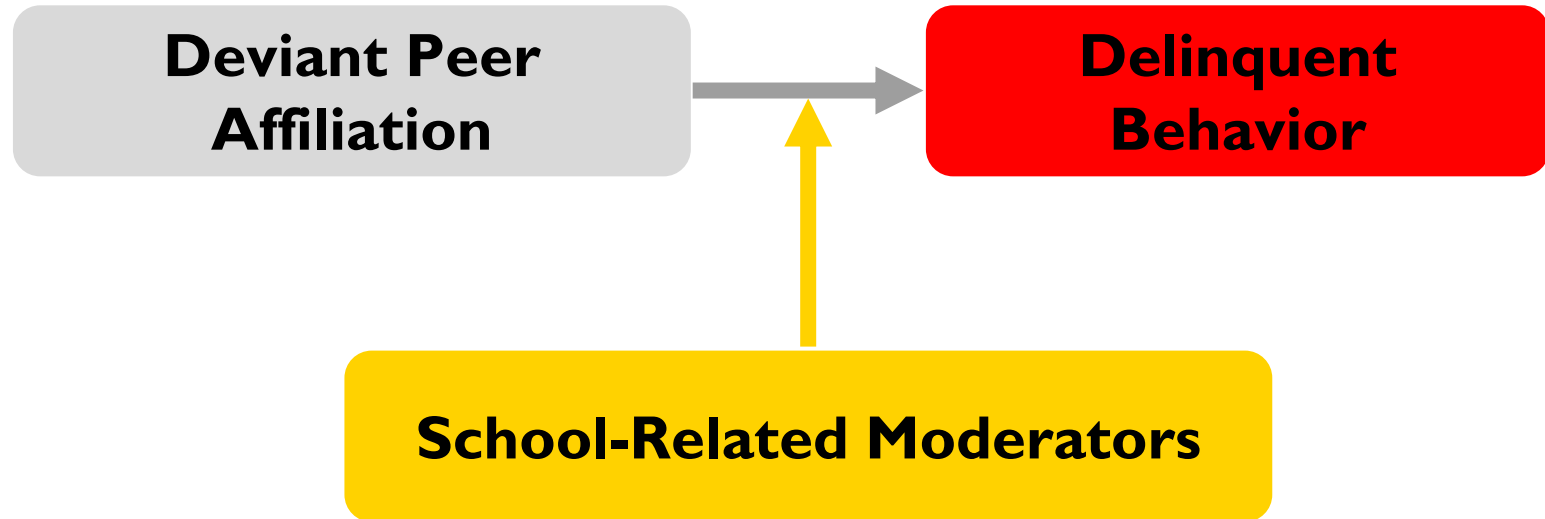# Peers, Teachers, and Schools: Understanding Youth Delinquency in China

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Introduction

Deviant Peer Affiliation → Delinquent Behavior

School-Related Moderators

"A Teacher for a Day is a Father for Life"

- Strict discipline and authoritarian teaching style

China / People & Culture

Is corporal punishment acceptable in Chinese schools? Government edict reopens debate

- Guangdong province leads move to clarify what is allowed with draft rule legalising some commonly used sanctions

- Forced standing and running could be permitted as parents and teachers debate where to draw the line

(South China Morning Post, 2019)

"A Teacher for a Day is a Father for Life"

- Emphasis on teacher ethics and teachers as "moral guardians"

  o Policies and laws regarding teacher ethics

    ▪ e.g., the 2008 Code of Ethics for Primary and Middle School Teachers, the 2018 Ten Norms for Middle and Primary School Teachers in the New Era

  o A well-established teacher evaluation system

    ▪ evaluation criteria: ideological and moral quality, professional ethics, professional knowledge, teaching capability, research achievements, physical and mental health, educational background, and teaching experience.

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Does Teacher Quality Moderate The Negative Influence of Affiliation with Deviant Peers?

