Venezuela

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THE INTERNATIONAL SELF-REPORT SURVEY ON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: **VENEZUELA**

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INTRODUCTION

The production of comprehensive and reliable data for criminological research is largely, although not entirely, determined by a country's level of wealth and institutional development. Thus, it has for long been an observation in comparative criminology that data are relatively abundant for the wealthy nations of the world and relatively sparse for the rest. For example, the International Crime Victim Survey has one or more national samples for countries in Western Europe and the New World, but only single city samples for many other countries. The first International Self-Report Survey on Juvenile Delinquency was likewise confined to countries with sufficient resources and research traditions to collect the data (see, generally, Newman, 1999).

Venezuela is typical of many other Latin American countries in that it has a relatively low rate of data production in criminology and makes only rare appearances in international studies. Accordingly, the announcement of plans to undertake a second international self-report survey on juvenile delinquency provided a good opportunity to collect valid and reliable data on juvenile delinquency in a Latin American country, thereby adding an interesting and geographically distinct case to the ISRD-2 sample of countries.

A survey instrument as comprehensive as that used in the ISRD-2 study allows the exploration of many different sets of variables relating to the possible causes of juvenile delinquency and responses to it. However, it is impossible to undertake a detailed analysis of all these variables in a preliminary report such as this. Accordingly, in this chapter we present and discuss the first results from the ISRD-2 survey in Venezuela, focusing on the prevalence of delinquent behaviors and some of its correlates. Rather than developing our analysis within the confines of a pre-selected theoretical framework, we proceed inductively by paying most attention to those variables showing the strongest associations with delinquent behavior. Many of those variables describe what we initially identify as disorderly environments, but on closer inspection the latter can be narrowed down to deviant peers. As we indicate in the conclusion to this chapter, deviant peer groups and deviant peers may have explanatory value for the study of individual delinquent behavior, and warrant further exploration. Our case study is prefaced with a description of Venezuela and the data collection procedures that were used.

VENEZUELA

Venezuela is a South American country of 27.5 million inhabitants (INE, 2007a) that stretches from the Amazonian basin and Guiana Highlands in the south, across the Orinoco basin and the Andean or coastal mountain ranges to the Caribbean in the north. From the Sixteenth Century onwards it was colonized by the Spanish and attained its formal independence from Spain in 1830. Three racial groups met and mixed during and after that time: the indigenous tribes that had lived in the territory since long before Columbus arrived, the Caucasians who colonized it, and the Africans who were brought in as slaves up to the mid-Nineteenth Century. Racial categories have grown blurred over time and their social significance has been attenuated, although it has not disappeared: currently, two thirds of the population are considered to be *mestizo* (a mixture of indigenous and Caucasian blood) (PDVSA, 1997).

The rural, agrarian-based, economy of the Nineteenth Century was rapidly transformed during the Twentieth Century with the discovery of oil. Venezuela is the ninth largest oil producer in the world, and the fifth largest exporter (EIA 2007); oil accounts for about 30% of the GDP, 50% of government income (CIA 2007) and 85% of the country's export earnings (ECLAC 2006). Following an unprecedented period of prosperity in the 1960s and 1970s, the economy went into sharp decline in the 1980s, with rising levels of poverty and inequality. However, the resurgence of oil prices during the first years of the new millennium, coupled with more social spending by the government, has done something to reverse this situation (Crespo 2006, WIDER 2007). Currently, Venezuela's gross domestic product (GDP) is slightly

above the average for Latin American countries, but only about one seventh of the GDP of the wealthiest countries in the world (World Bank, 2007).

During the second half of the Twentieth Century population growth was quite rapid[2] and was accompanied by a shift to urban areas. Currently, 87% of the population lives in settlements of more than 2,500 inhabitants (INE, 2007b). One result of population growth is that Venezuela is a young country: 33% of the population is under 15 years old, 63% is between 15 and 64 years old, while only 4% is 65 or older (INE, 2002). Correspondingly, Venezuelan children grow up in quite large households, nearly half of which comprise four to six people (INE, 2006). Children also grow up under a diversity of family arrangements: of the nearly six million households in the country, 37% are headed by married couples, 32% by couples who are cohabiting,[3] 22% by women and the rest (9%) by men (INE, 2006).

