

Summer 1963

Delinquency Proneness and Family Anomie

Lester D. Jaffe

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lester D. Jaffe, Delinquency Proneness and Family Anomie, 54 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 146 (1963)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

DELINQUENCY PRONENESS AND FAMILY ANOMIE*

LESTER D. JAFFE

Dr. Jaffe holds a joint appointment as Research and Teaching Fellow at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work, the Department of Sociology, and the Institute of Criminology of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel. He also serves as Consultant on Delinquency Research to the Israel Ministry of Social Welfare. Dr. Jaffe previously held the positions of Casework Supervisor at the Cleveland Psychiatric Institute and Hospital, and Research Associate at the Bellefaire Regional Treatment Center, Cleveland, Ohio. His earlier social work experience includes work at the Columbus State Psychiatric Hospital, Columbus, Ohio, and at the Cuyahoga County Division of Child Welfare, Cleveland, Ohio.

The term "anomie" has been used by Durkheim to describe the disintegrated state of a society that lacks a body of common values. Dr. Jaffe's present study results from his opinion that the same concept, when applied to the family, may be useful in the understanding of delinquent behavior. In the article that follows, the author reports upon a study employing three tests: a delinquency proneness scale, a powerlessness scale, and a value consensus scale developed specifically for this research. A preliminary study involved Negro institutionalized delinquents and nondelinquency prone Negro children. The main study involved a group of eighth grade Negro students, and two contrast groups of eighth grade white students. The author presents his findings and describes his conclusions as to the possible existence of a family anomie syndrome.—EDITOR.

In recent years considerable attention has been given in social science literature to the study of values and their relationship to delinquency proneness.¹ Research has focused upon values reflected or engendered by a social structure, values common to specific groups or sub-groups, and individual value systems.² These efforts strongly suggest that "anomie," Durkheim's term for "the disintegrated state of a society that possesses no body of common values or morals that effectively govern conduct,"³ may be a useful

concept for understanding delinquency. The concept of social anomie, however, seems too undifferentiated to cast much light upon delinquency causation, in that it fails to explain why the majority of people living in anomic social situations (e.g., structurally changing societies, disorganized neighborhoods, etc.) remain nondelinquent. This observation leads us to consider the impact of anomie upon the one institution most directly related to the behavior patterns and inter-personal functioning of individuals, the nuclear family.

A review of the literature on family disorganization reveals the inclusion of a multitude of varied phenomena with relatively few attempts to weight them or evaluate causal relationships between them.⁴ In this paper we wish to refine and

* The research here reported has been supported by grant M-1762, National Institute of Mental Health, United States Public Health Service, to Western Reserve University. Norman Polansky was Principal Investigator.

¹ REDL & WINEMAN, CHILDREN WHO HATE 222-23 (1951). See also NYE, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR 131 (1958); Beeler, *Angry Girls—Behavior Control by Girls in Latency*, 23 SMITH COLLEGE STUDIES IN SOCIAL WORK 205 (1953).

² Gardner, *Present-Day Society and the Adolescent*, 27 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 508 (1957). See also Falstein, *The Psychodynamics of Male Adolescent Delinquency*, 281 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 613 (1958); Papanek, *Re-Education and Treatment of Juvenile Delinquents*, 12 AM. J. PSYCHOTHERAPY 269 (1958); Cressey, *Changing Criminals: The Application of the Theory of Differential Association*, 61 AM. J. SOCIOLOGY 116 (1955).

³ Our use of the term "anomie" is derived from Durkheim's definition. However, in this paper we refer to anomie as a property of the family rather than of society. For a review of various meanings attributed to this term see: DURKHEIM, SUICIDE 365 (Spaulding &

Simpson transl. 1951); MERTON, SOCIAL THEORY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE 128 (1949); Cloward, *Illegitimate Means, Anomie, and Deviant Behavior*, 24 AM. SOC. REV. 189 (1959); Srole, *Social Integration and Certain Correlaries: An Exploratory Study*, 24 AM. SOC. REV. 164 (1959).

