Published in final edited form as:

Child Adolesc Social Work J. 2015 August 1; 32(4): 383–393. doi:10.1007/s10560-014-0372-2.

An Exploratory Analysis of Linguistic Acculturation, Neighborhood, and Risk Behaviors among Children of Southeast Asian Immigrants

Christina Tam¹ and

Doctoral Candidate, Department of Social Welfare, University of California, Los Angeles, (424) 258-4564, f: (310) 206-7564

Bridget Freisthler

Associate Professor Department of Social Welfare, University of California, Los Angeles, (310) 206-1602, f: (310) 206-7564

Christina Tam: christinatam@ucla.edu; Bridget Freisthler: freisthler@luskin.ucla.edu

Keywords

Southeast Asian youth; neighborhood effects; segmented assimilation; delinquency; acculturation

Among all Asian arrests in the United States, there is a higher proportion of juvenile arrests (15%) compared to other racial groups, including Whites (12%) and African Americans (14%) (Puzzanchera & Adams, 2011). Southeast Asian youth and young adults up to the age of 24, young people whose families originated from Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, are disproportionately represented in the justice system among Asian subgroups (Krisberg, 2005; Arifuku, Peacock, & Glesmann, 2006). However, due to the aggregate nature of data collection, Southeast Asians are often combined with other Asian ethnic groups that are stereotyped as the successful model minority (Ngo & Lee, 2007). Thus, little is known about Southeast Asian participation in behaviors related to delinquency, or acts that cause harm to individuals or the community (Shoemaker, 2009).

Children of Southeast Asian immigrants are at risk for poor adjustment as they confront the challenges of negotiating both host and ethnic cultures (Ying & Han, 2007; Ho, 2008). Part of this negotiation is the result of acculturation, a process by which psychological and cultural change occurs from the contact between two different cultural groups and their members (Berry, 1980). The immigration and acculturation experiences of Southeast Asians differ from that of most other Asians. Unlike their voluntary migrant counterparts, many Southeast Asians were forced from their home countries as refugees following the Indochina Wars in 1975 (Rumbaut, 2006). For example, while the majority of immigrants from the Philippines, India, Korea, and China were admitted to the U.S. on family sponsorships in the mid-1990s, more than one-half of Southeast Asians were admitted as refugees (Lee, 1998).

¹Designated corresponding author.

Without financial resources and like other new immigrants to the U.S., many Southeast Asian refugees settled in disadvantaged communities characterized by poverty (Rawlings, Capps, Gentsch, & Fortuny, 2007; Jargowsky, 2008). Southeast Asian immigrants are often employed in low-wage jobs with long hours (Echtle, 2011). Therefore, they are hard-pressed to provide to their children the support to achieve educationally and to engage in pro-social behaviors and activities with their peers (Yoshikawa, 1994). Southeast Asian American children may be placed at compounded risk for engaging in the problematic behaviors of the native-born disadvantaged, including delinquency (Zhou, 1997). The purpose of this study was twofold: 1) to explore whether acculturation is related to elevated risk behaviors, and 2) to determine if neighborhood characteristics are associated with elevated risk behaviors among an at-risk Southeast Asian sample.

Theoretical Foundation

Segmented assimilation, a theory used to explain acculturation, suggests that immigrants take on one of three divergent paths of assimilation (or integration to living in the U.S.) (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The first path assumes that some groups achieve upward mobility towards the mainstream American middle class. According to the second path, there are others that are able to achieve economic success while adhering to their ethnic cultural values; these members are able to become successful, but they are not acculturated into American culture and its practices. Finally, some groups undergo downward assimilation to the cultures that are reflective of the disadvantaged native-born. The three divergent paths are dependent upon the individual's race/ethnic background, neighborhood disadvantage, and limited upward mobility (e.g., structural barriers to achievement such as poor schooling) (Portes & Zhou, 1993). In other words, acculturation and neighborhood may predict whether one is able to achieve upward mobility.

The circumstances under which Southeast Asians have settled place them at risk of limited upward mobility. Refugees often continue to struggle with memories of war and political turmoil, even decades after resettlement (Marshall, Schell, Elliott, Berthold, & Chun, 2005). Compounded with their refugee status, Southeast Asians are less established in the U.S. and have the lowest socioeconomic status and educational attainment rates among Asians (Sakamoto & Woo, 2007; Um, 2003). For example, in California, Southeast Asians evidence among the highest rates of poverty of Asian American groups, including 25% of Cambodian, 17% of Laotian, and 34% of Hmong that live below the federal poverty line—compared to that of 11% of Chinese, 8% of Japanese, and 13% of Koreans. While 51% Chinese, 49% Japanese, and 55% Koreans reported having a college degree, only 14% Cambodian, 12% Laotian, and 15% Hmong reported having a college degree (Asian Pacific American Legal Center, 2013).

Segmented assimilation may imply that children of Southeast Asian immigrants are at risk for downward assimilation when considering their families' migration histories, settlement patterns, and the limited resources they had brought with them to the U.S. Thus, elevated risk behaviors associated with delinquency is assessed in this study in order to speculate whether an at-risk group of Southeast Asian youth and young adults may be experiencing a trajectory akin to downward assimilation. This paper extends previous empirical research on

investigating the relationship between acculturation and behaviors related to delinquency among Southeast Asians by incorporating an at-risk (i.e. drug-using) sample.

