WHEN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY ENHANCES THE SELF-CONCEPT:
THE ROLE OF RACE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Research investigating the relationship between delinquency and the self-concept has generally concluded that delinquency is caused by some internal pathology. In contrast to these findings, however, a developing body of literature suggests that delinquency may be motivated by a need to enhance the self-concept. This research is not clear, however, regarding who should be most likely to seek self-enhancement through delinquency. The current investigation examines the hypothesis that delinquency may provide an important source of self-affirmation for youths who are limited in their exposure to more conventional sources of affirmation. Because success in school is an important conventional source of affirmation for adolescents, it was hypothesized that juveniles who are uninvested in academics would be particularly likely to consider delinquent alternatives when other conventional sources of affirmation were also limited. As such, the pressure to be delinquent should be greatest for individuals who are the most limited in the number of conventional resources to which they have access. Because Blacks have fewer conventional resources on average than Whites, the enhancing effect of delinquency on the self-concept was expected to vary by academic investment and racial group membership. Thus, it was hypothesized that Blacks who are academically uninvested would be most likely to find affirmation in delinquency. In order to test this hypothesis, two sets of secondary analyses were conducted using data from the Youth in Transition study (1966-1968) and National Youth Survey (1976-1977). Findings across both studies confirmed the hypothesis that among Blacks who were academically uninvested, initial delinquency
enhances subsequent self-regard. Whites who were uninvolved in school did not show this effect, and Blacks and Whites who were academically invested did not show this effect. These findings challenge conventional interpretations of delinquency and suggest that delinquency can be an important source of affirmation for juveniles who have few alternatives. Future research directions, and the implications of these findings, are also discussed.
Dedicated to Keisha E. Sullivan
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"In that moment, I felt like God. I felt so good and so powerful that I wanted to do it again. I felt like I could pull that trigger, and keep on pulling it until I emptied the gun..."

"The greatest power on earth is the ability to give life. The next greatest power is the ability to take one. When carrying a gun, I was full of that sense of power. I felt confident, invincible..." (pp.72, pp.119, Nathan McCall, 1994)

In a book that became a National Bestseller, Nathan McCall recounts his experiences growing up as a young Black male, who by the age of fifteen found himself involved in activity that would eventually land him in prison. Today, McCall is a well respected journalist who divides his time between his family and covering news stories. In 1995, I had the opportunity to hear Mr. McCall discuss his reasons for why he got involved in criminal activity as a teenager. His explanation centered around a widely held belief purporting that a low self-image, particularly low self-esteem, is the primary cause underlying juvenile crime. However, as the above excerpt suggests, the decision to behave criminally could also be motivated by a need for power or control. In fact, based on McCall's comments, it is equally reasonable to assume that he was motivated by the simple thrill of being powerful. Not unlike the feeling a stage performer gets upon moving an audience to laughter, or the surgeon who saves a young child's life, the juvenile who commits acts of delinquency also experiences an exhilarating sense of power and control that is self sustaining. In other words, the behavior begins to justify itself.

Being a social scientist, and a Black male, the issue of juvenile crime is of particular interest to me for academic, personal, and social reasons. As such, I asked Mr. McCall whether he recognized low self-esteem as his motive at the time of his delinquency, or if
this explanation could have been construed in hindsight. His answer suggested that his motives were “sub-conscious.” However, given his comments above, and many more like them contained in his memoir, I pressed Mr. McCall as to why he would readily question the validity of motives which seemed so apparent in favor of one that was seemingly inconsistent with the tone of his book. His response, and others emanating from the audience reflected both frustration with my inquiries, and anger based on what was seen as an attack on a presumed universal belief about low self-esteem and juvenile crime. Their reactions and the implications of them are the inspiration for this work.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The assumption that juvenile delinquency is caused by some intra-personal pathology has a long and varied history in sociological and psychological research. In fact, most of the traditional work on the topic of the causes of deviance, both theoretical and empirical, focuses on some presumed psychosis of the individual deviant (Archer, 1985). However, a developing body of research suggests that accepting this assumption as conclusive may be premature. Specifically, a number of empirical studies have demonstrated the existence of a positive relationship between delinquent behaviors and self-attitudes (Bynner, O’Malley, & Bachman, 1981; Kaplan, 1975, 1980; Louden, 1981; Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989; Wells, 1989). In other words, there is growing evidence supporting the idea that engaging in delinquent activities may actually enhance the self-regard for some juveniles. At present, however, many findings supporting this view have been inconsistent. In fact, the strength of this argument lies in its theoretical support (Merton, 1968; Kaplan, 1975). The aim of this work then is to bring some clarity to this research by identifying the circumstances that produce a positive relationship between delinquency and self-regard. To achieve this goal, I will begin by reviewing the relevant literature on the relationship between deviant behaviors and the self-concept, followed by a discussion of the most widely cited model that has been advanced to explain such relationships. Next, I will seek to offer an alternative hypothesis to explain this relationship by relying on research from social psychology, specifically borrowing
from research on self-affirmation (Steele, 1988; Steele & Liu, 1983) and disidentification (Steele, 1992; Steele, in press). Finally, I will present empirical evidence from two longitudinal studies which seek to support this hypothesis.

Research investigating the connection between delinquent or deviant behaviors and the self has had a history that parallels the developmental growth of psychology as a field. To illustrate how explanations have varied over the years, I will begin this investigation by reviewing how some of the different approaches within psychology have sought to understand this problem. As a guide through this review, the reader should note that much of the earlier work on the topic was theoretical in nature, and that empirical contributions are relatively recent. As such, particular emphasis is given to the discussion of personality research, as these investigations have devoted the most empirical attention to the topic. The reader should also recognize that much of the earlier discussion of the topic of delinquent or deviant behaviors did not seek to make definitive distinctions between adolescent and adult deviant behaviors. It simply assumed that the same motives which compelled adults to violate social norms were operating in younger deviants as well. Finally, the reader should be mindful that throughout the writing of this document, the phrases deviant, antisocial, or criminal behavior, are all meant to be interpreted as consistent with the construct of juvenile delinquent behaviors (i.e., violations by adolescents of normative rules of conduct, including behaviors defined as criminal). Moreover, none of the findings presented in this document should be seen as applicable to behaviors clinically defined as pathological or psychotic.
The Relationship Between Deviance and the Self

One of the earliest accounts of the causes of deviant behaviors concluded that behaviors considered deviant or delinquent were nothing more than simple acts of "moral insanity" (Pritchard, 1837). In a similar statement, it was argued that conditions such as mental disease, mania, and idiocy were the real causes of criminal acts (Ray, 1838). Years later, when psychology entertained the brief study of phrenology, some even argued that criminals were examples of primitive humans, evident by such physical markers as large ears, a long lower jaw, an asymmetrical cranium, low sensitivity to pain, and retarded psychological features (Lombroso, 1876; see Binder, 1987).

In the years that followed, however, investigations became more scientific, as attention focused on genetics and the role it might play in the causes of crime. Specifically, a movement emerged galvanized around the belief that criminal tendencies could be inherited from one generation to the next (Maudsley, 1863, 1867, 1870). This idea flourished at the turn of century when researchers began to investigate the relationships between heredity, crime, and low intelligence. Most notable was the study of the hereditary effects of "feeblemindedness" and its relationship with criminality (Goddard, 1912, 1914, 1915). Known today as the infamous study on the "Kallikak" family, Goddard (1912) traced the progeny of this seemingly unique family along two distinct lines, a good line and a bad line. His investigation was based on the assumption that family members who inherited the trait of feeblemindedness should have a greater likelihood of criminality than those not inheriting the trait. Among those represented in the "good line" were a host of well respected individuals: governors, senators, and doctors. In contrast, those representing the bad line were criminals, prostitutes, alcoholics, and illegitimate children (see Shoemaker, 1990). Goddard extended his ideas further to an examination of the intellectual capacity of prison populations (Goddard, 1914). Here his
findings revealed that nearly 50% of the prison populations studied suffered from weak intelligence (Shoemaker, 1990). These findings were quite impressive and gave tremendous validity to the belief that deviant, even criminal behaviors are motivated by some psychological pathology. Furthermore, the implications of Goddard's work and others who supported his ideas suggested that despite people's intentions, their genetic makeup will predict the extent to which they will be deviant or not.

With the advent of psychoanalysis, the investigation of delinquency took a slightly more complex approach. Those interested in identifying the causes of juvenile delinquency were now equipped with a theoretical framework enabling them to more systematically explain its occurrence and prevalence. For example, in contrast to the more univariate explanations cited above, delinquency could now be explained with a more sophisticated set of assumptions. Focussing primarily on the problems associated with ineffective child rearing experiences (Friedlander, 1947), psychoanalytic investigators could argue that any given act of delinquency was caused by such experiences as maternal separation (Bowlby, 1946; Goldfarb, 1943; Spitz, 1945, 1946), parental influences of criminality (Johnson, 1949, 1959), or even repressed sexual desires for one's mother (Aichhorn, 1925; Alexander & Healy, 1935). The assumptions outlined by this approach argued that early unresolved traumatic experiences create intrapersonal conflicts that are so uncomfortable that individuals must suppress them to the realm of their unconscious minds. Although buried deep, conflicts would eventually surface causing the individual to seek resolution through an array of employable defense mechanisms, the expression of which may be manifest delinquency (Shoemaker, 1990). Despite these intricate assumptions, the psychoanalytic approach, like the earlier more univariate explanations, presumes that delinquent behavior has a deviant, intra-personal origin.

When learning theory became the dominant approach in psychology, researchers began conceptualizing behavior as a response to conditioning or reinforcement. This
included delinquency. Thus, investigators attempting to explain juvenile delinquency were apt to insist, for example, that delinquency resulted from poor prior conditioning (Eysenck, 1964, 1976, 1977). On the other hand, there were those social learning theorists who suggested that delinquency is simply the result of modeling the behaviors of aggressive others (Bandura, 1973). In other words, youths exposed to delinquent models were thought to acquire a predisposition through learning to respond to situations in ways that foster the continuation of delinquent actions. These ideas also form the basis of a well established theory of delinquency known as differential association theory (Sutherland, 1939), which argues that juveniles become delinquent simply because they have learned attitudes and behaviors that are favorable to delinquency.

Other learning theorists who endorse a more operant conditioning approach, in contrast, argued that delinquent behaviors evolve from the more favorable reinforcement of non-conforming behaviors. Thus, those juveniles receiving reinforcement conducive to the continuation of deviant behaviors will continue those behaviors. Conversely, reinforcement that is antagonistic to the performance of conforming behaviors should serve to limit the prevalence of such behaviors (Schwitzgebel, 1964; Switzgebel & Kolb, 1964). In any case, what these investigations show is that delinquency is seen as the product of counter-normative (i.e., deviant) influences, that under circumstances where no such influences were present, delinquency would also fail to be present.

Finally, with regards to the contributions by personality researchers, juvenile delinquency is characterized as the result of some personality disorder or trauma. Most noteworthy of all the research on this topic is the role played by the self-concept, particularly that aspect of the self-concept which deals with an individual's self perceptions of "competence and worthiness", more commonly referred to as self-esteem (Mruk, 1995). The assumptions driving this area of research insist that damage or threats to the self-concept negatively impacts one's self-esteem, the consequences of which may be efforts
directed at defending the self from further assault, or responses that enhance the self to pre-threat levels. Either way, the individual's reaction illustrates the motivational nature of self-esteem, and thus its causal influence on behaviors such as delinquency.

The idea that the self-concept can be a causal, motivating force for behavior is not new. In fact, long before any systematic, scientific study of the self was possible, it was believed that having a high self-regard is "the greatest joy of the human soul" (Hobbes, 1651; see Allport, 1968), suggesting that individuals are motivated to maintain it. Later, scholars were more explicit, insisting that individuals are motivated to protect or benefit their own personal welfare and self-esteem (James, 1915). Still others agree that self-esteem is a universal human motive (Rosenberg, 1965; Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989; Steele, 1988). Thus, the idea that self-esteem is a powerful motivator for human behavior was firmly established. However, it was not until the mid 1960's that these ideas proved applicable to the investigation of juvenile delinquency. With the publications of several highly influential works (Rosenberg, 1965; Coopersmith, 1967; Branden, 1969), the role of the self-esteem, specifically low self-esteem, as a causal factor in delinquency took shape, for now researchers had a tangible, universal construct to study in delinquent populations. Furthermore, with the many findings linking low self-esteem to such things as depression (Burns, 1980; Ellis & Harper, 1977; Harter, 1993), anxiety (Battle, 1982; Coopersmith, 1967; Samenow, 1984,1989), and stress (Bednar, Wells, & Peterson, 1989; Heatherton & Ambady, 1993; Wells & Marwell, 1976), it was widely believed that a similar pattern would be found in the psychology of delinquents. Consistent with assumptions, evidence was gathered linking low self-esteem to a variety of juvenile problems, including delinquency. However, as some researchers have argued, the evidence is not entirely conclusive (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989; Mruk, 1995). In this next section, I will delineate some of the research that has been conducted over the years examining the influence of low self-esteem on delinquency. The review will consist
of the common explanation for the effect, followed by empirical support from cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental investigations.

The Effects of Low Self-Esteem on Delinquency

The dominant view among researchers investigating the relationship between self-esteem and juvenile delinquency is that low self-esteem is the cause, and delinquency is the effect (Kaplan, 1975, 1980; Mecca et al., 1989; Owens, 1994; Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1978; Rosenberg et al., 1989; Steffenhagen & Burns, 1987). This idea can be traced back to the work of Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) on the construction of the self-concept. Their teachings argued that people's perceptions of themselves were largely influenced by what they felt others thought of them. Moreover, Mead (1934) insisted that as individuals develop, they must learn to imitate others, understand and make use of symbols to communicate, and take the perspective of the other (see Schaefer, 1989, pg. 97). These arguments, both Cooley's "looking-glass self", and Mead's "reflected self-appraisals" served as the basis for how people were presumed to interact with others, evaluate themselves, and evaluate others. In this view, then, positive self-concepts stem from being viewed favorably by others, while negative self-concepts are the result of being criticized or rejected. Deviance, by extension, is the result of prolonged negative experiences from which juveniles develop poor self-images.

Early correlational evidence provided a strong argument in favor of the claim that delinquency is an outgrowth of a poor self-image by demonstrating relationships between low self-esteem and delinquent behavior. For example, one early study revealed that delinquents reported lower levels of esteem than their non-delinquent counterparts (Reiss, 1957). Findings also showed that delinquents lack the discipline to engage in normative behaviors. This latter finding was substantiated with evidence that delinquents have a
rather weak commitment to socially normative behaviors relative to non-delinquents (Briar & Piliavin, 1965). In another study employing measures of self-control, conventional beliefs, and self-esteem, findings revealed that all three measures negatively predict delinquent behaviors. In other words, those respondents who showed the lowest levels of self-control and self-esteem, and who showed little interest in conventional belief systems, were most likely to be involved in delinquent activities (Jensen, 1973). This occurred even when factors such as race and social class were held constant.

Research employing experimental procedures corroborate these correlational findings, and offer additional evidence of the causal influences of low self-esteem on delinquent behaviors. In one study, individuals who were induced to feel bad about themselves were shown to express greater hostility toward others than those induced to feel good about themselves (Goldfried, 1963). In another experiment, subjects confronted with a publicly degrading situation (failure on a test) designed to invoke negative self-attitudes were more easily persuaded later to commit an act of theft than those exposed to more pleasant situations (Van Duuren & Di Giacomo, 1996). In two related studies, when subjects were exposed to negative personality information (Aronson & Mettee, 1968), or made to feel socially deprived (Stephenson & White, 1970), they showed a greater tendency to cheat than subjects not exposed to such circumstances. Thus, the evidence appears strong that there is a causal role for negative self-conceptions on subsequent deviant behaviors.

Along with the cross-sectional and experimental evidence cited above, research investigating the causal relationships between self-esteem and delinquency has made use of longitudinal studies tracking youths over a period of years. Like the earlier evidence, most of the findings here point to a consistent negative relationship between self-esteem and delinquency. In one well known longitudinal study consisting of data from the *Youth in Transition* study (Bachman, 1970; Bachman, Green, & Wirtanen, 1971), Rosenberg and
Rosenberg (1978) examined the cross-lagged panel correlations between self-esteem and a variety of delinquent measures (e.g., delinquent behaviors in school, frequency of delinquency, seriousness of delinquency, etc.) among a sample of 2213 tenth grade boys from 87 different high schools across the United States. They found that the relationships between self-esteem and delinquency were always negative, and were strongest when self-esteem was used to predict later delinquency, as opposed to having delinquency as the predictor. The researchers concluded that self-esteem operates more as a causal variable than an outcome variable. Findings also revealed that the effect varied somewhat by social class, such that among lower class respondents low self-esteem was a stronger predictor of later delinquency than among higher class youths. Interestingly, evidence also showed that in those cases when initial delinquency did significantly predict lower self-esteem, it was more likely to occur among higher social class respondents. These findings led the authors to speculate that participating in delinquent activities is more damaging to the self-concepts of higher social class youths because they are more likely to risk facing social condemnation by parents, peers, and community. Notwithstanding, higher class youths are likely to have more ways of bolstering their self-esteem through more socially conforming activities. In fact, given the greater prevalence of delinquency in lower class communities, the authors assumed that lower class youths may find some social acceptance by engaging in delinquent behaviors. With regards to the effects of low self-esteem on later delinquency, the authors argued that unlike their higher class counterparts, lower class youths are more likely to channel low self-esteem motivations into delinquent behaviors because of their greater exposure to delinquent others who may offer empathy for how they feel, and most importantly, encouragement for future delinquency.

