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## ABSTRACT

The investigation reported here examined the power of a set of 31 situational and attitudinal variables to predict delinquency among inner-city youth and to draw some conclusions about the causes of delinquency insofar as they may be empirically determined. The data were obtained through survey interviews with 837 male youth living in traditionally high delinquency areas of Chicago. Respondents ranged in age from 10 through 16 with roughly the same numbers, 119, at each year of age. 62 percent were Negro; the remainder were from Italian, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Anglo backgrounds, in that order. The variables emerging as best predictors are: age, educational expectations, occupational aspirations, group memberships, and race. The most important finding of this exploratory study is the significant connection between the expectation for success in the conventional sense and differential rates of official misconduct. In addition, at least one of the components of this relatively poor outlook for conventional achievement, Educational Expectations, is antecedent and causally related to delinguency. This pessimism about later school achievement develops prior to the age of 10 and does not relate closely to objective measures of academic achievement. (Author/JM)



# DELINQUENCY AND THE PERCEIVED CHANCES FOR CONVENTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

A set of situational and attitudinal variables are evaluated as predictors of official delinquency among inner-city youth. Thirty-one such variables are examined for their association with delinquency through application of a multi-variate analysis of variance procedure. The variables emerging as best predictors are: age, educational expectations, occupational aspirations, group memberships, and race. The most important finding of his exploratory study is the significant connection between the expectation for success in the conventional sense and differential rates of official misconduct. In additition, at least one of the components of this relatively poor outlook for conventional achievement, Educational Expectations, is antecedent and causally related to delinquency. This pessimism about later school achievement develops prior to the age of ten, and does not relate closely to objective measures of academic achievement.



# DELINQUENCY AND THE PERCEIVED CHANCES FOR CONVENTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the power of a set of situational and attitudinal variables to predict to official delinquency among inner-city youth and to draw some conclusions about the causes of delinquency insofar as they may be empirically determined.

### METHOD

## A. Respondents

The data to be examined were obtained through survey interviews with 837 male youth living in traditionally high delinquency areas of Chicago. Respondents ranged in age from ten through sixteen with roughly the same numbers, 119, at each year of age. Sixty-two percent were Negro; the remainder were white from Italian, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Anglo backgrounds, in that order.

The respondents resided in twenty-four inner-city census tracts most of which were coterminous. The tracts were selected because of their similarity on major environmental and demographic characteristics generally used to indicate social economic standing. The sampling design used involved the identification of random households and the selection of one male respondent from each of these households by a procedure designed to randomize birth positions. Interviews were carried out during 1964-66 by teams of trained interviewers. The average interview took about one and a half hours.



Sampling areas, household enumeration, and selection procedures were designed as part of a larger research effort, The Chicago Youth Development Project (Mattick & Caplan, 1964). A fuller description of the research design can be found in that report.

## B. Variables

The Measure of Delinquency. Police arrest for illegal conduct was used as the measure of delinquency. Cooperation of the Youth Bureau of the Chicago Police Department made it possible to use arrest records to determine the offense history (if any) for each respondent in the sample. Individual record identification was established on the basis of name, age, address, race, parent names, and other family and demographic information.

In the statistical analyses to follow, delinquency is treated as continuous variable, i.e., the <u>number</u> of offenses per respondent. This permitted the application of more refined statistical analyses than would have been possible had a binary partitioning of the dependent variable (delinquent versus non-delinquent) been employed.

<u>Predictor Variables</u>. Thirty-one variables were examined for their association with delinquency. These are listed and described briefly in Table 1.

## C. Statistical Analysis

The research strategy followed is exploratory. Because the analysis is concerned with a large body of data, containing many variables and a large number of cases, it was felt that more could be learned by letting



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the data speak for themselves rather than to submit them to a tight test of one or more hypotheses about delinquency.

A multivariate analysis of variance procedure developed by Morgan and Sonquist (1963; Sonquist & Morgan, 1964) was applied to the data. This statistical procedure is particularly well suited to the intention of the study. It parallels the strategy of an exploratory researcher engaged in a series of primary and secondary search processes to find the best way for isolating homogeneous subgroupings in a body of data. The statistical procedure permits a number of systematic data combinations and permutations to be examined for their power to reduce variance between high and low delinquency groups.

