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## DELINQUENCY, PERSONAL COSTS AND PARENTAL TREATMENT: A TEST OF A REWARD-COST MODEL OF JUVENILE CRIMINALITY\*

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A questionnaire survey was carried out to test predictions from a reward-cost model of delinquency. This model, in opposition to most current theories of delinquency, posits that everyone is instigated to commit crime, some more often and more strongly than others, and that what deters those who conform are subjectively experienced high costs attendant upon criminal activity. In the present test of the model, scales were constructed to measure boys' concern with two areas in which costs might be incurred, parental approval and school involvement. The responses of 693 high school boys to the scales indicated a strong relationship between costs and both self-reported and official measures of delinquency. Implications of the findings both for the theory and for the control of delinquency are discussed.

Several writers<sup>1</sup> have suggested recently that the failure of current delinquency theories to adequately account for male juvenile crime stems from problematic features of a basic assumption in virtually all of these theories, namely the premise of a disposition toward crime. Whatever their substantive differences, delinquency theories have generally been fixed-disposition theories. That is, the juvenile offender is seen as having a certain enduring personal inclination toward crime which is not experienced by so-called conforming boys and which results from some more or less specific anomaly in his previous (sometimes current) life experience. Psychoanalytic theory, frustration-aggression theory and the currently fashionable delinquent subculture theory

are among the more well-known theories utilizing this assumption.<sup>2</sup>

Criticism of dispositional premises in delinquency theories has been based on several grounds. First, few of the dispositions proposed have been found to be consistently related to delinquent behavior.<sup>3</sup> Second, even those dispositions which are found reliably to characterize juvenile offenders fail to account for one of the important dynamics of so-called delinquent careers—that most delinquents apparently become conforming in early adulthood.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that whatever dispositions operate to lead boys to commit crime, they often decrease or become neutralized with age. Yet, dispositional theories are either silent on this change, or, having recognized it, fail to explain it.

Third, currently posited criminal dispositions fail to deal adequately with the repeated finding

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With regard to the questionnaire referred to in the above synopsis of this paper, see Briar & Piliavin, *Delinquency, Situational Inducements, and Commitment to Conformity*, 12 Soc. Prob. 35 (1965).

<sup>1</sup>BECKER, *OUTSIDERS: STUDIES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF DEVIANCE* (1963); Briar and Piliavin, *Delinquency, Situational Inducements, and Commitment to Conformity*, 12 Soc. Prob. 35 (1965); MATZA, *DELINQUENCY AND DRIFT* (1964).

<sup>2</sup>BERKOWITZ, *AGGRESSION: A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS* (1962); CLOWARD & OHLIN, *DELINQUENCY AND OPPORTUNITY* (1960); COHEN, *DELINQUENT BOYS: THE CULTURE OF THE GANG* (1955); FRIEDLANDER, *THE PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH TO JUVENILE DELINQUENCY* (1947).

<sup>3</sup>Schussler & Cressey, *Personality Characteristics of Criminals*, 55 Am. J. Soc. 476 (1950).

<sup>4</sup>BERKOWITZ, *supra* note 2; MATZA, *supra* note 1.

that the vast majority of adolescent boys engage in delinquency to some degree.<sup>5</sup> A number of theories totally ignore this fact; others acknowledge it but then pass it off suggesting that the unlawful behavior of most boys is not of the same genus as that of "true" delinquents.<sup>6</sup> Presumably this assertion is based on the belief that "true" delinquents commit more serious and more frequent crimes than other boys. But even granting that some boys are more serious and persistent law violators than others does not necessarily imply different bases for crime within the two groups. In the absence of supporting evidence this assumption may be gratuitous and misleading.

Finally, on heuristic grounds, criticism has been leveled at dispositional premises because they direct attention away from situational factors which may influence boys to commit crime. It can be argued, of course, that such influences are minor, but this argument contradicts what is known about human behavior in general as well as what is known about delinquents and their crimes. As Matza has pointed out,<sup>7</sup> even the so-called serious delinquent engages in crime only rarely and his illegal actions are typically purposive and situationally relevant. Thus, if dispositions toward crime are in fact operating, it seems likely that their behavioral expression must in some sense be strongly influenced by situational elements.

