# MINNESOTA YOUTH POLL:
## YOUTH'S VIEWS ON REPUTATIONS & DELINQUENCY

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# MINNESOTA YOUTH POLL:
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## PURPOSE

The Minnesota Youth Poll provides an ongoing method by which youth in Minnesota can state their opinions, experiences, and values regarding such issues as youth rights, health, career aspirations, drug and alcohol abuse, education, crime and delinquency, and government. This Poll, in contrast to more standard opinion polls, focuses on the meanings and frames of reference that young people use to understand their world. Our goal in conducting the Poll is to learn about the range of ideas and opinions held by the wide variety of youth in Minnesota. To preserve the richness of what the young people said, we have not attempted to quantify their responses. Readers will not find tables of numbers or percentages of yes and no responses, as they would find in other opinion polls which use standard survey research techniques. Rather, the data is treated as themes or pictures in an attempt to retain both "the music and lyrics" of what the young people said.

*In this issue of the Poll*, young people's ideas and concerns about delinquency and reputations are explored. Because this topic is so broad, we have divided the Poll into two parts. Part One focuses on how high school students perceive "reputations"—how reputations are acquired and their role and impact on the lives of adolescents. Second, the relationship between reputations and delinquency is explored with the emphasis on how teenagers view the causes and treatment of delinquency. Part Two will explore specific issues about delinquency—status offenses, juvenile prostitution, teenage runaways, violent juvenile offenders, and youth's rights.

A new feature of this Poll is the inclusion of an international perspective. Several schools in Ireland participated in this Poll on reputations and delinquency, and these findings are reported on pages 33-36.

## METHOD[*]

The opinions and ideas of students were obtained in the following way. Based on our discussions with youth, our own experiences, a review of the literature and results from previous Polls, we developed a series of questions on ideas about delinquency and reputation. The questions were, largely, unstructured. That is, we chose questions that did not suggest answers by the way they were phrased. Also, we did not use questions in which people were asked to "respond to" predetermined opinions such as "Likert" type items that limit answers to degrees of agreement and disagreement. Instead we used open-ended questions that could be answered only with some explanation and elaboration. This stimulated discussion and brought out the range of ideas that students hold.

[*] A more detailed description of the rationale and methodology is contained in "Minnesota Youth Polls," *Center Quarterly Focus*, Center for Youth Development Research, University of Minnesota, Spring 1979

Questions were pretested extensively in local Twin Cities high schools to ensure that they served this purpose. Then, in the fall of 1977, packets of instructions and questionnaires were mailed to sixteen high schools, two 4-H clubs, and four juvenile correctional facilities around the state. (A set of instructions is in appendix 2 and a list of questions is in appendix 3.)

Twenty-two groups of young people were able to participate—six from urban areas (South High School, West High School, Southwest High School, Central High School in Minneapolis; Harding High School in St. Paul; Duluth Cathedral High School in Duluth); six from rural areas (Worthington High School, North Branch High School, Lincoln High School in Thief River Falls, Hutchinson High School, Westview High School in Braham, and 4-H clubs in St. Cloud); five from suburban areas (Lindbergh High School and Eisenhower High School in Hopkins; Coon Rapids High School, Osseo High School, Jefferson High School in Bloomington); five groups from juvenile corrections institutions (Totem Town in St. Paul, the State Training School in Red Wing; Upward Bound, Zion Group Home, and The City, Inc. in Minneapolis). In all, approximately 900 students participated in the 172 group discussions.

In each location the questionnaire was administered in a group setting. The teacher, an adult group leader, or a student read an introductory statement and instructions to participants. Then they broke down into self-selected groups of from five to seven people. Each smaller group selected one of its members to be the recorder and that person was given the questionnaire. The recorder read a more specific set of instructions to the group and then the discussion of the first question began. The recorder then wrote down as much of the discussion as possible on the blank part of the page. When five minutes were left in the period, recorders were instructed to check their notes for legibility and completeness.

The group questionnaires were then analyzed using qualitative techniques. This involved separating the questionnaires by area of residence (urban, rural, suburban, corrections) and by question. The answers to each question were scrutinized for recurring themes and ideas. From the way the questions were answered, a sense of frame of reference (that is, how youth see the world) emerged.

After the data was analyzed and a rough draft of the findings was prepared, we went back to one suburban and one St. Paul high school (14 groups) to verify our information. This involved having students read parts of the rough draft, asking them questions about findings that we were skeptical of or for which we wanted further clarification. The students generally agreed with our findings and their comments (enclosed in brackets) have been incorporated into this report.

## Section I:

# THE ROLE OF THE BAD REPUTATION

*"You got to make something of yourself somehow, otherwise you're nobody!"*

## INTRODUCTION

To discover what meaning reputations have in teenagers' lives, Youth Poll participants were asked how bad reputations are acquired, how youth with such reputations are treated, how reputations are changed, and the consequences of bad reputations. Reputations were found to be an important part of youths' lives. While what constitutes a bad reputation is somewhat different for males than females, all youths acquire bad reputations in the same way—by violating norms. The respondents believe that reputations have strong impact on how they are treated and how they treat others—it's a social role and an interpersonal strategy, i.e. a purposeful coherent system of relating to other people.

## HOW TO ACQUIRE A BAD REPUTATION

Youth have a clear picture of how to acquire a bad reputation. We asked them, "What do girls have to do to get a bad reputation?" and, "What do guys have to do to get a bad reputation?" The theme that emerged was a bad reputation was achieved merely by violating social norms, though the students themselves did not use that sociological term. (Norms are rules for behavior that are generally understood and accepted by people.) Violating the norms of the peer group, the family, the larger society or the law, were perceived as pathways for acquiring a bad reputation:

(You can get a bad reputation by) "Not going along with the clique."

"Everything you do that doesn't agree with someone else, you get a reputation. Someone can see part of what you do and think the worst."

"Do things that aren't acceptable."

"Don't act the way society wants them to act."

"Do something different; something not expected, something not normal; something against society's standards."

"Break the law. Get busted."

What types of norms can teens break to get a bad reputation? For all youth, the important determinants of a bad reputation are improper sexual behavior, lack of loyalty to friends, delinquent behavior, chemical abuse, and a slovenly appearance. But there were important differ-

ences for males and females. In general, norms that can be violated to produce a bad reputation are more clearly and narrowly defined for females than for males.

## How Girls Get Bad Reputations

When asked how girls get a bad reputation, the strongest norm violation concerned sexual behavior:

"Being a whore."

"Prostitution. Promiscuous. Deviant sexuality."

"The girls around here get a bad reputation by going out with a lot of different boys and having sexual relations with many, thus earning the name of a tramp."

"Acting 'sexy' and talking shit they can't back up."

"Telling what they did sexually with guys."

"Being a bed hopper."

"Easy piece."

"Girls that come on strong, sleezy."

"When someone finds out she's on the pill."

"Going from one guy to the next without really liking them."

"They're two-timers."

"Flirting with married men."

"Being sexually liberated."

The attitude which emerges is that having sexual relations is acceptable within the context of a steady, caring relationship, but promiscuity, lack of affection, and overtly "sexy" behavior are not condoned.

The strong negative sanction about promiscuity is demonstrated by the comments about "going out with a lot of guys." We were at first confused by this response, assuming that "going out with a lot of guys" indicated popularity and, thus, high status. However, when we questioned students further about this, they explained that formal dating is not common among teenagers today. Instead, there is a lot of group social activity, which results in some "pairing off" which then develops into steady relationships. Therefore, if a girl is dating a lot of different guys, it is assumed she is having sexual relations with them. Why else would so many guys be interested in dating her? There is also the suggestion that "going out with a lot of guys" is disapproved because it implies fickleness, lack of affection or exploitation.

Two interesting regional differences were evident in this data. Young people in all regions spoke of *"loose" sexual behavior* most often when discussing sexual behaviors which give girls bad reputations. However, the second most frequent response by rural students was pregnancy. This was rarely mentioned by urban students and young people in correctional facilities and only slightly more often by suburban students. It suggests that pregnancy carries a much greater stigma for rural students than for others.

In line with the more conservative attitude expressed by rural students was their belief that girls could get a bad reputation by having sexual relations under almost any circumstances. This was mentioned fairly often by rural students but almost never by other students.

Another way of violating norms concerns "how they act toward their friends." The young people seemed particularly upset by such traits or behaviors as gossiping, lying, and disloyalty:

"Being big mouthed and talking about everybody's business."

"If they know they're too good for anybody else."

"Spread rumors—bad mouthing people—distort truths."

"Hustle someone else's boyfriend."

"Being dishonest, mean and two-faced."

"Girls that go to parties and do things that otherwise they don't do, such as smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, to be accepted by the regular party goers."

"A girl who does not care how she looks or acts."

"Person who has no other feelings for other people."

"Informing the authorities of irresponsible behavior."

"Someone with a fake personality."

"Cannot control themselves physically and mentally."

"Hang on people."

Norms about appearance and grooming could also be violated to produce a bad reputation:

"They put tons of make-up on and wear short dresses and tight pants."

"Not keeping clean."

"Don't know how to maintain themselves...run around with insufficient clothing."

"They have a repulsive odor about them."

"They dress seductively."

Rural students have a more stringent set of norms regarding chemical use. Any amount of drinking and smoking can violate the norms and give a bad reputation. Students from other regions rarely mentioned mere use of chemicals as a negative behavior; rather it was chemical abuse—"drinking too much"—which was not condoned. Smoking was almost never mentioned by non-rural students:

"Girls that smoke, drink." (Rural)

"Drunk or loaded every day."

"Constantly deranged by chemicals."

"Doing a lot of drugs."

## How Guys Get Bad Reputations

Both males and females had similar ideas about how females achieve bad reputations. However, there was some disagreement between the sexes about male reputations. Females saw males getting a bad reputation much the same way that females do—through violations of norms concerning sex:

"For having a lot of one night stands."

"Being either too masculine or not enough."

"Uses girls for a physical attraction."

"They are loose with sex—they have no connection between emotional and physical needs."

"Boozing it up. Sleeping around. Flashing. Get good parties going. Involved in pornography. If he's a pimp."

Males, on the other hand, thought that violations of legal norms were the most important way to get a bad reputation. Some of these include violence:

"Getting in trouble with the law, i.e., getting busted. Unjustifiable, intentional fight (fist)."

"Stealing or ripping off people."

"Hot rodding around town, drugs, vandalism."

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*"They are constantly fighting, getting in trouble with the law, spending time in institutions, use drugs and drink a lot."*

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"They are constantly fighting, getting in trouble with the law, spending time in institutions, use drugs and drink a lot."

"Drive like maniacs."

"They just cause a lot of trouble. They do criminal acts. Yeah, we got this group around our house, they'll burn your garage for $10. That's why I stay in my car."

"Rape, theft, bad habits with the law."

"Smoke pot, rowdy, swear, spit, fights, booze, mugging, raping."

Besides these differences, the perception of males and females about male norm violations were much the same and included:

1. Violating norms about friendship:
   "Being a snake—back stabbing."
   "Boss people around."
   "Snitching on dudes."
   "Act like they are tough, say they do things they don't."
   "They think they know everything, but they don't."

2. Drugs:
   "Smoking habits, drug habits."
   "They smoke pot, to some who don't, their reputation is bad."

3. Appearance:
   "Be a pig (sloppy)."
   "Cruddy jeans, they kinda smell."

To summarize, youth have a clear picture of how they acquire bad reputations. They understand that violation of norms will give them a bad reputation, and they understand the content of the norms. They understand which norms apply to males and which to females. However, it must be stressed that while, as a group they may be able to articulate these ideas, as individuals they very well may not be aware of the picture that emerged from their collective understanding.

In the validation process, we asked students how good reputations are acquired. The range of opinion was enormous from students in inner city schools who said that using drugs, fighting, "minding your own business" were the methods by which a "good" reputation was acquired;

to those in a suburban school who cataloged a conventional list of attributes such as good personality—"happy, friendly, always laughing"—nice appearance, fashionable clothes, good athlete, active in extra-curricular activities and "nice" car.

(This list closely parallels the attributes that James Coleman found in the late 1950's needed for a young person to get into the most prestigious peer group. The only difference was that in 1979—nearly 20 years later—it no longer was important for teenage girls to refrain from smoking, drinking, and sex to have a "good reputation." Also in 1979, earning one's own money, rather than being dependent on parents, was seen as a way to acquire a "good" reputation.)

Students were also asked whether there were teenagers who have no reputation at all, and two themes emerged: 1) such a status was impossible:

"You get a reputation just for being a kid."

"Everyone has a reputation, but you don't know everyone in a big school."

and 2) quiet, shy, non-participants or those new to the school community might not have a reputation.

## HOW YOUTH WITH BAD REPUTATIONS ARE TREATED

Teenagers with bad reputations are shunned, taunted, and gossiped about by both young people and adults, according to Youth Poll respondents. Suburban youth were the least likely to accept a young person with a bad reputation. Those in correctional institutions were the most tolerant, but even they were evenly divided between avoiding and befriending the teen in trouble. While rural and urban respondents were slightly more accepting of the young person with a bad reputation than were suburban youth, they were also more likely to express their disapproval in more openly negative ways. For example, they said that victims might be beaten up, called derogatory names such as "rednecks," "sluts," "whores," or have their property vandalized.

The most typical response to the question, *"How do teenagers act toward other teenagers with bad reputations?"* was:

"They ignore them, call them names, look down on them, stay away from them, talk behind their backs, spread rumors about them."

Sometimes the students expressed misgivings about the manner in which these teenagers are treated. They seemed to unconsciously realize that stereotyping and pre-judging people based on gossip was unjust:

"A 'good' person will just go by what they hear though they don't know for sure."

"They act like they're not good enough for them."

"You pass quick judgments and always pre-judge."

"If you hear that someone is that way, you will have him stereotyped right away and won't give him a chance to change or prove himself."

"You feel uncomfortable around them—make me feel lower than them—makes me question my own values."

"I don't judge a person by what others have said about them or their reputation. I first try to get to know them

so I can judge them for myself. I think many teenagers would ignore someone with a bad reputation, but I don't think that would be fair."

Though some youth are uneasy about treating others badly, they seldom reported that they or their acquaintances befriend or accept teenagers with bad reputations. Youths who did usually befriended the others for the purpose of influencing them:

"The way you treat them depends on how honest you are. If you're honest, you will tell them you don't like the way they act, but maybe people will think you're cold. That's the same as being open I guess."

### Treatment by Adults

Adults, according to the students polled, treat teenagers with bad reputations substantially the same way that students do—they look down on them, threaten them, do not respect or trust them and spread rumors about them. Youth almost unanimously agreed that parents tell their children not to associate with teens who have bad reputations. The following statements sum up what respondents said about the attitude and behavior of adults toward such teenagers:

"Most adults seem to give the teenagers with the bad reputation the evil eye or talk behind their back and say what kind of parents raised something like that or else they try to protect their own innocent babies from this evil child."

