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VANDALISM: A PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY PRINCIPALS OF OAKLAND  
COUNTY, STATE OF MICHIGAN

*Michigan State University*

Ph.D. 1984

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VANDALISM: A PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY PRINCIPALS  
OF OAKLAND COUNTY, STATE OF MICHIGAN

By

Joseph Goslin

A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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## ABSTRACT

### VANDALISM: A PERCEPTION OF SECONDARY PRINCIPALS OF OAKLAND COUNTY, STATE OF MICHIGAN

By

Joseph Goslin

At the present time, many school administrators must simply "live" with the existence of vandalism in their schools. Several approaches have been developed to stop vandalism; it is possible that these attempts have had an impact upon this problem in the schools. Nevertheless, previous research on vandalism has left much to be desired in terms of positive, long-term solutions.

"Vandalism: A Perception of Secondary Principals of Oakland County, State of Michigan" is a study which attempts to prove that vandalism is the direct result of school policies and the means by which they are enforced. It is the intent of this study to examine how administrators perceive their roles in controlling vandalism for the following reasons:

1. To determine how high school administrators perceive their role in controlling vandalism
2. To determine how parents, school boards and communities may use the information for constructing interviews of prospective principals
3. To report how school boards may use the information reported for evaluating their principals'

performances, and

4. To determine how the information obtained from this study will be added to the data base on vandalism.

Principals from the entire population of Oakland County were asked to respond to a self-administered questionnaire, which elicited responses from them in terms of perceptions of their individual roles in controlling vandalism.

The results show that vandalism occurs in all schools regardless of its location, age or who is the principal. It was shown that the Suburban schools have more vandalism than any other type of school while the Urban schools have the most pre-meditated vandalism.

The average school experienced \$2,300 worth of vandalism and the results show that the school leaders are not optimistic next year or within the next five years that vandalism will decrease. This is due to the fact that most school administrators do not have written guidelines concerning vandalism to follow.

The study shows that those principals who are well known by the school body and are active in extra-curricular activities have a lower rate of vandalism than those principals who are not well known.

This study was a success in presenting the perceptions of secondary principals towards vandalism. Much can still be researched and much can still be learned in other related areas of research on vandalism in the secondary schools.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It goes without saying that a project of this magnitude requires the cooperation and assistance of a number of individuals. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the following professors, friends, and loved ones:

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Bryan Joseph, "The B," who through him I see the future and all the things in life that are good.

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## CHAPTER I

### Background of the Problem

The American high school has witnessed many challenges to its role in society over the years. Given the opportunity, high schools have performed well. As the twenty-first century approaches, high schools are beset with many problems, most of which have plagued administrators for years.<sup>1</sup> The range of problems extend between, but are not limited to, the decrease in enrollment of students, and to the destruction of schools by students.<sup>2</sup>

Although the problem of fewer students attending our educational institutions has created a drastic impact on the schools, the destruction of buildings has not been dependent upon the number of students in attendance.<sup>3</sup> The defacement

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<sup>1</sup>George Koppe, "School Crime Study," The Kansas City Times, 3 November, 1977.

<sup>2</sup>P. J. Cistone, "Educational Policy-making," Education Forum 42 (January 1977):89-100; R. J. Rubel, The Unruly School-Disorders, Disruptions, and Crimes (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1977); and F. A. J. Ianni, "The Social Organization of the High School--Specific Aspects of School Crime," School Crime and Disruption: Prevention Models (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1978).

<sup>3</sup>U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency. "Challenge for the Third Century: Education in a Safe Environment--Final Report on the Nature and Prevention of School Violence and Vandalism." 95th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office,

and destruction of school property, more commonly referred to as vandalism, is generally recognized as a serious problem.<sup>4</sup> There is difficulty in determining whether the schools are experiencing a surge in vandalism,<sup>5</sup> or whether the reporting of the acts has simply improved during recent years.<sup>6</sup> In general, it has been documented that a high frequency of vandalism has been reported in schools.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in the "Safe School Study," it was noted that a "leveling off" has been observed in recent years.<sup>8</sup>

The authors of several studies have suggested that school personnel play a significant role in the prevention and control of vandalism.<sup>9</sup> In particular, in a study by Dr. Walter Panko, it was suggested that a key element in the control of school vandalism is the building administrator. Dr. Panko stated:

Characteristics of building administration have implications for guidelines for organized response to prevent school vandalism . . . administration

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1977); James J. Van Patten, "Violence and Vandalism in Our Schools," Education Forum 42 (November 1977):57-65.