In another longitudinal study also using data from the *Youth in Transition* study, Wells and Rankin (1983) tested the mediating influences of self-esteem on the relationship between specific normative experiences (e.g., school performance, family, and social
support) and delinquency. These researchers sought to illustrate the motivational influence of self-esteem on delinquency by demonstrating that negative social experiences would lead to delinquent activity by depressing self-esteem. It was also hypothesized that delinquency would enhance subsequent self-esteem. Upon examination of the findings, however, results revealed that self-esteem yielded only a mildly negative effect on later delinquency, while delinquency had no effect on subsequent esteem. Thus, the authors concluded that “if there is a motivational effect of self-esteem on delinquent behavior, it is slight (pg. 16).” As for the enhancing effect of delinquency, evidence in support of this was non-existent.

Evidence of the effects of low self-esteem on later deviance was found in another study also examining self-esteem’s mediational influences (Kaplan, Martin, & Johnson, 1986). By defining low self-esteem in terms of negative self-attitudes, researchers argued that negative self-attitudes directly affect later deviance only by fostering a disposition to deviance. In other words, once individuals experience negative self-attitudes, it is suggested that they are then motivated to reject conventional norms and patterns, presumably because such patterns helped to instantiate negative self-attitudes. Once the attitudinal disposition is in place, it is expected that individuals will now become increasingly “aware of, seek out, and proceed to engage in deviant behaviors” (Kaplan et al., 1986, pp. 393). Findings based on a sample of over 7600 junior high school students, covering 3 different testing periods, revealed strong support for predictions. Specifically, evidence indicates that the effect of negative self-attitudes on later deviant behavior is largely accounted for by the extent to which individuals hold negative or indifferent attitudes toward conventional norms and institutions (e.g., school, neighborhood, church, family). In fact, once disposition to deviance is included in the model, the direct effect of negative self-attitudes on deviant behavior is no longer significant.

In one of the most recent and interesting investigations examining the relationship between adolescent self-esteem and delinquency (Owens, 1994), self-esteem was
partitioned into a positive “self-acceptance”, and a negative “self-deprecation” construct and then included in a structural equation model to examine its effects on several juvenile problems (e.g., poor school performance, depression, and delinquency). The rationale for making self-esteem a bi-dimensional construct is based on the belief that these two components may afford insight into juvenile problems that might have been obscured by using the more unitary global measure. Support for this distinction is noted elsewhere (Kaplan & Fukurai, 1992; Kaplan, D.S., Peck, & Kaplan, H.B. 1994; Owens, 1993), and past research has called for more concrete specifications of the dimensional nature of the construct (Wells & Marwell, 1976). Thus, investigations comparing global, positive, and negative constructs is theoretically justified. The analyses were conducted by comparing the reciprocal effects of the global, positive, and negative constructs of self-esteem on academic performance, depression, and delinquency. Findings relevant to the effects on delinquency, however, revealed that very little is gained by partitioning self-esteem. Specifically, negative self-attitudes (self-deprecation) yielded a slightly stronger effect on later delinquency ($r = .27, p<.001$) than positive self-attitudes (self-worth) ($r = -.16, p<.001$), while the global measure produced an intermediate effect ($r = -.19, p<.001$). As for the reciprocal relationships, no significant effects were found for the influence of delinquency on later esteem regardless of how it was operationalized. These findings thus confirm what is already generally considered as true - that among factors generally considered to be associated with the incidence of juvenile delinquency, those connected to the self-concept are presumed to be causal, and more likely to reflect the experience of some threat, trauma, or deficiency. In this next section, I will review evidence demonstrating the reciprocal effects of delinquency on self-esteem. The review will proceed with an explanation of the effect, followed by empirical support. As will become apparent, the relationships between delinquency and self-esteem discussed thus far become more complex as esteem and delinquency take on the roles of both cause and effect.
The Effects of Delinquency on Self-Esteem

In general, research examining the specific influence of self-esteem across a variety of domains is ongoing. In other words, no reports to date on the relationship between self-esteem and other factors have been proven definitive. As an example, much has been documented on the role that parental involvement plays in the development of self-esteem (Bednar et al., 1989; Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965). However, such findings cannot explain why some children with very loving parents still evidence very low self-esteem (Mruck, 1995). These paradoxes have led several researchers to conclude that the general conclusions of self-esteem investigations are that the phenomena is more complex than it appears (Mruck, 1995; Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989). These conclusions apply to delinquency research as well, as many investigations report a complicated relationship between self-esteem and delinquency, where low levels of self-esteem may lead to greater delinquency, but also where delinquency may produce higher self-esteem (Covington, 1986; Kaplan, 1975, 1980; Louden, 1981; Rosenberg, et al., 1989; Wells, 1989, Bynner et al., 1981). Thus, in contrast to investigations which characterized self-esteem simply as causal variable (Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1978), there is now some empirical support that self-esteem may also be an effect of delinquency.

Explanations offered to account for these reciprocal relationships have existed for some time (Cohen, 1955; Gold, 1978), however, the most comprehensive explanation offered thus far is the “self-enhancement model of delinquency” (Kaplan, 1975, 1980, 1982). Briefly, the model views deviant behaviors as adaptive responses to negative self-attitudes derived from failure experiences in the home, school, neighborhood, or other normative contexts. Juveniles seek out opportunities that will not only combat current negative self-feelings, but that will also provide instances for self-regard. As for where individuals will look for these positive sources, it is less likely that the search will occur in
normative domains, especially if the individual has encountered repeated failure. Rather, individuals should tend to look toward more deviant domains for self-regard, rejecting normative domains and the values they represent (Kaplan et al., 1986). When seeking fulfillment through acts of deviance, juvenile may choose among a variety of mechanisms. For example, juveniles may seek self-regard through acts of daring or toughness (Johnstone, 1983), through social comparisons with fellow deviants (Covington, 1986), or by learning new ways to justify their norm violating behaviors (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975; Kaplan, Johnson, & Bailey, 1987; Sykes & Matza, 1957). Submersion in the delinquent context, then, could serve to enhance the self-concept simply by providing juveniles with deviant adaptive strategies (Kaplan, 1980). Several studies demonstrating such effects have relied on the enhancement model for theoretical support.

In one study, approximately half of the junior high school students from the Houston School District were surveyed concerning their self-attitudes and self-reported delinquent behaviors over a three year period (Kaplan, 1980). Seventh graders were chosen to minimize instances of prior delinquent involvement and to examine rates of change in delinquent behaviors over the next two years. Findings revealed that those who reported more self-devaluing experiences in such contexts as home, among their friends, or in school, were also more likely to report having negative self-attitudes. Moreover, those negative attitudes were found to affect subsequent delinquency through the adoption of several deviant predispositions. In other words, the effects of negative self-attitudes on later delinquency were mediated by a disposition to deviance, defined by such things as deviant attitudes, self-esteem frustration, and an awareness of deviant behaviors (pg. 167, Kaplan, 1977). Most importantly, however, findings demonstrated the existence of an enhancement effect of delinquency on subsequent self-attitudes. Those respondents who initially reported negative self-feelings and who later adopted a deviant attitudes and
behaviors were much more likely than those not reporting similar feelings to report a subsequent reduction in the negative self-feelings.

Other evidence in support of a positive relationship between delinquency and self-esteem is obtained from a cross-sectional study examining the delinquency rates of students who varied both in their levels of academic performance (high vs. low), and self-esteem (Figueira-McDonough, 1983). Consistent with previous research on the relationship between poor school performance and delinquent behavior (Stinchcombe, 1964), it was assumed that poor performing students would exhibit the highest levels of delinquency. However, it was not clear how this finding would interact with self-esteem. Although specific predictions were made as to the type of delinquent activities each group would most likely perform, the finding most relevant to this discussion revealed that rates of delinquency were highest among those respondents who performed poorly in school and who had high self-esteem. These findings were explained in terms of a "strain" faced by high aspiring yet poor performing individuals. Specifically, the authors argued that for low performing yet high aspiring juveniles there is a feeling of strain which motivates these individuals to consider and seek out other opportunities (probably deviant) in order to achieve that feeling of success. An alternative explanation for this finding, which I will discuss in more detail later, is that for low performing individuals, negative academic experiences, which are perceived as threatening, motivates a decline in normative interests. These interests are then replaced by deviant alternatives which have the potential to enhance self-regard.

Findings from a longitudinal study illustrate another instance of the self-enhancing influences of delinquency (Bynaer et al., 1981). Using data from the Youth in Transition study (Bachman, 1970), structural equation models were estimated to determine whether self-esteem is a greater predictor of delinquency or delinquency is a greater predictor of self-esteem. The findings revealed that for the total sample a negative relationship emerged
regardless of whether esteem was the predictor or the effect, although self-esteem emerged as the stronger predictor. A closer look at the sample divided by initial levels of self-esteem, however, reveals a different pattern, particularly for the low self-esteem respondents. While the pattern for the total sample generally holds for the high self-esteem group, the pattern for the low self-esteem group reveals an enhancement effect. Specifically, for those respondents who began the study with low levels of self-esteem, engaging in delinquent activities produced an enhancing effect on their self-esteem. This effect is consistent with the one cited earlier by Kaplan (1980).

In a more recent study, data from the *Youth in Transition* study were once again analyzed to examine the effects of early delinquency on subsequent self-esteem (Wells, 1989). Findings revealed that delinquency generally had a negative impact on later self-esteem, except in cases where respondents had initial low levels of self-esteem. In other words, for those respondents exhibiting very low levels of early self-esteem, delinquency proved to have an enhancing effect of later self-esteem. Unlike the study cited above (Byner, et al., 1981), this effect occurred whether delinquency was used to predict self-esteem contemporaneously, 1 year later, or even 2 years later. In fact, the effect grew stronger with each subsequent test demonstrating both its consistency and reliability.

In another study using the *Youth in Transition* study, data were analyzed using reciprocal effects analyses to explore the relationships between self-esteem and adolescent problems (Rosenberg et al., 1989). Consistent with work cited earlier, findings revealed that lower levels of self-esteem were associated with later delinquency. However, evidence was also found for the self-enhancing influence of delinquency on subsequent esteem. Interestingly, the effect was strongest for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Explanations offered by the researchers for this occurrence centered on the normative nature of delinquency for lower class environments. Assuming that delinquency is more normative in lower SES environments, the authors argued that youths who engage in such
behaviors could be seen as responding to normative influences. Thus, the effects of such behaviors on the self would therefore be enhancing. The opposite assumptions would hold for higher social class environments.

Findings from an investigation on the effects of deviant (heroin-addicted) vs. non-deviant (non-addicted) lifestyles on the self-concept also showed evidence for the self-enhancing influences of deviant behavior (Covington, 1986). In this study, efforts were made to identify those factors that may interfere with the rehabilitation of heroin addicts to more conventional non-deviant lifestyles. Theories ranged from “user” self-esteem that may be based on a drug addicted lifestyle to the perception that job opportunities will be limited or infrequent, or will not compare with more lucrative opportunities in drug environments. The study also sought to explore whether differences might emerge as a function of race and gender. Findings revealed that White males involved in drug addicted environments reported more positive self-evaluations than all other groups similarly involved. This same group also showed a positive relationship between their current work status and their self concepts, suggesting that at least for this group of White males, their self-concepts benefitted both from conventional and deviant lifestyles. With regards to the findings obtained from the Black male respondents, which showed no evidence of deviant or work related self-enhancement, the author insists that the lack of an enhancement effect from either source may result from failure experiences in both areas. Such findings seem to reflect a racial difference in the factors that enhance self-esteem.

Finally, several other studies report similar effects among the following groups: West Indian-Black samples (Louden, 1981), alcoholics who were allowed to intoxicate themselves (Berg, 1971), previously threatened subjects who were subsequently given the opportunity to retaliate against their aggressor (Berkowitz, 1970), and residents from very low income (slum) environments who demonstrated attributes of daring, toughness, or
risk-taking (Feldman, 1968), thus suggesting that the enhancing effect of delinquent or deviant behavior on the self-concept is not an isolated occurrence.

In summary, it appears that the findings from both lines of research, those supporting the idea that low self-esteem leads to greater delinquency, and those proposing that involvement in delinquency may enhance subsequent self-esteem, find empirical support. At first glance, this may appear inconsistent. Upon examination of several studies reporting self-enhancement effects (Bynum et al., 1981; Kaplan, 1980; Rosenberg et al., 1989; Wells, 1989), and the self-enhancement model itself, however, both findings may be correct, in that under some circumstances low self-esteem may be a precursor to delinquency and delinquency could be a precursor to later high self-esteem. Assuming this is true, then what these findings suggest is that the relationship between the self-concept and delinquency is not as simple as was once thought. On the contrary, the relationship appears to be a bi-directional one which varies in valence as a function of initial levels of self-esteem. Specifically, those with initial low levels of low self-esteem are likely to exhibit the following pattern: low self-esteem leads to greater delinquent involvement, and delinquency leads to greater subsequent self-esteem. Among those with initial levels of higher self-esteem, delinquent involvement is presumed to be less likely overall.

These conclusions represent the current state of research concerning the relationship between delinquency and the self-concept. Findings are generally supportive of the self-enhancement model, however, most investigations focus on the connection between low self-esteem and subsequent deviance (Kaplan, 1992; Kaplan & Fukurai, 1992; Kaplan & Peck, 1992; Kaplan et al., 1986; Kaplan, Johnson, & Bailey, 1986; Kaplan, Martin, & Robbins, 1984; Kaplan, Robbins, & Martin, 1983; Kaplan, Martin, & Robbins, 1982). Support for the other half of the model is not as strong (Arbuthnot, Gordon, & Jurkovic, 1987; Wells, 1989). In this next section, I introduce a model of self-affirmation that could
also account for the findings presented thus far. Although applied to delinquency research for the first time, self-affirmation theory has been employed in other investigations examining features of the self-concept (Steele, 1988; Steele & Liu, 1983). Its relevance here is directed at explaining the circumstances that lead juveniles to disidentify with conventional pursuits in favor of delinquent ones. In addition, self-affirmation theory will be used to predict the conditions under which involvement in delinquent activities will enhance the self-concept.
CHAPTER 2

SELF-AFFIRMATION

Self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) begins with the premise that the need for self-regard is a fundamental human motive (Hobbes, 1651; James, 1915; Rosenberg, 1965; Tesser, 1988). This need, common among other self theories (Schlenker & Weigold, 1989; Tesser, 1988; Rosenberg, 1965), is presumed to be self-protecting, in that individuals are motivated to preserve certain levels of self-regard. When self-regard is adequate, the need to seek additional affirmation is low. However, when it is low or when the integrity of the self becomes threatened, the need to search for additional affirmation is activated. To borrow from Wells (1989), when self-regard falls below a level that is psychologically comfortable, individuals will be motivated to seek out sources of affirmation to elevate self-regard. This effort should continue until a psychologically comfortable level is reached, at which point efforts may relax. Research on dissonance and attitude change investigated these ideas, and can be used to help illustrate the consequences of affirmation for the self-concept.

To investigate the effects of affirmation when the self is threatened, researchers exposed subjects to dissonance arousing circumstances (Steele & Liu, 1981, 1983). Assuming that this would be uncomfortable, researchers hypothesized that subjects would be motivated to reduce the negative arousal by whatever means were at their disposal. Traditionally, however, research has restricted the means by which subjects could reduce dissonance to resolving the dilemma which created the dissonance. According to self-affirmation theory, however, people have other options from which to choose.
Specifically, the theory argues that attitude or behavioral change is not the only way to restore integrity of the self, integrity can be restored simply by affirming the self-concept. In fact, Steele and Liu (1981, 1983) insisted that what was important was not the inconsistency between attitudes and/or the behavioral experience per se, but what the inconsistency represented: a threat to the integrity of the self. Consistent with these assumptions, when Steele and Liu (1981, 1983) exposed subjects to dissonance arousing situations, those who were not given affirmation changed their attitudes. This response was consistent with traditional expectations (Festinger, 1957). Among those who received affirmation, however, subsequent attitudes were comparable to those subjects not exposed to any dissonance.

