

Family and Culture, and the Samoan Youth

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ABSTRACT. This qualitative study examines the Samoan family and culture as possible sources of risk and/or protection for delinquency among Samoan youth. Study participants included Samoan American youth and parents living in one U.S. state. Data were collected via individual interviews. Results indicate that family practices, dynamics, and socioeconomic status; cultural factors such as Samoan customs and traditions (Fa'aSamoa); and structural factors such as oppression and discrimination may serve as sources of risk and/or protection for delinquency among these Samoan youth. A theory is proposed based on familial, cultural, and structural factors related to delinquency among Samoan youth. Implications for future research, policy, and practice specifically focusing on the cultural aspects of the lived experiences of Samoan youth and their families living in the United States are discussed.

KEYWORDS. Customs and traditions [Fa'aSamoa], juvenile delinquency, Samoan culture, Samoan family, Samoan youth

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Among populations of color in the United States, particularly adolescents of color, juvenile delinquency, and thus disproportionate involvement at all stages of the juvenile justice system, continue to be a growing problem despite the reported national decrease in the juvenile delinquency rate over the past years (Hsia, Bridges, & McHale, 2004; Pope, Lovell, & Hsia, 2002; Short & Sharp, 2005; Sickmund, 2004; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006; U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006a/b). According to the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (2007), identifying factors that contribute to disproportionate involvement of adolescents of color in the juvenile justice system is complicated and complex. It is not clear whether minority disproportionality is the result of differential treatment, location of offense, youth misbehavior, racial bias, a victim's reaction to a youth of color, or other factors. Adding to this complexity is the lack of accurate literature on emerging populations at risk such as Pacific Islander youth.

Although the literature is sparse in relation to Pacific Islander adolescents, the information that does exist suggests that Pacific Islanders, particularly Samoan adolescents, tend to appear in disproportionate numbers in the U.S. criminal justice system (Kassabaum, Lau, Kwack, Leverette, Allingham, & Marker, 1995) as well as in other U.S. social welfare systems (Franco, 1991). Furthermore, a report by the Center for Youth Research indicates that Samoan youth in Hawaii are greatly overrepresented in secured detention facilities, family court, secured confinement facilities, arrests, and referrals for family court relative to their proportion in the general population (Kassenbaum et al., 1995). Low educational achievements, language barriers, low family incomes, poverty, racism and discrimination, recent immigration into the United States, and conflicting cultural practices have placed Pacific Islanders, particularly Samoan adolescents, at higher risk for involvement in crime and delinquency and, consequently, the juvenile justice system (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2006). Building on a risk and protective factors perspective, this article examines the impacts of specific Samoan cultural and family practices and experiences on an adolescent's risk for or protection from juvenile delinquency and the juvenile justice system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

This study is conceptualized by structuration theory, which provides an approach that allows for alternate discussion of micro, mezzo, and macro influences without having to shift entirely into a different framework (Giddens, 1991). Structuration theory honors the connections between individuals and structures by expanding beyond the limitations of competing views without disposing of the benefits of each perspective. The individual in structuration theory is seen as knowledgeable, active, and reasonable. Although social structures contain circumstances that restrict actions of the individual, these structures do not determine the individual's activities (Dear & Moos, 1994; Stubbs, Martin & Endlar, 2006). Structuration theory considers each level of influence (i.e., social, economic, systemic, and cultural factors) on adolescent behavior and suggests that adolescents are capable of action on various levels (conscious or unconscious). Indeed, the strength of this theory is that it not only provides a framework that transcends different levels of influence, but also provides a theoretical basis for empowerment.

Issues Relevant to Juvenile Delinquency Among Samoans

Transcultural adaptation. Acculturative stress is a common experience for Samoan adolescents and families. Many maintain a strong ethnic and cultural identity outside of Samoa, as reflected by their practice of the traditional "matai" kinship system and their preference in seeking membership in Samoan speaking churches in the United States (Janes, 1990). Although efforts have been made to maintain the culture among Samoans in the United States, the lifestyle and values of Western society have penetrated into the lives of adolescents and their families through school, television, peers, and involvement in formal or informal non-ethnic community activities (Baldauf, 1978; Freese, 1988). Thus, regardless of the generation to which one belongs, acculturation and changes in ethnic and cultural identities is an ongoing experience for many Samoans residing in the United States. Essentially, the centrality of the family in the Samoan culture necessitates consideration of acculturation from a family perspective rather than as an individual phenomenon.

In the general literature, findings indicate both positive and negative consequences of acculturation on adolescent behavioral outcomes. For instance, Fridrich and Flannery (1995) found that younger Mexican American adolescents who were acculturated reported significantly more involvement in delinquent behaviors. Likewise, Vega, Gil, Warheit, Zimmerman, and Apospori (1993) found that acculturative conflicts among Cuban American seventh graders were associated with delinquent behavior. Sommers, Fagan, and Baskin (1993) also reported that a high level of acculturation was positively correlated with participation in interpersonal violence and theft, and interestingly, a low level of acculturation was associated with drug use. Acculturative stress may have resulted in the use of drugs as a coping mechanism. In addition, research has found that differential family acculturation was related to the likelihood of future substance use among Latino adolescents (Martinez, 2006) and depression among North American Chinese adolescents (Crane, Ngai, Larson, & Hafen, 2005) and Mexican American adolescents (Gonzales, Deardorff, Formoso, Barr, & Barrera, 2006). Moreover, Cachelin, Phinney, Schug, and Striegel-Moore (2006) found that eating disorders among Mexican American adolescents were associated with an orientation toward Anglo American culture.