Briar and Piliavin<sup>8</sup> have recently argued that a reward-cost formulation of the delinquent act avoids the shortcomings of contemporary dispositional delinquency theories and provides a means of conceptualizing delinquent acts in the same terms as other forms of social behavior. In its general form<sup>9</sup> a reward-cost model of social action stresses the calculative and situational elements involved in behavior. The Briar-Piliavin specification of the model assumes that any individual is capable of committing criminal acts and that the motives giving rise to these acts

are engendered by the individual's contemporary situation. These motives, the satisfaction of which may be viewed as rewards, include the reasons offered by delinquents themselves for their illegal acts; e.g., the desire for valued goods, the wish to harm a hated other, the hope for acceptance by peers, the wish for excitement, etc.<sup>10</sup> Whether these motives are acted upon, however, is assumed to be dependent upon not only the strength of these motives but the individual's perception of potential costs. Given a particular reward value for an individual of a given act, the greater its potential costs, the less likely it will be undertaken. While potential costs are probably numerous and varied, some of the more common ones include the punishments that may be inflicted by officialdom, the wrath of God, parental rejection, withdrawal of esteem by conventional friends, and the loss of educational and vocational opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, according to Briar and Piliavin, the degree to which these possible rewards and costs are experienced as such depends upon the circumstances of the actor.<sup>12</sup> The boy with money in his pocket is not as likely as the boy without funds to desire another person's funds. The boy who is alienated from his parents and unconcerned about their expectations is not as likely as the boy who loves his parents either to consider their disapproval as a potential cost for transgression or to weigh this factor heavily in his decision of whether or not to commit a crime.

Although Briar and Piliavin find their reward-cost model of delinquency to be more congruent than other theories with the general trends and patterns of juvenile crime, they provide no direct tests of their thesis. The research being reported here was intended to test one proposition of the model, namely that the greater an individual's potential costs in relation to the commission of a

<sup>10</sup> ROBINSON, *JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: ITS NATURE AND CONTROL* (1960); YABLONSKY, *THE VIOLENT GANG* (1962); Shaw, *Juvenile Delinquency—A Group Tradition*, BULL. STATE UNIV. OF IOWA, No. 23, N.S., No. 700 (1933).

<sup>11</sup> Although delinquency theories have not systematically incorporated the concept of costs, some have discussed the role of superego and internalized conventional values in constraining criminal acts. These concepts have not been very useful in delinquency research however, and are, in any event, very narrow specifications of the cost concept. At the least they fail to encompass the more calculative concerns that are involved in an actor's assessment of the consequences of his actions.

<sup>12</sup> Briar & Piliavin, *supra* note 1.

<sup>5</sup> Murphy, Shirley & Witmer, *The Incidence of Hidden Delinquency*, 16 AM. J. ORTHOPSYCHIATRY 686 (1946).

<sup>6</sup> CLOWARD & OHLIN, *supra* note 2.

<sup>7</sup> MATZA, *supra* note 1.

<sup>8</sup> Briar & Piliavin, *supra* note 1.

<sup>9</sup> HOMANS, *SOCIAL BEHAVIOR: ITS ELEMENTARY FORMS* (1961); THIBAUT & KELLEY, *THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF GROUPS* (1959); Becker, *Notes on the Concept of Commitment*, 66 AM. J. SOC. 35 (1960); Becker, *Personal Change in Adult Life*, SOCIOLOGY 40 (1964).

crime, the less the likelihood that he will engage in crime.

Although the realms in which these costs might be experienced are wide-ranging, for the purposes of our research the measurement of potential costs was limited to two areas, the family and the school. Since these provide common and long-term bases for conventional expectations they suggest themselves as stable sources of potential costs for nonconformity among boys.