⁴ Among the family disorganization factors referred to in the literature are the following: "... members of the family criminalistic, immoral, or alcoholic; absence of one or both parents by reason of death, divorce, or desertion; lack of parental control through ignorance, blindness, or other sensory defect or illness; home uncongeniality, as evidenced by domination of one member, favoritism, oversolicitude, overseverity; neglect, jealousy, crowded housing conditions, interfering relatives; racial or religious differences, differences in

separate the objective family disorganizing variables from several suspected *products* of disorganization which we refer to operationally as the "family anomie syndrome." In other words, the variables in this syndrome define family anomie. Within this syndrome we identify, chiefly on the basis of clinical experience, the existence of at least three major variables: perceived lack of family consensus (also referred to here as confusion) regarding values, feelings of powerlessness in children from these families, and problems of parental identification. The term "family anomie" is utilized since it reflects our belief that, theoretically, value confusion is the independent of the three variables studied.

Whatever the exact cause-effect relationship involved between these variables we submit that family anomie helps to explain the malfunctioning of individual controls and delinquency proneness. Where there is evidence of family value confusion and ambiguity, the youngster is often forced to find his way by a process of trial and error—a kind of social pragmatism. He cannot benefit fully from the experience of others since the people important to him do not present him with a consistent value code. He is pushed anxiously to initiate his own set of rules to live by, and this approach may place him into difficulties psychologically and socially. As noted above, lack of consensus regarding values may be one of several variables in the syndrome of associated factors which characterize the anomic family. In addition to *value confusion* the youngster of the anomic family, in contrast to that of the non-anomic family, may be characterized by *feelings of powerlessness*, and *problems of parental identification*.⁵ This paper reports the findings of a study to determine the existence and characteristics

conventions and standards, foster home; economic pressures, such as unemployment, insufficient income, mother working out." SUTHERLAND & CRESSEY, *PRINCIPLES OF CRIMINOLOGY* 172 (1947). The contention here is that these objective variables produce the syndrome which is operationally defined as family anomie.

For a more detailed presentation of these and other factors see SUTHERLAND & CRESSEY, *supra*. See also Warren, *Social Disorganization and the Interrelationship of Cultural Roles*, 14 AM. SOC. REV. 83 (1949), and FARIS, *SOCIAL DISORGANIZATION* 194 (1955).

⁵ Another "side effect" believed related to family anomie and delinquency proneness is that of *verbal inaccessibility*, i.e., the child's lack of readiness to talk about and to permit others to talk with him about his important attitudes and feelings. This phenomenon is reported upon in Jaffe & Polansky, *Verbal Inaccessibility in Young Adolescents Showing Delinquent Trends*, 3 J. HEALTH AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR 105 (1962).

of the anomic family, and the usefulness of this concept across racial and class lines.

METHOD

The main study was preceded by a preliminary or pre-test study to develop research instruments and test the hypotheses empirically.⁶ Respondents in the pre-test consisted of two groups of 13 year old Negro boys,⁷ one group consisting of institutionalized delinquents, the other containing boys nominated by their Boy Scout and Y.M.C.A. group leaders as being least likely to get into trouble with the law. In general, the findings of the main study are consistent with those of the preliminary study. The age and sex group selected for the main study also consisted basically of 13 year old Negro boys in the lower income group, living in a neighborhood with a relatively high delinquency rate. These factors were constant in both the pre-test and main studies because, despite poor statistical data, evidence points to lower income minority groups as having the highest juvenile delinquency rates. As a result, the primary focus throughout was upon Negro youngsters.

In the main study respondents included an entire eighth grade of boys from a Youngstown, Ohio public junior high school.⁸ Although the majority of students in this grade were Negro, since it was inappropriate to exclude the white students from testing, we were also, but incidentally, able to secure a comparable low income white sample of respondents. We are not implying that this second group constitutes a control group, but this circumstance provided an opportunity to ascertain to some degree whether the hypothesized relationships would also hold up within a contrast group. Similarly, for further exploration of the generality of hypothesized

⁶ For a comprehensive review of these pre-test findings see Jaffe, *Delinquency and Impulse Control*, unpublished D.S.W. dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1960.

⁷ This age range was selected as it seems to reflect the lull before the delinquency storm. The ANNUAL REPORT FOR BOYS' INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL AT LANCASTER, OHIO (1958) indicates almost triple (196 vs. 61) the number of admissions for boys 14 as compared to those 13 years of age. The same data hold true for Juvenile Court intake records in Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio as well as numerous other cities as indicated by annual court reports.

