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THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS  
ON JUVENILE COURT DISPOSITIONS\*

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## THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

### ON JUVENILE COURT DISPOSITIONS

#### Introduction

The emergence of a separate juvenile court system whose structure and operation differs considerably from that of adult criminal courts reflects a pervasive belief that the rehabilitative ideal can be better served if juvenile courts retain a maximum degree of flexibility, discretionary decision-making power, and informality (Caldwell and Black, 1971: 186-200). The efficacy and appropriateness of such a system, however, has been strongly attacked in recent years. The informality, largely uncontrolled and nonreviewable discretionary power, and the vaguely structured "status offender" statutes that remain common in many jurisdictions, for example, have quite properly led to allegations that juvenile court operations effectively deprive many alleged offenders of their most basic right to due process and equal protection under the law, deprivations that are not balanced by any empirical demonstration of juvenile courts being relatively more effective than criminal courts in which such rights are more carefully protected (President's Commission of Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967). Similarly, these same characteristics have led many behavioral scientists to suggest that juvenile court procedures and policies allow and encourage the court officials to employ legally

irrelevant information in a manner which may work to the disadvantage of some cohorts of the population because of their ethnic origin, sex, socioeconomic status, family situation, demeanor, and a variety of other factors.

As is attested to by the text of Supreme Court decisions in such familiar cases as Gault, Kent, and Winship, these criticisms have had a substantial impact on juvenile court procedures despite the fact that other decisions, including McKeiver vs. Pennsylvania, demonstrate continued support for the differential treatment of juvenile offenders.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, neither the advocates nor the opponents of the contemporary juvenile court system have a strong empirical basis for their respective positions. The types of empirical data that are required to evaluate the viability of either position are simply too scarce. This paper will attempt to examine one particularly significant issue on which previous research has produced extremely inconsistent findings. Specifically, through an analysis of correlates of the dispositions assigned to a large number of juvenile cases in one metropolitan jurisdiction between 1966 and 1973, we will evaluate the relative effect of the social characteristics of alleged juvenile offenders on their case dispositions.

#### Prior Research

Those critical of the continuing lack of an effective integration of criminological theory and research would find little consolation were they to review the degree of

correspondence between conceptual and empirical analyses of the determinants of the decision-making processes at any level of the criminal justice system. Our examination of previous theoretical work that directly or indirectly provides a paradigm presumably capable of accounting for variations in juvenile court dispositions that cannot be attributed to the nature of the alleged offense, particularly the presently popular labeling paradigm, reveals no shortage of variables that are hypothetically associated with judicial decisions. Generally speaking, this body of literature appears to suggest that, when the structure of the judicial decision-making process does not effectively preclude it, case dispositions will reflect the preferences of those in positions of power and that they will discriminate against those who, for legally irrelevant reasons, lack the requisite level of social, economic, and political power that might otherwise inhibit their being treated harshly (Schwartz and Skolnick, 1962; Scheff, 1966; Turk, 1969; Rushing, 1971; Schur, 1971; Chiricos, et al., 1972). In point of fact, however, empirical evidence on the decisions to arrest, to refer for a formal court appearance, and actual court dispositions reflects a remarkable and, as Thornberry (1973) and Terry (1967a, 1967b) have noted, a frequently ignored level of inconsistency with regard to the influence of such hypothetically significant variables as the demeanor of the juvenile, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family situation, and other similar factors (see, for example,

studies of police decision-making by Black and Reiss, 1970; Black, 1970, 1971; Green, 1970; Williams and Gold, 1972; and examinations of court referral patterns by Terry, 1967a, 1967b; Weiner and Willie, 1971; Thornberry, 1973; Thomas and Sieverdes, 1975). Thus, in their study of juvenile court referrals, Thomas and Sieverdes (1975: 416), observe that "even a superficial review of the relevant literature leaves one with the rather uncomfortable feeling that the only consistent finding of prior research is that there are no consistencies in the determinants of the decision-making process."

