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Juvenile Deviant Behavior in an Immigrant Bangladeshi Community: Exploring the Nature and Contributing Factors

Mahfuzul I. Khondaker¹

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, USA

Abstract

This article utilizes the findings from a qualitative field work conducted in an immigrant Bangladeshi community in New York City to understand the nature of juvenile deviant and/or delinquent behavior as well as factors that contribute to this behavior. Although the data indicate that Bangladeshi juveniles are not involved in any serious law violations, community members perceive several risk factors that may lead juveniles in this immigrant community to be involved in delinquent behavior. This article also identifies the protective factors that are grounded in the community's cultural values that may work as a shield against youth becoming delinquent in this community.

Key words: Bangladesh; Juvenile Delinquency; immigrants; risk factors; law violations

Introduction

Studying immigrant delinquency has a long history in the discipline of criminology. In an early effort to understand the causes of juvenile delinquency among the youths of urban areas, Shaw and McKay (1942) looked at the interaction within and between immigrant groups and the dynamic life of the communities. In early twentieth century, the Chicago area was flooded with immigrants from many countries and it “became a settling place for virtually every racial and ethnic group” (Cullen and Agnew, 2003: 95). Shaw and McKay noted that as many of the new immigrants from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds initially settled in poor neighborhoods and started living side by side, there was no uniform moral code in these communities. According to the social disorganization perspective developed by Shaw and McKay, because of the absence of a uniform moral code, control in an immigrant community over its members erodes over time, which in turn decreases social cohesion, and produces delinquency.

Although there have been various attempts to study delinquency among immigrant communities, no real effort has been made to understand the aspects of delinquency among youths in the immigrant Bangladeshi communities. This study makes an attempt to address this gap by focusing on the factors that contribute to deviant behavior and/or

¹ Department of Criminal Justice Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, USA
Email: khondake@kutztown.edu

delinquent activity among youths in an immigrant Bangladeshi community in New York City which is one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in New York City (The New York Times, July 10, 2002). Despite the fact that Bangladeshi juveniles are reportedly not engaged in any serious types of delinquent activities, it is important to understand the factors that may contribute to future deviant/delinquent behavior of youths in this immigrant community.

Literature Review

One early study about delinquency of immigrant youths looked at the rates and types of crimes committed by children of immigrant parents (Batta, McCulloch, and Smith, 1975). This study reviewed the official data of an English city for three years to see “if there were any differences in the proportionate numbers and types of crime committed by Asians, half-Asians* and other juveniles (10-16 years)” (p. 33). The Asian samples included juveniles who were born to immigrant Indian and Pakistani parents. The study concluded that the rates of delinquency among Asian juveniles were much lower than the other two groups: half-Asians and other juveniles. As this study was not intended to identify the contributing factors of delinquency, it did not provide a detailed explanation of why the crime rate was lower among the Asian youths. However, the authors pointed out that because of the very close-knit nature of Asian communities, community members tried to solve any problems within the community instead of reporting them to criminal justice agencies.

A few recent studies have tried to provide theoretical explanations of juvenile delinquency among youths in several different immigrant communities (e.g., Aronowitz, 2002; Chin, 1990; Killias, 1989; Nguyen and Williams, 1989; Wong, 1997). These studies focus on understanding the factors that may have contributed to the delinquency among different groups of immigrant youths. Killias (1989) reviewed the available literature that dealt with the criminality of second-generation immigrants in Western Europe.* He suggested that the perspective of strain theory might be helpful to understand the criminality of second-generation immigrants. Although these second generation immigrant youths are to some extent loyal to the culture of their parents’ home country, they assess their achievements in reference to the living conditions in their country of residence. Killias suggested that these youths aspire to possess prestigious consumer goods and higher social status, but due to their immigrant status, they fail to achieve their aspirations, which leads them to deviant behavior.

Nguyen and Williams (1989) suggested that the possible conflict between the traditional Vietnamese cultural values and typical American values might lead to intergenerational conflict in Vietnamese refugee families. For example, Vietnamese parents strongly upheld their traditional family values, e.g., “parents always know what is best” (p. 506), but Vietnamese adolescents disagreed with their parents about the traditional family values in many instances as they were more adaptive towards opposing American values. Nguyen and Williams wrote, “Clearly, the American emphasis in individuality, independence, self-assertion, and egalitarian relationships challenge, probably threaten these deeply held Vietnamese family values” (p. 506). This difference between Vietnamese

* “Half-Asian” refers to youth with one parent who immigrated from India or Pakistan and one parent who is native born English.

* Most of the studies were written in a language other than English, and so are not reviewed independently here.

parents and their children in following traditional cultural values exacerbated the normal generation gap, which might contribute to the deviant/delinquent behavior among youths.

