

## The Relationship between Family Socioeconomic Status and Lifestyle among Youth in Hong Kong

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### *Abstract*

Youth's delinquent behavior has been a major concern for people from Hong Kong. To resolve this problem, the purpose of this study was to identify the causes of delinquency. One of the objectives was to examine the relationship between family socioeconomic status (SES) and delinquent behavior. At the same time, the mediating effects of class consciousness, alienation, negative labeling, and social bonding on the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior will be examined as well. To collect empirical evidence, a self-administrated survey was adopted. The data of the survey were obtained from tertiary students in Hong Kong. A sample of 136 respondents was obtained from nine high education institutions. Results indicated that family SES was not significantly related to delinquent behavior directly. However, there was an indirect relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior through social bonding because family SES was positively related to social bonding, whereas social bonding was positively related to delinquent behavior. Therefore, the findings manifested the indirect effect among family SES, social bonding, and youth's delinquent behavior. Moreover, negative labeling was positively correlated with delinquent behavior, but family SES was not associated with negative labeling. In addition, family SES was significantly related to alienation, but alienation was not significantly related with delinquent behavior. Family SES was not associated with class consciousness, and class consciousness was not related to delinquent behavior as well. Overall, these findings supported the hypotheses derived from social control and labeling theories but failed to support conflict theory. This implies that social bonding and negative labels are significant for the youth. In all, this study provides a comprehensive framework to view the path of delinquent behavior.

### **Introduction**

The problem of youth's delinquent behavior has been a prevalent issue in Hong Kong. In response to the growing public concerns over substance use among youth, a survey was conducted to investigate this phenomenon. According to the 2011/12 Survey of Drug Use

among Students (Narcotics Division, Security Bureau 2013), among 41,271 college students, 65.7% were reported drinking alcohol, 7.6% were reported taking tobacco, and 1.1% were reported taking drugs in the past year. Meanwhile, 77.7%, 13.9%, and 3.3% of the respondents claimed that they used alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, respectively, in their lifetime. Also, 10.9% of respondents indicated that schools were the usual venues for taking drugs (see Appendix A). Therefore, youth's delinquent behavior on campus is a prominent problem.

Regarding this social problem, most authors attempt to figure out the causes of delinquency. They suggest that family socioeconomic (SES) is a significant factor to delinquent behavior (Carney et al. 2013; Defoe, Farrington, and Loeber 2013; Le and Stockdale 2011; Legleye et al. 2010). However, the findings of their research were inconsistent. For example, Defoe et al. (2013) claimed that there is a negative relationship between low SES and delinquent behavior among youth, but Legleye et al. (2010) argued that not only lower SES related to delinquent behavior but also higher SES correlated with delinquency. Apparently, it is ambiguous to explain the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior. As a result, this study aimed to examine this relationship intelligibly.

Moreover, it is argued that the youth incorporate multiple factors that exercise direct and indirect effects on their behavior (Hinton, Sheperis, and Sims 2003). Noyori-Corbett and Moon (2010) suggested that parental involvement may mediate the effect of socioeconomic factor on delinquency. In addition, Inderbitzin, Bates, and Gainey (2013) claimed that delinquency is a class-specific behavior, so the impoverished youth are often labeled as delinquents. As a consequence, social bonding, class consciousness, alienation, and negative labeling are the mediators on the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior. In this paper, these indirect effects will be identified systematically.

### ***Significance***

A wide variety of studies have examined the effect of family SES on delinquent behavior, but limited studies incorporate family SES and other social factors such as class consciousness, alienation, negative labeling, and social bonding in the analysis of delinquency. To fill this gap, this study identifies the direct and indirect effects on the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior by using various mediators. As a result, this study provides a holistic and systematic framework to understand the path of delinquent behavior.

### ***Research Methodology***

To achieve the objectives, information was collected using the following methods:

- (i) An extensive document and literature review of scholar journals, research reports, books, and web site with related topics

- (ii) The newly designed questionnaires conducted to measure family SES, class consciousness, alienation, negative labeling, social bonding, delinquent behavior, and sociodemographic characteristics on the targeted respondents

### ***Structure***

The structure of the present study is categorized into eight sections. Section 2 demonstrates a comprehensive literature review related to the problem of delinquency. Section 3 composes of a series of definitions and a theoretical framework. Section 4 presents research objectives and research methodology. Section 5 provides the descriptive and analytical results. Section 6 presents the discussion. Section 7 shows several recommendations for the limitations of the study and the implication of the findings. Finally, section 8 presents the conclusion.

### **Literature Review**

In this section, the information of Hong Kong college students' delinquent behavior will be provided. Subsequently, a comprehensive literature review about the direct and indirect effects of family SES on delinquent behavior will be organized.

### ***Delinquent Behavior in Hong Kong***

Youth delinquency is a common problem in Hong Kong. According to the *Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics* (2012), 4,350 of youth aged 16 to 20 years were arrested by the police in 2011. Although the recent statistics show that the number of arrested youth decreased by 7.3% in 2012, many youth still commits nonviolent and violent crimes (Hong Kong Police Force 2013). However, these statistics could not represent the authentic situation of crime in Hong Kong because these statistics exclude those delinquent behaviors that are not executed by the authorities. Thus, the actual crime rate may be higher than the official statistics.

### ***Direct Effects***

#### ***Family SES and delinquent behavior***

Regarding the severity of delinquency, most sociologists attempt to identify the underlying causes. Their studies release that one of the major factors is family SES, used as parents' occupational prestige, income, and education level. According to Carney et al. (2013), there is a significant association between family SES and delinquency, although the direction is unknown. Subsequently, Defoe et al. (2013) and Le and Stockdale (2011) supported this notion and complement that SES is negatively related to delinquency.

However, several authors argued against these findings. For example, Özbay (2006) pointed out that the youth with lower monthly family income are less likely to commit delinquency. In addition, Legleye et al. (2010) argued that youth from families

with both higher and lower SES likewise engage in cannabis use, although the frequent use is different. On the basis of the above-mentioned arguments, the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior is controversial and inconsistent; hence, it is required to be examined clearly in this study.

#### *Class consciousness and delinquent behavior*

Another potential factor of youth's delinquency is class consciousness. It is defined as the awareness of social stratification in a capitalist society (Scott 2006). The youth of the disadvantaged class engage in delinquent behavior as a means of antagonism against capitalists. It is because they perceive class inequality in which the capitalist class exploits and oppresses the working class based on its ownership of the means of production (Olsen 2011; Downes and Rock 2007). In addition, Harper and Leicht (2002) believed that such class struggle will take a bloody revolution by violence when the perception of social inequalities emerges. This notion is consistent with the finding that youth gang membership is a resistant phenomenon that resulted from structural inequities (Librett 2008). The youth gang members exercise the badness through their lifestyle choices, including participating in drug dealing, street bullying, violent offences, fraud, and property offences (Gunter 2008). Therefore, class consciousness may lead to the occurrence of delinquent behavior.

#### *Alienation and delinquent behavior*

Apart from class consciousness, alienation also plays an important role in delinquent behavior. Alienation refers to a sense of estrangement or separation from self, significant others, school, or society (Reijntjes et al. 2010; O'Donnell, Schwab-Stone, and Ruchkin 2006). It connects to delinquent behaviors such as violence, vandalism, alcoholism, and drug abuse (Safipour et al. 2010; O'Donnell et al. 2006). This notion is consistent with the findings of Deutschmann (2007), who claimed that there is a relationship between higher alienation and antisocial behaviors, including sabotage, truancy, drug use, and violence. Reijntjes et al. (2010) suggested that the youth have aggressive responses when they experience exclusion by their peers or feel alienated.

