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Risks of Criminal Victimization in Contemporary Urban China: An Application of Lifestyle/Routine Activities Theory

Steven F. Messner, Zhou Lu, Lening Zhang and Jianhong Liu

This study examines the influence of lifestyles/routine activities on victimization in urban China. Using survey data recently collected in the city of Tianjin, we address three research questions that are informed by Western lifestyle/routine activities theories: (1) How do lifestyles/routine activities differ across demographic groups in Tianjin? (2) To what extent and in what ways are lifestyles/routine activities related to the risks of personal victimization? (3) To what extent and in what ways does the patterning of victimization risk across demographic groups conform to that observed in the West? The results replicate some findings that have been reported for the US and other Western nations but reveal divergent patterns as well. We conclude that the lifestyle/routine activities perspectives are applicable to urban China at a general level, at least for property offenses, but that these perspectives need to be applied flexibly to reflect distinctive features of the sociocultural context.

Keywords China; criminal victimization; lifestyle; routine activities; urban

Steven F. Messner is Distinguished Teaching Professor of Sociology, University at Albany, SUNY. His research focuses on social organization and crime, the spatial patterning of crime, and crime and social control in China. He is a Fellow and Vice President-Elect of the American Society of Criminology. Zhou Lu (deceased) was Director of the Institute of Law and Crime Research Center at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences, China. He conducted a series of surveys of inmates in Tianjin prisons and published several books on crime and social control in China. Lening Zhang is Associate Professor of Sociology/Criminal Justice in the Department of Behavioral Sciences, Saint Francis University. His research concentrates on comparative studies of crime and social control in China and the United States. Currently, he is engaged in the comparative study of criminal victimization using data collected from a large-scale survey in China. Jianhong Liu is Professor of Sociology at Rhode Island College. His major research interests include international and comparative studies of crime and justice. He is currently conducting studies of crime and justice in contemporary China. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fourteenth World Congress of Criminology, Philadelphia, PA, August 7-11, 2005. This material is based on research supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0351014. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation. Correspondence to: Steven F. Messner, University at Albany, SUNY, Albany, NY 12222, USA. E-mail: s.messner@albany.edu.

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Introduction

Over the course of the past two decades, China has experienced profound social changes. The government has retreated from a command economy and introduced selective market reforms that have been remarkably successful in promoting economic growth. During the 1990-2005 period, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) climbed by an average of over 9.5 percent annually (*China Statistical Yearbooks* 1990-2005). Social scientists both inside and outside of China have been quite interested in the consequences of such dramatic social changes for crime (Anderson & Gil, 1998; Bakken, 2000, 2005; Dai, 1995; Liu, Zhang, & Messner, 2001; Rojek, 1996). The official statistics indicate a rather striking increase in serious crimes, particularly for property offenses, over recent years (*China Law Yearbook*, various years; Liu & Messner, 2001). However, as Bakken (2005) observes, while increases in crime in China appear to be genuine, levels of crime remain rather low when considered in an international context.

Although researchers have been able to draw upon a variety of data sources to make inferences about overall trends in crime, very little is known about the social patterning of criminal victimization in China. The Chinese government does not conduct national victimization surveys comparable to those in some Western nations (Schneider, 2001, p. 451), and the only rigorous survey implemented at the local level in China is the Beijing survey, which was administered as one of the "city surveys" of the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) (Zhu, Wang, Lu, Guo, & Zhou, 1995). While this research demonstrates the feasibility of using the general survey methodology in the Chinese context to study victimization and provides illuminating descriptive data, its utility is limited in two important respects. It was conducted at a relatively early stage of the economic reforms (May 1994), and the questionnaire contains very few items reflecting personal lifestyles and behavioral routines that could explain differential risks of victimization.

The purpose of this paper is to explore more fully the social patterning of the risk of criminal victimization in contemporary urban China than has been possible previously. Using data from a survey recently conducted in the city of Tianjin, we examine the relationships between theoretically derived indicators of the respondents' lifestyles/routine activities and demographic characteristics, and between these lifestyles/routine activities and the likelihood of property and violent victimization. More generally, we assess the applicability of the most influential theoretical perspectives on victimization developed in the West to the previously unexplored setting of contemporary urban China.

Theory and Previous Research

Over the course of the last several decades, the field of victimology has advanced substantially. An important methodological development has been the implementation of victimization surveys. Initially introduced in the US in the

1960s, these surveys have been conducted with both local and national samples for countries throughout the developed and developing world. The results of these surveys have yielded a wealth of information about levels and patterns of criminal victimization. One consistent finding affirms an empirical regularity that has long been suspected by criminologists: levels of crime reported in surveys invariably exceed those represented in the official statistics. Research also demonstrates that risks of victimization vary across the major demographic categories of age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and marital status. Although the specific demographic correlates of risk differ somewhat in different nations and for different offenses (del Frate, Zvekic, & van Dijk, 1993; Hatalak, del Frate, & Zvekic, 1998; Laub, 1990; Lauritsen, 2001; van Kesteren, Mayhew, & Nieuwbeerta, 2001; van Wilsem, de Graaf, & Wittebrod, 2002; Wittebrood & Nieuwbeerta, 2000; Zvekic & del Frate, 1995), the evidence supports the general claim that the likelihood of criminal victimization is socially patterned in all contemporary nations.

In addition to the methodological innovation of victimization surveys, a major theoretical development in victimology has been the development of the lifestyle-exposure and routine activities perspectives (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo, 1978). According to the well-known formulation by Cohen and Felson, criminal victimization is conceptualized as a function of the likelihood that the three essential requisites for a direct-contact predatory crime converge in space and time—a motivated offender, a suitable victim, and the absence of capable guardians. Differentials in victimization across social categories, as well as changes in levels of crime over time, can thus be understood in terms of the normal, everyday activities and characteristics of potential victims that either increase or inhibit the likelihood of this convergence. Although findings vary somewhat depending on the offenses under consideration and the measures of activity patterns considered, the lifestyle-exposure and routine activities theories have received a good deal of support in the US (e.g., Miethe & Meier, 1994; Miethe, Stafford, & Long, 1987; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998) and other industrialized nations (e.g., Tseloni & Farrell, 2002; van Wilsem et al. 2002).

