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THE MYTH OF SOCIAL CLASS AND CRIMINALITY RECONSIDERED*

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Four recent contributions to ASR *on the relationship between social class and criminality are evaluated against a more comprehensive review of the evidence. It is concluded that class is one of the very few correlates of criminality which can be taken, on balance, as persuasively supported by a large body of empirical evidence. Self-report studies, however, fail to provide consistent support for a class-crime relationship. Yet even here more studies show significant class differences than would be expected on the basis of chance. Studies of official records consistently show notable class differences in criminality. While there is a considerable literature which has failed to demonstrate widespread class biases in official records, there is neglected evidence which suggests that self-reports exaggerate the proportion of delinquency committed by the middle class.*

In a review which Stark (1979) describes as a "definitive work," Tittle et al. (1978) argue that the class-crime relationship so central to theory in the sociology of deviance is, in fact, "myth." A subsequent contribution (Hindelang et al., 1979) also seems to begin by supporting this conclusion, referring to Tittle et al. (1978) as an "apparently definitive paper."

Hindelang et al. (1979) however, go on to a sophisticated assessment of the supposed discrepancy between studies on official statistics which show a strong negative association between class and crime, and self-report studies which show no relationship. Their conclusion is that, in those few studies which permit the calculation of levels of association between class and comparable types of crime on official versus self-reported measures, such associations tend to be similarly negative and similarly weak under the two measures. The problem is that rarely is it possible to get self-report data on a set of offenses of seriousness comparable to the index offense rates available from official sources. Given the small sample size and one-year reference period for the typical self-report study, to pick up class differences would require sensitivity to events with a "prevalence rate of 2 or 3 percent" in the general adolescent population (Hindelang et al., 1979). They argue that sample sizes of the order of those employed in the Census Bureau victimization surveys (over 130,000) are necessary. The conclusion seems justified, given, as Hindelang et al. point out, that there is plentiful evidence that seriousness affects self-report results (cf. Clark and Wenninger, 1962; Gold, 1970; Braithwaite and Law, 1978).

The subsequent publication of Elliott and Ageton's (1980) first National Youth Survey marks one of the first serious attempts to test the class-crime relationship on a self-report item set which covers most Part I and Part II UCR offense types. Even though the sample (1,726) falls far short of the size suggested by Hindelang et al., substantial class differences emerged for the serious crimes against persons and property but not for victimless crimes. On the "predatory crimes against persons" subscale, lower class respondents reported nearly four times as many offenses as middle class respondents, while on the "predatory crimes against property" subscale the frequency of offenses was almost twice as high. There were no class differences on the other subscales: illegal service crimes, public disorder, hard drug use, and status offenses.

A Review of Evidence on the Class-Crime Relationship

Tittle et al. (1978) inform their readers that "despite frequent references (without ci-

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tation) in the literature to 'many studies,' we are able to find only 16 investigations that used official police contact or court delinquency figures and only seven studies examining official arrest or conviction data for adults'' (Tittle et al., 1978: 645). After combining these with a number of self-report studies, the authors included a total of 35 works in their secondary analysis. If this is all that could be found, then they did not look very hard. The present review (an expansion of the Braithwaite [1979] review) includes 53 official records and 47 self-report studies on the relationship between social class and juvenile crime, and 46 official records studies of social class and adult crime. In addition, 57 official records studies on the relationship between social class of the area in which individuals live and juvenile crime were reviewed, and eight self-report studies on that relationship; as well as 13 official records studies on social class of area and adult crime.

In my earlier review, other studies of an ecological nature are discussed. These show that one is more likely to be the victim of certain types of crime in a lower class than in a middle class neighborhood. Tittle et al. (1978) believe that such studies are not relevant. The ecological fallacy notwithstanding, it is hardly plausible that one can totally explain away the higher risks of being mugged and raped in lower class areas as a consequence of the activities of middle class people who come into the area to perpetrate such acts. Perhaps Tittle et al. take their own findings seriously and adopt no extra precautions when moving about in the slums of the world's great cities than they do when walking in the middle class areas of such cities. Nevertheless, studies of the class composition of the areas in which offenses occur have been excluded from the present review.

Definitions

Although social class has been *defined* in a variety of ways, in the literature on the class-crime relationship these various definitions have almost always been *operationalized* in the same way. Those relatively low on the social class continuum (sometimes referred to as the lower class, sometimes as the working class, sometimes as the low socioeconomic status group) are those who have unskilled or semiskilled occupations, or, in some cases, are the unemployed. In the case of juveniles, the operationalization of social class is almost always based on parents' occupations. Thus, studies based on disparate definitions of class are comparable at the operationalized level.[1]

The social class of an area is most frequently operationalized as the percentage of the adult male population of the area who are in lower class occupations, the percentage unemployed, the percentage on welfare, the percentage below some poverty line, or some combination of these. It is also common for composite indices of the social class of area to include variables such as the proportion of houses which are substandard, or of below-average value, and the proportion of the population which has a below-average educational attainment. Social class of area is a highly robust and empirically meaningful construct. In numerous factorial ecologies of cities throughout the world, social class of area has consistently emerged as a stable underlying factor (Timms, 1971), and in most of these studies social class of area has accounted for more of the variance than any other factor in the ecology of the city. Moreover, Sweetster (1965) and Schmid and Tagashira (1964) have shown that the emergence of a factor representing social class of area is invariant under substitution of measures.

The definition of crime is more problematic. For the purposes of this review, crime is defined as behavior punishable, but not necessarily punished, under a specific legal prohibition. Offenses which do not involve injury to persons other than

[1] Comparability, of course, does not mean validity. A defect of occupational indices of social class is that the same occupational category (e.g., salesperson) might have much different income and status correlates in poor neighborhoods than in affluent suburbs: one salesperson is selling hot dogs and another Cadillacs or business property. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that occupational status correlates more highly with alternative indices of social class than does any other index (Ray, 1971).

the offender or loss of property are excluded from the review, as are offenses which involve the abuse of occupational power (price-fixing, commercial fraud, etc.). The rationale for this definition has been developed in the earlier review (Braithwaite, 1979:10–22, 43–6, 179–201); but, needless to say, there are many studies in the review which include some offenses not within this definition. Studies were excluded, however, where the majority of crime incidents included were outside the definition.