Venezuela has almost eliminated illiteracy - it was estimated at 6.4% in 2001 (INE, 2002) - and is close to achieving universal education for its young people. Almost 100% of children and adolescents in the ages corresponding to "Basic Education" (First through Ninth Grades, 6 to 14 years old) are in school, and official figures show a dropout rate of only 3.9% for the school year 2004/05 (INE, 2007c). Many adolescents continue for a further two years ("Diversified Education") to complete their secondary education, but fewer go on to university. Nevertheless, overall in 2001 two thirds of the population aged 7 to 24 was studying (INE, 2002). Once young people leave school or university, the prospects in the labor market are not bright. Not only is the official unemployment rate quite high - 16.8% in 2006 (World Bank, 2007) – but about half of employed people are working in the informal sector (characterized by low wages, instability and a lack of welfare benefits) (INE, 2006). Thus, despite the relatively abundant oil income, poverty is widespread: one third of the population is classified as poor (household income does not cover basic expenditures) and one tenth lives in "extreme poverty" (income does not cover the cost of food) (INE, 2006).

While people often cite unemployment as the country's most pressing problem, crime has recently taken the lead, according to an ongoing national opinion survey (PROVEA, 2006). Over the last 20 years, reported crime rates have been broadly stable, but there have been notable exceptions for certain kinds of violent crime (CONAREPOL, 2006; Crespo, 2006). During the 1990s, murder rates doubled from 13 to 25 per 100,000 inhabitants and then nearly doubled again to 44/100,000 by 2003, decreasing to 37/100,000 by 2005 (PROVEA, 2006). Since 2000, kidnappings have also increased rapidly, from 67 to 206 per year (PROVEA, 2006). While not the most violent of Latin American countries (Brazil, Colombia and El Salvador have the highest rates), Venezuela is above the average (Londoño, Gaviria & Guerrero, 2000) and its capital city (Caracas) has markedly higher rates than the rest of the country (Briceño-León & Pérez Perdomo, 2002). The level of serious violence in Venezuela is also much higher than that in Western Europe and North America. Recent high profile abduction and murder cases have generated considerable levels of concern for personal safety (Birkbeck and Gabaldón, 2009).

DATA COLLECTION

The project team elected to use the city-based sampling strategy proposed by the ISRD-2 Steering Committee. The large urban area chosen was Caracas, located in the coastal mountains in the centre of the country and with an estimated population (in 2001) of 2,758,917 (INE, 2007d). The medium-sized urban area chosen was the city of Mérida, located in the western, Andean, region of the country and with an estimated population (in 2000) of 300,000 (GBV, 2006a). Finally, three small urban areas were chosen for their relative accessibility for the research team from either the large or medium-sized city: Altagracia de Orituco (approximately 42,000 inhabitants in 2000 (GBV, 2006b)), which is located to the south east of Caracas in Guárico State; Lagunillas (approximately 20,000 inhabitants (GBV, 2006a), 20 kilometers outside of Mérida; and San Casimiro, a small town of less than 15,000 inhabitants (GBV, 2006c) located in Aragua State to the south best of Caracas.[4]

The target sample size was 2,150 students, aiming for 700 students each in Caracas and Mérida, and 250 students each in Altagracia de Orituco, Lagunillas and San Casimiro. An estimated global non-response rate of 40% was factored in, to cover for the loss of respondents through a variety of causes: the refusal of schools to participate in the survey, the unavailability of a class during the days on which the

survey team visited the school, student absences from class on the day or time when the survey was administered, and blank or unusable questionnaires.[5] Thus, the initial sample size would be approximately 3,600 students. No stratification variables were used.

The target population for the survey were students in 7th, 8th and 9th grades of Basic Education (ages generally ranging between 12 and 15). Students were to be sampled by the "section" (i.e., class) they were enrolled in, and in order to generate a complete listing of classes for the purposes of sample selection, information (in Excel files) was obtained from the Ministry of Education's regional offices on all schools and all classes at 7th, 8th and 9th grade levels in the urban areas chosen for the study. After checking and cleaning this data, the ISRD Survey Manager tool was used to generate a random sample of classes. A total of 125 classes at 69 schools were selected, giving an estimated student population of 3,811. With a 40% non-response rate, the final sample size was projected to be 2,286 students.

The questionnaire used in the survey was the standard version developed by the Steering Committee and contained no additional country-specific questions. The questionnaire was translated into Spanish by a team of four students who are fluent in English. This draft was then reviewed by the Venezuelan team leader (who is bilingual, and whose task was to check for any errors in translation). No major language problems were detected that required the modification or elimination of questions, or response options, from the standard version of the questionnaire. Because computers are not widely available in Venezuelan schools, the questionnaire was designed to be administered in a paper version.