According to Berry (1997) and Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006), acculturative stress is an outcome of the accommodations that must be negotiated by the demands of the host culture and those of the culture of origin. Such stress is personified by deteriorating physical and mental health status of individuals or groups experiencing acculturation. For Samoan American adolescents, the stress of attempting to live and function in a dual culture may steer them away from the norms and values of the original as well as the host culture and lead to involvement in deviant behaviors.

Family and Cultural Relations, and Protocols

Family and cultural systems have been extensively noted in the literature as having significant impacts, positive and negative, on juvenile delinquency (Agnew, Rebellon, & Thaxton, 2000; Elliott, Wilson, Huizinga, Sampson, Elliott, & Rankin, 1996; Powell, 1997). Family and culture are the essence of a Samoan person's way of life (Pacific Development Center & Malcolm D. McPhee & Associates,

1994). Samoan culture advocates loyalty to and pride in the family and one's primary membership groups (Hanna & Fitzgerald, 1993). The family, or "aiga," is the extended family system that includes the "matai," or the head of a village, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and others (Holmes, 1978). Samoan adolescents have a great deal of family pride (Janes, 1990) and a tendency to protect their peer groups, especially when they have accepted them as part of their extended families.

Although the "matai" system is not strongly enforced in the United States, the family pattern of most Samoans in the United States includes extended family members (Fitzgerald & Howard, 1990). Unfortunately, it can be hypothesized that, when this social support system is in turmoil, much of the Samoan family and thus the youth's stability is disintegrated. Indeed, when the connections to these social systems are disrupted, adjustment or development becomes difficult for the Samoan adolescent, particularly when the disruption lasts for a lengthy period of time. Understanding the influence of family and cultural relations and protocols are essential to understanding delinquency among Samoan adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Design

Due to the fact that the existing literature contains limited anecdotal information and a few dated studies about the experiences of Samoan adolescents in the United States, an exploratory qualitative study is appropriate. To this end, the inductive nature of grounded theory as a qualitative research method that provides a systematic set of procedures for constructing a theory about a phenomenon that is grounded in data and the interpretive understanding of the meanings of an individual's lived experiences were appropriate for this study (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory research focuses specifically on describing a phenomenon and its meaning from a participant's perspective, and as a result, constructed theories are grounded in the participant's lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In grounded theory research, an individual's meaning-making process is understood only in the context in which it occurs, a context which is embedded in the studied phenomenon (Caron & Bowers, 2000).

Data collection, analysis, and theory construction are regarded as reciprocally related because grounded theory is the construction of theory from data provided by participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This interweaving is a way to increase insights and clarify the parameters of the emerging theory to ensure that the analysis is based on the data and not on presumptions of existing theories (Becker, 1993). Subsequently, the emergent theory is thus specifically focused on explaining delinquency applicable to Samoan youth. Grounded theory promises rigor to the extent that detailed and systematic procedures for data collection, analysis, and theorizing are formulated and followed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

These qualities of grounded theory make it an appropriate research method for studying the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency among Samoan adolescents. It focuses on the lived experiences of Samoan adolescents and the meanings of such experiences in terms of the risk for or protection from juvenile delinquency. It provides a systematic method to construct theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) based on information or data relevant to Samoan youth and their families by positing that the adequacy of a theory cannot be separated from the process by which it is generated.

In keeping with the tenets of grounded theory, the following broad questions were explored with participants in order to allow them to define the phenomenon and meaning of juvenile delinquency from their lived experiences: What are the family and cultural-based factors that may place Samoan youth at risk for involvement in delinquent behaviors (risk factors) and consequently in the juvenile justice system? Conversely, what are the family and cultural-based factors that may deter youth from involvement in delinquent behaviors (protective factors) and the juvenile justice system?

Participants

Study participants included 30 Samoan adolescents, 24 males and 6 females, ages 11 to 18. Fifteen of the 30 adolescents have been involved in the juvenile justice system. To allow for triangulation, and ensure that multiple perspectives were being represented, parents/guardians of the participating adolescents were also interviewed.

Due to limited knowledge regarding parameter estimates of the Samoan community and the sensitive nature of this topic in relation to the stigma that is attached to delinquency, a networking

nonprobability sampling method was used to recruit participants for the study. Hagan (1997) suggests that the networking method of sampling is often used with hard to find subjects.