"Adults downgrade them. Most adults don't even know the teenagers but have heard some gossip about them and automatically distrust and dislike them."

Another theme was that adults are naive about some teenagers' reputations and behaviors and are not very aware of which teens have bad reputations:

"I don't think adults know."

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*"Some parents and teachers judge a person's character just by their looks alone. Teachers tend to like kids better who are clean in dress than others with not so nice an appearance."*

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"Some parents and teachers judge a person's character just by their looks alone. Teachers tend to like kids better who are clean in dress than others with not so nice an appearance."

"Most adults don't realize what kind of reputation teenagers have."

"Some parents don't try to find out what's going on."

Some students charged that adults tend to exaggerate the seriousness of the teenagers behavior; others said that some adults tend to stereotype all teenagers when they become aware that a few have bad reputations:

"They stereotype all teens. Treat them all like they have bad reputations and say all teenagers are the

same. The older the person is the more likely they are to believe this."

## CHANGING YOUR REPUTATION

Young people with bad reputations can change their reputations with effort, according to Youth Poll respondents. There was clear agreement that teens could correct a bad reputation by changing their behavior, their friends, and their attitudes, with professional help if necessary. A number of students also mentioned moving, changing appearance, and getting involved in socially approved activities as ways to improve their image:

"Become de-fried."

"Be twice as good as anyone else."

"Move out of town."

"Proving yourself over and over again."

"Be yourself...be more confident."

"Quit sleeping around."

"Clean up their act."

"Don't look like a dirt-bag. Dress decent and improve manners."

"Become more involved in school activities."

"Change people they hang around with."

Some regional differences appeared in the strategies to alter a bad reputation. Urban youth thought moving would be beneficial and both urban and suburban youth emphasized a change in appearance. These youth also stressed internal changes in personality and attitudes, in contrast with rural students, who focused on external changes such as change of habits and friends:

"Start respecting themselves."

"Change personality."

"Start getting responsibility."

"Change attitudes, ideas."

"Get into a different group that is better."

"Change their actions."

This optimism about the possibility of improving their reputations by finding more acceptable friends seems to contradict the discussion above on the ostracism of youth with bad reputations. The rejection described hardly bodes well for easily gaining acceptance.

A few students were more pessimistic about the possibility of changing a bad reputation, citing both the characteristics of stigmatized persons and the prejudices of others as obstacles:

"The reputation often reflects a part of the person's personality which can't be gotten rid of."

"They don't really want to change."

"People can change from good to bad—but not from bad to good."

"Once you have been in trouble, some people won't forget, and keep on talking about you, not giving them a chance to prove they can change."

"People won't let you start hanging around with them."

"People have a fixed idea about what a person is."

"Once a whore always a whore."

"*You almost have to have a friend who really trusts you and who tells other people that you have changed. Otherwise, you don't have a chance.*"

[In the validation process, students were asked to react to the seeming contradiction between statements suggesting that the major strategy for changing a bad reputation was to acquire new friends and the overwhelming opinion that youth with bad reputations were shunned. Students agreed that it was indeed, very difficult for teenagers to convince other teenagers that they sincerely wanted to change. The most successful method teens had for coping with this problem was to find one close friend who could interpret their new image to others:

"You almost have to have a friend who really trusts you and who tells other people that you have changed. Otherwise, you don't have a chance."]

## ADVANTAGES OF A BAD REPUTATION: AN INTERPERSONAL STRATEGY AND A SOCIAL ROLE

Most people think that a bad reputation is something that happens to them.

What the Minnesota Youth Poll reveals is quite a different picture. Some teenagers seem to actively seek bad reputations. Like the blind man selling pencils on a street corner who knows that the more handicapped he appears the more money he can make, teenagers consciously act in ways that help them maintain a negative image. This enables youth to keep others (usually adults) at a distance, helps them to acquire superficial popularity, and to be free of social control.

Teens' use of a bad reputation as an interpersonal strategy, i.e., a system of relating to others, was expressed in the responses to the question: "What are the advantages of a bad reputation?" We were surprised to find that the students could generate a long list of benefits.

The major advantage of a bad reputation seemed to be that it allows youths to control their relationships with others. A bad reputation appeared to be a social license to act in certain ways and be treated in certain ways. This license defines relationships along two important dimensions:

1) how close or distant you are to people, or intimacy.

2) who will be in control.

The general picture that emerged was that a bad reputation allows the teenagers to be popular without being intimate and to be free of social control while using their reputation to exert some power.

### Popularity without intimacy

It is clear that youth see that the major advantage of a bad reputation is in gaining popularity and being known:

"You're popular, your name gets around and much else. It could build your image."

"A lot of attention. People pay more attention to them."

"Being popular, attention, people pointing at you."

"You are notorious."

"Everyone knows your name."

This also extended to being "popular" with the opposite sex:

"To have a date every night."

"...Go with foxy guys..."

"If you are a girl, a lot of guys would want to take you out."

"More girls would go out with you (dirt girls). You could have more sex."

There is also an element of status in this popularity. Some were impressed and secretly or openly admired those with bad reputations, but this almost always applied to males:

"Girls look down on each other, but guys look up to each other for bad reputations— like who can drink the most."

"Guys will accept guys with bad reputations."

"Guys with bad reps are put on a pedestal."

"Girls cut each other down more than guys cut girls down for how they act. Guys are more bold about it; they don't care who hears it."

But it is also clear that this is a superficial popularity. Girls with bad reputations are taken out for the sake of sexual satisfaction, not to establish an emotionally intimate relationship. Friendships also lack depth. Overall, there is a tone of exploitation.

"Some guys try to see if the rumors are really true. A guy might make a bet with another guy to take a girl out who's bad."

"Some guys like hanging around the girls with bad reputations because they are easy."

The following pairs of quotes illustrate the dilemma of having a bad reputation—that some goals are achieved, but there are social and emotional costs. Each pair is from a discussion group with the first quote being the answer to what are the *advantages* of a bad reputation and the second quote being the answer to what are the *disadvantages:*

Advant.   "Might be looked at as a leader. To be noticed. Attention."

Disadvantage:   "Looked upon as a negative person. Difficult to be in a group desired. Horrible to make friends. Buys friends by threats."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Advantage:   "You are accepted by other students with bad reputations."

Disadvantage:   "The whole of society looks down on you, and you are not accepted by the more popular student. If you have a bad reputation, you probably will feel uneasy around normal students."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Advantage:   "Meet a lot of people."

Disadvantage:   "No close friends."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Advantage:   "Being talked about."

Disadvantage:   "Being talked about."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Advantage:   "Some people admire you. Gives you status."

Disadvantage:   "Most people can't stand you."

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Advantage:   "Can always make friends of others who are 'burnt' even in other schools."

Disadvantage:   "Don't have any close friends. Not liked by others...No one to confide in."

Advantage:   "Gaining popularity with the boys."

Disadvantage:   "Losing friends...Running into problems with abortion in a early age. Having children and not being able to care for them."

### Being alone.

Another advantage of a bad reputation is that you can be alone:

"Some people enjoy it because they don't have to be with other people."

"Keep people away from you. Have a hard cover."

"If you like to be a loner, then it's good. Otherwise we don't have many advantages."

"You're kind of not expected to associate too much with other people."

"You don't have to worry about too many friends."

"Solitude."

"More time to yourself."

"No fooling around with a lot of people. Get more things done. Have more time with yourself. Be with certain friends more."

Being alone is an advantage for several reasons. You don't have to deal with or be subject to the discomfort or "hassles" inherent in all relationships. For those who want to protect themselves from relationships, a bad reputation can be used as a "defense mechanism." Being alone frees you from social influence and control as well:

(An advantage of a bad reputation is that) "You are always alone so you can do what you want."

"People think you're independent because you're by yourself."

"You couldn't have friends because they try to make you change."

While being alone was viewed as desirable, there were also disadvantages cited, which are presented below to round out the picture. Again we present paired answers:

Advantage:   "People leave you alone."

Disadvantage:   "Whenever you come around, people run."

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Advantage:   "People leave you alone."

Disadvantage:   "Lonely."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Advantage:   "No friends."

Disadvantage:   "No friends."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Advantage:   "Some people enjoy it because they don't have to be with other people."

Disadvantage:   "People reject you; lose a lot of friends; feel left out."

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

### Freedom from social control

Freedom from social influence and control is a very important, positive consequence of a bad reputation. With a bad reputation:

"You can do anything you want."

"You can be as rotten as you want."

"You can get what you want."

This freedom from social control is based on four factors. *First*, the expectations of others are minimal:

"People don't expect much from you."

"No image to uphold. Everyone expects something wierd from them. Can't think of too many."

"Do anything you want. It's expected."

"People wouldn't be so shocked when something happens. Don't have to live up to anything."

"You can get away with things. It's a cover up. Protect yourself; you play your role. It's expected of you. You don't have to change because it's expected of you."

*Second,* rules are more leniently enforced:

"People don't miss you if you take off from school."

"You can get away with a lot more. People are lenient with you; they expect that kind of crap from you."

*Third,* the influence of peers and adults is reduced:

"You are your own person and enjoy what you're doing. You don't have to conform."

"(You) don't have to be forced by peer pressure, as long as you're not popular anyway, to do things you don't want to do."

*Fourth,* a bad reputation is a license to be irresponsible:

"Not having to account for your actions."

"Gives an excuse for bad behavior. Gets away with anything without hurting your reputation, freedom... No social pressure or societal pressure."

"To get out of doing things."

"You can get a diploma for doing nothing in high school."

"It's a scapegoat to get out of things. It's an excuse for doing things wrong."

"Don't have to use a lot of good judgment. You get away with a lot. Irresponsible."

"People make excuses for you; can get by easier."

"Get away with murder. Nothing is expected of you, so you can do anything. No responsibility to anyone or anything."

Why is social pressure and influence diminished? As stated before, by being alone, one automatically is separated from those who may try to exert influence or control. Also, if no one cares about the person, then too, one is free of social control. "Caring" is that part of a relationship that allows one to be controlled by the other person in that relationship.

"You can do what you want; no pressures. Who gives a damn."

"You can do almost whatever you want because no one cares anyway."

"You can do anything you wanted. It wouldn't make any difference. You just have to please yourself."

"No one cares about you, you can do whatever you want."

### Freedom from worry and anxiety

Another major advantage of a bad reputation is to provide immunization from a whole set of concerns:

"You don't have to worry about what you're doing is right or wrong."

"You don't have to worry about how you look or act."

"You don't worry as much."

"You don't have to feel guilty for anything."

"Conscienceness (sic) aren't a problem."

"Don't have to worry what people think of you."

"They can do anything others scorn at and not have to worry about ruining their reputation."

This theme—not worrying about or holding oneself responsible—is the counterpart to the theme above, that other people do not expect or care about those with bad reputations. A bad reputation functions as a license to be free of guilt.

### Control over others

The last advantage of a bad reputation is that it provides a measure of power over other people. A bad reputation is a social license to intimidate, stigmatize, and seduce.

**Intimidation.** Some teenagers suggested that being able to intimidate, threaten, and scorn others was a benefit of a bad reputation:

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*"It sometimes builds up an image and gives a feeling of a sense of power which makes certain people look up to you, and you can scare off people you don't like."*

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"It sometimes builds up an image and gives a feeling of a sense of power which (makes) certain people look up to you, and you can scare off people you don't like."

"People (are) afraid of you."

"Be a tough person—others are afraid of you."

"Feared and can get control."

"You can threaten people into doing what you want."

"You can dominate people. People fear you."

**Stigmatizing Power.** Some youth said that they avoided those with bad reputations to protect themselves from being labeled "bad." Bad reputations seem to be very powerful—almost contagious. Thus, they could be very useful to keep people at a distance both physically and emotionally. Some explained this theory about being contaminated by bad reputations very clearly; if a good student is seen with people of ill repute, they will "catch" the bad reputation:

"Teenagers without the reputations don't want to talk to the ones with the reputations because they get called sluts, alcoholics, etc."

"Stay clear. If you hang around with someone with bad reputation, you automatically get a bad rep in other people's eyes."

"The person with a bad reputation is believed to cause a bad reputation in the normal student."

"You are associated with who you hang around with."

"Avoid them so you don't get associated with them."

The idea that "good" teenagers could be contaminated by the "bad" ones seems to be one that teenagers receive from adults. Some recounted how their parents warned them against these "bad" people:

"Parents say, 'I don't want you to play with her, she doesn't wear a bra.'"

"Or they say, 'What a tramp. Stay away from that tramp.'"

"My dad says, 'I told you that kid is going nowhere. He's a tramp. He sits around and drinks beer.'"

"Adults think that their bad reputation rubs off on other kids. Some parents would move away when they feel their kids are getting too involved."

**Control through seduction.** Being seductive is a way for girls to control their relationships with guys and a bad reputation is a license to act this way:

"A girl who has no self-respect and has no feelings towards one boy, but uses her body instead of her personality to get a relationship with a male companion."

"They put on tons of make-up and wear short dresses and tight pants."

When one feels socially incompetent and awkward with other people and relationships, the natural inclination is to withdraw from social situations. As someone once noted,

"When you are continually stepping on people's toes you really don't feel much like dancing."

One impression is that youth keep people at a distance, keep people from caring, so that they can maintain and promote their independence. If one values independence, then a strategy for obtaining it is to be the kind of person that would be hard for people to care about: Disruptive, intimidating, withdrawn, slovenly, arrogant, disloyal, dishonest.

### A Picture of Teenagers with Bad Reputations

A picture of the type of person who adopts this social role emerged from the students' discussion. We draw this picture very tentatively because we have not actually identified these individuals and spoken with them. In fact, we can speculate that most of our respondents do not have bad reputations, and thus, their discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of a bad reputation may often be based on gossip and their observations of their peers and not on their personal experiences.

The data presented so far point to a social role which has certain features. It is characterized by being popular and well-known but with superficial and distant relationships:

"There is a certain mystique about being a 'hard guy.' For example, people don't always know what you are really about."