The fieldwork was carried out by a team of fully trained researchers and undergraduate students from the Universidad de Los Andes in the city of Mérida, who also traveled to the other urban areas included in the sample. Data collection began on April 24 2006 and ended on May 12. Because parental consent forms were not used, the key factor determining overall response rates to the survey was participation or non-participation at school level. Of the 69 schools included in the sample, 47 (68%) agreed to participate. Generally, a school did not participate because of a flat refusal from the Director or because of difficulties in arranging for the survey during the time allotted for the fieldwork.

In the schools that agreed to participate in the survey, cooperation was usually very good at all levels: the director and associate personnel, the teachers and the students themselves. Teachers helped the interview teams to get the class group ready for survey administration, and in the great majority of cases the class groups were orderly and filled out the survey instrument in silence. Many students appeared to take the survey very seriously, and often expressed their interest in its content to project staff.[6] However, many students also commented (either to the interview team or on the instrument itself) that they felt the survey to be very long.[7] When the instruments were subsequently transcribed for data processing, it became apparent that a considerable number of students experienced either difficulty or tedium as they answered the questionnaire. This suggests that the survey instrument was not completely attuned to the experience, capability and attention span of Venezuelan students. It would be interesting, and important, to explore alternative formats for the application of this kind of survey in the Venezuelan context.

Non-participation by schools eliminated 877 students, leaving an estimated total of 2,934 students in the schools that agreed to participate in the survey. In all, 2,395 usable questionnaires were collected (in 94 classes), indicating a loss of 18% of students due to absence or non-participation in the survey. The response rate was 82% of students at schools that agreed to participate in the survey and 62% of the students at all schools. This means that the overall non-response rate for the original sample was 38% (very close to the estimated figure – 40% - that was used in sample calculation). Table 1 shows student response rates by city. These were highest for Lagunillas and Mérida and lowest for Altagracia de Orituco and Caracas. In Altagracia de Orituco the low response rate was largely determined by the failure to locate two of the five schools in the sample,[8] while in Caracas the response rate was affected mainly by the absence of school directors or by a greater insistence on the need to obtain authorization for the survey from the Ministry of Education.

Table 1 about here

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the lifetime and recent prevalence of delinquent and other problem behaviors for the whole sample, and broken down by Caracas/other urban areas. What is most striking about these results is that the prevalence of most delinquent behaviors is very low, especially during the recent period (the previous twelve months for all behaviors except drug use, for which "recent" refers to the previous four weeks). For example, only 4.3% of respondents reported ever having shoplifted (only 1.5% during the previous twelve months) and only 1.3% had ever used marijuana. Overall, these results are quite similar to those found in previous surveys on drug use and delinquency in Venezuela using localized samples and different questionnaires (Birkbeck, 1995), and they suggest that deviant behavior, particularly serious deviant behavior, is not very frequent among Venezuelan adolescents.

Table 2 about here

The most frequent behavior recorded was downloading music or films from internet, but this must be interpreted in terms of a culture of contraband that prevails in Venezuela, where pirate copies of music, films and software are readily and cheaply available from street vendors. Thus, downloading music or films is generally seen as both normal and acceptable and it is difficult to consider it as a deviant behavior.[9] Among the clearly delinquent behaviors measured in the survey, the highest prevalence was found for group fighting (16.1% lifetime prevalence), followed by damaging something on purpose (7.7%), shoplifting (4.3%) and carrying a weapon (4.2%). On almost all measures, the prevalence for Caracas respondents was higher than for respondents in other urban areas, but not greatly so.

In order to examine variables associated with involvement in delinquent behavior, a summary measure of prevalence was calculated. For reasons stated above, computer offences were not included in this measure; however, in contrast to some other countries in the ISRD-2 project, marijuana use was included because it is considered a deviant behavior in Venezuela and generally thought to be a crime.[10] The summary measure of prevalence was scored 1 if the respondent reported one or more of the behaviors listed in Table 2 (except computer offences) during the previous twelve months (or previous four weeks for drug offences), and 0 if they reported none of them. Overall, 11.2% of the sample had a prevalence score of 1 and represents the group of adolescents (which we will call "delinquents") that is of particular interest for this project. In the following analyses, we compare this group with the rest of the sample ("non-delinquents") in order to identify variables that are significantly associated with the probability of being delinquent. We use contingency tables and the chi-square statistic to identify significant variables and Cramér's *V* to assess the strength of the association between the variables.

