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SUBCULTURAL VALUES, CRIME, AND NEGATIVE SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR CHINESE OFFENDERS*

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Subcultural theories of crime have received decreasing attention over the past few decades because they have not held up well to empirical tests. Overall, a direct causal relationship between subcultural values and criminal behavior has not been found empirically. Given the importance of subcultural theories, this article proposes a theoretical modification to the causal relationship: Subcultural values cause deviant or criminal behavior under the condition that an offender has access to *negative social capital*. The article further proposes the notion of *integrated measure* to resolve the classical difficulty in independently measuring a subcultural value. The article provides a preliminary test of the modified theoretical relationship between violent subcultural values and criminal behavior using inmate self-report data from Tianjin, China. The analyses find that violent values increase the hazards of recidivism for Chinese gang members and co-offenders but not for non–gang members and single offenders.

Subcultural theories have constituted one of the most prominent approaches in criminology. They held a pivotal place from the 1930s to the mid-1960s. These theories generally argued that the criminal subculture was a source of criminal behavior. Deviant and violent values were used as explanations for greater delinquency and violence among lower-class youth and gang members. The most prominent of these theories included Cohen's (1955), Miller's (1958), and Cloward and Ohlin's (1960). These theories greatly influenced the development of criminology and crime policy in the 1960s and 1970s. They stimulated numerous tests and inspired several large-budget federal programs aimed at delinquency prevention (Klein, 1971, p. 31). The differential opportunity theory of Cloward and Ohlin greatly impacted national policy during the late 1960s and 1970s (Klein, 1971, p. 31; Moynihan, 1969).

In the late 1960s and 1970s, subcultural theories came to be severely criticized on both empirical and logical grounds. A number of studies questioned the existence of a system of crime-related values, norms, and beliefs unique to the lower class (Ball-Rokeach, 1973; Buffalo & Rodgers, 1971; Dorn, 1969; Lerman, 1968; Short, 1964; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Siegel, Rathus, & Ruppert, 1973). The most prominent of the earlier studies was by Short and Strodtbeck (1965). Their study specifically tested the theories of Cohen, Miller, and Cloward and Ohlin. The

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researchers interviewed a sample of adolescent boys in Chicago, including gang and non-gang boys, white and black boys, and lower-class and middle-class boys. Each boy was asked to evaluate a number of conventional and deviant images. All groups evaluated the conventional images equally highly—black the same as white, lower-class the same as middle-class, and gang the same as non-gang. Short and Strodtbeck concluded that, although there were some differences among gang, lower-class, and middle-class boys in their tolerance of behaviors that were proscribed by the middle class, the endorsement of middle-class values was uniformly high (Short & Strodtbeck, 1965, pp. 47–76). Furthermore, even gang members were found to evaluate images associated with a middle-class lifestyle more positively than any subcultural images, especially those that were illegitimate. Overall, although there was some evidence of distinctive lower-class attitudes, these were definitely secondary to conventional values and beliefs (p. 59).

The most severe attack on subcultural theories came from Kornhauser (1978). In her influential book *Social Sources of Delinquency*, she questioned the explanatory validity of subcultural values for deviance and crime. She charged that the subcultural theories were so enchanted with culture as an explanatory concept that the people whom they studied were sometimes compelled to bear witness to cultures that they neither had nor wanted (p. 4). She challenged the explanatory power of cultural values for deviant behavior in modern society, stating, "This insistence on the ubiquity and power of culture is especially prominent in explanations of deviance. Drug use, poverty, illegitimacy, both the conformity and the alienation of youth, violence—all are attributed to some appropriate subculture. Delinquency theories provide an impressive list of subcultures that play a vital role in explanations of delinquency" (p. 4). She pointed out that a central problem with subcultural theories was their faulty logic: Without a demonstration of the independent effect of a distinctive group of norms and values, subcultural theories became circular reasoning; that is, lower-class members committed crimes because their subcultural values encouraged criminal behavior, and the behavior in turn was the proof of their lower-class values (Kornhauser, 1978, p. 209).

The most critical point is that the subcultural theories did not provide empirical evidence of a direct relationship between subcultural values and criminal behavior. Short and Strodtbeck (1965, p. 75) pointed out that Miller inferred the existence of his focal concerns based on his observations of behavior; this did not prove the independent existence of lower-class values. Others pointed out that subcultural theory did not demonstrate that the source of the class–crime relationship was the existence among the lower class of subcultural values that encouraged criminal behavior (Ball-Rokeach, 1975). Some critics acknowledged the existence of subcultures but pointed out that there was no evidence that any subcultural values required or condoned illegal behavior (Erlanger, 1979). As a result of these criticisms, subcultural theories that were once influential have received decreasing attention over the past few decades. Today, a widely shared view in criminology

is that, overall, subcultural theories have not held up well to empirical tests (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Klein, Maxson, & Miller, 1995, p. 109). To date, the critical problem remains: There is no direct empirical evidence supporting a direct causal relationship between subcultural values and delinquency (Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 1981; Kornhauser, 1978, pp. 214–244). Given the importance of the subcultural theories, the present article attempts to resolve the problems of subcultural theories and suggests a theoretical modification. The article also provides some empirical evidence that subcultural values do affect criminal behavior under the condition that *negative social capital* is available.