Delinquency among Children of Southeast Asian Immigrants

Southeast Asian youth and young adults may become involved in the juvenile justice system for a multitude of reasons. Acculturation might predict delinquency when there is dissonant acculturation between parents and children and one's commitment to his or her ethnic cultural values become reduced (Morenoff & Astor, 2006). The positive relationship between assimilation and problem behaviors such as gang involvement and violent offending is well documented among children of immigrants (Morenoff & Astor, 2006; Miller, Barnes, & Hartley, 2009), but few studies have tested these relationships among Southeast Asian groups (e.g., Le & Stockdale, 2005). Maintenance of the ethnic language may be protective against behaviors related to delinquency since language knowledge and use are closely related to ethnic identity (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Therefore, being situated in a neighborhood with the native-born poor may put these youth at risk of contact with the juvenile justice system.

Neighborhoods and Delinquency

As stated, Southeast Asian groups may be at risk for downward assimilation because of their migration histories and settlement patterns (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Le (2002) suggested that much delinquency research on Asian American adolescents has neglected to consider ecological circumstances in which delinquency occurs. Neighborhood characteristics, including social processes and neighborhood conditions, are related to crime and violence (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002; Brisson & Roll, 2012; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Concentrated disadvantage, or low socioeconomic conditions, of neighborhoods may influence the opportunities and resources that are available to its residents and their long-term well being. Yet, there are other studies that have found modest to no associations between disadvantage and delinquency related to adolescents living in urban environments (e.g., Rankin and Quane, 2002). While it is known that Southeast Asian families are more likely to settle in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Rawlings et al., 2007), there has been no study to date that investigates the influence of neighborhood characteristics on risk behaviors, especially for Cambodian and Laotian youth.

Immigrant neighborhoods

While risk factors such as concentrated disadvantage are associated with delinquency, there are yet other neighborhood characteristics that may be deemed protective. Despite immigrants residing in neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status, there is an increasing consensus that immigrant concentration is inversely related to crime (Lee & Martinez, 2009). Although the mechanisms underlying the effects of immigration on crime are not entirely well defined, there is some suggestion that immigration appeared to promote residential stability (Lee & Martinez, 2009). Residential stability engenders a social process, community cohesion (Sampson, 1991), which may be created through familiar cultural practices (Jargowsky, 2009). Community cohesion is conducive to social control, mutual trust, and collective efficacy, which are protective against crime and delinquency in

neighborhoods (Sampson et al., 2002). Thus, it may be protective for children of immigrants to reside in neighborhoods with a higher immigrant concentration.

Immigrant concentration may also be advantageous in protecting against negative outcomes through the preservation of cultural values. Experiences of youth living in an area with a high foreign-born population (i.e. ethnic enclave) compared to those outside these communities show that for the adolescent living in an ethnic enclave, their cognizance of ethnicity and collective cultural expectations were apparent in their everyday lives (Vo-Jutabha, Dinh, McHale, & Valsiner, 2009). Zhou and Bankston (2006) argued that enclaves help these youth uphold cultural values that are conducive to upward social mobility and may be protective against delinquency. However, immigrant concentration might be more protective against delinquent and deviant outcomes for first generation youth compared to later generations (Morenoff & Astor, 2006; Desmond & Kubrin, 2009). These results are consistent with the segmented assimilation approach; those who do not harbor a strong attachment to their family or immigrant communities in areas with high disadvantage will be at risk of engaging in criminality (Morenoff & Astor, 2006).

Present Study

Ecological context arguably influences Southeast Asian youths' assimilation trajectories, and neighborhood characteristics such as disadvantage and immigrant concentration become important foci for study. Further, the present study examines the relationship between Southeast Asian linguistic acculturation and elevated risk behaviors by extending previous findings with an at-risk sample, i.e., those who are engaged in and have normalized drug use. While some delinquency scales include measures of substance use (e.g., Curcio, Mak, & Knott; Thornberry & Krohn, 2000), drug use has become normalized among young Asian Americans (Moloney, Hunt, & Evans, 2008) and especially Southeast Asians (Lee & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Because the patterns of risk factors related to substance use and delinquency are similar (Williams, Ayers, Abbott, Hawkins & Catalano, 1999), and drug use is associated with delinquency and other problem behaviors (Oesterle, Hawkins, Fagan, Abbott, & Catalano, 2013), it would be valuable to investigate the association between acculturation and behaviors aside from drug use that may be categorized as delinquent. Previous studies have yet to address the association between neighborhoods and Southeast Asian risk behaviors. Thus, it is hypothesized that among a sample of at-risk Southeast Asian American youth and young adults, 1) linguistic acculturation is positively related to elevated risk behaviors, 2) neighborhood concentrated disadvantage is positively related to elevated risk behaviors, and 3) neighborhood immigrant concentration is negatively related to elevated risk behaviors.

Method

Sample

The original study, "Social Meanings of Drug Use for Asian Americans" (Lee, 2005), from which these secondary data were derived sought to investigate the social meanings of drug use among Southeast Asian American youth and young adults. Inclusion criteria for this purposive sample included recent use of illicit drugs, Southeast Asian ethnic background,

and ages 15 to 23. The sample ($N = 153$) was recruited via snowball method through community agencies from two Northern Californian communities. The communities from which this sample was drawn have the largest Cambodian and Laotian populations in the East Bay Area near San Francisco, California, are low socioeconomic status, and consist of a predominately minority population (Soller & Lee, 2010). All respondents were screened for any use of illicit drugs within the six months prior to recruitment; screening was by confidential self-report.