Table 3 shows the results for socio-demographic variables. In common with other studies of crime and delinquency, boys in the sample were more likely than girls to have engaged in delinquent behaviors (15.8% versus 6.8%), but unlike many other studies age was not associated with delinquent behavior.[11] Family living arrangements were not significantly associated with engagement in delinquent behavior and thus it made no difference whether adolescents lived with their mothers and fathers, their mothers only, or with other people (for example, with mother and stepfather, with father only, or with grandparents). The marked matricentric character of most Venezuelan households means that, irrespective of the specific composition of the family group, children are almost always brought up by a significant female (usually the mother, but possibly the grandmother or an aunt). Finally, a simple measure of socio-economic level[12] shows some rather surprising results, in that adolescents from homes with greater material provision were more likely to report recent engagement in delinquent behaviors. Perhaps a greater feeling of empowerment among the students from wealthier backgrounds is accompanied by a greater disposition to misbehave.

Table 3 about here

When variables measuring family interactions, school and neighborhood are examined, the results are rather mixed. For brevity, Table 4 shows a sample of such variables, with two drawn from each category. Whether or not students got along with their mothers/stepmothers was not significantly

associated with recent involvement in delinquent behavior; neither was the frequency with which students undertook leisure activities with their parents. Other variables measuring family interactions were either unrelated or weakly related to delinquent behavior.

Table 4 about here

By contrast, dissatisfaction with school and truancy were both quite strongly associated with involvement in delinquent behavior. The prevalence of delinquency was nearly twice as great among students who did not like school. Similarly, as truancy increased so did delinquent behavior: one quarter of students who had skipped class three or more times during the previous twelve months had been involved in delinquency. Most of the other variables in the survey that measure attitudes to school, or the school environment, were significantly associated with the prevalence of delinquency.

Finally, variables measuring attitudes towards the neighborhood were generally unrelated, or only weakly related, to the prevalence of delinquency. For example, when students reported that people in their neighborhoods do not get along, the probability of involvement in delinquent behavior was significantly higher (although not greatly so). However, whether or not neighbors notice and talk about the students' own bad behavior was not related to participation in delinquency, a type of finding that was similar for several other variables measuring neighborhood interaction. The exception to this pattern was found for variables measuring the presence of crime and deviance in the neighborhood, all of which were associated with a greater prevalence of delinquent behavior. Similarly, variables describing delinquent behavior in schools were also associated with a higher prevalence of delinquency among respondents, as was one variable describing family deviance (parents had problems with drugs or alcohol). These findings, some of which are summarized in Table 5, point to the considerable relationship between disorderly environments and the subject's own delinquent behavior, a process that we examine in more detail in the next section.

Table 5 about here

Disorderly Environments

The results exemplified in Table 5 indicate that when adolescents perceived themselves to be in family, school or neighborhood settings where there is crime and deviance, they were more likely to report their own involvement in delinquent behavior. For example, respondents reporting a parent with alcohol or drug problems were nearly twice as likely to have engaged in delinquent behavior. Similarly, respondents reporting more crime at school or in the neighborhood were more likely to have been delinquents themselves.

Another setting of great importance to personal behavior is the peer group, and the results from the survey indicate that when respondents were more actively engaged with peers, and when the peer group showed greater levels of deviant or delinquent behavior, respondents also showed higher frequencies of involvement in delinquent behavior, sometimes considerably more. Table 6 shows that when respondents spent most of their free time on their own, the prevalence for recent delinquency was 10.4%, but when they spent it with a relatively large group of friends, the prevalence was 19.0%. When respondents reported that they did not spend time with a particular group of friends the prevalence for recent delinquency was 5.0%, but when they did spend time with a specific group of friends, the prevalence was 13.6%. When respondents reported that people in the group did not do illegal things together, the prevalence for recent delinquency was 10.6%, but when the group did illegal things the prevalence jumped to 40.5%. Similarly, when respondents did not consider their group of friends to be a gang, the prevalence for delinquency was 11.1%, but when the group of friends was considered to be a gang the prevalence of delinquency was 27.3%. Not surprisingly, when respondents reported that group activities included deviant or delinquent behavior, their own involvement in delinquency was greater. For example, when the peer group never used alcohol or drugs, respondents' prevalence for delinquency was 9.2%, but when the peer group used alcohol or drugs, the prevalence jumped to a startling 53.7%. When the peer group did not vandalize things just for fun, the prevalence was 8.5%, but when it did, the prevalence was 30.4%.[13]

Table 6 about here

These last results might appear somewhat tautological in that, if the respondent has engaged in delinquent behavior, then by definition the peer group will have engaged in delinquent behavior. However, it is clear from the last two contingency tables in Table 6 that there is no perfect overlap between the peer group's behavior and the respondent's behavior: not all respondents who engaged in delinquent behavior belonged to delinquent groups, while many respondents who belonged to delinquent groups did not report delinquent behavior.[14] Moreover, additional data shows that much delinquent behavior was a group activity and not simply the work of the respondent. Table 7 shows the proportion of most recent incidents in which respondents reported that peers were also involved. For vandalism and most property crimes the proportion of incidents involving both the respondent and peers was between two thirds and four fifths. The exception was pickpocketing, where only 23.1% of incidents also involved peers, a finding which may be explained by the fact that pickpocketing is a crime of particular stealth for which large groups of confederates may be a hindrance. In general, however, delinquent acts involved joint participation by respondents and their peers.