In brief, the statistical analysis operates sequentially. First, the computer simultaneously scans all predictor variables until it determines the one predictor variable split leaving the greatest reduction of the unexplained variance on delinquency, i.e., the split producing the largest sum of squared deviations by a single division of the total sample. Next, the computer again scans all predictor variables to locate "best" splits for each of the two subgroups resulting from the initial split. This iteration procedure continues to operate until all dependent variable divisions accounting for a variance reduction of one or more percent of the unknown variance are detected.

#### RESULTS

## A. The Multivariate "Tree": An Overview

The main features of the multivariate "tree" generated by the statistical analysis are illustrated in Figure 1. Box 1 in the figure



shows the delinquency data for the total sample. The upper number within the box is the mean delinquency value for the Group 1; the lower figure is the number of respondents comprising the group. Thus, for Group 1 (the total sample) the 837 respondents averaged .66 offenses per boy.

Following out the multivariate "tree" in Figure 1, we see that, after scanning all predictor values for their power to reduce variation on delinquency between subgroups, the "best" split was found on Age.

The mean number of offences for the 337 respondents, age fourteen through sixteen (Group 2), is 1.18; this is the "high" delinquency group. By contrast, the remaining 460 subjects ranging in age from ten through thirteen (Group 3) average only .25 offenses per boy; this is the "low" delinquency group.

The remaining groups in Figure 1 branch off Group 2, the older and "high" delinquent group. No further "splits" are shown for the younger subjects in Group 3 because of the relatively small amount of delinquency among these younger respondents. As will be illustrated later, the associations between predictor variables and delinquency is similar for both age groups; however, the overwhelming amount of variance reduction is contributed by the group where there is the greatest amount of delinquency, i.e., Group 2.

Following the initial split on age, Educational Expectation was identified as the predictor variable providing the best separation on delinquency for the Group 2 respondents. Respondents who estimated their chances for graduating from high school as "Fair," "Bad," or "Very Bad," (Group 4; 1.73 offenses per respondent) were higher on delinquency than



respondents who estimated their chances for graduating as "Very Good," or "Good" (Group 5; 0.29 offenses per respondent). The Duncan Scale ratings are nineteen or below for the Group 6, and twenty or above for Group 7.

The "high" delinquency branch of the multivariate "tree" in Figure 1 terminates by division of Group 6 on Group Membership. Respondents who reported belonging to three or more clubs or groups (Group 10; 2.57 offenses per respondent) are higher on delinquency than those respondents reporting membership in less than three clubs or groups (Group 11; 1.57 offenses per respondent).

Returning now to pick up the branch stemming off of Group 5, we find that Racial Identity provided the best "split" for separating these respondents on Delinquency. Negro respondents make up the "high" delinquency group (Group 8) with a mean of 1.04 offenses per subject, while the "low" delinquency group (Group 9) is comprised of "white" respondents and has a mean of 0.31 offenses per subject.

Because of the limitations of space, not all predictor variables producing splits are illustrated in Figure 1. The statistical analysis actually generated a "tree" containing thirty-eight subsample groups, only about half of which are illustrated in Figure 1. Those shown in Figure 1 are the variable splits accounting for the grestest amount of variance reduction.

The combination of variables accounts for 26.7 percent of the variance between subjects on official delinquency. The splits on Age (8.1 percent of the variance), Educational Expectation (5.0 percent of the variance) and Occupational Aspiration (2.3 percent of the variance) account for the largest reductions of the unknown variance. The



additional splits which are not illustrated in Figure 1 accounted for another 6.7 percent reduction of the unknown variance. Thus a total of 27.1 percent of the variance between respondents on delinquency was accounted for by the analysis; the specific variables involved in these additional but less important splits will be discussed shortly. But first it would be instructive to examine more closely the association between delinquency and some of the more important predictor variables.

## B. The Individual Variables

Age. Age emerges as the best single predictor of official delinquency. Despite this close association, however, the finding is of only limited significance. In the strictest sense, time allows for differential exposure to events which may modify behavior, but it cannot produce such change in its own right. Comparison of differences in delinquency among subjects by other predictor variables holds more promise in this regard. Nonetheless, Age is the most important predictor variable among those used in this study and, because of that, data for the two age groups in Figure 1 will be presented separately when considering the relationship of Delinquency to other predictor variables in the discussion to follow.