The mean age of the sample was 18.63 ($SD = 2.50$), and more than half were male (58.82%). The primary ethnicities represented in this sample were Cambodian (39.22%) and Laotian (50.98%). The remaining three participants (1.96%) identified as Southeast Asian, but indicated “Other” as their primary ethnicity. The majority of the sample was born in the U.S. (77.12%), and the remainder immigrated to the U.S. at 10 years old or earlier. Given that those who immigrated at an earlier age have spent the majority of their childhood and adolescence in the host society, their experiences in the U.S. have a great influence on their identification (Rumbaut & Ima, 1998).

Procedure

The Institutional Review Board at the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) approved all protocols for this study. Field staff from community-based organizations initially referred potential respondents to the study. These respondents assisted in recruiting other qualified potential participants. This project utilized a small cash incentive to each participant for up to four referrals from friends and family in order to diversify the sample, and approximately 70% of the sample resulted from this snowball recruitment method (Soller & Lee, 2010).

Interviewers obtained informed consent from participants and parents of minor participants. While second-generation youths and young adults speak and understand English, many of their parents do not; parent consent forms were translated and back translated into Khmer or Laotian (Lee, Battle, Lipton, & Soller, 2010). Data were collected using confidential, closed-ended face-to-face interviews that averaged 90 minutes in length (Soller & Lee, 2010). The quantitative data analyzed in this study were collected in a surveyor-administered paper form that preceded a semi-structured narrative interview that collected qualitative data (results reported elsewhere). Study participants were given a cash incentive for participation.

Conceptualization and Measurement

Outcome Variables—Three indicators of elevated risk behaviors were dummy-coded: They included (1) justice system involvement, (2) gang association, and (3) violence.

Prior involvement in the juvenile or criminal justice systems was derived from the question, “Have you ever been in ‘the system’ (juvenile probation or adult justice system)?” Over one-third of the respondents indicated that they had been in the system (36.8%).

Respondents were asked if they were “currently in a gang,” “never in a gang, but kick it with people who are,” “never in a gang, and don’t kick it with people who are,” “formerly in a

gang and still kick it with people who are,” and “formerly in a gang and don’t kick it with people who are.” Responses indicating that they were “currently in a gang” or “kicked it with people who are” were collapsed to represent gang association. About 65% of participants answered that they were currently involved in a gang or were friends with people who were involved in a gang.

Items for violence were adapted from the Children’s Report of Exposure to Violence (CREV; Cooley, Turner, & Biedel, 1995), which include whether the respondent had participated in “beating someone up,” “stabbing, shooting, or shooting at someone,” and “threatening someone with a gun, knife, or some other weapon” (1 = *never* and 4 = *six more or times*). Because of the lack of variation in the number of times of violence perpetration, items were scored to reflect a binary outcome (e.g., 1 = having engaged in violence). The Chronbach’s (1951) alpha for the subscale was .58. Over 39% had indicated reported having perpetrated violence in their neighborhood within the last 12 months.

Demographics—Individual participant variables included self-reported age and gender.

Linguistic Acculturation—The extant literature on acculturation and violence among minority adolescents has continued to use language as a proxy for acculturation (Smokowski, David-Ferdon, & Stroupe, 2009). The four-item language-based acculturation subscale was adapted from a widely-used scale developed for U.S. Hispanics (Marin & Gamba, 1996) that asked about which language the respondent speaks, normally speaks at home, usually thinks in, and speaks with friends, using English or Spanish as the two possible languages. Many Southeast Asian refugees speak more than one Asian language (for example, many U.S. Mien speak Laotian and Thai as well as Mien and English). For the present study, each respondent was asked to name their primary non-English language and the surveyor inserted that language into the items. Item responses were based on a five-point Likert scale (i.e. “only primary,” “primary more than English,” “both equally,” “English more than primary,” and “only English”). All items were summed for each respondent to create an index for linguistic acculturation ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .48$). The modified Marin scale used for this study had adequate reliability ($\alpha = .55$).

High School Dropout—School dropout was generated using two variables: 1) whether the participant was currently enrolled in school full-time, or 2) had a high school diploma/GED or higher at the time of data collection. Respondents aged 17 and under who were currently not enrolled in school and respondents 18 and over who do not have a high school diploma/GED and higher or were not currently enrolled in school were dummy-coded with a “1” to indicate school dropout. About 36% of the sample fit these criteria.

Private Insurance—Respondents self-reported their families’ health insurance status, and a dichotomous measure represented whether the participant was privately enrolled (dummy-coded as “1”) or collapsed to indicate non-insurance or enrollment in a government program (e.g., Medi-Cal, Healthy Families) (coded as “0”). The final private insurance indicator represented a proxy for higher socioeconomic status ($n = 15$, 10.27%).

Neighborhood indicators—Participant data were geocoded (i.e. located using X, Y coordinates of their addresses) using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to determine the 73 Census block groups in which the respondents resided ($n = 134$ reported their cross-streets). Census data were appended to respondent data, and participants that could not be geocoded were excluded from the multivariate analyses. Because the data were collected in 2005, Census block group data were extracted from the 2005 GeoLytics demographic database and the American Community Survey (ACS) (United States Census Bureau, 2011) for an average of the years 2005 through 2009. GeoLytics estimates provided socioeconomic variables and ACS provided language and race variables. Because of multicollinearity between the neighborhood variables, factor analysis was conducted to derive neighborhood constructs. The first factor, *concentrated disadvantage*, consisted of percent poverty, families in poverty, unemployment, female-headed households with children ages 0 to 17, and less than high school educational attainment for ages 25 and over. The second factor, *immigrant concentration*, consisted of percentages of those who speak a language other than English at home, foreign-born, Asian American population, and Hispanic population.