In another study testing the assumption that affirmation need not be associated with the threatening source, Steele and Liu (1981) exposed subjects to dissonance arousing conditions. Prior to manipulations, subjects were asked to rate their interests on a series of unrelated topics, some of which were self-relevant. After dissonance manipulations, half of the subjects were presented with self-relevant topics while the other half were not. Assuming that subjects would find the self-relevant topics affirming, it was hypothesized that those exposed to the affirming manipulation would show attitude changes consistent with subjects in a low dissonant condition. Steele and Liu demonstrated that for those subjects who found the topics affirming, final attitudes were consistent with a control group not exposed to any dissonance. For those who were not affirmed by the source, attitude change was similar to a control group exposed to dissonance but not to affirmation. These and other self-affirmation studies show that if threatened, people will use opportunities to affirm their self-integrity in order to counteract the threat. Importantly, the affirming source need not be affiliated with the threatening domain. The affirming source need only satisfy the self-interest of the individual. Thus, if the source is self-relevant, and
capable of restoring integrity to the self-concept, it will be sufficient to counteract the threat (Steele, 1988).

For example, consider the juvenile who performs poorly on a math test. The threat of failure may motivate the youth to reflect on other academic accomplishments such as an “A” paper in English, or being selected for the honor roll. In the absence of such accomplishments however, he may turn to other areas of life that are more rewarding, such as his athletic ability. If the youth considers himself to be a good football player, for example, then focusing on his competence in this domain may be affirming enough to counteract the discomfort of failing the test. Furthermore, in addition to reflecting on his athletic ability, the youth may also be motivated to engage in athletic activities. Performing well in football later that afternoon, would also be sufficient to affirm his self-concept. Thus, reflecting on one’s abilities in rewarding domains, as well as engaging in rewarding activities, should be sufficiently affirming to counteract threats and thus lead to disidentification in threatening domains.

The more often individuals experience threats to the self in a particular domain, the more often they should be motivated to seek affirmation in other domains. If this process of threat in one domain and subsequent seeking of affirmation in other domains becomes chronic, individuals will begin to disidentify with the threatening domain. Thus, the flexibility of self-affirmation - whereby threats in one domain can be countered by success in another - leads almost inevitably to disidentification with chronically threatening domains (Steele, 1988, in press). Referring back to our young football player, failing a particular math test should motivate him to seek affirmation on the football field, but should not prompt him to want to give up on mathematics all together. For this to happen, he would have to routinely experience failure in mathematics. If he were to routinely fail in math, and he were to find affirmation in athletics or elsewhere, then he would probably disidentify with math.
Disidentification is unlikely to occur when confronted with occasional threats, as within any given domain there will be occasional threatening experiences as well as affirming ones. However, for those who routinely experience threats within a particular domain, the need to look elsewhere for affirmation should be high. According to self-affirmation theory, this mechanism of detachment one’s self-concept from threatening sources is necessary to free individuals to pursue other, more potentially rewarding sources of self-regard. Through the process of disidentification, people eventually completely detach themselves from the previously engaging domains, such that they are no longer affected by outcomes that occur in that domain, either good or bad. Thus, when individuals perform poorly, disidentification minimizes the assault to their self-integrity. In other words, disidentification may operate to restrict the generation of negative self-feelings. The obvious disadvantage however, is that in those occasional situations where academically disidentified individuals do perform well, this performance will have little effect on how they feel. Furthermore, once an individual is disidentified, there will be little motivation to strive in a domain that is no longer seen as self-relevant, and in which success is no longer rewarding.

Experimental evidence in support of the process of disidentification comes from a study examining race and academics. In their experiment, Osborne, Major, and Crocker (1992) asked African-American and White participants to complete a test that presumably measured their intellectual ability. Because African-Americans experience greater difficulty in school (Corley, Cernkovich, & Giordano, 1989; Osborne, 1995), and are stereotyped to perform poorly (Steele & Aronson, 1996), it was assumed that they would be most likely to routinely encounter threats within that domain, and be most likely to be disidentified with academics. Thus, it was hypothesized that while Whites would be affected by how well they performed, Blacks would not. In order to test this hypothesis, subjects were given either positive or negative feedback on the test, and then asked to respond to a variety of
affective measures. Results revealed that for Whites, positive feedback produced positive affect and negative feedback created negative affect. Blacks, on the other hand, showed no affective differences across feedback conditions. These findings suggest that Blacks are more likely than Whites to have detached their self-concepts from domains that are relevant to intellectual performance. This process was evident even when Blacks received positive feedback.

Findings from research on self-affirmation and disidentification may provide important insights into the investigation of delinquency. Assuming that part of the reason juveniles become delinquent is because of threats encountered in normative contexts (Kaplan, 1975), self-affirmation theory suggest that as such threats mount, juveniles will eventually begin to look elsewhere for affirmation. Some of the sources in which juveniles may seek affirmation are likely to be deviant domains, as delinquent activities can be highly affirming to adolescents. For example, some juveniles are attracted to delinquency because such activities provide opportunities to express daring or toughness (Johnstone, 1983). Consistent with this perception, among African-American delinquents, boys who were most likely to get into trouble were perceived as stronger, smarter, and tougher than those who never got into trouble (Erickson, 1959; Miller, 1958; Pettigrew, 1964; Ross, 1995). Thus, some juveniles seem to engage in delinquent activities because they are trying to solicit gratifying responses from their peers (Kaplan et al., 1987). Finally, other findings suggest that a damaged self-image may be reclaimed through delinquent pursuits (Gold & Mann, 1972). It is conceivable, then, that delinquent behaviors are an attempt to seek self-affirmation outside of the normative domain in response to a history of threatening normative experiences. According to such a possibility, juveniles who routinely encounter threats in their normative experiences will eventually disidentify with such domains to prevent negative self-feelings. Once disidentified, juveniles may be engaging in delinquent
activities in order to affirm their self-integrity. In the next section, I discuss when and among whom this process is likely to take place.

**Academic Performance: A Source of Both Affirmation & Rejection**

Attending school can be characterized as the primary life task of juveniles, as it consumes a major part of their development as young people (cf. Harlow & Cantor, 1995). For example, while in school, juveniles are expected to not only learn the norms, values, and sanctions of the larger society (Schaefer, 1989), they are also expected to prepare for later participation in the economy (Bowles, 1972). School is thus the place where juveniles encounter their most important affirming and threatening experiences. The valence of these experiences is primarily a function of how well they perform. For those who perform well, affirmation is achieved in a number of ways: they can evaluate their academic competence favorably; they can expect and receive praise and recognition from teachers, administrators, parents, and other significant adults; they can assess their future success in terms of their present success; they can compare themselves with others who perform less favorably, etc. On the other hand, for those who perform poorly, the opportunity to derive affirmation based on performance becomes increasingly difficult. Poor performing students are less likely to receive positive recognition for their performance. Positive social comparisons with poor performing others may be difficult, if at all possible; expectations about future success should be uncertain; reminders that one is not performing well should be present, etc. Thus, for juveniles who perform well in school, it is reasonable to conclude that their academic experiences are generally more affirming than not. For poor performing students however, academic experiences should be generally threatening rather than affirming. As a consequence, poor performing students should be motivated to look for affirmation elsewhere. When poor performance is experienced over an extended period
of time, disidentification with school is the likely consequence (Osborne, 1995; Steele, in press).

Given that school is the primary life task of adolescents, what is an academically disidentified student to do in order to achieve positive self-regard? For some, the choice may involve athletics, as positive performance on the playing field may compensate for poor performance in the classroom. For others, the arts, music, employment, popularity with peers, or even the military may be appealing alternatives. Thus, for those who fail to find affirmation in the classroom, there are a variety of sources of affirmation that fall within normative domains. If, however, competence in these other domains is perceived as inadequate, or if individuals simply do not have access to such alternatives, then individuals may be motivated to consider deviant alternatives for affirmation.

**Race, Disidentification, and Delinquency**

Among those juveniles who perform poorly in school, some may be at a greater risk than others to seek delinquent sources of affirmation, simply because they are less likely to have access to normative, non-academic affirming sources. Consider the experiences of African-Americans. Not only are they more likely than Whites to perform poorly and drop out of school (Corley et al., 1989; Solorzano, 1992), they are also more likely to grow up in environments where unemployment is high, poverty is prevalent, opportunities are limited, and crime is rampant (Hacker, 1992; Oyserman, Gant, & Ager, 1995). Thus, academically poor performing Blacks may perceive fewer opportunities than similarly placed Whites, because there are indeed fewer opportunities available for them. Consistent with this viewpoint, when Blacks and Whites have the same level of education, Blacks are still twice as likely as Whites to be unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1991). Furthermore, when African-Americans are employed, their incomes are still not
equitable with Whites. For example, in 1984 the median income for Whites with a college education was $30,800, whereas the median income for Blacks with a college education was $21,900 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986; see also Farley & Allen, 1987). Indeed, the income for college educated Blacks is actually much closer to that of high school educated Whites, at $19,600, than to college educated Whites. Perhaps most telling, the median income for high school educated Blacks is only $12,900 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986; see also Farley & Allen, 1987).

These findings suggest that when African-Americans are academically unsuccessful they will have fewer normative sources of affirmation compared to similar Whites. While it is true that most African-Americans, like Whites, should have normative sources of affirmation other than academics, these data suggest that on average, Blacks will have fewer normative opportunities than Whites. Because of this differential access to alternative normative sources of affirmation, African-Americans who perform poorly in school should be at a greater risk for delinquent involvement than comparable Whites. Moreover, because African-Americans are also more likely to experience threats routinely in academic domains (Osborne et al., 1992), those who do perform poorly should be at a greater risk than similar Whites for disidentification with academics. Therefore, if poor performing African-Americans are at a greater risk for disidentification with academics, and if they are less likely to have access to alternative conventional sources of self-regard, then they should be more likely to search for affirmation from deviant sources. This was the primary hypothesis of the current research. According to self-affirmation theory and the logic outlined above, African-Americans who perform poorly at academics should be more likely than poor performing Whites to seek affirmation in delinquency. As a consequence, delinquent activities should be more prevalent among poor performing Blacks than among high performing Blacks or low or high performing Whites. Furthermore, and perhaps
most importantly, delinquency should be a source of positive self-regard for poor performing Blacks, but not for high performing Blacks or low or high performing Whites. To explore these hypotheses, two studies were conducted.
CHAPTER 3

STUDY 1

The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether affirmation from deviant sources would be likely among individuals who are both disidentified with academics and relatively unlikely to find affirmation from other normative sources. Because academically unsuccessful African-Americans were identified as most likely to fit this description, it was hypothesized that they would show the strongest evidence of affirmation from delinquent involvement. Both low and high performing Whites, and African-Americans who performed well, were not expected to show this relationship. To test for this relationship, African-Americans and Whites were evaluated in terms of how invested they were in academics, either low or high. Next, affirmation was assessed by examining whether delinquent involvement was positively related with self-concept measures, most notably self-esteem. Affirmation was also tested by whether delinquent involvement was positively related to feelings of belonging. As noted earlier, delinquent activities enable some juveniles to solicit gratifying responses from their peers such as recognition, praise, or status (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Bell, 1970; Leon, 1969; Kaplan et al., 1987). These social motives tap a need to belong, and their relationship to delinquency suggests that some individuals may show enhanced belonging by engaging in delinquent activities. It was hypothesized that low academically invested Blacks were more likely to show affirmation from delinquent involvement as defined by a positive relationship between delinquency at Time 1 and self-esteem and belonging at Time 2. Whites, and African-Americans who had high academic investment, were not expected to show this pattern.
Low academically invested Blacks were also expected to show the strongest evidence of academic disidentification. Support for this hypothesis may be obtained in several ways. First, consistent with prior research, low performing Blacks should exhibit higher levels of self-esteem than similarly performing Whites. This would indicate that Blacks have uncoupled their self-esteem from their academic performance. Additionally, disidentification can be examined via the correlation between academic performance and self-esteem and belonging. If the correlation among low academically invested Blacks is low or near zero, this would indicate that the self-concept of low academically invested Blacks was detached from how well they performed in school. High academically invested Blacks and low and high academically invested Whites were expected to show a positive relationship between performance in school and self-esteem and belonging.

Finally, because a weak attachment to school increases a juvenile’s risk for delinquency (Gold, 1970; Farrington, 1973; Matsueda, 1982; Menard & Morse, 1984; Stinchcombe, 1964), it was also hypothesized that low academically invested Blacks would engage in more delinquent activities than high academically invested Blacks, or low or high academically invested Whites. The possibility that delinquency is most likely to be affirming for low academically invested Blacks leads to this prediction as well.
METHODS

SAMPLE

Data for Study 1 was sampled from a multiwave longitudinal project entitled the Youth in Transition (YIT) study (Bachman, 1970). Participants consisted of 2213 tenth graders selected randomly from 87 different high schools throughout the United States. The first administration was conducted in 1966, with the first follow-up occurring in 1968, at the end of respondents’ eleventh grade year. The sample contained 1644 Whites and 209 Blacks, and all participants were male. Among other measures, respondents were tested on academic ability, and asked to self report on such measures as self esteem, school performance and school identification, their rate of delinquent involvement, and their feelings of belonging (see Appendix A.). Analyses were limited to waves one and two only.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a 7-item index reflecting both positive and negative self-perceptions (e.g., “I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others”, and “I sometimes feel no good at all”). Six out of the seven items were sampled from Rosenberg (1965). Previous research suggests that partitioning self-esteem into its positive and negative constructs may be informative when examining its relationship with social problems (Kaplan et al., 1986a; Owens, 1993, 1994). Thus, in order to consider the unique contributions of both positive and negative factors, self-esteem was defined herein by both its positive dimension, referred to as self-acceptance (Cronbach’s Alpha=.64 at Time 1, Alpha=.73 at Time 2), and its negative counterpart of self-rejection (Cronbach’s Alpha=.53 at Time 1, Alpha=.63 at Time 2). Higher values on self-acceptance and lower values on self-rejection reflect greater self-esteem.
Belonging

Belonging is an 8-item index which reflects respondents’ sense of connectedness or affiliation with significant others (e.g., “No one cares what happens, when you get right down to it”, and “These days I get the feeling that I’m just not apart of things”) (Cronbach’s Alpha=.73 at Time 1, Alpha=.80 at Time 2). The index was originally defined as a social isolation measure (Merton, 1968), but was scored to indicate the extent to which juveniles feel a sense of belonging with others. The construct is presumed to play an important role in the experiences of young people especially as it relates to school performance (Gooden, 1994; Brewer, von Hippel, & Gooden, in press). Also, theoretical arguments suggest that having a sense of attachment to others may play a pivotal role in the decision to engage in delinquent behaviors (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992; Merton, 1968).

School Identification

School identification is a 23-item index reflecting respondents’ attitudes toward school and education (e.g., “Respondent is satisfied with school”, and “Respondent receives a sense of accomplishment from school”) (Cronbach’s Alpha=.91 at Time 1, Alpha=.91 at Time 2).

Academic Performance

Academic performance is defined by a single item measuring respondents’ grade point average from the previous year.

Academic Investment

To measure academic investment, an index comprised of academic performance, school identification, and attitudes towards achievement was created. Academic investment represents a 33-item index measuring past academic performance, how identified respondents are with school (e.g., “respondent enjoys school”. “respondent is bored with school”), perceptions of the usefulness of school (e.g., “respondent feels school helps to improve thinking and problem solving”), and attitudes toward academic achievement (e.g.,
“how hard does respondent work at achieving honors”, “how well does respondent work at striving to get the top GPA”). The index is taken at Time 1 only, and was measured separately for Whites (Cronbach’s Alpha=.77) and Blacks (Cronbach’s Alpha=.71).² This measure was then dichotomized separately for Blacks and Whites via a median split to produce the four race sub-samples: low academically invested Whites (LIW), high academically invested Whites (HIW), low academically invested Blacks (LIB), and high academically invested Blacks (HIB).²

Delinquency

Delinquency is a 5-item index reflecting various acts of anti-social behavior (e.g., “Respondent gets angry and smashes things”, and, “Number of times respondent has been suspended from school”) (Cronbach’s Alpha=.60 at Time 1, Alpha=.48 at Time 2).

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¹ In order to ensure that academic investment was not simply a proxy variable for socioeconomic status (SES), academic investment was correlated with SES (see Appendix A for items measuring SES). Analyses revealed that the correlations between academic investment and SES were significant for Whites (r=.25, p<.0001) and Blacks (r=.14, p<.05). The size of these correlations, however, suggests that academic investment is distinct from SES.

² Dichotomizing on academic investment was also done using the same median for both Blacks and Whites, and using the median for Blacks with the White sample and vice versa. None of these changes in the procedure for dividing the samples led to any differences in any of the analyses reported in this manuscript. Consequently, all analyses are reported dividing people by their own group’s median.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analyses were conducted in three parts. First, self-acceptance, self-rejection, belonging, school identification, academic performance, and delinquency at Time 1 and 2 were subjected to analyses of variance (ANOVA) to examine differences among the various subgroups. Next, inter-item correlations were computed to examine the strength and direction of relationships among all variables for each of the subgroups. Finally, the variables were entered into simultaneous regression equations to examine the unique predictive ability of Time 1 measures on Time 2 outcomes. Results from the regression analyses are presented in the form of path diagrams.