Wong (1997) tested the intergeneration conflict perspective proposed by Nguyen and Williams (1989), finding support for this perspective in explaining delinquent behavior among Chinese-Canadian youths. According to Wong (p. 118), “gap in cultural values may exacerbate intergeneration conflict, which in turn weakens parental control and increases the likelihood of delinquency.” In another study, Chin (1990) discussed the causes of delinquency among the immigrant Chinese youths that are rooted in the family and/or society. According to Chin, the lack of positive/appropriate parenting might have contributed to juveniles’ law violations. Chin noted that most of the Chinese parents were not able to effectively parent their children mainly for three reasons: 1) they worked for such extended hours that they hardly found any time to supervise their children; 2) they were not proficient in the English language which forced them to feel incapable of punishing and/or controlling the inappropriate behavior of their children; and, 3) the different pattern of child rearing in America, compared to their traditional child rearing process, made them confused about the right practice to follow. Chin also pointed out that overcrowded housing conditions in the immigrant Chinese community contributed to delinquency. He wrote, “A final source of stress for Chinese families is the shortage of adequate housing. As we have mentioned, families are often crowded in one- or two-bedroom apartments that have no living rooms or kitchens. Congestion within the household may drive adolescents to the streets” (p. 96-97).

Contrary to the idea of intergeneration conflict perspective proposed by Nguyen and Williams (1989) and the findings of Wong (1997) discussed above, Aronowitz (2002) found that those youths who were more connected with their families and maintained a strong Turkish orientation committed higher rates of delinquency than those who experienced conflict with the family in regards to this orientation. Those who experienced family conflict reported to have more German friends than the youths who were more connected with their families. According to Aronowitz (2002: 257), “youths coming from poorly integrated families are best shielded from delinquency through contact with German friends.” The youths who reported having less family conflict or who were more connected with their family felt a responsibility to defend their traditional family customs when they were challenged by someone, and in many cases they responded to a potential challenge through delinquent acts.

Research Variables

The current study looks at deviant behavior from a broad perspective; it addresses deviant behavior as a social phenomenon. According to this perspective, deviant behavior is that which is “regarded as unacceptable, inappropriate, or morally wrong in the opinion of the members of a group” (Tittle and Paternoster, 2000: 12). In order to avoid any conceptual ambiguity, it is helpful to define “deviant behavior,” as used in this article. In addition to formal lawbreaking such as fighting, stealing, vandalizing, robbing, using drugs and other offenses, deviant behavior, in this study, also means any kind of behavior which is viewed as inappropriate or unacceptable by members of the community. Thus, deviance may range from, failure to show appropriate respect for elders, verbally abusing someone, roaming the streets and teasing people to behaviors for which the juveniles can be punished by the juvenile and/or criminal justice system.

In explaining the nature of deviant behavior among youths of a Bangladeshi community and the factors that contribute to their deviant behavior, the initial focus is on the conflict that exists between traditional culture and values as practiced by the members of the immigrant community and mainstream America. As noted previously, research regarding the delinquency of immigrant youths suggests that the stress due to cultural conflict between the traditional ethnic community and mainstream culture of the country of residence for the community may cause delinquency among the juveniles of the immigrant ethnic group. The study also focuses on the intergenerational conflict between the immigrant parents and their children. As already mentioned, relevant research suggests that intergenerational conflict between parents and adolescent children may influence youth delinquency in immigrant ethnic communities. Intergenerational conflict arises when the parents expect their children to adhere to the traditional values of their country of origin, but their children are exposed to and inclined to adhere to the mainstream culture where they are living at present.

Concept Maps and Hypotheses

Considering the explanation of relevant literature the theoretical framework, three routes or “concept maps” (Maxwell, 1996) can be proposed that may help to explain the source of juvenile delinquency in the immigrant Bangladeshi community. According to Maxwell, a concept map “is a visual display of your current working theory—a picture of what you think is going on with the phenomenon you are studying” (p. 37). Three graphic formats of the conceptual progression to delinquent acts or concept maps are presented here, as these will be useful for providing clarity (Locke et al., 2000).