REFORMULATING THE RELATIONSHIP OF SUBCULTURAL VALUES AND CRIME

The relationship between subcultural values and crime is of fundamental importance. In a broader scope, the idea that cultural values influence people's behavior is a core theoretical proposition of sociology. Subcultural values, beliefs, norms, or commitments to cultural values are, directly or indirectly, key concepts in many criminological theories. Reexamining the effect of subcultural values on criminal behavior is of great theoretical significance. Despite the general rejection of subcultural theories, some criminologists have resisted the criticisms, arguing that the negative association between class and involvement in violent crime was evidence supporting the subcultural theories (Magura, 1975; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1982). Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1982, p. 101) argued that conduct is an external manifestation of cultural values. Braithwaite (1989) argued that understanding the criminal subculture is central to our understanding of crime. In his opinion, subcultural theory in criminology was dealt an unfair blow. He stated that we cannot easily accept that it does not explain crime at all (1989, p. 25). The concept of subculture continues to appear in criminological literature. Many argue for the existence of subcultures—for example, Braithwaite (1989, p. 25):

> We can not say that criminal subcultures do not exist or are not important. The Italian Mafia, British Skin Heads, Japanese Yamaguchi Gumi, American Hell's Angels, Indian Banjaras, New Zealand Mongrel Mob, Chinese Triads, New Guinean Rascals are unusually stigmatized groups which have obvious roles in transmitting criminal subcultures. Without much scratching below the surface of society, we can see variegated subcultures of drug use, groups that nurture subcultural behavior patterns such as motor vehicle theft gangs, associations of respectable businesspersons in a particular industry who meet to fix prices illegally, networks of intermediaries who negotiate bribes between vendors and purchasers in industries like aerospace, communities of tax consultants and clients who share knowledge on how to evade and avoid taxes.

It is especially notable that much of the gang research literature has assumed the existence of subculture in gangs. Short (1990, p. 148) defines gangs as the carriers of subculture. Much of the ethnographic work on gangs describes gang subcultures

(e.g., Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Moore, 1978; Padilla, 1992; Vigil, 1988). Tittle and Paternoster (2000, p. 146) conclude that gang culture is fairly well developed. The culture of the gang is composed of a set of attitudes that portrays the gang in a positive light and paints a hostile picture of outsiders.

Further, there is some evidence from ethnographic research that some subcultural violent values influence and even condone crime. For example, Majors and Billson (1992) have shown that the culture of masculinity promotes violence, especially when alcohol and substance use are involved. Hagedorn (1998) describes how the values of being a tough guy, "new jacks," and the concept of being a man are inclined toward violence and crime. Horowitz (1983) offers similar findings. Anderson (1994) describes how a code of the streets endorses violence as a way of life; violence becomes valued and prized in and of itself and is transmitted to younger males as part of a violent gang subculture. Others (e.g., Ice T & Sigmund, 1994) also report the effect of subcultural values and attitudes on crime. Indeed, even if a subculture does not directly demand crime, it has a role in causing crime. Matza (1964) has proposed processes that illustrate how subcultural values influence deviance but do not demand delinquency. For Matza, the delinquent belongs to a subculture characterized by values that allow delinquency without demanding it. Developing Matza's notion of a "subterranean" source of subcultural delinquency, Hagan and his colleagues (Hagan, Heller, Classen, Boehnke, & Merkens, 1998; Hagan, Merkens, & Boehnke, 1995) identify two separate traditions of subcultural theories. They analyze Matza and Sykes' notion of a subterranean source of subcultural delinquency (1961), linking the core values of mainstream cultural values in market societies to values of subcultural delinquency. Hagan and his colleagues provide empirical evidence for the role of subterranean values in the formation of subcultural delinquency (Hagan et al., 1998; Hagan et al., 1995). The persistence of the influence of the subculture concept suggests the importance of reexamination for the central issue of causal validity of subcultural theories. Nevertheless, few studies have offered a direct solution for this important issue.