⁸ Our sincere appreciation to the Youngstown Board of Education and particularly to Mr. C. F. Beede, Principal, and Dr. Michael Varkonda, Assistant Principal, of Hillman Junior High School for their cooperation regarding this study.

relationships, an attempt was successfully made to obtain yet a third group of students, namely, an upper-middle income sample. This group consisted of eighth grade white boys from a Cleveland Heights, Ohio junior high school, located in a suburb of Cleveland.⁹ Again, it is important to state that the Negro group remained our primary interest and largest sample, while the two groups of white respondents were included for purposes of group contrast. With the selection of the three groups, our next task involved distinguishing delinquency prone from the non-delinquency prone respondents in each group and then comparing them on the variables in question to determine differences within groups and across groups as hypothesized.

The primary measure of delinquency proneness utilized in the main research was a modified form of the Gough Delinquency Proneness, or So scale.¹⁰ In addition to earlier validation studies by Gough and others the scale was again subjected to rigid tests to assess its power to differentiate between delinquents and non-delinquents.¹¹ In view of the accuracy of the So scale determined by these checks, it was accepted in this research as a reliable and valid measure of delinquency proneness. Scale items are related to those attitudes and past experiences which are prevalent for known delinquents and non-delinquents.

The following are representative of items in the So scale (shown with scored response for asocialization or delinquency proneness).

1. Before I do something I try to consider how my friends will react to it. (false)
2. I often think about how I look and what impression I was making upon others. (false)

⁹ A note of appreciation also goes to the Cleveland Heights Board of Education, and to Mr. Boyd Purvis, Principal, and Mr. A. Bellin, Guidance Counselor, of Wiley Junior High School for their helpful assistance.

¹⁰ Gough & Peterson, *The Identification and Measurement of Predispositional Factors in Crime and Delinquency*, 16. J. CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY 207 (1952). See also Gough, *Theory and Measurement of Socialization*, 24 J. CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY 23 (1960), and Sandhu, *Validation of Socialization Scale (or Delinquency Scale) in India*, 21 INDIAN J. SOCIAL WORK 155 (1960).

¹¹ The Gough scale succeeded in accurately selecting 20 of the 21 students known to the Youngstown, Ohio Juvenile Court or to the school guidance counselor, and was also accurate in selecting students nominated by homeroom teachers as "most likely" or "least likely" to get in difficulty with the court. This study is only one of many validity tests for the So scale. See also other validation studies by Reckless, Dinitz & Murray, *The "Good" Boy in a High Delinquency Area*, 48 J. CRIM L., C. & P.S. 18 (1957).

3. I would rather go without something than ask for a favor. (true)
4. My parents never really understood me. (true)
5. Sometimes I used to feel that I would like to leave home. (true)
6. I have had my share of things to worry about. (true)
7. My home life was always happy. (false)
8. When I meet a stranger, I often think he is better than I am. (false)
9. I try to keep out of trouble at all costs. (false)
10. I hardly ever get excited or thrilled. (true)

There are 46 items in all, and the higher the total score, the greater the susceptibility. Extremely high So scale scorers (delinquency prone) in each sample were contrasted with extremely low So scale scorers (non-delinquency prone). Further to increase accuracy in identifying the delinquency prone from non-delinquency prone, objective criteria such as Juvenile Court records, guidance counselor reports, and teacher nominations regarding students' potential for delinquency were also utilized. Since court reports for the upper-middle income whites were rare or unavailable, only the So scale was used to differentiate respondents as to delinquency proneness in that group. A schematic presentation of the composition of the sample groups appears in Table I.

Each respondent in the total sample was given an "Opinion Questionnaire" which was read to the boys in groups of 20-25 by this researcher. The questionnaire included, in addition to the So scale, a section on background or face sheet data,¹² a *Value Consensus Scale* developed specifically for this research, and a *Powerlessness Scale* developed by Rotter and Seeman.¹³ Each of these instruments will be described as it becomes relevant to the presentation of research findings.

FINDINGS

Value Confusion: A Major Factor of Family Anomie and a Correlate of Delinquency Proneness

To investigate the relationship of family anomie to delinquency proneness, an attempt was made

¹² In order to promote reliability of data and protect confidentiality, respondents were asked not to identify themselves.

¹³ The author is grateful to Julian Rotter of the Ohio State University and to Melvin Seeman of the University of California at Los Angeles for permission to use the Powerlessness scale.