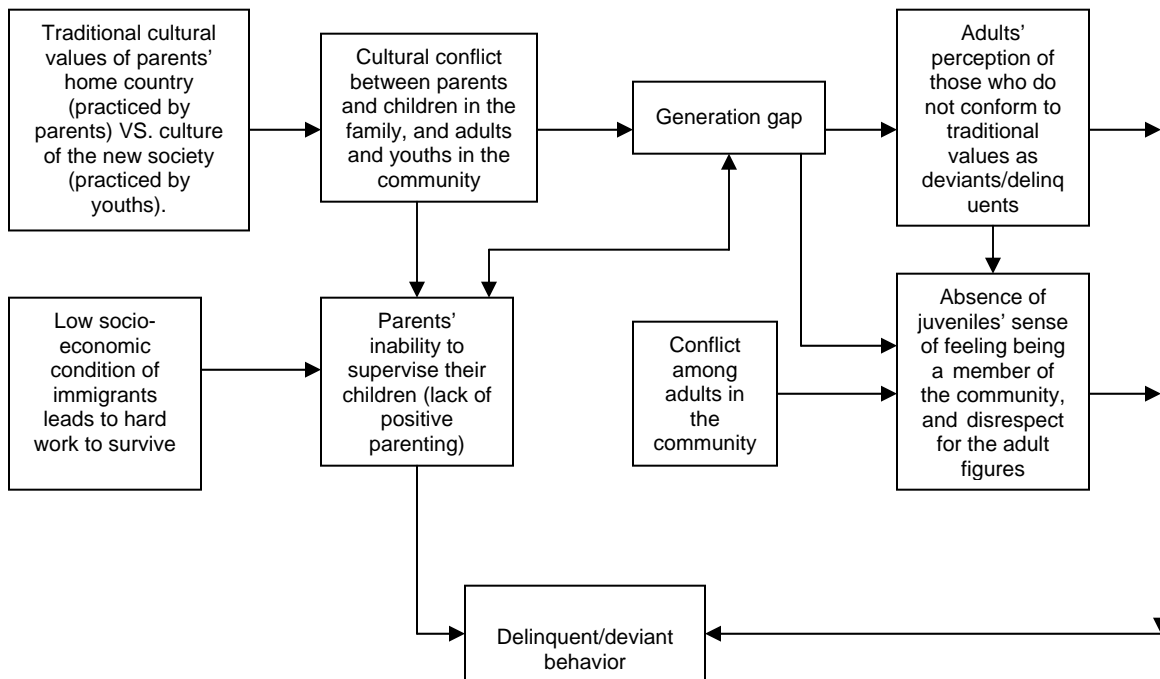


Figure 1: Concept map 1

Route 1

This theoretical progression of delinquency/deviance may be useful in explaining the antisocial behavior of a juvenile who was either born in the United States or migrated when the juvenile was very young. The delinquent/deviant behaviors of a juvenile in this category can range from disobeying the parents or showing disrespect to the adults in the community to serious violent offenses. A juvenile in this category may be a non-criminal youth who just engaged in socially unacceptable behavior, or a status offender, or a serious delinquent. This path of delinquency/ deviancy could best be explained within the premise of cultural conflict perspective.

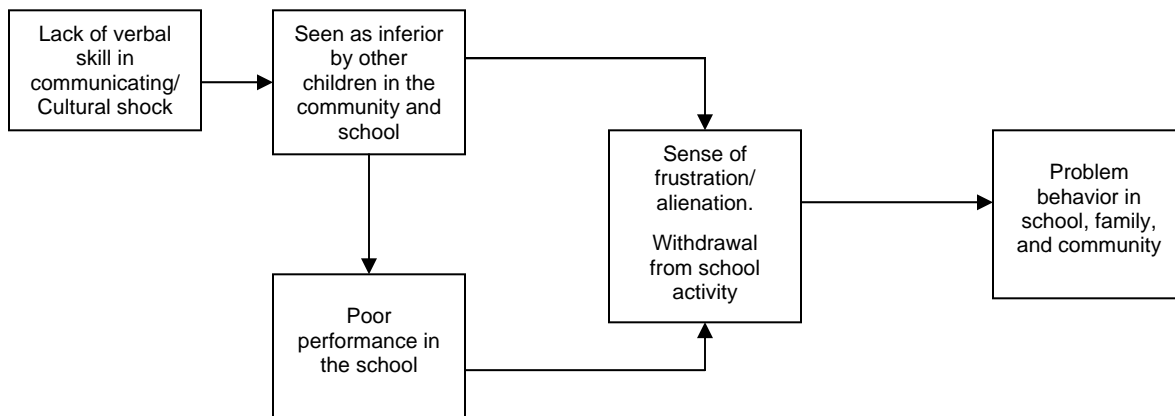


Figure 2: Concept map 2

Route 2

This anticipated route of delinquency/deviancy may be used in understanding antisocial behavior of a juvenile who immigrated in the United States at an older age. The immigrant youth already went to school in Bangladesh, and typically has many friends back home in Bangladesh. The juvenile is already integrated with the Bangladeshi culture. English is her/his second language and most probably never spoke English before coming in the United States. After emigrating to the new society, the juvenile sees many differences in culture and customs between the two countries and feels a cultural shock. As the juvenile is not adept in the English language, s/he feels shy trying to communicate with other youths in the neighborhood. The other Bangladeshi youths in the community see the newcomer as inferior to them since they already have internalized the language and culture of this country. The newcomer faces problems in school too because of poor communication skills. All of these factors may lead the juvenile to become frustrated and to withdraw from school activities. This ultimately leads the juvenile to act out in the school, in the family, and in the community. Chin (1990) suggested that this process may have contributed to the delinquent behavior of juveniles of Chinese immigrant community that he studied.

The problem behavior for a juvenile in this category may include, but is not limited to, school cutting, disobeying parents, minor fighting with siblings in the family and other children in the community. These behaviors constitute non-serious status

offenses. The deviant/delinquent behavior for a juvenile in this category usually does not last for a long period of time. Once the juvenile picks up the proper skills and understands the new system, the juvenile starts to do better in the school. As a juvenile in this category has already internalized the Bangladeshi culture, s/he is highly devoted to the parents and family. The juvenile has strong bonds with parents and becomes a productive member of the community.