Measure of Teacher Quality

- *Proportion of Accredited Senior Teachers at the School Level*

  - Professional rank: principal senior level (*zheng gaoji*), senior level (*fu gaoji*), level A (*yiji*), level B (*erji*), level C (*sanji*), and not rated

  - Teachers with a level A or higher were classified as accredited senior teachers (Park & Hannum, 2001)

  - School-Level Teacher Quality:

    - Teachers' multiple roles at school (e.g., Chief of a Class, Chief of a Grade, Dorm Supervisor)

    - Unequal distribution of educational resources (Range: [0.11, 0.99], Mean = 0.64, SD = 0.22)

Hypotheses

- **_Hypothesis 1:_**
  - A higher proportion of accredited senior teachers at the school level will be associated with lower rates of adolescent delinquent behavior.

- **_Hypothesis 2:_**
  - Deviant peer affiliation will increase adolescent delinquent behavior; whereas having no deviant friends will decrease adolescent delinquent behavior.

- **_Hypothesis 3:_**
  - The association between deviant peer affiliation and adolescent delinquent behavior will be weaker for adolescents who attend schools with more accredited senior teachers.

Data

- China Education Panel Survey
  - A final sample of 7,913 students
  - nested in 98 schools

- Independent Variables in 2013-2014 Baseline
  - school-level teacher quality; deviant peer affiliation
- Dependent Variable in 2014-2015 Follow-Up Survey:
  - delinquent behavior

- Control Variables:
  - School-level: school location, neighborhood delinquency, school funding
  - student-level: gender, migration, parental marriage status, parental-child relationship, parental discipline, boarding school, school attachment

