The Flinders University of South Australia

*School of Social Sciences*

# A Report on a Study of Vandalism

## in
## Two Selected Regions
## in Adelaide

## by
## Allan Patience
## Senior Lecturer in Sociology

A REPORT ON A STUDY OF JUVENILE VANDALISM

IN TWO SELECTED REGIONS IN ADELAIDE

Allan Patience
Senior Lecturer in Sociology
School of Social Sciences
The Flinders University of South Australia
Bedford Park,   S.A.   5042
Australia

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## Acknowledgements

The difficult task of interviewing (the central part of the research) was performed with exemplary sensitivity and skill by Pamela McNeil and Robyn Schutte.

This report should be read in conjunction with the report by Robyn Schutte (Schutte, 1982) which is a comprehensive and intelligent reflection on part of the research.

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INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is - in very broad terms - the non-conformity of legally "irresponsible" adolescents to prevailing norms, customs and views on law and order in society. In the West the period of adolescence has come to be viewed as one of stress and crisis as children adjust themselves, and are required by the wider society to adjust, to adulthood. Some social scientists argue that this adjustment process - one in which recalcitrance, violence, bewilderment and anger are often displayed - is a consequence of an interplay of physical (hormonal development, the emergence of sex drives, physical growth) and cultural processes (e.g., Freeman, 1983; for a critique of Freeman see Patience and Smith, forthcoming). However, others who have been influenced by Margaret Mead's culturological studies of adolescence in non-Western societies (e.g., Mead, 1970; Mead, 1981) put almost total emphasis on cultural explanations for the storm and stress which seems endemic to most Western experiences of adolescence. It is within this latter persuasion that this report is framed.

Juvenile delinquency, then, can be viewed usefully as an extreme variant of a normal social process in most Western societies. Fluctuations in rates of juvenile offences may be seen primarily as responses to wider social structural transformations (e.g., unemployment rates, institutionalized schooling, modes of policing and demographic changes such as the aging of particular populations).

Juvenile delinquency has been viewed as a social problem in the West at least since Socrates was accused of encouraging classical Athenian youth to question even the most sacred of cows. More recently, however, it has become a favourite issue for our mass media magnates to whip up that old magical mixture of fear, lascivious thrills and loathing in the minds of their various allegedly at-risk audiences. For generations now, we have

had a number of experts claiming to detect worrying rises in rates of youthful rebelliousness and crime. For example, in the United States Paul Tappan noted that "the volume of [juvenile crime] cases more than doubled during the period from 1948 to 1958, while the child population increased a little more than twenty percent" (Tappan, 1960: 53). In Great Britain T.R. Fyvel, in the 1950s, identified a working class gang phenomenon among young people which was "characterized by a hostility towards authority in every form, which could flare into violence upon a trivial cause" (1961: 17).

A great deal of these sorts of analyses are based on a positivistic criminology – or sociology of deviant and criminal behaviour – which spends a great deal of its time preoccupied with narrowly defined empiricist parameters. Rates of juvenile crime are measured by a variety of statistical techniques: the conclusions reached tend to confirm the old addage that there are liars, damned liars and statistics. Depending on the refinement or otherwise of the statistical and empirical methodologies employed, so the rates of various kinds of disapproved behaviours vary among juveniles.

Indeed, apparent increases in delinquency rates may simply reflect improvements in methodological and statistical techniques.

A further problem with this positivistic criminological approach to juvenile delinquency is that it places too much emphasis on the criminal and insufficiently analyses the socio-legal system within which he or she acts. As David Matza puts it:

> The most celebrated and thus the most explicit assumption of positive criminology is the primacy of the criminal actor rather than the criminal law as the major point of departure in the construction of etiological theories. The explanation of crime, according to the positive school, may be found in the motivational and behavioural systems of criminals. Among

these systems, the law and its administration is deemed

secondary or irrelevant (Matza, 1964: 3).

This is not to deny that there is great social scientific value

in a comprehensive statistical account of crime trends and tendencies

among all sections of the population. The recent volume, by Rutter and

Giller, Juvenile Delinquency: Trends and Perspectives (1983) is an

excellent demonstration of precisely this point (cf. Wiatrowski,

et al., 1981). However, as Taylor, Walton and Young have suggested,

we need to locate behaviours like juvenile delinquency first in their

wider social origins, then we must look at their immediate origins,

before considering the behaviours themselves. Then we must consider

the immediate origins of social reaction to the behaviours and the

wider origins of those reactions. We must give an account of the outcome

of social reaction. This process will enable us to look at the "deviant

process as a whole" (Taylor, Walton and Young, 1973: 268-282).

