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CAUSES OF DELINQUENCY: A PARTIAL REPLICATION AND EXTENSION

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Focusing primarily on urban males, Hirschi (1969) presents research findings which are generally consistent with the propositions of his control theory. In an effort to examine the extent to which Hirschi's basic research results can be replicated, groups of rural male and female students in grades six through 12 of one school were asked to respond to a self-report delinquency questionnaire and a series of items which Hirschi used to test propositions of his control theory. Indicators of "attachment" to parents and the school; "commitment" to, and "involvement" in, conventional activities; and "belief," were found to be related to reported delinquent involvement among these rural respondents to about the same extent as among Hirschi's urban males. However, his findings that attachment to peers and attachment to parents are *positively* related (to each other) and attachment to peers and reported delinquent involvement are *negatively* related, were not replicated; rather, the former relationship was found to be nearly orthogonal and the latter variables were found to be positively related.

The disjunction of major theoretical and research efforts in the area of delinquency has been an impediment to the understanding of the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency. With the publication of *Causes of Delinquency*, Hirschi (1969) clearly reversed a two decade trend in criminology by assembling and integrating a major theory of delinquency causation which presents, examines, and is generally supported by research findings generated by the theorist himself. This empirical-theoretical approach has several decided advantages over that taken by most other major delinquency theorists whose works have emerged in the past two decades. First, by virtue of the fact that the theory has been tempered by research findings of the author, the theory is more likely to withstand further empirical testing;¹

thus such theories can be propagated within the discipline with some assurance that they are at least somewhat concordant with the "real" world. Second, because many (if not all) of the propositions of such a theory will have been operationalized by the theorist himself, there is less chance of ambiguity in subsequent testing and interpretation of the theory. Finally, by means of an integrated theory/research approach, the proliferation of theories that may exist for decades without systematic empirical examination, and the accretion of research findings which are essentially atheoretical, is reduced.

Although the grounded theoretical approach has these and other advantages to offer, it has disadvantages as well. When both the theoretical perspective and the empirical analysis of that perspective are carried out in a single effort, this lack of independence must be viewed cautiously; that is, in-

mine how great the leap from his data to his theoretical perspective is. More qualitative research strategies are obviously intrinsically more difficult to report efficiently and to integrate with a theoretical perspective.

¹ The extent to which theories in the delinquency area have been shaped by the theorist's research is not always clear from the presentation of the theoretical perspective itself. Miller's (1958) paper, for example, notes that his theoretical perspective is based upon extensive systematic observations; because he does not present data therein, however, it is impossible to deter-

dependent verification would seem to address the potential criticism that the theory is merely *post hoc* speculation² or that the theorist/researcher has only presented results which support his hypotheses. In addition, although the theory may have considerable generality, the initial testing may involve a rather restrictive sampling of cases for which the theory may have been constructed; namely, the sample used to verify the theory may have temporal and geographical specificity as well as restrictions on other important parameters (e.g., age, sex, class, etc.) which imply a need for an extension of the empirical examination of the theoretical propositions involved.

Hirschi's *Causes of Delinquency* examines the extent to which deductions from his control theory hold for white, male adolescents in an urban California county in 1964. The present study is a quasi-replicative effort which extends the analyses to male and female adolescents in a rural New York State community in 1971. It is a quasi-replication in two senses. First, the scope of Hirschi's reported results made his study impossible to replicate fully; resources available for the present study were insufficient to do so. Second, some of the questions used in the present study (as noted below), although actually very similar to Hirschi's—and in a conceptual vein virtually identical to his—differed slightly from his questions; this situation arose from the fact that the results reported here are part of a larger series of investigations being conducted by the author for which the agreement of questions over time

within this series was deemed more essential than absolute agreement with the questions used by Hirschi.

The central aim of the present study is to investigate the extent to which Hirschi's research findings hold for rural males and females in an East Coast locale. Since the emphasis here is on whether his *basic research results* can be replicated within the groups studied, issues of causal ordering, higher order relationships, alternative explanations, and the plausibility of Hirschi's deductions will not be examined here. Thus, the present work is not a critical appraisal of Hirschi's control theory; that effort is underway and will be reported elsewhere.

The subjects of the present research were drawn from grades six through 12 in one school in a rural area of Upstate New York. The county in which the school studied is located has no towns with a population greater than 4,400 and has a population density of 39 inhabitants per square mile; the county in which Hirschi's study was carried out (Contra Costa County, California) has a city with a population of 85,200 and has a density of 756 inhabitants per square mile.

The subjects of the present study were assembled in the auditorium of their school in groups of about 200. All regular teaching and administrative staff left the auditorium, and a research team advised the students that their cooperation was being sought in a survey of the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of adolescents. The respondents were told that the information which they provided would be anonymous and confidential. Virtually all of the students present in the school on the day that the survey was administered were present in the auditorium. These 978 students produced 941

² One should, in the view of the author, be much more cautious in regard to *ad hoc* speculation! At least *post hoc* speculation has empirical bounds where *ad hoc* speculation has few (if any) empirical bounds.

questionnaires that were at least useable—i.e., a majority of the questions asked were answered; non-response for particular items can be gauged by noting the n's involved in the individual tables below.