Educational Expectations. The incidence of official delinquency by the degree of Educational Expectation for the total sample and for each of the two subsample groups resulting from "Age" split in Figure 1 are given in Figure 2. The "Good" and "Very Good," and the "Bad" and "Very Bad" response categories have been combined in the figure to simplify the presentation. As can be seen in the figure, the relationship between Delinquency and Educational Expectation is strongest among the older



subjects, the mean number of offenses for the three scale positions are:

"Good, Very Good" -- .79 offenses per boy; "Fair" -- 1.42 offenses per
boy; and "Bad, Very Bad" -- 2.91 offenses per boy. The "Low" Educational

Expectation group in Figure 1 (i.e., Group 4) contains those respondents
who were scored "Fair," "Bad," or "Very Bad." The respondents who
reported their chances for completing high school as "Very Good" or "Good"

make up the "High" Educational Expectation group in Figure 1, i.e., Group 5.

Among the younger subjects, those from ages ten through thirteen, only those
respondents who reported their chances for graduating from high school or

"Bad or Very Bad" were high on delinquency. (.68 offenses per boy). Those
who estimated their chances as "Fair," "Good," or "Very Good" averaged around
.10 offenses per boy.

Further examination of the Educational Expectation data raises questions as to the meaning of their variable and suggests that it may have broader significance than implied by the limited context of it's title. The perceived chances for academic success appears to be independent of age and formal academic accomplishment. First, respondents of all ages studied expressed roughly the same levels of Educational Expectation. As shown in Table 2, approximately one-third or more of all respondents from ten through sixteen years of age reported that their chances for completing high school were "Fair," "Bad," or "Very Bad." Apparently this pessimism developes prior to the age of ten. This points to the possibility that the close association between Educational Expectation and Delinquency may reflect the presence of a more general attitudinal orientation not studied directly in the present investigation. Secondly, the fact that Academic Standing produced no "split" in the multivariate analysis casts suspicion on the relation of Educational Expectation and



formal academic achievement. This suggests that, in predicting to delinquency, whether a person actually passes or fails in school may be of less importance than his own subjective estimate of his academic future.

Fortunately, the availability of panel data from respondents interviewed at two points in time made it possible to examine this variable for etiological significance. A cross-lagged correlational analysis (Campbell, 1963; Pelz & Andrews, 1964), was carried out to test for the presence of antecedent-consequent relationships between Educational Expectation and Delinquency. The panel respondents consisted of 63 respondents interviewed in 1962 and then reinterviewed two years later in 1964.

Figure 3 presents the correlations between repeated measures of Educational Expectation and Delinquency for these panel respondents over the two-year interval. "E" and "D" denote Educational Expectation and Delinquency respectively. The numerical subscripts refer either to Time 1 or to Time 2 measures for these variables. The connecting lines indicate correlational ties. Correlations are Pearsonian and all but the  $D_1E_2$  correlation (r=.08) are statistically significant at the .05 level or better.

Of special significance in the data illustrated in Figure 3 is that; (1) the correlation between Educational Expectation at Time 1 and Delinquency at Time 2 ( $r_{E_1D_2} = .37$ ) is greater than the correlation between Educational Expectation at Time 1 and Delinquency at Time 1 ( $r_{E_1D_1} = .23$ ); and, (2) the correlation between Educational Expectation



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at Time 1 and Delinquency at Time 2 ( $r_{E_1D_2} = .37$ ) is greater than the correlation between Delinquency at Time 1 and Educational Expectations at Time 2 ( $r_{D_1E_2} = .08$ ). Thus, Educational Expectation predicts to Delinquency through time and not the reverse. More specifically, the lower the estimate of chances for graduation from high school, the greater the probability of future delinquency. This suggests that Educational Expectation is a prior causal condition ( $E \rightarrow D$ ) in the determination of Delinquency. "Cause" is used here in the sense that the predictive relationship, or functional dependence, between variables is asymetrical in nature i.e.,  $E \rightarrow D$ , and not  $D \leftarrow D$ 

The fact that the simultaneous correlations ( $r_{E_1D_1}$  and  $r_{E_2D_2}$ ) strengthen over time from .23 to .52 is difficult to interpret in the absence of Time 3 measures. The suggestion here is that as formal education moves along toward the time of expected graduation, Educational Expectations and Delinquency exert an increasing degree of contemporaneous influence on each other (E  $\langle - \rangle$  D) quite apart from the unidirectional causal relation (E  $- \rangle$  D) already mentioned.