Taylor, Walton and Young's prescriptions for a new criminology

are, however, persuasive but vague. Furthermore, they expect too much -

a grand theory buttressed by a massive amount of middle-level theorising

and empirical data - for one small study of juvenile delinquency to

encompass. While it may be useful to aim towards a fully social theory

of juvenile delinquency, time, space and financial limitations require a

more modest approach.

In Australia, criminological and deviance research is largely

positivistic. The overwhelming majority of case studies and analyses are

based on official statistics and positivist-empiricist research methodologies.

There is little evidence of an Australian social interactionist perspective

developing - despite the excellent volume of essays edited by Edwards and

Wilson (1975). And very little in the way of a political economy of crime

and deviance in Australia has yet surfaced.

What is true of crime and deviance generally in Australia is also true of juvenile delinquency. As John Braithwaite has accurately noted: "Unfortunately, much delinquency research in Australia has been the study of youth who fit certain popular stereotypes of delinquency rather than the study of delinquents" (Braithwaite, 1977: 15).

This research sought to avoid the study of stereotypes by focusing on two groups of youths - (i) those who had come before Juvenile Aid Panels (the legal equivalents of juvenile courts but designed to try to avoid the labelling, hence recidivist-causing tendencies of other forms of official legal sanction and social disapproval); (ii) those who were identified by street-workers (youth social workers) as committing relevant offences and who agreed to participate in the research.

Permission to undertake the research had to be won first from the South Australian Department of Community Welfare. In addition, the co-operation of social workers in the two areas selected for study was also sought and won. Guarantees of confidentiality were central to the whole research programme. The research was conducted on the explicit understanding that no information (e.g., names, addresses, etc.) would be revealed - either by the research workers in the programme or in any reports or publications arising from it - which could lead to any person interviewed being identified punlicly. Furthermore, it was guaranteed that the two areas from which data were gathered would also remain concealed.

On the basis of these guarantees, and with the co-operation of the Department concerned, the social workers, and the subjects themselves, the research proceeded.

AIMS OF RESEARCH

1.  To seek an understanding of the <u>meanings</u> attached to their delinquent behaviours by juvenile offenders.

2.  To seek an understanding of the <u>social</u> <u>contexts</u> within which the meanings of delinquent behaviours are framed.

3.  To seek to clarify the <u>likely</u> <u>targets</u> of vandal acts.

METHODOLOGY

The research was formulated in a phenomenological theoretical framework. Clearly an orthodox social survey programme was not appropriate for this research - juveniles were not going to be readily salient or make themselves available for the administration of a questionnaire. The theoretical work of Steven Box (1981) guided the research programme.

The research proceeded with two groups of subjects:

Group 1.

A series of in-depth interviews conducted by the research assistant, with twenty four juveniles convicted of offences involving vandalism. The juveniles were selected from the two regions studied. These interviews involved an examination of the meanings the offenders attached to the behaviours which elicited their convictions. Special attention was paid to their personal backgrounds, levels of education, employment records, etc.

Group 2.

A series of in-depth interviews, by a specially trained street-worker, with juveniles who have not been convicted of vandal acts, but who were known by the streetworker to be engaged in, or are likely to be engaged in, acts of vandalism. The meanings of these behaviours, the targets selected, the frequency of the behaviours, and the methods used to avoid detection were the focus of these interviews.

In each case, in both groups, the interviews were arranged by the research assistant or the streetworker at the convenience of the subjects. In some cases minor costs (e.g., bus fares, coffee) were paid up to a maximum of $5.00 to facilitate the interview.

Interviews were conducted in circumstances in which the subjects felt most relaxed. These included a hospital ward, coffee bars, social workers' offices, and in the homes of the subjects.

The interviewing techniques of the research assistant and the streetworker were crucial to the whole research programme. They were required to establish a rapport with their subjects in which the latter felt they could trust the former not to be judgemental or to relay any compromising information on to the authorities. It is a tribute to the two interviewers concerned that this rapport was so clearly and profitably established.

All interviews were taped and then typed up for analysis.

The interviews followed a prescribed schedule (see Appendix 1) which was, however, administered flexibly by the interviewers. The schedule had three sections:

Section A

This section was made up of questions about the subject - age, home-background, family relationships, attitudes, friendships, income and expenditure, activities, etc.