TABLE I
CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AND COMPOSITION OF THE MAIN RESEARCH SAMPLES

Sample	Number Compared	Composition
Youngstown Negroes — Delinquent Prone (Low income) N = 102	40	Highest SO scorers, all court cases, 20 of 24 cases nominated by teachers and guidance counselor as most delinquent prone.
Youngstown Negroes—Non-Delinquent Prone	40	Lowest SO scorers, no court contacts, 20 to 30 cases nominated by teachers as least delinquent prone.
Youngstown Whites—Delinquent Prone (Low Income) N = 72	30	Highest SO scorers, all court cases, 14 of 17 cases nominated by teachers and guidance counselor as most delinquent prone.
Youngstown Whites—Non-Delinquent Prone	30	Lowest SO scorers, no court cases, 18 of 24 nominated by teachers as least delinquent.
Cleveland Heights—Delinquent Prone (White, Upper-Middle Income) N = 105	30	Highest SO scorers; upper quartile.
Cleveland Heights—Non-Delinquent Prone	30	Lowest SO scorers; lower quartile.

to isolate those variables believed part of the family anomie syndrome. Clinical experience with such families supports the belief that lack of family consensus about values, or value confusion, is the major and most important variable in the family anomie syndrome as we have defined it. In order to investigate the validity of this assumption the construction of an instrument to measure family value consensus was necessary. The Value Consensus scale rates the respondent's perceived degree of consensus between the respondent and his projections of his parents' responses about how to handle specific critical situations requiring a value decision. It is important to note that we are not measuring the objective reality regarding values, but the impression remains that perceived and objective reality may be similar.

Prior to the pre-test study a list of value items was selected after interviewing small groups of adjudicated Negro male delinquents and Negro boys nominated by Y.M.C.A. and Boy Scout leaders as non-delinquents. Each item represented a situation which the boys deemed significant and which elicited a critical value decision as to whether to engage in the act listed or not. In the pre-test study this list of 100 items was given to 25 institutionalized Negro delinquents and 25 Negro youngsters (all 13 years of age) nominated by Y.M.C.A. and Scout leaders as least likely to

get into trouble with the law. Each respondent in each group was asked to state whether he agreed, disagreed, or was undecided about engaging in the acts listed. He was then given the same list again and asked to state what he believed his father would say about doing the things listed; and, finally, he was given the same list and asked to state what he felt his mother would say.

On the basis of responses (i.e. the respondent's, and his projected responses for his parents) it was observed that nine major types of family response combinations were possible:

- (1) Child and parents all agree on what to do.
- (2) Parents agree, child undecided.
- (3) Parents agree, child disagrees.
- (4) Child and one parent agree, other parent undecided.
- (5) Child and one parent undecided, other parent decided.
- (6) Parents undecided, child decided.
- (7) Parents disagree.
- (8) Child and one parent disagree, other parent undecided.
- (9) Child and parents all undecided about what to do.

In order to weight these situations according to the severity of family value confusion which they reflect, a group of "expert judges" was asked to rank each of the nine situations listed above as to the degree of confusion shown by lack of

consensus among the child, mother, and father. Judges consisted of two groups, a group of 13 psychiatrists, and a group of 13 chief casework supervisors, drawn from a total of six different Cleveland social agencies which deal primarily with psychiatric problems of children. These judges rated value consensus "blind"; that is, they did not have any information regarding which subjects belonged to which populations when they made the rankings. Agreement between judges was quite high, and the probability is $<.001$ that the similarity of social work and psychiatric rankings could have occurred by chance. In other words, there is a very high correlation ($r = +.72$) between the way social workers and psychiatrists look at and evaluate the social situations presented to them in this study. These data are presented in Table II.

The judges' rankings were used as weighted scores ranging from zero to eight, or from the least severe to the most severe type of value confusion situation. The weighted scores for each of the 100 pre-test items were totaled, giving a final score for the Consensus scale. The higher the score, the greater the lack of consensus.

In the pre-test, the mean scores for delinquents and the nominated non-delinquents, based on the total weighted scores of the 100 pre-test items, differentiated between these groups. In other words, the unrefined 100 item value consensus scale found delinquent youngsters significantly more confused in values than non-delinquent youngsters. Hence, the pre-test findings supported the hypothesized association between value consensus and delinquency proneness.

After item analysis was performed for internal consistency, 50 of the 100 pre-test items were selected for the main study, the great majority of which differentiated significantly between high confused and low confused respondents at the .01 level or less. No items were included in the final scale which did not discriminate at least at the .05 level of confidence. The following items are representative of those from the Value Consensus scale:

1. Quitting school at 16.
2. Playing jokes on people.
3. Getting married right after meeting the girl.
4. Admitting doing something wrong.
5. Saving money for college.
6. Playing the dozens.
7. Sneaking into the movies.
8. Dating somebody from another religion.