We must agree that a similar situation confronts those concerned with judicial decision-making. Studies that have examined the relationship between ethnicity and case disposition, for example, report inconclusive findings (Chused, 1973; Keiter, 1973; Pawlak, 1973), no relationship (Terry, 1967a, 1967b; Ferdinand and Luchterhand, 1970), relatively more severe treatment of blacks (Arnold, 1971; Sieverdes, 1973; Thornberry, 1973), and harsher treatment for whites (Scarpitti and Stephenson, 1971; Ferster and Courtless, 1972). Evaluations of the importance of socioeconomic status have shown that juveniles from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more severely sanctioned (Scarpitti and Stephenson, 1971; Sieverdes, 1973; Thornberry, 1973) and that socioeconomic status is largely irrelevant (Terry, 1967a, 1967b; Arnold, 1971). Although home stability has not generally been a good predictor of case disposition (Ferdinand and Luchterhand, 1970; Arnold, 1971; Scarpitti and

Stephenson, 1971), Chused (1973) and Sieverdes (1973) each found that juveniles from broken homes receive more serious dispositions. Conversely, while many studies have observed that females tend to be more harshly treated than males if their cases are referred for formal hearing (Terry, 1967a, 1967b; Chused, 1973; Pawlak, 1973), there is also evidence that this is not the case (Sieverdes, 1973). There is, however, consistent evidence which shows that juveniles not enrolled in school are more harshly disposed of than those who are enrolled at the time of their hearing (Scarpitti and Stephenson, 1971; Sieverdes, 1973).

The situation does not improve significantly when attention is shifted to social factors that do not represent characteristics of the juvenile offender, but it should be carefully noted that little research has focused on such potentially meaningful variables as the juvenile's demeanor in court, the source of the complaint which resulted in a court appearance, the characteristics of the judge before whom the case was heard, and so on. Moreover, a surprisingly small body of research has examined the influence of such quasi-legal factors as pretrial detention, the presence of counsel, and the quality of counsel when the juvenile is represented. The evidence that is available implies that judges vary considerably in the dispositions they assign in both juvenile and adult courts (see, for example, Gaudet, *et al.*, 1933; Gaudet, 1938, 1946; Nagel, 1962; Frankel, 1972; Pawlak, 1973; Chused, 1973; Susman, 1973), but there are discrepant findings (Fenster

and Courtless, 1972) and only very preliminary attempts have been made to link these variations in dispositions to other factors that might make the differences more interpretable (Nagel, 1962; Susman, 1973). Similarly, some initial attempts have been made to relate the source of complaint to case dispositions. Chused (1973) and Ferster and Courtless (1972), for example, note a tendency for complaints filed by parents to receive harsh dispositions, but contrary results have been reported by Terry (1967a).

Numerous reasons could be offered to interpret the presence of this volume of conflicting evidence. One of the more obvious of these is certainly that juvenile court systems vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction with regard to such factors as the quality, training, and academic background of staff members; their organizational structure; the statutory and procedural constraints under which they operate; and so on. Chused's (1973) recent study of three New Jersey courts, for example, reveals considerable variations in the correlates of the decision-making process between the courts in his sample. Further, some of the available literature does not allow us to determine the relative importance of social factors because of the absence or inadequacy of controls for the legally relevant variables of offense seriousness and prior offense record (cf. Scarpitti and Stephenson, 1971). Further still, there is a considerable variation in the manner in which the crucially important disposition variable

has been operationalized. For example, Terry (1967a, 1967b) employs a dichotomy of formal supervision versus commitment; Arnold (1971) examines commitment versus noncommitment; and Thornberry (1973) compares the proportion placed on probation with the proportion institutionalized. Thus, although there is some reason to believe that the specification of the relevance of social factors cannot be resolved until substantially more comparative data is reported, there are also a number of basic methodological problems that continue to hamper the accumulation of a body of reliable information on this topic.

In short, previous research provides only inconsistent clues as to the influence of social factors on the disposition of juvenile offenders. Indeed, even a comparison of the more sophisticated research, particularly that reported by Terry (1967a, 1967b) and that of Thornberry (1973), reveals contradictory evidence. Significantly, the available research on the determinants of police decision-making and that of the probation officer or intake officer's decision to refer a case for a formal court hearing reveals similarly inconsistent findings with regard to the relative importance of social factors and legal factors. Confronting such a body of literature renders any hypothesis concerned with the extent to which social characteristics of offenders alter the probability and severity of judicial decisions quite speculative. This point notwithstanding, our inclination is to suggest that, when legally significant variables are held constant, juvenile court judges utilize information about the social



characteristics and social situations in their selection of a particular case disposition. Further, because these judges are immune to neither the prejudices of others in our society nor the typically social work orientation of those who selectively collect and prepare social background investigation reports on the juveniles who appear before them, we are led to anticipate the presence of systematic biases against some cohorts in the population, biases that reflect an attack on the legal premise that all alleged offenders have a right to equal protection under the law.