Data Analysis

Bivariate relationships were assessed between the predictor and outcome variables. Following, logistic regression models of the risk behaviors related to delinquency—justice system involvement, gang association, and violence—on the predictor variables were estimated. To address the possibility of violating the assumption of independence for logistic regression modeling, the first author tested this by randomly selecting one participant from each Census block group and used these data for separate logistic regression analyses with the same covariates in this paper. No more than two participants reported residency in one of the 73 block groups and the results from the randomly selected individuals did not vary from the overall reported findings in the results section. On average, there were 1.7 individuals per Census block group meaning that this low degree of clustering within block groups does not warrant more sophisticated multi-level analyses.

There were three sets of regression models that used 1) individual predictors only (Model 1), 2) neighborhood predictors only (Model 2), and 3) both individual and neighborhood predictors (Model 3) for each outcome variable. Given the exploratory nature of the research questions applied to selected ethnic groups and the small sample size, this paper examined findings significant at a probability level of .10. In considering the missing data, the multivariate analyses used sample sizes of $n = 126$ for justice system involvement and $n = 127$ for gang association and violence to be able to compare across models.

Missing Data—A dummy variable was created to reflect missing data on any of the predictor and outcome variables (18.30%, $n = 38$). About half the missing data was due to inaccurate address information. Bivariate analyses were conducted between the predictor or outcome variables and the missing data indicator. No significant differences were found between groups except for age ($p < .05$) where those with missing data were younger than those without.

Results

Bivariate Analyses

Chi-square analyses in Table 1 indicate that the percentage of participants that reported having been in the system differed by gender, $\chi^2(1, n=152) = 14.64, p < .001$. Being a school dropout was significantly related to being in the system ($\chi^2(1, n=152) = 2.92, p = .061$) and violence perpetration ($\chi^2(1, n=153) = 2.91, p = .088$).

T-test results in Table 1 indicate that age is significantly related to violence perpetration, $t(151) = 3.62, p < .001$, with younger respondents being associated with higher self-reports of violence. There was also a significant association for linguistic acculturation and gang association, indicating that those who are less linguistically acculturated (i.e. used less English overall) are more likely to be associated with gang members, $t(151) = 1.94, p = .05$.

Binary Logistic Regression

Logistic regression models were estimated for the three outcome variables: justice system involvement, gang association, and violence perpetration. For each outcome, Model 1 incorporates individual predictors only, Model 2 used neighborhood predictors only, and Model 3 regressed each outcome on both individual and neighborhood predictors.

Justice system involvement—The results for justice system involvement are shown in Table 2. Results for model 1 show that gender was significantly associated with justice system involvement (OR = 5.82, 95% CI 2.44 – 13.89, $p < .001$), in that males were more likely to have been in the system. Having dropped out of high school was associated with justice system involvement (OR = 2.19, 95% CI 0.90 – 5.31, $p < .10$). For Model 2, results show that the regression of justice system involvement on concentrated disadvantage and immigrant concentration yielded no significant relationships. In the combined Model 3, males were 5.78 times more likely than females to become justice system involved (95% CI 2.41 – 13.86, $p < .001$). A significant effect was found for those who had dropped out of school, with those respondents being 2.15 times more likely to become justice system involved than those who had not (95% CI 0.88 – 5.17, $p < .10$).

Gang association—As shown in Table 3, no results were statistically significant for gang association across the three models.

Violence—The results for violence perpetration are shown in Table 4. In Model 1, age was negatively associated with violence perpetration (OR = .78, 95% CI 0.65–0.94, $p < .05$) in that younger respondents reported higher rates of offending. In Model 2, results show that the regression of violence on concentrated disadvantage and immigrant concentration yielded no significant relationships. In the combined Model 3, age was also negatively associated with violence perpetration (OR = 0.78, 95% CI 0.65–0.95, $p < .05$).

Neighborhood characteristics had no effect on behaviors related to elevated risk behaviors in the combined models, and Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and log likelihood ratio tests indicated that there are no statistically significant differences between the combined

models and individual predictor only models, thereby concluding that Model 1 across all outcomes were the best fit.

The results indicated that across the three models, the individual explanatory variables were salient predictors of risk behaviors in Models 1 and 3 compared to the neighborhood indicators. Being male and having dropped out of school significantly predicted justice system involvement, and older respondents were about 20% less likely than younger respondents to report violent offending.

Discussion

This study extends previous empirical findings by examining the relationships between justice system involvement, gang association, and acts of violent offending and linguistic acculturation among a sample of an at-risk Southeast Asian American youth and young adult population. Additionally, this study examined whether neighborhood risk and protective factors have an effect. No statistically significant relationships were found for linguistic acculturation on risk behaviors in the multivariate models. Further, no significant associations were observed between neighborhood concentrated disadvantage and neighborhood immigrant concentration and reported elevated risk behaviors. Finally, results support past findings that males and younger participants (Farrington, 1989) were more likely to report arrest and violence, respectively, compared to females and older respondents.