### *Sample*

A 40-item questionnaire was sent to male high school students living in a working class community in the San Francisco Bay Area.<sup>13</sup> The subjects for the survey consisted of the 76 per cent of the original sample who responded to the mail questionnaire. Of these 693 boys, 71 per cent were Caucasian and 29 per cent Negro. The modal age of these students was 17 years.

### *Scales to Measure Potential Costs*

Three separate scales were constructed which were intended to measure potential costs for delinquency. By hypothesis, the higher an individual's score on any of these three scales, the greater his potential costs for crime with respect to the realm tapped by the scale.

(a) **Father Costs Scale.** The Father Costs score for each boy was his mean score on six items pertaining to his concern over his father's respect and approval. Two examples of items included in the Father Costs Scale were:

1. "I try to please my father" with seven response categories from "not at all" to "always."
2. "Being well thought of by my father" (1) "doesn't matter at all to me" to (7) "means everything to me."

(b) **Mother Costs Scale.** An identical scale phrased in terms of his mother's respect and approval formed the Mother Costs Scale and scoring for this scale was the same as that for Father Costs.

(c) **School Costs Scale.** The School Costs score for each boy was his mean score for eight items pertaining to his concern with teachers' approval and his interest in and concern with school performance. Two of the items used in this scale were:

1. "In general, do you like or dislike school?" with a three point response scale from "like it" to "dislike it."
2. "Do you care what the teachers think of you?" with three response alternatives ranging from "I care a lot" to "I don't care much."

For purposes of analysis, a respondent was classified as having high, medium or low costs on each of these scales depending upon whether his score fell in the upper, middle or lower third of the possible range of scores for that scale.

### *Parental Treatment Scales*

In addition to the costs scales, the questionnaire included two eight-item scales asking the subject to indicate how well he was treated by his parents. Two examples of the items contained in the Father Treatment Scale are:

1. "In general, do you feel that you get a 'square deal' with your father?" with seven response alternatives from "never" to "always."
2. "Do you think your father tries to understand your problems and worries?" with the same response alternatives.

Eight identical items substituting "mother" for "father" formed the Mother Treatment Scale.

As in categorizing boys' costs, parental treatment was designated as good, fair, or poor depending upon whether a given score was in the upper, middle or lower third of the treatment scale range. Father and mother scores were treated separately.

The alpha reliabilities<sup>14</sup> and intercorrelations of all five scales are presented in Table 1. As may be seen from the table, the reliabilities for the scales are adequate and range from .70 to .89. Whereas the parental treatment and costs scales appear to be somewhat related, the School Costs Scale is relatively independent of the other scales.

### *Criteria for Delinquency*

Data pertaining to the delinquency of sample members were available from an independent survey conducted several months prior to this investigation.<sup>15</sup> Three criteria were employed in

<sup>14</sup> Tryon, *Reliability and Behavior Domain Validity: Reformulation and Historical Critique*, 54 *PSYCH. BULL.* 229 (1957).

<sup>15</sup> We wish to thank Alan B. Wilson and Travis Hirschi for making these data available to us.

<sup>13</sup> Copies of the questionnaire are available upon request from the authors.

TABLE 1  
RELIABILITIES AND INTERCORRELATIONS OF THE THREE COSTS SCALES AND PARENTAL TREATMENT SCALES (Total Sample; N = 693)

	Father Costs Scale	Mother Costs Scale	School Costs Scale	Father Treatment Scale	Mother Treatment Scale
Father Costs.....	.79	.57	.36	.52	.25
Mother Costs.....		.77	.22	.18	.47
School Costs.....			.80	.17	.15
Mother Treatment.....				.89	.37
Father Treatment.....					.84*

\* Diagonal = Alpha Reliabilities for each Scale (Tryon, note 13 *infra*).