As noted above, the only data on victimization in contemporary China come from the survey conducted in Beijing in 1994 as part of the ICVS, sponsored by the United Nations. The results of the survey indicate that in Beijing as elsewhere, the self-reported victimization rate is much higher than the officially recorded crime rate. The data also suggest that victimization levels as reported in Beijing in the mid-1990s are low in comparison with other countries participating in the ICVS (Zhu et al. 1995, p. 69). A noteworthy exception is the relatively high level of bicycle theft, which undoubtedly reflects in part the widespread ownership and use of bicycles. The Beijing study is a pathbreaking effort that effectively demonstrates the feasibility of conducting a victimization survey in urban China, but the survey instrument contains very few items about behavioral routines and personal characteristics. It is thus not possible to use the Beijing data to explore the influence of specific aspects of lifestyles and routine activities on victimization risk in the Chinese context.

Context of Contemporary Urban China

Contemporary urban China offers a particularly interesting and instructive setting for comparative analysis of the applicability of lifestyle/routine activities perspectives on victimization because modern, consumer lifestyles have begun to emerge within a distinctive sociohistorical context. Until fairly recently, the standard of living in China was low, and there was little social differentiation. Indeed, prereform China was one of the most egalitarian developing countries at the time (Whyte & Parish, 1984, p. 44). Urban citizens generally had similar lifestyles, similar clothes, similar houses, and similar leisure activities. The situation has changed dramatically over recent decades. With economic reform and the implementation of many features of a market economy, the standard of living for the urban population has increased markedly, and new opportunities for the expression of consumer choices have appeared (see Davis, 2000; Tang & Parish, 2000). Thus, the profound social changes in urban China over the past few decades suggest that some of the basic insights of lifestyle/routine activities theories, which were developed to explain victimization in the consumer societies of the West, might be relevant to the Chinese situation as well.

At the same time, traditional Chinese features of social organization have not disappeared entirely. For example, scholars have observed a "Chinese familism" that emphasizes strong ties and stakes in extended family relationships (Lau, 1981; Ting & Chiu, 2002; Whyte, 2005; Zhang, 2004). In particular, the Chinese spend a comparatively large amount of time with family members relative to the time spent alone, both within the immediate household and outside of the household. The economic reform and open-door policy have undoubtedly had an impact on this family-centered tradition, but recent studies show that the tradition remains strong and still plays an important role in shaping people's lifestyles and routines (e.g., Ting & Chiu, 2002; Zhang, 2004). For example, research has found that the traditional pattern of adult offspring coresiding with parents continues to be common despite other changes in Chinese life associated with the economic reform (Logan, Bian, & Bian, 1998; Zhang, 2004). These strong extended family ties and traditional housing arrangements are potentially consequential for criminal victimization because they reduce the probability that people are alone inside and outside of homes.

Another feature of Chinese society that is likely to affect the nature of routine activities is a relational culture referred to as *guanxi* (Liang, 1949/1986; Fei, 1949/1992). *Guanxi* entails interpersonal connections that occur predominantly among relatives, close friends, and business partners. These connections are accompanied by shared sentiments of trust and obligations for reciprocal services or favors (Bian, 2002). This relational culture stands in sharp contrast with individualistic orientations associated with the West, which are reflected in weak personal ties and often fleeting interactions with low intensity (Lin, 1999). Certain social activities that might be regarded as purely

leisure activities in the West (e.g., going to restaurants and entertainment venues) serve important functions in China of solidifying *guanxi*. Some scholars have suggested that as a market-oriented economy has been developing in China, the role of *guanxi* has not only endured but is actually becoming stronger due to the increasing uncertainty in the changing social environment (Bian, 1994; Gold, Guthrie, & Wank, 2002). Similar to familism, the operation of *guanxi* networks is likely to increase the likelihood that many of the routine activities of life are performed in a collective, rather than a solitary, individual manner, which may modify the extent to which such activities constitute "risky" behavior. In short, the organization of social life in contemporary urban China has begun to resemble that in Western cities in some important respects as a result of market reforms and the accompanying prosperity, yet it continues to differ in ways that may yield a distinctive social patterning of criminal victimization.

Present Study

The primary purpose of the present study is to conduct a more direct and rigorous examination of the influence of lifestyles/routine activities on victimization risk within the context of contemporary urban China. Our analyses address three overarching research questions informed by the lifestyle/routine activities theories, involving three sets of variables—indicators of lifestyles/routine activities, demographic characteristics, and measures of victimization risk: (1) How do lifestyles/routine activities differ across major demographic groups in Tianjin? (2) To what extent and in what ways are lifestyles/routine activities related to the risks of personal victimization? (3) To what extent and in what ways does the patterning of victimization risk across demographic groups conform to that observed in the West?

Following the lead of Western studies, we examine indicators of lifestyles that are presumed to reflect increased visibility and accessibility as a crime target (away-from-home activities such as going out to eat, traveling out of town) and greater target attractiveness (carrying valuable property). We also include measures of self-assessed physical strength and self-defense capabilities, given their relevance to self-protection and personal guardianship (see Miethe & Meier, 1994, p. 39). To explore the social patterning of lifestyles, our research considers five demographic characteristics commonly considered in past research: age, gender, education, income, and marital status. With respect to the risk of criminal victimization, we examine four types of personal crimes. Three of the offenses are similar to those that have been studied extensively in past research: personal theft, robbery, and assault (excluding sexual assault). We also consider a crime that has emerged as a particular concern among the Chinese public in recent years: "swindles." This crime entails an element of fraud, but it differs from the ICVS "fraud" item. The ICVS asks about consumer fraud, whereas many swindles are analogous to "confidence games"

in the US.[1] Appendix A provides illustrations of common swindles that have been excerpted from the web page for the China Hoax Research Network.

Our analyses of victimization begin with a presentation of descriptive data on the prevalence and social context of the respective offenses. We then examine differences in lifestyles/routines across demographic characteristics. Finally, we estimate the effects of the demographic characteristics and the indicators of lifestyle/routine activities on victimization risk for the four types of personal crimes.