Section B

This section was made up of questions about the subjects' involvements in acts of vandalism, the understandings of the acts, their explanations of their behaviours, etc.

Section C

This section was made up of questions to those who had been apprehended and brought before Juvenile Aid Panels (i.e., subjects in Group 1).

The tapes and typescripts of the interviews were then examined to see if a picture of the meanings of juvenile behaviour to their perpetrators could be constructed.

The two regions selected for this study have relatively high levels of acts of wilful damage by juvenile offenders. Representatives of the regions originally approached the South Australian Service to Youth Council, to conduct research into the problem. The Council then requested the assistance of the present author (an academic sociologist) to mount the study. The other region was chosen on the basis of the availability of a skilled streetworker to conduct the interviews.

Given the arbitrary nature of selection of the two regions, no investigation was conducted into the ecological or geographical contexts of the offences or offenders. This would have been a useful study. As Herbert has noted:

> The concept of delinquency area can be recognized as one attempt to fill the gap between the urban and individual scales of analysis. The proposition, simply stated, is that within larger cities there exist identifiable districts which house disproportionate shares of known offenders. Historically such delinquency areas - and earlier crime areas - have been restricted to inner-city areas of high density, substandardness, and poverty; in modern times the 'problem estates' provide equivalents. [...] Within neighbourhoods, at the scale of the individual offender, very few areal analyses have been attempted (Herbert, 1982: 103-4).

The two regions lie somewhat between the two extremes (inner-city and 'problem estates') identified by Herbert. They both exhibit relatively high levels of unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular. The research, however, remained focused on individual offenders because it lacked the resources to conduct a simultaneous areal analysis.

FINDINGS

Group 1

(a) Overview

There were 24 subjects in this group, five of whom were girls.
Six were born overseas, 4 in the U.K., 1 in Holland, 1 in Italy. The
ages of the subjects ranged from 12 to 18 and the average age of the
group was 15. All of the subjects had appeared before Juvenile Aid
Panels and 13 had appeared before the courts. This latter group (13)
were all in institutional care (SAYRAC) as a result of their court
appearances for more serious crimes than wilful damage - usually
breaking and entering. Their wilful damage charges were usually a
by-product of their more serious offences. All of these thirteen
institutionalized subjects had records and it is probably reasonable
to say that they were well and truly embarked on a recidivist criminal
career. Their attitudes towards their wilful damage records were all
dismissive. Vandalism to them was a very minor and insignificant
element in their careers.

Of the other 11 subjects, 4 were still at school and of those,
2 had part-time jobs. One was working full-time and 6 were unemployed.
These 11 had all appeared before Juvenile Aid Panels and this appears
to have been a salutary experience for them. They all expressed a
fairly contrite view of their actions and expressed a desire not to
be caught again.

The family backgrounds of the 13 institutionalized subjects were
noticeably less stable than the 11 non-institutionalized subjects. Eight
of them come from single-parent homes, one came from a foster-home, four

came from homes where one of the original parents had been replaced by
a step-parent.

Of the 11 non-institutionalized subjects, one came from a foster-home,
two came from single-parent homes, two came from homes where one of the
original parents had been replaced by a step-parent, and the remaining
six lived with both of their biological parents.

(b)  Interview Results

The first and most overwhelming impression gained from reading
through the transcripts and listening to the tapes is the remarkable
orthodoxy of the attitudes towards parents, homes, schools, police and
society as a whole.  What is abundantly clear is that these young people
are not, by any stretch of the imagination, in some full-flighted revolt
against the prevailing norms and values of society.

(i)  Parents

All acknowledged the right of parents to discipline
them and to expect respect from them.  They all agreed
that parents had to be accounted to, for their actions.

Sixteen of the nineteen boys all expressed a special
closeness to their mothers.  Mothers were regularly cited
as mediators in disputes with fathers or other members of
the family.  Two of the boys noted a closer relationship
with their fathers (one lived in a single-parent home
with his father) and only one expressed a degree of
hostility towards both parents.

Three of the five girls stated that they were closer
to their fathers than their mothers, and two of the girls
expressed a degree of hostility towards both parents.

(ii)   Employment Prospects

Only one subject expressed a desire to become a doctor.  Eighteen of the subjects were very vague about what constitutes a good job.  They stated that a good job involved a regular pay packet without going into further detail.  Three of the remaining five specified skilled occupations (motor mechanic, engineer, chef) as good jobs (though only the would-be chef was clear about how he might realize this ambition).  Two specified un-skilled jobs as their idea of a good job (one wanted a full-time job in a fast-food outlet; the other thought his step-father might help him find a labouring position in a cemetary where he already worked).