This article proposes that a critical theoretical weakness of subcultural theories was that subcultural values were used as exclusive explanatory variables without much regard to structural elements in the crime causation process. Subcultural values were argued to cause deviant or criminal behavior under any structural conditions. Social structure does not appear to have played any explicit role in the proposed causal relationship between subcultural values and criminal behavior. Subcultural theories were therefore theoretically imbalanced in a sociological sense; that is, in stating the effect of subcultural values on criminal behavior, there was no significant place for social structure. Recognizing this theoretical imbalance leads to a reasonable modification to the subcultural statement: Perhaps the effect of subcultural values becomes significant only under certain structural conditions. Indeed, the important roles that structural conditions play in the causal process can be seen from the theoretical description of subcultural theories themselves. The essence of

social structure is the presence of social relationships or networks of relationship among actors. Social relationships among a group of actors are the basis of social structure, which consists of roles and expectations. There is no social structure when focus is on isolated individuals. Very typically, subcultural theories aimed to explain delinquency in gang or group contexts—the theories of Cohen, Miller, and Cloward and Ohlin are all gang theories. These contexts of gangs and groups directly involved in the crime causation process are structural components; they are relationships or social structures. Unfortunately, these contexts were not explicitly operationalized into empirical causal propositions. Omission of the structural element in the causal relation proposition leads to cultural determinism, where subcultural values become the only explanatory variable in the causal relationship.

This argument regarding the role of social relationships or structure in crime causation can be substantiated by the literature. One of the best-known findings in the field of criminology is that delinquency is typically committed in co-offender or group contexts. The majority of juvenile offenses are perpetrated by groups of two or three offenders (Zimring, 1981). A robust finding is that gang members are more likely than non–gang members to commit offenses, especially serious and violent offenses (Spergel, 1990). Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, and Chard-Wierschem (1993) conducted a critical test of this thesis. Their longitudinal study provides strong evidence that gang membership increases a youth's involvement in crime and delinquency. The group nature of offenses shows the impact of structural elements in the processes of delinquency causation: The relationship among offenders is a significant condition for crime to occur. When examining the direct effect of subcultural values on criminal behavior, it is important to take into account the structural element. Therefore, adding to the criticisms of empirical and logical problems with subcultural theories, it can be said that subcultural theories generally have failed to explicitly delineate the role of structural relationships among offenders in the process where subcultural values cause crime. This failure is a serious drawback of the classical subcultural theories. Here, my criticism of subcultural theories is very different from those in the literature, in the sense that it immediately suggests a possible solution: not to reject subcultural theory wholesale but to modify the subcultural thesis by explicitly introducing the contextual role of relationships, or social structure, into the proposition that subcultural values cause crime.

The operationalization of this idea is naturally to introduce structural variables such as gangs or co-offense groups as a conditional variable for the causal relationship between subculture and deviant or criminal behavior, because subcultural theories imply that social structures typically work as a context within which subcultural values influence or lead to violent criminal behavior. With this modification, a subcultural value would show different effects on criminal behavior under different conditions. When an offender is involved in a nonconventional structure or relationship, his or her subcultural values will have a significant effect on his or

her deviant or criminal behavior. When there is no social structure or relationship involved, a subcultural value will not have a significant effect on deviant or criminal behavior.

The modified causal relationship suggests that an independent effect of subcultural values on criminal behavior is conditioned by the presence of structural relations, such as gang or co-offender teams (a few offenders whose relationship is not very stable and lasting, committing a crime together). This is due to the fact that, outside a structure such as a gang or a co-offender team, there are no social resources available to the single offender to facilitate the process by which subcultural values produce criminal behavior. These resources produced by the relationship or structure are *negative social capital* (Liu, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999), which is social capital produced by nonconventional relationships or social structures, such as gangs.[1]

A recent breakthrough in social science is the social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988, 1990; Putnam, 1995). Social capital theorists argue that, like financial capital and human capital, social capital is another important resource for human action. According to Coleman, social-structural resources are a capital asset for the individual. Coleman defines these resources as social capital (1990, p. 302). The concept of social capital reveals those aspects of social structure and social relationship among actors that function to facilitate social action. Some of the most important forms of social capital are trust, obligations, expectations, information channels, and norms. The existence of these forms of social capital makes many otherwise impossible or ineffective social interactions and their consequences possible or effective because these aspects of social relations constitute resources that aid an individual's actions. The importance of Coleman's work has been widely recognized in social science. The concept of social capital has been used in analyses of education (how social capital generates human capital—e.g., Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1997), in analyses of social stratification (how social capital aids individuals in obtaining jobs—Bian, 1997; Granovetter, 1974, 1985), and in political science (of civic decline—Ehrenhalt, 1995; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 1996). The concept was introduced into criminology through the work of Sampson and Laub (1992, 1993), whose research showed how social capital can become a valuable resource in preventing criminal behavior. The most important recent work applying social capital theory to criminology has been done by Hagan and his colleagues. Hagan and McCarthy (1997a) linked social capital to anomie, suggesting that strain-and-opportunity also derives from the absence of social capital. By focusing on long-term development of social capital accumulation, conservation, and diminishment, they highlighted the cumulative significance of critical events

[1]The term "negative social capital" has also been used to refer to the negative consequences of "positive" social capital. This usage of the term, which differs from the meaning defined by Liu (1996, 1997, 1998, 1999), has received much criticism for its tendency to cause confusion (Portes, 1998).

and transitions in the life course. With this framework, Hagan and McCarthy (1997b) investigated homeless youth in two Canadian cities, explaining how adverse class backgrounds influenced their leaving home and how foreground class conditions channeled their involvement in crime through the harsh socioeconomic situation on the street. Further, Hagan and Parker (1999) have proposed a life-course capitalization theory, explaining that childhood delinquency is a consequence of the adolescent educational disinvestment of parents who are subsequently and cumulatively disadvantaged in preparing their children for school.