It is obviously not possible to give an adequate presentation of Hirschi's theory and the reasoning he employs in deducing his hypotheses in his book-length work, within these few pages. Therefore, the presentation of his position here should be viewed as a thumbnail sketch; the serious reader will, of course, consult Hirschi (1969) for clarification and expansion of his views. Briefly, his control theory postulates that delinquent behavior becomes more probable as the individual's bond to society weakens. The bond has several components: attachment (caring about others, their opinions, and expectations), commitment (time, energy, and self invested in conventional behaviors), involvement (engrossment in conventional activities), and belief (attribution of moral validity to conventional norms). Hirschi views these components as generally positively associated and as having some independent effects on the likelihood that an individual will engage in delinquent behavior. His general argument, then, is that as elements of the bond become weakened, delinquency becomes possible, although not necessary (Hirschi, 1969:16-34).

The bulk of Hirschi's analyses (and all of his results reported below) focuses on his group of approximately 1300 white males, who are rather evenly distributed among grades seven through 12 (1969:236). The rural males and females studied here are evenly split by sex; also 98 percent of the rural subjects are white. Both the rural males and the rural females are

nearly evenly distributed among grades six through 12, although grades 11 and 12 have slightly smaller proportions than the lower grades. Hirschi's white males have the following distribution by father's occupation: 13 percent unskilled labor, 14 percent semi-skilled labor, 35 percent skilled labor-foreman-merchant, 13 percent white collar, and 25 percent professional and executive (1969:69); the respective father's occupation figures for the rural subjects are: eight percent, 12 percent, 31 percent, five percent, and 44 percent.³ Thus the two groups are virtually equivalent racially; the rural group has a greater range on grade and has somewhat more prestigious father's occupations.⁴

Hirschi's major dependent variable was his "recency index" (1969:54-63), which is composed of several questions regarding involvement in delinquent behaviors.⁵ His questions include "have you ever taken little things (worth less than \$2) that did not belong to you?"; "Have you ever

³ The rural males and females were classified according to Turner's (1964) criteria. The category "professional and executive" encompasses Turner's five highest categories: small business owners and managers, semiprofessionals, business agents and managers, and professionals. Turner's categories were so grouped to parallel as nearly as possible those used by Hirschi.

⁴ According to Turner's criteria, "farmers" are small business owners, which accounts for the large proportion of rural respondents in the highest occupational category.

⁵ Hirschi makes extensive use of officially recorded delinquent acts as well; the relationships of his independent variables to officially recorded delinquent acts and the relationships of his independent variables to his recency index, were generally consistent. Information on officially known delinquency was not collected for the rural males and females studied here.

TABLE 1
REGENCY SCORE DISTRIBUTIONS FOR HIRSCHI'S MALES (HM),^a
THE RURAL MALES (RM), AND THE RURAL FEMALES (RF)
(IN PERCENT)

	Recency Score									
	0	1	2 ^b	3	4	5	6	7	8	
HM	56	25	19							100 (1303)
RM	26	24	19	11	8	5	2	3	2	100 (441)
RF	57	21	14	4	2	2	0	0	0	100 (445)

^a These results for Hirschi's males are derived from his Table A-2 (1969:237).

^b For Hirschi's males this category is actually "two or more."

taken things of some value (between \$2 and \$50) that did not belong to you?"; "Have you ever taken things of large value (worth over \$50) that did not belong to you?"; "Have you ever taken a car for a ride without the owner's permission?"; "Have you ever banged up something that did not belong to you on purpose?"; "Not counting fights you may have had with a brother or sister, have you ever beaten up on anyone or hurt anyone on purpose?" Maintaining consistency with a series of my past research efforts resulted in self-reported delinquency questions which were somewhat different from Hirschi's. The questions used in the present study were "How many times in the last year have you . . .":⁶ "Stolen something worth

less than \$10"; "Stolen something worth \$10-\$50"; "Stolen something worth more than \$50"; "Taken a car for a ride without the owner's permission"; "Destroyed property (less than \$10 damage)"; "Destroyed property (more than \$10 damage)"; "Been in fist fights." Following Hirschi (1969: 62), if the subject reported never having participated in the act or having participated in it only more than a year ago, the subject was given a score of zero for that act; if the subject reported having participated in the act one or more times in the past year he was given a score of one for that act. The recency index is a simple sum across all acts. It is clear that both sets of questions cover the same ground; however, because Hirschi used some limiting phrases and fewer questions, it may be expected that his questions will generate lower recency index scores. In reporting his results, Hirschi trichotomizes his recency index scores into the categories of zero, one, and two, or more; Table 1 shows the mar-