Table 7 about here

A final aspect contributing to disorderly environments is the experience of victimization. Table 8 shows the recent prevalence of four types of victimization (robbery/extortion, assault, theft and bullying) for the whole sample, for Caracas and for the other urban areas. Rates of victimization were quite low, except for theft (affecting about one quarter of the sample), and – as is to be expected - rates for Caracas were somewhat higher than in the other urban areas. Overall, 29.8% of the total sample reported being victimized by any of these behaviors; about half being victimized once and the rest more than once. Results from a contingency table (not included here for reasons of space) show that when respondents were not victimized, the prevalence for delinquency was 7.8%; when they were victimized once, the prevalence rose to 14.1%; and when victimized more than once, the prevalence rose to 18.9% (p = .000, V = .132). The data in the current study do not indicate the temporal sequence of victimization and delinquent behavior, so no causality can be inferred. The most that can be said is that adolescents with a greater prevalence of delinquency moved in environments where personal victimization was also more frequent.

Table 8 about here

Because the preceding results involve bivariate analysis, it is possible that some of the significant associations between variables hide simpler underlying patterns of association. For example, the prevalence rates for delinquency were higher among respondents who were more likely to say that there was a lot of crime and related deviant behavior in their schools and neighborhoods; but prevalence was also higher for respondents who had themselves been victimized. It is therefore possible that the experience of victimization led respondents to perceive more crime in their schools or neighborhoods. Thus, the perceived level of crime in schools and neighborhoods might not be unrelated to the experience of victimization, such that at bivariate level each variable shows a significant association with the prevalence of delinquency, although one of these variables may have a more direct influence on prevalence than the other. In order to test for this possibility, and to identify the variables with a direct influence on prevalence, multivariate analysis is required. In this case, with a dichotomous dependent variable measuring prevalence (0 = No recent delinquency, 1 = Recent delinquency), logistic regression was used to test for significant associations with variables previously considered in this chapter. Initially, several different models were tried in order to identify variables that showed the strongest associations with delinquency at multivariate level. Except for two variables (gender and socioeconomic level), models using socio-demographic variables did not perform well, which is to be expected from the bivariate results presented previously. Similarly, a model examining attitudes to, and experiences in, education showed that only liking/disliking

school and truancy were associated with delinquency. Models using variables that capture disorderly environments did much better, although many variables that showed significant associations with delinquency at the bivariate level ceased to show them in the multivariate model. Given the limitations on space, we here present and briefly discuss the results from a final composite multivariate model (including both socio-demographic variables and variables measuring disorderly environments), which illustrates the pattern of findings that emerges from the data. [15]

Table 9 shows that in multivariate analysis several variables measuring the disorderly environment continue to be significant predictors of self-reported delinquency, together with two socio-demographic variables.[16] When activities with friends involved the use of alcohol and drugs, vandalism and the frightening/annoying of other people, respondents were more likely to report their own delinquent behavior.[17] The odds ratios (Exp(b) in the table) show that when group activities involved a lot of alcohol or drugs, the odds of respondents' own delinquent behavior increased threefold, while group acts of vandalism increased the odds by two and half times. Similarly, when respondents had friends who used drugs or committed robberies, they were more than twice as likely to report delinquency. Note, therefore, that group engagement in delinquent behaviors and having friends who engaged in delinquent behaviors were partially separate influences on the probability of the respondent's own delinquent behaviour.

Interestingly, all of the variables measuring perceptions of delinquency and deviance in the school and neighborhood cease to show a significant relationship with self-reported delinquency, indicating that the bivariate relationships detected previously are accounted for by other variables in the model. Likewise, attachment to school and truant behavior are not associated with delinquency, although truant behavior comes close to significance.