The concept of social capital addresses an important aspect of conventional relations and social structures, whereas criminal and deviant behaviors often occur in the context of nonconventional relations and networks of relationships. Extending Coleman's concept of social capital, the concept of negative social capital (Liu, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999) was proposed to address nonconventional relationships and their function as resources for deviant and criminal behavior. Similar to social capital, forms of negative social capital are trust, obligations, expectations, information channels, and norms in gangs. The existence of these negative social capitals makes many otherwise impossible or ineffective deviant or criminal behaviors and their consequences possible or effective, and consequently they are valuable resources to gang members. Thus, borrowing from the concept of social capital, negative social capital refers to those resources that exist in nonconventional relations and networks of relationships and are available to deviant or criminal actors who are involved in those relationships. These resources do not exist for isolated individual offenders.

The concept of negative social capital suggests a way of understanding how nonconventional structures or relationships such as gangs or co-offenders facilitate deviant or criminal actions. It focuses on the resourcefulness aspect of nonconventional relationships. Trust, obligation, expectations, approval, and information are all important resources that are conveniently accessible to offenders who are nested in offender groups. For example, gang members have access to information on drug dealing from other gang members, including markets and skills, that is useful for more successfully selling drugs (Kleiman & Smith, 1990; Spergel, 1990). Much gang research and subculture literature has offered descriptions that suggest how these resources help to facilitate the process that produces deviant and criminal behavior. It would be fruitful to devote further study to additional forms of negative social capital, their role in the deviant or criminal behavior production processes, and the ways in which they influence the actions of individuals who may not otherwise be deviant or criminal.

Evidence of negative social capital and of its resource functions is especially rich in ethnographic studies of gangs (Spergel, 1990). Thrasher (1927), for example, in his monumental work on gang research, proposed that gangs supply needed interaction and social contact for their members. He maintained that gangs provide a feeling of belonging and togetherness for participants. He pointed out how gangs

build unity among the gang members, bringing about increased cohesion among group members and helping to draw the gang members into more formal, organized, and long-term systems of interaction. These studies frequently report that a person joining a gang can gain emotional support, protection, and access to the skills and information channels and networks of the gang. These resources may be applied to gain illegal profits from such sources as illicit drugs. Gang members describe how trust, obligations, expectations, norms, and information function in facilitating their actions. Indeed, without producing these resources for its members, a gang would perhaps cease to exist. Being a gang member can be said to guarantee the obtainment of negative social capital produced by the gang. In this sense, gang membership is a summary indicator of possession of negative social capital, although it is not a direct measure of specific forms of negative social capital and it does not detail variations in access to social capital within gangs. However, being or not being a member of a gang certainly represents the between-group variation—which can reasonably be believed to be much greater than the within-group variation—in access to negative social capital.

In its most preliminary use, the concept of negative social capital provides a new understanding for the role of gangs and of small co-offender groups in crime production. The present article analyzes two kinds of relationships between offenders. One relationship is membership in a gang, which is a stable structure among members who identify with the gang. The other offender relationship is that of co-offenders. These are relationships that exist more temporarily; the participants commit an offense together, but they do not identify themselves as members of a stable group like a gang. Gang and co-offender relationships indicate accessibility to special social resources that are only available to offenders who are involved in relationships with other offenders in the deviant or criminal behavior production process. Gangs, representing stronger and more stable relationships, should provide more negative social capital resources than co-offender relationships.

RESEARCH STRATEGY, DATA, AND METHODS

As reviewed above, the most severe criticisms of subcultural theories were those from Kornhauser (1978) regarding the faulty logic of the theories in their circular reasoning. The subcultural theorists only inferred the effects of subcultural values from observed delinquent behavior, which subcultural values supposedly cause. Without an independent measure of subcultural values, the effect of subcultural values on criminal behavior cannot be empirically verified. The criticism seems to suggest a critical test of the subcultural thesis: Construct a measure of a subcultural value independent of criminal behavior and then estimate the effect of the subcultural value on the behavior. However, this cannot be done if a subcultural value does not exist, as many critics have argued and have demonstrated in many studies (Ball-Rokeach, 1973; Buffalo & Rodgers, 1971; Dorn, 1969; Lerman, 1968; Short,

1964; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; Siegel et al., 1973). For example, the classic study by Short and Strodtbeck (1965) found that even gang members evaluated mainstream middle-class values uniformly higher than delinquent values. Indeed, we cannot obtain a good measure of a subcultural value when few respondents identify themselves with it. In this article, the focus is on violent subcultural values, because a large number of the subcultural studies have focused on violent subcultures (Anderson, 1994; Hagedorn, 1998; Horowitz, 1983; Majors & Billson, 1992). If we were to ask a group of murderers whether they would agree that a person should violently kill another person, few of them would say that they agree. Therefore, the reality is that an independent measure of violence value cannot be readily obtained.