Individual characteristics alone may be predictive of elevated risk. Less linguistically acculturated participants are more apt to become associated with gang-affiliated peers, suggesting that they may have become marginalized as a result of their struggle to assimilate to the mainstream of their communities. Their experiences of discrimination stress may drive them to seek out peer groups for a sense of belonging and protection against the co-resident community (Thlang, 2010). Linguistic acculturation was not associated with justice system involvement or violence across the estimated multivariate models. This suggests a possibility of support for the relationship that extends to Southeast Asian groups, but more research is needed to confirm this. Although not addressed in the original hypotheses, this study found that males were more likely to become involved in the justice system, and younger respondents were also more likely to perpetrate violence. These findings are consistent with previous scholars' thesis on the 'age-crime' curve (Farrington, 1989; Shoemaker, 2009); regardless of race, ethnicity, and culture, a trend that indicates a peak in the earlier adolescent years and then decreases, is prevalent.

The finding for neighborhood characteristics is not surprising given the mixed evidence reported in the literature. Elliott and colleagues' (Elliott, Wilson, Huizinga, Sampson, Elliott, & Rankin, 1996) study of neighborhood effects and adolescent problem behaviors concluded that while disadvantage was negatively related to informal social integration (i.e. perceived resources and activities) in one city, there was no significant relationship observed for another. It may be that the nuances of neighborhood composition and ethnic demographics could influence findings in studies of neighborhood effects. Oberwittler (2007) unexpectedly found that disadvantage did not affect adolescents with an immigrant background in the same way as it did for their native-born peers; rather, these adolescents

reported higher rates of delinquency *outside* of areas characterized by poverty. Future studies could benefit from testing the effects of other community characteristics, such as affluence, on delinquency. Further, there could also be other protective factors in disadvantaged neighborhoods that may keep them from engaging from behaviors that could put them at risk of contact with the juvenile justice system. For example, neighborhood cohesion in the presence of poverty may buffer the effects of disadvantage, regardless of the presence of co-resident youth of other ethnicities (Sampson, 1991). Investigating perceptions of collective efficacy and cohesion may be another avenue of testing the mechanisms that underlie Southeast Asian risk behaviors. With regards to immigrant population, it may be possible that this neighborhood characteristic had no effects on delinquency given that the majority of the sample was second generation. Morenoff and Astor (2006) discussed the possibility that second generation youth were less likely than first generation youth to be attached to their family and community values. Finally, it may be that since our measure of neighborhood characteristics was a relative measure, our sample did not include areas of sufficient variability in terms of concentrated disadvantage and concentrated immigrant status to show an effect.

The prediction that the sample in this study might be at risk of downward assimilation, given that they are engaged in elevated at-risk behaviors and resided in communities characterized by disadvantage, was not supported. This may suggest that the process to assimilating into the mainstream may be more complicated than the paths that Portes and Zhou (1993) originally proposed. The youth and young adults in this study were at-risk for delinquency in the sense that they were drug using, but more studies that are inclusive of their educational achievement and adherence to their cultural values are needed to further assess a possibility of being at risk. Perhaps because these youth and young adults have normalized their drug use but are not engaging in behaviors classified as “delinquent,” they may have not assimilated into their neighborhoods. This points to a possible indication of protective aspects of the community in which they live, and thusly they have not adopted the characteristics and practices of the disadvantaged *per se*.

There are several limitations in this study that warrant discussion. First, because this sample is considered at-risk, there may not have been enough variation within this group to capture the effects that the neighborhood indicators may have had on the respondents’ reported outcomes. Comparing this group to identified respondents who did not report drug use (i.e. are not considered at-risk) might yield different findings. It is important to keep in mind that these data were originally collected to examine the social meanings of drug use among a group of Southeast Asian American youth and young adults (Lee, 2005); drug use has been normalized in their social networks, and therefore these behaviors could be distinguished from actual and serious delinquency that are inclusive of violent offending. In addition to using an at-risk sample, the Southeast Asian population is considered “hard-to-reach” and therefore random sampling was not appropriate; the small sample size, coupled with the sampling methodology, limits the generalization of these findings to other Southeast Asian populations.

Secondly, the use of Census block groups assumes that all neighborhood predictors are uniform throughout the community. This study was limited to using only aggregated

community variables, and thus whether one is living in an ethnic enclave is unknown. It would be beneficial to tease apart the types of immigrant group concentrations that may be protective or even disadvantageous for the study population, as ethnic subgroups uphold values specific to their own cultures and may even feel antagonistic with other groups compared to a more heterogeneous neighborhood (Wu, Hou, & Schimmele, 2011).

Third, there are limitations with regards to several measures. Though language use has been used as a proxy for acculturation (e.g., Wallen, Feldman, & Anliker, 2002), scholars have also argued that there are other components to this multidimensional construct such as cultural values and practices that may contribute to a better measurement (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). The Chronbach's alpha demonstrated that reliability for this scale was fairly low, but it may still be deemed acceptable (Bowling, 2002). The alpha was low for violence, and therefore it may be beneficial for future replicative studies to utilize more reliable measures to test the relationships in this study.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Though the findings in this study were not as expected, these preliminary data provide implications for larger scale research studies with higher statistical power to affirm or refute this paper's findings surrounding acculturation and neighborhood effects for Southeast Asian groups. Given the interplay between the individual and community context, potential interaction effects between individual acculturation and ethnic makeup of the community (i.e. community acculturation) could be tested. In addition to comparing an at-risk group of Southeast Asian youth and young adults to a group not considered to be at-risk, subsequent research could examine additional neighborhood characteristics such as affluence and compare them to disadvantaged communities. Neighborhoods are becoming increasingly more diverse in the United States, and therefore it is important to investigate the ways in which different ethnic groups function in these communities in order to prevent behaviors that may be classified as delinquent. It is important to continue to encourage usage of disaggregated ethnic data in research and policy because different ethnic groups reflect varying cultural backgrounds and migration histories that may require culturally competent programming and interventions.