Occupational Aspiration. Duncan Scale decile rankings of occupational prestige for future job goals by Delinquency for the total sample and for each of the two major age groups are presented in Figure 4. The direction of the slopes shows that the less delinquent youth expect to hold future jobs which are higher and more prestigious on the social status continuum.

Even though the split in Figure 1 on Occupational Aspiration occurs after the splits on Age and Educational Expectations, it can be seen in Figure 4 that this variable is important as a general predictor to Delinquency quite apart from interactional effects produced in association with these



other variables. The multivariate "tree" represented in Figure 1 emphasizes, however, that occupational aspiration has it's most pronounced effect among older boys who are pessimistic about their chances for completing high school.

Group Memberships. As shown in Figure 5, the data reveal a rather even relationship between the number of group memberships held and the incidence of official delinquency. The greater the number of group memberships held, the greater the amount of delinquency. It bears emphasizing that this relationship holds for younger as well as older respondents.

Attempts to find relationships between types of group affillations and delinquency have proved unsuccessful; although the more delinquent youth may belong to a greater number of informal "hanging" and "play" groups, they were no less likely than less delinquent subjects to hold membership in sponsored groups associated with social activity, recreation, school, athletics, and the like.

Race. Racial identification is valuable as a general predictor to official delinquency quite apart from the interaction effect with Educational Expectations among older boys as shown in the multivariate "tree." The data in Table 3 shows that a single division of the total sample by race yields a delinquency measure for the Negroes approximately twice that for the white respondents. Among the younger boys, the mean number of offenses was .16 per boy for the white respondents and .34 per boy for the Negro respondents. There are .72 offenses per boy for the white respondents and 1.53 offenses per boy for the Negro respondents among older respondents.



The race-related interactional effect between Delinquency and Educational Expectation illustrated in Figure 1 deserves special attention. It appears that Educational Expectation produces it's most pronounced effect upon variations on Delinquency among white respondents. Race produced the best "split" on Delinquency among those respondents with "high" Educational Expectation (Group 5). The Negro respondents have a mean delinquency level of 1.04 per respondent (Group 8) while the mean level of delinquency among the white respondents is considerably less, .31 offenses per respondent (Group 9).

Other Variables. The additional predictor variables accounting for one or more statistically important splits, but which do not appear in Figure 1 are as follows:

In order of their predictive power--

- 1. Birth order--third and later born respondents were higher on Delinquency than only children, and first and second born:
- 2. Delinquency Perception 11--respondents who estimated a relatively high proportion (seventy percent or more) of neighbor-hood youth as being engaged in delinquency offenses of a medium seriousness level, were higher on delinquency than those who estimated a smaller proportion of youth committing such delinquent acts;
- 3. Peer Orientation Factor II--respondents who reported anti-social characteristics as being necessary to be "looked up to" by neighborhood peers are higher on delinquency than those who did not mention such traits in this context;



- 4. Future Orientation Factor II--respondents reporting anti-social characteristics as necessary in order to "get ahead" in life as an adult were higher on Delinquency than those who did not mention these traits as important for future success;
- 5. Adult helpfulness--respondents who estimated a larger proportion of neighborhood adults as helpful to youth were lower on delinquency than those who estimated a smaller proportion of adults as helpful.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

If we consider the Educational Expectation and Occupational Aspiration data jointly, then the most important finding that merges from this study is the significant connection between the expectation for success in the conventional sense and differential rates of official misconduct. Those youth who perceive that they do not have a good chance for completing high school or who are not hopeful of holding a relatively prestigious job in the post-youth world, or both, are considerably more likely to show a greater degree of delinquency than youth who have more favorable estimations about these matters. Most importantly, we have been able to show that at least one of the components of this relatively poor outlook for conventional achievement is antecedent and causally related to delinquency. Analysis of panel data showed that a pessimistic view of one's chances of completing high school predicted to future delinquency. through time, and not the reverse.