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BY BOYS' POTENTIAL COSTS FOR TRANSGRESSIONS—SCHOOL COSTS SCALE (CAUCASIANS)  
Delinquency Measures

School Costs	Police Apprehension	Delinquent Activity	Official Arrest
High.....	13.2 (144)	18.1 (144)	6.9 (144)
Medium...	26.0 (196)	41.5 (195)	14.6 (198)
Low.....	56.9 (130)	70.5 (132)	31.1 (132)
$\chi^2$ .....	64.85	77.51	29.76
p.....	<.001	<.001	<.001

designating youth as delinquent. The first, the *Police Apprehension Index* consisted of respondents' replies to one item asking whether or not they had ever been picked up by the police for an offense. The *Delinquent Activity Index* was obtained by asking respondents to check which of several acts from stealing objects worth less than \$2.00 to more serious offenses such as car theft and assault they had committed within the year preceding that survey. The final measure, the *Official Arrest Index*, was obtained from the official arrest records of sample members for the three year period prior to the data collection. A boy for whom one or more offenses was indicated by any of these criteria was classified as a delinquent in terms of that criterion, data for the three criteria being treated independently.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The use of several criteria of delinquency in this research and in delinquency research in general seems advisable, given both the differential base rates afforded by the three measures as well as the low intercorrelations among them.

The Pearson product-moment r's were:  
Police Apprehension Index and Official Arrest Index..... r = .42  
Police Apprehension Index and Delinquent Activity Index..... r = .38

RESULTS

Since the effect of costs varied by race the results for Caucasian and Negro boys are presented separately.

*Effect of Costs for Caucasians*

The relationship between potential costs as measured by the School Costs Scale and delinquency according to each of the three criteria is presented in Table 2. From these data it can be seen that as costs decrease from high to low, the percentage of delinquents increases rather dramatically.

On the Police Apprehension measure, for example, 13.2 per cent of the boys with high School Costs indicate that they have been picked up by the police one or more times; in the low cost group the percentage of delinquents is 56.9 per cent. This effect is consistent across all measures of delinquency and the chi squares for all three are significant at well beyond the .001 level.<sup>17</sup>

The results for Father Costs are presented in Table 3. The data again reveal that on each criterion of delinquency high cost boys commit fewer delinquent acts than low cost boys. The relationships are highly significant (p < .001 for all measures) although the magnitude of the effect for Father Costs is somewhat less pronounced than is the case for the School Costs measure.

Official Arrest Index and Delinquent Activity Index..... r = .26

The base rates for delinquency were:

	Caucasians	Negroes
Police Apprehension Index.....	31%	45%
Delinquent Activity Index.....	42%	45%
Official Arrest Index.....	17%	33%

<sup>17</sup> All p-values reported are two-tailed.

The data of Table 4 present the results for Mother Costs. While low cost boys are more frequently delinquent than high or medium cost boys on all of the criterion measures, only the differences obtained on the Delinquent Activity and Official Arrest indexes were significant (at the .001 and .01 levels respectively).

*Effect of Costs for Negroes*

Only the School Costs Scale yielded significant relationships with delinquency for Negro boys. As may be seen in Table 5 the predicted relationship between School Costs and delinquency among Negro boys replicates the results obtained on the Caucasian subjects, although the relationship is of a lower order of significance among the Negroes. The Father Costs and Mother Costs Scales, as presented in Tables 6 and 7, reveal nonsignificant effects in all analyses for the three measures of delinquency. In addition, contrary to hypothesis, the data for Mother Costs indicate a slight tendency for high costs to be associated with more delinquency on both the Police Ap-

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BY BOYS' POTENTIAL COSTS FOR TRANSGRESSIONS—FATHER COSTS SCALE (CAUCASIANS)  
Delinquency Measures

Father Costs	Police Apprehension	Delinquent Activity	Official Arrest
High.....	26.6 (214)	33.6 (214)	14.1 (220)
Medium...	22.3 (157)	47.8 (157)	13.6 (162)
Low.....	54.4 (90)	56.0 (91)	29.5 (95)
$\chi^2$ .....	30.79	15.43	13.15
p.....	<.001	<.001	<.001

TABLE 4

PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BY BOYS' POTENTIAL COSTS FOR TRANSGRESSIONS—MOTHER COSTS SCALE (CAUCASIANS)  
Delinquency Measures