⁶ Hirschi's alternative answers to each of his recency questions included: A. No, never; B. More than a year ago; C. During the last year; D. During the last year and more than a year ago. Although the questions used in the present study asked respondents to report the *number* of times they engaged in each act in the last year, it was possible to score them in such a way that had Hirschi's alternatives been used, the same results would have been obtained. For his recency index, Hirschi gives alternatives A and B a weight of zero and alternatives C and D a weight of one. In the present study the answer "zero times" to the question "In the last year how many times

have you. . . ." implies either Hirschi's A or B alternative and, hence, is given a weight of zero; an answer of greater than zero to the question "in the last year how many times have you. . . ." implies either Hirschi's C or D alternative and, hence, is given a weight of one.

ginal distributions of the recency index scores for Hirschi's subjects and the subjects of the present research. Whether the difference between Hirschi's white males (HM) and the rural males (RM) of the present study is an artifact of method—either in construction of the recency index or due to the fact that Hirschi's subjects were asked to give their names⁷—or reflects an actual difference, is impossible to ascertain; given that the rural males appear to be *more* delinquent than Hirschi's males—a finding opposite to rural-urban comparisons of official delinquency rates as well as rural-urban comparisons of self-reported delinquency⁸—it is more likely that the difference is artifactual. For this reason, and to make comparisons across Hirschi's males, the rural males, and the rural females easier to interpret throughout the remainder of the paper, it was decided to trichotomize the rural males and rural females such that the proportions falling into the low, medium, and high categories of the recency index corresponded as closely as possible to the respective propor-

tions of Hirschi's males. Among the rural males, the low category contains those with recency scores of 0 and 1; the medium category contains those with scores of 2 and 3; the high category contains those with scores of 4 or more. Among the rural females, Hirschi's cutting points were used: the low category contains those with recency scores of 0; the medium category contains those with scores of 1; and the high category contains those with scores of 2 or more. In spite of the discrepancy between the cutting points used for the rural males and those used by Hirschi, the general nature of his control theory and the linearity of his hypotheses seem to indicate that this analytic decision is reasonable.⁹

Attachment to Parents

One of the most basic propositions of Hirschi's control theory is that the bond of affection for conventional others is a major deterrent to illegal behavior (1969:83). He argues that when parental attachment is strong, parental values (presumed to be "anti-criminal") are more readily accepted. Table 2 addresses this issue with the responses to the question, "Would you like to be the kind of person your father is?" It can be seen from this table that the results for the rural males closely parallel Hirschi's results. He finds that 64 percent of those who answer "in every way" to this question compared to 41 percent of those who answer "not at all" to the question, score low on the recency index; the respective figures for the rural males are 61 percent and 36 percent. The results

⁷ Kulik, Stein, and Sarbin (1968) found that responses to self-reported delinquency items under conditions of anonymity elicit more self-reported acts than under conditions of non-anonymity. Although there is a change in the absolute amount of delinquency reported under anonymous versus non-anonymous conditions, the rank order of subjects under the two conditions is only minimally affected.

⁸ E.g., see Clark and Wenninger (1962). Since rural versus urban delinquency is not the subject of this paper, whether the differences in reported delinquency between Hirschi's males and the rural males are artifactual, is of limited concern here. If the self-report items used here are good indicators of the phenomenon which Hirschi's theory hopes to explain, the fact that they are not identical to the items he used should not be at issue.

⁹ Separate analyses using Hirschi's cutting points (zero, one, two or more) for both the rural males and the rural females, revealed relationships essentially the same as those reported below.

for the females are weaker. Sixty-five percent of those who answer "in every way" and 48 percent of those who answer "not at all," score low on the recency index. Perhaps this indicates that attachment to the parent of the same sex—a boy's attachment to his father and a girl's attachment to her mother—is what is crucial in deterring delinquency. However, Hirschi's data do not support such a notion. Although he does not present tabular results for the analogous question concerning affection for mother, Hirschi does report (1969:92) that among his males the relation between affection for mother and self-reported delinquency is stronger than the relation between affection for father and self-reported delinquency. This tendency is confirmed among the rural males; 79 percent of those who answer "in every way" but only 36 percent of those who answer "not at all" score low in self-reported delinquency. Among the rural females, attachment to mother is associated about the same as is attachment to father with self-reported delinquency. Thus, rather than cross-sex child-parent attachment being important, it seems that parental attachment—whether to mother or father—is more of a deterrent to delinquency for males than for females. Among the rural groups as well, then, attachment to parents is related to reported delinquent involvement, as Hirschi predicts.

Attachment to the School

Control theory postulates that attachment to the school is similarly related to delinquency. Specifically, those who do poorly in school reduce their interest in school and, hence, are free—to the extent of their reduced attachment to, commitment to, and involve-

ment in school-related activities—to commit delinquent acts (Hirschi, 1969:120-124). If this hypothesis is correct, Hirschi suggests it should be the case that perceived academic ability is related to delinquent behavior, not only because objective school performance is likely to be closely associated with perceived ability, but also because those who see themselves as able to do well in school will probably find school tolerable and relevant to future needs (1969:117). To test this notion, the respondents were asked to rate their academic ability in relation to other students in their school. Table 3 shows that the general hypothesis receives some support in all three groups studied; the effect is most noticeable in the highest portion of the recency index and in the comparison of the "below average" respondents and all others. In the group of males studied by Hirschi, 13 percent of those rating themselves "among the best" and 35 percent of those rating themselves "below average" score high on the recency index; the respective figures are 13 percent vs. 29 percent for the rural males, and 16 percent vs. 40 percent for the rural females.