The Evidence

Tables 1–4 present the results of studies of the class-crime relationship based on official records of crime separately for social class and social class of the area in which the offender lives, and separately for juvenile and adult crime. The review in Tables 1–4 is, no doubt, incomplete. In particular, there is little mention of the work on the class-crime relationship carried out in developing countries. This has already been covered in an excellent review by Clinard and Abbott (1973) of studies from Manila, Kuala Lumpur, Bombay, Kanpur, Lucknow, Kampala, Lima, Mexico City, Caracas, and Puerto Rico. These studies seem to show unanimously that lower class people and people from lower class areas appear in disproportionately large numbers in the official records of crime and delinquency in these countries. Of the 53 studies of class and juvenile crime which have been reviewed here, 44 showed lower class juveniles to have substantially higher offense rates than middle class juveniles. Among adults, all 46 studies found lower class people to have higher crime rates. Juveniles who lived in lower class areas were found to have higher juvenile crime rates in all 57 studies; for adults this was the case in all 13 studies. Thus it has been demonstrated, with a degree of consistency which is unusual in social science, that lower class people, and people living in lower class areas, have higher official crime rates than other groups.

Table 5 reviews studies on the relationship between self-reported juvenile crime and class, while Table 6 provides a summary of findings on the relationship between self-reported juvenile crime and the social class of the area in which respondents live. There has been only one self-report study of adult crime which has investigated the question of class distribution. On a sample of American adults, Tittle and Villemez (1977) found, after controlling for race, no evidence for a negative correlation between class and the self-reporting of theft, gambling, cheating on tax, assault, and marijuana use. With the exception of the male reporting of cheating on tax, the Tittle and Villemez data do show that nonwhites (male and female) reported higher levels of involvement than whites. In Tables 5 and 6, studies which find the lower class to admit to more delinquency, but where this difference is not statistically significant, are recorded as "No" (lower class juveniles not more criminal).[2]

Of the 47 self-report studies reviewed in Table 5, 18 found lower class adolescents to report significantly higher levels of involvement in delinquent behavior than middle class youth. Seven studies provided qualified support for this hypothesis, and 22 found no significant differences in reported delinquent involvement among classes. While a greater proportion of the studies have found a significant difference than would be expected on the basis of chance, the fact that almost half of the studies have failed to uncover a statistically significant difference must leave serious doubt about the relationship.

The review of research on the question of whether adolescents living in lower class areas report more delinquency than those living in middle class areas (Table 6) also yields mixed support for the class-crime relationship. Four studies supported the hypothesis, one provided qualified support, and three found no significant difference. One other self-report study by Pine (1965) has not been included in this review so far because it could not be placed into either Table 5 or Table 6. In

[2] In cases where significance tests were not available, studies are only classified as "Yes" if the data trend was reasonably strong and generally regarded as sufficiently strong to be cited by other researchers in the area as supporting the class-crime relationship.

Table 1. Studies of the Relationship between Social Class and Officially Recorded Juvenile Crime

Author(s)[a]	Location of Study	Sample Size	Lower Class Juveniles More Criminal?
Allen & Sandhu (1968)	Florida, U.S.	179	Yes
Braithwaite (1979)	Brisbane	2,333	Yes
Burt (1944)	London	Unknown	Yes
Canadian Govt. (1951)	Canada	6,198	Yes
Cardarelli (1974)	Unnamed U.S. city	975	Yes
Conger & Miller (1966)	Denver, U.S.	2,348	Yes
Connor (1970)	Sverdlovsk, U.S.S.R.	Unknown	Yes
De Fleur (1969)	Cordoba, Argentina	273	Yes
Douglas et al. (1966)	Great Britain, national sample	2,402	Yes
Elliott (1962)	U.S. West Coast City	200	Yes
Empey & Lubock (1971)	Utah and Los Angeles	667	No
Empey et al. (1971)	Los Angeles	262	No
Engstad & Hackler (1971)	Seattle, U.S.	200	Yes
Erickson (1973)	Rural Utah	336	No
Farrington (1973)	London	405	Yes
Frease (1973)	Marion County, Oregon	1,232	No
Garrett & Short (1975)	3 U.S. cities	2,711	Yes[b]
Gibson (1971)	Cambridge, Great Britain	402	Yes
Glueck & Glueck (1966)	Boston	1,000	Yes
Gould (1969)	Seattle	217	Yes
Havighurst (1962)	"River City"	238	Yes
Kelly & Balch (1971)	Unnamed U.S. County	1,227	Yes
Kvaraceus (1945)	Passaic, U.S.	533	Yes
Levy & Castets (1971)	Paris	Unknown	Yes
Little & Ntsekhe (1959)	London	381	Yes
Lunden (1964)	Canada	4,949	Yes
McClintock (1976a)	N.E. England	Unknown	Yes
McClintock (1976b)	Dover, England	302	Yes
McDonald (1968)	London & South East England	851	Yes
Ibid.	Another London sample	126	No
Mannheim (1948)	Cambridge & Lincoln	166	Yes
Mannheim et al. (1957)	London	400	Yes
Matsumoto (1970)	Tokyo	6,172	Yes
Meade (1973)	Unnamed U.S. city	439	No
Merril (1959)	Boston	300	Yes
Morris (1957)	Croydon, Great Britain	79	Yes
Mugishima & Matsumoto (1970)	Tokyo	11,931	Yes
Palmai (1971)	London	453	No
Piliavin (1969)	Madrid, Spain	447	Yes
Pirog-Good (1979)	Unnamed U.S. city	120	Yes
Polk et al. (1974)	Pacific North-West County, U.S.	265	No
Polk & Halferty (1966)	Unnamed U.S. city	410	Yes
Reiss & Rhodes (1961)	Nashville, U.S.	9,238	Yes
Robins et al. (1962)	Unnamed U.S. city	450	Yes
Shoham & Shaskolsky (1969)	Tel Aviv, Israel	100	Yes
Spadijir-Dzinic (1968)	Yugoslavia	Unknown	Yes
Sullenger (1936)	Omaha, U.S.	500	Yes
Toro-Calder (1970)	San Juan, Puerto Rico	1,051	Yes
Vedder & Somerville (1970)	California	837	Yes
Wadsworth (1975)	England and Wales, national sample	2,196	Yes
Warner & Lunt (1941)	"Yankee City"	Unknown	Yes
Wattenberg & Balstrieri (1952)	Detroit	2,774	Yes
Williams & Gold (1972)	U.S. national sample	847	No

[a] See Reference appendix for the full references of all articles in Tables 1 to 6.