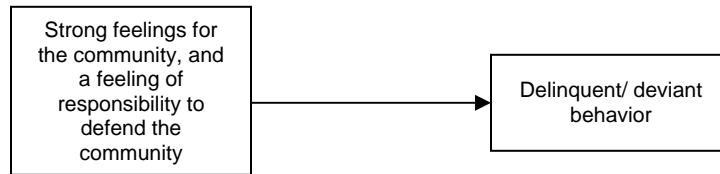


Figure 3: Concept map 3

Route 3

This route of delinquency may be used in explaining the antisocial behavior of juveniles, who feel strongly for the traditional community and feel a responsibility to defend the community when problems arise with outsiders, especially with other immigrant communities. Aronowitz (2002) noted that many of the Turkish immigrant youths in Germany violated the law to defend the traditional values when these were challenged by outsiders. This path of delinquency/deviancy is straightforward. As members of a relatively new immigrant community, these juveniles see other ethnic communities in New York City as their rivals. Many immigrant communities live side by side in different enclaves and tensions between two communities are not uncommon. Juveniles who fall under this category engage in trouble as they come forward to defend the honor of their community or to prove their community as a strong one. Some of these youths may not have well developed respect for the adult community members of their community, but still they fight for their community.

Hypotheses

According to Maxwell (1996, p. 53), “the distinctive characteristic of hypotheses in qualitative research is that they are generally formulated after the researcher has begun the study, that is they are grounded in the data and are developed and tested in interaction with it.” Based on the concept maps discussed above, the following hypotheses guided this study.

1. Juveniles in the Bangladeshi community become delinquents because of:
 - a. Generation gap, and parents/adults’ inability to supervise them properly, and/or
 - b. Frustration generated from being in a new society and their inability to communicate properly.
2. A strong, excessive sense of Bangladeshi identity contributes to law violation for some youths. According to the proposition of this hypothesis, the juvenile would mainly have problems with people from other ethnicities who might want to put

down the image of the Bangladeshi community, and will act delinquent because of his sense of responsibility to defend the image of the community.

Techniques of Data Collection

This paper develops as an ethnographic case study using multiple methods of research (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). As suggested in the literature of qualitative research, different techniques were used for collecting information to identify and explain the contributing factors of juvenile delinquent/deviant behaviors and the nature of these behaviors (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003). Essentially, an ethnographic field study was conducted as already mentioned. Formal interviews as well as informal conversations, and observations were used to gather data. Data were also gathered by reviewing one of the local Bangladeshi newspapers, in addition to The New York Times. Data were collected through a participant observation over a four-month period in the Bangladeshi community in New York City. During this period, numerous informal conversations were conducted with the members of the community. The informal conversations took place in a neutral and natural setting where the participants felt comfortable. The conversations often took on the format of group discussions. Bangladeshi restaurants were especially conducive to generating conversation among and with groups; especially in the evenings and weekends. Many of these gatherings were very beneficial regarding the topic of the research study and gathering information. Some conversations were conducted with people in social settings and while attending cultural gatherings.

Formal interviews were used to collect data for this study. Questions were developed and organized to use as an interview guide while in the field. These questions were intended to see how immigrant Bangladeshi parents and adults perceive deviant behavior among the immigrant Bangladeshi youths and what contributes to this behavior. Once these questions were organized, they were e-mailed to some adult members of the immigrant Bangladeshi communities including parents. These individuals live in different regions of the USA including New York City. Telephone conversations were conducted with several parents regarding the issues of the research. The responses of these individuals assisted in the reorganization of the interview guide; and also provided important guidelines on how to approach parents and adults without confusing them about the intention of the study.

Altogether, 34 people were interviewed. Among these 34 interviewees, 12 were youths, 16 were parents/community members, 4 were school teachers, and 2 were guidance counselors in local, predominantly Bangladeshi schools. Interviewees were selected purposefully; the goal was to select those who would be able to provide insightful information appropriate to research phenomenon (Cresswell, 1998; Locke, et al., 2000). Although an attempt was made to record the interviews, most of the respondents were unwilling to speak while being taped. These conversations were recorded in writing including as much detail as possible. At the end of each interview, the transcript was read to the respondent to ascertain accuracy. Transcriptions of recorded interviews were also read to the respective respondents. All interviews except the three with children were conducted in Bengali language, as it is the primary language in the immigrant community. The participants were made to feel more at ease due to the interviewer conducting the interviews in Bengali.

“Networking” was another aspect of the research study that proved to be extremely helpful. Individuals were requested to provide names and phone numbers of their friends and relatives living in the Bangladeshi immigrant communities in New York City. It was requested that the individuals recommend only those who were thought to be cooperative in providing information and making introductions to other community members. A good number of respondents and/or contacts were made using this approach. While in the field these initial contacts introduced the researcher to other potential respondents and data were generated through this snowball process.