#### Research and Methodology

The juvenile court records of a metropolitan court located in a southeastern SMSA provided a source of data for the analysis which follows. A review of cases processed between January 1, 1966 and July 31, 1973 yielded a sample of 1,522 juveniles who had come before the court one or more times during that time period, but it should be noted that only those juveniles for whom relatively complete social background information was available were chosen for inclusion in the sample. This non-random sampling procedure provided a disproportionately large number of juveniles who had either been referred to court for comparatively serious offenses, histories of previous delinquent involvement, or both. The bias which this introduces into our study, however, is viewed as minimal because of the fact that both seriousness of offense and prior offense record are held

constant in our analysis which is presented.

The sample of court records were reviewed in order to obtain data on each juvenile's offense, prior record, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, home situation, school enrollment, source of complaint, the judge who heard the case, and judicial disposition. The raw data were then categorized in the following manner. All offenses were defined as either felonies, misdemeanors, or status offenses on the basis of statutory definitions appropriate for the jurisdiction in which the alleged offense took place. Prior offenses were trichotomized into no prior offenses, one prior offense, and more than one prior offense. Socioeconomic status was determined on the basis of the occupational prestige of the juvenile's father (or mother if there was no male head of the household). The four categories of this variable include professionals, managers, white collar and sales workers, and blue collar and unskilled workers. The home situation variable includes categories for both father and mother or one natural parent and one step-parent, father or mother present, and neither father nor mother present. Complaints were coded as having been initiated by the juvenile's parents, private citizens, social service agencies and school officials, and the police. Finally, the dispositional alternatives were grouped into dismissals, cases that were continued generally or that called for a fine or restitution to the victim, probation, suspended sentences, and institutional commitments.

### Analysis and Findings

The purpose of our analysis may be simply summarized. Prior research has shown that a variety of social factors as well as the legally significant variables of offense seriousness and previous record are associated with both the type and the severity of case dispositions. Some research, however, has found that the relevance of presumably significant social factors, particularly race and socioeconomic status, is considerably diminished when type of offense and prior record are held constant. This has generally been interpreted to be a function of the statistical interaction that has been noted between social and legal variables. Other studies, however, have not found an elimination of the association between social factors and dispositions when legal factors are not allowed to vary. Thus, the purpose of our analysis is to remove the confounding affect of both offense type and prior record in order to arrive at a more accurate assessment of the relevance of social characteristics in the dispositional process.

Our initial interest is in determining which variables are associated with type of disposition when controls for type of offense and offense record are not held constant. The relevant findings of this aspect of our analysis are summarized in the correlation matrix presented in Table 1. With the exception of the very weak (but still statistically significant) association between race, socioeconomic status and disposition, our results are generally consistent with those of previous

reports. Ranked from highest to lowest level of association, the ordering of the predictor variables is prior offense record (C = .275), type of offense (C = .202), school status (C = .185), complainant (C = .177), which of the several judges heard the case (C = .159), sex (C = .118), race (C = .096), socioeconomic status (C = .089), and home situation (C = .074).<sup>3</sup>

These associations suggest that both legal and social factors are taken into consideration, but that legal factors are more closely linked to disposition than are social factors. What is perhaps more significant, however, is the inconsistent pattern of those linkages when the distributions within the tables which yielded these associations are closely examined. Limitations of space preclude the presentation of each of the relevant contingency tables, but the general implication that can be drawn from them is that the disproportionate representation of those sharing any given socially or legally relevant trait at any one point along our continuum of the severity of case disposition does not necessarily or even typically mean that there will be a similar imbalance at any other point along that continuum. This, in turn, rather strongly suggests that previous research which has treated case disposition as a dichotomy or that has applied statistical measures which assume additive linear relationships among the variables being examined may very well have produced very misleading interpretations of the manner in which both social and legal factors affect

decision-making.

