Early studies of juvenile delinquency in the United States were based largely on official statistics, police reports, and the observation of boys housed in correctional institutions, (Burgess 1952: 29-42; Shaw and McKay 1942; Cohen 1955: 37-44; Rapport Annuel 1960). Founded on this information are a host of theories of delinquency whose principle theme is that delinquency is found mainly among lower-class boys, that it is group-often gang-delinquency, subcultural, and often bellicose in quality, (Thrasher 1927; Cohen 1955; Cloward and Ohlin 1960; Miller 1958: 5-19; Yablonsky 1962). Until recently (Vaz 1967) little work has been conducted on delinquency among middle-class boys, and there existed the strong belief, based on official reports, in the inverse relationship between juvenile delinquency and social class. Recent findings leave the problem still unresolved. Data from the recent Short and Strodbeck research (1965: 164-171) tend to support early findings based on official information, yet most studies conducted on the differential distribution of undetected delinquencies by social class among adolescents have not uncovered significant differences, (Nye, Short, et al 1958: 318-329; Clark and Wenninger 1962: 826-834; Dentler and Monroe 1961: 733-734; Empey 1967: 30-31.). Of all the studies reported, those using official data reveal the greatest differences in delinquency among boys from different social strata. However it is important to note that these studies of undetected delinquency were conducted in relatively small cities and towns; what remains to be done is a large-scale study of the differential distribution of a wide variety of delinquent acts (using both official and self-reported material) by social class in a large city. Under these conditions one is more apt to find certain kinds of delinquency correlated with social strata.

Research concerning the nature of middle-class delinquency also remains
unsettled. Some researchers suggest that subcultures in the middle class emerge "for relatively petty delinquency", (Cloward and Ohlin 1960: 8). Vaz (1965: 52–70) has suggested that much middle-class delinquency is "sociable" in quality; although the Myerhoffs (1964: 328–336) refer to the "mischievous" component of middle-class "gang" delinquency, they also report the theft of expensive articles by these youths. Corroborating these findings is a study by Empey and Erickson (1965) who found that acts such as forgery, grand theft, breaking and entering, destroying property and arson were more often committed by middle than lower-class juveniles. Karacki and Toby (1962: 203–215) discovered fighting gangs that did not come from economically deprived homes. What these studies strongly suggest is that the traditional assumption of an inverse relationship between delinquency and social class is very likely more apparent than real.

Regarding research in non-English speaking countries, the comparative study of delinquency is just beginning (Cavan and Cavan 1968; Gibbens and Ahrenfeldt 1966.). Most of the European literature on delinquency describes it as basically a product of the lower classes (Council of Europe 1960). The study of the differential distribution of delinquent acts by social class remains unexplored. However one study of youth culture comparing the self-reported delinquent acts of Swiss and Canadian boys suggests that although a highly publicised youth culture is not yet evident among Swiss boys, and that even older Swiss boys remain parent oriented, they nonetheless report committing a considerable variety of delinquent acts (Vaz and Casparis 1971: 1–23).

The present paper tests the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social class and self-reported delinquent acts among Swiss boys in varying age groups. No effort is made to explain the etiology of the differentially distributed self-reported acts.

**Method and Sample Characteristics**

A questionnaire based on one previously used in a study of Canadian youth was revised, made applicable to the cultural context of Swiss adolescents and translated. Delinquent behavior was measured by an anonymous check list of twenty-three items included in the larger questionnaire, each item being a violation of Swiss law. Although the items cover a variety of delinquent acts, they do not include items such as rape, gang fights and armed robbery. We had no reason to believe, nor information to suggest, that such activities were meaningful to the particular area in which the study was conducted (Staub

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1 This was accomplished with the assistance of two German adolescents newly arrived in Canada who were familiar with the style of life of German and Swiss youth. Also, one of the authors is Swiss born, a native of the Graubuenden area, and educated in Switzerland.

2 Since very little sociological research on delinquency in Switzerland was found, our sources for background information are based on the personal experiences of one of the authors and on a twoyear reading of one of Switzerland’s major newspapers, the “Neue Zuercher Zeitung.”