There is a desire to "be alone" and "be left alone." Again this suggests that these youth are not comfortable in relationships and withdraw from them.
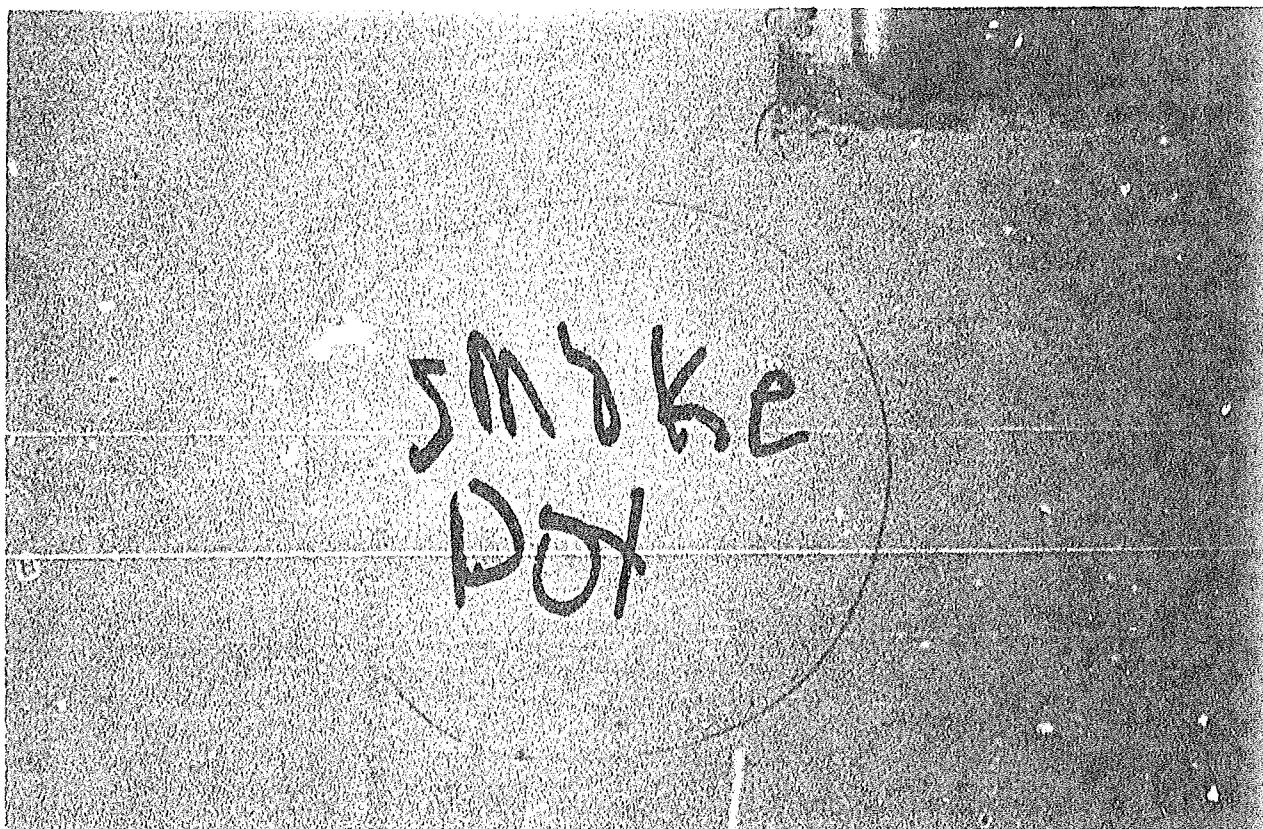
They also have difficulty acting assertively,[1] which may explain their characteristic withdrawal from relationships where they will be "controlled." A bad reputation can insulate young people from social control, particularly when they do not have the social skills to resist. At the same time they are granted a measure of power through the ability to intimidate, stigmatize, and seduce others with their reputation.

One interesting feature of a bad reputation is that the disadvantages exist primarily in the future while the advantages lie primarily in the present. These disadvantages are: difficulties in getting a "good" job, being a "normal" member of society, or finding a "good" husband or wife.

For some adolescents, the future is viewed as ephemeral and distant, and difficult to both visualize and to plan for. Therefore, some youths choose to be concerned primarily with the present (also some adults). This may be due primarily to the adolescents' level of cognitive development. A concern for the future in terms of probability and hypothesis, rather than in pre-determined ways is only possible for those who have reached higher levels of cognitive development called "formal operations" in Piagetian terms.[2] Thus, only the more mature youth can anticipate the disadvantages of a bad reputation and act accordingly. It is also the more mature youth who has gained social skills and can act assertively. It may be these two factors—the inability to predict the negative future consequences of a bad reputation and the lack of social skills to deal with social control— which lead adolescents to reject a "mature" strategy.

## Intentionality

As we have indicated, a bad reputation is not just an attribute, it is a social role. The data demonstrate that youth in general have an understanding of how they must act to achieve a bad reputation; they understand how others will treat them once they are in that role, and they understand the negative and positive consequences of enacting that role. Because the data are collected in groups, by "understanding" we cannot say that this complete understanding resides in any particular individual, but that a complete understanding does exist at a group or cultural level.

By "intentionality" we mean that an individual consciously decides to act in specific ways to achieve specific outcomes. An example of intentionality which relates to the reputation of a famous actor, Anthony Perkins, follows:

"When I first became a little well-known and had a day when I was feeling down, I'd actually say to myself, 'Well, I think I'll go out for a walk and be recognized.'"[3]

Other evidence of intentionality comes from direct statements made in the groups. First of all there were statements where intentionality was imputed by one person to the acts of another: Girls try to have a bad reputation to attract boys.

"Girls without bad reputations like to hang around with girls who do have bad reputations so boys will think they have bad reputations also."

"Use the reputation to advantage."

"People would probably take a look at this person and then begin to realize that this person is probably doing this to get attention because he has more than likely had a rough life before all these problems occurred."

Some of the strongest comments about intentionality came from youths who are in the corrections system. Such youths, we can presume, have direct experience with bad reputations. These are some of the comments they made about the advantages of a bad reputation:

"Use reputation against other people."

"It sometimes builds up an image and gives a feeling of a sense of power which certain people look up to you, and you can scare off people you don't like."

"Use reputation against other people. Hard ass. Getting into the inner circle. Make more money."

"Getting people to feel sorry for them."

During the validation process, a group of 18 year-olds who had delinquent pasts discussed the issue of intentionally acquiring a bad reputation. One student recalled how he consciously sought such a reputation because he felt lonely and lost in a new school:

"When I came from Florida in 7th grade, I didn't know anyone at the new school. I had been popular in elementary school so not having friends was really a shock. I started smoking pot and drinking so some kids would notice me. They were the only group I thought I could get in with."

Another person told how she intimidated her teachers with her violent behavior:

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*"We acted real wild on purpose—we'd break windows, get high and the teachers would be too scared to say anything to us."*

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"We acted real wild on purpose—we'd break windows, get high and the teachers would be too scared to say anything to us."

These remarks indicate that some teenagers—at least in retrospect—intentionally engaged in delinquent behavior so that "attention would be paid."

Again, it should be reiterated that, while we found evidence of intentionality, we cannot say how often youths intentionally acquire bad reputations. Nor can we say how often youth are forced to choose this strategy by circumstances: i.e., that this is their only way to satisfy their needs or deal with their social situations.

[1] Assertive behavior is defined as behavior which enables a person to act in his own best interests, to stand up for himself without undue anxiety, to express his honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise his own rights without denying the rights to others. This definition appears in Robert E. Alberts and Michael L. Emmons, Your Perfect Right, San Luis Obispo, Cal. 1970, p. 2.

[2] Sprinthall, N. A Primer on Development, in N. Sprinthall and R. Mosher, Eds. Value Development As the Aim of Education, Schenectady, NY Character Research Press 1978.

[3] Quoted in Goffman, Stigma Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity Englewood Cliffs, NJ Prentice Hall, 1963

Of course, it is possible that youths may not be aware that they are getting a bad reputation. There are several theories of human behavior that stress unconscious motivations or completely ignore the issue of intentionality. But in our view, intentionality, as well as unintentionality, does exist and it is a part of human motivation. Any individual may at times act intentionally and other times unintentionally, and the mix between these two modes varies from one individual to another and from one circumstance to another.

The strongest evidence that youth may deliberately try to acquire bad reputations comes from contrasting the behavior of youth with bad reputations to the behavior of adults who have other stigmas. Goffman has analyzed stigma and defines it as "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance."[4] It includes people with physical disabilities—amputees, midgets, the blind, the disfigured, and social disabilities—prostitutes, the insane, and criminals. Because of the way people act toward those who have disabilities—with horror, shock, rejection, or by being over solicitous—these stigmatized adults devote much energy to "passing" for normal. Goffman notes the skill and cleverness of techniques which they use to "pass" and cites this example of a blind person:

"I managed to keep Mary from knowing my eyes were bad through two dozen sodas and three movies. I used every trick I had every learned. I paid special attention to the color of her dress each morning, and then I would keep my eyes and ears and my sixth sense alert for anyone that might be Mary. I didn't take any chances. If I wasn't sure, I would greet whoever it was with familiarity. They probably thought I was nuts, but I didn't care. I always held her hand on the way to and from movies at night, and she led me, without knowing it, so I didn't have to feel for curbs and steps."[5]

Goffman argues that adults who deviate from the "normal" go to great lengths to hide their deviations. This is true whether the designation results from physical irregularities or socially disapproved actions.

But by comparison, youth with bad reputations seem to act in quite a different manner. Youth Poll respondents did not perceive that youth with bad reputations attempt to hide their reputations. In fact, one of the most important advantages of a bad reputation is the notoriety it brings. Moreover, there seemed to be some evidence that reputations were promoted through bragging, boasting, and public displays.

Returning to Goffman's definition—that a stigma is "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance"—we might note that a stigma is not necessarily something which is passively received. Rather it appears that some youth use a bad reputation to reject the terms of "full social acceptance," including responsibility and social skills.

*"Girls without bad reputations like to hang around with girls who do have bad reputations so boys will think they have bad reputations also."*
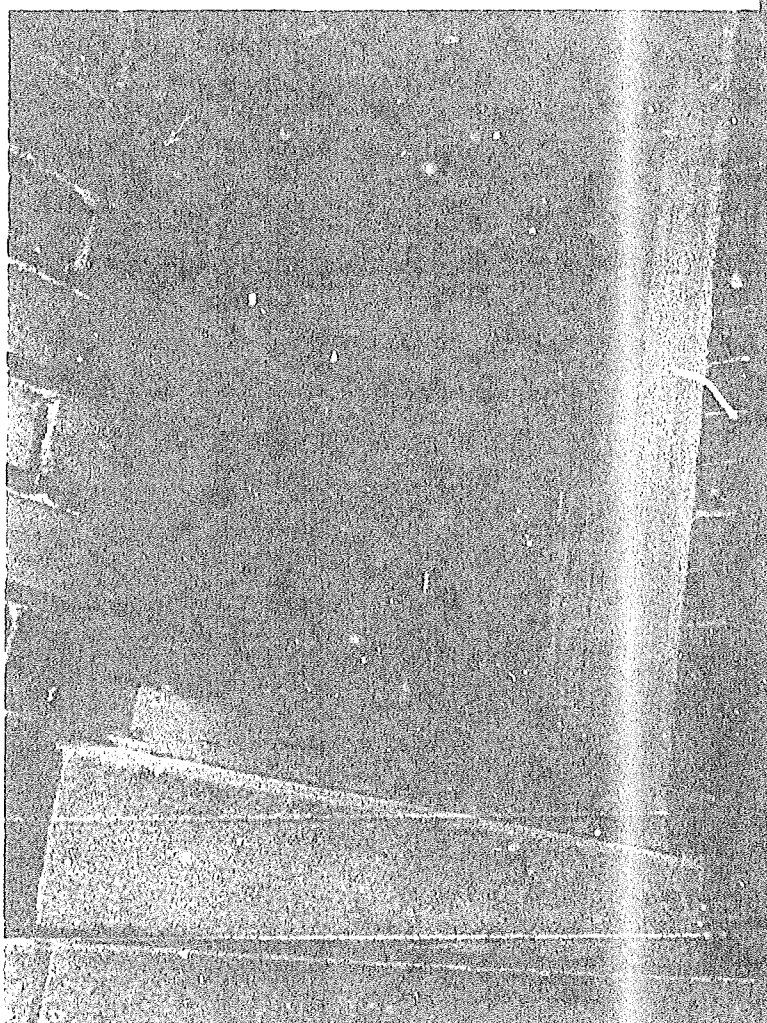
[4] Goffman, Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall, 1963, Preface.
[5] Goffman, op. cit., p. 88.

## Section II:
# JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IMAGES AND CAUSATIONS

*"If you didn't know they were a delinquent, you would think they were nice, but if someone told you he was a delinquent, you wouldn't look at his personality— you'd look at his record."*

## INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is the focus of this section. First, the picture of "the delinquent" is presented. Then, the respondent's theories about the causes of delinquency are discussed. The last two parts of this section deal with how delinquents are treated by "normal" youth and the differences between juvenile and adult offenders.

### A PICTURE OF A JUVENILE DELINQUENT: YOUTH IN TROUBLE, TROUBLED YOUTH

One of the questions in this poll was, "When you hear the word 'juvenile delinquent,' what kind of person comes to mind?" Our respondents saw juvenile delinquents both as *"youth in trouble"* and as *"troubled youth."* "Youths in trouble" were preceived as active creators of their label or status while "troubled youths" were viewed as passive, victims of the family or large society. The students talked both about the ways in which youths "get in trouble" and about the kinds of problems which these "troubled youths" had. Finally, juvenile delinquents were thought to have a distinctive appearance, though this was discussed less frequently than the above two images.

#### Youth In Trouble

Juvenile delinquents are pictured as "youths who get into trouble," with the primary focus on observable negative behaviors and actions in school, family, and community:

"...Someone in trouble, rowdy..."

"Hood, someone in trouble with the law, in trouble with school; either way they're in trouble with parents."

"Someone who has been in and out of trouble, constant use of drugs or alcohol."

"High school drop out. Idiots in school."

"Someone who starts trouble for the hell of it. A rowdy."

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"Kids that have been in trouble with police, with drinking, drugs, getting in gangs, trouble with school and at home, and running away. Having nowhere to go."

## Troubled Youth

Juvenile delinquents were also seen as young people who are "troubled" because of their social environment or their particular personality. The comments about "troubled youths" could be divided into two categories according to the major source of their difficulties—the social environment or their personal or psychological make-up.

The first comments described how "troubled" adolescents are created by the home and community environment.

"A troubled kid. Kids that have problems at home."

"Broken home child."

"Not much love (now) or when younger. Comes from bad family. Family that over-protects them. Family gives them everything but love. Do things for attention."

"Poorly raised—not loved. Not understood, poorly educated."

"Somebody that no one cares about."

"Someone that has parents that don't care."

"Rotten kids from slums."

"A victim of Society."

"A person who's alone, lonely."

The following statements indicate that the psychological make-up of young people—their structure of thinking and feeling—accounts for their being "troubled":

"Someone who's a little mixed-up upstairs."

"No morals or low morals. Confused. Has little regard for personal feelings or belongings due to low self-image."

"Usually someone who uses drugs or alcohol for mental stimulation rather than social use."

"Doesn't respect authority who care about other people."

"A little kid who thinks he's really tough and has to prove it."

"Very self-destructive."

"Mad at society. Everyone owes them."

"Someone who can't handle their responsibilities."