Although this trend was observed in virtually every relationship between the predictor variables and case disposition, a few examples are sufficient to illustrate the point. Those in the highest socioeconomic group and those in the lowest socioeconomic group were equally represented (34.9 percent of both groups) when the sanction imposed was something less serious than probation, but those in the lowest socioeconomic status group were considerably more likely to be committed than were those from the highest group (22.0 percent versus 14.3 percent). Similarly, males and females were almost equally likely to be committed (16.5 percent versus 16.7 percent), but males were more likely to receive a suspended sentence than were females (10.2 percent versus 3.5 percent). Further, there was also a tendency for those who shared a common legal or social characteristic to be treated both more leniently and less leniently when their dispositions at one point along the seriousness continuum are compared with another. For example, the black juveniles in our sample were both more likely to have their cases dismissed than were whites (12.2 percent versus 8.6 percent) and to face commitment for their offenses (27.1 percent versus 13.9 percent). Likewise, and surprisingly, those with multiple prior offenses had the charges against them dismissed far more frequently than did those with no prior offenses (23.6 percent versus only 3.1 percent), but they were equally more often confronted with

commitment (28.5 percent versus 8.8 percent).

Although we have no clear-cut interpretation to offer for these findings, several points should be noted. Initially, the levels of association between both general types of predictor variables and case disposition are of only weak to moderate magnitude. This suggests that no single factor exerts a major independent influence on judicial decisions. Given the philosophy of the juvenile court system, this finding might be interpreted as quite positive in the sense that it could imply the consideration of a broad spectrum of both legal and social variables in the dispositional process in an attempt to individualize the decision. On the other hand, these findings also suggest the possibility that those who share various social characteristics will be treated in a significantly different fashion from those drawn from other categories in the population; that those against whom complaints are filed by one type of complainant will be treated in a different manner than those who have engaged in comparable behavior, but whose offense has been brought to the attention of social control agencies by a different complainant; and that those who come before one judge will be disposed of differently than those who appear before another judge regardless of who they are or what their present and past offense record might be. These latter points, however, cannot be resolved without conducting a more thorough analysis, and it is to the necessary controlled analysis that we now turn.

Tables 2 and 3 provide a summary of our multivariate analysis. The intent of this aspect of our analysis, as noted previously, is to determine whether social factors exert a significant effect on judicial decision-making when the potentially confounding influences of offense type and prior record are held constant. Table 2 shows the results obtained when seriousness of offense is held constant; Table 3 the consequence of controlling for prior offense record. If the initial associations between the social factors and disposition were really an artifact of the statistical interaction between legal and social factors, we would expect the levels of association between the social factors and case disposition to be greatly reduced if not completely eliminated when the influence of legal factors is removed. On the other hand, if, as we have predicted, the social factors have an impact on case dispositions that is independent of the legal factors, the relationships observed between the social factors and case disposition in Table 1 should not be significantly affected.

The findings of our multivariate analysis are particularly interesting for two reasons. First, in no instance did we find that the introduction of a control for the type of offense eliminated the relationship between the social factor and case disposition. To the contrary, a substantial number of the associations became even stronger than had been noted previously. Second, and both more interestingly and more importantly, an examination of the tables themselves reveals a

tendency away from the inconsistent disposition patterns described earlier. Within each offense category, males were more likely to receive harsh dispositions than females; blacks were more likely to be treated harshly than whites; school drop-outs more than those who were in school at the time of their court appearance; those from broken homes more than those from intact homes. In other words, given knowledge of both the type of offense and these social characteristics, the judges appear to apply sanctions to those who share particular social characteristics more consistently than was the case when information on offense type was not present. The results obtained with the other extralegal variables, however, are not this straightforward. Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tended to be more harshly sanctioned when their offenses were either felonies or status offenses, but when the offense was a misdemeanor all socioeconomic categories were dealt with in a more equitable fashion (with the exception that those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds were considerably more likely to be put on probation for such offenses than were others in our sample). With regard to the significance of the complainant, as might be anticipated from the nature of the offense, the vast majority of felony complaints came from the police (86.8 percent) and the cell frequencies observed for other sources of complaints were too small to be meaningful. At the other end of the spectrum, the situation alters considerably: status offense complaints received from