TABLE II
CASEWORK SUPERVISORS AND PSYCHIATRISTS
COMPARED ON RANKING OF VALUE
CONFUSION SITUATIONS

Situation Ranked by Severity of Confusion	Mean Social Work Rank	Mean Psychiatrist Rank	Final Weight
Child and parents all agree on what to do about a situation requiring a value decision.....	0	0	0
Parents agree, child undecided.....	1.5	2.3	1
Parents agree, child disagrees.....	1.9	2.3	2
Child and one parent agree, other parent undecided..	3.8	3.6	3
Child and one parent undecided, other parent decided.....	3.8	4.9	4
Parents undecided, child decided.....	4.9	5.0	5
Parents disagree.....	6.2	6.0	6
Child and one parent disagree, other parent undecided.....	6.5	6.6	7
Child and parents all undecided about what to do.....	7.3	6.8	8
Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance: $W = +.72$ ($P < .001$).....	N = 13	N = 13	

9. Getting scars from fights.
10. Talking back to a teacher.
11. Crying when you are sad.
12. Reporting someone to the police.
13. Joining the Armed Forces.
14. Living in the public housing projects.
15. Looking out for yourself first of all.

Investigation of the hypothesis that an inverse relationship exists between value consensus and delinquency proneness is reported in Table III.

The findings in Table III strongly support our hypothesis in all sample groups. It seems evident that an appreciable degree of value confusion accompanies delinquency proneness.¹⁴

¹⁴ Mean overall scores for the delinquency prone upper-middle income white group was found by "t" test to be significantly different from those for delinquency prone lower income whites ($P < .02$) and Negroes ($P < .02$). The higher income group included a majority of Jewish students for whom cultural values in the family were expected to be more clearly defined than in

TABLE III
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN VALUE CONSENSUS AND DELINQUENCY PRONENESS

Sample Groups	Mean Scores on Value Consensus Scale		Cr. Ratio	Pr. Level
	Delinq. Prone	Non-Delinq. Prone		
Low Income Negroes.....	115.05 (N = 40)	82.80 (N = 40)	3.75	.001
Low Income Whites.....	116.83 (N = 30)	84.40 (N = 30)	3.56	.001
Upper-Middle Income Whites.....	99.63 (N = 30)	81.07 (N = 30)	2.45	.01

Correlation coefficients for the delinquency proneness and value consensus scales for the total number of respondents in each group rather than extreme quartile scorers yielded significant findings. The Pearsonian coefficient of correlation was $+0.37$ ($P < .001$) for Negroes, $+0.36$ ($P < .001$) for low income whites, and $+0.24$ ($P < .02$) for upper-middle income whites. These associations are positive, in the direction predicted, and taken with the data noted above, help to confirm the initial hypothesis linking lack of value consensus to delinquency.

An inquiry into the objective factors which produce family anomie supported our impression regarding these assumed correlates. For example, damaged marriages, crowded living quarters, low annual income, frequent changes in fathers' employment, and serious illness in the family were significantly associated with high value confusion scores.¹⁵ It is equally interesting to note that these same variables were also significantly associated with high delinquency proneness scores. While we cannot predict direct cause-effect relationships, it does seem that lack of value consensus is related to susceptibility to delinquency.

the average population. In any case, the upper-middle income white sample group showed the least lack of values consensus in this study.

¹⁵ Concerning the objective factors believed related to the source of family anomie, specific background variables did significantly differentiate respondents as hypothesized. Included among the background variables significantly associated with both delinquency proneness and value confusion in the main study were: frequency of changes in family residence, number of years respondent resided in present city, frequency of arguments at home, serious illnesses in the family, parents' marital status (i.e., living together or apart), and self-estimated annual income. It is also interesting to note that most of these variables, plus those regarding the number of people at home and frequent changes in father's employment were also found significantly related to feelings of powerlessness. For a detailed statistical presentation of these findings in both the preliminary and final research see Jaffe, *op. cit. supra* note 6, at 119-33.