Analyses

ANOVAS

To examine whether differences in self-acceptance, self-rejection, belonging, school identification, academic performance, and delinquency emerged among the four groups, all variables were subjected to analyses of variance. The means and standard deviations, as well as the significance levels are presented in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

As can be seen in Table 3.1, low invested Whites differed from high invested Whites on every variable. Consistent with previous research, those respondents who were highly invested in academics were less likely to be delinquent than their low invested counterparts. Moreover, those who were more invested in academics were also more likely to have higher self-esteem, as evidenced by a greater sense of self-acceptance and less self-rejection than those who were less invested. Data also reveal that those who were more invested were also more likely to feel like they belonged. These findings were consistent across Time 1 and Time 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables At Time 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Low Academic Investment Whites (LIW)</th>
<th>High Academic Investment Whites (HIW)</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Acceptance at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 3.69 SD=.666 N=908</td>
<td>Mean = 3.86 SD=.639 N=909</td>
<td>33.12</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Acceptance at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 3.74 SD=.718 N=770</td>
<td>Mean = 3.90 SD=.558 N=798</td>
<td>23.70</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Rejection at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 2.42 SD=908 N=908</td>
<td>Mean = 2.20 SD=889 N=909</td>
<td>27.13</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Rejection at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 2.29 SD=.913 N=770</td>
<td>Mean = 2.13 SD=835 N=798</td>
<td>13.62</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 3.36 SD=.629 N=902</td>
<td>Mean = 3.50 SD=.659 N=905</td>
<td>22.61</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 3.44 SD=.630 N=762</td>
<td>Mean = 3.57 SD=.622 N=787</td>
<td>16.65</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 2.71 SD=1.17 N=908</td>
<td>Mean = 4.13 SD=1.10 N=909</td>
<td>700.53</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 3.30 SD=1.13 N=722</td>
<td>Mean = 3.89 SD=1.58 N=782</td>
<td>66.50</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 2.77 SD=.890 N=847</td>
<td>Mean = 2.56 SD=.793 N=866</td>
<td>25.25</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 2.83 SD=.789 N=696</td>
<td>Mean = 2.63 SD=.639 N=749</td>
<td>29.88</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Mean differences of primary variables for high and low academically invested Whites (YTD).
The results for the Black sample, although similar, did not produce the same pattern of significant differences as the White sample. The only significant differences of interest between high and low academically invested Blacks were that highly invested Blacks were more likely to feel as if they belonged at Time 1 and Time 2, and were less likely to be involved in delinquency at Time 2 (see Table 3.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables At Time 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Low Academic Investment Blacks (LIB)</th>
<th>High Academic Investment Blacks (HIB)</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Acceptance at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =4.03 SD=947 N=115</td>
<td>Mean =3.95 SD=778 N=115</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>p&gt;.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Acceptance at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =4.00 SD=1.09 N=95</td>
<td>Mean =4.13 SD=909 N=94</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>p&gt;.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Rejection at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =2.54 SD=1.30 N=115</td>
<td>Mean =2.23 SD=1.12 N=115</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>p&lt;.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Rejection at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =2.50 SD=1.32 N=95</td>
<td>Mean =2.20 SD=1.15 N=94</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>p&gt;.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =3.20 SD=786 N=113</td>
<td>Mean =3.49 SD=727 N=113</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>p&lt;.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =3.31 SD=691 N=89</td>
<td>Mean =3.49 SD=714 N=89</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>p&lt;.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =2.76 SD=969 N=115</td>
<td>Mean =3.59 SD=1.14 N=115</td>
<td>34.87</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =3.30 SD=888 N=84</td>
<td>Mean =3.45 SD=858 N=90</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>p&gt;.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =2.76 SD=1.06 N=94</td>
<td>Mean =2.50 SD=868 N=92</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>p&lt;.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =3.19 SD=1.26 N=75</td>
<td>Mean =2.66 SD=1.07 N=78</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>p&lt;.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Mean differences of primary variables for high and low academically invested Blacks (YIT).
Consistent with prior research on racial differences in academic performance (Bachman, 1970; Demo & Parker, 1987; Levine & Eubanks, 1990; Simmons, Brown, Bush, & Blyth, 1978; Steele, 1992), Blacks performed worse than Whites, at Time 1, $F(1,2158) = 7.62$, $p<.006$, and Time 2, $F(1,1764) = 4.61$, $p<.03$. Contrary to expectations, no differences emerged in how identified Whites and Blacks were with school either at Time 1, $F(1,2143) = .03$, $p>.80$, or Time 2, $F(1,1741) = .000$, $p>.90$. Blacks and Whites did differ in how invested they were in academics, with Whites reporting higher levels of academic investment than Blacks, $F(1,2047) = 14.63$, $p<.0001$.

According to the hypotheses, low academically invested African-Americans should show the strongest evidence of disidentification with academics. One way to test for disidentification is to examine levels of self-acceptance, self-rejection, and belonging among the four groups. Findings presented earlier have already hinted at disidentification among low invested Blacks by showing that in contrast to the differences that emerged among Whites, they do not differ from high invested Blacks either in self-acceptance or self-rejection, although they do differ in their feelings of belonging. These results do not indicate, however, whether low invested Blacks differ in self-acceptance, self-rejection, or belonging from similarly invested Whites.

In order to test for these differences, self-acceptance, self-rejection, and belonging at Time 1 and Time 2 were subjected to 2(race: Black vs. White) X 2(academic investment: low vs. high) analyses of variance. Findings for self-acceptance at Time 1 reveal a main effect for race, with Blacks reporting greater self-acceptance than Whites, $F(1,2045) = 21.18$, $p<.0001$, and a main effect for academic investment, with high invested respondents indicating greater self-acceptance than low invested respondents, $F(1,2045) = 39.17$, $p<.0001$. An interaction also emerged between race and academic investment, $F(1,2045) = 10.05$, $p<.003$ (see Figure 3.1).
Figure 3.1: Race by academic investment interaction for self-acceptance at Time 1 (YR).

Simple effects analyses revealed that low academically invested Whites reported less self-acceptance than low academically invested Blacks, $F(1,764) = 30.86$, $p<.0001$. No differences emerged among the high invested respondents, $F(1,1281) = 2.45$, $p>10$.

Findings for self-acceptance at Time 2 revealed a similar pattern as self-acceptance at Time 1, however, no interactions emerged between race and academic investment, $F(1,1754) = .47$, $p>.40$. A main effect did emerge for race, with Blacks reporting more self-acceptance than Whites, $F(1,1754) = 21.94$, $p<.0001$. An effect also emerged for academic investment, with high invested respondents reporting more self-acceptance than low invested respondents, $F(1,1754) = 31.65$, $p<.0001$. Simple effects analyses revealed that both low and high invested Blacks reported significantly more self-acceptance than either low or high invested Whites, respectively, $F$’s $> 12.84$, $p$’s $<.0001$.

Findings from self-rejection at Time 1 revealed no main effect for race, $F(1,2045) = 1.26$, $p>.20$, but a main effect for academic investment, with low invested respondents reporting more self-rejection than those who were highly invested in academics, $F(1,2045)$
= 38.39, p<.0001. No interactions emerged, F(1,2045) = .140, p>.70. Simple effects analyses revealed that both low and high invested Blacks did not differ from their low or high academically invested White counterparts in feelings of self-rejection, F's < .40, p's>.50. At Time 2, results showed a main effect for race, with Blacks reporting more self-rejection than Whites, F(1,1754) = 4.11, p<.044, and a main effect for academic investment, with low invested respondents reporting more self-rejection than those who were highly invested in academics, F(1,1754) = 16.44, p<.0001. Again, no interactions emerged, F(1,1754) = .76, p>.30. Similar to self-rejection at Time 1, simple effects analyses revealed that both low and high invested Blacks did not differ from their White counterparts in feelings of self-rejection, F's < 2.60, p's>.10.

Finally, the findings from belonging revealed a similar pattern across Time 1 and Time 2. Specifically, a main effect for academic investment was found, with high invested respondents reporting greater belonging than those who were less invested in academics, F's > 21.90, p's<.0001. However, no effects for race emerged, F's< 3.61, p's>.06, and no interactions emerged, F's< 1.39, p>.20. Simple effects analyses revealed no differences between low, or high invested respondents across Time 1, F's< 3.14, p's>.07, or Time 2, F's< 1.92, p>.10. These findings indicate that although low academically invested African-Americans and Whites do not differ in their negative self-feelings, or in their feelings of belonging, African-Americans who are less invested in academics are more likely to feel positively about themselves, despite their relative standing in school.

To explore the hypothesis that low academically invested Blacks are more delinquent than either high invested Blacks or low or high invested Whites, delinquent involvement at Time 1 and Time 2 was subjected to 2(race: Black vs. White) X 2(academic investment: low vs. High) ANOVA. Analyses revealed that at Time 1 a main effect for academic investment emerged, such that those who were highly invested were less involved in delinquency than those uninvested in academics, F(1,1897) = 35.69, p<.0001.
No effect emerged for race, $F(1,1897) = .25, \ p > .60$, and no interactions emerged, $(F(1, 1897) = .01, \ p > .90)$. At Time 2, a main effect for academic investment emerged, with respondents who were highly invested reporting less involvement in delinquency than those who were less invested, $F(1,1595) = 41.51, \ p < .0001$. A main effect also emerged for race, with Blacks reporting more delinquent involvement than Whites, $F(1,1595) = 8.90, \ p < .004$. More importantly however, an interaction emerged between race and academic investment, such that low invested Blacks reported higher delinquent involvement than the other three groups, $F(1,1595) = 5.27, \ p < .03$ (See Figure 3.2).

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

Figure 3.2: Race by academic investment interaction for delinquency at Time 2 (YRT).

Simple effects analyses revealed that low invested Blacks reported more delinquent involvement than low invested Whites, $F(1,555) = 8.12, \ p < .006$, whereas no differences were identified for high invested Blacks and Whites.

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3 Previous research has shown that Blacks and Whites often do not differ on self-reported measures of delinquency (Farrington, 1987). This failure to find a difference may stem from under-reporting of delinquency, particularly among Blacks (Hindelang, Hirschi, & Weis, 1981), lack of adequate representation by delinquents in self-reported studies (Farrington, 1987; Hindelang et al., 1981), or impression management due to experimenter-respondent ethnic differences (Byrner et al., 1981; Wells, 1989).
emerged between highly invested Whites and Blacks, $F(1,1040) = .02$, $p>.80$. These findings indicate that African-Americans who are less invested in academics are more likely than either high invested African-Americans, or low or high invested Whites to be involved in delinquent activities.

**INTER-ITEM CORRELATIONS**

The inter-item correlations for all variable pairs are reported in Appendix B.

**Low Academically Invested Whites**

The correlation matrix revealed that self-acceptance and belonging were negatively correlated with self-rejection and delinquency, while positively correlated with each other, with school identification and performance. This pattern was consistent from Time 1 to Time 2. Self-rejection, on the other hand was negatively correlated with school identification, and academic performance, but positively correlated with delinquency across Time 1 and Time 2. School identification at Time 1 was positively correlated with academic performance at Time 2, and negatively correlated with delinquency at Time 1 and 2. Performance at Time 1 did not correlate with any of the major variables at Time 2, although performance at Time 2 was negatively correlated with delinquency at Time 2. Delinquent involvement at Time 1 was negatively correlated at Time 2 with self-acceptance, belonging, school identification, and performance, but positively correlated with self-rejection.

**High Academically Invested Whites**

Similar to the pattern among low academically invested Whites, self-acceptance, belonging, and school identification at Time 1 generally show negative relationships with self-rejection and delinquency, but positive relationships with each other and academic
performance. This occurred whether the variables were measured at Time 1 or Time 2. Self-rejection at Time 1 was negatively correlated with performance, and positively correlated with delinquency. These patterns were consistent from Time 1 to Time 2. Performance at Time 1 was unrelated to any of the variables at Time 2. Delinquency at Time 1 was negatively correlated with all of the variables at Time 2, except for self-rejection with which there was a positive relationship.

**Low Academically Invested African-Americans**

The pattern of correlations among low invested African-Americans appears somewhat inconsistent with expectations. For example, self-acceptance at Time 1 is positively correlated with self-rejection and academic performance at Time 1. No other correlations with this variable were significant. Self-rejection is negatively correlated with belonging both at Times 1 and 2, and is also negatively correlated with school identification, but only at Time 1. Self-rejection is positively correlated with delinquency, but only when they are both measured at the same time intervals. Belonging at Time 1 shows a positive relationship with school identification, and a negative relationship with delinquency both at Time 1 and Time 2. School identification at Time 1 is positively correlated with academic performance at Time 2, and is negatively correlated with delinquency at Time 2. Similar to low and high academically invested Whites, academic performance at Time 1 is not significantly correlated with any of the variables at Time 2. In support of the hypothesis that delinquency will be affirming to the self-concepts of low academically invested African-Americans, delinquency at Time 1 was positively related to self-acceptance at Time 2. Delinquency was also positively related to self-rejection at Time 2 indicating that delinquent involvement for low academically invested Blacks is associated with both positive and negative self-conceptions.
High Academically Invested African-Americans

Self-acceptance and belonging at Time 1 were positively correlated with school identification, and negatively correlated with delinquency at Times 1 and 2. Self-rejection at Time 1 is negatively correlated with belonging at Times 1 and 2, and school identification at Time 1, but positively correlated with delinquency at Times 1 and 2. School identification at Time 1 is negatively correlated with delinquency at Times 1 and 2. Academic performance at Time 1 is negatively associated with self-rejection at Time 2, and delinquency at Time 1 is negatively associated with academic performance at Time 2.

The Relationship Between Academic Performance and the Self-Concept

These above findings represent the general pattern of relationships for Whites and Blacks as a function of how invested they are in school. To further examine the hypothesis that low academically invested African-Americans would show the strongest evidence of disidentification, inter-item correlations were examined for the relationship between academic performance and self-esteem and belonging. Specifically, relationships between academic performance at Time 1 and self-acceptance, self-rejection, and belonging at Time 2 were examined for all groups. Findings revealed that academic performance at Time 1 had a small but positive correlation with self-acceptance at Time 2 for high academically invested Whites. Academic performance also was negatively correlated with self-rejection at Time 2 for high invested Blacks. Surprisingly, academic performance was not significantly correlated with belonging among these groups either at Time 1 or Time 2. These findings suggest that at least among high academically invested individuals the self-concept is in part affected by how well they perform in school. These relationships did not emerge for low invested Whites or Blacks, suggesting that for both of these groups academic performance is more detached from their self-concepts. These data do not
provide support for the hypothesis that low invested African-Americans will be more disidentified than all other groups.

**PATH ANALYSES**

According to hypotheses, low academically invested African-Americans are the only group expected to exhibit a positive relationship between delinquency at Time 1 and self-acceptance and belonging at Time 2. This hypothesis suggests that race, academic investment, and delinquency should interact to affect the self-concept. To test for this interaction, race, academic investment, and delinquency, as well as the interactions among these variables were entered into regression equations predicting self-acceptance and belonging at Time 2. Analyses predicting self-acceptance at Time 2 revealed that the three-way interaction between race, academic investment, and delinquency was significant, beta = -.088, p<.003. To assess whether the interaction reflected the hypothesized pattern, regression slopes were plotted for each of the groups (see Appendix C for formula used to plot regression slopes). As can be seen in Figure 3.3, low academically invested African-Americans were the only group to show a positive slope between delinquency at Time 1 and self-acceptance at Time 2. All other groups either showed no relationship or a negative relationship between delinquency at Time 1 and self-acceptance at Time 2.
Analyses predicting belonging at Time 2 revealed that the three-way interaction between race, academic investment, and delinquency was not significant, $\beta = .005$, $p > .80$. Findings also showed that none of the two-way interactions were significant ($p's > .30$) indicating that race, academic investment, and delinquency do not interact to affect belonging.

The next step in the analyses was to examine the pattern of these relationships separately for the four groups. All of the primary variables at Time 1 were simultaneously entered into regression equations predicting these same variables at Time 2. Thus, this analysis examines predictive effects of each variable on all other variables, while controlling for initial levels of all variables.
To illustrate the findings from the regression analyses, path diagrams were created for all groups. Path coefficients are presented as beta weights to indicate the direct effects of Time 1 predictor variables on Time 2 outcomes. For simplicity, only significant pathways are reported in the models.

According to the primary hypothesis, low invested Blacks should be more likely than either high invested Blacks, or low or high invested Whites to experience affirmation from delinquency. Consistent with this prediction analyses revealed that delinquent involvement at Time 1 was positively related to self-acceptance at Time 2 for low academically invested African-Americans (see Figure 3.4).

![Path diagram](image)

**Figure 3.4.** Path analysis predicting self-acceptance, self-rejection, belonging, school identification, academic performance, and delinquency at Time 2 by Time 1 counterparts for low academically invested Black youths only (N=71), **** p <.0001, *** p <.001, ** p <.01, * p <.05 (YIT).