parents or guardians were disposed of more harshly than those received from other sources. Finally, and a reflection on the differential sentencing preferences of juvenile court judges, the three judges before whom the preponderance of the cases in our sample appeared vary considerably in the sanctions they deemed appropriate for the offense types under consideration. For example, one judge tended to dismiss the felony cases that he heard (25.0 percent) or to assign either suspended or actual commitment sentences (30.8 percent); the other two judges most frequently deemed probation to be appropriate for felony offenders (29.6 and 26.1 percent, respectively).

In short, the introduction of offense type as a control variable generally produced a more interpretable, consistent set of relationships between the social factors under examination and case disposition. The slight variation noted in the linkage between socioeconomic status and disposition does not appear to significantly alter this trend. The continuing inconsistency with regard to the complainant variable is to be expected because of the association between offense type and source of complaint ( $C = .507$ ). The discrepant reactions of the judges, although important, is difficult to interpret because our data does not include any information on the characteristics of the judges before whom our sample of juveniles appeared.

The introduction of prior offense record as a control presents one methodological problem that was not so pronounced

when offense type was held constant. Most of those in our sample (50.83 percent), had no prior record, at least no prior record in the juvenile court jurisdiction where our data were obtained, despite the fact that our sample selection procedures yielded disproportionately larger numbers of juveniles with relatively serious records of delinquent behavior by legal standards. Further, while 37.27 percent did have one prior offense recorded, only 11.90 percent had multiple prior offenses. Thus, because our dependent variable includes five dispositional categories, our findings must be interpreted with care, particularly the relationships noted when the associations between social factors and disposition among the cases which involved juveniles with more than one previous offense are examined. This limitation having been noted, the findings that are summarized in Table 3 show that the introduction of prior offense record as a control eliminated an observed initial relationship in only one of the twenty-one conditions. This indicates that the initial linkages between social factors and disposition are not purely a function of the social factors and disposition being associated with prior offense record. Indeed, as was true when offense seriousness was introduced as a control, holding prior offense record constant reveals a number of conditional relationships that are stronger than the initial relationships.

Unlike the influence of offense seriousness, holding prior record constant does not systematically eliminate the

inconsistent disposition patterns described in the analysis and interpretation of the uncontrolled relationships. Females who have no prior record were more likely to receive light sanctions or to have their cases dismissed, but among those with one prior offense they were more likely to receive both light and harsh punishment. Sex differences largely disappeared among those with multiple prior offenses. Those from single parent or totally broken homes were more likely to receive serious punishment when they had no prior record, and they were more likely to be confined when they had one prior offense than were those with a comparable offense record who were in intact homes. Similarly, the relevance of socioeconomic status appears to diminish as the number of prior offenses increase. On the other hand, the influence of race and school enrollment status show a consistent pattern, particularly when the relative probabilities of confinement are compared. Both blacks and school drop-outs are considerably more likely to face confinement for their offenses than are whites and those still in school regardless of the number of prior offenses.

With regard to the influence of social factors that are not characteristics of the juveniles, our findings become difficult to interpret when prior offense record is held constant. The only consistent trend noted for the association between complainant and disposition is that citizen-initiated complaints are uniformly reacted to less harshly than all other

complaints. The most typical sanction applied to citizen-initiated complaints was to continue the case (thus leaving the way open for imposing sanctions should the child appear in court later). Complaints initiated by social service agencies and schools receive generally moderate reactions regardless of the number of prior offenses. The distinction between reactions to parentally-initiated complaints and those coming from the police is primarily that the juvenile is more frequently confined when the complaint is filed by a parent, but this difference diminishes when the juvenile has more than one prior offense. The relationship between the judge before whom the case was heard and case disposition somewhat erratic under the three prior record conditions. Generally, all of the judges were hesitant to severely sanction juveniles with no prior offense record (only 8.7 percent of our sample faced commitment when they had no prior offense record) and all were inclined to apply harsh sanctions to those with relatively long records (28.5 percent of the juveniles with more than one offense were committed). Interestingly, the greatest disagreement among the judges was clearly in situations where the juvenile had one prior offense. For example, one judge committed only 4.7 percent of those juveniles who had only one prior offense on record (though he committed 26.1 percent of those with multiple prior offenses), but one of colleagues committed 31.1 percent of those with one prior offense (and 33.7 percent of those with multiple offenses).

