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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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# Opportunities and peer support for aggression and delinquency during adolescence in nine countries

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#### Abstract

This study tested culture-general and culture-specific aspects of adolescent developmental processes by focusing on opportunities and peer support for aggressive and delinquent behavior, which could help account for cultural similarities and differences in problem behavior during adolescence. Adolescents from 12 cultural groups in 9 countries (China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States) provided data at ages 12, 14, and 15. Variance in opportunities and peer support for aggression and delinquency, as well as aggressive and delinquent behavior, was greater within than between cultural groups. Across cultural groups, opportunities and peer support for aggression and delinquency increased from early to mid-adolescence. Consistently across diverse cultural groups, opportunities and peer support for aggression and delinquency predicted subsequent aggressive and delinquent behavior, even after controlling for prior aggressive and delinquent behavior. The findings illustrate ways that international collaborative research can contribute to developmental science by embedding the study of development within cultural contexts.

#### KEYWORDS

adolescence, aggression, culture, delinquency, international peers

A major transition in the study of child and adolescent development over the years has been a shift from studies conducted primarily in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe to studies that are more representative of and generalizable to the world's population. However, even as late as 2015, a review of publications in high-impact developmental journals showed that 95% of the publications were produced by research

working in Western settings that represented less than 8% of the world's population (Nielsen, Haun, Kartner, & Legare, 2017). International, collaborative research is important to advance developmental science because children's experiences are shaped by cultural contexts in which they are situated; in consequence, much knowledge about a range of human experiences is constrained by focusing on only a narrow spectrum of cultural contexts (Bornstein, 2010; Lansford et al., 2019). Cultural psychology and anthropology, in particular, have long traditions of embedding the study of development in cultural contexts, a direction that has also grown in developmental science over the last decades.

To illustrate a new direction in understanding the nexus of culture and adolescent development, we draw on the Parenting Across Cultures project (Lansford et al., 2019), a longitudinal study of mothers, fathers, and children in nine countries: China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States. The