Churches, activity groups, and specialized entities in low-income housing areas in two districts of the state, geographical areas that contain the most concentrated numbers of Samoan residents, were approached about the study by the research team. Parents and youth who expressed an interest in participating in the study were informed that participation is voluntary; therefore, one may decide to end participation in the study at any time and all information is kept confidential and privacy is protected. Participants who consented to participate in the study were interviewed. Because of the stigma associated with delinquency, additional efforts were required for soliciting youth participants who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. The research team approached residents of these geographical areas separately in order to help identify youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. This networking method solicited fifteen youth who have been involved in the juvenile justice system and their parents/guardians. Interviewing youth both in and out of the juvenile justice system was important in order to compare and contrast meanings of the lived experiences of these youth in relation to risk factors leading to delinquency, protective factors from involvement in delinquency, and what factors deterred youth who may have experienced the same risk factors from involvement in delinquency. Additionally, the difference between the numbers of male and female participants was an outcome of the recruitment method. Also, the larger number of males may be reflective of the proportion of the Samoan youth population involved in delinquency or in the juvenile justice system.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

In grounded theory research, data collection, analysis, and theory construction are regarded as reciprocally related (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As one of the primary methods of grounded theory research, data were collected through individual interviews in which participants were the experts on the issue. The individual interviews were a one-time, one to two hours in length activity, using a semi-structured interview guide approach. The interviews were tape recorded and interviewers also took notes. The interviewers, who

constituted the research team, were professional Samoan women who were fluent in both English and Samoan languages. For individuals whose first language is Samoan, the interviews were done in the Samoan language. Interviews with most of the parents/guardians were done in the Samoan language because they were more comfortable with their language of origin. In translating the data to English, back translation was conducted to ensure that the contextual meaning was kept.

Participants took about five minutes to complete a brief demographic questionnaire. Information collected through this questionnaire included age, neighborhood, sex, family income, place of birth, school youth attending, year and reason parent migrated to the U.S., youth grade level, number of and relationship between people living in the home, language use at home, parent educational level, youth and parent employment, and type of employment. In the individual interviews, participants were asked about their lived experiences in relation to the Samoan culture and family and juvenile delinquency. For instance, participants were asked, "Tell me about your level of participation in Samoan customs and traditions (Fa'aSamoa or Samoan way)? What are the benefits (good things) of the Fa'aSamoa for youth and family? What do you find as the downside of the Fa'aSamoa for youth and family? Tell me about your family relations. Who do you consider family? What are the strengths and limitations of your family?" Furthermore, participants were asked, "What do you think led you (your youth) to participate in delinquency? What do you think prevented you (your youth) from being involved in delinquent activities?"

Following the interviews, data were transcribed by the research team. Two members of the research team conducted the data analysis using immersion in the data, coding processes, integrative memos, constant comparative analysis until saturation, and integration of the theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). First, a line-by-line analysis or open coding of each transcript was conducted verbatim in order to discover and describe significant themes related to the phenomenon from a participant's perspective. A follow up reading for themes related directly to the research questions occurred thereafter. Second, integrative memos were used to define interrelationships among themes and identify recurring patterns that were sorted into categories. Third, constant comparative analysis was conducted across cases in order to identify and compare themes and interrelationships among

themes. Line-by-line analysis, memo writing, and constant comparison were conducted until saturation, a point in which no new themes can be discovered, was reached. Following saturation, the developing theory was integrated. In order to contribute to the accuracy of the constructed theory, interested participants were asked to review the final document and provide feedback.

RESULTS

Participants lived in rural, suburban, and inner city areas. Twenty families reported annual incomes of \$0–20,000; nine families reported annual income higher than \$20,001; and one was unknown. Twenty youth were born in the United States compared to twenty-six parents who were born outside of the United States. All participants lived in multiple generation homes with parents, siblings, grandparents, and extended families (i.e., aunts, nieces, in-laws, cousins). Nineteen families spoke both Samoan and English in the home, nine spoke either English or Samoan, and one family spoke English, Samoan, and Tongan. Twenty-one parents completed high school, trade school, or college, whereas nine parents completed ninth grade. Eleven parents were unemployed, seventeen worked in positions that did not require a college degree, and the rest were retirees.

Youth Perspective on Samoan Culture

Samoan cultural practices (Fa'aSamoa). In terms of Fa'aSamoa (Samoan customs and traditions) that are practiced in the family, the following seven saturated themes were identified from the lived experiences of youth:

1. Church Devotion. Devotion to church was identified as the cornerstone of one's life and the vehicle through which the Fa'aSamoa was carried out in the family. These families practiced the Fa'aSamoa primarily because it was reinforced through church philosophies and practices. For example, the Sunday Tona'i, or Sunday Meal, in the church is an event which the entire family is expected to attend and contribute every Sunday.
2. Family and Community Obligations and Reciprocity. Commitment to family and community obligations and reciprocity are

- essential Samoan practices. For example, unconditional and unequivocal sharing of money, materials, and all resources are expected in these Samoan families and communities, without questions.
3. Respect for the elders. Youth are taught that decisions made by the elders are final and must be obeyed.
 4. Discipline. Youth expressed acceptance of physical punishment as appropriate disciplinary action. Some youth expressed that physical discipline is a sign of love and expectation to do well in life.
 5. Language Preservation. Youth involvement in family and cultural ceremonies are methods of language preservation. For example, youth are involved in wedding and funeral ceremonies with the elders who give directives in the Samoan language.
 6. Traditional food preparation, singing, dancing, art, and medicine were reported as Samoan customs that were practiced almost on a daily basis in the youth's family.
 7. Samoan Flag Day. All Samoans including Samoan youth are expected to contribute time, money, and other resources to the Samoan Flag Day.