This research examined an understudied population, despite data suggesting that Southeast Asian youth are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system (Krisberg, 2005). However, Southeast Asians comprise a growing minority group that warrants further attention, and their precarious family and migration histories place them at elevated risk for poor behavioral outcomes. Therefore, it may be advantageous for practitioners to first identify at-risk Southeast Asian youth—such as young men and those not enrolled in school—for culturally competent intervention work and fully understanding the unique circumstances of their lives, rather than to identify the characteristics of their neighborhoods.

Acknowledgments

The research for this manuscript was funded by a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (R01-DA18281, P.I. Juliet P. Lee), the Harry H.L. Kitano Fellowship through the UCLA Department of Asian American Studies, and the UCLA Graduate Summer Mentorship Program.

We thank Dr. Juliet P. Lee for her comments on this manuscript and for the use of these data.

References

- Asian Pacific American Legal Center. A community of contrasts: Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in California. 2013. Retrieved from http://advancingjustice-la.org/system/files/Communities_of_Contrast_California_2013.pdf
- Arifuku I, Peacock DD, Glesmann C. Profiling incarcerated Asian and Pacific Islander youth: Statistics derived from the California Youth Authority administrative data. *AAPI Nexus: Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders Policy, Practice and Community*. 2006; 4(2):95–110.
- Berry, JW. Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In: Padilla, AM., editor. *Acculturation: Theory, models and some new findings*. Boulder, CO: Westview; 1980. p. 9-25.
- Berry, JW.; Phinney, JS.; Sam, DL.; Vedder, P., editors. *Immigrant youth in cultural transition: Acculturation, identity and adaptation across national contexts*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum; 2006.
- Bowling, A. *Research Methods in Health: Investigating Health and Health Services*. 2nd. Buckingham: Open University Press; 2002.
- Brisson D, Roll S. The effect of neighborhood on crime and safety: A review of the evidence. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*. 2012; 9(4):333–350. [PubMed: 22830936]
- Chronbach LJ. Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*. 1951; 16(3):297–334.
- Cooley MR, Turner SM, Biedel DC. Assessing community violence: The children's report of exposure to violence. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 1995; 34(2):201–208.
- Curcio AL, Mak AS, Knott VE. The Australian Self-report Delinquency Scale: A revision. *Australian Journal of Psychology*. 2014;10.1111/ajpy.12075
- Desmond SA, Kubrin CE. The power of place: Immigrant communities and adolescent violence. *The Sociological Quarterly*. 2009; 50:581–607.
- Echtle, E. Southeast Asian voices. 2011. Retrieved from <http://napca.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/09/SE-Asian-Voices.pdf>
- Elliott DS, Wilson WJ, Huizinga D, Sampson RJ, Elliott A, Rankin B. The effects of neighborhood disadvantage on adolescent development. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*. 1996; 33(4):389–426.
- Farrington DP. Age and crime. *Crime and Justice*. 1989; 7:189–250.
- GeoLytics, Inc. *Estimates and Projections*. 2005 [Data file].
- Greenman E, Xie Y. Is assimilation theory dead? The effect of assimilation on adolescent well-being. *Social Science Research*. 2008; 37(1):109–137. [PubMed: 19255601]
- Ho J. Community violence exposure of Southeast Asian American adolescents. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2008; 23(1):136–146. [PubMed: 18087036]
- Jargowsky PA. Immigrants and neighborhoods of concentrated poverty: Assimilation or stagnation? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 2009; 35:1129–1151.
- Krisberg, B. *Redeeming our children*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 2005.
- Le T. Delinquency among Asian/Pacific Islanders: review of literature and research. *The Justice Professional*. 2002; 15(1):57–70.
- Le T, Stockdale GD. Individualism, collectivism and delinquency in Asian American adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*. 2005; 34(4):681–691. [PubMed: 16232065]
- Lee JP. *Social Meanings of Drugs for Asian American Youth*. 2005 [Grant proposal to the National Institute of Drug Abuse].
- Lee JP, Battle RS, Lipton R, Soller B. 'Smoking': Use of cigarettes, cigars and blunts among Southeast Asian American youth and young adults. *Health Education Research*. 2010; 25:83–96. [PubMed: 19959564]
- Lee JP, Kirkpatrick S. Social meanings of marijuana use for Southeast Asian youth. *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse*. 2006; 4(3–4):135–152. [PubMed: 16537331]