While all of them agreed that unemployment was a problem for young people, they all expressed confidence in finding an appropriate job in due course.  As one sixteen year old put it:  "If you try hard enough you can get a job anywhere."

This confidence in the labour market is at odds with the actual experiences of the group.  Nineteen of the twenty-four had all experienced periods of unemployment - four were still at school and only one had a full-time job.  None was worried that prolonged unemployment might be a part of his or her future - despite the fact that the average age at which those who had left school was 14½.

(iii)  Money

The main source of income for the group was the dole (19).  Parents provided pocket money for those at school and two of these supplemented this with income from

part-time jobs.  One admitted to regular stealing as
a supplement to his dole money.

Seven of the eleven non-institutionalized subjects
paid board at home.  Five were paying off loans on cars
and two were paying off loans on motor-bikes.

Cigarettes, clothes, entertainment and alcohol were
the highest expenditures for the group.

(iv)  Entertainment

Eighteen members of the group complained about
lack of entertainment facilities for young people in
their areas.  Police-run "blue light discos" were popular -
the main complaint being that there were not enought of
them.

The eleven non-institutionalized subjects ranked
pin-ball machines as their favourite form of entertainment,
with swimming at the beach (in summer) and drinking with
friends close behind.  Only five subjects played sports
regularly and they all belonged to sports teams.

Most weekends were spent in the company of friends,
at pin-ball parlors or drinking in pubs.

(v)  Marriage/Family Ambitions

Eighteen of the boys in the group all noted that
in due course they expected to settle down and marry and
have children.  Sixteen of these felt they would more
or less bring up their children as they had been brought
up themselves.  Two felt they would be stricter than
their parents had been.

Two of the girls expressed similar opinions to the
boys:  they expected to marry and have children too.

Three of the girls expressed no desire to marry ("it's only a piece of paper") and only one of these wanted to have children.

Only one boy (an 18 year old) did not see marriage and a family as a future choice for him ("No bloody way!").

(vi)  Vandal Acts

Almost all of the vandal acts of the thirteen institutionalized subjects were associated with more serious breaking and entering acts.  However, eight of this group admitted to vandalising their former schools (breaking windows in five cases, spray-painting slogans on classroom walls in two cases and burning a school building in one case).

Of the eleven non-institutionalized subjects, three had started fires in school buildings, three had vandalised houses which they had broken into, two had smashed shop windows, one had vandalised a bicycle, one had vandalised a car and one had valdalised a phone-booth.

When asked to explain their actions the overwhelming response was that they were bored.  Nine of the eleven non-institutionalized subjects claimed they were bored and vandalised in order to "have a thrill".  Two expressed anger (at former school teachers) for their attacks on schools.

Ten of the thirteen institutionalised subjects explained their reason for vandalising property was boredom.  Three claimed anger at former schools as a reason for their actions.

Of the institutionalized subjects, only one expressed any regret for their actions - the only regret came from being caught.  The one who expressed regret did so after she was told about the suffering her action caused to a person she vaguely knew.

Almost all of the eleven non-institutionalized subjects expressed regret at their actions.  Two felt that while their actions may have been reprehensible, nonetheless there was some justification for them.

Overall, the subjects seemed to see wilful damage to public property, or to the property of unknown private persons, as somewhat insignificant.  Because there was, in most cases, no personal identification with the things being vandalized, the subjects felt very little inhibition at the time of the offences.  Subsequently, after detection, some sense of regret emerged.  However, in the case of the institutionalized subjects, this was more at being caught, than for the vandalism itself.  For the non-institutionalized subjects, appearance before the Juvenile Aid Panels appears to have engendered a sense of regret where a penalty was applied (e.g., a good behaviour bond).  If a warning was all that was given by the Panel, there was a tendency for a degree of bravado to be expressed, rather than any regret.

(vii)  Attitudes to Authorities

Police

Interestingly, there was a general sense of respect for the police among the non-institutionalized subjects.

While some individual police officers were singled out
for critical comments (accusations of bashings by these
few officers were made by three subjects), the police in
general were seen as <u>fair, if ineffectual, in their
approaches to juvenile delinquency</u>.  Because they were
rarely out of their patrol cars, and because they could
be easily eluded, police were not seen as a major
deterrent by the non-institutionalized subjects.