Benefits of Fa'aSamoa. Overall, the Fa'aSamoa connects youth to the Samoan familial culture and provides structure for daily living. As such, first, youth expressed that the Fa'aSamoa is a constant reminder of who they are and where they come from. For example, it reinforces protecting the family honor, respect for others and the elders, ceremonial activities such as the "sua," and traditional dancing. One youth said, "Most Samoans that come from Samoa, they get white washed, they forget everything about the Samoan culture. But in our households we learn about the Samoan way, so we don't look stupid when it comes to traditions". Second, the Fa'aSamoa reinforces the need to speak Samoan because some parents do not speak English. Third, the time and physical demands of the Fa'aSamoa often helps youth stay out of trouble because the family requires them to be home to help prepare food and gifts like fine mats and money for the events. Fourth, the Fa'aSamoa is the mechanism through which these families share money and time unconditionally with family members. Last, church devotion as an integral aspect of Fa'aSamoa helps these families attend church and pray together consistently.

Challenges of Fa'aSamoa. In a nutshell, the Fa'aSamoa can be a negative experience for Samoan youth because of the possible overwhelming demands and burdens that such customs and traditions place on the family's time and scarce resources. First, the traditional requirements of the Fa'aSamoa were reported as often conflicting with their new American culture of individualism and convenience. Second, with Fa'aSamoa, there is a tendency to overcompensate. For example, participants felt that fa'alavelave such as funerals and weddings require a lot of work and energy, especially if their families are already struggling. A lot of money is donated, and sometimes, there is conflict regarding how money is distributed. Youth expressed that the feau (chores) for the Fa'aSamoa can be overwhelming. One youth stated, "Too much money is given all the time, and in a way they just giving money away, you know what I mean? Every time we have to give, my parents would give more. And sometimes my parents don't think about how it is going to affect us, when they give and next time they going say oh, we should have kept some money for us. They are sometimes too generous." Finally, youth expressed concerns about the perception of the Samoan community by mainstream culture as they discussed how Samoan people have been associated with violence that sometimes occurs during large Fa'aSamoa celebrations.

Youth Perspective on Family

Family practices. In relation to family practices, the following are saturated themes identified from the lived experiences of youth. First, youth referred to family as any person(s) who helps out, is always around, welcomes you into his/her house, befriends you, loves you, and cares for you. They considered parents, grandparents, siblings, nieces, nephews, cousins, uncles, aunties, and friends all as family. Interesting but not surprising, youth reiterated the previously discussed Fa'aSamoa as their family practices, including commitment to church, prayer, choir, respect for the Faifeau (pastor), and Sunday Tona'i (gathering); family gatherings and reciprocity; obedience to and respect for elderly people; and speaking the Samoan language.

Second, in terms of family relationships, youth expressed love and respect, particularly for mother and grandmother, and reciprocity in paying bills, child care, and doing feau (chores). In relation to problem solving methods, youth discussed family meetings in which the extended

family gathers, assesses the incident, and identifies the instigator who is required to provide an explanation and apology; then an agreement for punishment and/or restitution is reached. Commonly using the Samoan language, parents talk, yell, or scold the youth. The expression of one youth captures the Samoan family meetings, "My uncle usually does the talking because he is a high level matai, and my older aunty will always speak up too, especially in meetings. We are included but grandma speaks to us at a different level so that we understand."

Finally, some youth acknowledged receiving physical discipline and revoking of privileges, which had a greater effect on them than talking. Several youth said, "We did it the Fa'asamoa way, Dad spanked us because they love us and they don't want us to do bad stuffs. They care about us." When asked if he minded the spankings, one youth said, "No, but I did something wrong, it stops us from breaking the same rules so that we don't get hit again". Another youth commented, "After I got disciplined, it helps to learn from a little bit of pain. It says your parents love you and they want to know where you have been." Youth identified differences in disciplinarian figures in that the mother identifies the problem, separates the person who caused the problem, and talks directly with him/her; whereas the father lectures, explains what is wrong and right, and if necessary, give spankings. Sometimes, when a fight occurs in the family, a person is sent to an aunt's home where directives are given and a resolution is reached. Moreover, the family may say a special prayer for those involved in an incident.

Benefits of the family. In general, the family is the primary source of connections, discipline and directives, and daily support for youth. First, youth reported that their family members are always there for each other. If one has a problem one knows from whom to seek help. If a person needs help, everyone will contribute. Youth expressed the joy of having older siblings and the security of living within close proximity with grandparents and extended families. Second, their families attend church and Sunday Tona'i faithfully, which provides an opportunity for fellowship in a safe environment. Third, their families are a source of needed discipline. Last, their families are a source of monetary support, daily communication, and encouragement in sports and school.