The logical problem of subcultural theories thus implies a seemingly unresolvable measurement difficulty for subcultural values. However, Hagan and his colleagues' recent studies on subterranean cultural values (Hagan et al., 1998; Hagan et al., 1995) lead to a clue for resolving the measurement difficulty of subcultural values. Their research concludes that there is a link between mainstream values and subcultural values. Subcultural values are often essentially consistent with certain mainstream values; they are simply expressed in different forms. These findings lead to the idea that a violent subcultural value may not exist in a "pure" form but may exist in some form linked to certain mainstream values. For example, although gang members may not value violent killing *per se* highly, they do value violence much more highly than non-gang individuals when the violence can be justified to show their courage or their loyalty to their gang member friends. This is one form in which a subcultural violence value exists: Subcultural violence values exist along with bravery and loyalty, which are mainstream middle-class values in an "integrated" form. Violent subcultural values do not exist in an isolated form and cannot be measured in a survey. Therefore, in measuring the violent subcultural value, the proper operationalization should be in a form that integrates a violent subcultural value with certain mainstream cultural values, such as loyalty to one's friends. Subcultural values may only exist in an integrated form with mainstream cultural values.

For the purpose of preliminarily testing the modified causal proposition of subcultural violent values and their effect on criminal behavior, a great deal of effort was made to find a data set that hopefully would include an independent violent subcultural value measure and measures of criminal behavior. Unsurprisingly, such a data set cannot be found in the Western criminological literature, given the problems raised and difficulties encountered with the subcultural theories reviewed above. If researchers do not believe in the causal effect of subcultural values on criminal behavior, it is not likely that efforts would be made to design such measures and collect such data. Given the general rejection of subcultural theories in Western criminological literature, few researchers would have collected data including measures of a violent subcultural value independent of criminal behavior.

However, the possibilities in a non-Western context do exist. Traditionally and culturally, the Chinese firmly believe that deviant cultural values are causes of deviance and crime. Traditional Chinese philosophy has always emphasized that cultural values and beliefs are conceptually distinct from actions and that they determine one's behavior. The central theme of Confucianism emphasizes the fundamental importance of teaching people "correct" cultural values and teaching them to think of others. Confucius considered the teaching of good cultural values to be the foundation for good government and political rule (Confucius, 1994). Munro (1977, p. 48) quotes two Chinese authors: "All human acts are directed by thought consciousness." "Thought is the director of action. Whatever kind of thought there is initially determines what kind of action will follow." This basic idea has long been instilled into the subconscious of the Chinese people and deeply influences Chinese culture (Xin, 1994). Chinese Communist leaders continued these traditional beliefs (De Bary, 1998, pp. 134–135). The most natural Chinese understanding of crime and deviance is that incorrect values and thoughts are the most central determinants for deviant or criminal behaviors. (For a review see Gao [1986], Kang [1992], and Xiao & Pi [1992].) Instilling and educating youth and citizens with "correct" values and thoughts is emphasized very heavily, inasmuch as their values and thoughts are believed to direct their actions (Troyer, 1989). The Chinese style of social control emphasizes early intervention, rehabilitation, and ideological education; all efforts are based on the belief that establishing correct values and thoughts in citizens is fundamental to reducing deviant and criminal behavior (Troyer, 1989).

The data for the preliminary test of the modified causal relationship were obtained from a survey of inmates that was conducted in the fall of 1992 by the faculty at the Center of Criminology at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences. Tianjin is a large city in China that at the end of 1993 had a population of 9.28 million (PRC State Statistical Bureau, 1990–1999). Based on the resources available, a sample of 25 percent of all inmates admitted into prison in Tianjin in 1991 was randomly selected using the complete roster of inmates admitted. This procedure yielded a total of 1,063 respondents. Of the sample, 29.5 percent were violent offenders; 60.4 percent were property offenders; 5.3 percent were economic crime offenders; about 4.4 percent were "sex offenders" involving prostitution; fewer than 0.4 percent were political offenders.