The institutionalized subjects were uniformly
hostile to the police.  They claimed a series of harrass-
ment and bashing experiences by police.

### Juvenile Aid Panels/Courts

The non-institutionalized subjects expressed a
degree of respect for the Panels - where a penalty had
been applied.

The institutionalized subjects regarded the Courts
with a mixture of hostility and fear.

### Social Workers

Of the eleven subjects who had regular contacts with
social workers, only two expressed hostility towards
them.  The remaining nine expressed satisfaction and
appreciation for the support and advice they were
receiving from their social workers.

(viii)  <u>Targets</u>

All of the subjects identified telephone booths,
schools, street signs and windows (shops and private
homes), in that order, as the most likely targets of
vandal activity.  All were seen as relatively "anonymous"
targets with no immediately obvious owners who would be
personally affronted or inconvenienced by vandal activity.

(c)  Conclusion

It will be clear, then, that Group 1 (i.e., the detected offenders) is really made up of two sub-groups:  the institutionalized and the non-institutionalized.  The former are more recalcitrant and less obviously amenable to reform than the latter.

What is also clear is that, while the institutionalized sub-group displays a high propensity for recidivism, both sub-groups are well socialized into society's prevailing norms and values.  Their delinquent behaviour is substantially an illustration of Robert Merton's concept of "anomie" (Merton, 1968):  the subjects have all internalized society's goals; they are simply denied access to the normal paths for achieving those goals.

Group 2

This group was made up of eighteen boys, ages ranging from 15 to 18. While all admitted to participating in vandal acts, none had been apprehended for these acts.  Six had appeared before Juvenile Aid Panels on other charges.

(i)  Parents and Home Life

All subjects lived with their families.  Three subjects lived in single-parent homes; the rest lived with both parents.  Ten of the respondents preferred their mothers over other family members.  All had brothers and/or sisters living in the family home.

What is especially noteworthy is the relative stability of home life of these subjects.

(ii)  School/Unemployment/Employment

Only 3 of the respondents were still at school. Eight had left school at age 15 because they felt they were not doing well, or school curricula were boring, or

relationships were poor. School was not seen as a sure way of preparing to enter the work force.

Fourteen of the subjects were unemployed. While 10 of the subjects had had part-time jobs while they were at school, unemployment seemed accepted by all of them as a more or less inevitable fate, for at least several periods in their working life. The almost matter-of-fact acceptance of this threat of unemployment was a notable feature of all of the subjects' interviews.

(iii) Expectations for the Future

Only two subjects did not expect to marry and have children ("Too much noise!"). Of the remaining sixteen, only four did not expect to bring up their children in much the same way they had been brought up. Two said they would give their children far more freedom than they experienced. Two said they would be stricter and more demanding than their parents had been.

(iv) Money and Entertainment

Eight of the subjects were on the dole. Six were ineligible for the dole (either because they were at school or were not yet 16). Four were eligible for the dole but had not managed to complete the formalities for claiming payments (probably due to an inability to complete the forms).

Parents and friends were also a source of pocket money.

All subjects clearly felt that a shortage of money curtailed their opportunities for entertainment and contributed to the often inescapable boredom that pervaded their lives.

Money was spent on cigarettes, alcohol, and pinball machines.

Clothing and board, although subsidized by parents in nearly all cases, also ate into the sources of funds available to the subjects.

It was clear that all of them were surviving on a very thin economic margin.

At the streetworker conducting the interviews has noted:

> Boredom was the most common feature that all the young people interviewed showed. There was a general consensus that more entertainment facilities were needed in the local area, but few of the young people were able to think of anything that would be popular over a long period of time (Schutte, n.d.:96).

(v) Vandal Acts

The subjects in this group admitted to a range of vandal acts, from ringing door bells to annoying house-holders, to smashing trees, to breaking windows, to destroying street signs and to slashing seats on public transport.

(vi) Attitudes to Authorities

Police

All subjects felt that police were relatively ineffectual in either preventing vandalism or identifying and charging offenders. Police were seen to be confined to patrol cars and lacking the mobility to be "on the scene" in sufficient time to take appropriate action.

### Social Workers

All subjects showed a strong trust in the streetworker interviewing them. None had any other formal contact with a social worker at the time of the interviews.