<sup>4</sup>National Institute of Education, Violent Schools--Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to the Congress, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., National Institute of Education, 1978).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 37.    <sup>6</sup>Ibid.    <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>8</sup>The N.I.E. study cited statistics on the trends of vandalism as presented in the Annual Report of Vandalism in Selected Great Cities and Maryland Counties, Center for Planning, Research and Evaluation (Baltimore City Schools, 1974).

<sup>9</sup>Both the N.I.E. study and the Senate, Subcommittee mentioned this fact in their reports.

should be strong, fair, and fulfill the leadership function, and so be perceived by staff, students, parents and the community. Strength, fairness, and willingness to lead must all be high priority characteristics. Consistent adherence to policy, uniform practice, and impartiality in decision-making will facilitate the perception of strength and fairness by members of the school environment. High visibility during the school day and during after school activities enhances the image of leadership.<sup>10</sup>

### Statement of the Problem

Vandalism in the public schools appeared on the "top ten" rating of problems, as perceived by respondents in Gallup polls. Consequently, someone in a position of authority must be held responsible for events in and around the school. The building principal has the responsibility for the welfare of students and staff in his/her building. This responsibility includes the protection of school property from defacement and destruction. In addition, this responsibility harbours a tremendous amount of power in controlling most individuals and events in a school. Therefore, this study is seeking answers to the following question:

What are some of the differences among Oakland County high school principals in how they perceive their roles in controlling vandalism?

### Purpose of the Study

Vandalism is a concept derived from what are believed to be acts of wanton and malicious destruction. The original

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<sup>10</sup>Walter L. Panko, "Taxonomy of School Vandalism" (Unpublished dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1978), p. 140.

"vandals" were an eastern German tribe which overran the western part of Europe in 445 A.D.<sup>11</sup> Records of their attacks include the destruction of "works of art."<sup>12</sup> Consequently, their acts were deemed to be needless. Through the passage of time, destroyers of art have gained the label of vandals. Therefore, vandalism has become the term used widely for describing the needless destruction of property, especially public property such as schools.

Vandalism in schools takes place during and after school hours. Acts of vandalism take place in urban, suburban, and rural areas.<sup>13</sup> Vandals in schools come in all ages, shapes, and sizes; few schools, if any, escape vandalism's effects.<sup>14</sup> Yet acts of vandalism are not shared equally among school districts.<sup>15</sup> Since school vandalism is an act of destruction against public property, the question arises: Why do students and others deface schools?

Vandalism is a behavior which Cohen views as having a reason and purpose.<sup>16</sup> It is generally assumed that students vandalize because it is something to do without a purpose.

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<sup>11</sup> Stanley Cohen, "Property Destruction: Motives and Meanings," Vandalism, ed., Colin Ward (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), p. 33.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. <sup>13</sup> N.I.E., op cit., pp. 33-34.

<sup>14</sup> Arnold Madison, Vandalism: The Not-So-Senseless Crime (New York: The Seabury Press, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> N.I.E., op cit., pp. 37-42.

<sup>16</sup> Stanley Cohen, "The Nature of Vandalism," New Society (December 1968): 875-876.

This is probably true in some isolated situations; yet it would be difficult to verify.

Cohen has suggested that vandalism is a "way to relieve boredom or a conscious tactic to draw attention to a particular grievance."<sup>17</sup>

Studies by Ianni,<sup>18</sup> and Dececco and Richards,<sup>19</sup> have explored the "sheltered existence" of the high school. These studies looked at the effects of the school, as an institution and as an organizational unit, to see how it affects the behaviors of students. Vandalism is a social problem which has seized some schools and has ignored others. It is possible that schools may hold an answer to their own problems with vandalism.

The environment of an individual school is complex. Two of the elements in a school environment which hold power over the students are the policies governing their behavior, and the administrators who enforce the policies. Given the ages of the students, both the policies and administrators represent authority. Thus, the environment may establish the grounds for vandalism, through the development of rules or controls on student behavior:

Vandalism is just right. It is the ideal form of rule-breaking both in expressive (expressing

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<sup>17</sup>Cohen, op. cit., 1973, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup>Ianni, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup>J. P. DeCecco and A. K. Richards, Growing Pains: Uses of School Conflict (New York: Aberdeen Press, 1974).

certain values) and instrumental terms (solving certain structural problems). It is satisfying and provides just the right amount of risk.<sup>20</sup>

Is vandalism the direct result of school policies and how they are enforced? The intent of this study is to examine how administrators perceive their roles in controlling vandalism, especially since part of administrator's behavior is mandated by policies.