The number of victimizations continues to be significantly associated with respondents' own delinquency: each victimization incident increases the odds of delinquency by 45%. Of the socio-demographic variables, gender continues to be a significant predictor of delinquency, with males being almost twice as likely as females to report delinquency in the survey. Socioeconomic level is also significant, although its influence is quite weak: each point of increment is associated with a 7.8% increase in the odds of delinquency. Finally, a control variable specifying the urban area where respondents live does not show a significant relationship with the prevalence of delinquency. Thus, the somewhat higher prevalence of delinquent behaviors in the capital city is accounted for by variables other than the size of the urban area.

Overall, the results of multivariate analysis suggest that the initial concept of the disorderly environment can be narrowed to that of disorderly peers or, to phrase it rather differently, deviant groups and deviant peers. Male adolescents who spend their time with groups that engage in deviant or delinquent acts, or who have peers that engage in those acts, are more likely to be deviant themselves. Part of the deviant experience also involves being a victim. Indeed, it may well be that in this kind of context there is sometimes no clear distinction between offenders and victims.

CONCLUSION

In general, Venezuelan secondary school students appear to have quite low levels of delinquency, especially serious delinquency, or at least a low disposition to report such behaviors in a survey.[18] Setting aside computer activities (because downloading music or films is considered relatively normal in Venezuela, while the term "hacking" was misunderstood), the most frequent delinquent behavior reported in the survey was group fighting (16.1% lifetime prevalence), but for all other behaviors the lifetime prevalence was less than 10%, for most it was less than 5% and for many it was under 1%. Given the other results presented here, it is perhaps not surprising that *group* fighting was the most frequent type of delinquent behavior reported, because the activities of the peer group were strongly associated with the adolescent's own level of involvement in delinquent and deviant behaviors.

While bivariate analysis identifies many significant variables, which describe adolescents' interactions with peers, the nature of peer group activity, the perceptions of crime and deviance in the school or neighborhood, and the experience of victimization, multivariate analysis reveals that it is the deviant nature of peer and peer group activity, together with victimization, which (along with gender and socioeconomic level) emerge as the significant predictors of delinquent behavior. There is, of course, some

overlap here because the adolescent's own delinquent behavior when with a group would make the group delinquent. However, the fact that many (often most) of the recent acts captured by the survey were reported as being committed with peers (rather than simply with peers *present*) suggests that this is not merely a case of the respondent's actions defining those of the group, but that the dynamics of delinquent behavior grow out of interactions within the group. Much delinquency is therefore to be considered a group phenomenon rather than individual behavior. Thus, the proximity of the two sets of behaviors – those of the individual and those of the group – should be treated less as analytical redundancy and more as an invitation to reflect on the complex interactions between adolescents and their peers in the genesis of delinquency and deviance.

The "group nature" of delinquency is one of the most firmly established findings in research, at least in the United States, although its specific characteristics remain largely unstudied and their theoretical significance strongly debated (e.g., Erickson & Jensen, 1977; Warr, 1996). The findings presented here are an invitation to explore the data from our ISRD-2 study in greater depth and, eventually, to conduct additional research to try and illuminate these matters. Such an enterprise is of particular importance in Venezuela where, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., del Olmo, 1979), the analytical focus has been overwhelmingly on the individual juvenile delinquent.

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Table 1: Student response rates by city			
City/Town	Estimated Total of Students in Sample	Number of students Participating in the Survey	Response Rate
Caracas	1,174	614	52.2%
Mérida	1,223	889	72.6%
A. de Orituco	474	192	40.5%
Lagunillas	449	358	79.7%
San Casimiro	506	342	67.5%
Total	3,826	2,395	62.5%

|Table 2: Lifetime and Recent Prevalence of Delinquency and Other Problem Behaviors by: Total Sam
| |Total Sample (n = 2395) |Caracas (n = 614)
|Behaviour | |
| |Lifetime |Last Year |Lifetime |Last Year
|Damaged Something on Purpose
|Carrying a Weapon
|Downloaded Music or Films
|Sold Drugs |1.2 |5.9 |0.8
|Used Marijuana

|Table No. 3: Socio-demographic variables and recent delinquency
|Variable |Gender |Age |Family Living Arrangements |S
| |[N = 2,372] |[N = 2,390] |[N = 2,361] |[
| | | | | |
| |M |F |? 12 |1
| |% |% |% |%
|V (Cramér) |.142 |.051 |.028 |,
|Notes : Notes: unweighted data, contingency tables based on valid cases only.
|a Socio-economic level is calculated by giving 1 point for each of the following: has own room;
|phone; family has a car. Minimum score = 0; maximum score = 4.