Contrary to expectations, however, delinquent involvement did not predict feelings of belonging at Time 2. Belonging at Time 1 did, however, show a strong negative effect on
delinquency at Time 2. In addition, academic performance at Time 1 did not predict any of the variables at Time 2, suggesting a dissociation between academic performance and the self-concept. Somewhat surprisingly, several of the Time 1 variables did not predict significant variance in their Time 2 counterparts.

Among African-Americans who are highly invested in academics, path analyses revealed that academic performance at Time 1 was negatively related to self-rejection and delinquency at Time 2 (See Figure 3.5).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 3.5. Path analysis predicting self-acceptance, self-rejection, belonging, school identification, academic performance, and delinquency at Time 2 by Time 1 counterparts for high academically invested Black youths only (N=74), *** p <.001, ** p <.01, * p <.05. (YIT).

Findings also showed that belonging at Time 1 was positively related to school identification. Delinquency at Time 1, in turn, was negatively related to academic
performance at Time 2. Delinquency was not associated with self-acceptance among this group (\( \beta = -.03, p > .80 \)).

Path analyses for low academically invested Whites revealed that academic performance was positively related to belonging, while school identification positively predicted academic performance and self-acceptance at Time 2 (See Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. Path analysis predicting self-acceptance, self-rejection, belonging, school identification, academic performance, and delinquency at Time 2 by Time 1 counterparts for low academically invested White youths only (\( N = 711 \)), **** \( p < .0001 \), *** \( p < .001 \), ** \( p < .01 \), * \( p < .05 \).

Findings also revealed that among low academically invested Whites, self-rejection at Time 1 negatively predicted academic performance at Time 2. Delinquency was not associated with self-acceptance among this group (\( \beta = -.01, p > .70 \)).
Among Whites who are highly invested in academics, self-acceptance at Time 1 positively predicted school identification and academic performance at Time 2 (see Figure 3.7). Academic performance at Time 1, in turn, negatively predicted feelings of belonging, while delinquent involvement at Time 1 negatively predicted school identification. Self-rejection at Time 1 negatively predicted both self-acceptance and feelings of belonging.

Figure 3.7. Path analysis predicting self-acceptance, self-rejection, belonging, school identification, academic performance, and delinquency at Time 2 by Time 1 counterparts for high academically invested White youths only (N=754), **** p <.0001, *** p <.001, ** p <.01, * p <.05.(YIT).

Belonging at Time 1 was negatively associated with self-rejection at Time 2. Finally, among high invested Whites, delinquency was not associated with self-acceptance (beta=.00, p>.90).
These findings from the path analyses indicate that the only group to experience delinquent activities as self-affirming was the low academically invested African-Americans. Furthermore, the path analyses indicated that academic performance did not influence self-acceptance, self-rejection, feelings of belonging, or school identification among this group. These findings suggest that for this group, school performance is detached from their self-concepts. In other words, low academically invested African-Americans appear to be disidentified. All other groups showed some evidence that academic performance, or at least school identification, either enhanced feelings of self-acceptance or belonging, or negatively predicted feelings of rejection. Thus, the findings from Study 1 provide support for the hypothesis that low academically invested African-Americans are particularly likely to be academically disidentified, and consequently their involvement in delinquent activities is affirming to their self-concepts. This affirmation only manifested itself in feelings of self-acceptance, however, as feelings of belonging were dissociated from delinquency and were found to be the lowest among this group both at Time 1 and Time 2.

The goal of Study 2 was to replicate the patterns of affirmation and disidentification found in Study 1. In Study 2, however, evidence for the affirming role of delinquency was sought with feelings of belonging as the primary indicator of the self concept. Upon examination of the items making up the belonging scale in Study 1, it seems possible that the measure may not have fully achieved the operational definition of belonging. Rather, this “belonging” scale may have reflected the absence of societal alienation and hopelessness.

In Study 2, belonging was defined by the extent to which respondents felt a sense of connectedness and importance among their friends, family, and noted others at school.4

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4 Affiliation with individuals at school is assumed to be conceptually distinct from academic investment, as juveniles may be drawn to certain people while in school despite the fact that they are disidentified with their academic performance.
To the extent that this measure is more sensitive to the type of motives that affirm delinquent juveniles, Study 2 will attempt to extend the findings of Study 1 by testing the hypothesis that delinquent involvement should be more likely to affirm the feelings of belonging of low academically invested African-Americans than all other groups.

An additional variable in Study 2 asked respondents to report their delinquent attitudes. Previous research has demonstrated that delinquent attitudes mediate the relationship between self-rejection and delinquency (Kaplan et al., 1986a). Thus, those who experience more negative self-attitudes may be more likely to endorse delinquent attitudes. Because low academically invested African-Americans were expected to encounter the most threatening experiences in normative domains, it was hypothesized that they would show more delinquent attitudes than either high academically invested African-Americans, or low or high academically invested Whites.
CHAPTER 4

STUDY 2

METHODS

SAMPLE

Data for study 2 was obtained from the National Youth Survey (NYS) (Elliot, Huizinga, & Age ton, 1985). This multiwave longitudinal study surveyed a national sample of U.S. households and was first administered in 1976, followed by a second administration in 1977. Of the 1722, 1361 were White and 260 were Black, ages ranged from 11 to 17, and respondents were both male and female. Participants were interviewed along with one of their parents or a legal guardian and asked to self report about a variety of events that happened in the prior year. Information included, but was not limited to, academic performance, school identification, belonging, delinquent attitudes, and the frequency of delinquent acts (see Appendix A). Analyses are limited to the first two waves.

Belonging

Because of changes in the questions asked across successive waves of the survey, belonging is a 16-item index at Time 1, and a 15-item index at Time 2. The items reflect respondents’ sense of affiliation with significant others. Examples included “Nobody at school cares”, “I don’t fit well with friends”, and “Feel lonely at school”(Cronbach’s Alpha=.80 at Time 1, Alpha=.82 at Time 2).
School Identification

School identification at Time 1 is a 10-item index, while at Time 2 it is a 5-item index reflecting respondents' attitudes toward school (e.g., “How important has school work been”, “How important is going to college”) (Cronbach’s Alpha=.72 at Time 1, Alpha=.74 at Time 2).

Academic Performance

Academic performance at Time 1 is represented by an 8-item index, while at Time 2 it is a 6-item index indicating respondents' level of performance in school (e.g., “Respondents’ grade point average”, “How are you doing at completing your school work without any help”, and “How are you doing at having your teachers think of you as a good student”) (Cronbach’s Alpha=.73 at Time 1, Alpha=.76 at Time 2).

Academic Investment

Academic investment is an 18-item index combining respondents' past academic performance and school identification at Time 1. As in Study 1, this index was measured separately for Whites (Cronbach’s Alpha=.76) and Blacks (Cronbach’s Alpha=.72) and was dichotomized by performing a median split separately for each of the sub-samples.\(^5\)

Delinquent Attitudes

Delinquent attitudes at Time 1 is a 12-item index, while at Time 2 it is a 9-item index reflecting the extent to which respondents hold favorable attitudes toward delinquent activities (e.g., “Attitudes towards cheating on school test”, and “Attitudes toward hitting someone”) (Cronbach’s Alpha=.83 at Time 1, Alpha=.89 at Time 2).

\(^5\) Similar to Study 1, academic investment was correlated with socioeconomic status (SES) to determine the degree of relatedness (see Appendix A for items measuring SES). Analyses revealed that the correlation between academic investment and SES was significant for Whites ($r=.153$, $p<.001$), but not for Blacks ($r=-.005$, $p>.90$). Like Study 1, these findings suggest that academic investment is distinct from SES.
Delinquency

Delinquency at Time 1 represents a 12-item index, while at Time 2 it is a 9-item index reflecting the frequency with which respondents performed various acts of delinquent behavior (e.g., "Rate at which respondent carried a hidden weapon", "attacked someone", or "sold hard drugs") (Cronbach’s Alpha=.73 at Time 1, Alpha=.73 at Time 2).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Analyses

Similar to Study 1 analyses were conducted in three parts: ANOVAs, inter-item correlations, and simultaneous regressions using path models to illustrate relationships among variables.

ANOVARs

To examine whether differences in belonging, school identification, delinquent attitudes, academic performance, and delinquency emerged among the four invested groups, all variables were subjected to an analysis of variance. The means and standard deviations, as well as the significance levels are presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, low invested Whites differed from high invested Whites on every variable. As expected, those respondents who were highly invested in academics were more likely to belong and be identified with school. Highly invested Whites were also expected to be less likely to have delinquent attitudes and be involved in delinquent activities than their low invested counterparts. These findings were consistent across Time 1 and Time 2.6

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6 It should be noted that differences in effect sizes at Time 1 and Time 2 may be a function of the different items that make up the indices across time and not the effect of time itself.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables At Time 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Low Academic Investment Whites (LIW)</th>
<th>High Academic Investment Whites (HIW)</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belong at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 3.75 SD = .461 N = 671</td>
<td>Mean = 3.97 SD = .424 N = 687</td>
<td>98.03</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 3.86 SD = .406 N = 643</td>
<td>Mean = 4.08 SD = .443 N = 668</td>
<td>83.79</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquent Attitude Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 1.66 SD = .503 N = 671</td>
<td>Mean = 1.39 SD = .373 N = 687</td>
<td>129.10</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquent Attitude Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 1.78 SD = .565 N = 643</td>
<td>Mean = 1.52 SD = .456 N = 668</td>
<td>81.26</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 3.19 SD = .476 N = 671</td>
<td>Mean = 3.97 SD = .464 N = 687</td>
<td>937.80</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 3.19 SD = .660 N = 639</td>
<td>Mean = 3.79 SD = .674 N = 667</td>
<td>269.32</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean = 1.14 SD = .281 N = 671</td>
<td>Mean = 1.04 SD = .155 N = 687</td>
<td>57.70</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean = 1.11 SD = .337 N = 643</td>
<td>Mean = 1.05 SD = .210 N = 668</td>
<td>17.62</td>
<td>p &lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Mean differences of primary variables for high and low academically invested whites (NYS).
The results for Black sample generally produced the same pattern of significant
differences seen with Whites. The only difference of interest among this group was that
they did not differ in delinquent involvement at Time 2 (see Table 4.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables At Time 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Low Academic Investment Blacks (LIB)</th>
<th>High Academic Investment Blacks (HIB)</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belong at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =3.50 SD=.492 N=130</td>
<td>Mean =3.77 SD=.498 N=129</td>
<td>13.68</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belong at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =3.73 SD=.454 N=123</td>
<td>Mean =3.85 SD=.470 N=119</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>p&lt;.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquent Attitude Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =1.62 SD=.436 N=130</td>
<td>Mean =1.34 SD=.346 N=129</td>
<td>34.40</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquent Attitude Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =1.64 SD=.451 N=123</td>
<td>Mean =1.42 SD=.434 N=119</td>
<td>14.68</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =3.16 SD=.449 N=130</td>
<td>Mean =3.97 SD=.456 N=129</td>
<td>205.99</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =3.26 SD=.701 N=122</td>
<td>Mean =3.83 SD=.644 N=118</td>
<td>44.17</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 1</td>
<td>Mean =1.16 SD=.341 N=130</td>
<td>Mean =1.05 SD=.107 N=129</td>
<td>12.56</td>
<td>p&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency at Time 2</td>
<td>Mean =1.11 SD=.261 N=123</td>
<td>Mean =1.08 SD=.370 N=119</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>p&lt;.375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Mean differences of primary variables for high and low academically invested Blacks (NYS).

Analysis of the differences between Whites and Blacks revealed some unexpected
findings. For example, in contrast to the findings from Study 1, Blacks and Whites did not
report differences on the overall performance measure either at Time 1, $F(1,1617) = .18,$ p>.60, or Time 2, $F(1,1550) = .61,$ p<.40. Differences did emerge, however, when examining the respondents’ grade point average only, with Whites reporting a higher GPA
than Blacks at Time 1, $F(1,1610) = 12.15$, $p<.002$, and at Time 2, $F(1,1545) = 13.09$, $p<.0001$. Contrary to the differences in GPA, African-Americans reported greater school identification than Whites, both at Time 1, $F(1,1617) = 24.73$, $p<.0001$, and Time 2, $F(1,1557) = 17.29$, $p<.0001$. African-Americans also reported greater academic investment than Whites, $F(1,1615) = 9.95$, $p<.003$. This finding is in contrast to Study 1 where Whites reported greater investment.

To explore the hypothesis that low academically invested African-Americans would endorse more delinquent attitudes than the other three academically invested groups, delinquent attitudes at Time 1 and Time 2 were subjected to a 2(race: Black vs. White) X 2(academic investment: low vs. High) analysis of variance. Analyses revealed that at Time 1 a main effect emerged for academic investment, such that low academically invested respondents reported more delinquent attitudes than those who were highly invested, $F(1, 1613) = 128.40$, $p<.0001$. No effect emerged for race, $F(1, 1613) = 2.42$, $p>.10$, and no interactions emerged, $F(1, 1613) = .49$, $p>.40$. At Time 2, a similar main effect emerged with academic investment, $F(1, 1549) = 68.09$, $p<.0001$, with low invested respondents reporting more delinquent attitudes. A main effect for race also emerged with Whites reporting more delinquent attitudes than Blacks, $F(1, 1549) = 11.03$, $p<.0001$. No interactions emerged, $F(1, 1549) = .00$, $p>.90$. These results do not indicate, however, whether low invested Blacks would report more delinquent attitudes than similarly invested Whites.

To investigate these differences, delinquent attitudes at Time 1 and Time 2 were subjected to simple effects analyses. Findings revealed that no significant differences emerged between the two low invested groups in their delinquent attitudes either at Time 1, $F(1,945) = .00$, $p>.90$, or Time 2, $F(1,907) = 3.40$, $p<.07$. Differences did emerge, however, between the two high invested groups, with high academically invested Whites
reporting more delinquent attitudes than high invested Blacks, $F(1,642) = 4.67$, $p < .04$. These findings do not offer support for the hypothesis, but they do indicate that delinquent attitudes will be more strongly endorsed the less invested individuals are with academics.

It was also hypothesized that low academically invested African-Americans would show the strongest evidence of disidentification with academics via their feelings of belonging. However, it was shown earlier that low invested African-Americans report lower levels of belonging than high invested African-Americans both at Time 1 and Time 2. This finding does not support the hypothesis because it suggests that those who are less invested in academics are also less likely to belong (Tables 4.1 and 4.2). An examination of racial and academic investment differences in belonging at Time 1 and Time 2 confirm this impression. Specifically, a 2(race: Black vs. White) X 2(academic investment: low vs. High) analysis of variance at Time 1 revealed a main effect for race with African-Americans reporting significantly lower levels of belonging than Whites, $F(1,1613) = 51.34$, $p < .0001$, and a main effect for academic investment, with low invested respondents reporting less belonging than high invested respondents, $F(1,1613) = 105.92$, $p < .0001$. No interactions were found, $F(1,1613) = .01$, $p > .05$. At Time 2, the same pattern of results emerged, with a main effect for race, $F(1,1549) = 37.68$, $p < .0001$, and a main effect for academic investment, $F(1,1549) = 81.01$, $p < .0001$. Again, no interactions emerged, $F(1,1549) = 2.32$, $p > .10$.

To explore the hypothesis that low academically invested Blacks are more delinquent than either high invested Blacks or low or high invested Whites, delinquent involvement at Time 1 and Time 2 were subjected to 2(race: Black vs. White) X 2(academic investment: low vs. High) ANOVAs. Analyses revealed that at Time 1 a main effect for academic investment emerged, such that those who were highly invested were less
involved in delinquency than those who were uninvolved in academics, $F(1, 1613) = 53.34$, $p < .0001$. No main effect emerged for race, $F(1, 1613) = 1.00$, $p > .30$, and no interactions emerged, $(F(1, 1613) = .95$, $p > .30$. At Time 2, the same pattern emerged, with highly invested respondents reporting less involvement in delinquency than academically uninvolved respondents, $F(1, 1549) = 19.33$, $p < .0001$. Moreover, no effect occurred for race, $F(1, 1549) = .64$, $p > .42$, and no interactions emerged, $F(1, 1549) = .71$, $p < .39$. Simple effects analyses revealed that low invested Blacks reported being no more involved in delinquent activities than low invested Whites, either at Time 1, $F(1, 945) = 2.15$, $p > .10$, or at Time 2, $F(1, 907) = .03$, $p > .85$.

**INTER-ITEM CORRELATIONS**

The inter-item correlations for all variable pairs, both at Time 1 and Time 2, are in Appendix B.

**Low Academically Invested Whites**

The correlation matrix revealed that belonging was positively correlated with school identification and academic performance, while negatively correlated with delinquent attitudes and delinquency. This pattern was consistent from Time 1 to Time 2. School identification was negatively correlated with delinquent attitudes and delinquency, but positively correlated with performance, across Time 1 and Time 2. Delinquent attitudes were positively correlated with delinquency both at Time 1 and Time 2, yet generally uncorrelated with academic performance except when they both were measured at Time 2. Delinquent involvement was negatively correlated with performance when measured simultaneously, and performance at Time 1 was negatively correlated with delinquency at Time 2.
High Academically Invested Whites

Among high academically invested Whites, belonging at Time 1 was positively associated with school identification and academic performance, and negatively associated with delinquent attitudes and delinquency. This generally occurred whether the variables were measured at Time 1 or Time 2. School identification was negatively correlated with delinquent attitudes and delinquency. Surprisingly, school identification was not consistently correlated with academic performance. Delinquent attitudes were positively correlated with delinquency both at Time 1 and Time 2. Delinquency was negatively correlated with academic performance both at Time 1 and Time 2. Academic performance at Time 1 showed positive correlations with belonging and school identification only at Time 2.