### Importance of the Study

At the present time many school administrators must simply "live" with the existence of vandalism in their schools. Several approaches have been developed to stop vandalism; it is possible that these attempts have had an impact on vandalism in schools. Nevertheless, research on vandalism has left much to be desired in the form of positive, long-term solutions.

According to Panko, "research of school vandalism has been fragmented and unsystematic."<sup>21</sup> Many districts have studied vandalism in terms of the collection and analyses of dollar and cent figures, as applied against the numeration of specific school populations. Absent in a majority of reports has been the examination of "people" influences on vandalism. Specifically, there have been absences of inquiries into the influence of administrators and others on the incidence of vandalism in schools. Consequently, since the purpose of

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<sup>20</sup>Panko, op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>21</sup>Panko, op. cit., pp. 128-134.



this study is to gather information about the perceptions of administrators; the results are important for the following reasons:

1. Administrators will be able to view the information gathered about how high school administrators perceive their role in controlling vandalism
2. Parents, school boards and communities may use the information for constructing interviews of prospective future principals
3. School boards may use the information reported for evaluating their principals' performances, and
4. The information obtained from this study will be added to the data base on vandalism

#### Questions for the Study

Given the nature of the study, several questions were constructed from issues listed in the literature on vandalism. The questions are printed below:

1. Do building principals in urban high schools perceive their schools as experiencing more vandalism than their suburban and rural counterparts
2. Do building principals in urban school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their buildings
3. Do building principals in suburban school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their schools

4. Do building principals in rural school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their schools

5. What are the top five major types of vandalism cited by principals in the three groups of school settings

6. Do building principals in urban and suburban school districts differ from principals in rural districts in how they define vandalism

7. Is vandalism perceived by building principals as a serious problem in their schools

8. Do principals believe they can control vandalism

9. Do principals perceive vandalism decreasing in their schools

10. Do principals perceive parents as supporting their efforts to control vandalism

11. Do principals link discipline policies and practices with the level of vandalism in their schools

12. Do principals who are not known by all of their students experience greater levels of vandalism in their schools

13. Do principals who are not available and "visible" after school experience greater vandalism in their school

14. Do principals challenge their students to control vandalism

15. Is vandalism by youth more frequent and more serious than destruction by adults

### Definition of Terms

#### Principal

The administrative head and professional leader of a school division or unit such as a high school . . . a highly specialized, full-time administrative officer in a large public school system . . . usually subordinate to a superintendent of schools.<sup>23</sup>

#### School

An organized group of pupils pursuing defined studies at defined levels and receiving instruction from one or more teachers . . . usually housed in a single building or group of buildings.<sup>24</sup>

#### Administrative Policy

A statement adopted by a board of education . . . outlining principles to be followed with respect to specific matters; usually requires rules or regulations to be adopted for its implementation and is broad enough to provide for administrative decision regarding the manner in which it shall be implemented although its implementation in some manner is mandatory.<sup>25</sup>

#### Vandalism

Destruction of property through carelessness or displaced aggression.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), p. 436.

<sup>24</sup>Op. cit., p. 512.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 515.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

City School District (Urban  
School District)

A geographical area, generally coterminous with a legally established municipality, of which the population may be relatively high in number and density and which has been designated as a local school unit.<sup>27</sup>

Rural School District

A school district which has been established to serve the educational needs of youth in a rural community setting. Such a district would include those districts outside of city/urban, suburban and out-state communities.<sup>28</sup>

Suburban School District

A school district which hinges on or near the borders of a city but does not contain heavy industry or a city type setting. Population is moderate and middle to upper economic status.

The purpose of this study is to survey the perceptions of Oakland County high school principals about their roles in controlling vandalism. The remainder of the thesis will include four chapters, described below in brief.

Chapter Two will cover an extended review of the literature on vandalism, with a selected review of the literature on student discipline and policy development. Included in the review will be examples of studies on the subject of school vandalism and approaches developed for controlling vandalism.

Chapter Three will be a detailed description of the design of the study and how the study was executed. In

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 191.      <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

Chapter Four the results of the study will be presented with an analysis of the findings. Finally, Chapter Five completes the study with the presentation of concluding statements and recommendations for future research on vandalism.

#### Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to the survey population, which is composed of public high school principals in the County of Oakland, State of Michigan. The study population does not include private school administrators or its supporting organizations. It should also be noted that because a specific group of administrators was surveyed at a particular point in time, the results may become invalid over time, as the administration changes. It is also limited to the extent that the instrument used to elicit administrators' responses to the questions measures only those educational and professional domains for which it was designed, and does not measure all of the perceptions that administrators may have towards vandalism. Finally, it is limited to a study of the relationship of only those selected demographic, personal, and professional characteristics of administrators elicited through the questionnaire and those factors which are empirically derived through a factor analysis of responses to the questionnaire.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

The American public school system is a creature of a democratic society. This society lauds, tolerates, examines, and, on occasion, attacks the school as an institution. In turn, the school as an institution tends to mimic the behavior of the society in general. Public schools are charged with, among many things, the responsibility of transferring the country's values to succeeding generations of citizens. Yet, when these future citizens, either individually or in mass, confront the schools through challenging the rules of expected behavior (the authority of the school), the school usually exercises its option to discipline the students. An example of such a challenge to the authority of schools is the purposeful act of vandalism.

Schools as institutions of learning are deprived of absolute control over the students. The existence of vandalism indicates the limitations of control by existing authority in schools. However, it must be remembered that vandalism indicates the limitations of control by existing authority in schools. However, it must be remembered that vandalism is a creature of the American society as well. Consequently, an examination of vandalism requires an in depth

examination of the environment where it has been most visible--the public schools.

In his development of a taxonomy of vandalism, Panko has stated:

School vandalism is the unauthorized, intentional damage and appropriation of school property, including theft, for the material gain of the actor; and associated damages, if any.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently, vandalism has "plagued" American schools since pre-revolutionary times.<sup>30</sup> Little change can be detected in methods used for "combating" vandalism today, from those of earlier times.<sup>31</sup> Yet, whether the discussion on vandalism is historical in nature or oriented toward the present, the main theme will always be of vandalism as a problem. It is a problem which must be resolved by someone in a given school.

Since schools play a major role in the society, school vandalism may be described as a social problem. For school vandalism to be held as a social problem, it must meet a certain condition. Stanley Cohen described this condition as follows:

One of the conditions for social problem definition is a perception that the condition is remediable.

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<sup>29</sup>Op. cit., pp. 57-58.

<sup>30</sup>J. Norbert Weiss, "Vandalism: An Environmental Concern", National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 58, No. 379, 1974, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

Somebody must see that something can be done to prevent, control, or eradicate the problem.<sup>32</sup>

In the case of schools, someone must be responsible for declaring a given act as vandalism. This group is basically a social group, composed of any number of individuals, usually the administration and/or staff.<sup>33</sup> In a social group such as a school's faculty, the perceptions of the environment of the school will probably vary among its members. For example, a principal may view an act as vandalism; whereas, a custodian or teacher may not perceive the same act as vandalism.

Herein lies a major problem for anyone studying vandalism. There is a definite lack of understanding what acts of behavior should be considered as vandalism. A conclusion in Thaw's study suggests that:

An indeterminate usage of vandalism as an "umbrella" term attempting to describe all acts taken against property has accompanied a boundless growth in forms and frequency of school property damage.<sup>34</sup>

Despite a lack of consensus of what constitutes vandalism, it has been noted that it has increased over the past two decades.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Stanley Cohen, "Campaigning against vandalism." In Colin Ward (Ed.) Vandalism (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973, p. 218.

<sup>33</sup> Erving Goffman, Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction (Indianapolis: Boobs-Merrill Co., 1961), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Charles B. Stalford, "Historical Perspectives on Disruption and Violence in schools." ERIC ED 139:24, p. 18.



The basic ingredient for vandalism is a vandal or vandals. The act of vandalizing a school serves many purposes for an individual or group. "Vandalism is ideally suited . . . it is a perfect activity to raise the stakes, to make things more contrived."<sup>36</sup> Thus, this "curious breed of citizens"<sup>37</sup> continues to plague schools. The literature suggests that several reasons exist for the increase in vandalism in American schools. The remainder of this chapter will examine the character known as the vandal plus various issues which are associated with vandalism.

#### A Term in Search of a Definition

The original vandals were members of a Germanic tribe which "sacked Rome in 455 A.D."<sup>38</sup> Today a vandal is a person who simply destroys or defaces property. Again, the product of a vandal's work is known generally as vandalism. In many ways it is one of "those words which, in attempting to explain all, essentially explains nothing."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Stanley Cohen, "Property Destruction. Motives and Meanings," in Collin Ward (Ed.) Vandalism (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> Phillip G. Zimbardo, "A Sociopsychological Analysis of Vandalism: Making Sense of Senseless Violence" (Springfield: National Technical Information Service, z-05, Dec., 1970), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Cohen, 1973, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>39</sup> G. Hardin, "Meaningless of the word protoplasm," Scientific Monthly, 1956, 82, pp. 122-130. In Frank Johnson (Ed.) Alienation: Concept, Term and Meanings (New York: Seminar Press, 1973).