### General Observations of Groups 1 and 2

It is fairly clear that the vast bulk of acts of wilful damage by juvenile offenders are to be understood as a response to boredom, a lack of opportunity to find suitable employment and a degree of anger and frustration at a social and economic system which does little to provide them with appropriate means of achieving the goals they have been taught to aim at - a career, a car, a wife and family, a house. Insofar as this sort of inequality continues and/or increases, more vandal activity can only be expected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recreational Facilities

There is clearly a need for an up-grading of existing recreational facilities (e.g., BMX tracks) and the provision of further recreational facilities in both regions studied.

These facilities need to have an educational function attached to them, in addition to their sporting and amusement capacities. Provision should be made, for example, for training in elementary motor maintenance, elementary carpentry, elementary electrical and similar skills for young people.

Such facilities will need to be substantially subsidised because the major clientelle using them will be unemployed youth.

N.B. The development of recreational facilities in either region should only be done after careful and meaningful consultations (see Recommendation 2 below) with the young people who are likely to be using them have been carried out.

2. Youth Community Consultative Councils

There is a special need for a series of Youth Community Consultative Councils to be established. These councils should have three major functions:

(i) Consultation

The councils should provide a regular and serious medium for municipal officials, social workers, educational officers, and police, on the one hand, to consult with youth in the regions. Discussions could include: recreational needs (see Recommendation 1 above), specific problems of youth arising from time to time (e.g., vandalism, other criminal activities such as drug-taking etc.), problems of

policing, relations between police and youth, access
to social workers, co-ordination with Social Security
and Commonwealth Employment Service officials, T.A.F.E.
authorities, etc.

(ii)   Youth Involvement

The councils should actively recruit youth to help
administer, run and supervise all recreational facilities
in the region.  They should actively foster a sense of
civic membership and responsibility in regard to the
recreational facilities for youth in the regions.

(iii)  Education

The councils should also - in close consultation with
youth - provide a range of educational opportunities
similar to those mentioned in Recommendation 1 above.
Elementary trade skills, basic training in reading and
writing skills (e.g., how to apply in writing for jobs,
social security benefits, T.A.F.E. courses, etc.), basic
training in running organisations (e.g., the recreational
facilities), etc. could all be part of this educational
programme.  As much as possible, these educational
facilities should be made available through participatory
programmes - i.e., the young people should be encouraged
to recognize the value of the programmes through their
own participation in the work associated with council
membership.

It is recognized that the concept of a council being advocated here
is likely to be untidy and difficult to organize.  This ought to be
accepted as part and parcel of the broadly educational role (i.e.,
education for citizenship) that the council will play.

Membership of the council should include no more than three special social workers with a training and experience in street work (see Recommendation 3 below), one representative of the relevant municipal authorities, one representative of local educational officers and one representative of the local police. Youth membership should be open to any young person in the region.

One of the street-workers should act as co-chairperson with the other co-chairperson being elected from among the youth membership.

It ought to be the aim of the "official" (i.e., non-youth) members of the council to guide the council's deliberations as subtly as possible, to remain in the background offering advice and guidance preferably when it is asked for.

3. Street-workers

At least two street-workers (social workers with a special training in street work with youth) should be engaged full-time in both regions studied. Ideally up to four such workers in each region could be effectively employed.

These street-workers, arguably, are the most effective means for locating and working with potentially delinquent youth in the regions. In addition they would form the backbone of the councils mentioned in Recommendation 2 above.

4. Public awareness programme

Local government authorities should be encouraged to promote public awareness campaigns on likely targets of juvenile delinquent activity, to encourage them to assist police and other authorities in the prevention of acts of wilful damage and the apprehension of offenders wherever possible. At the same time the programmes ought to seek to educate the public about the problems of contemporary youth (especially unemployment) in order to engender public support for the implementation of Recommendations 1, 2 and 3 (above).

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## APPENDIX


## Questionnaire

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

·THE FLINDERS UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AND

THE SERVICE TO YOUTH COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

RESEARCH PROJECT

A STUDY OF WILLFUL DAMAGE

BY JUVENILE OFFENDERS

# QUESTIONNAIRE

*(n.b. this is not meant to be a structured interview. It is·*
*to be administered flexibly.)*

Explanation (to be read out to subject by interviewer)

This interview is part of a research project on vandalism
being conducted by Flinders University and the Service to Youth
Council of South Australia. It is designed to build up a picture
of how young people who commit acts of willful damage feel about
what they are doing.

Any replies you give to the questions I am about to ask you
will be kept strictly confidential. No identification of you or
your family will be allowed in any reports we write. You should
feel free to decline to answer any questions.