Low Academically Invested African-Americans

Among low academically invested African-Americans, feelings of belonging at Time 1 were positively correlated with academic performance at Time 1, but were not related to any other variables either at Time 1 or Time 2. School identification at Time 1 was negatively correlated with delinquent attitudes both at Times 1 and 2, and positively related with academic performance at Time 2. Delinquent attitudes at Time 1 were negatively correlated with school identification at Time 1, but not with any of the other variables either at Time 1 or Time 2. In support of the primary hypothesis, delinquency at Time 1 shows a positive relationship with belonging at Time 2. Delinquency at Time 1 is also positively correlated with delinquent attitudes at Time 2, and negatively correlated with academic performance at Time 2. Academic performance at Time 1 is not significantly correlated with any of the other variables either at Time 1 or Time 2.
High Academically Invested African-Americans

The pattern of correlations among high academically invested African-Americans revealed that belonging at Time 1 was positively correlated with school identification and academic performance at Time 1 only, but not related to any other variable. School identification shows a similar pattern of weak and inconsistent relationships. For example, school identification at Time 1 was negatively correlated with academic performance at Time 1, but these variables were positively correlated when measure at Time 2. School identification was also negatively correlated with delinquent attitudes when both were measured at Time 2. Delinquent attitudes were positively correlated with delinquency and negatively correlated with academic performance but only when they were measured simultaneously. Delinquency was negatively related with performance when both were measured at Time 2. Academic performance at Time 1 was positively correlated with belonging at Time 2.

The Relationship Between Academic Performance and Belonging

To examine the hypothesis that low academically invested African-Americans would show the strongest evidence of disidentification, inter-item correlations were examined for the relationship between academic performance and belonging. Specifically, relationships between academic performance at Time 1 and feelings of belonging at Time 2 were examined for each invested group. Findings revealed that academic performance was positively correlated with belonging at Time 2 for low and high academically invested Whites, and high academically invested Blacks. In contrast, no relationship emerged for low academically invested African-Americans (see Table 4.3). In contrast to the ANOVA approach to disidentification, these data provide support for the hypothesis that low invested African-Americans are more disidentified than all other groups.
Table 4.3: Inter-item correlations between academic performance at Time 1 and feelings of belonging at Time 2 for low academically invested Whites (LIW), high academically invested Whites (HIW), low academically invested Blacks (LIB), and high academically invested Blacks (HIB) (NYS).

**PATH ANALYSES**

According to hypotheses, low academically invested African-Americans are the only group expected to exhibit a positive relationship between delinquency at Time 1 and belonging at Time 2. Similar to Study 1, this suggests that race, academic investment, and delinquency should interact to affect the self-concept. To test for this interaction, race, academic investment, and delinquency, as well as the interactions among these variables were entered into a regression equation predicting belonging. Analyses revealed that the three way interaction between race, academic investment, and delinquency did not reach statistical significance, $\beta = .002, p>.90$. When the two-way interactions were examined (without the three-way interaction in the equation; see Cohen & Cohen, 1975), however, significant interactions were found between race and delinquency, and between investment and delinquency ($\beta = .066, p<.04$, $\beta = -.095, p<.0004$, respectively). Examination of the regression slopes for each group suggests that race and academic investment operate additively to affect feelings of belonging. As can be seen in Figure 4.1 low academically invested African-Americans showed a positive relationship between delinquency at Time 1
and belonging at Time 2. All other groups either showed no relationship or a negative relationship between delinquency at Time 1 and belonging at Time 2.\(^7\)

![Graph showing relationships between delinquency and belonging](image)

**Figure 4.1:** Regression slopes for low and high academically invested Whites and Blacks (NYS).

These findings support a weaker version of the hypothesis. It seems that low academically invested African-Americans differ from the other groups not because there is something unique about the combined effects of race and investment, but rather because race and academic investment produce independent effects. Nevertheless, it is only low academically invested African-Americans who showed a positive relationship between

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\(^7\) Since Study 2 contains both males and females, regression analyses were also conducted to examine the interactive effects of gender. Findings revealed that the 4-way interaction between gender, race, academic investment, and delinquency was not significant (\(\beta = .031, p > .40\)). A 3-way interaction, between gender, academic investment, and delinquency, however, was significant (\(\beta = -.095, p < .007\)). No other interactions with gender were significant.
delinquency at Time 1 and belonging at Time 2. The only group that appears to differ from Study 1 is the high academically invested Whites, who showed a negative relationship between delinquency and belonging, whereas in Study 1 there was no relationship between these variables in this sub-sample.

The next step in the analyses was to examine the pattern of these relationships separately for the four groups. The primary variables at Time 1 (belonging, school identification, delinquent attitudes, academic performance, and delinquency) were simultaneously entered into regression equations predicting these same variables at Time 2. As in Study 1, path coefficients are presented as beta weights to indicate the direct effects of Time 1 predictor variables on Time 2 outcomes. Only significant pathways are reported in the models.

According to the primary hypothesis, low academically invested African-Americans should be more likely than either high academically invested African-Americans, or low or high invested Whites to experience affirmation from delinquent involvement. Consistent with hypotheses, path analyses revealed that among low invested African-Americans, delinquent involvement at Time 1 was positively related to feelings of belonging at Time 2 (see Figure 4.2).
Figure 4.2. Path analysis predicting belonging, school identification, delinquent attitudes, academic performance, and delinquency at Time 2 by Time 1 counterparts for low academically invested Black youths only (N=123). **** p < .0001, *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05 (NYS).

Delinquent involvement at Time 1 was also positively related to delinquent attitudes and negatively related to academic performance at Time 2. School identification at Time 1 was positively related to academic performance and negatively related to delinquent attitudes at Time 2. Similar to the findings of Study 1, academic performance at Time 1 did not predict any of the variables at Time 2, indicating that academic performance does not influence the feelings and attitudes of low invested African-Americans. It is also important to note that belonging at Time 1 was positively related to delinquent attitudes at Time 2.

Among African-Americans who are highly invested in academics, path analyses revealed that delinquency at Time 1 was positively related to delinquent attitudes at Time 2 (See Figure 4.3). Academic performance at Time 1 was not positively related with either
feelings of belonging or school identification at Time 2, suggesting that like their low
invested counterparts, high academically invested African-Americans are somewhat
unaffected by how they perform in school. Delinquency at Time 1 was not associated with
belonging at Time 2 among this group (beta=-.01, p>.80).

![Path diagram](image)

Figure 4.3. Path analysis predicting belonging, school identification, delinquent attitudes,
academic performance, and delinquency at Time 2 by Time 1 counterparts for high
academically invested Black youths only (N=119), **** p <.0001, *** p <.001, ** p
<.01, * p <.05 (NYS).

Among low academically invested Whites, path analyses revealed that belonging
and school identification at Time 1 were positively related to academic performance at Time
2. School identification at Time 1 was also negatively related to delinquent attitudes at
Time 2. Delinquent attitudes at Time 1, in contrast, were negatively associated with
feelings of belonging at Time 2. Academic performance at Time 1 was positively related to
school identification at Time 2, while delinquency at Time 1 positively predicted delinquent
attitudes at Time 2 (See Figure 4.4). Delinquency at Time 1 was not associated with belonging at Time 2 among this group (β = -.04, p > .10).

![Path diagram](image)

**Figure 4.4.** Path analysis predicting belonging, school identification, delinquent attitudes, academic performance, and delinquency at Time 2 by Time 1 counterparts for low academically invested White youths only (N=643), **** p < .0001, *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05 (NYS).

Among Whites who are highly invested in academics, school identification at Time 1 negatively predicted delinquency at Time 2. Surprisingly, school identification at Time 1 also showed a small positive relationship with delinquent attitudes at Time 2 (see Figure 4.5).
Academic performance at Time 1 was positively related with school identification at Time 2, while delinquent involvement at Time 1 was positively related to delinquent attitudes at Time 2, and negatively associated with school identification and performance at Time 2. Delinquency at Time 1 was not associated with belonging at Time 2 among this group (beta=-.03, p>.30).

The findings from the path analyses confirm the hypothesis that low academically invested African-Americans were the only group to find delinquent activities affirming to their feelings of belonging. Furthermore, the path analyses indicated that academic performance did not influence feelings of belonging or school identification among this group, suggesting that performance in school is also unrelated to how connected they feel to their friends, family, even people at school. In other words, when African-Americans
are uninvested in academics, how well they perform in school does not appear to influence their associations with other people. Surprisingly, this also appears to be the case for high invested African-Americans. Low and high invested Whites, on the other hand, showed some evidence that academic performance was at least positively associated with their sense of school identification. Low invested Whites even showed a positive relationship between their feelings of belonging at Time 1 and their academic performance at Time 2, suggesting that feelings of belonging lead to improved performance.

The results from Study 2 provide support for the hypothesis that low academically invested African-Americans become disidentified with school and as a consequence find a sense of affirmation from delinquent involvement. Contrary to hypotheses, however, low invested Blacks were no more involved in delinquent activities, and were no more likely to endorse delinquent attitudes than low invested Whites. Furthermore, and also contrary to the hypotheses, high invested Blacks showed the same dissociation as low invested Blacks between school performance and the self-concept, suggesting that they too may be disidentified.

In summary, the results from Study 2 extend the findings of Study 1 by showing that in addition to enhancing feelings of self-acceptance, delinquent involvement may also enable low academically invested African-Americans to feel like they belong. Study 2 provided contrary evidence to Study 1, however, in its failure to find evidence that low invested Blacks were more delinquent and more disidentified than all other groups.
CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this investigation was to examine the conditions under which participation in delinquent activities would affirm the self-concept. This idea that involvement in delinquency could affirm the self-concept originated from past research which showed that the relationship between delinquency and the self-concept was at times positive (e.g., Bynner, et al., 1981; Rosenberg et al., 1989). The early view concerning these discoveries was that a positive relationship between delinquency and the self-concept was either spurious (e.g., Berg, 1971; Vanderpool, 1969), or only likely among obscure populations (Wells & Rankin, 1983). Furthermore, the idea that delinquency could affect the self existed in a climate in which the relationship between delinquency and the self-concept was presumed to be uniformly negative (Mead, 1934; Rosenberg & Rosenberg, 1978; Schur, 1971). The findings presented in this manuscript challenge these early views by revealing that among low academically invested African-Americans, delinquent involvement can positively affected the self-concept. The discovery that race and academic achievement moderates the valence of the relationship between delinquency and the self-concept hints at the importance of factors that make normative affirmation difficult to achieve. That is, the evidence indicates that the combination of race and academic performance can determine whether individuals will be more likely to pursue normative values, and goals, or whether they will be susceptible to violating those values and goals.
The most important finding in this research was the discovery of a positive relationship between delinquency and self-regard among low academically invested African-Americans. In Study 1, African-Americans who were not invested in their academic experiences showed a positive relationship between delinquency and subsequent self-acceptance. In Study 2, this pattern was repeated, except now delinquency was positively related to belonging. Low academically invested Whites, and high academically invested Whites and Blacks did not show this pattern of delinquency leading to affirmation in either Study 1 or Study 2. In fact, the relationships between delinquency and self-acceptance and belonging for these 3 groups never differed significantly from zero. These findings suggest that the experiences of academically unsuccessful African-American youths cause them to be at greater risk for delinquency than either low academically invested Whites, or high academically invested Whites and Blacks. Obviously such a risk for delinquency can become a serious matter, as juvenile delinquency is highly predictive of criminal activity in adulthood (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1987).

The fact that high academically invested Whites and Blacks do not derive affirmation from delinquent involvement is hardly surprising, but it could be argued that it is somewhat surprising that low academically invested Whites do not. For this latter group, affirmation from academic sources should be very limited because of their poor performance and negative school attitudes. However, the results reveal no significant influence of delinquency on subsequent self-acceptance or belonging among these individuals. These findings are important because they reveal that low academically invested Whites, despite their relative academic standing, still have greater access to conventional sources of self-regard than low invested African-Americans.

It was also hypothesized that low academically invested African-Americans would be more academically disidentified than any of the other 3 groups studied. The findings
related to this hypothesis, however, are somewhat mixed. Study 1 did show evidence that low invested Blacks are more disidentified with school. Low invested Blacks reported levels of self-acceptance that were greater than low academically invested Whites, and did not significantly differ from the low invested Whites in either self-rejection or in belonging. Study 1 also showed that academic performance was unrelated to self-acceptance, self-rejection, or belonging for low invested Blacks. Study 2, however, showed inconsistent results. Inter-item correlations revealed that academic performance was positively related to subsequent belonging for every group except low academically invested African-Americans. However, path analyses revealed that belonging was unaffected by academic performance for both low and high academically invested African-Americans. This discrepancy between the two studies may be due to differences in how the various measures were constructed. It could also be the case that the methods used tap into disidentification were not sensitive enough to detect differences between the groups in Study 2. Nevertheless, the data provide some support for the hypothesis that low academically invested Blacks would be more academically disidentified than any other group. Thus, this research also provides some support for the idea that affirming academic experiences are a deterrent to delinquency. When youths perform well in school, and are invested in the experiences and opportunities that school offers, their self-concepts will reflect those experiences. These youths will feel better about themselves and be motivated to continue their investment in academics because school has proven itself sufficient as an affirming source. Because school is affirming, there is less of a need to pursue alternative sources of affirmation. In this way, successful academic experiences that lead to identification with school can operate as a deterrent to delinquent interests.

Finally, it was also hypothesized that low academically invested African-Americans would report the greatest involvement in delinquent activities. Here too, the results were
mixed. In Study 1, low academically invested Blacks reported more delinquent involvement than any other group. This result did not emerge in Study 2, where low invested African-Americans reported delinquent involvement that did not differ significantly from low academically invested Whites. This discrepancy between Studies 1 and 2 may be partially explained by some of the biases innate to self-reported measures. For example, it has been suggested that a failure to find race differences in self-reported measures could be due to self-report biases (Hindelang et al., 1981), or to the absence of a representative sample of delinquent youth from self-reported studies (Farrington, 1987; Hindelang et al., 1981). If any of these concerns are present in the current investigation then the detection of race differences in delinquency may be difficult. Assuming that the interaction found in Study 1 was not spurious, the findings suggest that low academically invested African-Americans may be the most likely to be involved in delinquent activities. Consistent with the other findings in this research, the basis for this involvement is thought to be self-affirmation. Self-affirmation theory offers clear predictions concerning how individuals respond when they experience chronic threat in a given domain. As noted above, under such circumstances, they should disidentify with the domain by detaching their self-concepts from experiences in that domain. They should then be motivated to look elsewhere for sources of self-regard. If delinquency provides a source of self-regard, and other sources are lacking, delinquent involvement is a likely outcome.

**Extending Previous Theoretical Perspectives on Delinquency**

The present investigation contributes to the study of juvenile delinquency by providing insights into current delinquency theory and by qualifying previous empirical findings. It may also provide a means for integrating previous research into a comprehensive account of the motives underlying juvenile delinquency. The possibility
that delinquency can affirm the self-concept extends the ideas of self-enhancement theory (Kaplan, 1975, 1980), strain theory (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1968), social-control theory (Hirschi, 1969), and differential association theory (Sutherland, 1939).

According to self-enhancement theory, delinquency is a response to self-derogation (Gold & Mann, 1972; Kaplan, 1975, 1980). Negative experiences are thought to contribute to feelings of self-rejection which then motivate individuals toward delinquency. Delinquent involvement in turns affords individuals the opportunity to reject the normative values and standards which contributed to the initial feelings of self-rejection. By being delinquent, individuals may enhance self-regard by justifying the rejection of normative values and goals, and by developing skills that are valued by delinquent others (Kaplan, 1980). Empirical support for this model has revealed that feelings of self-rejection are associated with later delinquency (e.g., Kaplan, 1992; Kaplan, Peck, & Kaplan, 1994). However, support for the enhancing effect of delinquency on the self-concept is not as strong (Arbuthnot et al., 1987). The results of the current study suggest that delinquency can enhance the self-concept, but is particularly likely to do so when individuals have few alternative sources of self-affirmation. Thus, it may be necessary to identify certain moderating variables (e.g., race, academic performance) before the enhancement effect can be reliably detected.