Mother Costs	Police Apprehension	Delinquent Activity	Official Arrest
High.....	29.0 (138)	31.2 (138)	16.3 (141)
Medium...	30.6 (144)	41.0 (144)	10.1 (148)
Low.....	38.5 (122)	57.4 (122)	25.2 (127)
$\chi^2$ .....	3.05	18.44	11.12
p.....	n.s.	<.001	<.01

TABLE 5

PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BY BOYS' POTENTIAL COSTS FOR TRANSGRESSIONS—SCHOOL COSTS SCALE (NEGROES)  
Delinquency Measures

School Costs	Police Apprehension	Delinquent Activity	Official Arrest
High.....	27.3 (33)	18.2 (33)	12.1 (33)
Medium...	38.5 (96)	42.3 (97)	32.7 (98)
Low.....	62.5 (64)	61.9 (63)	43.3 (67)
$\chi^2$ .....	13.74	17.17	9.74
p.....	<.01	<.001	<.01

TABLE 6

PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BY BOYS' POTENTIAL COSTS FOR TRANSGRESSIONS—FATHER COSTS SCALE (NEGROES)  
Delinquency Measures

Father Costs	Police Apprehension	Delinquent Activity	Official Arrest
High.....	41.1 (56)	43.9 (57)	32.8 (61)
Medium...	43.2 (51)	42.0 (50)	30.9 (55)
Low.....	47.5 (61)	46.8 (62)	30.8 (65)
$\chi^2$ .....	.52	.27	.07
p.....	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

TABLE 7

PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BY BOYS' POTENTIAL COSTS FOR TRANSGRESSIONS—MOTHER COSTS SCALE (NEGROES)  
Delinquency Measures

Mother Costs	Police Apprehension	Delinquent Activity	Official Arrest
High.....	51.3 (76)	44.0 (75)	40.7 (81)
Medium...	42.9 (49)	38.8 (49)	23.5 (51)
Low.....	37.5 (32)	57.6 (33)	26.5 (34)
$\chi^2$ .....	1.99	2.90	4.94
p.....	n.s.	n.s.	<.10

prehension and Official Arrest Indexes. This failure to find the relationship expected between delinquency and parental cost scale scores for Negroes will be taken up in some detail below.

*Effect of Parental Treatment*

Although the results presented thus far clearly confirm the hypothesis under investigation for

TABLE 8

PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH AND LOW COST BOYS REPORTING ADEQUATE OR POOR FATHER TREATMENT (TOTAL SAMPLE)  
Delinquency Measures

Costs	Police Apprehension			Delinquent Activity			Official Arrest		
	Father Treatment		$\chi^2$ , Father Treatment	Father Treatment		$\chi^2$ , Father Treatment	Father Treatment		$\chi^2$ , Father Treatment
	Adequate	Poor		Adequate	Poor		Adequate	Poor	
High	21.1 (199)	19.5 (41)	0.00* n.s.	24.6 (199)	40.0 (40)	3.98 < .05	13.0 (200)	9.8 (41)	0.10* n.s.
Low	49.4 (81)	55.8 (120)	0.81 n.s.	56.9 (79)	63.4 (123)	0.84 n.s.	28.1 (82)	33.9 (124)	0.78 n.s.
$\chi^2$ , Costs	22.23 < .001	16.20 < .001		26.43 < .001	6.78 < .01		9.17 < .01	8.91 < .01	

\*  $\chi^2$  corrected for continuity.

Caucasians and at least partially for Negroes, the objection can be raised that these findings are spurious and indicate only the workings of other factors that influence costs and delinquency in the same direction. While it was not possible to examine the validity of this objection over a wide range of potential explanatory variables, the effect of one factor, parental treatment of children, was investigated. It has been long and widely assumed by students of delinquency that parental rejection and neglect are important factors in the making of delinquents. Furthermore, it can be argued plausibly that such practices can lead children to become alienated from parents and unconcerned about their expectations. Perhaps then the relationships obtained merely reflect this direct influence of parental practices on both costs and delinquent behavior.