Challenges of the family. Overall, feelings of disconnection in the family, either as a result of normal adolescent development or overwhelming family expectations, can be challenging for youth.

First, youth indicated that sometimes in the family feelings cannot be freely expressed. Second, youth expressed that sometimes parents do not understand them and falsely blame them for incidents. Third, a few youth stated that their fathers are not home often, and sometimes he drinks too much and complains about money. Fourth, sometimes there are so many feau (chores) that there is no time for homework. Lastly, youth felt that the fights and hurtful words between them and their parents do not heal.

Youth Perspective on Delinquency and the Justice System

Half of the participating youth reported involvement in delinquency and experienced being arrested. Age range of first participation in delinquent activities spanned from 9 to 14 years old. One youth said, "That's how I started with everything. In seventh grade, my friend when ask me if I wanted to smoke, I tried cigarettes and he gave me weed to try. From seventh grade I started drinking." In terms of most recent time of involvement in delinquent activities, a few youth reported last night, several youth reported last week or months ago, and others reported last year.

Delinquent activities reported by youth included shoplifting, stealing, fighting, graffiti, defacing properties, fireworks in school, disrupting classes, truancy, trespassing, breaking curfew laws, drinking, smoking, drug use, carrying a gun/illegal weapon, robbery, assault, and hijacking. Some youth also stated that they were only guilty by association, being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

In terms of risk factors for involvement in delinquent activities, youth participants identified feeling depressed, feeling left out, being angry, stress in the family, and the sense of need to protect family members. One youth said, "I was hurt 'cause my mom passed away." Another youth commented, "You want stuff, to be known and popular." Still another commented, "I didn't like the fact that girls were picking on my little sister, so I had to jump in. My sister didn't go to school for like two weeks cause she was scared, so I took a chance."

In relation to protective factors that would have prevented involvement in delinquent activities, youth identified factors such as wanting to do something better in life; love and respect for their families and wanting to not disappoint them; deciding to live for

God; learning to talk with the person instead of hitting; learning how to walk away; controlling anger; wanting to stay out of jail; having all of their personal needs met; and the positive influence of their parents. One youth affirmed that, "Kids should listen and obey their parents." Another youth said, "My grandma, she's always in the back of my head. When I touch beer I think of her and I put it down again. I also have an uncle that is very involved with church and every time I'm with him he always preach to me about what's good and what's bad."

Parent Perspective on Samoan Culture

Cultural practices (Fa'aSamoa). All but one parent reported some level of participation in the Fa'aSamoa (Samoan customs and traditions). Parents discussed practices that were identical to those reported by the youth. As such, saturated themes identified from the lived experiences of parents as pertaining to Samoan customs and traditions that are practiced in the family included church devotion, reading the scriptures, and supporting the Pastor; fa'alavelave; reciprocity in sharing; respect in speech and behavior towards the elders, parents, and others; speaking the Samoan language; and preparation of food in traditional Samoan ways.

Benefits of Fa'aSamoa. Overall, parents embraced the Fa'aSamoa as a mechanism for teaching and preserving cultural values and family roots. Like the youth, parents expressed that the Fa'aSamoa teaches values of reciprocity and respect in the family and community. Several parents commented, "Young people say that no matter how independent they want to be, they're happy to know that they have a family to turn to for help, the family is the Samoan culture. Youth learn to respect people especially the elders, how one should act, and their relationship with others." Furthermore, families learn and nurture family roots through events such as the fa'alavelave in which the entire family shows their love for each other by showing up to help out both financially and emotionally. Likewise, the Fa'aSamoa helps youth learn good values (such as respect and peace), which help deter them from involvement in unlawful activities. Moreover, the Fa'aSamoa encourages youth to go to church and pray with the family as ways to stay out of trouble.

Challenges of Fa'aSamoa. In general, parents acknowledged the sometimes excessive demands of the Fa'aSamoa as a possible source

of risk for the well-being of the entire family. For instance, parents expressed that the fa'alavelave is often practiced to the point of negatively affecting the care of children and meeting basic needs of their families. With the excessive increase in the demand for giving to fa'alavelave, the Fa'aSamoa has become unaffordable. In fact, several parents pointed out that those with high status in the community tend to take advantage of those with lesser titles; an abuse of power and exploitation. One parent said, "People want to give too much, more than they can afford. They will set aside their family obligations to take care of others." Another said, "Many families become poor because of too much fa'alavelave." Still, another commented, "The matai can take everything that belongs to a family and if they don't obey they will be removed from the communal family."

Additionally, the conflict in living the Samoan and American culture duality was noted by parents. For instance, the demands of the fa'alavelave may cause confusion and perhaps resentment for youth, especially if all of the family's resources are used in such occasions. Another issue of duality is that in the Samoan culture, parents are the disciplinary figures with no court or law enforcement involvement, whereas in the American culture the police are called when parents physically discipline their children. One parent said, "The culture is mixed here in [the state]. When they [youth] get spanked by their parents, they call the police."