Data and Methods

Research Site and Data Collection

The data for the study are based on a criminal victimization survey conducted in 2004 of approximately 2,500 respondents who were 18 and over in the city of Tianjin. The research team consisted of the authors and additional researchers at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences. One of the objectives of the survey was to gather information about routine activities and lifestyles of the residents of the city. Tianjin is one of the four municipalities of the People's Republic of China.[2] As a municipality, Tianjin has provincial-level status and comes directly under the central government. It is the third largest city in mainland China. Tianjin is located along the Hai He River. Its ports, some distance away, are located on the Bohai of the Pacific Ocean. The Tianjin Municipality borders Heibei province to the north, south, and west, the municipality of Beijing in a small portion to the northwest, and the Boahai Gulf to the east. At the end of 2004, the population of the Tianjin Municipality was 10.24 million, of which 9.33 million were holders of Tianjin *hukou* (permanent residence). Among Tianjin permanent residents, 5.56 million were urban, and 3.76 million were rural.

The survey entailed a multistage cluster sampling design. Tianjin has 15 administrative districts and three counties. The sample was drawn from the six traditional districts located in the central urban area of the municipality. They include Heping, Nankai, Hongxiao, Hexi, Hebei, and Hedong districts. Each district has approximately six to 10 City Street Offices, which are the grass-roots organizations of the Tianjin government. We first randomly selected two City Street Offices from each of the selected districts, yielding a total of 12 City Street Offices.

Among the 12 selected City Street Offices are two large offices that include a relatively large number of neighborhood committees. Five neighborhood

1. A confidence game can be defined as "a scheme involving a false representation to obtain money or any other thing of value, where the deception is accomplished through the trust placed by the victim in the character of the offender" (Ferdico 1992, p. 91). The specific wording of the question on "swindles" in Chinese refers to *zha pian*.

2. The following description of Tianjin is taken from the online version of Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tianjin).

committees were randomly selected from each of these large City Street Offices, while four neighborhood committees were randomly drawn from each of the remaining 10 City Street Offices. A total of 50 neighborhood committees were thus obtained through a combination of purposive and random selection. Members of the research team met the supervisor in each of the selected neighborhood committees to explain the purpose and importance of the survey, the financial sources of the survey, and compensation for costs associated with administration. Upon securing agreement for assistance, the research team requested a complete list of households in that neighborhood.

Fifty-one households were selected for the survey in each of the 50 selected neighborhoods in hopes or reaching the target of 2,500 households. Using the household roster provided by the neighborhood committee in each selected neighborhood, the research team conducted systematic sampling. A starting point was randomly determined, and every eighth household from each neighborhood was selected until the specified number of households was obtained. The research team defined a criterion date to select a specific respondent from a selected household for those households with more than one person 18 years old or older. The individual with a birthday closest to the criterion data date was chosen to be the respondent.

Data were collected through anonymous, self-administered questionnaires at convenient sites within the neighborhood (e.g., recreational areas or school classrooms). With the assistance of the neighborhood committees, the research team contacted the respondents to schedule the questionnaire administration. The representatives of the neighborhood committees arranged the specific site for the administration and made sure that the site was suitable (e.g., facilities such as tables and chairs were available). No one was allowed to enter the site during the administration other than the respondents and members of the research team. The questionnaire was intended to be self-administered, although onsite members of the research team were allowed to clarify the meaning of questions if so requested. The overwhelming majority of respondents had an elementary school education or higher (97.4 percent), and thus illiteracy was not much of a problem. Consistent with standard institutional review board (IRB) protocols, respondents were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to refuse to answer questions, and the confidentiality of their responses. After respondents had completed the questionnaires, they were place in large envelopes that were sealed and transmitted directly to the chief Tianjin researcher who secured them in a safe location. A total of 2,474 valid questionnaires were obtained, very close to the target of 2,500.

Measures

The dependent variables for our analyses are the respondents' reports of selected forms of personal victimization. Given the expected infrequency of

criminal victimization in China, a 5-year time frame is used.[3] The specific offenses are personal theft in public places, having been "swindled," robbery (having anything of value taken by force or threat of force), and assault (having been physically attacked or threatened with attack). These measures are treated as dummy variables, with a score of "1" indicating any victimization of a specified type within the past 5 years.

Gender and marital status are dummy variables scored in the direction of "female" and "single." The original item for marital status has five response categories: single, married, divorced, widowed, and remarried. We recoded the response categories into 1 = single, and others = 0, to create the dummy variable for marital status. Age is represented by two dummy variables for "young" (ages 18-34) and "middle age" (ages 35-54). The 55 and over age group serves as the reference category.[4] Education and income are both ordinal measures with three categories. Education is classified as "illiterate and elementary school," "middle school," or "college and above." The measure of income refers to monthly income per person for members of the household living together. The categories for income are "below 500 yuan," "500-999 yuan," and "1,000 yuan and over."

Our key theoretical variables are indicators of personal characteristics and lifestyles/routine activities that are expected to enhance or inhibit victimization risk by affecting the visibility and accessibility of potential victims, their attractiveness as "targets," and their capacity for personal guardianship. The characteristics conceptualized as indicators of personal guardianship are respondents' assessment of their physical strength/health (PHYSICAL STRENGTH) and their perceived capability for self-defense and alertness about personal security (SELF-DEFENSE/ALERT). These two measures are scored as: "poor" (1), "average" (2), "good" (3), and "very good" (4). High scores presumably reflect greater personal guardianship. Our indicator of target attractiveness refers to carrying valuable property. The specific item asks whether the respondent usually wears expensive jewelry or watches (WEAR JEWELRY). The response categories and scores are: "never or rarely" (0), "often" (1).

Five additional items refer to away-from-home activities that are expected on the basis of Western victimization research to increase the visibility and accessibility of potential victims. The specific items and codes are as follows:

- Eat out at restaurant every month (EAT OUT)—"no" (0), "yes" (1);
- Usual travel time from home to workplace (TIME HOME TO WORK)—"0 minutes" (0), "1-30 minutes" (1), "more than 30 minutes" (2);[5]

3. Following procedures in the ICVS (Nieuwbeerta, 2002), the Tianjin questionnaire first asks whether the respondent experienced a victimization within the past five years, and follows up with a question on whether the most recent event occurred within the past year.

4. Age is originally measured by year of birth. We categorize the variable for the regression analyses because lifestyles are not likely to vary incrementally on an annual basis. Rather, age is expected to be important to the extent that it reflects stages of life. Our categorization corresponds roughly to young adult, middle age, and elderly.