The analysis dealing with this question was confined to sample members who could be categorized as having either high or low *total costs* based on a composite of their scores on the Father and School Cost Scales.<sup>18</sup> Boys who were initially classified as having high costs on one of these scales and no lower than medium costs on the other were placed into a High Total Cost grouping. Conversely sample members who were initially classified as having low costs on one of these scales and no higher than medium costs on the other were assigned to a Low Total Cost category.

<sup>18</sup> Although Mother Costs were related to delinquency, this scale was the least powerful of the costs scales and had higher variance than the other measures. Consequently, it was not employed in developing a total cost index.

Father Treatment scores were used as the index of parental practices since only Father Costs had been employed in the Total Costs index. Because of low cell frequencies, fair and good fathers were combined into a category of adequate fathers.

Chi-square analyses of the relationship between Father Treatment and delinquency revealed a strong tendency for adequate father treatment groups to manifest less delinquent behavior ( $p < .001$  on all criteria of delinquency). When this effect is examined separately for Caucasians the same relationship is evident ( $p < .001$  on Police Contact;  $p < .001$  on Recency;  $p < .05$  on Official Index). Although the results are generally in the predicted direction for Negroes, the data do not reach acceptable levels of significance on any of the three criteria for delinquency.

In Table 8 the results are presented for our total sample for the bivariate analysis of Total Costs and Father Treatment on delinquency. When the relationship between parental practices and delinquency is examined holding costs constant, only one of the six possible comparisons is significant. On the other hand, when fathers' parental practices are controlled and the resulting relationships between costs and delinquency are observed, all of the six possible comparisons show significant differences. When this relationship was examined for Caucasians (Table 9), the data again reveal that the effect of costs is stronger than that of parental practices. These analyses support our hypothesis that delinquency is more

TABLE 9  
 PERCENTAGE OF DELINQUENCY AMONG HIGH AND LOW COST BOYS REPORTING  
 ADEQUATE AND POOR FATHER TREATMENT (CAUCASIANS)  
 Delinquency Measures

Costs	Police Apprehension			Delinquent Activity			Official Arrest		
	Father Treatment		$\chi^2$ , Father Treatment	Father Treatment		$\chi^2$ , Father Treatment	Father Treatment		$\chi^2$ , Father Treatment
	Adequate	Poor		Adequate	Poor		Adequate	Poor	
High	19.9 (166)	19.4 (31)	0.01* n.s.	23.5 (166)	43.3 (30)	5.13 < .05	10.8 (167)	6.4 (31)	†
Low	47.5 (59)	58.3 (72)	1.54 n.s.	60.3 (58)	70.3 (74)	1.43 n.s.	23.73 (59)	36.5 (74)	2.51 n.s.
$\chi^2$ , Costs	16.75 < .001	13.23 < .001		26.39 < .001	6.61 < .02		6.02 < .02	8.50* < .01	

\*  $\chi^2$  corrected for continuity.

†  $\chi^2$  not calculated due to expected frequencies less than 5.

the direct consequence of costs than of parental treatment.

Since our expectations concerning the effects of parental costs and treatment were not confirmed for Negroes and because of small cell frequencies in the relevant table, the relationship between parental treatment, total costs and delinquency was not assessed for this group.

#### AN EXPERIMENTAL ANALOG

The survey results, at least for Caucasians, clearly support the stated hypothesis. However, the findings remain ambiguous because of possible biases in the criterion measures. For example the findings that boys with low costs are more often arrested by police may not reflect more delinquency on their part but rather that they are dealt with more harshly for their crimes because they are less likely than high cost boys to evince attitudes and emotions which evoke police leniency.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the measures of self-reported crime and police apprehension may reflect only that low cost boys are less likely to hide their transgressions than are high cost boys.

In order to avoid these problems as well as to provide an opportunity for studying the effects of costs on delinquent and nondelinquent boys under controlled reward conditions, an experiment was designed in which direct observations could be made on the occurrence of a quasi-delinquent act, namely cheating on a test for purposes of

financial gain. The findings of this study, presented in detail elsewhere,<sup>20</sup> are consistent with those obtained in the survey reported above. Boys with low potential costs cheated significantly more often on the test than boys with high potential costs. These results, furthermore, remain even when prior delinquency is controlled.