|Table No. 4: Family, School, Neighborhood and recent delinquency
Variables					
	|How do you usually get				
		along with your		Leisure		Do you usually	Skipped school for a
		mother/stepmother?		activities with		like school?	day (last 12 months)
		[N=2,347]		parents		[N = 2,379]	[N = 2,376]
			|[N= 2,358]			
					|Not well/Is	
					|not around |At least once a week
				Rather well		%	%
	|Just fine	|%			
	|%					
V (Cramér)		.023		.014		.079	.153
Notes: unweighted data, contingency tables based on valid cases only.

|Table No. 5: Disorderly environments and recent delinquency
|Variables |Has one of your parents had problems with alcohol or drugs? [N = 1,515] |There is a lot of stealing in my school [N = 2,251] |There is a lot of fighting in my school [N = 2,222] |There is crime in neighbou [N = 2,2
| | |Yes |No |Agree |Disagree
| | |% |% |% |%
|V (Cramér) |.078 |.097 |.117 |.082
|Notes: unweighted data, contingency tables based on valid cases only.

|Table No. 6: Peer groups and recent delinquency
|Variables |With whom do you spend most of your time? [N = 2,368] |Do you have a certain group of friends that you spend time with? [N = 2,302] |Do people in your group actually do illegal things together? [N = 1,729] |Do you consid your group of friends to be gang? [N = 1,731]
| | | | | |With larger
| | | | |With 1-3 friends|group of frie
| |On my own |With family | | |
| |% |% |% |%
| | | | | |
|V (Cramér) |.136 |.116 |.261 |.171
|Notes: unweighted data, contingency tables based on valid cases only.

Table No. 7: Proportion of Most Recent Incidents Also Involving Peers		
Activity	No. of Respondents with Recent Prevalence	% of Most Recent Incidents Also Involving Peersa
Damaged something on purpose	80	82.7
Shoplifting	33	66.6
Burglary	6	84.8
Bicycle Theft	7	85.0
Car Theft	5	65.5
Stole from Car	10	62.8
Pickpocketing	18	23.1
Robbery	25	62.5
Assault	23	44.1
Sold Drugs	15	46.8
Used Marijuana	11	64.9
Used XTC or Speed	6	31.5
Used Cocaine or Heroin	4	50.0
a Refers to most recent incident.		

Table No. 8: Last Year Prevalences of Victimization and Reporting to the Police by: Total Sample		
	Total Sample [n = 2395]	Caracas [n = 614]
Type of Victimization		

Table No. 9: Multivariate Logistic Regression – Dependent: Recent Prevalence of Delinquency [n = 1,525 (63.7% of total sample)]		
Variable (and contrast category)	Sig.	Exp(B)
We drink or use drugs (vs. never)	.001	3.077
We vandalize things (vs. never)	.000	2.673
We shoplift (vs. never)	.963	1.029
We frighten/annoy other people (vs. never)	.007	1.719
I have friends who use drugs (vs. none)	.006	2.124
I have friends who shoplift (vs. none)	.197	1.414
I have friends who commit burglaries (vs. none)	.308	.596
I have friends who commit robberies (vs. none)	.005	2.412
I have friends who assault people (vs. none)	.195	1.525
There’s a lot of stealing in my school (vs. I disagree)	.501	1.156
There’s a lot of fighting in my school (vs. I disagree)	.036	1.606
There’s a lot of vandalism in my school (vs. I disagree)	.860	1.039
There’s a lot of drug use in my school (vs. I disagree)	.826	.946
There’s a lot of crime in my neighborhood (vs. I disagree)	.607	1.130
There’s a lot of drug selling in my neighborhood (vs. I disagree)	.191	1.383
There’s a lot of fighting in my neighborhood (vs. I disagree)	.149	.698
Number of victimizations (continuous)	.001	1.451
I like my school (vs. I do not like it)	.239	1.435
No. of times skipped school (ordinal)	.016	1.386
Gender: male (vs. female)	.001	1.920
Age (contrast = 16 or more)		
Up to 12	.034	2.365
13	.851	1.072
14	.101	1.747
15	.968	1.015
Family Arrangements (contrast = other)		
Living with mother and father	.266	.781
Living with mother only	.618	.869
Socioeconomic level (continuous variable)	.002	1.078
Urban area: Caracas (vs. Other)	.716	1.093
Unweighted data. Nagelkerke R2 = .303		

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[2] For example, the rate of population growth during the 1990s was 2.3% per year (INE, 2007b).

[3] Cohabitation (called *concubinato* or *unión libre* in Venezuela) is more frequent among the poor and generally less enduring than marriage.