Strain theory argues that antisocial behavior stems from the frustration of being unable to achieve legitimate social or economic success (Merton, 1968). This argument was extended to delinquency research by suggesting that juveniles who feel limited in their access to normative resources will consider non-normative alternatives to achieve (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955). Much of the empirical support for this perspective has examined the deviant tendencies of individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Hamparian, Schuster, Dinitz, & Conrad, 1978; Rosenberg et al., 1989; Singh, Celinski,
& Jaywardene, 1980), and has shown that lower class youth are more delinquent because of their failure to take advantage of the normative resources to achieve. These ideas fit within the framework of self-affirmation as outlined in the current research. The current research suggests that race and academic investment may be as important as socioeconomic status in determining who is likely to seek non-normative sources of self-regard. Nevertheless, future research might extend the current findings by examining whether socioeconomic status also moderates the relationship between race and/or academic investment in determining when juveniles will be affirmed by delinquent involvement.

Social control theory maintains that delinquency is the result of weak ties with conventional sources such as the family, church, or school (Hirschi, 1969; Liska & Reed, 1985). As individuals become more detached from conventional sources, they become free to pursue their own self-interests. Hirschi (1969) believed that this motivation to be deviant does not differ across individuals or groups (Briet & Piliavin, 1965; Durkheim, 1973; Reiss, 1951), but is present in everyone. What does differ, he argued, is the extent to which individuals are bonded to conventional sources. According to the theory, the bonds that individuals develop with conventional sources stem from four factors: attachment, where individuals share a sense of belonging with normative others such as peers, teachers, and parents; commitment, where individuals devote themselves to conventional aspirations such as good performance in school, or a respectable reputation; involvement, which relates to the kind of conventional activities individuals pursue, such as academic, athletics, etc.; and, belief, which refers to how well an individual has internalized conventional norms and values. If these four bonds are strong, then the susceptibility to delinquent influences will be low. If they are fragile, or non-existent, susceptibility to delinquent interests will be high. Empirical support for social control theory has revealed that attachments to family and to school (as measured by grades, educational aspiration, school attitudes, and motivation) decreases the likelihood of
delinquent involvement (Gold, 1970; Farrington, 1973; Matsueda, 1982; Menard & Morse, 1984; Stinchcombe, 1964). This perspective provides a clear connection between identification with normative sources and delinquency. Those who are disidentified with school are likely to be the same individuals who exhibit weak bonds with teachers, school administrators, and students who perform well in their classes. They are also likely to rebuff prodding by parents or other adults to stay in school and get better grades. Thus, research on social control and academic disidentification appear to complement one another in the sense that self-affirmation and disidentification might be the mechanisms that lead some individuals to have strong bonds with conventional sources while others do not.

Differential association theory proposes that juveniles commit delinquent acts because of their affiliations with delinquent others (Sutherland, 1939). From these contacts with delinquent peers, juveniles develop attitudes that are favorable to the initiation and subsequent continuation of delinquent behaviors. Explicit in this theory is the notion that delinquency is a learned behavior comparable to any other behavior that an individual may learn. Thus, differential association theory assumes that delinquents and non-delinquents are driven by the same motives, but they differ in the means they select to achieve their goals. This idea is also present in strain theory (Merton, 1968).

According to the theory of differential association, then, delinquency is born of social interactions with delinquent others. Consistent with this idea, in this investigation I found evidence that delinquency may enhance juveniles’ feelings of belonging with others. Other researchers have noted similar findings by showing that juveniles may use delinquency as a way to manifest courage (Johnstone, 1983). Juveniles may also use delinquency to solicit favorable reactions from their peers (Kaplan et al., 1987), as juveniles who get into trouble are often admired by their peers (Pettigrew, 1964; Ross, 1995). If these findings are correct, then peer influences are an important motivation in delinquency. As individuals strive to affirm their need to belong, they may be motivated to
consider delinquency. The results of the current investigation provide important evidence about who is likely to feel enhanced belonging by engaging in delinquent activities.

Like all theories attempting to explain juvenile delinquency, the self-affirmation explanation of delinquency may be unique to a particular period in adolescence. Given the range of ages for respondents in Study 1 (14-18) and Study 2 (11-17), it is conceivable that the ability to derive affirmation from delinquent behaviors is restricted to adolescence. Respondents who are either pre-adolescent or closer to adulthood may not have shown the positive relationship between delinquency and the self-concept, as there may be factors that are unique to juveniles in this age cohort that make deriving affirmation from delinquency likely. For example, research has shown that adolescents may be more sensitive to issues involving identity formation (Archer, 1982; Waterman, 1982) and affiliation with peers (Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986), suggesting that self acceptance and belonging may be more important for this group. Due to these developmental concerns, failure to exhibit competence in academics, coupled with limited access to other normative sources of affirmation, may have exerted an inordinate pressure on low academically invested African-American adolescents to consider delinquency as a viable source of affirmation. Because pre-adolescents and young adults are encountering different experiences qualitatively than adolescents, the effect of deviance on the self-concept may vary for these groups. Future research should seek to examine the efficacy of self-affirmation theory in explaining non-normative behaviors among pre-adolescents and adults.

Extending Previous Empirical Findings on Self-Enhancement

Findings from this investigation may also provide insight into past delinquency research by extending empirical work on self-enhancement. For example, prior
investigations examining the self-enhancing effects of delinquent behaviors have relied almost exclusively on the enhancing effects on self-esteem (Kaplan, 1975, 1980; Rosenberg et al., 1989; Wells & Rankin, 1983). The current research, however, reveals that both self-esteem and belonging can be positively affected by delinquent involvement. These findings suggest that delinquent involvement may affirm both intra-personal (i.e., self-acceptance) and inter-personal feelings (i.e., belonging).

Research investigating the self-enhancement effects of delinquency traditionally assumed that negative self-rejecting feelings were necessary before delinquent involvement could affirm the self-concept (Kaplan, 1975, 1977, 1980). Self-rejection was seen as a drive mechanism motivating juveniles to commit delinquent acts which in turn would increase their sense of self-regard (Gold, 1978; Kaplan, 1975, 1980). Later studies showed that the effects of self-rejection on subsequent delinquency were mediated by a deviant disposition (i.e., deviant attitudes, self-esteem frustration, and an awareness of deviant behaviors) (Kaplan, 1977). The findings from this investigation, however, do not show a clear pattern of antecedent self-rejecting attitudes. Specifically, there was no evidence that low academically invested African-Americans had less self-acceptance or greater self-rejection than similarly invested Whites. In fact, in Study 1 low invested Blacks had higher self-acceptance at Time 1 than all other groups. The only evidence of a negative relationship between prior self-feelings and subsequent delinquency was found in the path models for Study 1, where low invested Blacks showed a negative relationship between feelings of belonging and subsequent delinquency. This pattern did not replicate, however, in Study 2. The findings from this investigation are thus unclear about the importance of negative self-feelings as a precursor to subsequent delinquency.
A number of investigators have been reluctant to examine racial differences in self-enhancement because of perceptions that Black respondents report less reliable information concerning delinquency than Whites (Bachman, 1970; Bachman & O’Malley, 1984; Bynner et al., 1981; Wells, 1989). Nevertheless, the findings from the current investigation revealed that African-American respondents do exhibit consistent patterns. A reliable enhancement effect emerged among low academically invested African-Americans in two different datasets that were measured eight years apart. These findings not only illustrate the importance of race in the study of delinquency, they also reveal important variability within racial groups that may lead to different delinquency outcomes. In the current research, high academically invested Blacks did not differ in their reports of delinquent involvement from high invested Whites, and also did not show any evidence of delinquent affirmation. These findings indicate that delinquent involvement and delinquent affirmation are not just a matter of race. Rather, the findings reflect a more complex process involving an interaction between race and academic investment. Thus, it seems possible that more consistent patterns will emerge among African-Americans when investigations also consider the role of academic investment in delinquent involvement.

Finally, past research on self-enhancement has traditionally investigated the relationship between delinquency and the self-concept through the use of Rosenberg’s (1965) global self-esteem measure. This measure has proven very useful (e.g., Kaplan, et al., 1994; Kaplan, et al., 1986a; Kaplan, et al., 1986b; Kaplan, 1980). The findings from the current research, however, indicate that the global self-esteem measure can be usefully partitioned into self-acceptance and self-rejection (Owens, 1994). The results of Study 1 indicate that when self-acceptance and self-rejection are examined separately, unique variance is accounted for by each. Among low academically invested African-Americans, self-affirmation was shown by delinquency positively predicting subsequent self-
acceptance. Surprisingly, there was no negative effect of delinquency on subsequent self-rejection, as had been anticipated for this group. This dissociation suggests that self-acceptance and self-rejection are not simply mirror images of one another, but are distinct constructs worthy of independent attention.

**IMPLICATIONS**

**Race & Identification with School**

Research has shown that those who perform well in school and have strong ties to conventional sources such as the family, church, and school will be less delinquent than those who are disconnected from such sources (Cernkovich & Giordano, 1992; Elliot et al., 1985; Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1972; Liska & Reed, 1985; Matsueda, 1982; Stinchcombe, 1964). These findings suggest that if more effort is directed at keeping juveniles connected to social institutions such as school they may remain more law abiding. Implicit in this assumption is the belief that those juveniles who have strong ties to school have embraced the norms, values, and goals associated with school. According to the findings presented in Studies 1, however, this assumption may vary by race. As was shown in Study 2, highly invested African-Americans exhibited evidence of being disidentified with school despite the fact they were performing well. This finding, although inconsistent with hypotheses noted above, seems to reflect an unwillingness on the part of African-Americans to fully invest their self-concepts into education. An explanation for this unwillingness may be found in African-Americans attitudes towards education. For example, previous research assessing African-American attitudes toward education indicate that there is a lack of faith that education will lead to any improved social or economic prosperity, especially as it relates to competition with Whites (Hacker, 1992;
Liska & Reed, 1985). Additional evidence suggests that both African-Americans and Whites view education as an arena where Whites are more likely to succeed (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Still other findings have revealed that among African-Americans there is the perception that having a strong commitment to school is comparable to “acting White” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Thus, African-Americans may be somewhat hesitant to commit themselves to academics for fear of negative sanctions from their peers (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

On the other hand, and in contrast to these findings, some evidence reveals that African-Americans are very invested in academics, despite the lack of economic opportunities available to them or to their families (Macleod, 1987). Findings from Study 2 support this research by showing that high academically invested Blacks were just as invested as their White counterparts. These discrepancies suggest that the findings from Studies 1 and 2 regarding disidentification are somewhat inconclusive. If it is the case that African-Americans are generally more disidentified with academics than Whites, then this suggests that the two groups will most likely differ in the kind of experiences they encounter while in school. As White adolescents perform well, it is likely that they will increasingly embrace the values and goals associated with academics and society at large. African-Americans, on the other hand, may be less certain about internalizing those goals due to the fear that those goals may not be realized. They may also be fearful of alienation or other negative social sanctions they may face from peers if they decide to pursue such academic goals. These findings suggest that African-Americans in general will be more vulnerable to school disidentification than Whites.
How to Increase Identification with School

Research has already investigated some of the ways that identification with academics may be increased. This investigation may offer important insights that could help guide social policy on juvenile delinquency. At present, the social policy towards delinquency has been primarily directed at identifying risk factors in juvenile populations and developing intervention programs designed to minimized the likelihood of future offending (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1987). This identification of risk factors is then used by court officials, case workers, policy makers, and parents to determine which juveniles are likely to become delinquent, and which are likely to benefit from preventive programs. According to the findings from this investigation, juveniles who are at risk for delinquency could benefit from greater academic opportunities for affirmation.

To illustrate how this could happen, consider some of the recommendations outlined by Steele (in press). Steele suggests that identification can be increased by developing better academic skills, increasing a sense of domain efficacy, enhancing feelings of social and cultural comfort, and decreasing social pressures to disidentify. It is important to note that the aim of these recommendations is not to simply enhance self-regard. As was shown in Study 1, low academically invested African-Americans did not suffer from low self-acceptance. The aim of Steele’s recommendations was to present academics as a source of affirmation. The problem with academic disidentification and its relationship with delinquency is not low self-esteem, but rather self-esteem that is based on delinquency. Thus, if low academically invested African-Americans could be assured of obtaining affirmation from academic sources the need to seek affirmation from delinquency would be lessened. If, however, this proved to be difficult, then low academically invested African-Americans could be encouraged to pursue alternative normative sources of affirmation. For example, they could pursue opportunities in technical skills,
entrepreneurial interests, the arts, athletics, employment, etc. If juveniles obtained affirmation from other normative non-academic sources, the current results suggest that might decrease the likelihood that they would pursue delinquent alternatives. However, the current policy toward juveniles who perform poorly in school is often to prohibit them from participating in such activities as athletics, band, and theater until their grades improve. Restricting poor performing students’ access to these non-academic normative activities may be a poor solution, however, as it may increase the likelihood that they will consider delinquent alternatives. The recommendation from this investigation would be to encourage academically poor performing juveniles to participate in such activities to ensure that they maintain access to normative sources of self-regard.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should consider employing self-affirmation theory as a framework to further understand juveniles’ attraction to delinquency. As was found in Studies 1 and 2, self-affirmation theory provided a clear explanation for the relationship between delinquency and self-acceptance and belonging. Furthermore, self-affirmation theory offered clear predictions concerning the response individuals would choose if they were to experience chronic threat in a given domain. The evidence presented was consistent with the idea that low academically invested African-Americans would be more likely than any of the other groups studied to experience chronic threat from their academic experiences. That chronic threat would eventually lead them to become more disidentified with academics, thereby motivating them to seek affirmation from delinquent sources.

Self-affirmation theory may also contribute insight to the study of adult crime. For example, the theory assumes that all individuals are motivated by some fundamental need
for self-regard, and delinquency has already been shown to be associated with enhancing feelings of self-acceptance and belonging. It is thus reasonable to assume that criminal activity may also affirm the self-concept of adults. Although this idea would be likely to encounter skepticism among contemporary delinquency researchers, there is no reason to assume that the motives which contribute to criminal activity of adults should differ significantly from those underlying the delinquent activity of juveniles. Interestingly, the same argument has been made to compare white-collar crime to crime in general (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1987).

It would also be informative to discover if individuals feel a greater sense of self-affirmation after engaging antisocial behaviors. Experimental research from Van Duuren and Di Giacomo (1996) may offer some insight into the design of possible investigations. These researchers found that after exposing subjects to degrading situations, they were more likely to agree to participate in an act of theft. This tendency occurred whether the theft was directed toward the source of the degrading event (i.e., the experimenter) or to an unrelated passerby. No effort was made, however, to assess how subjects felt about themselves afterwards. Future research employing experimental designs of this nature may want to include measures that could detect whether subjects are deriving a sense of affirmation by committing such infractions. Other experimental designs could assign participants to conditions in which they are instructed to think about their involvement in previous antisocial activities. Other participants could serve as controls and be asked to think about something non-evaluative events. Participants could then be asked to respond to a variety of attitude measures, some of which would detect whether affirmation had occurred. These investigations would attempt to show that individuals may derive affirmation by engaging in behaviors deemed to be antisocial. By doing so, such investigations may enable researchers to uncover the motive(s) that underlie antisocial
behaviors. Additional designs could even assign participants on the basis of race and academic investment to determine which groups would show affirmation upon thinking about past antisocial activities.

The findings from Studies 1 and 2 also suggest that future research could benefit by further exploring the utility of self-esteem as a bi-dimensional construct. Previous research has typically defined self-enhancement as the reduction of self-derogating attitudes (Kaplan, 1980). However, evidence presented in this investigation indicates that self-acceptance and self-rejection are distinct constructs. That is, delinquency enhanced self-acceptance but did not reduce self-rejection. Why might this be? It seems possible that self-rejection and self-acceptance are determined by different sources. Specifically, disidentification with academics may reduce self-rejection, while delinquency may enhance self-acceptance. This possibility suggests that juveniles who routinely encountered threats from their normative experiences may have disidentified with those experiences to protect their self-integrity from further threat. If these threats had initially caused feelings of self-rejection, such feelings may have diminished as disidentification with the threatening domain increased. Self-acceptance, on the other hand, may have increased as juveniles who were already disidentified with normative domains increased their involvement in delinquent activities. These possibilities suggest that both self-acceptance and self-rejection may often be dissociated.

Future researchers investigating the self-concept may want to employ self-acceptance and self-rejection independently (see Owens, 1994). As suggested above, the variables do not appear to be mirror images of each other. Although they are related to one another, greater self-acceptance does not necessarily mean less self-rejection, and factors that influence one may not influence the other. Consistent with this possibility, research on attitude ambivalence suggests that individuals often simultaneously hold both positive and
negative attitudes toward the same object (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Jonas, Diehl, & Bromer, 1997; Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995). Self-esteem, despite its long history in psychology, appears to be venturing into a new era that conceives of a more multifaceted self.