## Appearance.

Besides being "in trouble" and "troubled," juvenile delinquents were thought to have a characteristic appearance:

"...Leather coat, messy hair, some people think they lay in gutters and suck wine bottles. (But) not all people who wear leather coats are jd's. People who wear (the) nicest coats rip off houses, jewelry stores. The ones who rip off Target or small stores don't."

"Someone in a leather jacket smoking on a street corner."

"Burn-out, dirt bag, long hair, thief, a little rip-off, western boots."

"A dirt. A long haired hippie."

"Hoodlum, long hair, leather jacket and boots with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. 'Dark haired people' Rowdy. Someone with a big leather jacket with chains in their pockets and spiked heels and scars on their face."

## CAUSES OF DELINQUENCY

It was difficult to formulate a question to learn what youth perceive as the causes of juvenile delinquency. Initially, during the pretesting of the questionnaire, we asked simply, "What are the causes of delinquency?" The question generated long lists of just about everything that could go wrong with a person's life, but there was a strong emphasis on family problems, such as "broken homes" and poor family relationships:

"Broken-up families, children who have parents who don't care, people from problem families such as alcoholics, abuse, etc. Kid who hangs around other kids who are delinquents."

"Bad family, life, low income, poor living conditions. Not adapting to society."

"I think a lot of kids get in trouble just for the hell of it. Just for insane fun. Or maybe they don't have anything to do so they get in trouble."

"Family problems, physical or mental problems. Social problems. Location, society influence, need to prove something special to draw attention. Inability to look at other's points of view. Think mostly of themselves. Peer pressure."

"A broken home. The person often wants attention. Doesn't feel liked. They're bored. Want a change. Peer group pressure. They didn't want to be left out. Also, they considered it a joke but it turned out to be a hassle. They like to see what they can get away with. It starts small and grows—trying to get away with more and more."

Though respondents emphasized the family as the "cause" of delinquent behavior in the pretest, in the main Poll, we asked three different questions to try to get a more balanced picture of the causes of delinquency. They were:

"What kinds of families do delinquents come from?"

"Can friends get a person in trouble?"

"In what ways are delinquents the same or different from other people your age?"

## The Families of Delinquents

When questioned further about the type of family juvenile delinquents come from, the students' initial response was "all types of families." However, after more consideration, they specified certain family conditions which were likely to produce delinquent children—broken homes, alcoholic parents, poor families, rich families, and neglectful parents:

"Broken homes, alcoholics (both or one). Where they don't get enough attention. A home where the parents are just as immature as the kid."

"Poor people, drunk parents, divorced parents, large families where they don't get enough attention at home."

"Usually uncaring and poor, or rich and over protective."

"Any kind. Where parents don't have common sense. Poor families, rebellious, rich kids."

"Families that don't have a positive home environment, with love, respect and understanding. It could be any income family."

"All different kinds. Mostly rich families. But it's poor people too—they're the ones that get in trouble. The rich ones drive off into another neighborhood. But the poor kid has to stand bummin' on the corner until the police come around. Parents who don't believe their kids are in trouble—they don't listen, they're too busy."

Although juvenile delinquents were thought to come from both rich and poor families, the students identified some differences in the reasons youth from these different backgrounds became involved in delinquent behavior. Poor youth were thought to become delinquent because of boredom, survival needs, or because their parents were criminals. On the other hand, children of rich parents became juvenile delinquents because they were spoiled, rebellious, or seeking attention.

## Peer Influence Toward Delinquency

When questioned specifically about the extent of peer influence, the consensus was that it was significant. There are several ways in which teenagers influence one another—through "dares" and through the wish to fit in and be accepted. The teenagers also felt that fear of ostracism, blackmail, gossip, and being reported to authorities was also related to peer pressure:[1]

"Most people felt the person will go along with his friends and get into trouble so they will not look down on him and he feels he will be impressing them."

"Dare them to do something, bringing your friends with you when you do something wrong, having a party at their house."

"They have a big influence on him and he wants to conform to their ways to be accepted."

"They can either make them look like a hero for doing something that was wrong or put them down for not going along with the group."

"Spread rumors."

"Squealing on them."

"They may force you into doing something because if you don't, maybe they will tell somebody something you've done."

## Differences and Similarities Between Delinquents and Non-Delinquents

This question produced a different perspective on the causes of delinquency. There were four distinct types of responses to this question:

1) Delinquent youth are *very different* from normal youth.

2) Delinquent youth are essentially the same as normal youth except that they have exaggerated needs due to some emotional deprivation.

3) Delinquent youth are essentially the same but they just *act* differently.

4) Delinquent youth and non-delinquent youth are the same—it's just that some people get caught.

**Delinquent Youth Are Very Different.** Some of the Youth Poll respondents thought that delinquents were qualitatively different from non-delinquents and lacked certain essential qualities such as empathy or concern for others, self-control, and a capacity to cope with problems.

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*"Delinquents don't care. They have no goals or values. Other teenagers who are interested in their futures have goals and values."*

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"Some might have mental problems."

"Rough childhood, lots of problems they can't handle."

"They don't care for authority or school, likes total freedom. Likes to defy society, morals. Looks out for himself."

"They are very different. They have no *real* values and don't work. They are usually lazy."

"Delinquents don't care. They have no goals or values. Other teenagers who are interested in their futures have goals and values."

"Lack of responsibility, only care about themselves. No goals. More attention from school officials."

"Not much in looks. Different values. Different sense of morals."

**Delinquents have exaggerated needs.** Some of the high school students thought the delinquent youth were essentially the same in that they had the same type of feelings (such as frustrations), same needs (such as love, attention) and the same kinds of problems. The difference was that their feelings and needs were more extreme—that they become more frustrated and had greater needs for love and affection and had more problems. There is the suggestion that these exaggerated needs, feelings, and problems are the result of family problems:

"They try to get more attention and often it turns out to be something bad enough to get into trouble for. They are the same but they may be raised different or maybe had personal problems."

"They are really the same, but they just have some problems."

"They still have feelings. They do it for attention—everyone wants attention. They are too insecure..."

"Same wants and needs, like love and affection. Only more."

"They are someone who is starving for attention."

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It is interesting that suburban students are most likely to believe delinquent youths are significantly influenced by peer pressure and that these students are also most likely to stereotype juvenile delinquents.

**Delinquents Act Different!** The third perception of the causes of delinquency is that, as in the last answer, delinquents are viewed as essentially the same, but acting differently. They are thought to have poor impulse control and behave in aggressive, disorderly, and inappropriate ways:

"The same problems, but (non-delinquent teens) can deal with them, have different ways of dealing with them. One follows through and other doesn't. One person thinks, 'I'd like to kill that teacher,' and the other does it, ha! ha! ha!"

"Both are trying to be independent only they're going about it differently."

"They (teenagers) are all looking for love of some kind, but they go about it in different ways."

"I feel they're the same as most people in that they want attention and to be 'popular', but try to gain these things by different means."

"Probably all have the same fears and the same feelings. They act out their feelings differently. They act towards others a lot differently."

"They have a habit of doing criminal things; mostly are the same."

"They have the same feelings...except they express themselves differently. One of the differences are they get in the wrong crowd or they don't know how to express themselves."

**Delinquents Get Caught.** Some respondents thought that delinquents and non-delinquents are essentially the same, and claimed that all teens engage in delinquent acts. The difference is that some youth get caught and therefore are labeled "delinquent:"

"They're different because they get into more trouble than the average teenagers. They're the same because they're just like anybody else inside. There is probably more delinquent people our age than what we think— they just don't get caught."

"...They are no different from us, they just get caught with the goods. At least everybody's a juvenile delinquent."

"...Almost every kid is a delinquent in their own way. Anything from beating their dog or some old lady."

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*"Everybody sometime in their life does something wrong—it's just that delinquents get caught."*

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"They're the same but one gets in trouble."

"All start out the same: They get caught at it."

"Everybody sometime in their life does something wrong—it's just that delinquents get caught."

## SUMMARY

In the above section, we have outlined six "theories" that Minnesota youth have about the causes of delinquency:

1. Delinquency is caused by family malfunctioning.
2. Delinquency is caused by peer influences.
3. Delinquents are psychologically very different from ordinary teenagers.
4. Delinquents are essentially the same as normal youth but have exaggerated needs.
5. Delinquents are essentially the same as normal youth but act differently.
6. There are no differences between delinquents and non-delinquents—except some get caught and are labeled delinquent and subsequently are forced into delinquent careers.

In looking at these ideas, three categories of causation emerged. The first two ideas deal with the social or external causes of delinquency: family functioning and peer influence. The next three relate to the psychological effects that negative family or peer influence have on the young person's whole personality, need structure, impulse control or the learning of maladaptive behaviors. The last one on the list might be thought of as a quasi-cause because there are no "real" differences in the person that cause delinquency. It is only an unfortuitous application of a label that appears to cause it.

These ideas seem to correspond to the theories of causation and delinquency held by adults in general, and by experts in the field of juvenile delinquency.

F. Phillip Rice in *The Adolescent*[2] summarizes the major theories of delinquency which closely parallel those of the Minnesota Youth Poll respondents.

"**Sociological Factors in Delinquency.** The most important sociological factors that have been investigated in relation to juvenile delinquency are the following:

1. Socioeconomic status and class
2. Affluence, hedonism, and values in our culture
3. Peer group involvement and influences
4. Neighborhood and community influences
5. Social and cultural change, disorganization, and unrest
6. School performance
7. Family background

"Socioeconomic status and class have been found to be less important in relation to juvenile delinquency than once thought. Traditionally, delinquency was thought to be a by-product of poverty and low socioeconomic status...Delinquency was an act of despair, a defiant reaction against their inability to succeed in a class system that is middle class oriented...Recent studies show, however, that juvenile delinquency is becoming more evenly distributed through all socioeconomic status levels...Affluence and hedonistic values and life styles among modern youths are conducive to delinquent patterns of behavior...Thus, delinquency among contemporary adolescents is a by-product of participation in the legitimate youth culture. As a result, *peer-group involvement* becomes

[2]F. Philip Rice, *The Adolescent*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1978

a significant influence in delinquency... Various neighborhood and community influences are also important. Most larger communities can identify high crime areas in which delinquency rates are higher than in other neighborhoods. Not all adolescents growing up in these areas become delinquent but a larger than average percentage do because of the influence and pressures of the cultural milieu in which they live...Today's adolescents are also living in a period of rapid cultural change, disorganization, and unrest, which tends to increase delinquency rates. Values that once were commonly accepted are now questioned. Social institutions such as the *family* that once offered security and protection may exert an upsetting influence instead. The specter of social, economic, and political unrest stimulates anxieties and rebellion...School performance also is an important factor in delinquency. A lack of school success, poor grades in school, classroom misconduct, and an inability to adjust to the school program and to get along with administrators and teachers are all associated with delinquency... *Family background* has an important influence on adolescent development and adjustment and hence on social conduct. *Broken homes and strained family relationships* both have been associated with delinquent behavior.

"*Psychological Factors in Delinquency*. Certainly no one personality type can be associated with delinquency, but it is known that those who become delinquent are more likely to be socially assertive, defiant, ambivalent to authority, resentful, hostile, suspicious, destructive, impulsive, and lacking in self-control. They consistently exhibit a low self-esteem or negative self-image. They view themselves as "lazy," "bad," or "dumb." Their delinquency appears as a defense against their feelings of inferiority, rejection, and frustration. In some cases, delinquency is but a symptom of *deeper neuroses*, an outgrowth of fears, anxieties, or hostilities. In other instances it occurs in basically emotionally healthy adolescents who have been handled incorrectly, misdirected, misled, or suffered temporary traumatic experiences. In some cases, delinquency is the result of poor socialization that results in the adolescents not developing proper impulse controls. Thus, the psychodynamics of delinquents' behavior are different, even though the results of that behavior lead to trouble."

While the Youth Poll respondents mentioned most of Rice's seven sociological factors, they particularly focused on peer influence and strained family relationships. They also emphasized some psychological problems mentioned by Rice such as low self-esteem and deeper neuroses.

The theory of causation developed by David Matza in *Delinquency and Drift*, is similar to the last two ideas of the Minnesota youth—that delinquents are basically like other youth but they may act differently or they are simply unlucky enough to get caught. He contends that delinquent and non-delinquent youth are fundamentally the same, holding socially acceptable and antisocial values simultaneously. In this view delinquent behavior is placed on one end of a continuum, at the opposite end of which is strictly law-abiding behavior. All people drift on this continuum subject to a number of factors. Drift is a dynamic state meaning that involvement in delinquency is not irreversible.

The teenagers appear to be remarkably knowledgeable and sophisticated about the multiple causation of delinquency. Simply by reflecting on their day-to-day experiences, they were able to identify most of the major theories of delinquency. While individual teenagers might not be able to construct such a theory, their ideas and perceptions taken together (which we, in fact, organized and constructed) do illustrate considerable depth and insight about delinquency.

## RECIDIVISM

In their discussion of the causes of delinquent behavior, respondents focused on how young people initially get involved in crime. However, when the students were asked why some youth get in trouble repeatedly even after being caught, a somewhat different picture emerged. While such factors as a bad home life and boredom were still mentioned, the most prominent motives of "repeaters" were seen as a desire for attention, the thrill of the activity, peer pressure, revenge, and force of habit. According to the respondents, various factors encourage a young person to become involved in delinquent behavior initially but once involved, the activity itself traps the young person:

"Like the excitement of doing it."

"They feel that what they did last time wasn't really nothing, 'cause they figure that they can always be more sly or slick about it next time. The laws are light enough on juveniles that they can usually continue with a life of crime until they are around the age of 17. Then they figure that it is time to start straightening out 'cause they might go to prison. Some do it 'cause they like to take chances, it's more-or-less a game, a challenge."

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> "*It's easier to steal something and sell it than work for $2.65 an hour.*"

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"It's easier to steal something and sell it than work for $2.65 an hour."

"People they hang around with convince them."

"Feel they can't turn back."

"Because it's their way of life, it's the only way they know of to get things."

"Some kids start to like all the attention they get by the cops and institutions."

"It's a way to get revenge on their parents and other people who hurt them."