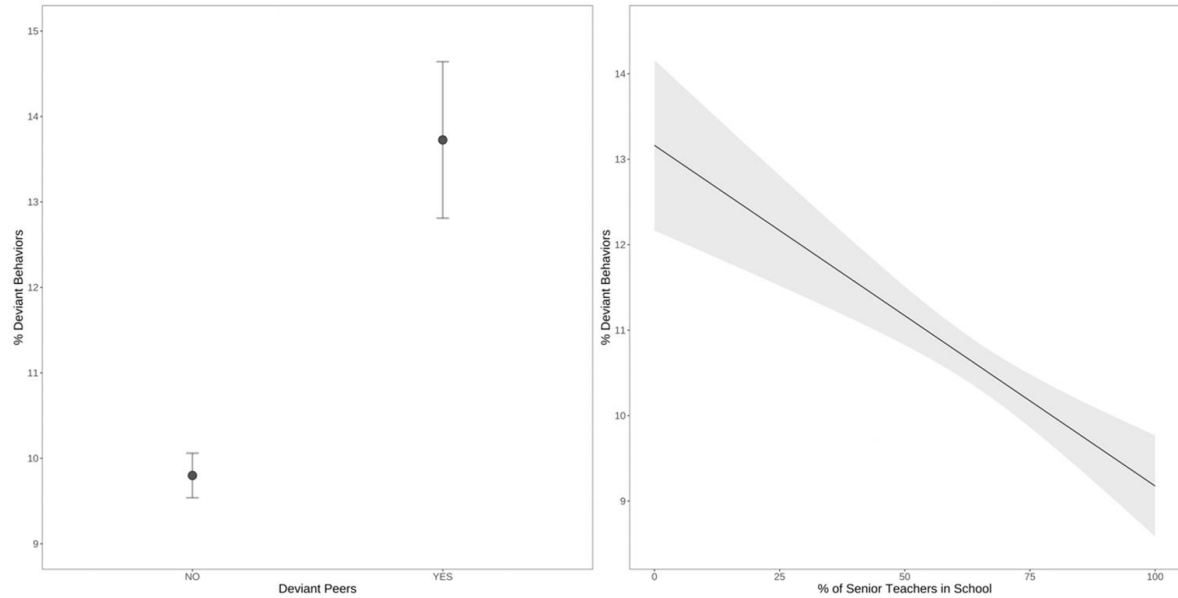# Models

- Hierarchical Linear Models

School Level

School-Level Teacher Quality

Individual Level

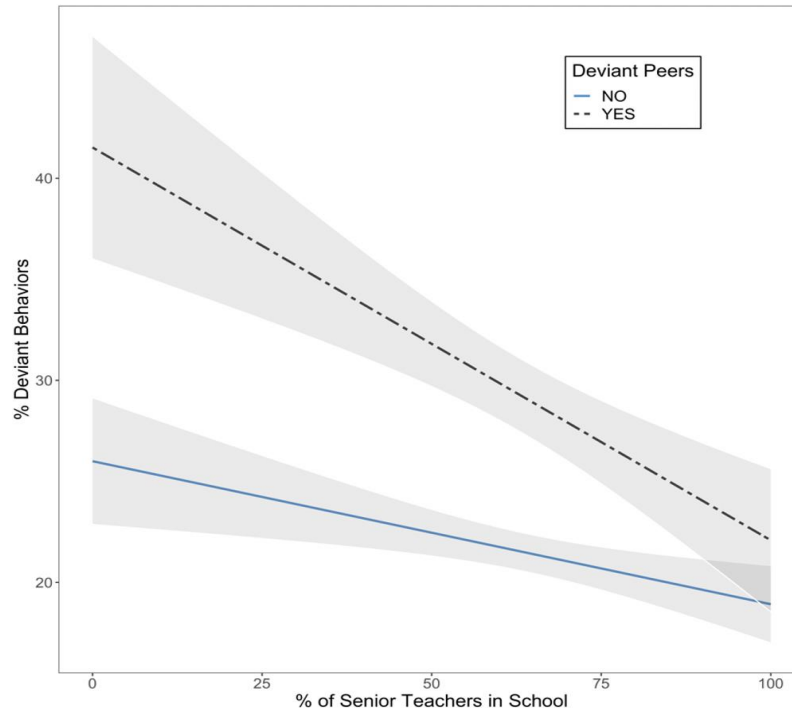Deviant Peer Affiliation → Delinquent Behavior
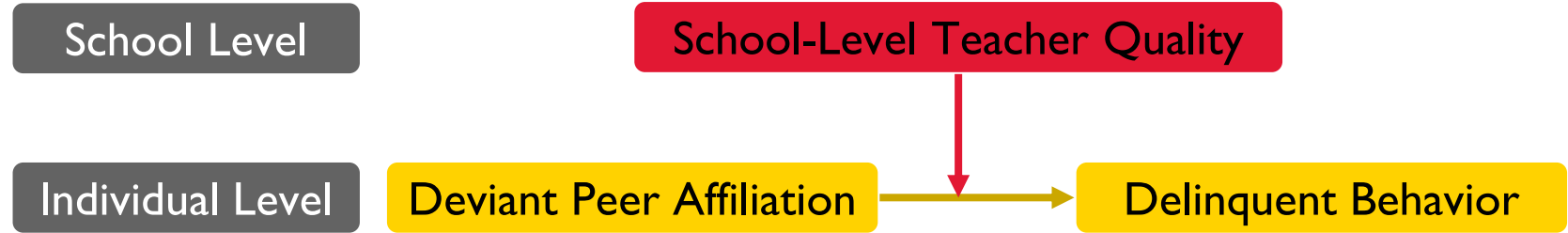
Main Results

- Main Effects of Deviant Peer Affiliation and Teacher Quality on Youth Delinquency

Main Results

- Interaction Effects of Teacher Quality and Deviant Peer Affiliation on Youth Delinquency

Robust Analysis

- Listwise deletion (N = 7,913) versus multiple imputation (N = 10,279)

- Include outliers versus exclude outliers

- Control for neighborhood-level characteristics

→ **The main findings remain stable.**

Conclusion

- The HLM models yield supportive evidence for all our proposed theses – the schoolteacher quality thesis, the peer influence thesis, and the school moderation thesis.
- Our study adds to the literature on the effects of school context on youth delinquency and the research on moderators of peer influence on youth deviance.
- The teacher-peer interaction effect implies that teachers could play a critical role in supervising adolescent behavior, especially in a context where respect for teachers is highly valued, and authoritarian teaching style is a norm.
- Future research should adopt an integrated macro-micro perspective and consider the cultural and institutional context while interpreting individuals' deviant behaviors.