[b] "Lower class" in all three cities had highest police contact rate, but in one city the "upper class" had a higher rate than the "middle class" and "working class," and in another city the "middle class" had a higher rate than the "working class."

this study Pine used a composite index of social class, which incorporated *both* the socioeconomic status of the area in which the individual lived and the socioeconomic status of his family. For his New England sample of 683, he found no

Table 2. Studies of the Relationship between Social Class and Officially Recorded Adult Crime

Author(s)	Location of Study	Sample Size	Lower Class Adults More Criminal?
Amir (1971)	Philadelphia	1,292	Yes
Asunti (1969)	Western Nigeria	53	Yes
Baldwin et al. (1976)	Sheffield, England	1,225	Yes
Bannister (1976)	Scotland	102	Yes
Barber (1973)	Queensland, Australia	248	Yes
Cameron (1964)	Chicago	443	Yes
Cardarelli (1974)	Unnamed U.S. city	975	Yes
Chimbos (1973)	Ontario, Canada	446	Yes
Clinard & Abbott (1973)	Kampala, Uganda	5,812	Yes
Cormack (1976)	Scotland	1,891	Yes
District of Columbia Crime Commission (1969)	Major violent crime offenders known to the police in Colombia		Yes
Dunlop & McCabe (1965)	London and Werrington	107	Yes
Gil (1970)	National U.S. sample of perpetrators of physical child abuse	1,380	Yes
Glueck & Glueck (1930)	Massachusetts	500	Yes
Glueck & Glueck (1934)	Massachusetts	500	Yes
Green (1970)	Ypsilanti, U.S.	3,156	Yes
Hollingshead (1947)	"Elmtown"	Unknown	Yes
Lalli & Turner (1968)	U.S. national sample	5,183	Yes
New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (1974)	New South Wales, Australia	1,000	Yes
Nixon (1974)	All offenders convicted in New Zealand Magistrates' Court in one year		Yes
Palmer (1960)	New England, U.S.	51	Yes
Pownall (1969)	All U.S. Federal prison releases in June 1964		Yes
President's Commission (1967)	All persons committed to State and Federal prisons and reformatories in the U.S. in 1960		Yes
Robins et al. (1962)	Unnamed U.S. city	503(Sample I) 409(Sample II)	Yes Yes
Simondi (1970)	Florence, Italy	80	Yes
Smith et al. (1973)	Birmingham, England	214	Yes
United States Bureau of the Census (1923)	All persons committed to State and Federal prisons and reformatories in the U.S. in 1923		Yes
University of Pennsylvania (1969)	Homicide, rape and robbery offenders on Philadelphia police records		Yes
Warner & Lunt (1941)	"Yankee City"	705	Yes
Willett (1971)	England	599	Yes
Wolf (1962)	Denmark	3,032	Yes
Wolfgang (1967)	Reviews 13 studies of homicide in the U.S., Italy, Great Britain, Denmark, Finland, Ceylon, Mexico, South Africa.		All Yes
Wood (1961)	Ceylon	777	Yes

significant relationship between questionnaire-reported delinquency and this index.

Earlier reviews have pointed out that a number of the studies which failed to find a relationship between class and self-reported delinquency were conducted in rural areas (Box and Ford, 1971; Cohen and Short, 1971). It is suggested that testing the class-crime association in urban areas is more pertinent because "In non-urban areas class differentiation may not have developed sufficiently for it to result in distinctive ways of acting, thinking and feeling" (Box and Ford, 1971:39). This proposition seems to be corroborated by the studies of officially recorded delinquency by Erickson (1973), Frease (1973),

Table 3. Studies of the Relationship between Social Class of Area and Officially Recorded Juvenile Crime

Author(s)	Location of Study	Sample Size	Juveniles from Lower Class Areas More Criminal?
Baldwin et al. (1976)	All juveniles appearing before Sheffield courts for four months in 1966		Yes
Bates (1962)	St. Louis, U.S.	Unknown	Yes
Bloom (1966)	Unnamed U.S. city	Unknown	Yes
Bordua (1958)	Detroit	748	Yes
Braithwaite (1979)	Brisbane	2,333	Yes
Burt (1944)	London	About 2,000	Yes
Carr (1950)	Detroit, Toledo, Flint, Jackson, Dearborn, Ann Arbor, Monroe	All unknown	All Yes
Cartwright & Howard (1966)	Chicago	16 gangs	Yes
Cherchi et al. (1972)	Sardinia	Unknown	Yes
Chilton (1964)	Indianapolis, U.S.	1,649	Yes
Chilton (1967)	Indianapolis, U.S.	5,507	Yes
Conlen (1971)	Baltimore, U.S.	Unknown	Yes
De Fleur (1971)	Cordoba, Argentina	5,453	Yes
Dirksen (1948)	Hammond, Gary, East Chicago, U.S.	All unknown	All Yes
Dunstan & Roberts (1977)	Melbourne	Unknown	Yes
Galle et al. (1972)	Chicago	Unknown	Yes
Garrett & Short (1975)	Three U.S. cities	Unknown	Yes
Glueck & Glueck (1966)	Boston	1,000	Yes
Gold (1963)	Flint, U.S.	Unknown	Yes
Hardt (1968)	Middle Atlantic State, U.S.	814	Yes
Kvaraceus (1945)	Passaic, U.S.	533	Yes
Lander (1954)	Baltimore, U.S.	8,646	Yes
Mannheim et al. (1957)	London	400	Yes
Martin (1961)	New York	6,808	Yes
Matsumoto (1970)	Tokyo	6,172	Yes
Olds (1941)	Pittsburgh, U.S.	Unknown	Yes
Polk (1958)	San Diego, U.S.	Unknown	Yes
Polk (1967)	All males appearing before Portland Juvenile Court in 1960		Yes
Quinney (1971)	All juvenile arrests by Lexington (U.S.) police in 1960		Yes
Reiss & Rhodes (1961)	Nashville, U.S.	9,238	Yes
Rosen & Turner (1967)	Philadelphia	504	Yes
Shaw & McKay (1969)	Chicago, 1900–1906	8,506	Yes
Ibid.	Chicago, 1917–1923	8,141	Yes
Ibid.	Chicago, 1927–1933	8,411	Yes
Ibid.	Philadelphia	5,859	Yes
Ibid.	Boston	4,917	Yes
Ibid.	Cincinnati	3,829	Yes
Ibid.	Cleveland	6,876	Yes
Ibid.	Richmond	1,238	Yes
Sheth (1961)	Bombay	Unknown	Yes
Singell (1967)	Detroit	Unknown	Yes
Spady (1972)	Baltimore, Portland, San Diego	All Unknown	All Yes
Timms (1971)	All Juvenile Court cases in Luton, England, for 1958–60		Yes
Vinson & Homel (1972)	All juvenile offenders in Newcastle, Australia, known to the police in 1971		Yes
Wallis & Maliphant (1967)	London	Unknown	Yes
Willie (1967)	Washington, D.C.	6,269	Yes
Wolfgang et al. (1972)	Philadelphia	9,945	Yes

and Polk et al. (1974) which found no class differences among rural youth.