Among all sampled offenders, 279 inmates were recidivists who were serving a sentence for their most recent offense. They had been released from prison after serving the sentence for their previous offense (the most recent offense for which they had completed a sentence) and had been rearrested and resentenced for their current offense (the offense for which they were currently incarcerated). The questionnaire included additional questions for these recidivist inmates, for the purpose of further studying recidivists. The additional questions for recidivists requested information about their criminal history, including the number of prior

offenses, the length of the sentence for their previous offense, the date of release after serving the sentence for their previous offense, the date of rearrest for their current offense, gang membership, and other demographic information prior to current rearrest. These recidivists are the subjects of the present article. The research team was composed of professors and researchers of the academy and some trained university graduates in the social sciences. To ensure the validity and accuracy of the answers, the survey was administered by the research team without the participation of prison staff. The researchers emphasized to the inmates the purely academic nature of the survey and explained to them that their answers would have no bearing on their treatment or punishment. The research staff assured the inmates of complete anonymity. The questionnaires were self-administered. Inmates completed their questionnaires voluntarily and privately. Among the 1,063 inmates, 93 (8.7 percent) were illiterate or only knew a few words and asked for assistance from research staff in completing their questionnaires. Few inmates had ever participated in an academic survey. They seemed to be very interested and cooperative. The response rate was close to 100 percent. High response rates have been reported in many Chinese surveys (Blau & Ruan, 1990; Walder, 1990, 1992, 1995).

The data include a list of measures of cultural values, but most of these are measures of a variety of "bourgeois" values, which according to official ideology lead to criminal behavior.[2] However, there is a measure for violent subcultural values. The measure gauges whether the respondents agreed with, were not sure about, or disagreed with an old gang saying: "A person should go to violent fights for his friends, unafraid of even being stabbed in the ribs of both sides." This measure of violent subcultural value includes not only violent orientation but also a sense of loyalty to friends. The measure is in an integrated form. By conventional standards of measurement validity, this variable may be weak in its ability to measure violent orientation. However, despite the weakness, the measure does differentiate the respondents in their acceptance of the violent subcultural value. Because it can be expected that most of the respondents would claim loyalty to friends, different choices still reflect the differences in willingness to choose violence as a means. Thirty-six percent of the recidivists disagreed with the gang saying, 35 percent of the recidivists were not sure, and 27.7 percent agreed. Given the reality of measuring subcultural values analyzed above, measurement weakness would seem to be difficult, if not entirely impossible, to avoid in studies of subcultural values.

The purpose of the analyses reported here was to conduct a preliminary test for the modified model of the causal effect of violent subcultural values on criminal behavior. Survival analyses were used as analytical methods for data on 279 repeat

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[2]Separate analyses were performed for these value measures. Their effects on re-offending were generally not statistically significant.

offenders (recidivists) who had experienced at least one incarceration. Because the original sample of 1,063 inmates was a random sample of the total inmate population, the subsample of 279 recidivists was a random sample of the recidivist population in Tianjin prison, representative of all repeat offenders in Tianjin prison.[3] For these recidivists, the number of months of non-offense after last release was calculated; the follow-up time was found to vary across individuals from their last release to arrest for current offense. Survival analyses model the time to event, which is the last rearrest for each offender in this article. This approach has two major advantages. First, survival analysis is longitudinal in nature although the data were collected in one survey. The longitudinal nature of the analyses will increase our confidence in the causal directions of the relationship. Second, a preferred dependent variable fitting conceptualization of general criminal behavior should reflect a pattern of behavior, rather than a single action. A measure of risk of re-offending for offenders would be more adequate. The survival analyses model the hazard of re-offending, which is the conditional probability of re-offending at a time t, given a person who remained non-offending for a length of time up to t. Survival analyses have the advantage of taking into account the fact that some offenders re-offend shortly after release for a previous arrest, whereas others re-offend after a long period of time following their last release from prison. The probit and logit models often used for recidivism analyses do not take this fact into account.

The advantages of survival analyses in modeling recidivism are widely accepted today. In recent criminological applications, parametric models have been skillfully developed and estimated (e.g., Lattimore, Visher, & Linster, 1995; Visher, Lattimore, & Linster, 1991). In other cases, variables thought to influence the hazard were included as stratification variables; hazards were then nonparametrically estimated for different strata and compared graphically or analytically (e.g., Joo, Ekland-Olson, & Kelly, 1995). A major disadvantage of this approach is that the validity of the parametric specification depends on the author's theoretical assumptions. The development of a parametric model requires strong theories specifying the mathematical form. Theories at this level are currently rarely available in criminology. Also, estimating the effects of independent variables is different from treating independent variables as strata variables. This type of nonparametric analysis does not provide meaningful coefficients reflecting the effects of variables on hazards. A number of studies have used the Cox proportional hazard model (e.g., Gruenewald & West, 1989; Stewart, Gruenewald, & Parker, 1992). The Cox proportional model (Cox, 1972, 1975; Lancaster, 1990) makes no

[3]Performing analyses only on recidivists may raise the issue of sample selection bias. The most regularly used procedure for correcting this problem was developed by Heckman (1979) and Berk (1983). However, Stolzenberg and Relles (1990, p. 408) found in their Monte Carlo simulations that the method could easily do more harm than good. Acknowledging the methodological concerns and limiting generalizations only to the recidivist population, this article does not apply the Heckman–Berk corrections.

assumptions regarding the distributional form of the hazard. Its assumptions are much weaker than those of parametric models. The coefficients from the semiparametric estimation have straightforward explanations. This article uses the Cox proportional model to estimate the effects of independent variables.