5. Respondents who do not work are assigned a score of "0" on this item.

- Reliance on bus as mains of transportation (TAKE BUS)—"no" (0), "yes" (1);[6]
- Frequency of travel outside of the city for leisure (TRAVEL, FOR LEISURE)—"almost never" (1), "once a year or less" (2), "more than once a year" (3);
- Frequency of travel out of the city for work (TRAVEL, FOR WORK)—"almost never" (1), "once a year or less" (2), "more than once a year" (3).[7]

Frequency distributions for the indicators of lifestyles/routine activities and personal guardianship are reported in the bottom panel of Appendix B. These descriptive statistics suggest some interesting differences in lifestyles among Tianjin residents compared to those in developed Western cities. Dining away from home is surprisingly infrequent, with 80 percent of respondents reporting that they do not eat out at least once a month. The activities of the vast majority of Tianjin residents also appear to be largely restricted to the boundaries of the city. Almost two-thirds (63.4 percent) of respondents report that they "almost never" travel out of the city for leisure, and over 90 percent report that they "almost never" travel out of the city for work. Less than 5 percent report that they travel out of the city more than once a year for these reasons. Thus, despite the appreciable social changes ushered in by the economic reform, the residents of Tianjin appear to lead lives that in some important respects are not nearly as dispersed from the household or from the immediate urban environment as are those for residents in cities in the developed Western world, at least at the time of the survey. The interesting theoretical question that our statistical analyses can address is whether these kinds of activities, regardless of their overall frequency or infrequency for the population at large, are in fact "risky" activities for Tianjin residents.

Statistical Procedures

In the analyses of victimization risk, we initially estimate multivariate binary logistic regression equations for the dichotomous measures. As explained below, the offense of "swindle" can be meaningfully differentiated with respect to location at home or away from home. We accordingly extend our analyses of this offense by estimating multinomial logistic regressions, treating "no swindle" as the reference category. For models with the lifestyle/routine activities measures serving as dependent variables, logistic regressions are also estimated for the binary measures, while ordered logit estimation is employed for those measures with three or more ordinal categories.

The multistage sampling design implies that the observations are not independent. We thus estimate fixed effects models with hierarchical linear modeling

6. This measure is based on responses to three items that ask about the primary means of transportation for going to school, for shopping, and for going to work. A respondent who identifies "bus" on any of these three items is assigned the score of "1."
7. Respondents who do not work are assigned the "almost never" response on this item.

(HLM) to adjust for the clustering of respondents within neighborhoods and assess statistical significance with robust standard errors.

We caution that the cross-sectional nature of our data, combined with unique features of the Chinese setting, creates some ambiguities for causal inference. As noted above, the relatively low frequency of victimization requires the use of a 5-year time period in the measurement of the dependent variables. The measurement of the independent variables, in contrast, refers to the time of administration of the survey. The associated temporal "mismatch" is unproblematic for time-stable characteristics, but it may entail biases for variables that change over time. We suspect that the most likely bias would be the attenuation of the estimated effects of "risky" activities, insofar as past experiences with victimization have made victims more careful in their current routines. However, the impact of any measurement error associated with the differential reference period is admittedly unknown.

Results

We begin with descriptive analyses of victimization risk in Tianjin. The prevalence of the different types of personal victimization over the past 5 years is reported in Table 1. Not surprisingly, property crimes are more common than violent crimes. Slightly more than 10 percent of Tianjin respondents reported a personal theft within the past 5 years, while slightly less than 10 percent reported having been swindled. In contrast, a rather small proportion of respondents—only 2 percent—reported either of the violent crimes of robbery or assault.

Information about the distribution of personal victimizations across settings and relationships is presented in Tables 2 and 3. As indicated in Table 2, the settings differ somewhat for the respective offenses. The predominant setting for personal theft (almost 70 percent) is a public area other than "on the street."[8] These locations are likely to include shopping malls, other commercial establishments, and transportation facilities (bus and train stations). An

Table 1 Prevalence of victimization during the past 5 years—2004 Tianjin Survey

Offense	Percent victimized
Personal theft	11.5
Swindle	8.5
Robbery	2.0
Assault	2.0
N = 2,474	

8. The wording of the item for personal theft refers to theft in "public places." Thus, the relatively small number of responses in the categories for "at home" and "at some else's home" evidently reflects a misunderstanding of the question.

Table 2 Distribution of personal victimizations across settings—2004 Tianjin Survey

Settings	Offense			
	Personal theft	Swindle	Robbery	Assault
At home	2.1	41.9	0	16.3
At someone else's home	1.4	1.4	0	4.1
At work place	1.7	5.2	2.0	8.2
On the street	21.7	23.3	71.4	34.7
In a public area	69.9	21.4	18.4	26.5
Others	3.1	6.7	8.2	10.2
N	286	210	49	49

appreciable portion (over 20 percent) of personal thefts also occur "on the street." In contrast, roughly comparable proportions of swindles occur in private settings (at home) in comparison with the combined "street/public area" categories, while a small but noticeable proportion occur at the work place (5.2 percent). Robbery is very much a "street crime" in Tianjin, similar to the pattern in the US (US Department of Justice, 2005, p. 318). Finally, assaults exhibit the greatest dispersion across settings, with the majority of incidents occurring in public places, but with non-trivial proportions occurring at homes and at the work place.

Table 3 reports the distributions of victimizations by victim/offender relationship for the two violent offenses (offenses for which information on offender is always available). The results reveal that robbery is characteristically a "stranger crime" in Tianjin as it is in the US (Catalano, 2005). A slight majority of assaults involve strangers, but assaults among friends and acquaintances are also relatively common.