Feelings of Powerlessness

Feelings of powerlessness were believed to be a second aspect of family anomie and a correlate of delinquency proneness. Such feelings may arise when behavioral norms are nebulous and contradictory, when a pragmatic approach to life results in lack of self-confidence in being able to understand how and why events occur in life, and when cause-effect knowledge is so meager that fate and destiny become the guiding forces for most personal and world events.¹⁶ From the psychoanalytic point of view, feelings of powerlessness may be interpreted as representing personal anxiety and fear of ego disintegration present under conditions of family confusion. We suspect that delinquent behavior may be one effort toward restoring some sense of personal power.

The Powerlessness scale utilized to explore this hypothesis was developed at Ohio State University by Rotter and Seeman. It has been used and tested for reliability and validity by this researcher. In brief, the Powerlessness scale relates to the respondent's feeling that he is not in control of his life, that he cannot see any real pattern or meaning to the things that happen to him or to people in general, and that his life is "other-administered" rather than "self-administered." The following are a few items representative of those used in the scale.

1. If you are a success you will usually have more good breaks than bad breaks.
2. The things that happen to most people are outside their own control.
3. Most of the things that have disappointed me in my life have come because my luck ran out.

¹⁶ An excellent discussion on the dynamics of "power orientation" among offenders can be found in: ADORNO, ELSE-FRENKEL-BRUNSWIK, LEVINSON & SANFORD, *THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY* 387 (1950). Adorno's discussion also touches upon problems of sexual identification noted in this study.

TABLE IV
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DELINQUENCY PRONE AND NON-DELINQUENCY PRONE RESPONDENTS ON
THE POWERLESSNESS SCALE

Sample Groups	Mean Powerlessness Score		Cr. Ratio	Pr. Level
	Del. Prone	Non-Del. Prone		
Low Income Negroes	42.33 (N = 40)	32.88 (N = 40)	5.00	.001
Low Income Whites	40.97 (N = 30)	34.27 (N = 30)	4.11	.001
Upper-Middle Income Whites	38.77 (N = 30)	31.93 (N = 30)	3.80	.001

4. To get ahead you have to gamble on unsure things.

This is a Likert-type scale with four alternate choices for each item ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with the statement presented. The higher the total score, the greater the feelings of powerlessness. In the main research this finding held up again between delinquency prone and non-delinquency prone respondents in all three of the sample groups. The results of this investigation are given in Table IV.

In addition to these significant findings, powerlessness and delinquency proneness scores were correlated for all sample groups. By means of Pearsonian correlation an r of $+.50$ was obtained between these two variables ($P < .001$) for the Negro groups; a correlation of $+.44$ ($P < .001$) for the low income white group; and $+.33$ ($P < .001$) for the upper-middle income group. These coefficients indicate a consistent association between feelings of powerlessness and delinquency proneness, as predicted.

It is interesting to note that there was no significant mean difference found between sample groups on the powerlessness scale. The delinquency prone youngsters apparently tend to feel powerlessness to a similar degree regardless of race or class factors.

The above findings relating powerlessness to delinquency are important in that in addition to establishing a relationship, they point up the presence of this relationship in a non-institutionalized population.¹⁷ Jaffe has found a significantly greater degree of felt-powerlessness among institutionalized delinquents as compared with college freshmen in Reserve Officers Training Corps classes. It was not clear, however, whether

¹⁷ See Jaffe's earlier findings with the Powerlessness scale at the Boys' Industrial School, Lancaster, Ohio, 1959, Jaffe, An Investigation of Some Factors Related to Delinquency Proneness, unpublished M.A. thesis, The Ohio State University, 1959.

this difference was one of basic attitudes about life or a reflection of institutional structure and its limitations on personal freedom. The present study points out that feelings of powerlessness are common to delinquent youngsters and reflect a characteristic approach to life.

To explore the interrelationships between factors in the anomic family, a second hypothesis regarding powerlessness predicted a positive correlation between a lack of value consensus and powerlessness, the theory being that insecurity and felt powerlessness would be a reaction to experienced confusion, and consequently, parts of the same syndrome. The Pearsonian coefficients of correlation between these two variables was $r = +.19$ for lower income Negroes ($P < .05$), $+.12$ (N.S.) for low income whites, and $+.17$ (N.S.) for upper-middle income whites. Although these associations are not strong, they are positive and tend to support the association predicted.

Patterns of Parental Identification and Family Anomie

One wonders what problems arise for children in anomic families in working out identification with their parents' values. If the incidence of value confusion is so great, how does the youngster handle the almost schizophrenogenic problem of trying to side with both parents despite the gap in their approaches to life situations?