Since Hirschi argues that the link of ability and performance with delinquency is through one's bond to the school (1969:120), it should be the case that bond to the school is also related to delinquency. He assesses bond to the school with the question, "In general, do you like or dislike school?" (like/neither like or dislike/dislike). Liking school is related to self-reported delinquent involvement for all three groups. Among Hirschi's males the relationship is the strongest; 68 of those who report liking school, but only 33 percent of those who report disliking school report no delinquent

TABLE 2
SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENCY BY IDENTIFICATION WITH FATHER^a
(IN PERCENT)

Recency Index	<i>Would you like to be the kind of person your father is?</i>											
	In Every Way			In Most Ways			In Some Ways			In Just A Few Ways		
	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF
Low	64	61	65	65	61	59	58	51	59	48	50	55
Medium	21	28	28	24	28	28	25	35	31	30	20	25
High	16	12	8	11	11	14	17	15	21	22	25	25
	101	101	101	100	100	101	100	100	101	100	100	100
	(121)	(51)	(40)	(404)	(103)	(80)	(387)	(141)	(116)	(172)	(56)	(92)

^a These results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Table 20 (1969:92).

TABLE 3
SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENCY BY PERCEIVED ACADEMIC ABILITY^a
(IN PERCENT)

Recency Index	<i>How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with other students in your school?</i>											
	Among Best			Above Average			Average			Below Average		
	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF
Low	67	58	57	56	59	63	57	49	54	36	47	27
Medium	20	30	28	27	26	20	23	33	25	29	24	33
High	13	13	16	16	16	17	20	18	20	35	29	40
	100	101	101	99	101	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	(135)	(87)	(51)	(379)	(97)	(88)	(619)	(175)	(241)	(84)	(21)	(15)

^a Excluded from this table are 21 rural males and 23 rural females who answered that they did not know. The results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Table 31 (1969:118).

involvement. Among the rural males and females the relationships are similar but weaker: 63 percent of the rural males who report liking school and 45 percent of the rural males who report disliking school, report low delinquent involvement; while 67 percent of the rural females who report liking school and 41 percent of the rural females who report disliking school, report low delinquent involvement. The data show that both perceived ability and the bond to school itself are associated with reported delinquent involvement. In both cases, the differences are largest for Hirschi's males, next largest for the rural females, and smallest for the rural males.

Lastly, in connection with the school, in order to assess attachment to a conventional figure, respondents were asked, "Do you care what teachers think of you?" (a lot/some/not much). Hirschi's findings with urban males hold for both rural males and rural females. Among those who report caring "a lot" what teachers think of them, 70 percent of the rural males and 67 percent of the rural females report low delinquent involvement, while among those who report caring "not much," 35 percent of the rural males and 42 percent of the rural females report low delinquent involvement; Hirschi had found 66 percent and 36 percent, respectively. In terms of school related variables, the bond with the teacher seems most closely associated with self-reported delinquent involvement.

Attachment to Peers

Hirschi points out (1969:98) that both differential association theory and control theory predict that the delinquent behavior of one's own friends is strongly related to one's own delinquent behavior. Table 4 shows that this

expectation is confirmed for Hirschi's subjects and for the rural males and females studied here; although among the rural males there are some slight reversals among adjacent categories. Eighty percent of the rural males who report having no close friends picked up by the police score low on reported delinquent involvement, while 26 percent of the rural males who report having four or more friends picked up by the police, score low on reported delinquent involvement; the relationship is somewhat weaker among the rural females, for whom comparable figures are 73 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

Hirschi notes (1969:139-141) that it has been argued (e.g., Coleman, 1961) that attachment to peers and attachment to parents are inversely related; Hirschi's control theory argues the opposite—that attachment to peers and attachment to parents are directly related to each other and that both are inversely related to delinquency. He goes on to suggest that close ties to peers not only fail to substitute for close ties to parents but also fail to provide substitute satisfaction for social mobility; in fact, contrary to the picture painted by many theorists, boys who are most attached to their peers are also most achievement oriented (Hirschi 1969:144). Table 5 shows Hirschi's results among urban males in support of his position; as attachment to mother increases, so does attachment to peers. However, this table also shows results dissonant with both Coleman's and Hirschi's hypotheses; namely, among the rural females, attachment to mother and attachment to peers are essentially independent, and among the rural males there is only a slight positive association between parental and peer attachment.