In Table 4, we report the results of regressions of the lifestyles/routine activities measures on demographic characteristics. The findings reveal that, as expected, these personal characteristics and behavioral routines are socially patterned, but a careful examination of the coefficients suggests potentially complex processes linking demographic characteristics and victimization. For

Table 3 Distribution of violent personal victimizations by victim/offender relationships—2004 Tianjin Survey

Victim/offender relationship	Offense	
	Robbery	Assault
Stranger	93.9	57.1
Seem to know	4.1	22.4
Friend or someone I know	2.0	18.4
Family member	0	2.0
N	49	49

Table 4 Regressions of lifestyle on demographic characteristics—2004 Tianjin Survey

	Personal characteristic/lifestyle							
Independent variables	Physical strength	Self-defense/ alert	Eat out	Time from home to work	Wear jewelry	Take bus	Travel out for leisure	Travel out for work
Female	−.43*	−0.10	−.29*	−.77*	1.18*	.45*	0.08	−1.62*
	(.08)	(.08)	(.12)	(.09)	(.11)	(.18)	(.10)	(.21)
Young	1.22*	.81*	1.01*	3.37*	.38*	1.44*	.92*	2.46*
	(.13)	(.13)	(.14)	(.25)	(.18)	(.39)	(.19)	(.37)
Middle Age	.38*	.45*	.52*	3.08*	−0.11	.85*	0.18	2.39*
	(.11)	(.08)	(.15)	(.18)	(.13)	(.30)	(.15)	(.33)
Education	0.09	.27*	.68*	.53*	0.06	1.27*	.84*	1.62*
	(.08)	(.08)	(.10)	(.16)	(.11)	(.16)	(.09)	(.21)
Income	.36*	.23*	.96*	.54*	.41*	.33*	.81*	1.01*
	(.05)	(.04)	(.07)	(.06)	(.07)	(.12)	(.06)	(.11)
Single	0.14	0.12	−0.14	−1.15*	−.38*	.88*	−0.05	−1.47*
	(.11)	(.12)	(.15)	(.16)	(.17)	(.24)	(.14)	(.29)
Constant	−2.61*	−2.87*	−3.66*	−5.52*	−2.52*	−6.21*	−5.53*	−7.96*

*$p \leq .05$.

example, education is positively related to five hypothetical risk factors for victimization: eating out, travel time from home to work, taking a bus as a primary means of transportation, and traveling out of the city for leisure and for work. These routine activities might accordingly lead the highly educated to be at an increased risk of victimization. At the same time, education is positively related to self-defense capacity/alertness, which should reduce the likelihood of victimization. Similarly "mixed" associations with factors that might inhibit or elevate risks emerge for the other demographic characteristics. Note also the lack of any association between the status of being single and the indicator of "eating out" and the significant negative association with the indicator of traveling out of the city. These findings would seem to run counter to expectations for residents in Western cities, wherein being married is typically associated with constraints on activity patterns.

The regression results in Table 5 indicate the effects of demographic characteristics and the indicators of lifestyles/personal characteristics on risks of victimization for the four offenses under consideration. Two models are reported for each offense. In Model 1, the effects of demographic characteristics alone are presented. In Model 2, the theoretically strategic independent variables are added to the logistic regression equations.

Considering first the effects of demographic characteristics alone, some of the patterns mirror those that have been commonly observed elsewhere. Females are at greater risk of personal theft and reduced risk of assault, while young people and those with higher education exhibit elevated risks of personal theft and robbery. The elderly have a comparatively high risk of one type of offense—swindles. Research in the West has similarly suggested a high vulnerability of the elderly to this type of victimization (Yin, 1985, p. 103). In contrast with these findings that replicate those in previous research, the null effect for martial status is quite striking. Being single in Tianjin does not appear to be associated with increased risk for any of the types of victimization examined, which is contrary to the general pattern in Western nations but is consistent with some of the results on the relationship between marital status and lifestyles/routine activities reported above.

Turning to the effects on victimization risk of the indicators of personal characteristics and lifestyles/routine activities (Model 2, lower panel), the results for the property crimes are generally consistent with theoretical expectations. Three of the indicators of routine activities exhibit significant effects on personal theft, and each is in the predicted direction. Eating out more frequently, taking a bus as a primary means of transportation, and more frequent traveling out of the city for work increase the risk of becoming a victim of theft. For the offense of "swindle," a highly rated capacity for self-defense/alertness emerges as a significant protective factor, whereas traveling out of the city for leisure and for work increases victimization risk.

The results for the violent offenses differ notably. The variables derived from lifestyle/routine activities theory are of no utility in explaining the risk of robbery victimization. None of them exhibits a significant association for this

Table 5 Logistic regressions of victimization on demographic characteristics and lifestyle—2004 Tianjin Survey

	Offense							
	Personal theft		Swindle		Robbery		Assault	
Independent variables	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Demographics								
Female	.56*	.59*	−.17	−.23	−.38	−.57	−1.12*	−1.16*
	(.13)	(.14)	(.16)	(.19)	(.29)	(.33)	(.33)	(.36)
Young	.63*	.54*	−.48*	−.39	1.64*	1.70*	.48	.35
	(.24)	(.24)	(.23)	(.24)	(.64)	(.66)	(.58)	(.61)
Middle age	.27	.23	−.87*	−.78*	1.09	1.22*	.62	.62
	(.20)	(.20)	(.18)	(.23)	(.61)	(.62)	(.47)	(.50)
Education	.46*	.28*	.03	−.03	.62*	.57	−.08	−.19
	(.13)	(.13)	(.14)	(.15)	(.31)	(.31)	(.30)	(.34)
Income	.02	−.11	.13	.10	−.13	−.13	−.02	−.17
	(.10)	(.11)	(.10)	(.12)	(.19)	(.21)	(.15)	(.18)
Single	−.14	−.10	.04	.10	.03	−.07	.31	.39
	(.19)	(.21)	(.23)	(.23)	(.35)	(.36)	(.48)	(.48)
Lifestyle								
Physical strength	-	−.15	-	−.11	-	−.03	-	.19
		(.09)		(.12)		(.21)		(.20)
Self-defense/alert	-	−.04	-	−.33*	-	−.20	-	−.68*
		(.09)		(.11)		(.21)		(.30)
Eat out	-	.46*	-	−.11	-	−.37	-	.10
		(.14)		(.23)		(.44)		(.37)
Time home to work	-	−.02	-	−.13	-	−.03	-	.03
		(.08)		(.14)		(.27)		(.28)

Table 5 *Continued*

	Offense							
	Personal theft		Swindle		Robbery		Assault	
Independent variables	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Wear jewelry	-	.07	-	.27	-	.46	-	.36
		(.16)		(.21)		(.38)		(.37)
Take bus	-	.46*	-	.11	-	.56	-	.21
		(.15)		(.32)		(.33)		(.48)
Travel, for leisure	-	.13	-	.31*	-	.35	-	.48
		(.12)		(.12)		(.28)		(.33)
Travel, for work	-	.38*	-	.39*	-	−.24	-	.24
		(.13)		(.17)		(.38)		(.30)
Constant	−3.22*	−3.16*	−1.97*	−1.70*	−5.60*	−5.23*	−3.92*	−3.52*

*$p \leq .05$ (two-tailed).

offense. One personal characteristic is significantly related to assault in the expected direction: respondents who rate their self-defense/alertness capabilities highly report a lower risk of being assaulted.[9]

As noted above, swindles exhibit a distinctive profile in comparison with the other offenses in that relatively large numbers (41.9 percent) occur at home. This pattern allows for an analysis of the effects of lifestyle/personal characteristics on victimization risk, disaggregated by setting. This disaggregation is theoretically meaningful because the lifestyle/routine activities perspectives explicitly conceptualize the household as a relatively safe location in comparison with non-household settings (see Cohen & Felson, 1979, p. 594; Hindelang et al. 1978, pp. 251-253). Indeed, a primary aspect of lifestyles and behavioral routines that allegedly render them "risky" is that they draw individuals away from the home (see Messner & Blau, 1987). It is thus instructive to examine whether the effects of the lifestyle/activity measures on "swindle" vary across settings in a manner consistent with the logic of routine activities theory.