Newspaper reports were heavily relied on as well, particularly the local newspaper, *Thikana*. This is a Bengali newspaper published in New York City by Bangladeshi journalists. The newspaper is widely read among the members of the Bangladeshi community. Prior issues of *Thikana* from the past two years were reviewed for relevant news articles. Several articles were collected and then presented to the participants during interview process. The participants were requested to make comments on the news articles set forth. The participants were asked to voice their views regarding a particular article or a similar and/or related issue. Additionally, the *New York Times* was reviewed to find news articles that referred to the immigrant Bangladeshi people in New York City. The newspaper has published a few articles which were also discussed with the participants.

Data Analysis

Formal interviews were recorded in writing as were the informal conversations. Observation and findings from newspaper analysis were also noted. Transcripts of the interviews were read back to the respondents to ascertain correct interpretation of their comments. The interviews were reviewed at length, noting any similarities of common themes and issues. Major themes relating to the study were noted as well.

During interviews and informal conversations, different issues and/or concerns were raised; a second reader crosschecked the validity of these specific issues and/or concerns. The process assisted in acquiring details on particular issues. A second person somewhat trained in qualitative studies was always present during the informal conversations. Sometimes, this second person asked probing questions of the respondents, while taking detailed notes. Notes frequently were checked and crosschecked to establish accurate recording and interpretation of data.

Discussion

Data from this study lend support for the hypothesis which states: “juveniles in Bangladeshi community become delinquents because of (a) generation gap, and parents/adults’ inability to supervise them properly, and/or (b) frustration generated from being in a new society and their inability to communicate properly.” The data suggest that the first proposition is accurate for many Bangladeshi families. The second proposition applies generally too, but applies most directly to children who immigrate in their teens. No support was found for the hypothesis which states “a strong, excessive sense of Bangladeshi identity contributes to law violation for some youths.”

While discussing the factors that could contribute to deviant or delinquent behavior, community members identified several issues and vocally expressed their concerns about multiple subjects. From this research, three interrelated sets of issues can be identified which are central to understanding deviance among Bangladeshi immigrant

youth and also support the idea of concept map 1 which proposes that a youth who either born in the United States or came here with parents at an early age may become deviant because of the cultural conflict and generation gap with the parents and adults in the community. The three sets of factors can be loosely grouped under the headings: 1) cultural conflict, 2) ineffective parental supervision, and 3) economic factors. It is important to note, at the outset of this discussion, that these factors are closely intertwined and that separating them, even in these broad categories, is somewhat artificial.

Cultural Conflict

Community members believe that there is a cultural gap between parents or adults and the youths, and this gap can be considered a contributing factor to deviant or delinquent behavior in youths. This finding is similar to those reported by Nguyen and Williams (1989), where the Vietnamese youths reportedly displayed deviant/delinquent behavior in that they were being into the American culture and away from the traditional Vietnamese cultural values practiced and deemed important by their parents.

In the immigrant Bangladeshi community adults are inclined to practice their traditional Bangladeshi cultural norms whereas many children are not interested in the traditional values as they are exposed to the different aspects of American culture. Many community members expressed fears about the youth becoming very much Americanized. Community members see a conflict between Bangladeshi culture and American culture. Traditional/older Bangladeshi people are offended by many American customs, such as dating. On the other hand, what is an accepted practice in Bangladeshi culture is sometimes treated as a violation of law in the United States. For example, in Bangladeshi culture and social norms, slapping or hitting ones' own children is perfectly acceptable. Traditional Bangladeshi beliefs hold that to have children behave properly they should be physically punished as a way to control them. In Bangladesh, nobody thinks this practice is wrong. Traditionally, not only parents, but also other adult family members and school teachers are permitted and expected to use corporal punishment to "keep children in line". Slapping or otherwise hitting children is an accepted way of punishment in the Bangladeshi community, but under the American legal system striking even ones' own children can be considered child abuse and is a punishable offense. Many Bangladeshi parents are afraid that this aspect of law helps their children to be deviant, as they do not obey their parents.

Cultural conflict, as discussed above and the generation gap between parents and children may contribute to perceived deviant behavior among those juveniles who come to the United States as teenagers. As newcomers, these juveniles try to follow and imitate their American counterparts, but their parents are not ready to give them that freedom. Due to this, there arises conflict between the parents and the newly arrived teenagers. For example, two respondents, who are mother and daughter, reported that when the teenage daughter arrived in this country and started schooling, she wanted to wear dresses like other female students; however, her mother did not permit the wearing of American style dresses because they were too tight and did not conform to the traditional Bangladeshi dress code. In Bangladesh, the girls usually wear loose-fitted dresses, which were out of place in American schools. For the daughter, when she went to school wearing traditional Bangladeshi dresses, many of her schoolmates belittled her by ridiculing her attire. To be accepted the daughter needed to dress American, but the mother was not convinced. The tension between mother and daughter continued over this issue for some time. In the end,

the mother reluctantly gave in on the dress issue when she realized that her daughter was getting “out of control.” According to the mother, “I compromised here, and I was able to make her do other things that I wanted.”