#### *Negative labeling and delinquent behavior*

Most scholars point out that negative labeling produced by other people is related to youth's delinquent behavior. According to Link and Phelan (2001), the labeled people are disapproved by others based on undesirable characteristics or stereotypes, which lead them to engage in delinquent behavior. Grattet (2011) stated that different people including peers, parents, teachers, and even anonyms influence youth's delinquent behavior through social interaction; hence, others' responses to an individual's act are very important. They believe that serious delinquent behavior is shaped by the reaction of the community. If an act is seen as evil by others, this perception will guide an individual

to perceive that behavior as evil and enforce them to follow. Thus, when individuals perceive a negative label by their parents and teachers, they will increase their delinquent behavior.

#### *Social bonding and delinquent behavior*

A variety of studies argued that youth engage in delinquent behaviors because of weak social bonds. Thus, they believed that insecure attachments are the root of criminality. Furthermore, Longshore et al. (2004) pointed out that delinquent behavior results from fragile social bonds, which included poor attachment to other people, low involvement in traditional activities, insufficient commitment to conventional lifestyles, and low endorsement of conventional moral beliefs. Pizzolato and Hicklen (2011) also supported that the level of parental involvement and attachment affects the development of college students as post-tertiary institutions have multiform standards of behavior. Therefore, parental guidance is important for the youth.

#### ***Indirect Effects***

##### *Family SES, class consciousness, and delinquent behavior*

Class consciousness serves as a mediator of the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior. Zhou (2009) stated that class conflict, class consciousness, and favor in violence toward class enemy are prevalent in developing society because of the resentment of income gap. In fact, several studies also approve that lower-class youth lack immediate material wealth (i.e., income), social recognition, and social standing relative to middle and upper class; hence, they engage in delinquent behaviors like theft, violence, and vandalism to oppose inequalities (Piff et al. 2012; Reay 2005).

##### *Family SES, alienation, and delinquent behavior*

Alienation is another mediator of the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior. Recent and prior studies point out that people with lower household income have higher levels of alienation compared with upper-class people; hence, the poor people are more likely to commit crime (O'Donnell et al. 2006; Smith and Bohm 2008). Besides, according to Giordano (2003), SES differences are reproduced within youth's social hierarchies. Middle-SES youth have more resources to gain peer alliances in accordance with their higher status. However, low-SES youth experience peer rejection or lack ability to build up friendship. Thus, these rejected youth are more likely to engage in aggressive and emotional behaviors.

##### *Family SES, negative labeling, and delinquent behavior*

A conception of delinquency largely restricts to the lower class because the behavior that trigger labels occur frequently in this group than that in other groups (Clinard and Meier 2008). This notion is consistent with the observation of Inderbitzin et al. (2013). They

also claimed that delinquent behavior is a class-specific bias, which means there are more rule breakers in the lower class. For instance, police often stigmatize low-class youth as criminals (Tapia 2011). Therefore, many people with these negative attitudes and perceptions toward disadvantaged groups included welfare recipients and the poor for a long time (Dijker and Koomen 2007). As a result, these less power groups internalize these negative labels and lead to adverse consequences.

#### *Family SES, social bonding, and delinquent behavior*

There is a debate that family SES is related to social bonding, which links up with delinquent behavior. According to Ronka, Kinnunen, and Pulkkinen (2000), disadvantaged family background causes youth at risk for adverse outcomes. For example, truancy appears in lower SES individuals. Henry (2007) and Veenstra et al. (2010) believed that the negative effects on the maladaptive behavior derived from disadvantage may influence the life course. In other words, the behavior of the youth can be affected by the deviant behavior in childhood and adolescence because of disadvantaged background. Veenstra et al. (2006) pointed out that delinquent behavior is more likely to link up with low-class youth because they have insufficient social bonds with their parents. Because their parents have lower education level, they use unresponsive parenting style to take care of their children. Therefore, the youth are more likely to associate with delinquent behavior without appropriate parenting style.

#### **Summary**

The previous studies provide a crucial insight to understand the impacts of the structural and social factors on youth's delinquent behavior. However, some studies examine the antecedents and mediators of delinquent behavior separately. To identify the direct influences and indirect effects of various factors on delinquent behavior, this study explores these effects simultaneously.

#### **Conceptualization**

##### *Definition of delinquent behavior*

It is vital to define the concept of delinquent behavior first. In general, it refers to an antisocial behavior that may result in a serious consequence, namely, being arrested by police (Wan 2010). However, the targets of this study are not delinquent experts. Thus, the behavior related to the violations of moral authority, parental authority, school authority, or local authority is seen as a delinquent behavior in this study.

##### *Definition of family SES*

Family SES refers to the generation of parent's income, education, and occupation (Bradley and Corwyn 2002) because these indicators enable the estimation of the family's financial, social, and human capital. Nevertheless, other family factors related to family

social status or privilege is also considered in this study, such as public assistance and homeownership.

*Definition of class consciousness*

Class consciousness is defined as the subjective processes that shape the choices with respect to those interests and struggles (McCall 2008). Also, class consciousness is seen as a set of more enduring attitudes and sentiments that oppose to management (Vallas 1987). These two definitions will be used in this study.

*Definition of alienation*

In this study, alienation refers to individuals estrange from others and experience powerlessness, meaninglessness, and isolation (Smith and Bohm 2008).

*Definition of negative labeling*

In this study, negative labeling is defined as a negative symbol or attitude judged by other people or social groups. This negative evaluation is in accordance with undesirable characteristics such social class or SES (Inderbitzin et al. 2013; Dijker and Koomen 2007).

*Definition of social bonding*

Social bonding is defined as an effort to ensure conformity to a norm or a collective consciousness, which indicates the citizens' beliefs and sentiments toward the same society (Goode 2011; Bui 2009).

**Theoretical Framework**

According to the previous studies, different factors are related to delinquent involvement, including family SES, class consciousness, alienation, negative labeling, and social bonding. To analyze these factors in a systematic way, an integrated model of the theories was developed. This model synthesizes various sociological theories to explain delinquent behavior, including conflict theory, labeling theory, and social control theory. The suggested model is shown in Figure 1.

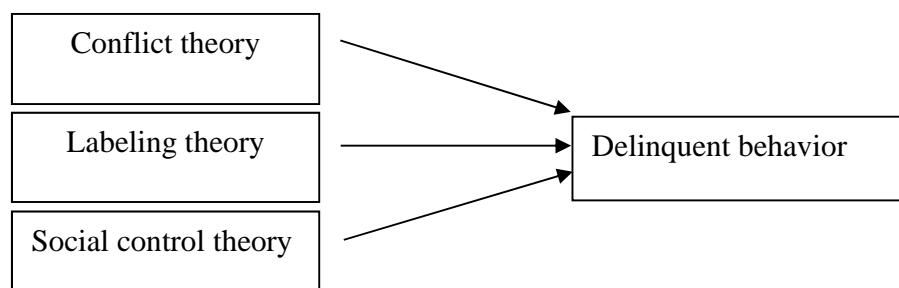


Figure 1. The integrated model of the theories

### ***Conflict theory***

Conflict theory emphasizes the relationship between the upper class and the lower class, and the relationship influences delinquent behavior. The theory assumes that class conflict results from economic and structural inequality (Jacoby 2008). According to Clinard and Meier (2008), the ruling class and the working class are incompatible in economic interests. Because capitalists aim at maximizing their profits and minimizing the costs of labor, the workers suffer from exploitation by the capitalists (Harper and Leicht 2002). Most importantly, these class conflicts may lead to delinquent behavior because of class consciousness (Zinn 2008). Once the lower-class individuals become conscious of their place within the social structure or the socio-structural contradiction between labor and capital, they will strive for economic welfare and economic power through delinquency or collectivist strategies such as strike (McCall 2008; Zinn 2008). Similarly, Pontell (2002) also claimed that the working class struggles against economic inequality and oppression through revolution. Indeed, conflict itself can take a hostile revolution to remove social and economic injustice (Franzese 2009). Therefore, delinquency is then a symptom of class conflict or structural contradiction in a capitalist society (Downes and Rock 2007).