Parent Perspective on Family

Family practices. In relation to family practices, the following are saturated themes identified from the lived experiences of parents. Parents, like the youth, defined family as spouse, children, aunties, uncles, cousins, siblings and their children, matai (chief), in-laws, parents, and grandchildren. As did the youth, the parents discussed the Fa'aSamoa as their family practices. First, families are committed to church and church-related activities such as evening prayers. One parent said, "Every Sunday my family gets together with my sisters and brothers and their families to have Sunday Tona'i after church. Some evenings we have Bible study and song practice." Second, the dynamics of family relations are defined by set cultural rules. For example, young people must respect elderly members of the family—no back talking; younger siblings must respect older

ones; and brothers must respect their sisters and their wishes. Finally, constant family gatherings are integral to the lives of these Samoans.

In terms of resolving problems in the family, parents discussed removing privileges as a solution that usually works as well as the family meetings that allow individuals to express their views and allow parents to issue directives, advice, and consequences. A parent's statement reflected a common occurrence, "We have special family evenings when each person shares what they are not happy with and we discuss it. We have family talks, we talk about things to improve our family relations. We talk to the boys, my husband talks to them a lot; I am the one that gives directions and does most of the talking." Another parent said, "Continuously teach, never give up teaching. If they do wrong teach them to do right; my husband spanks them but I tell him that the kids are growing up and they will not respond to spanking but he should talk to them."

In addition, families may seek spiritual guidance through prayer or consulting with a pastor, the police, or a social worker. One parent said, "Whatever the problem we ask our Heavenly father for help. Just sit down and then think about God, what answer he's going to give to me. When we are having difficulties, we go before God. When my wife is angry at me, then I say to her that the devil is taking control over you, bring your spirit back here, then she laughs." Another said, "If I can't resolve it, I call someone else like, social worker, or the police, or my pastor." Furthermore, physical discipline such as punching or hitting with a broom was also identified as a way of resolving problems in the family. A parent stated, "If he doesn't listen it's time for spanking."

Benefits of family. Generally, the family is the primary source of connections and daily support for youth. For example, parents indicated that family members (immediate and extended) support each other when in need, especially in helping care for sick family members. These parents believe that a strong family helps children do well in school. Furthermore, the family reinforces the spiritual belief in God and his greatness through involvement in church and church-related activities. These parents also proudly expressed that their youth are intelligent; athletic; loving and respectful; self motivated; hard working; committed to school; committed to church and youth ministry; and have a great sense of humor.

Challenges of family. Overall, parents expressed family challenges such as feelings of disconnection with their youth and sometimes feelings of inadequacy in meeting their family's needs. For instance, parents discussed the lack of communication in certain situations, particularly when their children are afraid to share their views and secrets because of perceived extreme differences with parents. Additionally, parents talked about their extremely limited financial means and limited time spent with their families because everyone must work in order to support the family. A few parents spoke about the difficulties of step parenthood and single parent head of household without a father figure, which often results in communication breakdown, resentment, and financial destitution. Parents also identified challenges in their youth including using drugs and alcohol and not living up to their potentials.

Parent Perspective on Youth Involvement in Delinquency and the Justice System

Of the 15 parents who reported having youth who participated in delinquent activities, three indicated that their children were never arrested for the delinquent acts. Contrary to the youth's responses, the most recent time of involvement in delinquency reported by parents was three months prior to the interview. The majority of the parents mentioned that they are aware of their youth participating in delinquent activities, with one youth starting at age 10. Youth delinquent activities that were reported by parents included shoplifting; stealing; fighting; yelling at the teacher; taking mother's car without permission and getting into an accident; and experimenting with marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol.

In terms of risk factors that may have influenced delinquency among youth, parents identified the death of a parent as the primary cause of feelings of loss, anger, and deviant behaviors toward family members, friends, and teachers. A few parents felt that the youth's temperament (anger) puts him/her at risk for delinquent activities. Furthermore, parents indicated that their youth tend to be curious and test the parents' limits. Parents also talked about the lack of parental involvement and supervision in the lives of these Samoan youth, because of work and community demands on parents' time, as a risk factor for delinquency.

In terms of protective factors for involvement in delinquency, parents discussed prohibiting idle time for youth; praying a lot; and always advising children and serving as good examples. Parents emphasized involving youth in recreational and church activities as well as assigned house chores in order to avoid idle time. Parents also identified attending church and praying to God for help through difficult times as well as talking with youth as a friend and providing spiritual advice.