"I think jail makes people crazy. They lose contact with other people. They get used to stealing and they want to do it again—like a hobby. To prove that even if
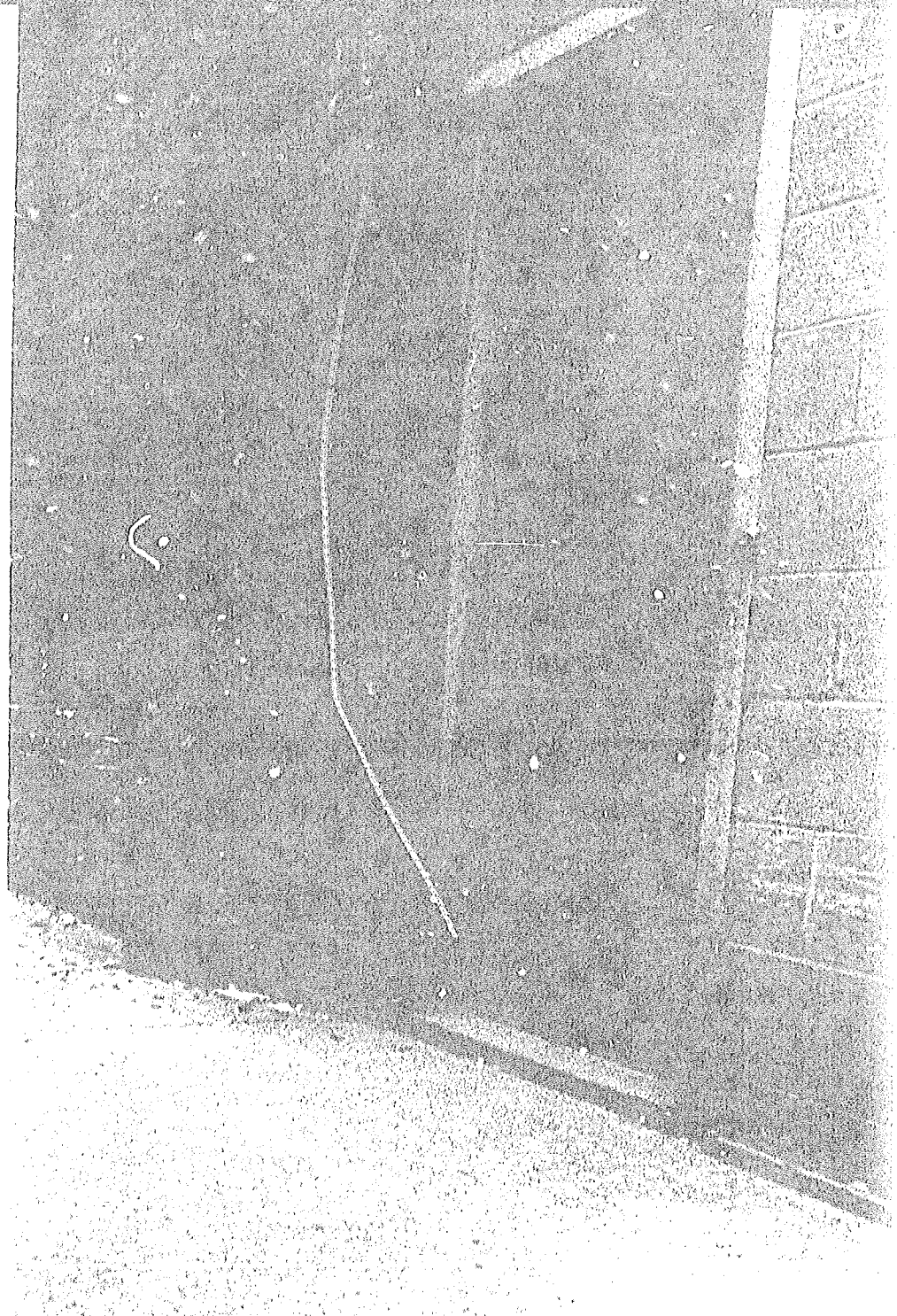
you went to jail you're still your own person. You decide for yourself. Some do it to show they're somebody."

"Because they have no reason to get into society and no way to get there."

When factors discussed under causes were cited, for example, family problems, boredom, etc., they were perceived as more severe. For instance, these young people did not merely have a troubled relationship with their parents, their parents had "given up on them." Likewise, they weren't just bored with a normal routine, they were so far removed from a "straight life," that they didn't even know how to explore its options.

"The only kind of fun that they know of."

"Chronic illness."

"'Cause their parents don't seem to care or they give up trying to help them."

"Deep problems."

Rural students were more likely to believe that juvenile offenders repeat their offenses because they are not punished severely enough. "Spare the rod and spoil the

child" sums up their attitude. Suburban respondents often saw juvenile repeaters as motivated primarily by the immediate benefits of the delinquent activity itself (thrills, revenge, etc.) rather than other influences such as home life, peer pressure or force of habit.

Both sexes seemed to hold quite similar views on this issue, with the only distinction being that females were more likely than males to cite a troubled home life as a motive for these young people's behavior.

## HOW ARE JUVENILE DELINQUENTS TREATED?

Teenagers treat juvenile delinquents much the same as they treat young people with bad reputations, according to Youth Poll respondents. The most common reaction to delinquent youth was complete avoidance. While in some cases, they held a relatively benign attitude (stemming from a lack of interaction), more often delinquent youth were viewed as "untouchables." This is exemplified in the comments below:

"Juvenile delinquents talk to delinquents and non-delinquents talk only to non-delinquents."

(When people find out you are a juvenile delinquent, they...) "Look at you like you are crazy, a dope freak—a loser. (They) act like they are better. Refuse to talk to you. Call you names. Leave you alone and talk behind your back. Gang up on you, chase you, etc."

The power of the delinquent's reputation was cited as one reason for this behavior:

"If you didn't know they were a delinquent, you would think they were nice, but if someone told you he was a delinquent, you wouldn't look at his personality—you'd look at his record."

Other reasons for avoiding juvenile delinquents were fear for one's safety, damage to one's reputation, and a feeling of contempt:

"Depends on if you're alone or not—scared of them."

"A lot of people feel sorry for them but don't do anything for fear of getting a bad reputation."

"Fear...locking doors when driving by home, school."

"They look down on them. They get hassled by everyone."

"Look down on them. Don't associate with them. Feel superior to them."

"They aren't as good as we are."

Striking regional differences appeared in this data. The typical reaction to delinquent youth by rural and suburban students was "gossip" about or "talking behind their backs." Fear was a common reaction of rural students, while suburban youth were inclined to show contempt for delinquents. In addition to comments such as "we look down on them," several statements indicated that juvenile delinquents were objects of ridicule and pity. These may also be viewed as manifestations of contempt.

Perhaps fear of delinquent youth is fear of the unknown. The odds of everyday contact between juvenile delinquents and other youth in rural and suburban areas are much less than in urban areas where there is a higher incidence of reported delinquency. Our urban respon-

dents—while they often mentioned that juvenile delinquents were avoided by other youth—were much less likely to mention gossip, fear or contempt as reactions to delinquent youth.

The ambivalence of some youth who are both interested in and fearful of delinquent youth is evident in this comment:

"Be kinda scared to get involved, but curious. Could get you into trouble. You may want to help him but he may rebel so you're scared to."

Not only were urban youth and youth in correctional institutions less inclined to gossip about, fear, or despise delinquent youth, they were also more likely to actually befriend them, admire them, or to perceive them as "normal." Again, this more tolerant attitude may be due to more interaction.

"They're our friends."

"Some will be friends with them because they think they're cool and get away with some things that are illegal."

"Same as anybody else, don't cause any more trouble, live with lots of them. When I came here everyone seemed to have a probation officer—but everyone acted the same as kids from my home town. I freaked out."

Although only urban youth perceive delinquents as "normal," admiration for delinquents was not limited to those in large cities. While rural and suburban students generally held a more negative view of delinquents, some also acknowledge a sneaking admiration.

## JUVENILES VS. ADULTS: CRIMES AND CRIMINALS

Further illumination about teenagers' image of "the delinquent" was garnered from asking the students to contrast the adult to the juvenile offender. The question: "In what ways are adults who break the law like or different from youth who break the law?" brought out their ideas about the punishments meted out and the crimes committed, as well as the descriptions of the kind of persons involved in juvenile and adult crimes.

The students perceive that the correctional system treats the adult offender quite differently from the juvenile delinquent. They suggest that adults are dealt with more harshly for the breaking of the law than are the juvenile delinquent:

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*"The law will come down much harder on an adult than it will come down on a juvenile."*

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"The law will come down much harder on an adult than it will come down on a juvenile."

"Teenagers are given the benefit of the doubt that you may change and are given many opportunities to do so through clinics, treatment centers, institutions, etc."

"The court system is different in the way they handle adults and delinquents. Adults go to prison. Both com-

mit the same crime but are punished in different ways."

"The authorities are harder on adults than they are on the kids."

In general, the students seemed to think that harsher penalties for adults were justified. First of all, they said that adults committed more serious offenses, and, therefore, deserved more severe punishment. Second, they argued that adults ought to act more responsibly and ethically than teenagers and ought to be held accountable for their actions.

The kinds of crimes committed by adults were characterized as more serious, more vicious, better planned, and more premeditated than crimes committed by youth:

"Stealing from their job and killing people."

"They do crime more maturely. They plan things better, and have more experience."

"Adults are better organized, more experienced, and smarter. They don't get caught as often, and are publicly known. Their names get in the paper."

"The adults are after a quick buck, easy ride, cutting corners."

"Older person shoots and robs banks, try something more daring."

"Usually think it out better, more alibies, usually make TV on the news, and kids influenced by them."

"An adult criminal has better weapons. He can deck a cop who's trying to grab him. He's more experienced and more likely to get away."

"Adults are at a more violent level or at a more corrupt level. Like adults commit armed robbery compared to kids just shoplifting."

"Adult crime has a big risk involved and is planned out. Kid's crimes doesn't have much risk involved and is on the spur of the moment."

Teenagers expressed little sympathy for adults who break the law. Over and over again, they said that the adults "ought to know better" and that adults should set a good example for young people instead of acting irresponsibly and violently:

"They get punished more because they're supposed to be more responsible."

"Adults who break the law are older and more responsible, they should know better."

"An adult knows more completely what they are and what they are doing, where a kid is still forming his morals."

"Adults are old enough to realize good values, for example when you rob someone it hurts them and that's not right. There is no excuse for violent crimes by adults or JD's."

"When you're an adult you don't have the excuse of being too young to understand."

"They should know better, they are setting bad examples."

"Adults should know the difference between right and wrong."

Some respondents suggested that adults and youth have different reasons for breaking the law. Adults were thought to commit crimes primarily for profit and for survival, while youth committed crimes for "kicks" or for attention:

"Kids do it for kicks and adults might do it for a living."

"Adults do it not so much for thrills or because of boredom, but for money or necessities."

"In some ways they do it for the same reasons—for kicks, spite, ignorance. But adults could be desperate for money, while kids just do it for the hell of it."

Other differences were that adults were thought to be more psychologically disturbed, more anti-social, more hardened, and therefore more difficult to rehabilitate:

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*"Adults usually can't make a new life; it's usually too late for them. If you are a delinquent, you can still be helped, if an adult, doubtful."*

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"Adults usually given up on."

"Adults won't have as much chance to change as youth do. More hard-core."

*"Adults usually can't make a new life; it's usually too late for them. If you are a delinquent, you can still be helped, if an adult, doubtful."*

"The adult criminal might not be able to change. The problem just grows and grows."

"The longer the adult is put away, the longer it takes to readjust to a community, also to change, they become hardened. You (i.e. juvenile delinquents) are given the benefit of the doubt that you may change, and given many opportunities to do so through clinics, treatment centers, institutions."

One group of rural students suggested that the reason the police "hassle" young people more than they do adults is that there is the potential for the young people to be helped to turn away from law breaking:

"The police don't hassle or watch the adults as much as they do the kids because they want to set kids straight."

Finally, several other differences were noted—that adults were less influenced by others to commit crimes while youth were often pushed into delinquency behavior by peer pressure. Adults sometimes turned to crime because of a feeling of inadequacy.

While more of the responses focused on the differences between adults and youthful law breakers, similarities were noted. When similarities were discussed, they usually focused on the psychological motivation for breaking the law that both groups shared. Both groups were seen as seeking attention through their action, lacking a sense of responsibility and self-control, rebelling against authority and society; and from similar social and family backgrounds.

*"If delinquents get corrected, they might become counselors and help other kids that are in the same boat as they were."*

# Section III:
# DEALING WITH DELINQUENTS

## INTRODUCTION

In this section we have grouped the questions that deal with the topics of delinquency prevention and rehabilitation. The role of parents is emphasized in the discussion of prevention. We also examined teenagers' views about how delinquents can be rehabilitated—their ideas about the role of the professionals and the role of friends and family. Finally the teenagers predict what kinds of adults delinquents will become.

## PARENTS AND PREVENTION

We asked, "To what extent can parents keep their children from getting into trouble?" Students generally agreed that parents could prevent their children from engaging in delinquent activities, particularly through having a "good relationship" with them.

"It depends on the relationship between the kids and parents. The larger the relationship, the less trouble; the smaller, the more."

"Not always screaming at their kids or telling them what they're expected to be; try and make family life happy—develop a close relationship with their children; *trust* (especially!)."

"A good relationship with their parents helps the kids from getting into trouble."

### "Family Togetherness"

Students mentioned many attributes of a "good relationship," with the strongest theme being intensive interaction between parents and children.

"Spend more time with them, family activities."

"Parents could become more involved in your life—school, teachers and friends, and if they don't like something about one of them, talk *to* you about it, instead of *at* you."

"Interested in every aspect of your life."

("Parents can keep their kids from getting into trouble, to)...a large extent if they pay attention."

"The parents could be more aware of what's going on. Most parents never know about or don't want to realize that their kids are trouble makers."

"If the parents give them enough attention so they don't have to get it somewhere else."

"Stay home and spend time with them instead of social events."

"Pay more attention toward them. The parents could give the kids encouragement and maybe compliment them when they do something right."

"Try to understand them; get involved with kids, find out where they go meet their friends and get to know them."

### Discipline and Limit Setting

Another important theme was that parents could prevent trouble by controlling their children through discipline and setting limits:

"Have to steer."

"They can tell them what their limits are. Tell them who not to hang around with; to be home at a certain time."

"Come in early. Regulate who their friends are."

"Tell them to get home early. Know where they are going and with who and what they are doing."

"Keep close bearings on them. Ground them if they do anything bad."

"Know where they are at night by preventing them from going to wild parties. Making a curfew."

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## "Don't give them so much freedom that you don't know where they are."

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"Don't give them so much freedom that you don't know where they are."

Some youth thought that controlling through mere discipline and limit setting was not enough and that stronger measures would be required:

"They could lock them up in the house."

"Lock them in their room."

"Chain them in the basement. Whip them. Electrocute them."

"Strap them to their beds. Straight jacket."

"50 lashes."

While it is hard to take these comments at face value, they do reflect the ambivalence and contradictory demands teenagers place on their parents.

### Independence and Trust

While youth saw control through discipline and setting limits as important, they also said that too much control could "backfire" and that some freedom was necessary:

"Some parents don't let their kids do anything but they'll do it just to get back at their parents."

"Rebellion if people are too concerned about you."

"Make some restrictions, but not too many so they feel cared for."

"If they try too much they'll make it worse. They can't force them too much. Allow them some freedom."

"Parents try to keep you out of trouble. Some try too hard or forceful. (They should) not be too strict."

"Shouldn't put too many restrictions so he'll feel responsible for making his own decisions."

"Let them have their freedom but guide them. Don't be unreasonably strict."