More importantly, a number of the studies which have found no significant relationship are particularly susceptible to methodological criticism. The pioneering

Table 4. Studies of the Relationship between Social Class of Area and Officially Recorded Adult Crime

Author(s)	Location of Study	Sample Size	Adults from Lower Class Areas More Criminal?
Baldwin, Bottoms & Walker (1976)	All adults appearing before Sheffield courts for four months in 1966		Yes
Bechdolt (1975)	Los Angeles & Chicago	Unknown	Yes
Brown, McCulloch & Hiscox (1972)	Northern England	Unknown	Yes
Clinard & Abbott (1973)	Kampala, Uganda	5,812	Yes
Moran (1971)	Boston	258	Yes
Porterfield (1952)	Fort Worth, U.S.	Unknown	Yes
Quinney (1971)	All arrests by Lexington, Kentucky, police in 1960		Yes
Shaw & McKay (1969)	Results of a number of studies in U.S. cities (see Table 3)		All Yes
Timms (1971)	All court cases in Luton, England 1958–60		Yes

work of Nye et al. (1958) has been criticized for internal inconsistency (Hirschi and Selvin, 1967:108–9; Hirschi, 1969), and Gold's (1963:5–7) recomputation of the published data leads him to conclude that the data *do* support the class-juvenile delinquency relationship anyway. The inappropriate use of Guttman scaling in this study (Braithwaite and Law, 1978) has resulted in a requirement of boys to admit to either drinking or to drinking and heterosexual relationships in order to get into the most delinquent category. Both of these "offenses" are treated as more serious than "stealing a car." The study by Akers (1964) is probably also best dismissed because the small number of items are dominated by crimes without victims and very petty forms of delinquency. McDonald (1968:136–42) also points out that the significance test in the Akers study is based on a sample with only 13 cases in the lowest (unskilled) category.

Hirschi (1969:70–5) has argued that an underrepresentation of the very lowest in the social class continuum has been a fundamental weakness of self-report studies. "The *class* model implicit in most theories of delinquency is a peculiarly top-heavy, two-class model made up of the overwhelming majority of respectable people on the one hand and the lumpenproletariat on the other" (Hirschi, 1969: 71). Hirschi's data support the efficacy of such a model. Between father's occupation and self-reported delinquency he finds only "a very small relation that could easily be upset by random disturbances of sampling or definition" (p. 69). However, when he looks at the very lowest on the social class continuum (the "lumpenproletariat"), he finds a clear association. "Boys whose fathers have been unemployed and/or whose families are on welfare are more likely than children from fully employed, self-sufficient families to commit delinquent acts" (p. 72). Similarly, Elliott and Ageton's (1980) significant overall relationship between class and self-reported delinquency is totally a consequence of the difference in delinquency between the lower class group and the rest of the sample, there being no difference between the working class and middle class groups. Spady (1972) has also shown with official records that, as the bottom cutting point is moved toward the lower end of the social class distribution, the obtained association between social class and delinquency tends to be strengthened.

In common with most other self-report studies, Hirschi (1969) included items such as "Have you ever taken little things (worth less than $2) that did not belong to you?" and "Have you ever banged up something that did not belong to you on purpose?" It has been pointed out that the angry school child who takes another student's pencil and breaks it is guilty of both of these offenses. In Hirschi's study a child who admits to both of these offenses

Table 5. Studies on the Relationship between Social Class and Self-Reported Juvenile Crime

Author(s)	Location of Study	Sample Size	Interview or Questionnaire	No. of Items	Lower Class Juveniles More Criminal?
Akers (1964)	Washington	836	Q	7	No
Allen & Sandhu (1968)	Tampa, Florida	198	Q	6	Yes [a]
Arnold (1965)	Unnamed U.S. city	180	Q	32	No
Belson, (1969)	London	1,425	I	44	Yes
Belson (1978)	London	1,565	I	53	Yes
Berger & Simon (1974)	Illinois	3,100	Q	11	No
Braithwaite (1979)	Brisbane	344	I	15	No
Braithwaite & Braithwaite (1978)	Brisbane, Melbourne, Ipswich, Australia	422	Q	32	No
Casparis & Vaz (1973)	Rural Switzerland	489	Q	23	No
Cernkovich (1978)	Midwestern U.S. city	412	Q	30	Yes
Christie et al. (1965)	Oslo, Bergen, & rural areas of Norway	3,372	Q	25	No
Clark & Wenninger (1962)	4 U.S. communities	1,154	Q	38	Yes & No[b]
Dentler & Monroe (1961)	3 U.S. communities	912	Q	5	No
Elliott & Ageton (1980)	National sample, U.S.	1,726	I	47	Yes
Elliott & Voss (1974)	California	2,617	Q	12	Yes & No[c]
Elmhorn (1965)	Stockholm	950	Q	21	Yes
Empey & Erickson (1966)	Utah, U.S.	180	I	22	Yes & No[d]
Engstad & Hackler (1971)	Seattle	200	Q	Unknown (Nye-Short scale)	Yes
Epps (1959)	Seattle	356	Q	11	Yes & No[e]
Erickson (1973)	Rural Utah	336	I	14	No[f]
Gold (1970)	Flint, Michigan	522	I	51	Yes & No[g]
Hassall (1974)	Christchurch, New Zealand	872	Q	Unknown (Hirschi & Nye-Short scales)	No
Himelhoch (1965)	Rural Vermont, U.S.	Unknown	Q	Unknown (Nye-Short scale)	No
Hirschi (1969)	Richmond, U.S.	1,121	Q	6	Yes & No[h]
Johnson (1969)	Baton Rouge, U.S.	Unknown	Q	Unknown	No
Johnstone (1978)	Chicago	1,124	Q	30	Yes
Kelly (1974)	2 small towns in New York State	173	Q	25	No
Kelly & Pink (1975)	Unnamed U.S. county	284	I	2	Yes
Kratcoski & Kratcoski (1975)	Unnamed U.S. city	Unknown	Q	25	No
Lanphier & Faulkner (1970)	Small U.S. town	739	Q	6	Yes
McDonald (1968)	London & S.E. England	851	Q	44	Yes
Marsden (1979)	Illinois	2,467	I	28	Yes
Natalino (1979)	North-Central U.S.	1,174	Q	36	No
Nye, Short, & Olson (1958)	6 small Ohio communities	2,350	Q	18	No
Phillips (1974)	Unnamed U.S. city	469	Q	Unknown	Yes