The inconsistent disposition patterns observed in some

instances notwithstanding, it is clear that social factors continue to exert an influence on judicial dispositions of juvenile offenders when the influence of their prior offense record is controlled. Thus, similar to our findings with regard to the influence of social factors when the seriousness of the alleged offense is held constant, this segment of our analysis provides further support for our expectation that social factors exert a significant influence on particular segments of the juvenile population.

Discussion

The goal of our analysis has been to assess the relevance of extra-legal factors in the disposition of cases in a metropolitan juvenile court system. Three general considerations prompted the research. First, advocates of an informal, flexible model for juvenile court operations have argued that it is only within such a setting the individualized treatment of young offenders can be achieved. The claim is that the rehabilitative goal is so significant that a rigid adherence to or movement toward what has been described as a "due process model" (Packer, 1968) should be resisted. Advocates of the due process model, on the other hand, find the broad discretionary power and absence of procedural safeguards to be without justification in either the premises upon which the structure of criminal law has been built or any demonstration that juvenile justice is individualized or effective. Thus, one issue we have attempted to examine relates to whether or not there is

evidence that judicial decisions so discriminate against particular cohorts in the population that the absence of procedural safeguards contributes to the effective denial of the alleged offender's right to equal protection under the law. Second, in our review of the previous literature we noted that the lack of carefully controlled analysis, the selection of statistical measures that are of questionable utility given the nature of the types of data that have been analyzed, and the operationalization of the case disposition variable as a dichotomy may well have obscured important relationships. We have attempted to avoid each of these problems in our analysis to the extent possible given the size of the sample we were able to obtain and the type of information that could be abstracted from the official court records. Finally, though certainly not our least important goal, we wished to examine the empirical adequacy of that segment of labeling theory which holds that some segments of the population, particularly those without access to political and economic power, are more likely to receive harsh sanctions from social control agencies than will their more powerful cohorts. The latter point is particularly significant if the hypothesis that the imposition of sanctions contributes toward rather than inhibiting future involvement in proscribed behavior (a hypothesis which we should note has been seriously attacked by a number of researchers, the most convincing and thorough critique coming from Tittle (1975)).

Our findings are difficult to evaluate because of the considerable lack of consistency that characterizes obvious research in this area, but the general trends noted in our data are basically consistent with Thornberry (1973). Specifically, the levels of association between our hypothetical predictors of case disposition, both legal and social factors, do appear to influence case dispositions, but the levels of association, while generally statistically significant, are of only low to moderate magnitude. The relatively weak associations were not, however, eliminated when the potentially confounding influence of offense type and prior record were held constant. This is not to say that the pattern of influences that we found were completely consistent, particularly were we to examine the disposition of only the small segment of our sample of cases that involved multiple offenders. To the contrary, our data suggest that the relevance of a juvenile's social background characteristics, the source of the complaint filed against him, and the judge before whom a case happens to be heard are less significant should the juvenile be referred to court for a serious offense after having already appeared in court numerous times before. On the other hand, only 8.7 percent of the juveniles in our sample were appearing in court for a felony offense after having already appeared in court more than once in the past. Thus, for the vast majority of those on whom we were able to obtain data, the severity of the sanctions they received was partly determined by who they were, who

reacted to their behavior, and on whose court docket their case happened to appear. Individualized justice? Perhaps. But if our findings have pointed to the presence of individualized justice, they point to a strange variety of it, a variety that most typically applies harsh sanctions to blacks, those who have dropped out of school, those in single parent or broken homes, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and those against whom a complaint was filed by a parent or a policeman.