Other elements of a positive parent-child relationship which were discussed include trust, caring, respect, honesty and allowing children to assume responsibilities:

"Give them responsibilities as they can handle them. Let them know you love them and that you care."

"Be honest with the children and teach them to be truthful back, help them with their problems, get them interested in useful activities, instead of them running around and wasting time, make the children feel important."

"Care for them; respect their opinion; give them trust; understanding; love."

"Don't try to choose their friends. Don't be overly strict. Don't continually blame them. Don't treat them like a child. Talk to them. Find what they want. Let them make their own decisions. Trust them. Give them responsibility. Don't expect too much from them. Don't always let them do what they want, it shows the parents don't care what happens to the kids."

### Parental Influence in Childhood

While there was general agreement that parents can have a role in prevention, there was disagreement about the timing. In the preceding section, we grouped together the quotes that seemed to suggest that parents could have an effect any time. But some youth argued that parents could only have a preventive effect if they started early—that by the time a child reached adolescence it was too late.

"There's not much they can do at the time. The parents should have started (discipline) when the child was young."

"Discipline from the time they are infants."

"Keep a loose tab on them. Give them punishment but also attention they need. Give them that when they are young. You can't start discipline at 16. Must start young. Parents have to show them they care—reward them."

"They can't do too much at this time."

"Almost none when they reach the ages where they feel freedom. Helping them develop when they are young."

"If the parents really care about them from the start."

"Condition them when they are young."

"Can't except in the way they are raised in early childhood, making them feel secure."

"They can begin to shape and mold the child's lifestyle while still in his pre-adolescent age bracket."

### Beyond the Influence of Parents

Finally, the idea that parents cannot keep their children out of trouble was expressed. Sometimes this was stated as an expression of free will—if teenagers *want* to do something that will get them into trouble, they can easily do it:

"They (parents) can't watch them 24 hours."

"Parents can't keep kids out of trouble if kids want to get into it. Parent can only turn them in or punish them."

"No! They try to keep kids from trouble but no matter how hard the parents try to tell them right from wrong, they just don't listen."

"Ha! That's a good one. There isn't much they can do. They can punish them but that doesn't usually work."

"They can just (only) really tell them right from wrong because when the human being gets to a certain age he will do whatever he wants to do."

"They really can't. If kids want to do something, they will find a way to do it."

"Most kids do what they want. They don't care what their parents say."

"Parents don't really have any control. Kids are gone too much."

"They can teach them all the consequences, but in the end it's all up to the kid."

[During the validation process, we asked students to comment on the apparent contradiction between saying that close family life (parents and children spending a great deal of time together, parents knowing a lot about their activities) would prevent delinquency and their wish for independence from their parent's influence and control. Students expressed much ambivalence about this situation. Our general impression was that students believed that the ideal state of affairs would be very close, open relationships and more frequent involvement between parents and children, but that reality was that teenagers did not want to be too close. Several students disagreed with this, and said they were extremely close to their parents. For example, two girls said that their mothers were their best friends, and the person with whom they shared every problem, success, and concern. In general, though, the students said that there were a whole series of concerns and activities about which they did not want parents to be informed. One person commented that some freedom is important when one becomes a senior high student: "Your parents have to give you some slack. They can't keep treating you like a little kid. Like my mother says, 'a caged bird always escapes.' Your parents got to trust you and give you some slack."]


## TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION

Youth Poll respondents strongly favor rehabilitation, rather than punishment, for juvenile delinquents. When asked what they thought were the best ways of dealing with delinquents, the students emphasized helping and understanding. In discussing this issue, the youth demonstrated an awareness of current treatment methods and vocabulary. They talked specifically about family counseling, community-based programs, group therapy, and positive reinforcement, as well as the general need for supportive and rehabilitative treatment:

"Listening to them, talking to them, understanding. Helping instead of always punishing them."

"Family counseling—that's where most problems start."

"Keep him in the community and work with him in programs that are operating on the streets."

"Give them opportunities to do things with good kids."

"Do not tell how to do the right thing. Give them positive reinforcements. Try to open communication so you can talk. Let them decide if they have a problem."

"Rehabilitation: group therapy."

"Let them make their own decisions. Trust them. Give them responsibility."

"Help get involved in other activities, get job."

"Show them that you care."

Ironically, there seemed to be a discrepancy between the students' belief that delinquents need and deserve caring treatment and their own admitted rejection of delinquents (see p. 22). Youths appear, in theory, to be quite sympathetic to young people in trouble, while, in reality, they want nothing to do with them. This contradiction may stem partially from an assumption that "treatment" is something which takes place outside their normal environment, which can be done only by professionals. The frequent mention of "putting" or "sending" juvenile delinquents somewhere else for treatment supports this explanation. Another possibility is that students may wish to behave differently toward delinquent youth, but feel the personal risk of acquiring a bad reputation or being rejected themselves is too great, since bad reputations are seen as being contagious.

Some youth advocated punishment, although this attitude was not widely expressed. Several students suggested that punishment and threat of punishment can serve as deterrents to delinquent behavior. Only a few seemed more vindictive:

"Have a time limit set and after that time limit is up, you are automatically released and if the same type of behavior continues, send him back for a longer term."

"Lock them up, shoot them, make them pay for what they wreck."

"Got to be punished. Not kind to them. If they know something bad is going to happen to them, maybe they won't do it."

There were some differences according to region and sex. Males, especially those in rural areas, had a somewhat punitive attitude. Females, on the other hand, were more compassionate in their orientation to treatment of delinquents. This sex difference was reversed for suburban youth, where males were more compassionate and females more punitive.


## HOW DO JUVENILE DELINQUENTS CHANGE?

Although students were not generally very optimistic about the possibility of delinquents improving their behavior in adult life, we were interested in their perceptions of how such change might occur. We asked the following question to learn about their views on rehabilitation: "How come not all juvenile delinquents become adult criminals?"

There were two major ways that a person moves away from delinquent behavior: 1) the process of growing up and maturing, and 2) receiving help or treatment.

### Growing Out of Delinquency

The first notion, that a person "grew out" of delinquency, was particularly noted by suburban and rural youth. They explained that:

"It's just a phase that some kids go through."

"It's a stage in a teenager's life."

"When you mature, you just get more responsible."

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## "Some kids are rowdy when they are young and grow out of it."

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"They realize that it was childish."

"Some kids are rowdy when they are young and grow out of it."

"They just mature and adjust to adult life."

This process of growing out of delinquent behavior was viewed as a natural, normal process, which did not require outside intervention. These students apparently believe that people are programmed to leave behind delinquent acts when they grow into adulthood.

### Receiving Help or Treatment

The other major theme was that outside intervention is required if a person is to change. Students described this process as "getting help," "getting corrected," "getting treatment." Suburban and rural youth seemed to think that any kind of professional help would be useful. The students in correctional facilities and in the urban schools were more likely to state that only high quality professional care designed to meet the individual's special needs would be helpful, i.e., "*good* counseling," "the *right* kind of help," "the right program at the right time." Only institutionalized young people noted that a person had to be willing to accept the help that was offered:

"They have to be willing to change and want the help and accept it. You have to put forth effort, not just sit in the counseling program and not do anything."

Students indicated that an important element in outside intervention is the love and concern of another person. It was not clear in these quotes whether the youth were referring to professional helpers or to friends and relatives of the delinquent. The idea of "caring," that appears frequently when teenagers discuss relationships, was present in this discussion:

"They meet somebody who cares enough to show them a different way to live."

"People have shown they care for them."

"Maybe they met someone who influenced them and really cared about them."

"They find a reason to change—like love."

"Find a girlfriend or if a girl, a boy, and fill needs through other things."

The juvenile corrections system was not mentioned as a source of help. And, in answer to one question about youths who are repeatedly in trouble with the law, youths stated that the juvenile corrections system has little success in rehabilitating delinquent youths. However, they do not seem to make the connection that many of the professionals they so highly regard are actually a part of the juvenile corrections system.

[During the validation process, we asked students to further discuss their views on professional help, e.g., what professionals do that make them effective, whether parents and friends can be as effective as professionals. In general, the initial impression that professionals were viewed as necessary in the change process was reconfirmed. Not only was their superior knowledge about human behavior admired, but that they remained calm, respectful, and rational was particularly appreciated.

"If you're bad, your friends are probably bad, too, so that can't help you. Professionals don't yell at you."

"You need time alone to figure things out. They can talk to you and find out why you do it, and not put you down."

Some students rejected the notion that professionals were needed to help teenagers who were involved in delinquent activities. Some said that peers were far more effective and argued for more peer counseling programs. Others saw professionals as essentially irrelevant, i.e., "They don't know nothing about what it's like to be a kid," or as inappropriate, "they'll just try to make you be someone you're not."]

### Self-Help: A Rare Alternative

Neither of the two methods of moving away from delinquent behavior—growing out of it and getting outside help—require much initiative or self-help. The first way—growing out of it—requires that people simply mature and change through no effort of their own. The second way—getting help—stresses that outside intervention by a professional or by someone who cares a great deal for the delinquent youth also requires little initiative. The idea that people, through their own efforts and will, could change their behavior appeared less important than the first two ideas. It seemed that people developed the will to change under the following circumstances: They realized that the future would be bleak if they continued their delinquent behavior, or they learned from their mistakes:

"They change, you have to hit bottom before you start all over."

"Finally decided that they care about their lives...take responsibility for themselves. Realize the good things in their lives. Don't like being lower class so they decide to change."

"Some realize life is okay and worth living so they try hard to deal with it."

"Some learn what they're doing is bad."

"They work out their problems, they decide to change."

"They get themselves together; they learn right from wrong, offered an alternative, self-awareness."

"Because they begin to like themselves more. Straighten themselves out."

"They learn something from their experiences. They set adult goals. Realize how they hurt themselves,

...realize what they've done to hurt themselves and
want to change."

"Because of social help or self help. It beings with self
realization."

### Change through Punishment

Students also suggested that change occurred as a
result of punishment. This idea was much less important
than the other three. It was emphasized slightly more by
urban students and youth in correctional facilities than
students in suburban and rural areas:

"Some find out it's not fun in jail. Prison scares people
to not want to break the law."

"They don't want to go to adult prisons."

"They had a lot of punishments."

"Because they get locked up. They straighten out be-
cause penalties are stiffer for adults."

Finally, the other explanation offered as to why "not
all juvenile delinquents become criminals" was that many
youthful offenders die or get killed before they become
adults. They suggested that "some don't live that long"
and "some get killed in the process." The frequency with
which this response was offered led us to take this idea
seriously.

## WHAT KIND OF ADULTS DO DELINQUENTS BECOME?

The respondents predicted unanimously that youth
*would* change as they reached adulthood. Their predic-
tions took two extreme forms. The most prevalent of these
was that, as adults, delinquents would be even more
troubled and troublesome than they were in their youth.
The other prediction was that delinquents would undergo
a radical change and become exemplary adults. Both of
these predictions were applied to all three adult roles that
were discussed—parent, worker, and citizen.

Rural youth were the most pessimistic about the possi-
bility of a delinquent becoming a productive, law-abiding
adult. Rather, their overwhelming opinion was that a
youthful delinquent would become an "adult delinquent."
The suburban and urban respondents were just slightly
less pessimistic.

### Adult Delinquents

As parents, students most often thought delinquents
would become inadequate, uncaring, and irresponsible
parents. Some said that delinquents would become child
abusers; others believed they would have too many chil-
dren, or that the delinquent's own children would become
delinquents:
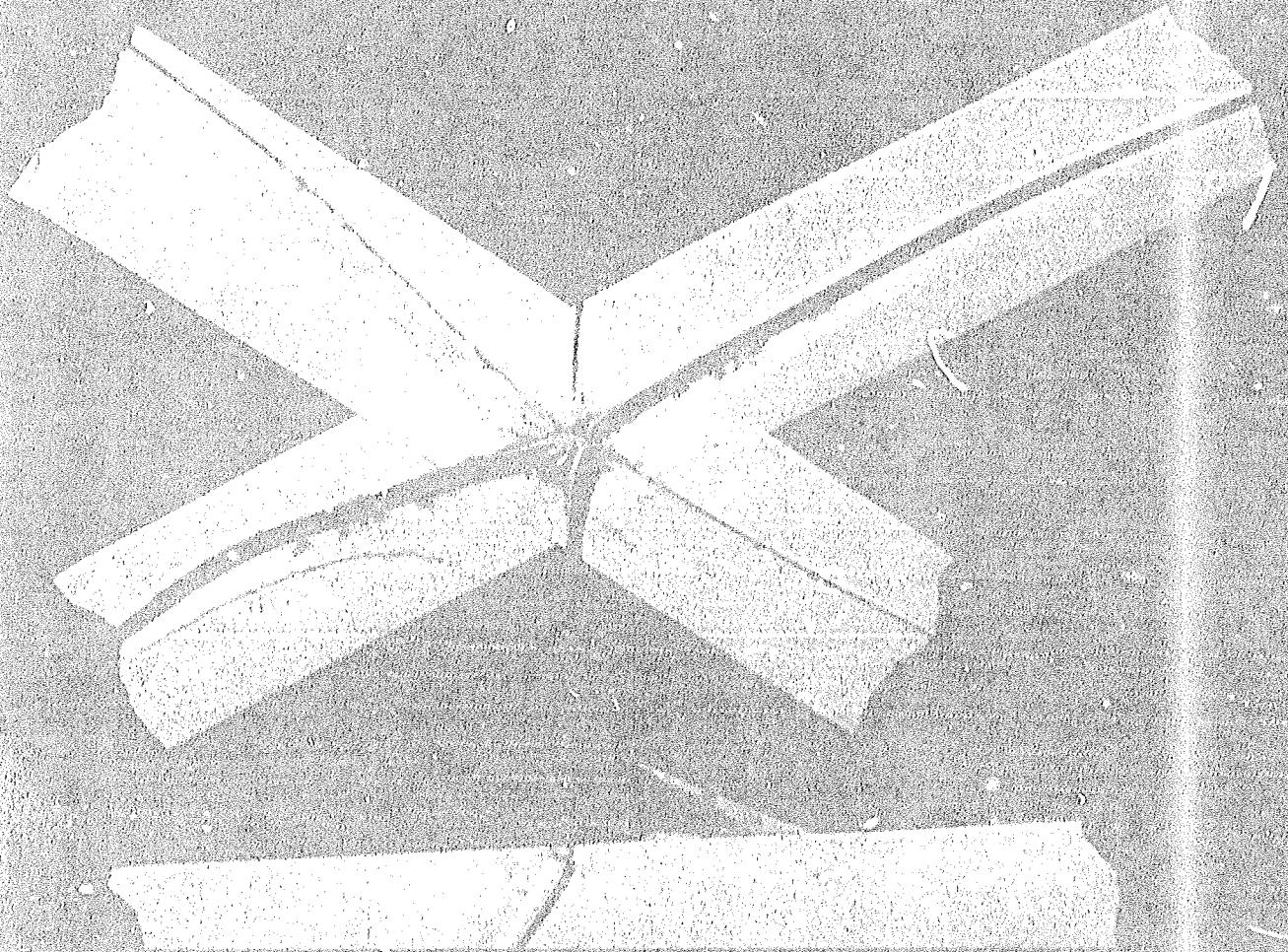
"They will become parents who abuse their children. They tend to have children who end up like they were."