- Lee MT, Martinez R. Immigration reduces crime: An emerging scholarly consensus. *Sociology of Crime, Law, and Deviance*. 2009; 13:3–16.
- Lee SM. Asian Americans: Diverse and growing. *Population Bulletin*. 1998; 53(2)
- Leventhal T, Brooks-Gunn J. The neighborhoods they live in: The effects of neighborhood residence on child and adolescent outcomes. *Psychological Bulletin*. 2000; 126(2):309–337. [PubMed: 10748645]
- Moloney M, Hunt G, Evans K. Asian American identity and drug consumption: From acculturation to normalization. *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse*. 2008; 7(4):376–403. [PubMed: 19064437]
- Marin G, Gamba RJ. A new measurement of acculturation for Hispanics: the bidimensional acculturation scale for Hispanics (BAS). *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. 1996; 18(3): 297–316.
- Marshall GN, Schell TL, Elliott MN, Berthold SM, Chun C. Mental health of Cambodian refugees 2 decades after resettlement in the United States. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2005; 294(5):571–579. [PubMed: 16077051]
- Miller HV, Barnes JC, Hartley RD. Reconsidering Hispanic gang membership and acculturation in a multivariate context. *Crime & Delinquency*. 2009; 57(3):331–355.
- Morenoff, JD.; Astor, A. Immigrant assimilation and crime: Generational differences in youth violence in Chicago. In: Martinez, R., Jr; Valenzuela, A., Jr, editors. *Immigration and crime: Race, ethnicity, and violence*. New York: New York University Press; 2006. p. 36–63.
- Ngo B, Lee SJ. Complicating the image of model minority success: A review of Southeast Asian American education. *Review of Educational Research*. 2007; 77(4):415–453.
- Oberwittler D. The effects of neighbourhood poverty on adolescent problem behaviors: a multi-level analysis differentiated by gender and ethnicity. *Housing Studies*. 2007; 22(5):781–803.
- Oesterle S, Hawkins JD, Fagan AA, Abbott RD, Catalano RF. Variation in the sustained effects of the Communities that Care prevention system on adolescent smoking, delinquency, and violence. *Prevention Science*. 2013 10.1007/s11121-013-0365-y
- Portes A, Zhou M. The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 1993; 530(1):74–96.
- Puzzanchera, C.; Adams, B. Juvenile arrests 2009. 2011 Dec. Retrieved from <http://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/236477.pdf>
- Rankin BH, Quane JM. Social contexts and urban adolescent outcomes: the interrelated effects of neighborhoods, families, and peers on African-American youth. *Social Problems*. 2002; 49(1):79–100.
- Rawlings, LA.; Capps, R.; Gentsch, K.; Fortuny, K. Immigrant integration in low-income urban neighborhoods: Improving economic prospects and strengthening connections for vulnerable families. 2007. Retrieved from http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411574_immigrant_integration.pdf
- Rumbaut, R. Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian Americans. In: Min, PG., editor. *Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues*. 2nd. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 2006.
- Rumbaut, R.; Ima, K. *Between Two Worlds: Southeast Asian Refugee Youth in America*. Boulder: Westview Press; 1998.
- Sakamoto A, Woo H. The socioeconomic attainments of second-generation Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans. *Sociological Inquiry*. 2007; 77(1):44–75.
- Sampson RJ. Linking the micro-and macrolevel dimensions of community social organization. *Social Forces*. 1991; 70(1):43–64.
- Sampson RJ, Morenoff JD, Gannon-Rowley T. Assessing “neighborhood effects”: Social processes and new directions in research. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2002; 28:443–478.
- Schwartz SJ, Unger JB, Zamboanga BL, Szapocznik J. Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist*. 2010; 65(4):237–251. [PubMed: 20455618]
- Shoemaker, DJ. *Juvenile Delinquency*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield; 2009.

- Smokowski PR, David-Ferdon C, Stroupe N. Acculturation and violence in minority adolescents: a review of the empirical literature. *Journal of Primary Prevention*. 2009; 30(3):215–263. [PubMed: 19387835]
- Soller B, Lee JP. Drug-intake methods and social identity: The use of marijuana in blunts among Southeast Asian adolescents and emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. 2010; 25(6): 783–806. [PubMed: 22003266]
- Thlang, A. Master's thesis. California State University; Sacramento, CA: 2010. Factors Contributing to Gang-related Activities Amongst Southeast Asian Youths.
- Thornberry TP, Krohn MD. The self-report method of measuring delinquency and crime. *Criminal Justice*. 2000; 4:33–83.
- Um, K. A dream denied: Educational experiences of Southeast Asian American youth, issues and recommendations. Washington, D.C: Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC); 2003.
- United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey 2005–2009 ACS 5-year estimates. 2011. [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2009_5yr_data/
- Vo-Jutabha ED, Dinh KT, McHale JP, Valsiner J. A qualitative analysis of Vietnamese adolescent identity exploration with and outside an ethnic enclave. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 2009; 38(5):672–690. [PubMed: 19636763]
- Wallen GR, Feldman RH, Anliker J. Measuring acculturation among Central American women with the use of a brief language scale. *Journal of Immigrant Health*. 2002; 4(2):95–102. [PubMed: 16228765]
- Williams JH, Ayers CD, Abbott RD, Hawkins JD, Catalano RF. Racial differences in risk factors for delinquency and substance use among adolescents. *Social Work Research*. 1999; 23(4):241–256.
- Wu Z, Hou F, Schimmele CM. Racial diversity and sense of belonging in urban neighborhoods. *City & Community*. 2011; 10(4):373–392.
- Ying Y, Han M. The longitudinal effect of intergenerational gap in acculturation on conflict and mental health in Southeast Asian American adolescents. *Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 2007; 77(1): 61–66.
- Yoshikawa H. Prevention as cumulative protection: Effects of early family support and education on chronic delinquency and its risks. *Psychological Bulletin*. 1994; 115(1):28–54. [PubMed: 8310099]
- Zhou M. Growing up American: The challenge confronting immigrant children and children of immigrants. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 1997; 23:63–95.
- Zhou, M.; Bankston, CL. Delinquency and acculturation in the twenty-first century: A decade's change in a Vietnamese American community. In: Ramirez, RM.; Valenzuela, A., editors. *Immigration and Crime: Race, Ethnicity, and Violence*. New York: New York University Press; 2006.