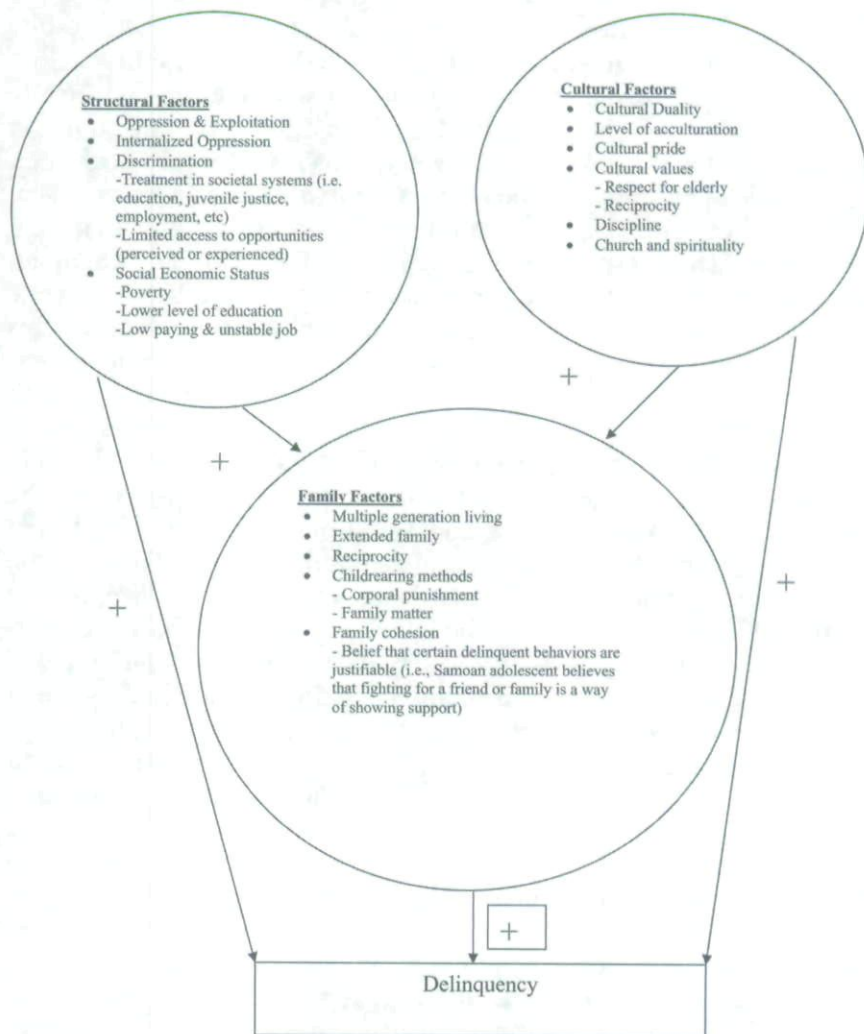
DISCUSSION

Developing a Delinquency Theory for Samoan Youth

Guided by structuration theory, findings of this study are the basis to begin constructing a delinquency theory that relates specifically to Samoan youth. This theory suggests that the influence of Samoan culture as a macro level system and Samoan family as a mezzo level system (Giddens, 1991) are sources of risk for or protection from juvenile delinquency. As posited by structuration theory, the connections between Samoan adolescents and structures such as culture and family must be honored in working with Samoan adolescents and their families. Samoan adolescents, their cultures, and their families are independent systems that provide interdependent benefits as well as challenges that inform empowerment and growth for each system. This study generated three significant set of factors that related to delinquency among Samoan adolescents: family, culture, and structure-based factors. (See Figure 1).

Family-based risk and protective factors. Although family has been identified as a major source of protection from delinquency, some aspects of the family may also serve as sources of risk for delinquency. For instance, living in multiple generation homes and among extended families may be a protection from delinquency among Samoan youth, in that, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and relatives, as a second layer of parents, can reinforce the positive values and teachings of the parents. Consistency and unity in child rearing methods can steer adolescents away from deviancy. On the other hand, a disagreement between parents and grandparents in relation to how a child should be raised may result in confusion and the child seeking guidance elsewhere. A large extended family may also provide

FIGURE 1. Theory for Samoan Youth



additional help and guidance for youth; on the other hand, having family members engaged in deviant behaviors may influence a youth to identify with deviancy as an appropriate behavior. Also, larger families mean more responsibilities for basic needs such as food, shelter, and attention; evidently, some responsibilities will be fulfilled and others ignored, which has implications for behaviors of youth.

Family cohesion serves as a possible protective factor for juvenile delinquency. The value of helping and supporting each other in the family is a major strength of the Samoan culture. In fact, despite heated family arguments and fights, the Samoan family comes together, apologizes, and stays together. Also, cohesion and loyalty to the family were reflected in the tendency of Samoan youth to accept their parents' way of resolving problems, even physical discipline, which they claim teaches responsibility and prevents recidivism.

Lastly, reciprocity and obligations in the Samoan family may be a protective factor from adolescent deviancy. For example, a Samoan child is raised and protected by a community of families; everyone watches out for each other's children and family. As one family helps pay the bills or carry the responsibilities of another family, that family in turn provides guidance and help for their children. With reciprocity, each person receives a benefit.