"They usually aren't very sensible so they have a lot of kids."

"They might abuse their kids or might be overly protective parents or not care about their kids."

"They become alcoholics, bums, drug addicts and just all around bad parents."

"Can't demand authority for themselves as parents and can't show kids how they love them."

"The bad one could also teach their kids to do bad."

As workers. Another adult role discussed was worker, but far less frequently than that of parent. The students thought that the delinquent would probably have no professional goals, would be unable to "hold a steady job," would be destined for low-paying, "crummy jobs," and would probably end up "on welfare" and in the "lower-class:"

"Floaters, loners, they don't know who they are or what they want to be."

"If they don't get help when they were young, they probably grew up and become low-class people that are worthless and will never amount to anything in their whole life."

"They'll just be skid-row bums and live off welfare."

"They can't hold a job and are unemployed most of the time."

"Low income most of the time; unskilled labor; on welfare."

"They have low-paying, crummy jobs or no jobs at all."

Some of the students cynically suggested that a delinquent past was an excellent background for certain legitimate careers in which deviousness, dishonesty, and cunning were important qualifications. According to the young people, such careers included business, medicine, politics, and President of the United States.

As citizens. It was generally believed that juvenile delinquents would not become law-abiding citizens and would continue in delinquent and criminal careers:

"They will be law breakers; they're not very responsible. When they get older it goes to their heads and they think they're really bad. They come after you with weapons, think they can get away with it their whole life, they think they're smart cause they got away with it when they were young."

"They grow up and become outlaws, criminals, worthless people."

"They're just problem citizens, convicts, winos, pushers, killers."

"The kind that end up in prison."

"Most of the younger ones that have been sent up for stealing, drugs, robbery, burglary, etc. stay the same most of their lives unless they have good counseling."

"Probably become adult delinquents, drifters, lonely loners, crooks, robbers, suicidal maniacs. Higher degree of theft. More felonies, larger crimes."

"Big delinquents take bigger stuff, more likely to kill somebody."

A few students made the interesting observation that some delinquents do not really become adults. These respondents apparently equate adulthood with being mature, responsible, and productive and, thus, if people were not fulfilling the role that adults in our society should fulfill, they were not really adults:

"They really do not become grown-ups because of the bad things they do."

"They never grow up."

## Model Adults

While the prevailing outlook was pessimistic, some respondents thought that a delinquent youth could not only improve as an adult but actually become a model adult.

As parents. It was thought that being responsible for a child was a powerful motive for a positive change:

"They could turn the opposite and bring the kids up strictly."

"If they straighten themselves out, they could be super parents."

"They may reform and help young kids not to be JD's and may grow up and become parents and be very careful."

"Good parents because they learn from their mistakes."

"Some turn out better cause they don't want their kids to be like them."

"Some of them would straighten out because they want their kids to have better than they had."

It is interesting that the teenagers focused so strongly on the role of parents. Some seem to equate being an adult with being a parent as the following quote illustrates: "They may reform and be like other normal parents." (Remember that this was in response to the question: "What kind of *adults* do delinquents become?")

As workers. It was sometimes suggested that a delinquent background might motivate a person to go into social work, counseling, or one of the helping professions. They thought that some delinquents would "learn from their mistakes" and want to help other people from following the same destructive path:

"If they get corrected, they might become counselors and help other kids that are in the same boat as they were."

"Some become counselors and they try to help people; they want to improve people."

"We think a lot of people like that might turn into social work because of their experience."

As citizens. It was thought that people with delinquent pasts might become model citizens. When youth expressed this point of view, they usually added that a person with a difficult childhood and adolescence would probably be more concerned for the future generation, and would attempt to influence young people to not repeat their mistakes. Such a person was thought to have a highly developed sense of concern for fellow human beings, and a commitment to helping others.

# FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

## FINDINGS

### Acquiring a Bad Reputation

All teenagers sampled believed that youth acquire bad reputations by violating laws and norms—norms about sexual behavior, friendship, appearance, and chemical use.

Males and females agreed that improper sexual behavior was the most important way that females acquire bad reputations. Males, however, saw violating the law through delinquent and violent acts as the major way in which males obtained bad reputations. Females, on the other hand, thought that males, too, acquired bad reputations through inappropriate sexual conduct.

### Treatment of Teenagers With Bad Reputations

Teenagers with bad reputations are shunned, taunted, and gossiped about by young people. Sometimes youths expressed misgivings about treating other youth negatively, but they seldom reported that the "good" teenagers accepted the "bad" ones.

Adults were thought to treat teenagers with bad reputations in substantially the same ways, and were viewed as either being naive about the reputations of teenagers or stereotyping and exaggerating their actions.

### Changing a Bad Reputation

While students initially were optimistic about the possibility of altering a bad reputation, upon further examination they agreed that it was very difficult to convince other teenagers that one sincerely wished to change. Strategies for acquiring a new reputation include external changes such as moving to a new neighborhood, finding new friends, and changing one's appearance; and internal changes such as "getting a new attitude and personality."

### Advantages of a Bad Reputation

Some youth seem to actively seek and promote their bad reputations. For these youth, a bad reputation has the advantages of enabling them to achieve popularity without having to develop close relationships, to be free of social control, to maintain their solitude, and to obtain a measure of power and control over others.

Youth may act with a degree of intentionality in adopting bad reputations. This is suggested by the fact that they do not attempt to hide their negative reputations as do stigmatized adults, but rather that they actively promote their label.

### Picture of the Juvenile Delinquent:

The respondents had two somewhat different pictures of delinquents:

1.) as young people "in trouble," active creators of their delinquent label;
2.) or as a "troubled youth," passive victims of their own personality, family, or larger society.

## Causes of Delinquency

Three major categories of causation emerged:

1.) external or social causes, such as family malfunctioning or peer influence;
2.) internal or psychological causes, such as poor impulse control, lack of empathy or concern for others, incapacity to cope with problems, and exaggerated needs for attention;
3.) "getting caught"; i.e. being labeled as a delinquent causes delinquency.

## Recidivism

Recidivism was thought to be caused by a desire for attention, the thrill of the activity, peer pressure, revenge and force of habit, rather that the motivation cited for initial delinquent activity such as boredom or a poor home life.

## Attitude Toward the Delinquent

The typical pattern of interaction with delinquents was none at all—avoidance was the major theme. Delinquents were avoided for the following reasons: fear of being contaminated by a bad reputation, fear for one's safety, and contempt. Though generally teenagers held the delinquent both in contempt and at arm's length, they held more positive attitudes toward the juvenile than toward the adult offender. The respondents thought that harsher penalties were justified for the adult offender because they:

1.) committed more serious and pre-meditated crimes.
2.) had a responsibility as adults to set a good example for young people.
3.) committed crime primarily for profit, rather than for "kicks" or for attention.

## Preventing Delinquency

Parents were thought to have a powerful influence in preventing their children from being involved in delinquency activity, primarily through having a "good relationship" with them. A good relationship is characterized by intensive interaction between parents and children, controlling children through discipline and setting limits, and giving appropriate amounts of freedom and independence to older teenagers.

## Changing Delinquent Behavior

There were two major ways that a person was thought to move away from delinquent behavior:

1.) the process of growing up and maturing.
2.) receiving help or treatment, usually from a professional or sometimes from friends or family.

These means, requiring little initiative on the part of the young person, were emphasized more than the self-help methods.

Youth Poll respondents strongly favor rehabilitation and treatment, rather than punishment, for juvenile delinquents.

Generally, the respondents were pessimistic about the capacity of delinquents to fulfill their adult roles of parent, worker, and citizen. But in some cases, a "rebound effect," in which the delinquent would become a model adult was noted.

# CONCLUSIONS

## The Power of Reputations: Their Positive and Negative Impact

Reputations appear to be enormously powerful in the lives of teenagers. Adolescents seem to feel pressure to conform strictly to the rules and norms about appearance, friendship, sexual behavior, chemical use, and violation of laws. These rules also seem to be understood and known by most teenagers. One conclusion that can be drawn is that Minnesota teenagers, far from being rebellious challengers of the conventional order, have, for the most part, accepted and incorporated its rules and values. While there are perhaps differences between the views of teenagers and adults as to what constitutes appropriate behavior with respect to sexuality, chemical use, appearance, etc., these differences seem to be more a matter of degree than of substance. Further research on what constitutes a good reputation would illuminate this issue further. It does appear, however, that teenagers' beliefs about good and bad reputations reflect those of the larger society.

Another implication of these findings is that enforcement of these rather rigid social rules and norms by teenagers serves to segregate and separate teenagers from one another, decreasing the possibility of the delinquent or deviant youth moving away from delinquent patterns. Ironically, teenagers assert that having new friends and new involvements with "normal" teenagers is essential for change in delinquent youth, but make little effort to reach out to the "deviant" youth. This may suggest that specific programs in which teenagers support, befriend, and help delinquents are needed to help reintegrate them into the "normal" teenage culture.

There are several examples of such efforts, including Project Surround in a delinquency institution in Red Wing, Minnesota. In this program, teenagers from delinquents' hometowns or neighborhoods visit and become friends with them while they are institutionalized. This provides support and encouragement for delinquents when they return to the community. Similar efforts could be started even within a single school or neighborhood.

## Treatment of Juvenile Offenders

Respondents clearly favored treatment approaches—family counseling, group therapy, community-based services, group homes, etc.—in contrast to punishment for juvenile offenders. In a period when there is a movement toward more punitive methods in juvenile corrections, it is important to note that young people themselves have little faith that punishment will either deter or rehabilitate teenagers.

## Teenagers as Theorists on Adolescent Life

The teenage respondents demonstrated that they had complex and sophisticated knowledge about the causes and treatment of delinquency and how reputations are acquired. When students discuss issues and topics that

are a part of their every-day lives, an enormous reservoir of knowledge and sophistication is in evidence. On the other hand, issues which are not a part of the day-to-day reality, such as the world of work or their future health status, tend to provide little discussion and minimal insight. This topic, delinquency and reputations, is obviously one that has great significance to these young people. It is remarkable that, in a discussion of approximately five to ten minutes about the causes of delinquency, they were able to recapitulate most of the major theories experts in the field have offered. Indeed on topics of high saliency to them, teenagers are thoughtful theorists and philosophers, whose ideas can provide valuable insight to those who seek to better understand and work with this age group.

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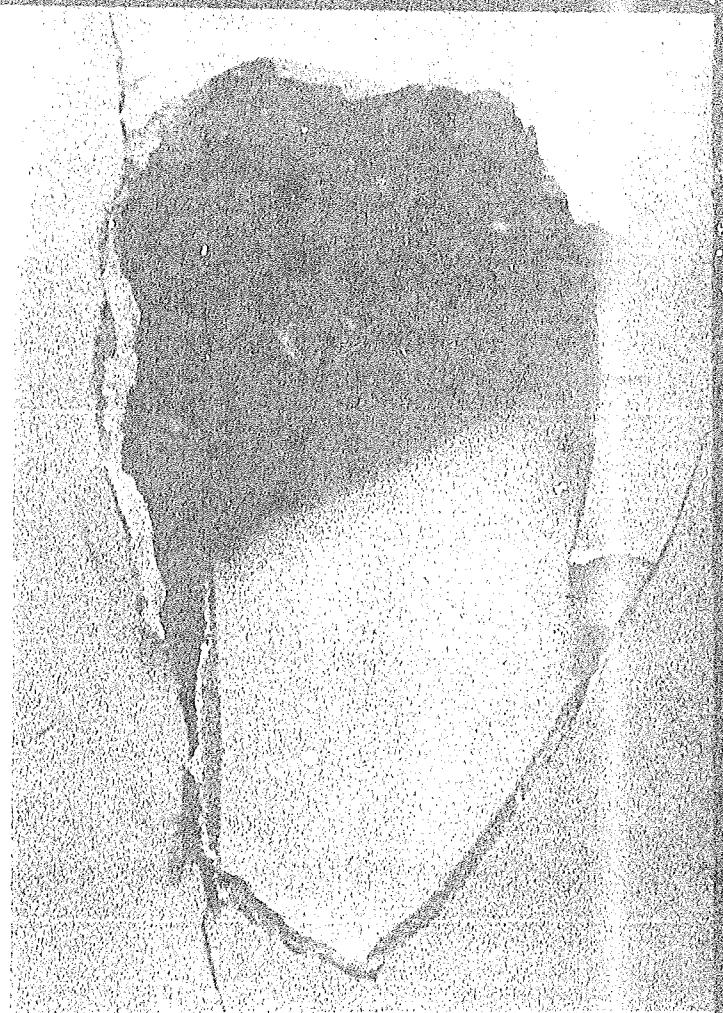
# Appendix I:
# Irish Youth Look At Reputations & Delinquency

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## Introduction

Over the past three years, a method for learning about opinions and ideas of adolescents called the Minnesota Youth Poll has been used in Minnesota. Recently, the scope of the Poll has been extended to include youth in several other countries outside the United States. The first experiment with an international youth poll involved four secondary schools in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The Poll on delinquency was conducted with almost one hundred students comparable in age (15 to 17) to the Minnesota respondents. In consultation with Ann Moroney, an Irish social worker who has also worked with American youth, the questions were reworded where necessary to make them understandable to the Irish students. As with the Minnesota Youth Poll, no claim is made that this is a representative sampling of Irish youth. Rather the Poll presents a picture of the range and variety of opinions held by Irish youth. In analyzing these data, we have considered the themes presented by the Irish youth alone and in comparison with the Minnesota Youth Poll findings.

The most striking feature of the two pictures of reputations and delinquency held by Irish and American youth is how very similar they are. The Irish respondents offered the same basic definitions of delinquency, theories of causation, and recommendations for treatment as their Minnesota counterparts. Likewise, their reported ostracism of youth in trouble parallels the Minnesota picture. Rather than repeat in detail these very similar views the focus here is on the differences. However, we wish to re-emphasize that the view of these young people from different cultures with different juvenile systems are *more alike* than they are different.

## REPUTATIONS

Regarding the questions on how a bad reputation is acquired, the Irish respondents agreed with the Minnesotans that sexual and delinquent behavior were the most important determinants.