Furthermore, in the Marxist perspective, conflict alienates people from their social networks (Smith and Bohm 2008). It is because individuals consider one another as a competitor and are unlikely to feel connected to others. Consequently, these alienated people feel powerless, normless, meaningless, culturally estranged, self-estranged, and socially isolated (Smith and Bohm 2008). Because of the loss of these essential humanities, delinquent behavior can be the result. Deutschmann (2007) stated that high alienation associate with different types of delinquent behaviors, such as violence, sabotage, absenteeism, and drug use.

### ***Labeling theory***

Labeling theory focuses on how people use and respond to negative labels in the social interaction (Franzese 2009). It is assumed that negative labels have effects on an individual's behavior. Thio, Calhoun, and Conyers (2013) stated that individuals define themselves through others' eyes. Once individuals are labeled as troublemakers, rule breakers, bad persons, or delinquents from their significant others such as parents, teachers, siblings, and peers, regardless if true or not, the labeled people believe that it is true and see themselves as delinquents because they integrate a delinquent self-concept into the "me" part of the social self, which is a reflection of others' view of the self, and they start to engage in delinquent activities to suit to the new concept of the self (Brezina and Aragonés 2004). Therefore, they become delinquents and confirm others' expectations. It is obvious that negative labels have negative effects on individuals' behavior.



### ***Social control theory***

Social control theory emphasizes the conformity to norms (Clinard and Meier 2008). The assumption is that delinquent behaviors emerge when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken (Downes and Rock 2007). Meanwhile, Goode (2011) supported this assumption and claimed that weak bonds toward conventional institutions such as family and school will lead to delinquent behavior. Because individuals are free from the social rules, they are not required to follow the norms of the society. Thus, they engage in delinquent behavior.

Indeed, there are four elements of social bonds, including attachment, commitment, involvement, and moral beliefs. First, attachment is defined as a tie of affection which an individual has formed to significant others such as parents (Deutschmann 2007). It is presumed that individuals are less likely to violate societal norms when they establish a strong and stable attachment with significant others. In contrast, individuals do not care about others' expectations when they have insufficient attachments. As a result, this may contribute to delinquent behavior.

Second, commitment is related to the aspiration of engaging in conventional activities and the acquirement of conventional values (Downes and Rock 2007). The premise is that there is a negative relationship between commitment and delinquent behavior (Downes and Rock 2007). In other words, the individuals are unlikely to commit crimes when they have strong commitments to conventional society.

Third, involvement refers to frequent participation in socially approved activities. On the basis of the limited time and energy, this component suggests that individuals have less available time to commit crimes when they spent more in conventional activities (Inderbitzin et al. 2013). For instance, individuals spent a large amount of time in academic pursuit, so they have fewer chances to participate in delinquent activities.

Lastly, beliefs are defined as the acceptance of the moral values of society (Thio et al. 2013). They postulate that the stronger awareness, understanding, and agreement with the rules and norms of society, the less one is likely to engage in delinquent behaviors. However, it depends on the individuals whether they exaggerate the beliefs or ignore beliefs toward the rules (Kubrin and Stucky 2009). For example, youth are more likely to engage in delinquency when they comply with the statement that delinquent behavior is not harmful for people (Thio et al. 2013). Thus, when a person ignores the moral beliefs of society, they will engage in delinquent behavior.

To summarize, these four components of social bonding have impacts on delinquent behavior.

### ***Theoretical Model***

On the basis of the previous studies and theories, an integrated model is developed to demonstrate the relationship among family SES, class consciousness, alienation, negative labeling, social bonding, and delinquent behavior (see Figure 2).

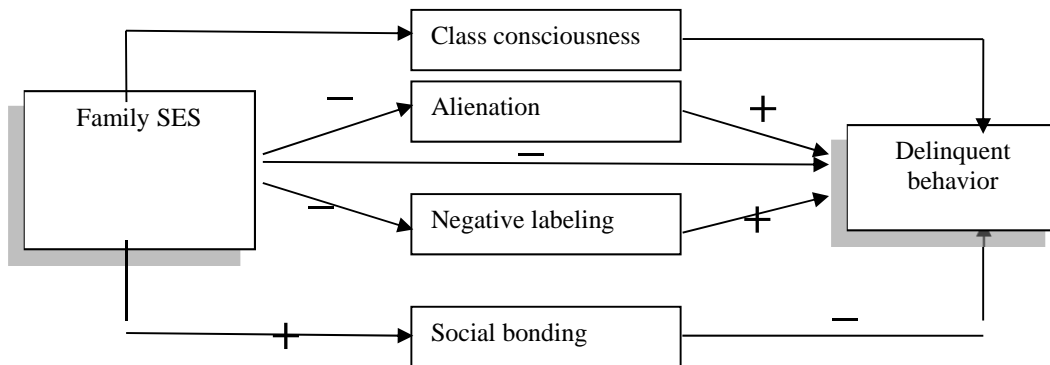


Figure 2. The integrated model of the study

This model concentrates on how family SES affects the mediators (i.e., class consciousness, alienation, negative labeling, and social bonding) and the effects of these mediators on delinquent behavior. First, family SES has a negative relationship with class consciousness, and class consciousness has a positive relationship with delinquent behavior. According to Conyers (2013), youth gangs often appear in the minority group because they develop class consciousness or class mindedness. Subsequently, they gather and fight against the exploitation of the powerful group.

Second, family SES has a negative relationship with alienation, and alienation has a positive relationship with delinquent behavior. It is because low-class youth experience peer rejection based on family prestige Giordano (2003). Therefore, this dissatisfactory relationship with others cause the alienated youth engage in delinquent behavior.

Third, family SES has a negative relationship with negative labeling, and negative labeling has a positive relationship with delinquent behavior. Dijker and Koomen (2007) stated that others respond negatively to the lower class, which increases the delinquent behavior among youth.

Finally, family SES has a positive relationship with social bonding, and social bonding has a negative relationship with delinquent behavior. It is because low-class parents fail to transfer social norms to their children, which increase the chances of delinquent involvement (Veenstra et al. 2006).

### ***Hypotheses Development***

The following hypotheses are developed in this study:

- H1a: There is a negative relationship between family SES and youth's delinquent behavior.
- H1b: There is a negative relationship between family SES and youth's class consciousness.
- H1c: There is a negative relationship between family SES and youth's alienation.

- H1d: There is a negative relationship between family SES and youth's negative labeling.
- H1e: There is a positive relationship between family SES and youth's social bonding.
- H2a: There is a positive relationship between class consciousness and youth's delinquent behavior.
- H2b: There is a positive relationship between alienation and youth's delinquent behavior.
- H2c: There is a positive relationship between negative labeling and youth's delinquent behavior.
- H2d: There is a negative relationship between social bonding and youth's delinquent behavior.