Culture-based risk and protective factors. First, results of this study confirmed that Samoan family and community systems preserve the Fa'aSamoa (Samoan customs and traditions), which is transferred from one generation to the next and as families migrate from Samoa to the United States through daily living, special cultural events, and cultural ceremonies. However, the Fa'aSamoa seems to have a dichotomous effect on these Samoan adolescents, serving both as a source of risk for and protection from deviant behavior. As a possible source of risk, participating youth shared the struggle to deal with the duality, or cultural conflict, of being contemporary Samoan American youth living with traditional and immigrant Samoan parents. Sometimes this duality can lead to cultural, familial, and societal dissonance and, perhaps, structure-based factors of oppression, internalized oppression, exploitation, and discrimination in various social systems.

Furthermore, the differences in level of acculturation toward either Samoan culture, which is community oriented, or American culture, which is individualistic, are a challenge for Samoan youth and their parents. For example, the financial demands of the Fa'aSamoa can be a source of frustration and dissatisfaction among youth because it can lead to financial difficulties, feelings of inadequacy, and sometimes deviant behaviors such as stealing and shoplifting to meet basic needs or to cope with one's frustrations. Samoan families are no strangers to financial difficulties, as is reflected in this study in which about 70% of families have low socioeconomic status or are living in poverty due to the lack of educational and employment credentials

required for competing in the U.S. market. Also, because of the low socioeconomic status, there is a need for parents to work multiple jobs, which results in the lack of appropriate parental supervision, all of which are risk factors for juvenile delinquency. Although many youth and parents agreed that the Fa'aSamoa is beneficial, many also differ in their views of the extent in which these customs and traditions should be practiced outside of the islands of Samoa.

On the other hand, pride in the Samoan culture and customs can be a source of protection from delinquency among these youth. For example, among youth, the Fa'aSamoa teaches and nurtures respect for the elders and reciprocity even in times of financial and emotional struggles in the family. Youth also referenced the fear of disrespecting, disappointing, or shaming of their parents, grandparents, and family as mediating factors for involvement in delinquency.

Second, physical and verbal discipline as a possible source of risk or protection also seems to have dichotomous effects on Samoan adolescents. As a protective factor, discipline was accepted as a form of teaching that works and an act of love that is deemed necessary for protecting youth from involvement in deviant behaviors. Youth expressed a clear understanding of the reasons for discipline by parents and the positive outcome of such act. The embracing of discipline as a positive act stems from the fact that in the Samoan culture, discipline is always done concurrently with much love and caring. Perhaps, youth are viewing discipline through the eyes of their parents. On the contrary, harsh discipline may have led to involvement in juvenile delinquency as a form of acting out one's frustrations or being rebellious against the family and culture. Using physical discipline as a method of solving problems can also be perceived by adolescents as a means of resolving problems with others. Thus, fighting, assault, or using other physical means to resolve a conflict might be a learned behavior as a result of physical discipline. As documented in the literature, most anti-social behaviors are learned and can be transferred from one generation to the next through beliefs or practice.

Finally, similar to the literature, church and spirituality are possible sources of protection. For example, church was a likely vehicle for the practice of Fa'aSamoa through which youth learn cultural and family values and responsibilities. On the other hand, the rigidity and sometimes overwhelming demands of church may have also led to juvenile rebelliousness and delinquency. Often times, children are involved in

church activities because of a mandate from parents. However, when a child does not take on the value and belief system of a religion or spiritual tenet, that child does not develop a bond with and a commitment to such system. Additionally, when behaviors of parents are inconsistent with the tenets and values of a religion, children see the inconsistency and, therefore, do not commit to the beliefs of that religion.

Limitations

Hagan (1997) suggests that the networking method of sampling is often used with hard to find subjects. The limitation of networking and other nonprobability-type sampling, however, is the potential for the sample to be nonrepresentative of the larger population with the characteristics of the sample being reflective of only certain segments of the population, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to the population studied. However, the results of this study may be replicated in the future to test for consistency or reliability within the larger Samoan community.

Implications for Research

The limitation of this study and the limited existing literature results in many implications for research on Samoan youth. However, one of the necessary follow-ups to this study is a more in depth mixed method qualitative and quantitative research on specific family and cultural based risk and protective factors. For instance, the in depth qualitative method could expand understanding of the impacts of factors such as church, spirituality, collectivity, functioning in dual cultures, physical discipline, finances, gender, and family differences, whereas the quantitative method could enhance the generalizability of these study findings.

Implications for Policy and Practice

As with research, there are many implications for policy and practice with Samoan youth. However, solutions to problems faced by these youth must be comprehensive in nature. For example, it is possible that a youth who experiences difficulties at home may be struggling in school and acting out his or her frustration in the community, consequently becoming involved in the justice system or vice versa. Solutions must address the complexity of these issues.

Furthermore, it is necessary for policy and practice to focus on the need to honor and accept the strong connections between a Samoan adolescent and his or her family and culture. As an example, policies and practices need to address acculturation as a family and community process rather than merely as an individual phenomenon. As such, culturally appropriate prevention and intervention programs must be developed and implemented in partnership with Samoan families in order to combat risk for or actual juvenile delinquency. In implementing these programs, cultural competency and diversity training for individuals and groups working with Samoan adolescents is necessary.

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