Future research may also benefit from further exploring the utility of belonging as a psychological construct. The findings presented in this investigation showed that belonging may provide meaningful insight into delinquency. Similar in some respects to the concept of "peer influence" (e.g., Johnson, Marcos, & Bahr, 1987; Kaplan et al., 1987; Pabon, Rodriguez, & Gurin, 1992; Sutherland, 1939), belonging in this investigation reflected an individual’s need to be connected with others. Unlike peer influence, a need to belong can exist independently of the presence of others. Thus, it is not necessary for peers to be present to encourage delinquent activity, an individual need only see the delinquent activity as affording an opportunity to affirm feelings of belonging. For example, consider the juvenile who illegally spray paints the side of building because he believes it will gain him approval from a group of respected peers. The argument is that the juvenile was motivated by a need to belong, not by peer influence. He simply decided to commit the offense on his own, unsolicited, with the assumption that it would be received positively by a group of others with whom he desires to be affiliated. This kind of motivation would no doubt be sensitive to external influences, however it should be clear that no direct external influences are necessary to incite the delinquent behavior.

CONCLUSIONS

No matter what issue researchers investigate with regard to juvenile delinquency, the focus of their investigations invariably leads back to the question of why. Why are so
many juveniles delinquent? The purpose of this investigation was to address that question by relying on a very basic premise of human nature: People pursue things that make them feel good. Furthermore people vary in what they find affirming. If delinquent activities afford some juveniles the opportunity to affirm a need that is important to their self-concept, and if there are no attractive alternatives, they will likely pursue those activities. Thus pursuing delinquent activities is not evidence that these juveniles are psychotic or even pathological, it is simply evidence that they are human.
LIST OF REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SURVEY ITEMS
Belonging at Time 1 and Time 2 YIT

No one cares what happens, when you get right down to it(R)
The life of the average man is getting worse, not better(R)
People don’t really care what happens to the next fellow(R)
I get the feeling that life is not very useful(R)
These days I get the feeling that I’m just not a part of things(R)
These days I don’t know who I can depend on(R)
Respondent feels it is not fair to bring child into world(R)
Respondent feels no one cares about him(R)

Items comprising the belonging index. Response are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = almost always true, 2 = often true, 3 = sometimes true, 4 = seldom true, 5 = never true. Responses are coded so that higher numbers reflect greater Belonging. The Belonging Index was created by reverse scoring the Anomie Index contained in the dataset as a single measure thus (R) indicates reverse scoring. Alpha for entire group Belonging at Time 1 (alpha = .73), Belonging at Time 2 (alpha = .80).

Self Acceptance at Time 1 and Time 2 YIT

Respondent considers himself a person of worth
Respondent has a number of good qualities
Respondent able to do things as well as others
Respondent takes a positive attitude toward self

Items comprising the self-acceptance index. Response are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = almost always true, 2 = often true, 3 = sometimes true, 4 = seldom true, 5 = never true. Responses are coded so that higher numbers reflect greater Self-Acceptance. Alpha for entire group Self-Acceptance at Time 1 (alpha = .64), Self Acceptance at Time 2 (alpha = .74)

Self Rejection at Time 1 and Time 2 YIT

Respondent has not much to be proud of
Respondent sometimes feels no good at all
Respondent feels own life not very useful

Items comprising the self-rejection index. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Items denoted with an "*" indicate that they were not represented at Time 2. Response are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = almost always true, 2 = often true, 3 = sometimes true, 4 = seldom true, 5 = never true. Responses are coded so that higher numbers reflect greater Self-Rejection. Alpha for entire group Self Rejection at Time 1 (alpha = .54), Self Rejection at Time 2 (alpha = .64)

Academic Performance at Time 1 and Time 2 YIT

Respondent’s average grade over the past year

Single item comprising academic performance. Higher numbers reflect higher grades.
School Attitudes at Time 1 and Time 2 YIT

Respondent is satisfied with school
Respondent values education
Respondent feels school makes a real difference in life
Respondent would stay in school over taking a job
Respondent has an area of special interest in school
Respondent enjoys school
Respondent likes school because of social opportunities
Respondent values school
Respondent feels all should have a high school education
Respondent feels school is worthwhile
Respondent feels school is worthwhile regardless of job value
Respondent feels school improves thinking, problem solving
Respondent feels education will aid in becoming more mature
Respondent feels school will assist in becoming a good citizen
Respondent receives a sense of accomplishment from school
Respondent would rather work than be in school (R)
Respondent is bored by school (R)
Respondent would quit school for a good job (R)
Respondent feels education comes from experience, not from school (R)
Respondent attends school just to get a job (R)
Respondent could satisfy curiosity better outside school (R)
Respondent would learn more from a good job (R)
Respondent feels school is a waste of time (R)

Items comprising the school attitudes index at Time 1 and Time 2. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Response are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = very much, 2 = pretty much, 3 = a little, 4 = not at all. Responses are coded so that higher numbers reflect more positive school attitudes. Alpha for entire group Self Rejection at Time 1 (alpha = .91), Self Rejection at Time 2 (alpha = .91)

Academic Investment at Time 1 only YIT

Respondent is satisfied with school
Respondent values education
Respondent feels school makes a real difference in life
Respondent would stay in school over taking a job
Respondent has an area of special interest in school
Respondent enjoys school
Respondent likes school because of social opportunities
Respondent values school
Respondent feels all should have a high school education
Respondent feels school is worthwhile
Respondent feels school is worthwhile regardless of job value
Respondent feels school improves thinking, problem solving
Respondent feels education will aid in becoming more mature
Respondent feels school will assist in becoming a good citizen
Respondent receives a sense of accomplishment from school
Respondent would rather work than be in school (R)
Respondent is bored by school (R)
**Academic Investment at Time 1 only YIT cont.**

Respondent would quit school for a good job (R)
Respondent feels education comes from experience, not from school (R)
Respondent attends school just to get a job (R)
Respondent could satisfy curiosity better outside school (R)
Respondent would learn more from a good job (R)
Respondent feels school is a waste of time (R)

Grade Point Average
R’s highest grade past year
How well does R work at studying constantly to become a well educated person
How well does R work at working hard to achieve academic honors
How well does R work at striving to get the top GPA in the group
How well does R work at studying hard to get good grades
How does R rate in school ability compared to others
How close does R come to doing best work in school
How hard does R work in school compared to others
How satisfied is R with school performance

Item comprising the academic investment index. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect a greater investment in academics. Alpha for entire group academic investment at Time 1 (alpha = .77), Black sample (alpha = .71), White sample (alpha = .78).

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**Delinquent Activities at Time 1 and Time 2 YIT**

Respondent gets angry and smashes things
Respondent is rude to teachers
Respondent loses temper at teachers
How often does Respondent argue with teachers
How often has Respondent been suspended or expelled from school

Items comprising the delinquent activities index. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect a greater rate of Deviance. Alpha for entire group Delinquent Activities at Time 1 (alpha = .60), Delinquent Activities at Time 2 (alpha = .49)

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**Socioeconomic Status YIT**

Father’s occupational status
Parents’ education
Possessions in the home
Number of books in the home
Number of rooms per person in the home

The items for socioeconomic status exist as a single computed index in the Youth in Transition survey. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect higher status.

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**Belonging at Time 1 and Time 2 NYS**

I am not included in school activities as much as I'd like (R)*
I don't fit well with friends(R)
Teachers don't care on me(R)
I am an outsider with the family(R)
Nobody at school cares(R)
Friends don't take an interest(R)
Family listens to problems
Feel close to friends
Feel lonely with family(R)
Don't belong at school(R)
Friends listen to problems
Feel lonely at school(R)
Teachers don't ask me to work on projects(R)
Feel close to family
Feel lonely with friends(R)
Family not interested in problems(R)

Items comprising the belonging index. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Items with an "*" indicate that they were not represented at Time 2. Response are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Alpha for entire group Belonging at Time 1 (alpha = .80), Belonging at Time 2 (alpha = .83).

**School Identification at Time 1 and Time 2 NYS**

Afternoons during the school week spent studying*
Evenings during the school week spent studying*
Time spent studying on the weekends*
How important has school work been
How important has school activities been*
How important is doing well in hard subjects*
How important is doing your own school work without help
How important is having a high GPA
How important is going to college
How important is completing a college degree

Items comprising the school identification index. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Items with an "*" indicate that they were not represented at Time 2. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect greater school identification. Alpha for entire group School Identification at Time 1 (alpha = .73), School Identification at Time 2 (alpha = .75)

**Academic Performance at Time 1 and Time 2 NYS**

Grade Point Average
How are you doing at having others think of you as a good student
How are you doing at doing well at hard subjects
How are you doing at doing your own school work without help
How are you doing at having teachers think of you as a good student
**Academic Performance at Time 1 and Time 2 NYS cont.**

How are you doing at having a high GPA  
How much do you agree that your friends label you as likely to succeed*  
How much do you agree that your teachers label you as likely to succeed*  

Items comprising the academic performance index. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Items with an "*" indicate that they were not represented at Time 2. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect greater Academic Performance. Alpha for entire group Academic Performance at Time 1 (alpha = .74), Academic Performance at Time 2 (alpha = .76)

**Academic Investment at Time 1 Only NYS**

Grade Point Average  
How are you doing at having others think of you as a good student  
How are you doing at doing well at hard subjects  
How are you doing at doing your own school work without help  
How are you doing at having teachers think of you as a good student  
How are you doing at having a high GPA  
How much do you agree that your friends label you as likely to succeed*  
How much do you agree that your teachers label you as likely to succeed*  

Afternoons during the school week spent studying*  
Evenings during the school week spent studying*  
Time spent studying on the weekends*  
How important has school work been  
How important has school activities been *  
How important is doing well in hard subjects*  
How important is doing your own school work without help  
How important is having a high GPA  
How important is going to college  
How important is completing a college degree  

Items comprising the academic investment index. Items with an "**" indicate that they were not represented at Time 2. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect greater investment in academics. Alpha for entire group (alpha = .76), Blacks (alpha = .72), Whites (alpha = .76)

**Delinquent Attitudes at Time 1 and Time 2 NYS**

Attitudes towards cheating on school tests  
Attitudes towards destroying property  
Attitudes towards using marijuana  
Attitudes towards stealing something worth less than $5.00  
Attitudes towards hitting someone  
Attitudes towards using alcohol  
Attitudes towards breaking into a vehicle  
Attitudes towards selling hard drugs  
Attitudes towards stealing something worth more than $50.00  
Attitudes towards getting drunk†
**Delinquent Attitudes at Time 1 and Time 2 NYS cont.**

Attitudes towards using prescription drugs†
Attitudes towards giving or selling alcohol†

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**Delinquent Activities at Time 1 and Time 2 NYS**

Rate at which Respondent carried a hidden weapon
Rate at which Respondent attacked someone
Rate at which Respondent has been in gang fights
Rate at which Respondent has sold marijuana
Rate at which Respondent has hit teacher
Rate at which Respondent has sold hard drugs
Rate at which Respondent has bought liquor*
Rate at which Respondent has used force on students
Rate at which Respondent has used force on others
Rate at which Respondent has been drunk*
Rate at which Respondent has broken into building
Rate at which Respondent has been suspended*

---

**Socioeconomic Status NYS**

Father's occupational status
Parents' education
Possessions in the home
Number of books in the home
Number of rooms per person in the home

---

Items comprising the delinquent attitudes index. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Items with an "†" indicate that they were not represented at Time 1. Response are rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = not wrong at all, 2 = A little bit wrong, 3 = Wrong, 4 = Very wrong. Alpha for entire group Delinquent Attitudes at Time 1 (alpha = .84), Delinquent Attitudes at Time 2 (alpha = .90)

---

Items comprising the delinquent activities index. Items denoted with an "R" indicate reverse scoring. Items with an "*" indicate that they were not represented at Time 2. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect greater involvement in delinquent behaviors. Alpha for entire group delinquent activities at Time 1 (alpha = .74), delinquent activities at Time 2 (alpha = .74)

---

Items comprising the socio-economic index. Response are coded so that higher numbers reflect higher status. Alpha for entire group (alpha = .60), Whites (alpha = .54), Blacks (alpha = .59).
APPENDIX B

CORRELATION TABLES: YOUTH IN TRANSITION SURVEY 1966-1968 &
NATIONAL YOUTH SURVEY 1976-1977
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Inter-item correlations for all groups: (LIW) - low academically invested Whites, (HIW) - high academically invested Whites, (LIB) - low academically invested Blacks, (HIB) - high academically invested Blacks, (LIT) - low academically invested sample, (HIT) - high academically invested sample, Blacks, Whites, and total sample. (YIT).
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Inter-item correlations for all groups: (LIW) - low academically invested Whites, (HIW) - high academically invested Whites, (LIB) - low academically invested Blacks, (HIB) - high academically invested Blacks, (LIT) - low academically invested sample, (HIT) - high academically invested sample, Blacks, Whites, and total sample. (YIT).
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Inter-item correlations for all groups: (LIW) - low academically invested Whites, (HIW) - high academically invested Whites, (LIB) - low academically invested Blacks, (HIB) - high academically invested Blacks, (LIT) - low academically invested sample, (HIT) - high academically invested sample, Blacks, Whites, and total sample. (YIT).
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<td>(.021)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency 2</td>
<td>-0.156</td>
<td>-0.147</td>
<td>-0.208</td>
<td>-0.239</td>
<td>-0.154</td>
<td>-0.164</td>
<td>-0.224</td>
<td>-0.182</td>
<td>-0.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Acad. Perform2</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.021)</td>
<td>(.009)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
<td>(.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inter-item correlations for all groups: (LIW) - low academically invested Whites, (HIW) - high academically invested Whites, (LIB) - low academically invested Blacks, (HIB) - high academically invested Blacks, (LIT) - low academically invested sample, (HIT) - high academically invested sample, Blacks, Whites, and total sample. (NYS).
APPENDIX C

FORMULA FOR CALCULATING REGRESSION SLOPES
Formula for Calculating the Regression Slopes

In order to plot the regression lines for the four academically invested groups, the following equation for a line was used:

\[ Y_i = b_1A_i + b_2B_i + b_3C_i + \ldots + b_jF_i + D \]

where \( Y_i \) is the dependent variable, \( b_1 \) is the unstandardized regression weight for variable \( A_i \), \( b_2 \) is the unstandardized regression weight for variable \( B_i \), and \( D \) is a constant (the constant is used as the intercept).

To discriminate between relationships among low and high academically invested Whites and Blacks, the equation requires a weighting system. Typically, this system involves a procedure known as “dummy coding”, where variables (e.g., \( A_i \)) are assigned values of zero or one. More complex procedures may also be used, such as the insertion of standard deviations. In the current analyses both dummy coding and standard deviations will be used to code variables.

When conducting multiple regression analyses, there is always the concern that multicollinearity (the condition where predictor variables are highly correlated with one another) will exist. In order to minimize problems due to multicollinearity, race, academic investment, and delinquency were all centered by subtracting their respective means from the individual score. Next, all variables, and the interactions between them were entered into a regression equation in a blocked fashion, such that main effects were entered first (i.e., race, academic investment, delinquency), followed by the two-way interactions (i.e.,
race by academic investment, race by delinquency), and the three-way interaction (i.e., race by academic investment by delinquency). This procedure allows for the examination of the individual effects for each block, as well as the pooled effect for all of the blocks. The resulting full model equation was used to calculate the relationship between delinquency at Time 1 and the self-concept at Time 2 for Studies 1 and 2:

\[
\text{Self-Acceptance}_{2} (\text{Belong}_{2}) = \beta_1 \text{Race} + \beta_2 \text{Academic Investment} + \beta_3 \text{Delinquency} + \beta_4 \text{Race} \times \text{Academic Investment} + \beta_5 \text{Race} \times \text{Delinquency} + \beta_6 \text{Academic Investment} \times \text{Delinquency} + \beta_7 \text{Race} \times \text{Academic Investment} \times \text{Delinquency} + \text{Constant}
\]

where race is coded 1 for Blacks and 0 for Whites, academic investment is coded by 1 standard deviation above for high invested respondents, and 1 standard deviation below for low invested respondents, and delinquency is left free to vary between 0 and 1. The following four equations were produced first for Study 1, and then Study 2:

\[
\text{Self-Accept}_{2} \text{ for Low Invested Blacks} = 2.53 + .276x: \quad (0,2.53) \quad (1,2.80)
\]
\[
\text{Self-Accept}_{2} \text{ for High Invested Blacks} = 2.56 - .080x: \quad (0,2.56) \quad (1,2.48)
\]
\[
\text{Self-Accept}_{2} \text{ for Low Invested Whites} = 2.32 - .014x: \quad (0,2.32) \quad (1,2.31)
\]
\[
\text{Self-Accept}_{2} \text{ for High Invested Whites} = 2.41 - .014x: \quad (0,2.41) \quad (1,2.40)
\]

\[
\text{Belonging}_{2} \text{ for Low Invested Blacks} = 1.88 + .350x: \quad (0,1.88) \quad (1,2.23)
\]
\[
\text{Belonging}_{2} \text{ for High Invested Blacks} = 1.91 + .068x: \quad (0,1.91) \quad (1,1.98)
\]
\[
\text{Belonging}_{2} \text{ for Low Invested Whites} = 1.95 + .052x: \quad (0,1.95) \quad (1,2.00)
\]
\[
\text{Belonging}_{2} \text{ for High Invested Whites} = 1.99 - .244x: \quad (0,1.99) \quad (1,1.74)
\]