In view of the close fit between these findings and the traditional assumptions of anomie theorists, e.g., Cloward and Ohlin (1960), there is



a fundamental question to consider which pertains to means-ends descrepancies: "Does the delinquent perceive the legitimate accesses to conventional opportunity as being blocked to him, and if so, does he then engage in unconventional behavior as a substitute path for or a way to circumvent the institutional paths to achievement?" In order to answer the first part of this question it would be necessary to know how the individual perceives the opportunity structure or the reasons for his preconceived expectations for mobility; unfortunately, the available data does not permit an examination of these issues. There are available data, however, that bear on the second part of the question. The data show that the more delinquent youth consider anti-social behavior as an important requisite for peer acceptance and for getting ahead in the world as an adult. These findings suggest that there is an assumption of incremental gain associated with being delinquent and that such gains have to do with both social and utilitarian values.

The importance of delinquency to social sufficiency is particularly noteworthy. Obviously the "Birds of a Feather" hypothesis is untenable in face of these data. The organizational forms of social participation among delinquent youth is not limited exclusively to groups of individuals who share and embody the delinquent culture in their beliefs and actions. The more delinquent youth show a relatively high level of integration into group life. They belong to more groups than the less delinquent youth and the groups they belong to do not differ in type from those groups in which their less delinquent counterparts belong. As Kobrin (1951) has suggested there appears to be no great conflict between delinquent and conventional values in high delinquency communities. The



relatively large number of social ties among the more delinquent youth in the present study indicate that the culture in these communities can carry both types of values simultaneously and in an integrated form.

The finding, however, that the less delinquent youth more often perceived local adults as "helpful" suggests that this absence of value conflict might not be as relevant to the adult culture as it is to the peer culture.

It is not surprising that variables which pertain to age, school. employment, value orientation, and race are found to be closely associated with delinquency. Race is probably not a predictor or independent variable with much explanatory value in it's own right, but like age. has more to do with the increased exposure to delinquency producing factors, rather than actually constituting a "cause" in it's own right. It is somewhat surprising, however, that despite the emphasis of Monahan (1957) and Moynikan (1965) on the absence of the father from the home and its presumed relation to later social adjustment, we did not find that delinquency rates were associated with this family centered variable. Other variables, particularly those extraneous to the home, seem to be far more important. The one family variable that emerged important was Birth Order. Consistent with the earlier findings of Sletto (1934) and McCord and McCord (1959), the data show a marked tendency for later born to be more delinquent than either only children or early born. 1npassing, it may be noted that while this finding may not seen immediately relevant to delinquency, the studies of Sears, Maccoby, and Levine (1957), Schacter (1959), Capra and Dittes (1962), portray the later born as more likely to be risk takers, more likely to lack a well developed sense of



"conscience" and more likely to be negatively oriented to achievement.

than early born or only children. In general these are characteristics

one would ordinarily expect to find among delinquents.

In conclusion, what is represented here is a very rough exploration into the very complex problems of delinquency. In the final analysis, this investigation is probably most important not because it revealed associations between a set of variables: with delinquency, but because it was possible to trace its linkage as a derivative of pessimistic expectations for future educational achievement. It is also important to emphasize that this "School Pessimism" develops prior to the age of ten (the age floor of the present sample) and that it did not relate closely to objective measures of academic achievement. Thus it probably reflects a general predisposition, e.g., "world view," that develops relatively early in childhood with serious consequences for later social adjustment --delinquency being possibly only one of its symptomatic manifestations. In order to verify and conceptualize more clearly the dynamics that underlie delinquency, or to determine the locus of its causality; it will be necessary to know more about the etiology and persistence of educational pessimism and the processes that dampen expectations for conventional achievement in general.