Hirschi also hypothesized and found

TABLE 4
SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENCY BY FRIENDS, CONTACTS WITH THE POLICE^a
(IN PERCENT)

Have any of your close friends ever been picked up by the police?															
Recency Index	No		One			Two			Three			Four or More			
	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF
Low	73	80	73	51	54	50	41	57	39	32	22	38	25	26	31
Medium	20	17	21	27	33	24	37	24	21	24	74	25	30	37	32
High	7	3	6	21	13	26	21	19	39	44	3	38	45	37	37
	100 (520)	100 (152)	100 (214)	99 (164)	100 (61)	100 (76)	99 (99)	100 (37)	99 (33)	100 (62)	100 (27)	101 (16)	100 (208)	100 (134)	100 (90)

^a These results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Table 24 (1969:99).

that the greater the peer attachment, the lower the reported delinquent involvement. Table 6 shows that contrary to his hypothesis and results, among the rural males and rural females, there is a generally *direct* relationship between the extent of reported identification with friends and the extent of self-reported delinquency. Hirschi found that 64 percent of those who reported identifying most closely ("in most ways") with their friends reported low delinquent involvement, while 47 percent of those who reported identifying least closely ("Not at all") with their friends reported low delinquent involvement. The results for the rural males and females are virtual mirror images of Hirschi's results. Among the rural males, for example, of those who report identifying most closely with their friends, 49 percent report low delinquent involvement while 67 percent of those identifying least closely with their friends report low delinquent involvement. Thus, in the area of peer attachment we find the first substantial divergence from Hirschi's results. It would seem that these data for the rural subjects show a greater consistency with more traditional views (e.g., Cohen, 1955) than with Hirschi's control theory regarding the association of peer attachment and delinquency. One implication of this finding is that "attachment," as an element of a theory to explain delinquent involvement in a rural area may not be viewed as simply unidimensional; that is, more specification regarding the characteristics of those to whom one is attached may be necessary before consistent relationships will emerge.¹⁰

10 Hirschi devotes some attention to this notion, in another connection, when he examines the effect of attachment to conventional versus unconventional parents on re-

TABLE 5
ATTACHMENT TO MOTHER BY ATTACHMENT TO FRIENDS^a
(IN PERCENT)

<i>"Would you like to be the kind of person your best friends are?"</i>									
<i>"Would you like to be the kind of person your mother is?"</i>	In Most Ways			In a Few Ways			Not At All		
	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF
In every or most ways	47	28	30	23	21	29	18	21	22
In some ways	31	27	22	41	31	29	29	27	28
In a few ways	12	10	20	23	19	23	26	16	19
Not at all	10	25	28	14	30	20	28	36	30
	100 (330)	100 (87)	100 (88)	101 (710)	101 (243)	101 (243)	101 (152)	100 (75)	99 (89)

^a These results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Table 41 (1969:142).

Commitment to Conventional Activities

Hirschi argues that aspirations to achieve conventional goals—rather than being a source of motivation to delinquency as strain theory suggests—constrain delinquency, since delinquent behavior not only fails to assist one in attaining conventional goals, but in fact acts as a means of precluding the attainment of conventional goals (1969:162). He further suggests that many adolescents with low educational aspirations, in effect complete their ed-

ported delinquent involvement (1969:95-96).

ucation without simultaneously being able to begin their occupational careers; when this occurs, they are bound neither to an educational nor to an occupational career. Adolescents caught in this situation—where they are still only guaranteed the freedoms of children—tend to develop attitudes, and behave in ways, appropriate only to adults; the result is a high rate of delinquency (1969:163).

These "adult" behaviors include smoking, drinking, and dating. It is Hirschi's contention that involvement in such behaviors reflects an orientation toward adult activities which is related to involvement in illegal behaviors.

TABLE 6
SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENCY BY IDENTIFICATION WITH BEST FRIENDS^a
(IN PERCENT)

<i>Would you like to be the kind of person your best friends are?</i>									
Recency Index	In Most Ways			In A Few Ways			Not At All		
	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF
Low	64	49	55	54	54	56	47	67	63
Medium	21	33	19	26	29	26	26	21	16
High	15	18	26	19	17	17	27	12	21
	100 (353)	100 (89)	100 (84)	99 (748)	100 (239)	99 (234)	100 (160)	100 (72)	100 (86)

^a These results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Table 44 (1969:146).

"To claim the right to act contrary to the wishes of adults is to express contempt for [adult] expectations, which as we have repeatedly stressed, is to free oneself for the commission of delinquent acts" (1969:166). For example, among those who report having begun to smoke before age 13, 25 percent of Hirschi's males, 28 percent of the rural males, and 30 percent of the rural females score low on reported delinquent involvement; among those who report not smoking, the percents scoring low on reported delinquent involvement are 65 percent, 68 percent, and 71 percent for the three groups, respectively. Hirschi also reports (without giving tabular results) that drinking is more strongly related to delinquency than smoking and that dating is also strongly related to delinquency. Combining these three items into an index in Table 7 shows that their effects are additive and strongly related to reported delinquent involvement in all three groups. Among the rural males, for instance, only 16 percent of those who do not smoke, drink, and date score medium or high on reported delinquent involvement, while 73 percent of those who smoke, drink, and date score medium or high on reported delinquent involvement. That this index is substantially related to delinquent involvement is clear; as Hirschi also notes, however, why the index is related to reported delinquent involvement to this extent is not. His notion that early involvement in these "adult" behaviors reflects an orientation conducive to delinquency is plausible; the source of this orientation is open to question.