The analytical approach limits the analyses to a sample of recidivists. It only models variation within this group, reducing the chances of finding significant effects. Given this fact, the results are expected to be very conservative. Perhaps a significant effect, if found, would imply a more confident conclusion about the existence of the effect.[4]

The number of months from the last release to the last rearrest was calculated for each inmate using the date of their last release from prison and the date of their rearrest for the current offense. The average duration of non-offending was 39.3 months. Because all recidivists have been rearrested for their current offense, the failure rate is 100 percent; no cases are censored.

Gangs are an important nonconventional social structure and a form of relatively stable and involved relationships among a number of individuals. As reviewed above, numerous studies have described how gangs provide resources to their members—in other words, provide significant negative social capital. In the Tianjin data, 38 percent of the recidivists were members of gangs; 62 percent were not gang members.

The data also include information on the current offense of the recidivists—specifically, whether the offense was committed with another person, defined as a co-offense. A dummy variable for co-offense was constructed. A code of 1 was assigned to offenders who answered yes to any of several variables that dealt with co-offense, and the rest of the recidivists were assigned a value of 0. The majority of the offenses were co-offenses (62.7 percent). The presence of a relationship is expected to produce some negative social capital according to social capital theories.

The literature has suggested many variables that influence the hazard of re-offending. The major variables include onset (the age of first incarceration), criminal history, and current age. These variables need to be controlled in order to estimate the effect of violent subcultural values on risk of reoffending. Onset is measured by the question "What was your age when you were first sentenced by a court?" Criminal history is measured by two variables, the self-reported number of prior offenses and the length of the last sentence imposed by a court. For these Chinese inmates, the length of the last sentence is a reasonable approximation to the

[4]Another seemingly possible analytical strategy would be to include in the analyses all of the inmates, both recidivists and non-recidivists, treating non-recidivists as censored cases in survival models. However, non-recidivists, by definition, have no record of prior criminal history—which, according to the literature, must be controlled in evaluating the risk of re-offending. The lack of criminal history information in the data renders this strategy unfeasible for the present article.

seriousness of the previous crime. The more serious the offense, the longer the sentence. The inmates' answers to three questions regarding the adequacy of their sentence indicate that this approximation is quite reasonable. One question asked, "Do you think that the facts used by the court for your sentence were accurate?" Fully 44.2 percent of the inmates responded that they were accurate; 42.2 percent of the inmates responded that they were largely accurate; only 12.5 percent responded that they were inaccurate. When asked "Do you think that the judgment of the seriousness of your crime by the court was accurate?" 47 percent responded that it was accurate; 40 percent responded that it was largely accurate; only 12.3 percent responded that it was not accurate. When asked "Do you think your sentence is adequate?" 63 percent answered yes; 31.8 percent answered that it was harsher than he or she deserved; only 3.5 percent answered that it was mistaken.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics. The upper panel presents mean and standard deviation for continuous variables and the lower panel presents frequency and percentage for categories of discrete variables. The average duration of non-offending since the last release from prison is 39.8 months. The long duration of non-offending contributes to the low recidivist rate in China.

The analyses were first conducted with gang membership as a conditional variable. The results are reported in Table 2. To test the hypothesis that violent subcultural values influence behavior when the structural condition "gang" is present, three models with and without the interaction terms are estimated.

In Model 3, the interaction term represents the conditional effect of gang membership on the hypothesized causal relationship. The statistical significance of the product term confirms the hypothesis: With the presence of gang membership, violence values significantly contribute to the hazard of re-offending, whereas the main effect of violent subcultural values alone is not statistically significant. Also, gang membership identification by itself significantly contributes to the risk of re-offending, consistent with the general findings of the literature. Other control variables show results that are generally consistent with the literature. Length of last sentence is highly statistically significant. The number of prior offenses is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Age effect is significant, consistent with the well-known aging-out phenomenon. The effect of age squared is significant, indicating that the effect of age is curved. Age at first sentence is not significant, but the direction is consistent with the expectation from the literature: The lower the age at first sentence, the higher the risk of reoffending. These results suggest that the hypothesized interaction process indeed exists: The violence value does influence the risk of criminal re-offense when a social structure providing resources and support is present—that is, when negative social capital supplied by gangs is available.

Table 1

Description of Variables

Variables	Mean	*SD*	*N*
Non-offense duration	39.760	40.23	279
Age at first sentence	23.36	7.79	279
Length of last sentence	33.45	27.26	279
Number of offenses	4.039	3.46	279
Age	27.2	7.14	279

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Violence value		
1 Disagree	100	36.9
2 Not sure	96	35.4
3 Agree	75	27.7
Gang membership		
1 Yes	106	38
2 No	173	62
Co-offense		
1 Yes	175	62.7
2 No	104	37.3

Note. *SD* = standard deviation.