### **Research Objectives**

The overarching objectives of this research were as follows:

- (i) To investigate the relationship between family SES and youth's delinquent behavior
- (ii) To investigate the relationship between class consciousness and youth's delinquent behavior
- (iii) To investigate the relationship between alienation and youth's delinquent behavior
- (iv) To investigate the relationship between negative labeling and youth's delinquent behavior
- (v) To investigate the relationship between social bonding and youth's delinquent behavior
- (vi) To examine the indirect effect among family SES, class consciousness, and youth's delinquent behavior
- (vii) To examine the indirect effect among family SES, alienation, and youth's delinquent behavior
- (viii) To examine the indirect effect among family SES, negative labeling, and youth's delinquent behavior
- (ix) To examine the indirect effect among family SES, social bonding, and youth's delinquent behavior
- (x) To investigate whether sociodemographic variables are related to youth's delinquent behavior

## **Methodology**

### ***Survey***

The research method used in the present study was a form of survey, which aimed at identifying different delinquent behaviors committed by college students in universities. Participants were required to complete a self-reported questionnaire that measured the frequency of delinquent behavior and the levels of negative labeling, social bonding, class consciousness, alienation, and affordability. Also, the participants were asked to provide sociodemographics related to their personal information and family background. Because the issue of delinquent behavior was highly sensitive to the participants, using self-administered anonymous questionnaire was more appropriate. This method not only avoided embarrassment but also prevented causing bad reputation to the participants and the case of trial. It was useful to encourage the targets to participate in this survey, and hence, the response rate could be increased. Moreover, it was a descriptive and explanatory study, so self-administered questionnaires could collect finite numbers to achieve the objectives of the study. Also, because the questionnaires were standardized, it could be distributed to many participants at the same time. Hence, it was effective to recruit more respondents in a short time.

### ***Sampling***

This survey adopted a nonprobability sampling method, that is, convenience sampling. The reason for choosing this method was that it was practical and feasible to recruit and observe the targets.

### ***Participants***

The targets of this study were college students who were 18 years or older. They were studying in universities or postsecondary institutions. It was expected that the participants were mature enough to respond to the questionnaires as they were in young adulthood. Also, they might have experiences of delinquent behavior in high education institutions because there were fairly uniform standards on the behaviors of the youth. Therefore, college students were the participants of this study.

### ***Procedure***

Data were collected from the youth through self-administered structured questionnaires in Chinese (see Appendix B). The purpose of this study was explained to the respondents, and they were invited to complete a set of questionnaire voluntarily. In general, the participants completed it within 5 to 10 minutes, and then the data were collected by the author. A total of 136 questionnaires were distributed and returned, so the response rate was 100%. The survey was conducted during March 4, 2013, and March 8, 2013, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The survey was expected to be carried out within 1 week, and

hence, the problem of time lapse could be eliminated. This survey was held in the ground floor, entrance, or corridors of the City University of Hong Kong because many college students passed through these venues. Hence, it was easy to identify the targets.

### *Measurement*

In this study, six scales were used to measure the major variables, including class consciousness, alienation, negative labeling, social bonding, affordability, and delinquent behavior.

#### *Class consciousness, negative labeling, and affordability*

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of three scales, including class consciousness, negative labeling, and affordability. First, the scale of class consciousness was adopted from Vallas (1987). This scale consists of six items related to the characteristics of class consciousness, which are (1) perceived class opposition, (2) supported for worker control, and (3) militancy. The Cronbach's alpha was around 0.7 originally. Second, Adams and Evans's (1996) scale of negative labeling was used. This scale aimed at examining the frequency of negative labeling that their teachers used to label them. The negative labels were "rule breakers," "bad person," "getting into trouble," and "doing things against the law." These four labels were constructed into a four-item index with a higher Cronbach's alpha (i.e., 0.85). Finally, a six-item scale of affordability was adopted from Antonaccio et al. (2010). This scale aimed at assessing an individual's relative purchasing power. For example, the respondents were asked whether their family afforded the groceries that they wanted. In this part, all responses were made on a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 = none to 5 = always, to examine the condition during the past year. The higher scores indicated higher frequencies or levels.

#### *Alienation and social bonding*

The second part of the survey consisted of two scales: alienation and social bonding. Alienation was constructed by six items, which aimed at examining the extent of social alienation (Banai and Reisel 2007). The example items included "people were too self-centered" and "people were out for themselves and neglected anyone else." The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.76 originally. On the other hand, there were nine items for the scale of social bonding, which was adapted by Stevens et al. (2011). Items 4 and 6 were modified to be more direct and active statements, for example, "I decided to continue my further study by myself" and "I talked about my feelings and thoughts with my parents." The reliability for this scale was 0.730 originally. In this part, all responses were answered in a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 = none to 5 = always. The higher scores indicated higher levels of social bonding and social alienation.

### *Delinquent behavior*

In the third part of the questionnaire, nine items were adapted from the index of Gutierrez and Shoemaker (2008), which aimed at measuring the frequency of youth's delinquent behavior during the past 3 months. This scale included nine items in which items 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9 were modified to be more precise and simplified, for instance, "using illicit drugs" and "engaging in illegal gambling." The participants responded to the questions on a five-point rating scale ranging from 1 = none to 5 = always. The higher scores indicated higher frequencies of delinquent behavior.

### *Family SES and personal information*

Family SES were reflected by 10 indicators, including (1) father's educational level, (2) mother's educational level, (3) father's employment status, (4) mother's employment status, (5) father's occupation, (6) mother's occupation, (7) monthly family income, (8) public assistance, (9) family asset, and (10) homeownership. All occupations were recoded into different scores according to the Weberian perspective of occupational prestige (i.e., 0 = homemaker; 10 = worker, driver, service worker, and sales worker; 20 = skilled worker; 30 = clerical worker; 40 = technical worker; 50 = supervisor; 60 = social worker and nurse; 70 = teacher of secondary school or below; 80 = manager, executive, official, and business person; 90 = professional; and 100 = teacher of tertiary institution). In addition, the type of housing were also recoded into different scores to reflect the homeownership (i.e., 0 = public housing, 25 = rented private flat, 50 = staff quarter, 75 = home ownership scheme housing, and 100 = own private flat). Besides, public assistance was also an indicator to measure the family SES of the households. It was recoded into two scores (i.e., 0 = yes, 100 = no). The higher scores implied higher family SES. In addition, father's SES consisted of the father's education level, father's employment status, and father's occupation, whereas mother's SES consisted of mother's education level, mother's employment status, and mother's occupation.

Finally, the background information of the respondents was asked. Gender was divided into two categories: female and male. The designations by themselves for the gender were used in the present study (i.e., 1 = male, 2 = female). Moreover, the birthplace, residency, educational level, university, year, disciplines, religion, and criminal record served as the secondary consideration. Particularly, the description of residence was recoded into different scores (0.25 = less than 6 months, 0.75 = 6 months to 1 year, 3.5 = 1 year to 6 years, and 9.5 = 7 years to 12 years). The higher scores indicated longer residency in Hong Kong.

Table 1  
*Schedule and sources of the scales*

Variable	Question	Source
Part 1		
Class consciousness	1–5, 16	Vallas (1987)
Negative labeling	6–9	Adams and Evans (1996)
Affordability	10–15	Antonaccio et al. (2010)
Part 2		
Alienation	1–3, 5, 12, 15	Banai and Reisel (2007)
Social bonding	4, 6–11, 13, 14	Stevens et al. (2011)
Part 3		
Delinquent behavior	1–9	Gutierrez and Shoemaker (2008)
Part 4		
Family SES and background information		

**Data analysis**

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS; version 17.0) was used to analyze the data in this study. Four key analysis techniques were applied: (1) factor analysis, (2) Pearson’s correlation analysis, (3) linear regression, and (4) and curvilinear regression. Therefore, the descriptive and analytical data were presented successfully.

**Results**

In this study, the quantitative data were collected and analyzed using SPSS 17.0. The frequencies of the respondents’ personal background were demonstrated first. Subsequently, four key techniques were used to analyze the data, including factor analysis, Pearson’s correlation analysis, linear regression analysis, and curvilinear regression analysis.