### RESPONSES ABOUT GIRLS' REPUTATIONS

Sexual Behavior and Attitudes:
"A girl who is seen to be indiscriminate with her sexual favours, who 'sleeps around', probably with married men. A girl who has had several illegitimate children." (Female Group)

They prostitute themselves
They two-time fellas." (Male)

"Hang around the soldiers barracks, wait to be picked up." (Mixed)

"Too willing to give too much too soon. Get off with anyone in sight. Unfaithful. Virgins." (Male)

Delinquent Behavior:

"Become violent, uses very bad language. A girl who has become deeply involved in violent politics." (Female)

"Defy authority...girls who are afraid to fight themselves and encourage others. Irritate and lead on fellow students." (Female)

"They disturb the peace in the neighborhood." (Male)

"Stealing...getting into trouble in school." (Female)

"Girls mixed up in illegal organizations (I.R.A.)." (Female)

## RESPONSES ABOUT BOYS' REPUTATIONS

### Sexual Behavior and Attitudes:

"A boy who is known to have no respect for women—who does not consider feelings in his relationships with girls, who blackmails someone into having sexual relationships with him." (Female)

"They act like homosexuals . . . they two-time girls." (Male)

"Boys who get girls pregnant." (Female)

"Young married men and their behavior with single girls." (Mixed)

"Get off with another bloke's girl." (Male)

"They act as male whores." (Male)

### Delinquent Behavior:

"By fighting; often by fighting over girls. By ripping seats in the cinema and other places such as pubs, telephone booths." (Mixed)

"Looking for scraps. Acting in gangs. Attacking the younger people. Vandalizing and writing on walls." (Male)

"A boy who will fight over literally anything—football, etc." (Female)

"They vandalize the area and get the whole district a bad name." (Male)

"Bullies who terrorize younger kids. Continually getting into trouble with authority." (Female)

"By going around starting fights, causing trouble to the community. By being a general nuisance to society." (Male)

After sexual and delinquent behavior, a frequently mentioned determinant for both girls and boys was excessive drinking:

"They get violently drunk."

"Drinking excessively."

"Going to work drunk."

"Continuous drinking and behavior when under the influence of alcohol."

The Irish students appeared to place more emphasis on this behavior than the Minnesota respondents. One Irish colleague confirmed that there is much excessive drinking among Irish youth. However, she pointed out that because heavy drinking is widely tolerated, little attention has been paid to the problem of teenage alcoholism.

While there is greater emphasis on the use of alcohol, there is a lack of emphasis on other chemical use. In contrast to Minnesota respondents' frequent mention of the use of marijuana and other drugs, the Irish students *never* mentioned drug use in response to this question. When asked their impressions of juvenile delinquents, however, drug use was mentioned a few times. According to our Irish colleague, this general lack of emphasis on the use of chemicals other than alcohol is a fairly accurate reflection of the extent of usage. She reports that Irish youth use alcohol much more frequently than other chemicals.

An interesting difference between the American and Irish students is their perception of how males and females acquire bad reputations. In Ireland a bad reputation is defined in almost identical terms for both sexes. This is in contrast to the Minnesota students who emphasized improper sexual behavior for girls and delinquent activities for males. Both issues, however, were cited as important for both sexes by the Irish respondents.

Furthermore, there was little variation between the Irish male and female groups' perceptions of each other's reputations. The only differences that emerge are that males tend to emphasize females' sexual behavior more than other factors, while females give almost equal emphasis to all factors. And females were more likely than males to mention excessive drinking as a determinant of males' reputations. However, discrepancies between the Minnesota males and females was quite extreme regarding males' reputations. American males thought that delinquent behavior was the leading cause of a bad reputation for themselves, while American females rarely mentioned it. Rather, females cited sexual exploitation of females as most important, a factor rarely mentioned by males.

Like their Minnesota counterparts, the Irish respondents thought that teenagers shun those with bad reputations and that parents try to keep their children away from such youth. Unlike the Minnesota respondents, they did not often seem uneasy about this ostracism. The following quotes illustrate the tone of the responses:

"Ignore them, make a quick get-away, talk behind their backs, sometimes try to meet them halfway to help them or to discover what has formed them into what they are. Usually sever themselves from that person."

Teenagers with bad reputations stay together and the others stay together. But if they are all mixed together, all of them get the bad reputations."

"Use isolation tactics. Will avoid the person concerned, unless you have been friendly with the person beforehand. Will be very careful of being seen in the company of that person so as to avoid also gaining a bad reputation."

(Adults) "Extremely nasty towards them, go through previous family history to try and discover why they are the way they are. Blame the parents, upbringing. They put them down before they help them, think they're slightly insane. Make sure their children don't mix with them; pretend they don't exist in order to make sure they aren't associated with them."

Irish youths typically agreed with Minnesota youths that young people can change their reputations, although many acknowledged that this would be difficult. They were also somewhat more likely than Minnesota respondents to focus on changing behavior rather than changing friends. A group that was divided on the issue expressed the complexities involved:

(To change a bad reputation) "Be honest, straight, open, change their ways. To show people that they truly want to change and try to prove it when given the chance. In extreme cases to leave the area and start afresh."

(Why change is difficult) "They feel defeated and branded for life. Because people have failed to give them a chance, they feel there is no point in trying and so don't. People's stringent codes of behavior, narrow-mindedness on behalf of the society, failure of society to understand them and their problems and the influencing factors leading to their reputations."

The Irish respondents agreed with the Minnesotans that a bad reputation had some benefits. They cited the same advantages, with particular attention to achieving popularity and freedom:

"A real cool image. Admiration and fear. Sense of power."

"You can do what you want without having to worry about what people think."

"You've no standards to keep up with and you are free to do as you want. People are scared of you and stay at a distance. Don't have to keep to the stupid 'codes of society' as dictated by middle class, indifferent hypocrisy."

In discussing the disadvantages of a bad reputation, the Irish youth were somewhat more pragmatic in their outlook than the Minnesota youth. While Minnesota respondents emphasized loss of respect and problems in personal relationships, the Irish youth focused on being banned from public places, being continually suspected of crimes, and having difficulty finding a job:

"No real enjoyment because he is barred from most social centers."

"If anything ever happened, you'd automatically get the blame."

"No employment because you can't get a good reference from anybody."

The Irish respondents characterize juvenile delinquents as economically disadvantaged, slovenly youth in trouble with the law. As mentioned before, they are seen as drug-users in contrast to youth with bad reputations, and they are sometimes believed to be neglected or mentally/emotionally disturbed. The following comments are representative:

"Boot boys with battle axes hanging out of their back pockets. People that go around with insane tendencies, par example: bashing somebody over the head with a hammer or throwing them off bridges. (This is from reality)"

"Vandal, gypsy. Someone from under-privileged place, from slums. A drinker, a drug addict. Show offs. Mentally unstable."

"Wrangler jacket. Violent—join all violent popular waves. Carry weapons and don't use hankies. Deprived children. Vandals, bullies."

"A person that is constantly causing trouble and guilty of causing many offenses. A skinhead and scruffily dressed. A person who is often involved in robberies."

"The term brought forward many suggestions: (a) deprived child (b) hard person (c) uncaring person from an uncaring family (d) a romantic view of an adolescent just rebelling against a sick society (e) someone to be afraid of (f) a person who had missed all life's chances (g) an attention seeker."

"Drink, break windows, fight, smash cars, disturb the peace, rob articles from shops and houses. Beat up old ladies, etc."

Crimes frequently specified include vandalism and crimes of violence. This is a distinct contrast to the Minnesotans' picture of delinquency, which features theft as the most common crime and destructive and violent crimes as infrequent. This may be a reflection of social conditions. Minnesota has a low rate of violent crime overall and has not been the scene of large scale violence of any kind in this century. Ireland and Northern Ireland, on the other hand, have been the scene of violent conflicts for centuries due to the Protestant-Catholic conflict and Irish-English tensions. Perhaps teenage violence in Ireland has been stimulated by this violent atmosphere. The young people are, of course, affected by the tensions in their country, as is indicated by these comments descriptive of the activities of both delinquent youth and youth with bad reputations:

"Bully... ... to integration of Protestants and Catholics"

"Stone the British army"

"Violent politics"

"Beat up those of another religion"

Our Irish colleague confirms that teenage violence in Ireland has increased over the past several years, and suggests that several factors in addition to a "violent tradition" are responsible. The most important of these, she believes, is the high rate of unemployment that has affected large percentages of youth, particularly school leavers.

While the Irish students were less likely to analyze the motives of delinquent youths than the Minnesotans, some comments do suggest that the nature of delinquency is somewhat different in Ireland than in Minnesota. In Minnesota, the students' theories about the causes of delinquency emphasized child relationships and psychological problems, while the Irish youth emphasized deprived economic circumstances. Perhaps this suggests that delinquency is seen as class-based more often in Ireland than Minnesota. Our Irish colleague concurs with this analysis, and adds that, in her observation, Irish youth are generally less likely than American youth to analyze behavior from a psychological viewpoint.

The Irish students did not suggest a troubled relationship with parents to be a major motive for delinquent behavior, as did the Minnesotans. The two groups likewise had different reactions to the question: To what extent can parents keep their children from getting into trouble? The Irish respondents were almost unanimous in their belief that parents could positively influence their children, while the Minnesota students were less optimistic.

In our initial analysis of the Minnesota data, we were puzzled that, while the parent-child relationship was seen as important in *causing* delinquent behavior, parental influence was not always seen as effective in *preventing*

delinquent behavior. Looking at the Irish data alone, in which the opposite views are prevalent, was similarly confusing. However, comparing both sets of data suggests a possible explanation. Perhaps parents can be influential only as long as they are not the source of the problem. Let us oversimplify for purposes of explanation—if, for example, teenagers commit delinquent acts to get attention from their parents and are successful, they may be encouraged to continue the behavior. If unsuccessful, they may feel challenged to continue, perhaps increasing the severity of the acts. In either case, outside intervention may be necessary to effect change. On the other hand, if parent-child relationships are positive and youths commit delinquent acts because of economic or social pressures the parents may successfully intervene.

## Conclusion

This initial attempt to implement an International Youth Poll has necessarily been on a small scale, and these data were too limited to permit more in-depth analysis. However, the results of this intital experiment are encouraging. Learning about the views of Irish youth has provided insight into the thinking and opinions of Minnesota teenagers. We hope that persons working with and making decisions about youth in Ireland will also find these data useful in practice and policy.

INSTRUCTIONS READ TO YOUTH POLL PARTICIPANTS

The Center for Youth Development and Research at the University of Minnesota is asking you to participate in a project called "The Minnesota Youth Poll."

The Poll is being conducted with approximately twenty high schools and youth organizations throughout Minnesota. The Poll will be an ongoing project and your group is one that has been selected to participate. The purpose of the Poll is to develop a way for you—the youth of Minnesota—to state your opinions on issues important to youth.

To obtain your ideas and opinions, the Center is asking you to participate in a group discussion today. The Center would like each of you to discuss your ideas and opinions openly; but if you want to be quiet during the discussion, you can. In order to insure that no one will misuse what you say please *do not refer to yourself directly or use names which may identify other people.* If you say something that you don't want recorded, ask the recorder not to write it down, or to erase it if it has been recorded already.

After these instructions are read, your teacher will ask you to divide up into groups of five to seven people and will designate places for the groups to meet (usually one in each corner of the room). Students may be in any group they choose as long as it has seven or fewer people. After you are settled, each group should decide who their recorder will be. Choose a recorder who can write quickly and accurately and who is a good listener.

Your teacher will give each recorder a questionnaire for the group to fill out. At the top of each page there are several questions, which the recorder will read to the group to get the discussion started.

The recorder should use the rest of the page and the back of the page to write down what is being said. Record as much of the conversation as possible. When we read the report of the group discussion it should be complete enough so that we have a good idea of what the discussion was like.

The recorder should take the last five minutes of the discussion to go over his or her notes to make sure that they are readable and to fill in parts that were left out.

After the discussion, please mail your forms to us. We will collect all the forms from your groups and other groups and will report the results back to you, and anyone else interested in the information.

We hope you have a good time, have fun, and learn something.

Thank you,

<div align="right">Diane Hedin, Howie Wolfe, Janis Arneson</div>

Summary of Instructions
1) Have a student or yourself read these instructions to the class.
2) Have the class divide up into groups of 5-7 people.
3) Ask the group to choose a recorder who can write quickly and accurately.
4) Pass out Questionnaires to recorders.
5) When 5 mintues remain in the period, ask the recorders to read their notes to the group to check on accuracy and legibility.
6) Collect all questionnaires and mail them back to the Center.

Cover Sheet

We would like some information about the members of your discussion group.

Number of students in each grade? 9th.... 10th.... 11th.... 12th....

Number of females ....

Number of males....

Name of your school _____

(Please read this to your group)


It is important to remember that in order for your ideas and opinions to be useful, we must be able to read about and understand what was said during the discussion.

The Job of the Recorder. The recorder's job is most important. Without clear, accurate, and complete notes of the group discussion it is hard to use what you have done. What your group thinks is very important to us. Unless your writing is clear and the record is as complete as possible, we will not have a good understanding of your opinions.

The recorder's job is to write down as much as possible of what is being said during the group discussion. Don't decide what would be important for us to know about—tell us as much as you can about what people said—even jokes are important to write down.

The Job of the Group Members. The job of the group members will be to talk to us through the comments that the recorder writes down. Try to make it easy for the recorder to write down your comments by talking slowly and clearly. But that does not mean that your ideas need to be well thought out or carefully worded, although that would help. Also you don't have to agree with each other; in fact we are just as interested in disagreements.

You can start the discussion by reading the questions on the first page.

## Page One

1) What do girls do to get a bad reputation where you live?
2) What do guys do to get a bad reputation where you live?
3) How do *teenagers* act toward another teenager with a bad reputation?
4) How do *adults* act toward a teenager with a bad reputation?

## Page Two

1) Some people think that if you get a bad reputation you are stuck with it. Others think that you can change your reputation. What do you think?
2) If you think a person can get rid of a bad reputation, what things would they have to do? If you think a person can't get rid of a bad reputation what keeps them from getting rid of it?
3) What are the advantages of having a bad reputation?
4) What are the disadvantages of having a bad reputation?

## Page Three

1) How do people show that they care about someone?
2) What happens to people if no one cares about them?
3) What happens to people if someone cares about them too much?

## Page Four

1) When you hear the words "juvenile delinquent," what kind of person comes to mind?
2) How do teenagers act toward someone who is a juvenile delinquent?
3) In what ways are delinquents the same or different from other people your age?

## Page Five

1) There are many ways of dealing with delinquents. In your opinion, what are the best ways?
2) Even though young people get caught for breaking the law, some of them get into trouble over and over again. Why do you think this happens?
3) To what extent can parents keep their children from getting into trouble?

## Page Six

1) What kinds of things do people your age do that get them in trouble?
2) Do you think friends can get a young person in trouble? If so, how?
3) What kind of families do juvenile delinquents come from:

## Page Seven

1) What kind of adults do delinquents become?
2) How come not all juvenile delinquents become adult criminals?
3) In what ways are adults who break the law like or different from youth who break the law?