According to the daughter, “I follow the rules of my mom because I need her for protection and money, but I don’t like her discipline. I follow her discipline when I am at home or with her. But when she is not around, or when I am with my friends alone, I don’t care about her rules. I do a lot of things that she would not permit me to do if she saw me doing them.” This example illustrates the connection between cultural conflict and intergeneration conflict between parents and children as discussed in the literature. As mentioned earlier, according to Nguyen and Williams (1989) and Wong (1997), intergeneration conflict due to the differences of attitudes about practicing the traditional cultural values and norms between parents and children may have contributed to delinquent behavior among their juvenile samples.

Ineffective Parental Supervision/Control

One factor that was a continual topic of discussion was the parents’ inability to supervise their children properly. Clearly, parental supervision is closely tied to the culture conflict. Parents may be unable to provide proper supervision because of their busyness with overtime work, and their inability to speak English and failure to understand the American system. Moreover, due to the conflicting nature of disciplining children in the United States and Bangladesh, parents may not effectively use the parenting strategy to guide their children

As many immigrant Bangladeshi parents work hard and for long hours, they do not have enough time to devote to their children which eventually contributes to absence of proper supervision. As a result, children of immigrant Bangladeshi parents are at risk of becoming deviant. A conversation with some youths, who are identified by the community as deviant and those who self-reported having contact with the juvenile justice system, revealed clear evidence that they were not guided properly by their parents or adults in the family, as their parents were either busy with their work or they did not have family members to act in their absence.

Not only does the need for parents to work long hours impact their parental responsibilities, but their lack of knowledge about the American system also contributes to their inability to properly supervise their children. As many parents are not comfortable speaking English, they refrain from interacting with Americans, particularly in different social institutions such as schools. Some youths use deception to take advantage of their parents’ inability to speak English and their lack of knowledge about the American system. For example, in Bangladesh, getting a 60% grade on a test is an indication of a very good student. A grade of 60 percent or above is the highest scale in the grading level in Bangladesh, but in the United States it often indicates a failing grade. By not understanding the U. S. grading system, when a child scores 70 percent on a test and shows it to his or her parents, the parents become happy, thinking that their child received a grade above 60 percent and is excelling at school. They are proud of the child. Sometimes, the child takes advantage of this by asking for rewards, but the child knows the true nature of his/her performance and progress.

The practice of parenting also is different in the United States compared to Bangladesh and sometimes the practices are contradictory. For example, as mentioned earlier, in Bangladesh it is quite normal for a parent to slap or hit their children to

discipline them. Most parents view this practice a very effective way to control their children. But in the United States, the Bangladeshi parents are afraid to even yell at their children because the children threaten to call 911 or the police. Many parents do not know how to reach a balance between these two systems. Because of the confusion arising from the lack of knowledge about the system, many parents are unable to properly discipline and guide their children, which lead some juveniles to act deviant.

Some Bangladeshi parents are very strict in terms of disciplining their children, which sometimes conflicts with American practices, and also may contribute to delinquent or deviant behavior among the Bangladeshi youths. Many Bangladeshi parents want their children to follow the rules as they, being parents, establish for them. For example, some parents do not allow their children to watch TV and they are very reluctant to accept any aspect of American culture. They want to see their children succeed in American institutions and enjoy the good qualities of life in the United States, but they sometimes punish their children (particularly girls) for adopting American behaviors. For instance, merely wearing an American style dress may cause the parent to discipline the child. These parents are harsh with their children, which again contradicts the notion of positive parenting. This type of strictness sometimes causes problems and appears as a risk factor for juveniles to act deviant in the Bangladeshi community.

When parents are very strict, children sometimes revolt because they see the behavior of their parents as abusive. As an example, a very religious mother was cooking and doing housework. Being a very conservative woman, even by Bangladeshi standards, she wears a "*burkha*" (veil) whenever she goes in front of other males outside of her family. She also has some very strict rules for her teenage daughter. On this particular night she asked her daughter for some help, but her daughter was watching television as she often does when she gets a chance. Her mother called the daughter several times and finally, the mother came into the living room and pulled her daughter by the hand. The daughter did not like that and she was defiant. The next day, when the girl went to school, she told one of her friends what happened. She also told her friend about her mother's strict rules. Her friend advised her to report the incident to the teacher, the teacher reported it to the social work agency, and the family got into trouble. Community members who were aware of the incident viewed the girl as a noncompliant and deviant as she did not follow her mother's order. However, at the same time, they also blamed the mother for being overly harsh.