*Personal Background*

A total of 136 university students completed and returned the questionnaires. Their ages ranged from 18 to 26 years, and the mean of age was 20.68 years. Most respondents were aged 20 years (20.6%) and 21 years (22.8%). Of the respondents, 52.2% were men and 47.8% were women. As regard the education level, most of the respondents were undergraduates (78.7%) who were studying in the City University of Hong Kong (85.3%). Among the respondents, 41.9% were year 1 students, 31.6% were year 2 students, and 26.5% were year 3 students. Furthermore, 37.5% of the respondents were liberal arts and social sciences students, 29.4% were science and engineering students, and 26.5% were business students. Most of the respondents did not have religion (64%), and nearly all respondents did not have criminal record (99.3%). In addition, the major respondents are people from Hong Kong (86.8%), and they lived in Hong Kong for 12 years (82.4%).

*Family Background*

The findings showed that most respondents’ fathers (35.3%) and mothers (43.4%) graduated from secondary school. Most of their fathers (58.8%) and mothers (48.5%) were employed by someone. Almost 31% of their fathers and 17.6% of their mothers serve as workers, drivers, and service workers. Furthermore, 43.4% of monthly family income was between \$10,000 and \$19,999, and most respondents’ family asset was \$99,999 or lower (21.3%). More than 90% of the respondents reported that their family did not receive any public assistance such as the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance in the past year. In addition, most respondents were living in public housing (39.0%) or own private flat (27.2%).

*Factor Analysis*

Two variables were grouped together to analyze their factor loadings and reliability. The groupings were illustrated in the following sections.

*Class consciousness and affordability*

Twelve statements were categorized into two component-by-factor analyses, which were labeled as class consciousness and affordability. Also, these two scales’ Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were 0.667 and 0.740, respectively. It is suggested that the internal consistency of the scales was adequate independently.

Table 2

*Factor analysis and reliability analysis of class consciousness and affordability*

<b>Component</b>	<b>Item</b>		<b>Factor loading</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
Class consciousness	1	Corporations took advantage of workers	0.708	0.667
	2	Workers would make better decisions than supervisors	0.415	
	3	Workers would strike to keep protections against layoffs	0.651	
	4	Workers would strike to prevent reductions in benefits	0.693	
	5	If workers could make decisions, products would improve	0.611	
	6	All management cared about was profits	0.537	
Affordability	1	My family traveled abroad for leisure	0.360	0.740
	2	My family renovated our house	0.274	
	3	My family afforded clothes that I needed	0.862	
	4	My family afforded the groceries that I wanted	0.890	
	5	My family afforded medications that I needed	0.885	
	6	My family afforded to buy a house	0.608	



Note: All items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = none to 5 = always.

*Negative labeling and delinquency*

Thirteen items were put together for analysis, and they were categorized into two component-by-factor analyses, which were labeled as negative labeling and delinquency. However, items 5 and 9 of delinquency were deleted because their factor loadings were very low. Afterward, the Cronbach’s alpha values of these two scales were 0.902 and 0.601, respectively. It is suggested that the internal consistency of the negative labeling scale is very high, and the internal consistency of delinquency scale is moderate.

Table 3

*Factor analysis and reliability analysis of negative labeling and delinquency*

Component	Items		Factor loading	Alpha
Negative labeling	1	My teachers characterized me as a “rule breaker”	0.846	0.902
	2	My teachers characterized me as a “bad person”	0.859	
	3	My teachers characterized me as one getting into trouble	0.842	
	4	My teachers characterized me as one doing things against the law	0.855	
Delinquency	1	Shouted profanities at classmates	0.277	0.601
	2	Be honest on class tests	0.398	
	3	Smoked cigarettes	0.314	
	4	Doing homework by copying from other classmates	0.434	
	5 <sup>a</sup>	Purposely protected property	-0.204	
	6	Used illicit drugs (such as marijuana, cocaine, ketamine, and other drugs)	0.776	
	7	Engaged in illegal gambling	0.859	
	8	Drank alcoholic beverages (such as beer, wine, and whisky)	0.551	
	9 <sup>a</sup>	Paying before leaving a shop	0.034	

Note: All items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = none to 5 = always.

<sup>a</sup>Item was deleted in the data analysis.

*Alienation and social bonding*

Lastly, 15 items were divided into two components, which were labeled as alienation and social bonding. However, items 4 and 6 of the alienation scale and item 7 of the social bonding scale were deleted because of low factor loadings. Subsequently, these two components had satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha values, which were 0.656 and 0.735, respectively.

Table 4

*Factor analysis and reliability analysis of alienation and social bonding*

Component	Items		Factor loading	Alpha
Alienation	1	It was impossible for one person to understand another person’s feelings	0.469	0.656
	2	People were out for themselves and neglected anyone else	0.860	
	3	People were too self-centered	0.857	
	4 <sup>a</sup>	Most people seemed to accept me when I was just being myself	0.092	
	5	Many people in our society were solidary	0.378	
	6 <sup>a</sup>	When people around me knew that I was having problems, they would try to help me	0.021	
Social bonding	1	I decided to continue my further study by myself	0.253	0.735
	2	I talked about my feelings and thoughts with my parents	0.726	
	3	I got along with my parents very well	0.704	
	4	I was satisfied with the way my teachers treated me	0.606	
	5	I found most of my courses interesting	0.583	
	6	I conformed to the legal standards	0.375	
	7 <sup>a</sup>	I avoided breaking the law	-0.127	
	8	I asked my parents for advice if I had a problem	0.695	
	9	Through hard work, I could be as successful as I wanted to be	0.584	

*Note:* All items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = none to 5 = always.

<sup>a</sup>Item was deleted in the following data analysis.

### *Linear Regression Analysis*

On the basis of the results from previous Pearson's correlation analysis, the linear regression analysis was applied to allow more sophisticated exploration of the interrelationship among antecedent variable and mediators. Several regression models were developed as below.

#### *Effects of SES on delinquency and mediators*

Family SES ( $\beta = -0.063, p > 0.05$ ), father's SES ( $\beta = -0.113, p > 0.05$ ), and mother's SES ( $\beta = -0.018, p > 0.05$ ) were not significantly related to delinquency. Also, family SES ( $\beta = 0.056, p > 0.05$ ), father's SES ( $\beta = -0.016, p > 0.05$ ), and mother's SES ( $\beta = -0.042, p > 0.05$ ) were not significantly related to negative labeling. In addition, family SES ( $\beta = -0.027, p > 0.05$ ), father's SES ( $\beta = -0.088, p > 0.05$ ), and mother's SES ( $\beta = -0.135, p > 0.05$ ) were not the significant predictors of class consciousness.

In addition, the findings showed that family SES ( $\beta = 0.190, p < 0.05$ ) was significantly related to social bonding with 3.6% of variance explained. Father's SES ( $\beta = 0.279, p < 0.01$ ) had a significantly positive relationship with social bonding, but mother's SES ( $\beta = 0.116, p > 0.05$ ) did not related to social bonding.

Besides, family SES ( $\beta = -0.193, p < 0.05$ ), father's SES ( $\beta = -0.264, p < 0.01$ ), and mother's SES ( $\beta = -0.188, p < 0.05$ ) were significantly negatively related to alienation.

Furthermore, family SES ( $\beta = 0.504, p < 0.01$ ), father's SES ( $\beta = 0.409, p < 0.01$ ), and mother's SES ( $\beta = 0.239, p < 0.01$ ) were significantly positively related to affordability. In particular, the explained variance of family SES and father's SES were very high (25.4% and 16.8%, respectively).