Table 5. Continued

Author(s)	Location of Study	Sample Size	Interview or Questionnaire	No. of Items	Lower Class Juveniles More Criminal?
Quensel (1971)	Cologne, Germany	599	Q	16	Yes
Reiss & Rhodes (1961)	Nashville, U.S.	158	I	Unknown	Yes
Sherwin (1968)	Middletown, Ohio	280	Q	20	Yes & No[i]
Slocum & Stone (1963)	Washington	3,242	Q	5	Yes
Vaz (1966)	Canada	1,639	Q	21	No
Voss (1966)	Honolulu	620	Q	16	No
Walberg et al. (1974)	Chicago	430	Q	13	Yes[j]
West (1973)	London	411	I	38	Yes
Wilcox (1969)	Rocky Mountains area	403	Q	Unknown	No
Williams & Gold (1972)	National sample, U.S.	847	I	16	No
Wilson et al. (1975)	Brisbane	129	I	8	No
Winslow (1967)	Los Angeles	259	Q	9	No

[a] Allen and Sandhu seem to misinterpret their data at one point in their paper as showing that adolescents from high income families are more delinquent than those from low income families. Why they do this is puzzling. From Table 2, p. 265, it is quite clear that while 46% of those in the low family income category are high on self-reported delinquency, only 37% of those in the higher income category are high on self-reported delinquency.

Calculated from Table 2 (Allen and Sandhu)

		Delinquency		
		Low	High	TOTAL
Family Income	Low	$54\%_{(57)}$	$40\%_{(48)}$	$100\%_{(105)}$
	High	$63\%_{(59)}$	$37\%_{(34)}$	$100\%_{(93)}$

[b] "Yes" for the "Industrial city" sample, "No" for other areas. There is an association between social class and the more serious self-report delinquency items, even in the latter areas.

[c] This is a longitudinal study in which the relationship between class and crime is examined at two time periods—junior and senior high school. For neither time period were the Nye-Short items classified as nonserious significantly related to social class. Serious delinquency was significantly associated with social class at the junior high school level, but not at the senior high school level.

[d] This study is based on an unusual nonrandom sample of 50 high-school boys, 30 boys with one court appearance, 50 boys on probation and 50 incarcerated offenders. Three subscales, "general theft," "serious theft," and "common delinquency" showed correlations of −.20, −.17 and −.17 respectively with social class. But when these results were broken down into more detail, the correlations were due to middle and lower status respondents reporting more delinquency than those in the upper status category, while there were no differences between middle and lower status boys.

[e] "Yes" for females, "No" for males. A number of items in this study represent crimes without victims.

[f] This study is based on an unusual nonrandom sample. The sample consisted of 100 incarcerated offenders, 136 "Provo Experiment" offenders, and 100 youths who were officially nondelinquent.

[g] "Yes" for males, "No" for females.

[h] See the discussion of this study in the text.

[i] Lower class youth did not admit to committing a greater number of different offenses. However, they admitted to committing most offenses with greater *frequency* than middle class youth.

[j] The independent variable here is "family background" rather than social class as such. "Family background" is indexed by the number of middle class, school-relevant objects in the home (telephone, dictionary, encyclopedia, etc.) and the nature of the psychological relationship between parent and child, particularly with regard to school expectations. That is, the independent variable purports to be an index of the existence of a middle class ethos in the family situation.

would be placed with the 20% in the highest delinquent category. It is fairly safe to assume that anyone who denies ever having "taken little things" is lying. Who has not stolen an eraser or a paper clip? Clark and Tifft (1966), in their validation with a lie detector, found that, while only 32.5% admitted to this offense in the first administration, 87.5% admitted to it in the final administration. If this item is treated as a lie item rather than as a measure of delinquency, the results of studies such as those of Hirschi (1969) and Dentler and Monroe (1961) can be shown

Table 6. Studies on the Relationship between Social Class of Area and Self-Reported Juvenile Crime

Author(s)	Location of Study	Sample Size	Interview or Questionnaire?	No. of Items	Juveniles from Lower Class Areas More Criminal?
Braithwaite (1979)	Brisbane, Australia	344	I	15	No
Braithwaite & Braithwaite (1978)	Brisbane, Melbourne, Ipswich, Australia	422	Q	32	Yes
Clark & Wenninger (1962)	4 U.S. communities	1,154	Q	38	Yes[a]
Elmhorn (1965)	Stockholm	950	Q	21	No
Hardt (1968)	Middle Atlantic state U.S.	814	Q	19	Yes & No[b]
Johnson (1969)	Baton Rouge, U.S.	Unknown	Q	Unknown	No
McDonald (1968)	London & S.E. England	851	Q	44	Yes
Smith (1975)	Brisbane, Australia	184	Q	17	Yes

[a] Basically "Yes", although in a low-income rural area less delinquency was reported than in a high-income urban area.

[b] "Yes" for 14–15 year olds, "No" for 12–13 year olds.

to provide statistically significant support for the class-crime association. The failure of both of these works to show a significant relationship largely reflects the fact that there were no class differences between those who admitted to no offense and those who admitted to only one offense.[3]

Similarly, Elliott and Ageton (1980) found that their significant class differences disappeared when the proportions of those who reported more than one offense were compared with those who reported none. At the other end of the frequency continuum, Elliott and Ageton found that class differences were in considerable measure a reflection of a large number of delinquent offenses reported by a small number of lower class respondents. When their data were rescored to truncate the frequency range by making "3 or more offenses" the upper category, most class differences disappeared. Using a "3 or more offenses" upper category is precisely what has been done in a number of self-report studies (e.g., Hirschi, 1969; Williams and Gold, 1972; Elliott and Voss, 1974; Braithwaite, 1979).