Thank You!

Questions & Comments Welcomed

Appendix

Table 2

Hierarchical Linear Models Estimates of Delinquent Behavior

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
(Intercept)	53.06***	57.64***	57.49***	58.12***	57.35***	59.29***
	(2.15)	(2.63)	(2.63)	(2.61)	(2.62)	(2.61)
Student-Level Variables						
Gender (Female = 1)	-6.73***	-6.73***	-6.72***	-6.73***	-6.72***	-6.70***
	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.46)
Migrant Status (Migrant = 1)	1.29*	1.25	1.24	1.28*	1.22	1.40*
	(0.65)	(0.65)	(0.65)	(0.65)	(0.65)	(0.64)
Parent-Child Relationship	-3.66***	-3.64***	-3.65***	-3.67***	-3.64***	-3.67***
	(0.54)	(0.54)	(0.53)	(0.53)	(0.53)	(0.53)
Parental Discipline	-2.41***	-2.40***	-2.37***	-2.36***	-2.35***	-2.44***
	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.60)
Parent Marital Status (Divorced = 1)	3.11***	3.09***	3.11***	3.13***	3.12***	3.13***
	(0.89)	(0.89)	(0.89)	(0.89)	(0.89)	(0.89)
Boarding School (Yes = 1)	3.50***	3.23***	3.23***	2.84***	3.21***	2.82***
	(0.71)	(0.72)	(0.72)	(0.73)	(0.71)	(0.71)
School Attachment	-4.33***	-4.33***	-4.31***	-4.31***	-4.30***	-4.31***
	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)
Deviant Peer Affiliation (Having such friend(s) = 1)	7.59***	7.65***	15.53***	15.61***	15.59***	15.43***
	(0.84)	(0.84)	(2.34)	(2.33)	(2.34)	(2.34)
School/Neighbourhood-Level Variables						
School Quality (Proportion of accredited senior teachers)		-7.10**	-7.08**	-6.42**	-7.58**	-5.55*
		(2.37)	(2.37)	(2.32)	(2.36)	(2.27)
School Location (Central urban area = 1)				-2.56*		
				(1.02)		
Neighbourhood Delinquency (Always or often = 1)					1.94	
					(1.20)	
School Funding						-2.33***
						(0.61)
Cross-Level Interactions						
Deviant Peer Affiliation × School Quality			-12.36***	-12.50***	-12.44***	-12.10***
			(3.49)	(3.48)	(3.49)	(3.50)
AIC	69872.07	69866.39	69856.50	69852.33	69855.97	69844.82
BIC	69962.76	69964.05	69961.15	69963.95	69967.59	69956.44
Log Likelihood	-34923.03	-34919.19	-34913.25	-34910.17	-34911.98	-34906.41
Number of Observations	7913	7913	7913	7913	7913	7913
Number of Groups	98	98	98	98	98	98
School/Neighbourhood-Level Variance (Intercept)	18.17	16.07	16.09	14.83	15.42	13.49
	(4.26)	(4.01)	(4.01)	(3.85)	(3.93)	(3.67)
Residual Variance	388.33	388.33	388.29	388.27	388.31	388.18
	(19.71)	(19.71)	(19.71)	(19.70)	(19.71)	(19.70)
R^2, marginal (fixed effects only)	0.11	0.12	0.13	0.14	0.14	0.14
R^2, conditional (entire model)	0.17	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18

Note. $*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$. Entries show parameter estimates with standard errors in parentheses. The slope for deviant peer affiliation is allowed to vary.

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