Table 5  
 Linear regression effects on major variables I

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
		<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$				
Delinquency	Family SES	-0.041	0.057	-0.063	-0.726	0.469	0.063	0.004
	Father's SES	-0.069	0.053	-0.113	-10.299	0.196	0.113	0.013
	Mother's SES	-0.012	0.059	-0.018	-0.204	0.838	0.018 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
Negative labeling	Family SES	0.061	0.095	0.056	0.647	0.519	0.056	0.003
	Father's SES	-0.016	0.090	-0.016	-0.179	0.858	0.016 <sup>a</sup>	0.000
	Mother's SES	-0.047	0.098	-0.042	-0.481	0.632	0.042	0.002
Social bonding	Family SES	0.146	0.065	0.190	20.236	0.027*	0.190	0.036
	Father's SES	0.202	0.061	0.279	30.331	0.001**	0.279	0.078
	Mother's SES	0.092	0.068	0.116	10.348	0.180	0.116	0.013
Class consciousness	Family SES	-0.023	0.073	-0.027	-0.315	0.754	0.027	0.001
	Father's SES	-0.069	0.068	-0.088	-10.016	0.311	0.088	0.008
	Mother's SES	-0.114	0.073	-0.135	-10.567	0.120	0.135	0.018
Alienation	Family SES	-0.167	0.073	-0.193	-20.277	0.024*	0.193	0.037
	Father's SES	-0.214	0.068	-0.264	-30.131	0.002**	0.264	0.070
	Mother's SES	-0.167	0.075	-0.188	-20.210	0.029*	0.188	0.035
Affordability	Family SES	0.509	0.075	0.504	60.750	0.000**	0.504	0.254
	Father's SES	0.375	0.073	0.409	50.136	0.000**	0.409	0.168
	Mother's SES	0.245	0.086	0.239	20.837	0.005**	0.239	0.057

\*\**p* < 0.01, \**p* < 0.05.

To understand the effects of the components of family SES on the major variables specifically, several models were developed. The findings indicated that only father's SES ( $\beta = -0.238, < 0.05$ ) was significantly related to delinquency with 9.0% of variance

explained. Moreover, only father's SES ( $\beta = 0.237, < 0.05$ ) was significantly related to class consciousness with 10.7% of variance explained. However, all components of family SES were not related to negative labeling, social bonding, and alienation.

Table 6  
 Linear regression effects on major variables II (1 of 2)

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
		b	SE	$\beta$		
Delinquency	(Constant)	14.569	8.689		1.677	0.096
	Father's education level	0.393	0.982	0.045	0.400	0.690
	Mother's education level	-0.431	1.115	-0.042	-0.386	0.700
	Father's employment status	0.315	0.830	0.036	0.379	0.705
	Mother's employment status	0.143	1.002	0.016	0.142	0.887
	Father's occupation	-0.616	0.266	-0.238	-2.318	0.022*
	Mother's occupation	-0.324	0.268	-0.129	-1.206	0.230
	Monthly family income	-0.820	0.697	-0.115	-1.176	0.242
	Public assistance	4.059	3.832	0.100	1.059	0.292
	Family assets	0.493	0.394	0.134	1.250	0.214
	Homeownership	-0.563	0.951	-0.061	-0.592	0.555
Final statistics: $R = 0.300, R^2 = 0.090$						
Negative labeling	(Constant)	21.239	14.891		1.426	0.156
	Father's education level	-2.364	1.683	-0.162	-1.404	0.163
	Mother's education level	1.749	1.912	0.101	0.915	0.362
	Father's employment status	0.351	1.423	0.024	0.247	0.805
	Mother's employment status	-2.761	1.717	-0.179	-1.608	0.110
	Father's occupation	0.421	0.455	0.097	0.926	0.356
	Mother's occupation	-0.411	0.460	-0.098	-0.894	0.373
	Monthly family income	1.035	1.195	0.087	0.866	0.388
	Public assistance	0.108	6.567	0.002	0.016	0.987
	Family assets	0.298	0.675	0.048	0.442	0.659
	Homeownership	-0.453	1.630	-0.029	-0.278	0.782
Final statistics: $R = 0.209, R^2 = 0.044$						
Social bonding	(Constant)	53.135	10.377		5.121	0.000
	Father's education level	1.178	1.173	0.115	1.004	0.317
	Mother's education level	0.489	1.332	0.040	0.367	0.714
	Father's employment status	0.961	0.991	0.095	0.970	0.334
	Mother's employment status	0.076	1.197	0.007	0.063	0.949
	Father's occupation	-0.033	0.317	-0.011	-0.103	0.918
	Mother's occupation	-0.203	0.321	-0.069	-0.634	0.528
	Monthly family income	0.040	0.833	0.005	0.048	0.962
	Public assistance	0.041	4.576	0.001	0.009	0.993
	Family assets	0.399	0.471	0.093	0.849	0.398
	Homeownership	0.583	1.136	0.054	0.514	0.608
Final statistics: $R = 0.233, R^2 = 0.054$						

Table 7  
 Linear regression effects on major variables II (2 of 2)

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
		b	SE	$\beta$		
Class consciousness	(Constant)	71.589	10.991		6.514	0.000
	Father's education level	-0.921	1.243	-0.083	-0.741	0.460
	Mother's education level	-1.711	1.411	-0.129	-1.212	0.228
	Father's employment status	-1.951	1.050	-0.177	-1.858	0.066
	Mother's employment status	-1.411	1.267	-0.120	-1.113	0.268
	Father's occupation	0.785	0.336	0.237	2.336	0.021*
	Mother's occupation	0.229	0.340	0.071	0.673	0.502
	Monthly family income	0.272	0.882	0.030	0.309	0.758
	Public assistance	-6.048	4.847	-0.117	-1.248	0.214
	Family assets	-0.155	0.499	-0.033	-0.312	0.756
	Homeownership	1.130	1.203	0.095	0.940	0.349
Final statistics: $R = 0.327$ , $R^2 = 0.107$						
Alienation	(Constant)	71.451	11.469		6.230	0.000
	Father's education level	-2.270	1.297	-0.198	-1.751	0.082
	Mother's education level	-0.412	1.472	-0.030	-0.280	0.780
	Father's employment status	-0.732	1.096	-0.064	-0.668	0.505
	Mother's employment status	-1.604	1.323	-0.133	-1.213	0.227
	Father's occupation	0.476	0.351	0.140	1.359	0.177
	Mother's occupation	0.055	0.354	0.017	0.157	0.876
	Monthly family income	1.379	0.920	0.147	1.498	0.137
	Public assistance	-4.742	5.058	-0.089	-0.938	0.350
	Family assets	-0.670	0.520	-0.139	-1.289	0.200
	Homeownership	-0.374	1.255	-0.031	-0.298	0.766
Final statistics: $R = 0.284$ , $R^2 = 0.081$						

\* $p < 0.05$

*Effects of mediators on delinquency*

Negative labeling ( $\beta = 0.342$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was significantly positively related to delinquency with a total of 11.7% of variance explained, whereas social bonding ( $\beta = -0.222$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) was significantly negatively related to delinquency with a total of 4.9% of variance explained. In contrast, class consciousness ( $\beta = -0.081$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), alienation ( $\beta = 0.120$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and affordability ( $\beta = -0.023$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) were not related to delinquency.

Table 8

Linear regression effects on delinquency I

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
		<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$				
Delinquency	NL	0.205	0.049	0.342	4.215	0.000**	0.342	0.117
	SB	-0.189	0.072	-0.222	-2.631	0.010**	0.222	0.049
	CC	-0.064	0.067	-0.081	-0.945	0.346	0.081	0.007
	Al	0.091	0.065	0.120	1.393	0.166	0.120	0.014
	Af	-0.015	0.056	-0.023	-0.267	0.790	0.023	0.001

\*\**p* < 0.01, \**p* < 0.05.

NL, negative labeling; SB, social bonding; CC, class consciousness; Al, alienation; Af, affordability.