Marital discord is another factor that also contributes to poor parental supervision. Incidents of conflict between parents, and the number of single parent families are increasing in the immigrant Bangladeshi community. Research shows that family problems and marital discord among parents are considered strong factor in predicting delinquency (West and Farrington, 1973; Richards et al., 1979; Minty, 1988; Kruttschmitt et al., 1986; Jaffe et al., 1986; Mann et al., 1990; Holden and Ritchie, 1991). Minty (1988: 172) suggested that marital conflict was "strongly associated with juvenile delinquency and conduct disorder." Lorion, Tolan, and Wahler (1987) concluded that the families of delinquent youths have greater frequency of parental disagreements between the parents. Children who witness conflict and violence between parents are at greater risk of becoming delinquents. Bangladeshi immigrants also perceive marital discord as a risk factor for the youths to act deviant.

Marital discord appears much more common among Bangladeshi immigrants than is the case in Bangladesh. There are many reasons that fights occur between parents.

According to the community leaders, one of the main reasons is that more and more women are getting involved in the job market outside of their home. Because of this they become more conscious of their position and desire a measure of independence. In Bangladesh, most women lead a submissive life. Traditionally, they do not talk back to their husbands and the husbands have almost absolute control over the lives of their spouses. While in Bangladesh most women accepted the control of their husbands, but when they came to America and begin working, earning money and contributing equally to the family, they want their voice to be heard in family matters. Many husbands are reluctant to accept their spouse as an equal and to relinquish paternalistic family control, which often causes marital discord and sometimes concludes in divorce.

Marital discord stems from another source too. As some families share their apartments with another family or a single man, as it is hard to afford the rent because of their poor economic conditions, sometimes distrust grows between couples. On several occasions, the Bangladeshi newspaper reported that a marriage had failed because one member perceived that their partner was emotionally involved with the other person who shared their apartment.

Because of the disagreement between parents, some children do not get the proper attention. Sometimes the children witness these abuses, which contribute to their own deviant behavior. One teenage girl and her siblings were reported abusing drugs and alcohol and showing other types of deviant behavior. Many community members pointed out that parental conflict may have contributed to her siblings and her deviant behavior. According to many community members who know her family and also to the guidance counselor and teacher at the school, her parents do not get along. They have fights in the home and although they are not divorced yet, they often live separately. The father does not stay with the family regularly and when he does return home, he fights with the mother. Some neighbors reported that it is very common to hear the sound of verbal argument between her parents. Neighbors also mentioned that they believe the husband physically abuses his wife and that the children witness these actions.

The idea that lack of proper and positive parental supervision may have contributed to the deviant behavior of Bangladeshi youths is consistent with the theory and other research findings. Paterson and Stouthamer-Loeber (1984) found that parents' inability to supervise their children causes delinquency. Wells and Rankin (1988) and Rankin and Wells (1990) also found that parental controls were significantly related to delinquency. They found that proper parental control reduces the risk of delinquency. Hirschi (1969) pointed out that proper and effective parental supervision help children to be attached to their parents and juveniles who were more closely attached to their parents were less likely to commit delinquent acts than were those who were less closely attached. Hirschi's theory about attachment to parents has been supported by several studies (Agnew, 1985; Canter, 1982; Fagan, Piper, and Moore, 1986; Paterson, 1980; Rankin and Wells, 1990).

Conflict also prevails among the adult members in the immigrant Bangladeshi community in New York City, and some community members believe that these conflicts encourage some youths to act deviant. As one community member pointed out "there are some parents who don't let their children mix with the children of those parents who they don't like. For example, if I have problem with someone, I will be reluctant to let my children play with their children." Sometimes, these parents force their children to end friendships with the children of their rivals. In this process, some children are forced to

disrespect those adults who have animosities against their parents. Parental conflicts also may sometimes lead to conflict and fight among the young children. There is another dimension of deviant behavior that arises from the conflict among adult members. When children are told to end the relationship with their friends because of the problem among adults, some youths defy their parents' command. This leads to conflict between parent and children, which is manifested through the deviant behavior of youths.

Economic Factor

Most of the Bangladeshi families live in poor neighborhoods and in some instances there are six or seven people living in a one or two-bedroom apartment. Some families also share apartments with another family. This type of living arrangement appeared to be a risk factor for the deviant/delinquent behavior and my respondents were concerned about this. An example of this family arrangement illustrates a potential role in delinquency. The family shares a two-bedroom apartment with another family; the other family has no children. The mother (respondent) said that she wants to move to another city when her children grow up as this is not a good place to raise children. According to her, there is no good place for her children to play. When the children go outside, they are subjected to drunks and people in the street smoking cigarettes. She said one day she saw her elder son pick up a cigarette butt and pretend to smoke it. She also does not like the family that shares the apartment with them. She does not allow her children to talk to the family. The author asked one of her sons about the family and he said they are not good people. The author asked his respondent whether she thought her actions caused animosity between her sons and other people. She said that it is her duty to tell her children who is good and who is bad and to protect them from bad people. Chin (1990) noted that overcrowded housing conditions in the immigrant Chinese community may drive adolescents to the street and may have contributed to the delinquent behavior among the immigrant Chinese youths.