The other side of the coin of involvement in "adult" activities is engrossment in activities reflecting a commitment to the conventional student

status. Two measures of the extent of commitment to academic activities are the amount of effort spent on homework (discussed below under involvement) and the importance that the respondent personally attaches to getting good grades. Table 8 shows that the reported importance attached to getting good grades is similarly related to the extent of reported delinquent involvement in the three groups. Among those who report viewing grades as being very important to themselves personally, 64 percent of Hirschi's urban males, 66 percent of the rural males, and 65 percent of the rural females report low delinquent involvement; among those who report viewing grades as completely unimportant personally, 21 percent of the urban males, 41 percent of the rural males, and 39 percent of the rural females report low delinquent involvement. It seems, then, that those who have a stake in school performance—an investment which delinquent behavior may jeopardize and with which delinquent behavior may be incompatible—are, as control theory postulates, less inclined to engage in delinquent activities.

Involvement in Conventional Activities

In Hirschi's (1969:191) view:

The school does more than prepare students for the future. It acts also as a holding operation; it attempts to engross and involve students in activities that are or may be essentially irrelevant to their occupational futures. If it succeeds, the student's delinquency potential may be less than would be expected from his status prospects.

One facet of involvement in school activities is time spent on homework. In general, there is a monotonic increase in the proportion of those scoring medium or high on reported de-

TABLE 7
PERCENT SCORING MEDIUM OR HIGH ON REPORTED DELINQUENT
INVOLVEMENT BY INDEX OF INVOLVEMENT IN ADULT ACTIVITIES^a

	Index Score ^b									
	0		1		2		3		4	
HM	RM	RF	HM	RF	HM	RF	HM	RF	HM	RF
25	16	20	40	29	61	46	62	54	48	78
(35)	(106)	(128)	(270)	(38)	(73)	(41)	(149)	(65)	(31)	(154)
				(52)				(66)		

^a These results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Table 57 (1969:168).

^b If the student smokes or drinks, he was given a score of 2 on the index. If he dates, he was given a score of 1. The scores on the index may thus be interpreted as follows: 0 = Does not smoke, drink, or date; 1 = Dates but does not drink or smoke; 2 = Smokes or drinks, but does not date; 3 = Smokes or drinks, and dates; 4 = Smokes and drinks, but does not date; 5 = Smokes, drinks, and dates (Hirschi 1969:168).

TABLE 8
SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENCY BY PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF GETTING GOOD GRADES^a

Recency Index	<i>How important is getting good grades to you personally?</i>									
	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Fairly Important		Completely Unimportant			
	HM	RF	HM	RF	HM	RF	HM	RF	HM	RF
Low	64	66	53	47	44	45	21	41	39	
Medium	23	26	28	34	24	29	21	28	11	
High	13	8	20	19	32	25	58	31	50	
	100	100	101	100	100	99	100	100	100	
	(674)	(144)	(409)	(146)	(176)	(75)	(38)	(32)	(28)	

^a These results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Table 94 (1969:224).

linquent involvement as the number of hours per day spent on homework decreases from one and one-half hours to one hour, to one-half hour, and to less than one-half hour. The respective percents falling into the four "hours spent" categories are: Hirschi's males, 34, 48, 52, 64; rural males, 39, 40, 55, 53; rural females 35, 45, 45, 67. As can be seen, the pattern and the magnitude of the relationship is similar for Hirschi's males and the rural females, while it is weaker, with a slight reversal, for the rural males.

In addition to the academic aspects of school activities, there are various non-academic school activities which control theory predicts will be inversely associated with delinquent involvement. To assess involvement in school-related non-academic activities the respondents were asked: "Are you very active in school activities (like playing sports, belonging to clubs, etc.)?" Table 9 shows that for both the rural males and rural females the relationship between reported involvement in school activities and reported involvement in delinquent activities is slightly non-linear; in addition, the

largest differentiation is between the category "not active at all" and the other three categories. Finally, the effect of reported involvement in school activities is most manifest in the highest portion of the reported delinquent involvement dimension; among those who report being very active in school activities, 14 percent of the rural males and 18 percent of the rural females score high on self-reported delinquent involvement; while among those who report being not active at all, 37 percent of the rural males and 46 percent of the rural females score high on self-reported delinquent involvement. Although the results in Table 9 give some support to Hirschi's proposition, these results for involvement in school-related activities are not as supportive as are the results for attachment to the school or involvement in academic activities.