The results of multinomial logistic regressions of the disaggregated measure of swindles are presented in Table 6. Consistent with previous analyses, two models are estimated. The first includes only demographic characteristics; the second introduces the lifestyle measures. The response of "no swindle" serves as the reference category for the dependent variable. With respect to demographic characteristics, the analysis of the refined measure of swindles suggests that the elderly are significantly more likely than middle age respondents to be swindled at home. None of the demographic characteristics is significantly related to swindles away from home.

Turning to the measures of lifestyle in Model Two, the respondent's capacity for self-defense and alertness emerges as a protective factor for swindles occurring both at home and away from home. This makes sense, given that persons who are alert should minimize their risk of victimization regardless of the social setting. In contrast, wearing expensive jewelry and watches, as well as traveling outside of the city for work, are significant risk factors only for swindles away from home.[10] On logical grounds, these activities seem unlikely to be relevant to risks within the home. The pattern of results for the disaggregated analyses of the effects of lifestyle predictors on swindles across the varying settings is thus consistent with the underlying logic of routine activities theory.

9. Two contradictory processes of "reverse" causation are plausible for the observed relationships between the indicator of self-defense/alertness and swindles and assaults. If the experience of victimization makes people more alert, the estimated negative association is likely to underestimate the impact of this protective factor. On the other hand, if the experience of a victimization leads respondents to "downgrade" their perceptions of self-defensive capabilities and alertness, some of the negative association may not be due to any genuine causal impact of this characteristic.
10. We have tested for the significance of these differences in coefficients across outcomes (at home vs. away from home) using the "seemingly unrelated estimation" procedure in Stata. As suggested by a simple visual inspection of the coefficients and robust standard errors in Table 5, the difference for the measure "self-defense/alert" is not significant, whereas the differences for the measures of "wear jewelry" and "travel for work" are significant.

Table 6 Multinominal logistic regression of location of swindle on demographic characteristics and lifestyle—2004 Tianjin Survey

	Model 1		Model 2	
Independent variables	Swindle at home	Swindle away from home	Swindle at home	Swindle away from home
Demographics				
Female	−.17	−.16	−.13	−.32
	(.27)	(.17)	(.31)	(.21)
Young	−.10	−.06	−1.00	.11
	(.53)	(.27)	(.52)	(.29)
Middle age	−1.37*	−.50	−1.36*	−.33
	(.29)	(.26)	(.36)	(.29)
Education	.13	−.06	.13	−.18
	(.22)	(.17)	(.22)	(.18)
Income	.18	.10	.19	.37
	(.15)	(.14)	(.18)	(.16)
Single	.18	−.05	.21	.02
	(.45)	(.31)	(.44)	(.32)
Lifestyle				
Physical strength	-	-	.13	−.28
			(.14)	(.20)
Self-defense/alert	-	-	−.36*	−.31*
			(.18)	(.15)
Eat out	-	-	−.37	.07
			(.32)	(.29)
Time home to work	-	-	.06	−.29
			(.20)	(.17)
Wear jewelry	-	-	−.28	.60*
			(.35)	(.28)
Take bus	-	-	−.29	.36
			(.42)	(.39)
Travel, for leisure	-	-	.37	.27
			(.22)	(.16)
Travel, for work	-	-	.06	.63*
			(.26)	(.19)
Constant	−2.82*	−2.63*	−2.74*	−2.23*

*$p \leq .05$.

Summary and Conclusions

In this paper, we have examined the social patterning of victimization for personal crimes in contemporary urban China with data from a survey recently conducted in the city of Tianjin. This dataset contains a variety of indicators of personal characteristics and behavioral routines of respondents and thus offers a unique opportunity to apply the influential lifestyle/routine activities perspectives to explain victimization in a distinctive sociocultural setting. The

results of our analyses replicate some findings that have been reported for the US and other Western nations but reveal some divergent patterns as well.

In Tianjin as in other cities in the modern world, criminal victimizations of some form are frequent enough to be regarded as "statistically normal events" (Schneider, 2001, p. 453). About 1 out of 10 respondents report the experience of personal theft over the past 5 years, and about the same relative numbers indicate that they have been victimized by a property crime of particular concern in contemporary China: swindles. Violent victimizations, in contrast, are much less frequent. Only 2 percent of respondents report having been robbed or assaulted over the time period considered.

Our descriptive data on the indicators of lifestyles/routine activities indicate that the degree of involvement in selected activities that are commonly included in Western victimization studies is evidently rather low in Tianjin. Relatively few respondents report that they dine out on a regular basis (once a month), and very few report traveling outside of the city boundaries for work or leisure except on rare occasions. These results suggest that prominent aspects of a consumer society had yet to emerge to a significant degree at the time of the survey (2004). Interestingly, however, indicators of these two features of lifestyles—dining out and out-of-city travel—yield *effects* on victimization risk in the theoretically expected direction. Eating out and traveling outside the city for work increase the risk of personal theft, and travel for both work and leisure increases the risk of being swindled. Thus, while the *levels* of these activities may be relatively low in Tianjin, the evidence suggests that they are nevertheless "risk" factors, consistent with observations and theoretical accounts in the West.

These twin observations—relatively low levels of certain activities associated with consumer societies yet notable effects of these activities on victimization risk—have implications for understanding the crime situation in contemporary China more generally. As noted earlier, levels of crime in China have almost certainly increased, and yet they remain relatively low in international comparison (Bakken, 2005). The "cost of modernization" (see Shelley, 1981, p. 134), in other words, has not been as severe in China as might be expected, given the magnitude and rapidity of social change. This may reflect that fact that the embrace of consumer lifestyles by the Chinese has been restrained in important respects.