Preliminary (pre-test) findings with delinquents and non-delinquents helped to clarify this issue. In the pretest, delinquents, who reported substantial value confusion, verbalized identification with their mothers' values, as did the nominated non-delinquents, but in *indirect* testing they actually identified with their fathers' values. In the main study with non-institutionalized populations, two questions were asked further to explore this intriguing finding. Respondents were asked, "Whom do you usually go to for good advice?"

and "Whom do you talk to about those things that are the hardest for you to talk about?"

Findings for the second question are presented in Table V. Frequency totals which are less than sample size indicate failure of respondents to answer this question. Table V includes only those respondents whose parents were in the home.

It is clearly evident from Table V that upon *direct* questioning, delinquency prone and non-delinquency prone respondents in all sample groups show *no* significant differences; all avow a greater closeness to the mother. The same findings were obtained for the question regarding from whom to seek advice. These questions were not combined to classify people as targets; since responses were similar, data for only one is presented here. By means of *indirect* testing, however, it was found again, as in the preliminary research, that delinquency prone youngsters from anomic families actually identify with values of the father, while the non-delinquents from non-anomic families maintain their verbally avowed identity with values of their mother. This finding was

obtained by selecting those items in the value confusion scale for each respondent concerning which the mother and father were in disagreement. Observation was then made as to which parent the child sided with under these circumstances. Closeness to one or the other parent was determined by which parent the respondent predominantly sided with. Cases in which respondents sided equally with the mother and father were excluded from this analysis. By means of a sign test it was then possible to investigate differences in patterns of closeness to parents for delinquency prone and nondelinquency prone respondents. Table VI presents the results of this analysis.

It is evident from Table VI that there is a significant relationship between the tendency to share the *father's* attitudes and delinquency proneness, despite the verbalized closeness to the mother. The above evidence seems to point up the effects of confusion regarding values upon patterns of closeness to parents. Whatever the theoretical explanation, the problem of role identity seems to be a crucial area for research regarding family anomie and delinquency.

TABLE V

PATTERNS OF CLOSENESS TO PARENTS FOR DELINQUENCY PRONE AND NON-DELINQUENCY PRONE RESPONDENTS AS DETERMINED BY REPORTED ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE FEELINGS (DIRECT QUESTION)

Sample Group	Target Person	Delinquency Prone	Non-Del. Prone	χ^2	Pr.
Low Income Negroes	Mother	19	19	1.71	n.s.
	Father	3	8		
Low Income Whites	Mother	18	15	.51	n.s.
	Father	6	10		
Upper-Middle Income Whites	Mother	11	13	.10	n.s.
	Father	8	8		

TABLE VI

RESPONDENT'S PATTERNS OF CLOSENESS TO PARENTS WHEN PARENTS DISAGREE (INDIRECT TESTING)

Parental Choice	Delinquency Prone	Non-Delinquency Prone	χ^2	Pr.
Father	25	15	6.57	.02
Mother	11	23		

CONCLUSIONS

This research began as an effort to learn more about the association of values to the differential vulnerability of youngsters to delinquency. Social and community disorganization factors, often described in the literature by Durkheim's term "anomie," seemed a useful concept around which to build research. However, it was readily evident that a discomfiting gap existed when it came to translating the impact of social forces into behavioral determinants. Drawing upon clinical experience with delinquents, our hunch was that these forces could best be appreciated when viewed with regard to their impact upon the nuclear family. Consequently, we began looking at the family unit with anomie as our conceptual model for explaining family breakdown and susceptibility to delinquency.

Beginning with value confusion as a suspected variable of anomie within the family rather than the society, a very significant difference in degree of confusion was found for delinquency prone and non-delinquency prone youngsters. In addition, the highly confused delinquency prone boys differentiated from the less confused non-delinquency prone boys on variables regarding degree of verbalized felt-powerlessness and patterns of

parental identification. These differences appeared so consistently and clearly in all sample groups that they seemed to be part of a *family anomie syndrome*. Our interpretation of these relationships suggested that both feelings of powerlessness and ambivalent parental identification result from a lack of value consensus among family members, and that these three variables taken together define family anomie.

This syndrome of associations in the anomic family has been shown to correlate quite closely with susceptibility to delinquency, and because of this we feel that the variables of family anomie have much meaning for delinquency research. It remains, of course, for future research to determine the continued validity of the family anomie variables and their usefulness in delinquency prevention and treatment planning.