## TABLE 1

# Predictor Variables

Var	iàble	Code Categories
١.	Age	Chronological age by year from ten through sixteen.
2.	Race	"White" or Negro.
3.	Housing.	Public or private.
4.	Birth Order	Only child, first born, second born ninth born or more.
5.	Family Size	Number of siblings.
6.	Sibship Sex Composition	Number of brothers and number of sisters.
7.	Family Status	Whether or not parents are living together.
8.	Significant Others	Number of familiar persons whose relationships are highly valued by the subject. (Each respondent was asked to "name everybody you know who you feel is important to you." After the respondent had named these persons he was asked what each "has to offer.")
9.	Parental Importance	Whether one, or both, or neither parent are mentioned as being one of the "three most important people in your life."
10.	Sibling Importance	Whether one or more siblings are named among the "three most important people."
11.	Peer Importance	Whether one or more peers are named among the "three most important people."
12.	Group Membership	Number of group memberships held.
13.	School Status	Attending, graduate, dropout or expelled from school.
14.	Academic Standing	Grade placement in relation to chronological age; one year advanced, normal, one year behind, and two or more years behind.
15.	Educational Expectation	Perceived likelihood of graduating from high school. (Respondents were asked to estimate their chances for graduating from high school as "Very Good," "Fair," "Bad," or "Very Bad.")



16. Job Holding

Whether or not the nonstudent respondents are employed.

17. Job Aspiration

Socio-economic prestige level of job which subject hopes to hold as an adult. (Scored on the Duncan Scale)

18. Activity Index

Number of distinct activities engaged in during a day in the life of the subject. Based on respondent reports of "everything you did from the time you got up until the time you went to bed for the night" for the day preceding the interview. Activity scoring procedure is similar to that used by Barker and Wright.<sup>2</sup>

19. Peer Orientation,
Factor |

The number of prosocial characteristics felt necessary in order to be "looked up to" by neighborhood peers.

20. Peer Orientation,
 Factor II

The number of antisocial characteristics felt necessary in order to be "looked up to" by neighborhood peers.

21. Peer Orientation,
 Factor || |

The perceived importance of having an official delinquency record or correctional school experience for being "looked up to" by neighborhood peers.

22. Peer Orientation, Factor IV

The perceived importance of having delinquent friends for being "looked up to" by neighborhood peers.

23. Peer Orientation, Factor V

The perceived importance of (a) doing well in school or (b) holding a job or (c) both for being "looked up to" by neighborhood peers.

24. Delinquency, Perception I Respondent's estimate of the number of neighborhood youth (males) who engage in minor forms of delinquent activity, e.g., truancy and curfew violations. Coded in percentiles.

25. Delinquency, Perception | | Respondent's estimate of the number of neighborhood youth who engage in delinquency activities having a middle range of seriousness, e.g., routinely carry weapons.

26. Delinquency,
Perception III

Respondent's estimate of the number of neighborhood youth who engage in relatively serious delinquency activity, e.g., robbery.



27.	Adult Help	Respondent's estimate of the percentage of adults in his neighborhood who attempt to help youth adjust along conventional lines.
28.	Future Orientation, Factor	Number of prosocial characteristics felt necessary in order to "get ahead" in life.
29.	Future Orientation, Factor II	Number of antisocial characteristics felt necessary in order to "get ahead" in life.
30.	Future Orientation, Factor	The perceived importance of involvement in illegal activity to 'get ahead' in life.
31.	Future Orientation, Factor IV	The perceived importance of having delinquent and criminal friends to "get ahead" in life.



1

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TABLE 2
School Pessimism By Age

10	11	12	13	14	15	16
N=140*	N=101	N=128	N=101	N=107	N=100	N=112

Percent of respondents reporting their chances for graduating from high 35.6% 38.1% 35.0% 41.2% 39.3% 40.9% 32.4% school as "Fair," "Bad," or "Very Bad."



The total N is less than 837 because "Dropouts," "Graduates," and "Don't Know's" were not included in the calculations.