TABLE 1  
 INTERCORRELATION MATRIX (CRAMER'S C) OF VARIABLES

	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	X <sub>9</sub>	X <sub>10</sub>
X <sub>1</sub>	1.000	.118	.096	.185	.074	.089	.177	.159	.275	.202
X <sub>2</sub>		1.000	.045*	.047*	.065*	.038*	.337	.077	.050*	.429
X <sub>3</sub>			1.000	.059*	.217	.336	.102	.106	.091	.091
X <sub>4</sub>				1.000	.097	.061*	.068*	.054*	.135	.142
X <sub>5</sub>					1.000	.136	.081	.056*	.025*	.054*
X <sub>6</sub>						1.000	.052*	.075	.063*	.040*
X <sub>7</sub>							1.000	.135	.202	.507
X <sub>8</sub>								1.000	.080	.002*
X <sub>9</sub>									1.000	.098
X <sub>10</sub>										1.000

X<sub>1</sub> = Disposition

X<sub>2</sub> = Sex

X<sub>3</sub> = Race

X<sub>4</sub> = School Enrollment

X<sub>5</sub> = Home Situation

X<sub>6</sub> = Socioeconomic Status

X<sub>7</sub> = Complainant

X<sub>8</sub> = Judge

X<sub>9</sub> = Prior Offense Record

X<sub>10</sub> = Offense Type

\*Indicates coefficients that are not significant at or less than the .05 significance level.

TABLE 2

CONDITIONAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL FACTORS AND CASE  
DISPOSITION WHEN OFFENSE TYPE IS HELD CONSTANT

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>Case Disposition</u>	<u>Original Correlation</u>	<u>Offense Type</u>	<u>Conditional Correlation</u>
Sex		.118	Felony	.107
			Misdemeanor	.117
			Status Offense	.106
Race		.096	Felony	.166
			Misdemeanor	.102
			Status Offense	.148
School Enrollment		.185	Felony	.248
			Misdemeanor	.224
			Status Offense	.134
Home Situation		.074	Felony	.132
			Misdemeanor	.118
			Status Offense	.124
Socioeconomic Status		.089	Felony	.132
			Misdemeanor	.111
			Status Offense	.111
Complainant		.177	Felony	.106
			Misdemeanor	.103
			Status Offense	.129
Judge		.159	Felony	.187
			Misdemeanor	.145
			Status Offense	.269

TABLE 3  
 CONDITIONAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL FACTORS AND CASE  
 DISPOSITION WHEN PRIOR RECORD IS HELD CONSTANT

<u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>Case Disposition</u>	<u>Original Correlation</u>	<u>Prior Offense</u>	<u>Conditional Correlation</u>
Sex		.118	None	.162
			One	.132
			Two or More	.045
Race		.096	None	.138
			One	.061
			Two or More	.109
School Enrollment		.185	None	.245
			One	.163
			Two or More	.214
Home Situation		.074	None	.118
			One	.076
			Two or More	.179
Socioeconomic Status		.089	None	.104
			One	.131
			Two or More	.128
Complainant		.177	None	.153
			One	.187
			Two or More	.138
Judge		.159	None	.108
			One	.253
			Two or More	.356

FOOTNOTES

1. The available evidence raises serious questions regarding the extent to which the issues posed by Gault, Kent, and Winship have been effectively and properly resolved rather than simply circumvented by the revised policies and procedures implemented by many juvenile court jurisdictions. (Lefstein, et al., 1969; Reason, 1970; Dufee and Siegel, 1971; and Chused, 1973).
2. Our emphasis on inconsistent and contradictory findings with regard to the associations between social factors and case dispositions should not be taken as an indication that legal factors have been consistently good predictors. Positive relationships have generally been noted between seriousness of offense and severity of sanctions (Terry, 1967a; Ferdinand and Luchterhand, 1970; Scarpitti and Stephenson, 1971; Keiter, 1973; Sieverdes, 1973; Thornberry, 1973), but there are exceptions to this (Lerman, 1971; Ferster and Courtless, 1972; Culbertson, 1973). Our review of the relevant literature reveals only one legal factor that is a consistent predictor of judicial decision-making: prior offense record (Terry, 1967a; Scarpitti and Stephenson, 1971; Ferster and Courtless, 1972; Chused, 1973; Pawlak, 1973; Sieverdes, 1973; Thornberry, 1973).
3. Cramer's C, a chi-square measure of association when the independent and/or dependent variables are nominal level measures, is employed in this analysis. This statistic is

analogous to the somewhat more familiar contingency coefficient. The maximum value of contingency coefficients, however, is influenced by the number of rows and columns in a contingency table. In a 2 X 2 table, for example, the maximum value of a contingency coefficient is .707. Cramer's C includes a correction factor for the dimensions of the table being examined, a correction that allows it to vary from 0 to 1.0 and that allows comparisons of coefficients of association between tables which have unequal numbers of rows and columns.