Because many Bangladeshi families live in poor socio-economic areas, their children do not attend good schools. When they go to their schools, they mostly see children from other ethnic minority groups who also are poor and come from communities or families where there are many problems. Some of the juveniles from other ethnic minorities have had contact with the criminal justice system and many of them show problematic behavior. When Bangladeshi students interact with these juveniles in the school settings, they become exposed to this problematic behavior and sometimes they act the same. These contributing factors of deviant and delinquent behavior discussed above may follow the logic of social disorganization theory. According to the perspective of Shaw and McKay (1942), poor socio-economic conditions in a community, combined with overcrowded living conditions and cultural/ethnic heterogeneity in the community, contribute to delinquent behavior. Shaw and McKay noted that most of the youths who are engaged in delinquency are from this type of community. According to them, these conditions in a community breakdown the core social institutions such as the family, and the society loses its control over its members, which eventually leads to delinquent or criminal behavior.

There is also a fair amount of corroboration for concept map 2 which describes: a youth who came to the United States at a relatively older age may initially become deviant because of the cultural shock that stems from lack of skill of coping in an entirely new environment.

As one schoolteacher states

“They are [youths who come at a later age] like scared animals out of the cage. The culture or norm is totally different. They do not speak English and rarely understand English. They go to school when they arrive here, but they face a huge problem in the school as they are not apt in communicating with teachers and their classmates because of their lack of skill in understanding the English language. They also experience a big cultural shock. They see boys and girls hugging each other, which was beyond their imagination when they were in Bangladesh. In the school, they are totally free, and enjoy that complete freedom. But when they go home, they encounter a totally different and opposite situation. Some youths fail to make a balance between these two opposite situations and they begin to show the symptoms of psychological problems. We had to refer many Bangladeshi students to psychiatrists because of their behavior problem....Some of them fall in love.”

Many other respondents also expressed similar concerns. This finding is similar to the finding of Chin (1990), where he noted that those Chinese youths who arrived in the United States in their teenage years faced difficulty in coping with new situation because of their lack of proficiency in English language. Due to this difficulty in the new country and new environment, many of them acted deviant and delinquent.

There are some other youths in this group who also came to the United States as teenagers but are not here with their families. They came here alone, their families managed to send them here hoping that they would be able to send money home once they reached their “Dreamland”. Initially, they go to school and try to cope with the new environment without anyone’s help. They too experience the same type of situations like those youths mentioned above. According to the community members and schoolteachers, after a while these youths become familiar with the environment and try to cope with it. Once they are established in this country, they are able to give up the negative behavior caused by the initial stress, and to follow the traditional rules and norms. As they already internalized the Bangladeshi cultural values, they do not have much of a problem conforming to the norms and expectations of society.

As in the case of hypothesis 2, data do not support the idea presented in concept map 3 that states: a Bangladeshi youth may act delinquent if he suffers from an excessive sense of Bangladeshi identity and feels strongly that he needs to uphold the image of the community when it is challenged.

Conclusion

This study was designed to add to the body of literature that has examined deviance and delinquency in immigrant communities. As already discussed, despite the early emergence of studies of immigrants (see e.g. Shaw and McKay, 1942) there is relatively little contemporary literature that explains the nature and the contributing factors of deviant/delinquent behavior among youths in immigrant communities.

This study suggests the importance of generational and cultural conflict as contributing to perceptions of deviance among the youth of this immigrant group. Like other studies of this kind, the study examines adaptation to immigration among a particular group. Each immigrant community possesses different cultural and traditional values from the mainstream society, in this case, American society. Thus, studying these communities may

help us to understand how a different cultural perspective sees deviant and delinquent behavior and how it differs from the perspective of the mainstream culture.

As found in this study, Bangladeshi immigrants see many behaviors as deviant which are not viewed in the same way in the mainstream American culture. For example, dating is viewed as extremely deviant for the teenagers in the Bangladeshi community, but it is a normal behavior in American society. In this sense, the results of this project mirror those of Nguyen and Williams (1989), Wong (1997), and Chin (1990).

This study tries to understand the deviant behavior of youths of an immigrant community within the framework of current criminological theories. While this research was not designed to test various theories, the data from this research support most strongly the perspectives of cultural and generation gaps in explaining the deviant or delinquent behavior of youths in an immigrant community. The data also suggest that control theories have a good deal to contribute to understanding deviant behavior of immigrant Bangladeshi youths as lack of parental supervision appears to be a central factor leading to deviant behavior.

Finally, this study may prompt similar studies of Bangladeshi communities in other countries. England, for example, has a large Bangladeshi community, and comparison of the dynamics of youthful deviance and delinquency may be productive. This research may also help Bangladeshi scholars to look at the delinquency problem in Bangladesh itself. Currently, there exists a lack of study on this issue. The findings of this research may motivate the Bangladeshi native scholars to undertake research pertaining both to juvenile delinquency and other criminal behavior and to criminal justice in Bangladesh.

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