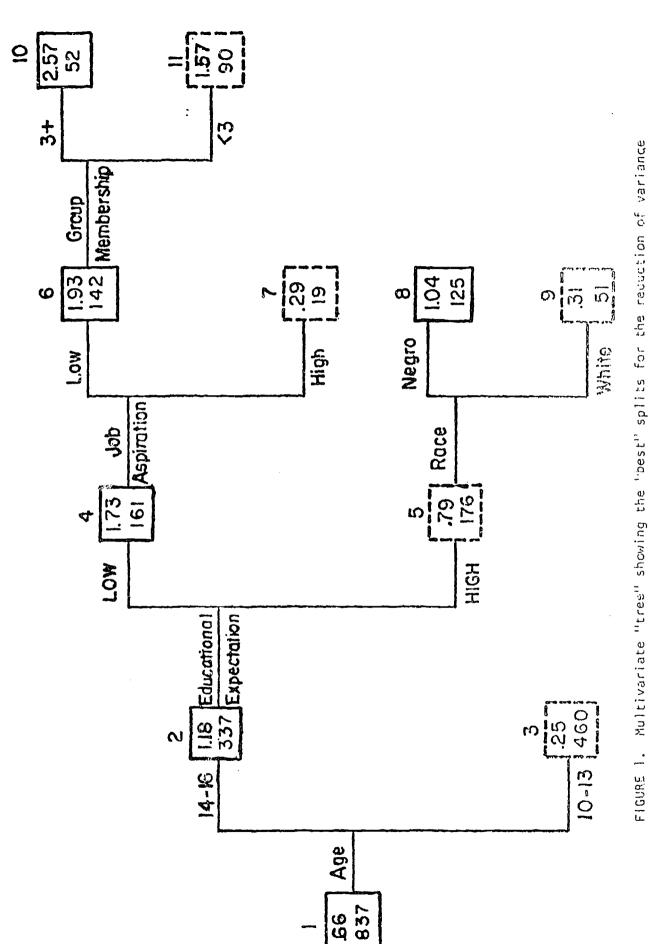


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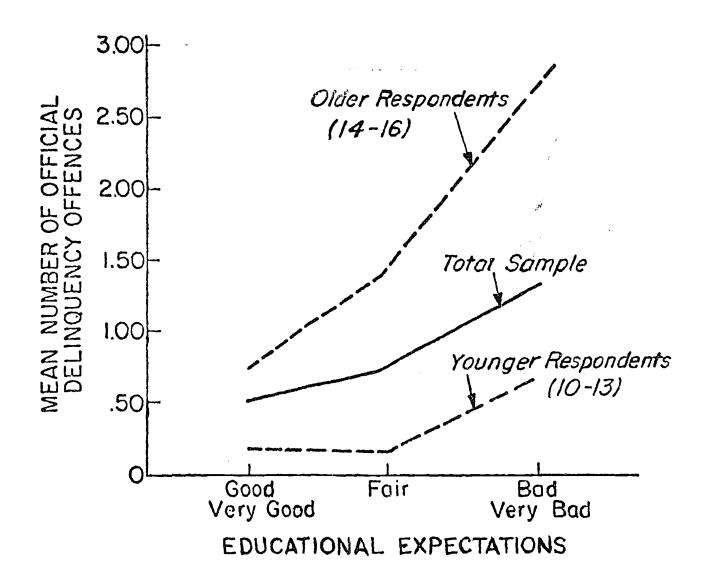


FIGURE 2. Division of the sample on Delinquency by Educational Expectation.



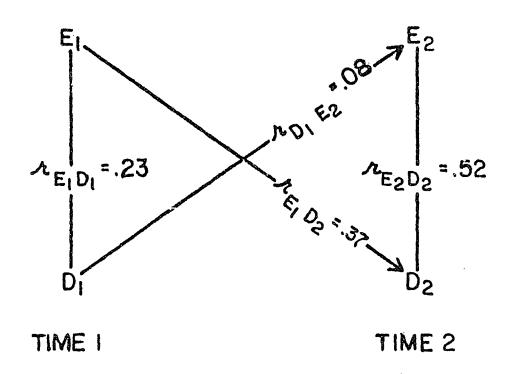


FIGURE 3. Cross-lagged correlational analysis of panel data on Educational Expectation and Delinquency.