Belief

Control theory postulates that delinquent behavior does not result from beliefs which require delinquency but instead that delinquency is made possible by the absence of beliefs that

TABLE 9
SELF-REPORTED DELINQUENCY BY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
(IN PERCENT)

Recency Index	<i>Are you very active in school activities (like playing sports, belonging to clubs, etc.) ?^a</i>							
	Very Active		Somewhat Active		Not Very Active		Not Active At All	
	RM	RF	RM	RF	RM	RF	RM	RF
Low	55	54	56	61	49	61	44	38
Medium	31	28	30	26	35	14	20	16
Highs	14	18	14	13	16	26	37	46
	100 (156)	100 (146)	100 (155)	100 (178)	100 (74)	101 (74)	101 (41)	100 (37)

^a Although Hirschi asked about involvement in school activities (Hirschi, 1969:253) he does not present a cross-tabulation of the results.

forbid delinquency (Hirschi, 1969: 198). Specifically it is Hirschi's position that attachment to parents generates a wider concern for the approval of persons in positions of authority and ultimately a belief that societal norms bind one's conduct. Thus, attachment to conventional others and belief in the moral validity of their rules are not independent (1969:200).

Table 10 contains items which Hirschi uses to tap several aspects of belief. He begins by suggesting that respect for the police is another measure of attachment to conventional others, which is also closely related to respect for the law; therefore, control theory predicts that lack of respect for the police should be related to delinquent involvement for both of these reasons. The data show considerable consistency between Hirschi's findings and those of the present study. Among Hirschi's males, 29 percent of those who strongly agree that they have a lot of respect for the police and 66 percent of those who strongly disagree score medium or high on reported delinquent involvement. Among the rural males, 19 percent of those who strongly agree with the statement and 76 percent of those who strongly disagree score medium or high on reported delinquent involvement.

The second belief component examined in Table 10 more directly addresses the beliefs of the respondents with respect to violation of the law—the extent of agreement or disagreement with the statement "It is all right to get around the law if you can get away with it." Hirschi suggests that agreement with this statement indicates acceptance of a definition favorable to violation of the law. Control theory views such an acceptance as

freeing (but not constraining) the individual to violate the law when he views it to his advantage to do so (1969:202). Here again there is close agreement among the results of all three groups. Seventy percent of Hirschi's males and 76 percent of the rural males who strongly agree with the statement, but only 29 percent of Hirschi's group and 33 percent of the rural males who strongly disagree score medium or high on reported delinquent involvement.

The remaining items in Table 10 are used by Hirschi to tap Sykes and Matza's (1957:666) five techniques of neutralization—"unrecognized extension[s] of defenses to crimes, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system." These techniques of neutralization, they argue, free delinquents to violate norms to which delinquents subscribe.

Sykes and Matza propose that if one believes his actions are due to forces outside of his control, he may believe that he is not responsible—and, hence, not culpable—for those actions. The item "Most criminals should not be blamed for the things they've done" is used to examine the relationship of denial of responsibility to reported delinquent involvement. From Table 10 it is clear that the relationship is slight for Hirschi's males, and small as well as inconsistent for the rural males and females. A second item to measure denial of responsibility ("I can't seem to stay out of trouble no matter how hard I try") gives stronger and more consistent results for all three groups. Among the females, for example, 78 percent of those who strongly agree with the statement but only 24 percent of those who strongly disagree report

TABLE 10
PERCENT SCORING MEDIUM OR HIGH ON SELF-REPORTED
DELINQUENCY BY HIRSCHI'S BELIEF ITEMS^a

Strongly Agree			Undecided ^b						Disagree			Strongly Disagree		
HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF	HM	RM	RF
<i>I have a lot of respect for the (Richmond^a) police</i>														
29 (273)	19 (67)	31 (63)	38 (496)	41 (115)	34 (181)	54 (325)	48 (129)	48 (122)	59 (98)	60 (62)	63 (40)	66 (89)	76 (47)	77 (26)
<i>It's alright to get around the law if you can get away with it</i>														
70 (49)	76 (25)	(13)	68 (93)	72 (78)	62 (66)	54 (219)	52 (101)	49 (101)	45 (493)	30 (115)	35 (152)	29 (426)	33 (100)	34 (100)
<i>Most criminals shouldn't be blamed for the things they've done</i>														
51 (49)	(11)	(7)	51 (105)	48 (35)	51 (35)	48 (177)	58 (99)	41 (90)	44 (503)	43 (138)	49 (185)	39 (449)	40 (134)	34 (113)
<i>I can't seem to stay out of trouble no matter how hard I try</i>														
63 (46)	69 (55)	78 (32)	66 (104)	68 (75)	63 (52)	49 (176)	55 (83)	55 (62)	44 (621)	34 (119)	42 (137)	25 (251)	22 (88)	24 (142)
<i>Most things people call delinquency don't really hurt anyone</i>														
72 (78)	70 (20)	(13)	55 (232)	57 (80)	56 (60)	43 (432)	49 (157)	41 (176)	38 (376)	38 (121)	41 (128)	31 (164)	35 (20)	29 (47)
<i>The man who leaves his keys in the car is as much to blame for its theft as the man who steals it</i>														
44 (391)	49 (122)	(152)	42 (461)	47 (154)	46 (180)	49 (131)	46 (43)	54 (31)	46 (211)	44 (56)	42 (52)	37 (102)	43 (46)	(15)
<i>Police try to give kids an even break</i>														
35 (260)	29 (24)	(17)	42 (460)	39 (109)	27 (104)	39 (255)	43 (113)	45 (130)	55 (194)	52 (119)	48 (120)	58 (117)	63 (55)	59 (62)

^a These results for Hirschi's males are taken from his Tables 78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86 (1969:201-211).