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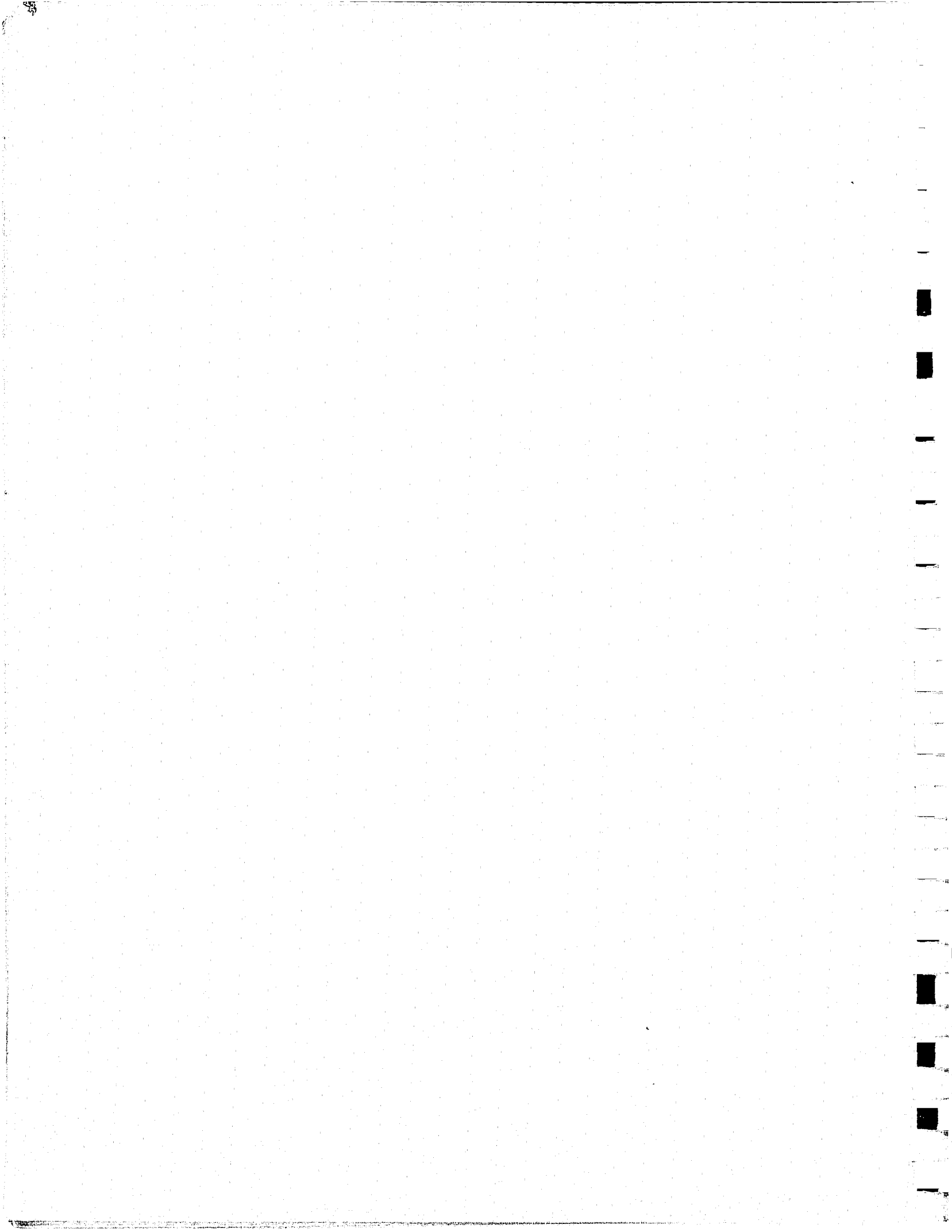
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