[4] Care was taken in the selection of small cities that are not dormitory settlements for medium or large cities. Altagracia de Orituco is three hours' drive from Caracas and is a small administrative centre in a predominantly agricultural zone. Lagunillas is a small commercial centre in an agricultural zone and has only a few residents who commute to work, or to the university, in the nearby city of Mérida. San Casimiro, approximately one hour's drive from the nearest city (Maracay) and two and a half hours' drive from Caracas, is also located in an agricultural zone.
[5] Parental consent forms were not used. These are almost unknown in Venezuelan survey research. However, students were given the opportunity not to participate in the survey by simply leaving the instrument blank and handing it in with all the others.
[6] In countries with a strong research tradition (i.e., Western Europe and the New World), surveys of school students are quite frequent and must be programmed with care to avoid collision or overload. This does not happen in Venezuela: surveys of school students are still quite rare, particularly in rural areas. This worked to the research team's favor because the data collection was a quite unusual or novel experience, both for school personnel and students, which helped to stimulate curiosity about the survey and a willingness to participate.
[7] Students took an average of 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire, with some finishing in 30 minutes and others taking as long as an hour.
[8] Similarly, one of the schools selected for the sample in Lagunillas could not be located. Project personnel did not query the Ministry of Education about these cases because over the years there have been scandals involving "ghost schools" in which the physical plant and students are non-existent but the payroll is definitely functioning. In other words, ghost schools are a form of corruption. We do not here affirm that the non-existent schools in Lagunillas and Altagracia de Orituco fell into this category, but we felt that to question the Ministry about these cases might have led to the perception that we were undertaking an investigation into corruption, and this would have undoubtedly raised barriers to institutional access for the project.
[9] The data on hacking should also be treated cautiously, but for a different reason. The term hacking was translated using the Hispanicised slang (*hackear*) that is current among the cyber-literate in Venezuela, but many students (particularly in the small towns) did not know what it meant (as revealed by their questions in class) and appeared to think that it referred to chatting over the internet (which is usually referred to as *chatear* in Venezuela). Thus, the data on hacking are of dubious validity.
[10] Marijuana and the other drugs mentioned in the ISRD-2 survey are included in Venezuelan drug laws. For all these drugs, the law distinguishes between "personal use" and possession (with the implied intent to sell), trafficking, and so on. Personal use is not strictly a crime, although if detected it leads to criminal proceedings and a "sentence" to treatment (Venezuela, 2005).
[11] The finding on age is not, however, dissimilar to the findings from previous self-report surveys conducted in Venezuela (Birkbeck, 1995).
[12] Socioeconomic level was calculated by assigning 1 point for each of the following: respondent has own room at home; respondent has access to a computer at home; respondent owns a mobile phone; and family owns a car. The minimum score would therefore be 0 and the maximum score would be 4.
[13] Similar results were found for shoplifting and frightening/annoying other people. When respondents reported that their peer groups engaged in those behaviors, the prevalence of self-reported delinquency was significantly higher.
[14] Similar results were found when specific types of delinquent behavior were compared (e.g., groups use of alcohol/drugs with respondent's use of alcohol drugs; group's shoplifting with respondent's shoplifting), so these findings are not simply an artifact of the cumulative measure of delinquency reported here. Respondents were also asked if they had friends that used drugs, shoplifted, or committed burglary, robbery or assault. In all cases, having friends who are delinquent was significantly associated with a greater probability of the respondent's own delinquency, but the overlap was not complete.
[15] The predictive power of logistic regression models is measured by goodness-of-fit statistics such as the Cox and Snell R^2 and the Nagelkerke R^2. The model discussed here has a Nagelkerke R^2 of .303, the highest for any of the models tested in the analysis.

[16] Given the relatively large sample size, the criterion for significance used here is $p < .01$.
[17] Note that shoplifting is an exception: peer group shoplifting is not associated with the respondent's *cumulative* delinquent behavior. Specific analyses of the data on shoplifting in the survey show a rather complex pattern. Table 7 shows that two thirds of recent shoplifting incidents were committed with peers, while additional bivariate analysis (not included in the tables) shows that approximately two thirds of shoplifters also said that their peer group did not shoplift. Although belonging to a peer group that shoplifts significantly increased the probability of the respondent's own shoplifting, it appears that much shoplifting, although committed with others, was not part of the activities in the respondent's regular peer group. The need for stealth in shoplifting may well militate against its emergence as a "collective" behavior.
[18] As in many countries, of course, the most serious delinquents may have dropped out of school or be in state residential facilities, so that they do not appear in samples drawn from ordinary educational institutions.