N.B.: (a) Have you willingly agreed to take part in this ·
interview?

(b) Do you have any questions, yourself, about the
interview, before we get going?

(c) Do you mind if I tape record this interview?

# SECTION A

Let's begin by talking a bit about you and your family.

A- 1     How old are you?

A- 2     Where were you born?  (country/city)

A- 3     Where was your father born?  (country/city)

A- 4     Where was your mother born?  (country/city)

A- 5     Are you still at school?

        If YES:

           A-5(i)     Do you like school?

                   (Probe here:  - subjects/teachers?
                                   - friends?
                                     - general attitudes?)

           A-5(ii)     How much longer will you stay at school?

                   (Probe:  why?)

        If NO:

           A-5(iii)     When did you leave school?

                   (Probe:  why?)

A- 6     Do you live at home?

        If YES:

           A-6(i)     Do you live with both your parents?

                   (Probe:  mother/father/step-parent?)

           A-6(ii)     Who else lives in your home?

                   (Probe:  - brothers/sisters?
                                - other relatives?
                                - friends?)

           A-6(iii)     Do you have a room of your own at home?

                   (Probe:  - any sharing?
                                - with whom?)

           A-6(iv)     Do you pay any board at home?

        If NO:

           A-6(v)     Do you live with friends?

                   (Probe:  who?)

           A-6(vi)     Do you have a room of your own?

                   (Probe:  - any sharing?
                                - with whom?)

           A-6(vii)     Do you pay any board?

A- 7    Can I ask you some questions about your relationships with
        your family?

    A-7(i)    Do you get on well with your parents (or mother/
              father)?

    A-7(ii)   Do you see them (him/her) regularly?

    A-7(iii)  Do you get on well with other members of your
              family?

              (Probe:  - with whom?
                       - nature of relationship)

    A-7(iv)   Who do you like most in your family?  (Probe)

    A-7(v)    Who do you see most often in your family?


A- 8    What is your idea of a really good job?  (Probe)

    A-8(i)    Have you ever had a job?

              (Probe:  details of work career to date?)

    A-8(ii)   Did (do) you like working?

              (Probe:  details)

    A-8(iii)  Have you been (are you) unemployed?

              (Probe:  length of time, etc.)

    A-8(iv)   Do you think you will ever have (do you have) a
              really good job?  (Probe)

    A-8(v).   Do you think unemployment is a problem for people
              in your age group?

              (Probe:  why?)

                                If YES:

                                    What should be done to help young people to
                                    get jobs?

A- 9    Do you have many friends?

        (Probe:  - general descriptions
                 - feelings about them?

    A-9(i)    Do you belong to any youth groups/sports clubs/
              groups.

              (Probe for details)

    A-9(ii)   What is your idea of a really good friend?

    A-9(iii)  Do you have a regular girl/boy friend?


A-10    Can you give me a rough idea of how much money you get a
        week?

    A-10(i)   From parents?

    A-10(ii)  From friends?  (Probe details)

    A-10(iii) From job(s)?

    A-10(iv)  From dole?

    A-10(v)   From other sources?  (Probe details)

A-11    Can you tell me a bit about what you spend money on each week?

    A-11(i)     On food?

    A-11(ii)    On alcohol?

    A-11(iii)   On clothes?

    A-11(iv)    On cigarettes?

    A-11(v)     On entertainment
              (films, parties, dances/discos, sports, hobbies, etc.)?

    A-11(vi)    Paying off car/bike/etc?  (Probe details)

    A-11(vii)   Board?

    A-11(viii)  Anything else?  (Probe details)

A-12    Do you own - a car?
                - a motor bike?
                - a bike?

A-13    What is your idea of a really good time?

          - sports?
          - hanging around with friends?  (Probe details)
          - parties/discos?
          - getting drunk?  (Probe:  - where?
                                      - with whom?)

A-14    Are there enough entertainment facilities for young people in your area?

      If YES:  ask for details

      If NO:   what is needed?

A-15    Do you get bored much?

    (Probe for details)

A-16    Can you tell me a bit about how you spend a normal week?

    (Probe here for details of activities of each day
    - e.g., work, how much time at home, how much time with
                  friends, what time does subject go home at night?)

A-17    Can you tell me a bit about how you spend a normal weekend?

    (Probe for details)

A-18    What is your idea of a really good holiday?  (Probe)

A-19    What do you most like doing to relax and have a really good time?  (Probe)

A-20    Do you want eventually to settle down and get married?