#### DISCUSSION

To review briefly, the hypothesis under investigation was that boys are constrained from committing transgressions by the degree to which these transgressions pose potential costs in various spheres of the boys' lives. Three scales designed to measure potential costs were used to test this hypothesis. Two of these scales measured costs in terms of concern for parental approval, and the third in terms of concern for teacher approval and acceptable school performance. All cost measures were strongly related to the occurrence of delinquency among Caucasians. On the other hand, while the School Cost Scale predicted delinquency among Negroes, the Parental Cost Scales did not.

Given the overall findings, it is difficult to view this unanticipated failure as a refutation of the relevance of personal costs to delinquent behavior. On the other hand, it cannot simply be dismissed as a consequence of the unreliability of responses by Negroes to the two scales (Alpha

<sup>19</sup> Piliavin & Briar, *Police Encounters With Juveniles*, 70, *Am. J. Soc.* 206 (1964).

<sup>20</sup> Piliavin, Hardyck & Vadum, *Constraining Effects of Personal Costs on the Transgressions of Juveniles*, 10 *J. Pers. & Soc. Psych.* 227 (1968).

Reliability = .76 for Father Costs Scale, .74 for Mother Costs Scale). One possible explanation for this finding is that while virtually all white parents severely condemn and punish delinquency among their children, a large number of Negro parents tolerate it. The presence of such tolerance in families where children desire parental approval would serve to lower the potential costs of crime for these children and increase the probability of its occurrence.

But why should some Negro parents be more tolerant or resigned to their children's delinquencies? A partial answer to this query is found in the results of studies by Lewis<sup>21</sup> and Rainwater.<sup>22</sup> These investigators report that many Negro parents adhere to the presumably erroneous assumption<sup>23</sup> that the deviant norms of street life eventually and inevitably prevail among children over the conventional expectations of parents. As a result, say Lewis and Rainwater, these parents give up trying to counter street mores as their children move into adolescence. Although Lewis and Rainwater do not specifically connect this abdication of the parental authority role with tolerance of crime, the relationship seems not at all unlikely. But even if it is true that many Negro parents are somehow tolerant of juvenile crime it still needs to be shown that

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, *Child Rearing Among Low-Income Families*, in FERMAN, KORNBLAH & HABER, *POVERTY IN AMERICA* 342-53 (1965).

<sup>22</sup> Rainwater, *The Concept of Identity in Race Relations: Notes and Queries*, 2 *DAEDALUS* 172 (1966).

<sup>23</sup> Reckless, Dinitz & Murray, *The "Good" Boy in a High Delinquency Area*, 48 *J. CRIM. L.C. & P.S.* 18 (1957).

this tolerance is found in families where children desire parental approval and that it increases the likelihood that these children will engage in delinquency. Unfortunately, we know of no data bearing on these matters. They remain unknowns requiring empirical study.

Another avenue for further investigation concerns the role of personal costs as an intervening variable between delinquency and the social and interpersonal conditions which have been found to be related to juvenile crime. Students of delinquency have suggested that these various conditions are the bases for the crime-producing dispositions posited by contemporary delinquency theories. A reward-cost formulation of delinquency would see these conditions as leading to lowered personal costs in relation to crime. Support for this latter view is provided by the analysis reported here linking fathers' treatment of boys, costs, and delinquency. Obviously, additional analyses using other correlates of juvenile crime are needed before the general applicability of the proposition can be granted.

Aside from its theoretical relevance, a reward-cost formulation of delinquency has some interesting practical implications for the control of juvenile crime. It suggests that this control might be achieved through increasing the costs of delinquency and the rewards of conformity. The most direct way of doing this requires the use of money wages to boys merely on condition that they keep out of trouble. A delinquency control program based on this simple approach would provide an important test of the reward-cost framework.