Gold (1963:4–7) has pointed out that many of the offenses in the original Nye, Short, and Olson (1958) scale (the scale which most subsequent researchers have adopted or modified) are not really violations of the law. "Disobeyed your parents," "had a fist fight with another person," "told a lie," "ran away from home" and "defied your parents' authority" are not forms of misbehavior specifically proscribed as punishable by law. Clark and Wenninger (1962:833), after having found no class differences in the reporting of so-called "nuisance offenses," but clear class differences on the more serious offenses, concluded that

> Perhaps the failure of some researchers to find differences among the social classes in their misconduct rates can be attributed to the relatively less serious offenses included in their questionnaires or scales.

Box (1971:87) considers that the Akers (1964), Vaz (1966), and Voss (1966) studies in Table 5 should be ignored because their "delinquency" items are so contaminated with adolescent status offenses and bad manners. All of these are studies which report no relationship between class and self-reported crime. The Voss study is also particularly weak in that it is based on a sample which is half Japanese, yet there is no control for race. Slocum and Stone's (1963) study, which

[3] I have recalculated χ^2 on these two studies, treating those who admit to only one offense as non-delinquents. Both studies then support a statistically significant tendency for the lower class to admit to more delinquency.

supports the class-delinquency relationship, should also be ignored because of the inclusion of items on drinking, truancy, and parental defiance, which account for most of the variation of scores on the delinquency measure.

The majority of the studies labelled "No" in Table 5 report a very slight (nonsignificant) tendency for the lower class to admit to more delinquency. Bytheway (1975) has demonstrated the importance of these slight trends by pooling the data from three studies often cited as evidence against the class-delinquency association. The increased sample size, through pooling the data from the Nye et al. (1958), Akers (1964), and Hirschi (1969) studies, results in a statistically significant tendency for the children from low occupational status families in the three studies to report more delinquent involvement.

The studies by Erickson (1973) and Williams and Gold (1972), which found no class differences in self-reported delinquency, must also be considered carefully because both failed to find class differences in *officially* recorded delinquency on their samples. Since a finding of no class differences in officially recorded delinquency is unusual, it may be that sampling error has resulted in rather atypical delinquents being included in these samples. Hindelang et al.'s (1979) reanalysis of Nye et al. (1958) suggests that this could be true of the latter as well.

In short, the findings of seven studies can be questioned—six of them find no significant relationship between class and crime (the studies by Akers (1964), Dentler and Monroe (1961), Erickson (1963), Nye et al. (1958), Vaz (1966), Voss (1966), and Williams and Gold (1972)). If these studies are ignored, there remain, in Table 5, 17 studies which support the hypothesis, 7 which partially support it, and 16 which find no significant difference. If studies based on rural or small town samples were also excluded, the ratio of significant to nonsignificant findings would increase further. The number of studies which have uncovered a significant relationship is clearly greater than would be expected on the basis of chance. It is possible that the failure to find significance in a large number of studies is the result of the contamination of measures with items measuring misbehavior not normally punishable by law, the setting of lower class cutting points too high, or the choice of a small sample which is disproportionately middle class to the exclusion of the very lowest social class groups.

The Question of Class Bias

Both official records and self-report data are riddled with error. While the purpose of this paper is not to review these validity problems, class bias in measures of crime is one source of error so central to the present debate that it cannot be ignored. When the early self-report studies failed to show class differences in delinquency, this was regarded as proof that class differences in official measures were the result of bias in the criminal justice system. However, the conclusions of most recent reviews (e.g., Braithwaite, 1979; Liska and Tausig, 1979) tend to coincide with that of Hindelang et al. (1979):

> Once the seriousness of the instant offense and prior record of the offender are taken into account, apparent class bias plays only a minor role in the generation of official data. (Wolfgang et al., 1972, Table 13.5; Cohen, 1975; Terry, 1967; Hohenstein, 1969)

Certainly the limited class biases uncovered by studies such as those cited by Hindelang et al. are insufficient to account for the strong class-crime relationship from official records studies. The evidence supports the conclusion that while class bias might be a profound problem in some jurisdictions, for many courts and police departments this bias may be minimal or nonexistent. Therefore the finding that the records of *virtually all* courts and police departments show the lower class as committing more crime cannot be explained away by the existence of monumental class bias in all of these statistics.

An interesting question for the sociology of sociology is why the early self-report findings did not also provoke a research interest in the possible class biases of self-report measures of criminality. Perhaps the irony is that both liberals and conservatives found the rejection of the

class-crime relationship too comfortable a position to challenge. Liberals often suffer from a magnanimous disinclination to believe that the lower classes are in any way nastier than middle class people, while enjoying any opportunity of construing the police and courts as illiberal persecutors of the downtrodden. Conservatives also find it comfortable to deny that class position is a predictor of criminality because it enables them to argue that transforming the class structure is not relevant to solving the crime problem.

In fact there is scattered evidence that the self-report methodology tends to exaggerate the proportion of delinquency perpetrated by the middle class (Braithwaite, 1979:54–8). For example, while we know that lower class youth are more likely than middle class youth to get into trouble with the police and the courts, a number of studies have shown that, when interviewed, lower class youth do not *report* that they have been in trouble with the police or courts more frequently than do middle class respondents (Hardt, 1968; Carter, 1974; Smith, 1975; Braithwaite and Braithwaite, 1978). Similarly, lower class youths tend to score higher on "lie" scales within self-report measures (Hardt and Peterson-Hardt, 1977; Braithwaite, 1979:56–7). Perhaps when confronted by unfamiliar white middle class researchers with their probing questions, lower class respondents are more suspicious and defensive than their middle class counterparts.

A Critique of the Tittle et al. (1978) Review

The foregoing has demonstrated the selectivity of the Tittle et al. (1978) review. Of the 224 classifications made of studies in Tables 1–6, 81% were "Yes" (lower class more criminal), while only 35% of Tittle et al.'s 35 studies have been classified "Yes".[4] Nevertheless, the first point which must be emphasized is that even the highly selective secondary analysis of Tittle et al. does not demonstrate "the myth of social class and criminality" as their title would have us believe, but rather a *weak* inverse relationship between class and crime represented by an average gamma from the 35 studies of −.09. Because social science is by design more concerned about falsely accepting hypotheses than with falsely accepting the null hypothesis, it is not well equipped for demonstrating "myths."

