

South Dakota State University
**Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional
Repository and Information Exchange**

Economics Commentator

Economics

12-20-1982

Delinquent Behavior of South Dakota Youth

Galen Kelsey
South Dakota State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/econ_comm

 Part of the [Agricultural and Resource Economics Commons](#), and the [Regional Economics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kelsey, Galen, "Delinquent Behavior of South Dakota Youth" (1982). *Economics Commentator*. Paper 187.
http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/econ_comm/187

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Economics at Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Economics Commentator by an authorized administrator of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact michael.biondo@sdstate.edu.



Editor: Donald C. Taylor

Economics Department SDSU, Box 504A Brookings, SD 57007 Tele: (605) 688-4141
 No. 191 December 20, 1982



Delinquent Behavior of
 South Dakota Youth
 by
 Galen Kelsey
 Extension Economist
 Public Affairs

Crime is both an economic and social phenomenon. Replacing property stolen or destroyed through crime is costly. Measures to prevent crime result in less efficient, higher cost production, and hence higher insurance and consumer prices. The social costs of anxiety, guilt, and personal insecurity associated with crime are also considerable.

Several studies of crime in South Dakota and the nation indicate that high crime rates are not confined to large cities. While big city crime rates remain high, the growth in the crime rate in suburbs and rural areas is now greater than that in the core areas of larger cities.

Juvenile crime in South Dakota

A 1978 study at the University of South Dakota indicates that the incidence of certain classes of crimes in South Dakota is greater than that for the entire nation. In 1978, for example, juveniles in rural areas of the U.S. accounted for 36.4% of all arrests for Part I property crimes which include burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. The comparable figure for S.D. is 53.3%. This is particularly significant because the 14-17 age group comprises only about 10% of the state's population.

The arrest record of 261.4 juveniles per 1,000 arrests in South Dakota also is higher than that for the nation as a whole (139.8 juveniles per 1,000 arrests). A high crime rate for juve-

niles is alarming, particularly when we consider that if youths continue their delinquent behavior in adulthood they may progress to more serious crimes.

In a recent statewide crime victimization study, vandalism was shown to be the most frequently occurring crime of those studied and the one involving the most people and the greatest dollar damage (a 1982 cost to South Dakota of about \$4.3 million). The study showed other common juvenile crimes in South Dakota to involve drug abuse, runaways, driving under the influence of alcohol, and liquor law violations. Over two-thirds of these crimes were committed in rural areas.

Crime among South Dakota high school students

The nature of and possible reasons for crimes by South Dakota high school students were examined in a recent study by Joseph Faltemier and Robert Mendelsohn of the Rural Sociology Department at S.D.S.U. Their study of 1,077 high school students shows that within the last year one in three students have used marijuana, nine in ten have used alcohol, and one in three have provided liquor to a minor. At the same time, only one in six had more than once purposely damaged or destroyed property that did not belong to them, and only one in 20 had more than once stolen (or tried to steal) something valued at more than \$50.

Students were asked questions on how they believed their parents, teachers, and friends felt about them and how they perceived themselves. They were also questioned about their family situation.

As one might suspect, there was a high correlation between students reporting frequent incidents of delinquent behavior and responses indicating that students believed their parents,

teachers, and other students held them in something less than high esteem. If another family member was "in trouble with the law", the student was also more likely to be involved in delinquent acts. It appears, however, that the students' esteem among parents, friends, and teachers was not a factor when considering delinquent behavior involving marijuana and liquor violations.

Conclusions

The people of South Dakota are paying a high cost for criminal behavior. If present trends continue, we can expect the cost to increase in the years to come.

A 1982 study of responses from 1,077 high school students was designed to learn more about youth involvement in certain types of delinquent behavior. It was not designed to find solutions to the problem, although some possible solutions might be inferred.

1. Place more resources in programs that deal with youth and alcohol abuse, and do that before the student reaches the Junior or Senior level. Several national studies indicate that such efforts should begin with seventh grade students.

2. Mothers, fathers, and teachers seemingly do play an important part in the self perceptions that are held by students. Involvement of these "signi-

ficant others" in any community programs is imperative.

3. The obvious targets for such efforts are those who have had or are having "trouble" with the law and/or those who have a family member in "trouble".

4. Each community must evaluate the nature of its delinquency problems and determine appropriate strategies for dealing with the problems. Security measures involving the use of burglar alarms or the disciplined locking of doors can discourage amateur burglary and auto theft. "Fortress" type programs involving the fencing of property or guards on patrol, however, may only spur on potential vandals. However, no amount of security is likely to deter professional thieves.

Analysis of the results of the student survey indicates that the family, school, and community are influencing the vast majority of youth in a positive manner. Understanding more carefully what goes wrong with the minority responsible for growing delinquency and what might be done to help turn them around, would yield benefits not only to the individuals involved but also to society at large.

Editor's Note: From all of us to all of you, a happy holiday season.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the USDA, Hollis D. Hall, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, SDSU, Brookings. Educational programs and materials offered without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, handicap or national origin. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

Cooperative Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
South Dakota State University
Brookings, SD 57007

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for Private Use \$300

Economics Newsletter

Postage and Fees Paid
U.S. Department of Agriculture
AGR 101

Third class mail
Bulk Rate



Address Correction Requested