^b Hirschi's "neutral" point was "undecided." The "neutral" point used for the questions used in the present study was "no opinion." As was the case with the questions constituting the recency index, this terminological difference resulted from an attempt to maintain consistency within a series of research efforts by this author. The difference between "undecided" and "no opinion" may not be trivial; however, since each of these alternatives was placed between "agree" and "disagree" along a continuum, the effect was probably not substantial.

medium or high delinquent involvement.¹¹

Denial of injury, another technique of neutralization, involves the delinquent's defining his acts such that they do not really cause anyone serious harm (Hirschi, 1969:208). Responses to the statement "Most things people call delinquency don't really hurt anyone" were used to determine whether denial of injury is related to reported delinquent involvement. The results for this item in Table 10 show that all three groups produce strikingly similar results: those most strongly agreeing with the statement report most delinquent involvement and those most strongly disagreeing report least delinquent involvement.

Denial of the victim as a technique of neutralization involves the argument that the victim somehow deserves to be victimized or at least contributes to his own victimization. The relationship of reported delinquent involvement to the item "The man who leaves his keys in the car is as much to blame for its theft as the man who steals it" is shown in Table 10. In none of the three groups is this item consistently or strongly related to reported delinquent involvement. Denial of the victim, as measured by this question, does not emerge in any of the groups as control theory predicts it should.

The final technique of neutralization reported by Hirschi involves condemning the condemners—reducing one's relative culpability by indicting

"respectable" others. Hirschi uses the item "Policemen try to give all kids an even break" to determine whether reported delinquent involvement is related to condemnation of the condemners (1969:211). The lowest portion of Table 10 shows a moderate relationship between agreement with the item and reported delinquent involvement for all three groups. Among the rural males, for example, 29 percent of those in strong agreement with the item as compared with 63 percent of those in strong disagreement report medium or high delinquent involvement.

Overall, Hirschi's results with his belief items are replicated very closely within both the rural males and females—both those results which support control theory and those which do not. The techniques of neutralization receive mixed reviews; one indicator of denial of responsibility and the indicator of denial of the victim proved unrelated to reported delinquent involvement; while the remaining purported indicators of techniques (denial of injury, condemning the condemners, and one indicator of denial of responsibility) showed consistent moderate relationships to reported delinquent involvement in all three groups.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As noted at the outset, the aim of this analysis has been limited; namely, to determine the degree to which the bivariate relationships found and reported by Hirschi in *Causes of Delinquency* hold for groups of rural males and females in Upstate New York.

With one major exception, the overall correspondence between his results and the results here is substantial. Attachment to parents, teachers, and the school; commitment to "adult" activi-

¹¹ In explaining his results, Hirschi notes that this relationship may simply be a reflection of accurate reporting about past behaviors. He further notes that time ordering is a question which plagues the concept of techniques of neutralization and suggests that neutralizations resulting from earlier acts may be causes of later acts (1969:207-81).

ties and conventional activities; involvement in school-related activities; and all of the belief items produce results very similar to those produced by Hirschi.¹²

The one exception, of course, is in the area of peer attachments, which generated two tables contrary to Hirschi's hypotheses and results: attachment to mother and attachment to peers were not substantially related (Hirschi postulates a positive relationship); reported delinquent involvement and attachment to peers were found to be *directly*, rather than inversely, related.

The independence of parental and peer attachments does not constitute a direct challenge to the principles of control theory; the problem created by this orthogonality is, rather, relatively minor. Greater difficulty is generated by the finding that, among the rural groups, peer-attachments are directly related to delinquent involvement. As suggested above, this may indicate that Hirschi's control theory will have to be more specific about attachment to peers. That is, the theory may need to be reconceptualized in terms of attachment to conventional and unconventional peers.

¹² It should be clear, of course, that not all of Hirschi's results are consonant with the predictions of control theory—for example, one indicator of denial of responsibility ("Most criminals should not be blamed for the things they've done") and the indicator of denial of the victim do not relate to reported delinquency as predicted.

As with the relationships which support control theory, it may be that the relationship between peer attachment and delinquent involvement which contradicts control theory, will disappear or be reversed when other variables are controlled. Questions relating to the direct effects of the variables examined, causal sequences, and the possible interpretations of these findings are beyond the scope of the present work.

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