Table 1
Bivariate Comparisons of Sample Demographic Characteristics for Elevated Risk (N = 153)

	Gang Association			Justice System Involvement			Violence		
	%/mean (se)	n	p	%/mean (se)	n	p	%/mean (se)	n	p
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>									
Age (range = 15 – 24 years)	18.46 (0.25)	153	–	18.89 (0.33)	153	–	17.75 (0.30)	153	<0.001
Sex		153	–		152	<0.001		153	–
Male	67.78%			49.44%			41.11%		
Female	61.90%			19.05%			36.51%		
Linguistic Acculturation (range = 2.8 – 5.0)	4.01 (0.05)	153	0.05	4.06 (0.06)	153		4.15 (0.06)	153	
School Dropout		153	–		152	0.061		153	0.088
Yes	64.29%			46.43%			30.36%		
No	65.98%			31.25%			44.33%		
Private Insurance		146	–		145	–		146	–
Yes	53.33%			46.67%			26.67%		
No	67.18%			36.92%			40.46%		
<i>Neighborhood Characteristics</i>									
Concentrated Disadvantage (range = –2.53 – 2.79)	–0.06 (0.11)	134	–	0.05 (0.13)	133	–	0.10 (0.10)	134	–
Immigrant Concentration (range = –2.02 – 1.63)	0.04 (0.11)	134	–	0.11 (0.13)	133	–	0.00 (0.16)	134	–

Table 2

Logistic Regression Models on Justice System Involvement Related to Individual and Neighborhood Predictors (n = 126)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Individual						
Age	0.96	0.80 – 1.15			0.99	0.82 – 1.19
Male	5.82	2.44 – 13.89***			5.78	2.41 – 13.86***
Linguistic Acculturation	1.06	0.48 – 2.30			1.09	0.50 – 2.40
School Dropout	2.19	0.90 – 5.31†			2.15	0.88 – 5.27†
Private Insurance	1.66	0.45 – 6.14			1.68	0.46 – 6.19
Neighborhood						
Concentrated Disadvantage			1.11	0.77 – 1.61	1.11	0.73 – 1.68
Immigrant Concentration			1.21	0.84 – 1.75	1.28	0.84 – 1.94
Goodness of Fit (BIC)		–434.732***		–427.009		–426.585**
Contrast to Model 1		–		–		8.147

Note: Model 1 = individual predictors only; Model 2 = neighborhood predictors only; Model 3 = individual and neighborhood predictors. Log likelihoods between Models 1 and 3 indicate no statistical significant difference and thus no improvement in model fit.

* p < .05

† p < .10

** p < .01

*** p < .001

Table 3
Logistic Regression Models on Gang Association Related to Individual and Neighborhood Predictors (n = 127)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Individual						
Age	0.90	0.76 – 1.06			0.88	0.74 – 1.04
Male	1.35	0.63 – 2.91			1.37	0.63 – 2.97
Linguistic Acculturation	0.52	0.24 – 1.16			0.52	0.23 – 1.17
School Dropout	1.10	0.46 – 2.60			1.11	0.46 – 2.65
Private Insurance	0.59	0.18 – 1.90			0.61	0.19 – 1.98
Neighborhood						
Concentrated Disadvantage			1.13	0.77 – 1.66	1.04	0.70 – 1.55
Immigrant Concentration			0.83	0.57 – 1.22	0.77	0.52 – 1.14
Goodness of Fit (BIC)	–428.276		–438.038		–420.351	
Contrast to Model 1	–		–		7.926	

Note: Model 1 = individual predictors only; Model 2 = neighborhood predictors only; Model 3 = individual and neighborhood predictors. Log likelihoods between Models 1 and 3 indicate no statistical significant difference and thus no improvement in model fit.

Table 4

Logistic Regression Models on Violence Related to Individual and Neighborhood Predictors (n = 127)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Individual						
Age	0.78	0.65 – 0.94*			0.78	0.65 – 0.95*
Male	1.21	0.55 – 2.65			1.20	0.55 – 2.65
Linguistic Acculturation	1.70	0.76 – 3.81			1.74	0.77 – 3.94
School Dropout	0.94	0.38 – 2.31			0.94	0.38 – 2.31
Private Insurance	1.06	0.29 – 3.95			1.10	0.30 – 4.08
Neighborhood						
Concentrated Disadvantage			1.16	0.80 – 1.69	1.14	0.77 – 1.69
Immigrant Concentration			1.06	0.74 – 1.54	0.93	0.63 – 1.39
Goodness of Fit (BIC)	–433.349*		–436.280		–424.192†	
Contrast to Model 1	–		–		9.157	

Note: Model 1 = individual predictors only; Model 2 = neighborhood predictors only; Model 3 = individual and neighborhood predictors. Log likelihoods between Models 1 and 3 indicate no statistical significant difference and thus no improvement in model fit.

* p < .05

† p < .10