At the same time, the fact that some of the risk factors commonly studied in Western research operate similarly in China underscores the relevance of theoretical perspectives that emphasize "opportunity" factors. Explanations of the increases in crime in China have focused largely on expanding criminal motivations and decreasing social control. For example, criminal offending has been attributed to the growth of the so-called "floating population" generated by rural/urban migration (Ma, 2001), a population that faces problems of adjustment in the new urban environments and various forms of discrimination. Researchers have also cited the potential criminogenic effects of more extreme inequality and concomitant feelings of relative deprivation (Cao & Dai, 2001),

and the weakening of neighborhood committees, which in the past practiced "reintegrative shaming" to regulate misbehavior (Rojek, 2001).

Our research suggests that, whatever the role of rising criminal motivations and decreasing social control, changes in routine activities and increased opportunities for crime are likely to have played a role as well in the (relatively restrained) growth in crime, and these changes are likely to play an even more important role in the future insofar as consumer lifestyles penetrate society more deeply. Of course, a direct assessment of the impact of changes in routine activities on changes in crime requires longitudinal data, which are not available. Nevertheless, our evidence on the relationships between lifestyle/routine activities and victimization risk lends further credibility to the ironic observation that, in China as in the West, "... the very factors which increase the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of life also may increase the opportunity for predatory violations" (Cohen & Felson, 1979, p. 605).

Although the lifestyle/routine activities perspectives are useful for explaining property victimization in Tianjin, we acknowledge an important qualification. The theoretically grounded independent variables do not perform well in explaining either robbery or assault. One possible explanation for the weak effects of the indicators of activity patterns on violent crimes is the methodological limitation noted above—the need to use a 5-year time window to capture a sufficient numbers of victimizations for meaningful statistical analysis. Perhaps violent victimizations are the kinds of experiences that precipitate an appreciable change in lifestyles and routines, and thus the attenuation due to the imperfect match of time periods for the measurement of victimization and the measurement of routine activities is most consequential for these offenses.

Another possibility is that the null effects for violent crime are not attributable to distinctive features of the survey or the setting of the research; rather, they reflect limited scope conditions of the theoretical perspectives. Our findings are consistent with the speculations of some Western scholars that the lifestyle/routine activities theories are better able to explain the risk of victimization for property crimes than for violent crimes (Miethe et al., 1987; Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998). As Miethe et al. (1987) observe, violent crimes are more expressive and spontaneous than are property crimes. "If motivated offenders engage in a conscious selection of suitable targets who lack guardianship, the spontaneous nature of most violent crimes is incongruent with the strictly rational characterization of human behavior underlying routine activity/lifestyle theories" (Miethe et al. 1987, p. 186). In addition, violent crimes often involve "specific interpersonal and situational dynamics" rather than "simple physical exposure to a risky situation." Therefore, the factor of "target attractiveness" may be more directly relevant to the risk of criminal victimization in property crime than in violent crime. Miethe et al. (1987) report findings comparable to ours based on a sample of cities in the US. Similarly, in an assessment of some of the "macrostructural tenets" of the routine activities model in a cross-national analysis, Bennett (1991, p. 147) concludes that this model "... is crime-specific, explaining property crime better than personal crime" (p. 158).

Finally, the relationships between demographic characteristics and victimization in Tianjin also replicate those commonly observed elsewhere in some respects but diverge in others. Consistent with the literature in the West, females exhibit greater risks of personal theft and lower risks of assault. The young are at relatively high risk of personal theft and robbery, while the elderly are vulnerable to swindles. Education is positively associated with personal theft and robbery, consistent with the view that educated people are more likely to engage in certain lifestyles that entail risk. Our results indicate, for example, that education is positively associated with eating out and travel beyond the city boundaries for both leisure and work. These replications suggest the operation of some generalizable processes.

However, we have uncovered an unexpected finding that illuminates the importance of the larger sociocultural context in establishing the linkages between social statuses and lifestyles/routine activities. The results indicate that being single in Tianjin is unrelated to victimization risk for any of the four offenses examined. Our analyses of the relationships between measures of lifestyles/personal attributes and demographic characteristics indicate that the unmarried are characterized by both protective factors and risk factors. This is undoubtedly the case in other nations as well. However, the relative effects of the two types of factors in the aggregate are evidently counterbalancing in Tianjin, whereas the risk factors tend to outweigh protective factors in other nations, as manifested in relatively high victimization levels for the unmarried (Lauritsen, 2001; van Kesteren et al. 2001; van Wilsem et al. 2002).

One possible explanation for this contrast is that the implications of marital status for living arrangements and social ties differ between the Chinese and Western contexts, reflecting the high degree of "familism" in China noted above. A common explanation for the relatively high risk of criminal victimization for single people in Western nations is that single people are likely to establish their own households and lead lives that are relatively independent of other relatives. This personal independence implies reduced guardianship, less activity restriction, and more target attractiveness (see Miethe & Meier, 1994, p. 37). The status of being single in China, even after the economic reforms, is quite different. Single people retain close relationships with parents and relatives, who often still share the same household (Zhang, 2004). Even if single people no longer live with extended families, their parents or relatives are heavily involved with their lives, with less concern for independence and privacy than is common in the West. This greater involvement with extended families is consistent with our finding that single respondents are no more likely to eat out on a regular basis than are married respondents. The influence of *guanxi* on routine activities, referred to earlier (Bian, 2002; Gold et al. 2002), might operate in a similar manner. To the extent that Chinese singles engage in routine activities with members of their *guanxi* network, the contrast between single and married people in terms of involvement in solitary, "risky" activities is less pronounced. In short, given features of the sociocultural setting, being single in China is not as likely to be accompanied by the

risk factors commonly associated with this status in the US and other Western nations.

Our divergent findings for marital status thus suggest the need for a degree of flexibility in the application of the Western theoretical perspectives on victimization. At a very general level, the core claims of these perspectives appear to have widespread applicability, at least for property crimes: aspects of lifestyles and routine activities affect victimization risk, and lifestyles and routine activities differ appreciably across social statuses. The linkages between *specific* social statuses and lifestyles/routine activities and concomitant risks of victimization are not necessarily universal, however, as reflected in our findings for marital status. Moreover, it seems likely that a full enumeration of the array of risk and protective factors, and the ways in which they operate, will require sensitivity to salient features of the sociopolitical context of the larger society. Investigating these factors and processes in China and other countries that have yet to be extensively studied is a critical task for future comparative research.