Tittle et al. (1978) fail to establish an operating definition of what constitutes crime for the purpose of including studies in their sample. Hence we have self-reported adult tax evasion from one of their own studies (Tittle and Villemez, 1977) lumped together with studies which use a variety of indices of delinquency. The problematic of what constitutes delinquency is of no concern to the authors. For example, a study by Stinchcombe (1964) is included which measures school misbehavior (e.g., being sent from the classroom by the teacher). The hypothesis that middle class children are no less likely to misbehave in school than lower class children is quite different from the hypothesis that middle class people are no less likely to violate the criminal law than lower class people.

The most crucial definitional problem which has been left in abeyance is whether "white collar" offenses are to be included. A few studies on trade practice offenders, consumer fraud, or industrial safety prosecutions could completely transform a review of studies focusing on the directly interpersonal types of crime which are the predominant concern of police departments. The nature of the class distribution of crime depends entirely on what form of crime one is talking about.

The Won and Yamamoto (1968) study included in the Tittle et al. (1978) review is excluded from the present review. Won and Yamamoto investigated 493 cases of shoplifting apprehended by a security firm for a chain of supermarkets in Honolulu. It was found that the shoplifters came disproprotionately from middle class suburbs. Unfortunately, Won and Yamamoto

[4] All 35 Tittle et al. studies have been considered in the present review. The Tittle and Villemez (1977) study does not appear in the tables, but is a clear "No" in the text. Stinchcombe (1964) and Won and Yamomoto (1968) are outside the definitions set by the present review. Had they been included, they both would surely have been classified "No".

do not report whether the stores were *located* predominantly in middle class or lower class areas. Tittle et al. agree that this and the Stinchcombe (1964) work criticized earlier, which is also excluded from the present review, are "crude" and "primitive."

Tests of statistical significance have been calculated to support the potency of the trends discerned by Tittle and his collaborators. Their sample of studies is not random, but a manifestation of a most biased form of selectivity.[5] Equally important from a statistical point of view, the observations are not independent. A total of 363 gammas have been gleaned from 35 studies. For any one study, different gammas for the sample broken down by age, sex, race, place of residence, and the like are each treated as a separate observation. Clearly the gamma for whites separately would not have been independent of the gamma for the total of all races, or the gamma for blacks would not have been independent of the gamma for people living in lower class areas.

Tittle et al. (1978) were thus able to extract a large number of gammas from a small number of studies. Given that the great majority of empirical studies on the class-crime relationship are of official records, it is telling evidence of the unexplained selectivity of their review that 302 of the 363 gammas are from self-report studies. While the mean gamma for the small number of official records studies included was $-.25$, for the self-report studies, it was a meager $-.06$.

The conclusion of the Tittle et al. review that "there has been a monotonic decline in association between social class and crime/delinquency" (Tittle et al., 1978:654) is also a function of the selectivity of their work. The present review covers 90 investigations (both official records and self-report) of the class-crime relationship published since 1970. Only 21 of the 90 failed outright to support the hypothesis, while two provided only qualified support.

Other Forms of Data

"Social scientists long have assumed an intimate linkage between a variety of social pathologies and injustice or inequality in the distribution of societal resources." This opening sentence of the Tittle et al. (1978) paper creates the impression that what is to follow is a review of the kinds of evidence most central to the question of whether a more equal society would be a society in which there would be less "social pathology." Evidence on whether lower class people violate the law more than do middle class people is not the most crucial kind of evidence to the equality and crime question. It may be that conditions of greater inequality in a society foster greater criminality not only among the poor but also among the rich. This is hardly an original idea, having been developed by Bonger (1916) at the beginning of the century. Bonger argued that, first, a criminal attitude is engendered by the conditions of misery inflicted upon many of the proletariat under capitalism; and, second, that a similar criminal attitude among the bourgeoisie arises from the avarice fostered when capitalism thrives.

The most relevant empirical test is, therefore, to ascertain whether inequality is associated with higher or lower aggregate crime rates. To this end, in my earlier review I used a number of inequality indices to predict average crime rates on Uniform Crime Report Indices for the years 1967 to 1973 in 193 United States cities. The income gap between the poor and the average income earner was shown to be a significant predictor of crime rates, while the proportion of the population below the poverty line in the city was not. A considerable number of other intercity and international comparisons which are consistent with this interpretation were also reviewed.

[5] It might have been helpful if Tittle et al. (1978) had commented qualitatively on the data trends in the studies which they excluded. For example, Johnstone's (1978) impressive self-report study on a sample of 1,124 was excluded because it "reports only delinquency scores for categories of social status." In the interests of helping the reader to reach a balanced judgment, it might have been in order to point out that this study provides clear support for a correlation between class and self-reported delinquency.

The most important empirical test of all will ultimately be time-series investigations. At this point, however, few time-series studies have been published which are both methodologically sound and test out the effect of clearly conceived indices of inequality.[6]

Even on the more limited question of whether the lower class violate the law more than the middle class, the kind of data reviewed by Tittle et al. (1978) is not the only kind available. The most important type of evidence which has been ignored is victimization survey data. Victimization surveys avoid many of the class biases possible in both official records and self-reports. Hindelang (1978), for example, has used the National Crime Panel data to show that whereas only 11% of the American population are black (and race is certainly a strong correlate of class), 39% of rape victims in the survey reported their assailant to be black. Police figures record the percentage of rapists who are black as 48%. The victimization data therefore show that official statistics probably exaggerate the proportion of rapes committed by blacks, but that it is still probably the case that the rape rate is several times higher among black than among white men. Hindelang (1978) also shows that 62% of robbery, 30% of aggravated assault and 29% of simple assault victims reported their assailant to be black.

Another important type of study which does not fall within the official records or self-report framework of the present review is the direct observational study. Systematic observational data on the class distribution of crime is scarce in the literature. One could perhaps point to Short and Strodtbeck's (1965) study in which lower class youth were observed to be more often present in delinquent gangs than middle class youth. However, the only genuinely systematic study is that of Miller (1967). Miller's work is based on direct observation by several fieldworkers of a large number of instances of theft by gang members over a two-year period. His findings were clear cut in the direction of lower status being associated with higher crime rates.