Furthermore, family SES and four mediators were used to predict delinquent behavior together. The results showed that negative labeling ( $\beta = 0.352$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and social bonding ( $\beta = -0.181$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) still had the strongest contribution to predict delinquency with 18.4% of variance explained. Thus, these two variables had a higher explanatory power to predict delinquent behavior.

Table 9

Linear regression effects on delinquency II

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$		
Delinquency	(Constant)	24.898	6.564		3.793	0.000
	Family SES	-0.024	0.054	-0.036	-0.439	0.662
	Negative labeling	0.210	0.048	0.352	4.355	0.000**
	Social bonding	-0.155	0.070	-0.181	-2.225	0.028*
	Class consciousness	-0.108	0.064	-0.139	-1.706	0.090
	Alienation	0.061	0.063	0.081	0.982	0.328
Final statistics: $R = 0.429$ , $R^2 = 0.184$						

\*\**p* < 0.01, \**p* < 0.05.

*Effects of sociodemographics and mediators on delinquency*

The findings showed that being female ( $\beta = -0.227, p < 0.01$ ) had a significantly negative relationship with delinquency, but the variance explained was quite low (5.1%). However, birth place ( $\beta = 0.311, p < 0.01$ ) and residency ( $\beta = 0.249, p < 0.01$ ) were significantly positively related to delinquency with a higher variance explained compared with gender (9.7% and 6.2%, respectively). Furthermore, the results showed that negative labeling ( $\beta = 0.299, p < 0.01$ ) was significantly positively related to delinquency, whereas social bonding ( $\beta = -0.177, p < 0.05$ ) was significantly negatively related to delinquency. There was a total of 29.2% of variance explained in delinquency. However, class consciousness, alienation, female, age, father’s SES, mother’s SES, studying in the City University of Hong Kong, educational level, and other disciplines were not significantly related to delinquency in this model.

Table 10

*Linear regression effects on delinquency III (1 of 2)*

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
		b	SE	$\beta$		
Delinquency	(Constant)	18.209	1.387		13.132	0.000
	Female	-5.407	2.006	-0.227	-2.696	0.008**
Final statistics: $R = 0.227, R^2 = 0.051$						
Delinquency	(Constant)	6.151	2.688		2.289	0.024
	Birth place	10.919	2.885	0.311	3.785	0.000**
Final statistics: $R = 0.311, R^2 = 0.097$						
Delinquency	(Constant)	6.781	3.136		2.162	0.032
	Residency	0.675	0.227	0.249	2.974	0.003**
Final statistics: $R = 0.249, R^2 = 0.062$						

\*\* $p < 0.01, *p < 0.05$ .



Table 11  
 Linear regression effects on delinquency III (2 of 2)

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>b</i>	SE	$\beta$		
Delinquency	(Constant)	9.327	16.002		0.583	0.561
	Negative labeling	0.178	0.050	0.299	3.600	0.000**
	Social bonding	-0.151	0.071	-0.177	-2.111	0.037*
	Class consciousness	-0.087	0.067	-0.108	-1.294	0.198
	Alienation	0.062	0.064	0.082	0.972	0.333
	Female	-3.496	2.107	-0.146	-1.659	0.100
	Age	-0.062	0.596	-0.009	-0.103	0.918
	Birth place	6.212	4.457	0.165	1.394	0.166
	Father's SES	0.023	0.064	0.037	0.356	0.723
	Mother's SES	0.077	0.062	0.113	1.238	0.218
	City university	1.389	3.040	0.042	0.457	0.649
	Education level	1.323	2.583	0.047	0.512	0.610
	Business	2.628	2.527	0.098	1.040	0.300
	Science and engineering	1.164	2.600	0.044	0.448	0.655
	Media	-3.326	4.322	-0.066	-0.770	0.443
Residency	0.320	0.334	0.115	0.957	0.341	
Final statistics: $R = 0.540$ , $R^2 = 0.292$						

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

*Summary*

The findings showed that family SES could not act as an independent predictor for delinquent behavior. However, family SES was significantly positively related to social bonding, whereas social bonding was significantly negatively related to delinquent behavior. Thus, the effect of family SES was mediated by social bonding and then related to delinquent behavior.

Furthermore, family SES was significantly negatively related to alienation, but alienation did not significantly related to delinquent behavior. Negative labeling was significantly positively related to delinquent behavior, but family SES did not significantly related to negative labeling. Hence, alienation and negative labeling failed to mediate the relationship between family SES and delinquency. Lastly, the relations among family SES, class consciousness, and delinquency were not significant (for details, see Figure 3).

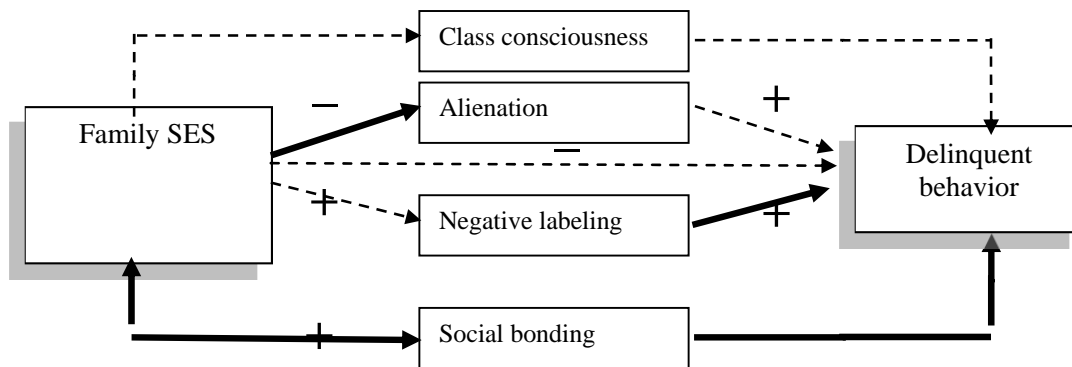


Figure 3. The integrated model of the study (modified).

-----> = no significant relationship.  
 —————> = significant relationship.

### Discussion

The finding showed that family SES was positively related to social bonding. This relationship may be illustrated by parenting style because family SES is a proxy to determine parenting styles in accordance with financial, social, and cultural capital (Veenstra et al. 2006). Parents with a higher occupational level will have a higher level of autonomy to educate their children authoritatively, whereas parents with a lower occupational level educate their children restrictively (Veenstra et al. 2006). Also, lower family SES youth receive relatively less warmth from their mothers and experience more parental conflicts because of communication skills and economic strain (Uçanok and Güre 2012). Thus, the lower family SES youth have lower social bonding with their parents.

Furthermore, the findings support the expectation that social bonding was negatively related to delinquent behavior. Wan (2012) stated that either punishment or low-withdrawal of the parenting styles is associated with the delinquent behavior of youth. Moreover, parental agitation may influence delinquent behavior. Cheung and Ngai (2007) indicated that an attached and intimate relationship with parents is important for youth. Lower parental concern resulted from poor relationships between youth and parents, which may lead to the lack of material and emotional support. Consequently, the youth may commit crime to fulfill their physical or emotion needs. In contrast, parental support is able to reduce youth delinquency because parental support serves as a means to develop social bonds over youth. Therefore, parental support is essential to protect youth far away from delinquent behavior. Furthermore, Roberts, Gunes, and Seward (2011) indicated that family ritual can control the youth's behavior. The family members may

increase a sense of belonging and identity through family rituals and interaction. Hence, the youth can share similar values which may regulate them to act positively.