Table 2

Coefficients of Cox Proportional Hazard Model With Conditional Effect of Gang Membership

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age at first sentence	-0.062	-0.091	-0.004
Length of last sentence	0.015***	0.018***	0.023***
Number of prior offenses	0.016*	0.002	0.135*
Age	-0.762***	-0.695***	-0.609***
Age squared	0.013***	0.007***	0.008***
Violence value	0.421	0.199	0.238
Gang membership		4.323***	3.872***
Violence value × gang membership			5.879***
Likelihood ratio	39.5	43.5	60.9
Degree of freedom	6	7	8
P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
N	265	260	269

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$.

Table 3 presents results from two separately estimated models on the effect of co-offense. Co-offense is a term used by the Chinese scholarly community to refer to situations where a few offenders offended together, but they do not form a stable gang. Table 3 shows the effect of violent subcultural values separately for both situations: In Model 1, the current offense is a co-offense; in Model 2, the current offense is not a co-offense.

Table 3

Coefficients of Proportional Hazard Models: Effect of Violence Value on Risk of Re-Offending

	Model 1 Co-offense	Model 2 Non–co-offense
Violence value	0.262**	-0.033
Age at first sentence	-0.02	-0.001
Length of last sentence	0.02***	0.013***
Number of prior offenses	0.005	-0.043
Age	-0.414***	-0.342***
Age squared	0.005***	0.003***
Likelihood ratio	73.9	47.8
Degree of freedom	6	6
P-value	0.000	0.000
N	158	100

*$p < 0.05$. **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$.

The presence of violent subcultural values significantly influences the hazard of reoffending when offenders commit their crimes along with other offenders. However, violent subcultural values are not found to influence the hazard of reoffending when there are no co-offenders, after controlling for the usual factors that influence the risk of reoffending. The results indicate that the presence of a relationship among offenders moderates the effect of violent subcultural values on the risk of reoffending. Table 3 also confirms other generally accepted conclusions in the literature. Criminal history influences the risk of reoffending: The length of the last sentence for the previous crime is highly significant. The effect of age and of age squared is significant. The number of prior offenses is not significant in these two models. Both models fit the data well; the likelihood ratios are 73.9 and 47.8 respectively, and the *P*-values are near zero.

CONCLUSION

Subcultural theories were once among the most influential theories in criminology. Although it is generally accepted that subcultural theories have not held up to empirical evidence, it is premature to give up such an important perspective. The philosophy of sciences teaches us that it is unwise to abandon influential theories before important modifications are considered (Lakatos, 1970). The critical difficulty for subcultural theories was that there was little empirical evidence that deviant and criminal values caused deviant and criminal behavior. Subcultural theorists generally used deviant or criminal behavior as indicators of deviant or criminal subculture, which was supposedly caused by subcultural values. This circular reasoning was the most severe problem of subcultural theories.

This article is an attempt to resolve the most critical issue of subcultural theories: the faulty logic issue and the measurement of a subcultural value independent of deviant or criminal behavior. The article offers a theoretical modification to the classical subcultural thesis by introducing the conditional effect of social structure or relationship, as an indicator of access to negative social capital. This article argues that the failure of the existing subcultural theories may be due to their omission of structural elements. The study applies Liu's concept of negative social capital (Liu, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999) to interpret the conditional impact of social structure—the relationships among offenders—on the causal effects of subcultural values on deviant or criminal behavior. This article resolves the difficulty in independently measuring the subcultural values by proposing the idea of "integrated" measures, which may be considered weak measures according to the conventional criteria of measurement; however, an integrated measure may more accurately reflect the reality of subcultural values in their existent forms, indicating a model for measurement of objects of study that are ambiguous or whose existence is in question.

This article further provides a preliminary test for the modified models of the effect of violent subcultural values on criminal behavior. The empirical analyses have a number of limitations, and interpretations of the results must be cautious. One weakness is that there is only one item in the data measuring violent subcultural value; multiple measures would be preferred. Another weakness is that the measures of negative social capital are indirect. Gangs and co-offense reflect access to negative social capital, but they are not direct measures of negative social capital. Therefore, the idea of negative social capital as an important part of the theoretical formulation for the modified subcultural causal thesis did not receive a direct test in this article. It is only a reasonable interpretation for the effect of gangs and co-offense situations. Further confirmation of these theories will require direct measures of negative social capital. In view of these severe limitations, the results can only be viewed as preliminary.

The theoretical reasoning in this article has offered a new direction for possible further development. Although preliminary in nature, most of the results are significant and consistent with the expectation. Given the difficulty in obtaining ideal data with independent measures of subcultural values and criminal behavior, the preliminary results are encouraging. Indeed, the findings for Chinese offenders largely confirmed our theoretical expectations. In the author's view, what is most important is not the results of one analysis presented in this article but rather the idea and logic developed in the study. Given the importance of the issue and the scarcity of ideal data, further empirical studies are important in increasing our confidence in the generalizability of the conclusions.

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