> On the basis of contract period theft involvement, lower class 3 groups [lower lower class] engaged in theft three times as frequently as groups from lower class 2 [middle lower class]. (Miller, 1967:34)

> Its patterning was so decisively related to social status that status differences as small as those between lower class 2 and 3 had marked influence on its frequency. (Miller, 1967:37)

Direct observational studies of the class distribution of crime are rare because it is logistically very difficult to mount a research effort which systematically observes enough crime to calculate rates for different groups. Yet direct observation clearly is the best source of data because it is the very second hand and third hand nature of self-report and official record compilation which permits bias to enter into measures.

The conclusion is therefore inescapable from the voluminous, though not always satisfactory, evidence available at this time that lower class people do commit those direct interpersonal types of crime which are normally handled by the police at a higher rate than middle class people. If, however, we are talking about those less directly interpersonal forms of crime which involve the abuse of the power inherent in occupational roles (and which are normally policed by special regulators of commerce), then, of course, the reverse is true. The sociological study of crime does not need "to shift away from class-based theories" as Tittle et al. (1978) announce in their concluding sentence. What we require are class-based theories which explain why certain types of crime are perpetrated disproportionately by the powerless, while other forms of crime are almost exclusively the prerogative of the powerful.

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[6] Brenner's oft quoted and much criticised, but as yet unpublished, data might yet bring some light to bear on this question. (See Brenner, 1976a, b) Mukherjee (1981) is also currently working up a 75 year data set from Australia which should be usable for the purpose, but for an assessment of the limited value of existing time-series data for exploring the relationship between class inequality and crime see Braithwaite (1979:220–2) and Orsagh and Witte (1980). The only useful published study is that of Danziger and Wheeler (1975).

Stark and the Meaning of Class

Stark (1979) agrees with Tittle et al. (1978) that when adolescents are assigned a class position on the basis of their parents' occupational status, there is little or no relationship between class and delinquency. He points out, however, that by adolescence young people are well on the way to establishing their own position in the class structure, a position which may be different from that of their parents. It is argued that

> People near the bottom of the high school status system tend to remain near the bottom in later life. Indeed, for the majority of school drop-outs, the status attainment process virtually ends during their teens (Stark, 1979:668–9).

Stark convincingly argues that if we assign adolescents a class position of their own derived from their location on the success ladder of the school, then a powerful class-crime relationship can be demonstrated. The weight of empirical evidence that school failure is a strong correlate of delinquency is beyond question (Sullenger, 1936; Kvaraceus, 1945; Toby and Toby, 1957; Gold, 1963:44; Lunden, 1964; Polk, 1965; Polk and Halferty, 1966; Schafer and Polk, 1967; Rhodes and Reiss, 1969; Fisher, 1970; Lanphier and Faulkner, 1970; Burns, 1971; Empey et al., 1971; Kelly, 1971; Kelly and Balch, 1971; Farrington, 1973; Frease, 1973; Gold and Mann, 1973; Magishima and Matsumoto, 1973; Hassall, 1974; Phillips, 1974; Offord et al., 1978).

The idea that much middle class delinquency can be explained by the anticipation of economic failure among middle class adolescents who are doing badly at school has also been developed by Hirschi (1972).

> For example, children doing well in high school and children who expect to graduate from college are much less likely to be delinquent, regardless of their father's occupation or education. Put another way, the evidence is clear on one point: the lower the social class the child will enter, the more likely he is to be delinquent, regardless of his class of origin.

Stinchcombe (1964) was the earliest advocate of the view that it is the social class futures of adolescents, rather than their social class origins, which are most critical to delinquency. In his study of "rebellious behavior" at school, he found that middle class students who failed at school engaged in *more* "rebellious behavior" at school than lower class school failures. Studies by Kelly (1971), Kelly and Balch (1971), Frease (1973), and Polk et al. (1974) have all provided moderate to weak support for the hypothesis that middle class school failures engage in more delinquent behavior than lower class school failures.[7] Polk (1969), however, failed to find any support for the hypothesis: academically unsuccessful lower class boys were found to be just as delinquent as academically unsuccessful middle class boys.

Since middle class children have higher aspirations for success, it may be that middle class school failures suffer from a greater discrepancy between aspirations and expectations of occupational success. And it has been shown that children with a great discrepancy between aspirations and expectations are more likely than others to engage in delinquency (Spergel, 1961; Wood, 1961; Elliott, 1962; Spergel, 1967; Fredericks and Molnar, 1969; Kelly, 1971).[8] Moreover, middle class school failures possibly become more delinquent because they are under greater pressure to succeed than lower class school failures, and because they have further to fall through downward occupational mobility.[9]

Hence there is, as Stark (1979) suggests,

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[7] Some of these studies also investigated the relationship for other forms of deviance besides delinquency against persons and property.

[8] Short (1964) also found a relationship in this direction, but a fairly weak one. Studies by Gold (1963), Hirschi (1969:83) and Rosenberg and Silverstein (1969) failed to establish such a relationship. Gold (1963) concluded on the basis of his interviews that the relationship did not emerge because many of his lower class delinquents, when confronted with poor school performance, lowered their aspirations. For a review and discussion of alternative interpretations of the discrepancy between aspirations and expectations and delinquency see Liska (1971).

[9] Mizruchi (1964) has reported that middle class respondents reported greater stress than lower class respondents when confronted with limited opportunities to realize their occupational aspirations.

a considerable body of theory and empirical evidence to support the paradox that class inequality is responsible for much middle class delinquency. This work could, indeed, be taken much further than it has to date. Perhaps a system which has failure built into it fosters crime not only among those who have objectively failed (at work or school). There are also the pathological consequences of anticipation of failure, fear of failure, and failure to achieve the success aspired to or expected. These are further arguments for the proposition that the most needed types of analyses are those which explore the effects of class inequality on rates for varying types of crime aggregated across all classes.

Tittle et al. (1978) choose not to disagree with the Stark (1979) observation:

> There does seem to be an empirical relationship between class origin and academic performance in high school. There also seems to be a consistent and strong association between academic performance and delinquency. . . . Therefore it should follow that there would be a strong class origin/delinquency association, but of course, our paper shows that in general such a relationship has not been demonstrated. Either the origin/performance or the performance/delinquency association is in error or some rather complex interactions are involved which need to be sorted out empirically.

Could it be that the origin/performance and performance/delinquency associations are not in error, but that the "myth" of the origin/delinquency association is in error?

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