    (Probe for reasons on YES or NO)

A-21    Would you eventually like to have children of your own?

               If YES:   would you bring them up in the
                          same way you have been brought
                          up?

               If NO:    why?

# SECTION B

Now I want to ask you some questions about your involvement in acts
of vandalism.

B- 1    Can you describe for me any acts of wilfull damage (vandalism)
        which you have been involved in lately?

        (Probe:  full details here)

B- 2    Do you often get involved in this sort of activity?

B- 3    What is your most recent involvement in vandal activity?

        (Probe:  - details
                 - date (approx.) and time?
                 - in company (with whom?) or alone?

B- 4    Can you tell me a bit about how you felt when you were doing
        this (refer B-3)?

        (Probe:  - thrill-seeking/due to boredom
                 - angry?  (details?)
                 - adventurous?
                 - dared by friends?)

B- 5    Do you remember everything that happened when you did this
        (B-3)?

        (Probe for full description of act:  was it premeditated;
        or an 'on-the-spot' act?;  try to get a detailed account
        of the full event.)

B- 6    Did you feel a bit scared at all:

        (a) before you did it?
        (b) while you were doing it?
        (c) after you had done it?

B- 7    After you had committed the act, did you feel at all sorry
        for what you had done?

        (Note:  This relates to feelings before any official
                apprehension has occurred.)

B- 8    Who do you think may have been affected by this action (B-3)?

        (Probe:  How would they have been affected?)

                        If victims are nominated:

                        How do you feel about the way these people
                        may have been affected?

                        (Probe:  for details of any remorse or
                        satisfaction, etc.)

                        (Comment on how valid you think the remorse
                        or satisfaction is)

B- 9    Even if some people may be affected, do you think you might
        commit a similar act again?

B-10    What are the easiest sorts of things to smash up around this
        area?

B-11    What reasons generally do you think make some young people
        want to smash things up around here?

B-12    What advice would you give someone who wanted to try and
        protect things from being smashed up around here?

B-13    Do you think vandalism is a very serious sort of activity?
        Or is it fairly unimportant?

B-14    Why do you think that the local Council, the police, etc.
        get upset by vandalism?

B-15    There's been a bit of talk by some councillors and other officials lately round here, that there should be a 'war on vandalism'. What you think about this sort of talk?

B-16    What would you do to stop vandalism, if you were on the local Council?

B-17    Do you think the police around here are very effective in catching people who are smashing things up?

(Probe for details, examples)

B-17(i)    What do you think of the police around here generally? Do they give you a hard time?

(Probe: details)

B-18    Do you think other people around here are effective in catching people who are smashing things up?

If YES:    Who?

(Probe: what do you think of them?)

B-19    Do you think vandalism is a very serious thing?

B-20    What are some of the really most serious crimes?

(Probe: details)

B-20(i)    How does vandalism compare to these really serious crimes?

B-21    Apart from the vandal act(s) you have mentioned earlier (B-3), have you committed any other offences lately; or in the past?

(Probe: details of any criminal career)

B-21(i)    If YES:    How does the vandalism you mentioned earlier (B-3) compare with the other offences you have committed?

# SECTION  C

This section is only for those people who have been caught and come before a Juvenile Aid Panel/Court for an 'act of wilfull damage' (i.e., for people being interviewed in Phase I, by Pamela McNeil).

Now can we talk a bit about how you got caught and what happened to you after you got caught (re B-3)?

C- 1    How did you get caught?

(Probe:  - police? - caught in act? or after investigations?
         - informer?
         - social worker/youth worker?
         - did you own up yourself?
         - parents?)

C- 2    If police were involved:

- How did they treat you?

(Probe: details)

C- 3    Did you come before a Juvenile Aid Panel/Court because of your actions (described in B-3)?

If YES:

C-3(i)    Can you describe the experience?

C-3(ii)    What was the consequence of
           appearing before the Panel/
           Court?

           (Probe for attitudes here)

C-3(iii)   How did you feel then, when you
           were appearing before the Panel/
           Court?

C-3(iv)    How do you feel now, about
           appearing before the Panel/Court?

C-3(v)     Do you think appearing before
           Panel/Court will have any effect
           on you?

           (Probe for details)

C- 4    How do you feel about your social worker?  Is he/she friendly
        and helpful?

        (Probe for details)

C- 5    Do you think the experience of having been caught will help
        persuade you from smashing things again?

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        Thank you very much for participating in this interview.

AIP/hlb
May, 1982