In all, social bonding mediated the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior, and hence, family SES was related to delinquent behavior indirectly. To regard this relation, ineffective parenting may be the fundamental factor. In fact, ineffective parenting is a predictor of antisocial and unhealthy behaviors (Ekaterina, Botchkovar, and Broidy 2012). The reason is that women in paid labor market rather than stay at home to take care of their children (Cooke 2004; Chesters, Baxter, and Western 2009) because of the increase in education level and economic independence. Thus, the parent's involvement decreases and thus leads to delinquent behavior (Pizzolato and Hicklen 2011).

Negative labeling was positively related to delinquent behavior because of self-fulfilling prophecy. Teachers' bias about students' behaviors have major implications for students' negative outcomes such as alcohol taking. It is because youth passively internalize the judgments of the significant others in a less cognitive process. Thus, the stigmatized self-perception leads them to engage in delinquent behavior (Dijker and Koomen 2007).

However, the direction of the relationship between family SES and negative labeling is at odds with that expected. The findings showed that there was a positive relationship between family SES and negative labeling, although it was not significant. Possibly, hatred against the rich may affect the reaction of teachers toward the higher SES students. On the one hand, it is because the values of teachers are affected by society; on the other hand, it is because higher SES students are coldhearted, arrogant, and presumptuous (Zhou 2009). Consequently, these negative attitudes or behaviors posed by higher SES students lead them to experience punishments through being labels by their teachers.

In addition, family SES was negatively related to alienation among youth, which achieved the expectation of the study. The disadvantaged youth feel alienated because of peer rejection (Giordano 2003). Ngai et al. (2008) suggested that youth's social networks are adversely influenced by lower family SES. In fact, emotional support is very important for youth. However, lower SES youth fail to gain support from their peers in social institutions such as education system. Thus, they perceive more alienated feelings.

However, alienation was not significantly related to delinquent behavior. Probably, youth tend to be a non-engaged person rather than a delinquent. The alienated youth feel powerless and frustrated when they are excluded by others (Ngai and Ngai 2007). Thus, they may withdraw from the social network such as truancy to protect themselves.

Moreover, family SES was not significantly associated with class consciousness. The possible reason is that individualistic blaming offsets system blaming for poverty among low SES youth (Hunt 2004). In fact, Hong Kong is an international society, in

which people are influenced by western culture that concentrates on individualism. On the one hand, the youth blame themselves for the impoverished status; on the other hand, they blame the structure condition. Consequently, these two beliefs neutralize each other and lead to insignificant outcome.

Surprisingly, class consciousness was negatively associated with delinquent behavior, although it was not significant. The possible reason for the negative relationship is that low SES youth become conscious of class stratification and life stress, but they feel powerless to alter a given situation (Saravi and Makowski 2011). Hence, they reduce the motivation of revolution. In fact, the ruling class is a predominant class that encompasses a large proportion of resources, so the subordinate class is unable to struggle against them. As a consequence, the youth suppress their antisocial beliefs, which lead to less delinquent involvement.

On the other hand, the result indicates that female gender was significantly negatively related to delinquent behavior. One of the reasons is that parents are more likely to exert direct control over their daughters, so girls receive higher levels of family supervision (Steketee, Junger, and Junger-Tas 2013). Another reason is that girls have a greater commitment in education system, which may increase the level of social bonding (Özbay 2006). However, Franzese (2007) believed that women engage in crime less than men as a result of their disadvantaged social position that affords them less opportunity to engage in criminality.

Besides, residency and birthplace (i.e., Hong Kong) were significantly positively related to delinquent behavior. It is because Hong Kong is a stronger capitalist and commercial context (Zhang 2008). Youth perceive a higher proportion of economic stress and inequality. Thus, they engage in delinquent behavior to relieve their stress and oppose the injustice.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations, although it offers an advanced knowledge about the causes of delinquency. First, most participants of this study come from one university (i.e., City University of Hong Kong), so it may reduce the representativeness of the study. Also, the sample size is relatively small, which may cause insignificant results or fail to achieve the hypotheses. Therefore, the questionnaire may be distributed to other universities to maximize the validity of the study and to increase the sample size.

Another limitation of this study is that it fails to recruit the targeted respondents who have delinquent behavior frequently. The period of data collection is in the morning and afternoon, so the delinquents may disappear in the daytime. It is because delinquents commit crimes often at night to avoid the attention from others. Therefore, it is suggested that data collection may be organized at night. Also, most respondents are well-behaved undergraduate students, so this study may not truly reflect the phenomenon of delinquent behavior among college students. Thus, further studies may recruit the youth who are not

students to figure out more delinquents.

Moreover, most respondents are people from Hong Kong who may be influenced by traditional Chinese ideas. Thus, there is limited generalization to other cultural contexts. Regarding this limitation, further study may select participants from different cultures.

On the other hand, although social bonding was significantly related to delinquent behavior and family SES was related to social bonding, only a small amount of variance explained these two relationships (i.e., 4.9% and 3.6%, respectively). Apparently, the explanatory power of the relationship among family SES, social bonding, and delinquent behavior is very low. To regard to this limitation, it is suggested that further study may explore how these variables interact with one another and reexamine the scales to improve the explanatory ability.

Last but not least, the findings indicated that negative labeling had the strongest contribution to explain delinquent behavior compared with other variables. However, it is unknown how gender differences influence negative labeling and how negative labeling affects different types of delinquent behavior. Therefore, it is necessary to explore this significant finding comprehensively in further study.

### **Implications**

On the other hand, the practical implication for policy to address the problem of delinquency is to increase youth's social bonding in social institutions, particularly family. It is suggested that to organize more family education programs, empowerment programs, training, or counseling for the lower SES parents to improve their parenting style, parent-child relationship, and child-rearing skills. However, if some of the parents are not willing to take care of their children, teachers or social workers may serve as the role of parents. Schools or nongovernmental organizations may provide mentorship program for the youth in which the mentors can transfer the shared values and beliefs of the society to the youth, and hence, the youth's delinquent behavior can be reduced.

As for theoretical implications, social bonding theory may integrate with labeling theory. The reason is that negative labeling or stigmatization is a type of social control, which is aimed at excluding a person from a relationship or society (Dijker and Koomen 2007). It is clear that negative labeling can be seen as a functional form of social control. Thus, if labeling theory incorporates with social control theory, they will exert a greater effect to control over delinquency.

However, the direction of the relationship between family SES and negative labeling is required to reexamine first. It is because the findings showed that family SES was positively associated with negative labeling, although it is not significant. Nevertheless, this direction is out of the expectation of labeling theory. Thus, it is necessary to be examined.

Furthermore, the finding showed that the relationship among family SES, class consciousness, and delinquent behavior was not significant. It is important to note that the direction of the relationship between class consciousness and delinquent behavior is inconsistent with the prediction of conflict theory. As a result, it is needed to reexamine this relationship and direction.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, this paper clarifies the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior. As the results showed that family SES was not related to delinquent behavior directly, in contrast, family SES was linked to delinquency by a mediator of social bonding. Thus, social bonding provides consistent and empirical evidence to support the interdependent relationship among family SES, social bonding, and delinquent behavior. Unexpectedly, class consciousness, alienation, and negative labeling could not mediate the relationship between family SES and delinquent behavior in this study. Probably, because of the limitations as mentioned previously, these factors were not significant. However, these factors may affect delinquent behavior in the further study. As a result, further study may play more attention to these mediators.

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Cheung Chau-Kiu, Jacky. He shared several experiences with me and taught me how to analyze and interpret data. His clear directions led me to conduct my study effectively. Meanwhile, I really appreciate his passion and wisdom in doing research.

Also, I would like to thank my parents and dear friends, especially Tony Ho, Nicholas Ng, and Megan Hui. They provided substantial and emotional support to me.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all my teachers who taught me in these 2 years. Otherwise, I could not have accomplished this study. Indeed, I learned a lot of useful research skills from them, which I have applied to finish my study.

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