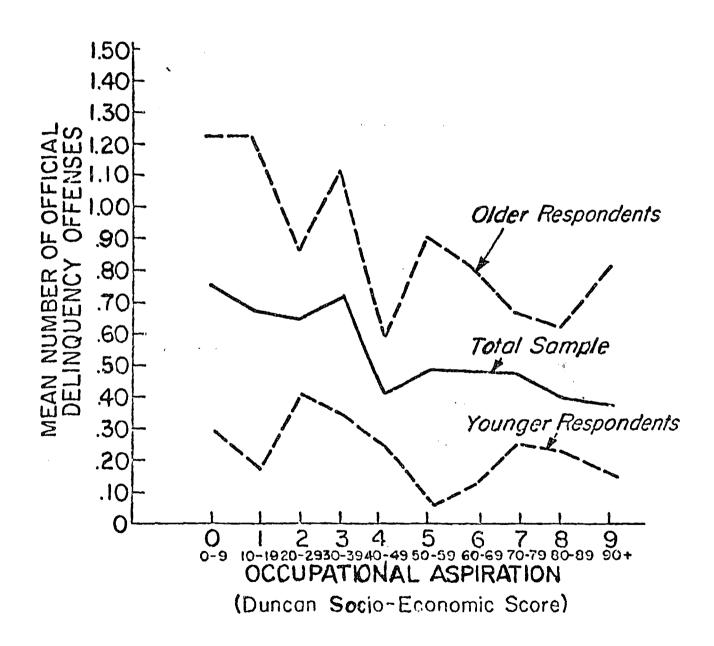


FIGURE 4. Division of the sample on Delinquency by Occupational Aspiration.



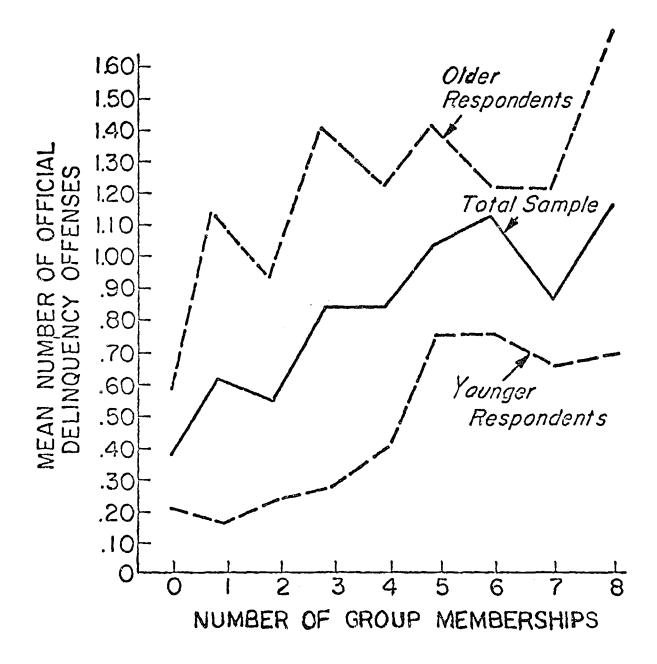


FIGURE 5. Division of the sample on Delinquency by Number of Group Memberships.



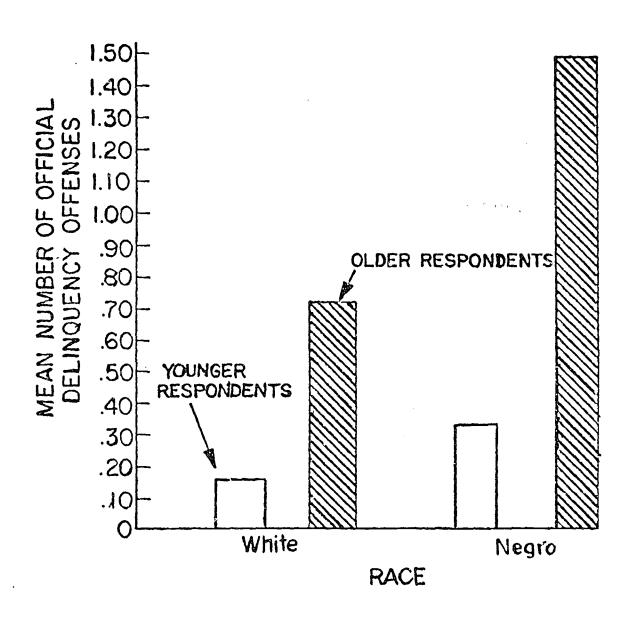


FIGURE 6. Division of the sample on Delinquency by Race.



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