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Appendix A. Illustrations of "Swindles"

Reproduced and translated from the China Hoax Research Network, http://www.ps315.com.

Note: "p" is the initial of Chinese "*Pian*" (cheat, swindle); and "s" is the initial of Chinese "*Shu*" (methods, means). "315" refers to March 15, which is the International Day for Protecting Consumers' Rights.

1. A couple with a child (or an old person with a child; or just an old person), usually with frugal clothing, asks pedestrians for money, saying that they failed to get in touch with friends/relatives living in the city while using up money, and so need a little money to take bus/train. It usually happens at the street, on bus station, or on college campus.
2. The cheater (either old or young or child, either female or male) sits aside the street, puts a poster in front of himself/herself, which tells what a terrible story (for example, homeless due to flood at hometown, orphan, seriously ill) happened to them, and then asks money from sympathizers.
3. Two cheaters: A and B. A pretends to unintentionally drop a bunch of cash on the floor aside you and keeps walking ahead. B picks it up with you present and then asks you to share the money. A comes back and asks B if B finds the money A loses. B denies. A says, "I cannot believe unless you let me do a frisk." B agrees. Firstly, B takes you to a corner and asks you to keep the money until he comes back to share it. Then, he asks for a deposit in case you leave with all the money. In this situation, you usually take your own money out of your pocket and give to B as deposit. B takes your money, asks you to stay there until he comes back, and then leaves with A. Both of them never come back. When you open the bunch of money, you will find it's a bunch of paper with a cash cover. It usually happens in front of banks. [This is a variation of the classic "pigeon drop" in the West.]
4. You are notified by a cell phone message that you have won a prize in a lottery, such as a laptop. When you call at the number in the message, you are told to send postage to an account and then they can mail you the award. But you will never receive it even if you pay the postage.
5. Street gambling. A cheater upends several cups on the ground, changes their position quickly, at the same time puts a chessman under one of them, asks the audience to bet under which cup the chessman is put. Usually he has confederates around as gamblers. [This is a variation on the 3-card Monte.]
6. A cheater, carrying a bag of rice, comes to your house and says, "Just now an aged lady bought a bag of rice at my store, and asked me to send it here. She has gone shopping at other stores. She hasn't paid it yet. It's 50 RMB" You pay 50 RMB and he leaves. When your mother comes back, you are told she never bought rice. When you open the bag, you find it's rice of poor quality, at most worth 20 RMB. Another similar case: A cheater comes to a house and tells the aged lady that, "I am your son's colleague. I went to

Beijing for business. Your son asked me to take him a name-brand pair of shoes. The price is 380 RMB." The son is not at home and so the lady pays. When the son comes back, they know ... With regards to this kind of swindle, the cheaters usually do a lot of homework before the crime, say learning about composition and work-and-rest schedule about the target household.

7. When you do shopping at a fruit booth, the vender asks you to change his small bills into a big bill, say 10 pieces of 10 RMB bill to 1 piece of 100 RMB bill. When you give him the 100 RMB bill, you see that he takes out 10 pieces of 10 RMB bills and gives to you. But when you leave the booth, you may find there are only 8 or 9 pieces of 10 RMB bills, or a few 5 RMB bills. If you go back, he will not admit it.
8. When a bus arrives in a station and stops to open the door, Cheater A blocks the door and says, "I just lost my cell phone in this bus. Please do me a favor to find the thief. Could I borrow a cell phone to dial my number here? When my phone rings, we will know who is a thief." Then he borrows a cell phone from a kind passenger and tries to dial. Cheater B suddenly jumps down the bus and runs away. It seems he is the thief. Then cheater A immediately runs after B, without returning the borrowed phone. Both of them quickly disappear. As a result, it is true that someone's cell phone is gone.
9. When you shop or take a taxi, you take out 100 RMB bill for payment. The vender/driver takes the bill, searches his pocket for change for a while, then gives the 100 RMB bill back to you and says, "I do not have enough change. Could you pay me with small bills?" You may take the 100 RMB bill back and find a few small bills to pay him. But the 100 RMB bill you take back is not the one you gave to him previously. You give him a real one and he gives back a forged one.
10. When you travel out for work, the criminal keeps calling your cell phone in the name of a test. You are told the test will last a couple of hours, and you can turn off your phone. Once you turn off your phone, the criminal gives a call to your family, and tells them an accident has happened to you, and you are in emergency room. He asks your family to immediately mail money to an account as a medical service deposit. When your families fail to access you by phone, they might trust the criminal and mail the money for your medical service. In China, the patients pay before they receive the medical treatment.

Appendix B. Frequency Distributions for Independent Variables

	Number	Percent
Demographic characteristics		
Gender		
Male	1,262	51.0
Female	1,212	49.0
Age		
18-34	775	31.3
35-54	1,126	45.5
55+	573	23.2
Education		
Illiterate and elementary school	214	8.6
Middle school and high school	1,701	68.8
College and above	559	22.6
Income		
Below 500	948	38.3
500-999	951	38.4
1000 and above	575	23.2
Marital status		
Single	529	21.4
Non-single	1,945	78.6
Personal characteristics, lifestyle activities		
Physical strength		
Poor	266	10.8
Average	1,098	44.4
Fairly strong	717	29.0
Strong	393	15.9
Self-defense capability/alertness		
Poor	113	4.6
Average	1,107	44.7
Good	911	36.8
Very good	343	13.9
Go out to eat		
Yes	490	19.8
No	1,983	80.2
Time from home to work		
0 minute	1,557	62.9
1-30 minutes	622	25.1
More than 30 minutes	295	11.9
Wear jewelry		
Never/rare	1,978	80.0
Often	496	20.0

Appendix B. *Continued*

	Number	Percent
Take bus		
Yes	180	7.3
No	2,294	92.7
Travel out for leisure		
Almost never	1,567	63.4
Once a year or less	786	31.8
More than once a year	118	4.8
Travel out for work		
Almost never	2,300	93.0
Once a year or less	78	3.2
More than once a year	96	3.9