Although, as Moore points out, "vandalism is a problem recognized in most schools and is a serious problem in a few."<sup>40</sup> But as a term to be defined it has been evasive.

Several authors, McCrasky<sup>41</sup> and Panko,<sup>42</sup> to name only two, have reported their concerns on how vandalism is defined. Yet, Shackelford has stated that:

Vandalism is a term understood by most of us, defined by few, and explained by even fewer, in terms not suggestive of mutual comprehension by even one another.<sup>43</sup>

Generally, an act of vandalism in a school is associated with a variety of events and people.

The acts can be located on the exterior of a given physical plant, or they can be found inside a building. They can be minor such as a mark on a desk and they can include something as serious as arson. Plus, as it has been mentioned by Deltz:

Vandalism occurs in large and small districts, urban, rural and suburban settings. It occurs in wealthy school districts and also in poorer school districts.<sup>44</sup>

This section of the discussion will conclude with the suggestion that a definition of vandalism be event-specific. Although it may be suggested that a broad

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<sup>40</sup>Royce P. Moore, The Status of Vandalism in Selected Arizona Public Schools. Dissertation Abstracts, Vol. 40, No. 8, 1980, p. 4389a.

<sup>41</sup>Cherie L. McCrasky, School Vandalism in the United States. Dissertation Abstracts, Vol. 39, No. 11, 1979, p. 6407a.

<sup>42</sup>Panko, op. cit.      <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 45.      <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

definition be standardized, to include most types of vandalism, it is possible that this would be a very difficult task to complete.

### The Act of Vandalism

Despite the fact that there is no generally accepted definition of vandalism, there are several forms of vandalism listed in the literature. This section will include the work of two major studies, one by Cohen<sup>45</sup> and the other by Panko.<sup>46</sup> The review is being limited to Cohen and Panko, given the thoroughness of their reviews.

According to Cohen, vandalism may be viewed as "institutionalized rule-breaking."<sup>47</sup> The author suggests that there are six conditions which, in effect, sanction various types of vandalism. Cohen listed the conditions as follows:

1. ritualism
2. protection
3. plan
4. writing-off
5. walling-in
6. licensing<sup>48</sup>

In general "ritualism is exemplified by the pranks of youth around Halloween. It is seen as a behavior which can be tolerated." Another example of this condition would be the acts of high school seniors upon their graduation.

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<sup>45</sup>Cohen, op. cit.      <sup>46</sup>Panko, op. cit.

<sup>47</sup>Cohen, op cit., p. 23.      <sup>48</sup>Ibid.

The second condition listed was "protection." The best examples of this behavior are the acts of fraternities or clubs in a school. Outside of the school the acts may be punished. Inside is a different story.<sup>49</sup> The acts are punished but not as they would be by other forces in society.

In some areas in and near a school, children will play games such as baseball, etc. Invariably, someone knocks or throws a ball through a window. This particular act falls under the condition of "play." Sometimes the game is more of a mischievous nature. In this instance, the play may involve "a competition to see who can break the most windows."<sup>51</sup> The remaining conditions are matched more with those experienced in schools.

"Writing-off" is a condition where vandalism is not only tolerated but expected. This would include many of the ritualistic acts as well. Cohen stated that these acts:

are so rarely formally reported and processed that they contribute virtually nothing to the public image of vandalism or its reflection in the official statistics.<sup>52</sup>

This form of vandalism is basically non-punishable. Cohen continues by suggesting:

The central reason for non-enforcement is that which applies to vandalism as a whole: the fact that this is one of the most safe and anonymous of offenses.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.      <sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-27.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.      <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 27.      <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

Of all of the forms of vandalism which may be expected in a school setting, graffiti is the form which is basically written-off.<sup>54</sup>

The school is a closed society in many ways. Several acts of vandalism occur in a school which pass unknown even to a majority of the students and staff, Cohen noted:

When attention is paid to the rule-breaking--and this is the chief characteristic of this condition--it is sanctioned, within the framework of the organization.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, this particular condition was termed by Cohen a "walling-in."<sup>56</sup>

The final condition of vandalism, as listed by Cohen, was "licensing."<sup>57</sup> The author described this form of vandalism by stating that it

is chartered or insured against in the sense that even before the damage takes place, some informal arrangement is made whereby the rule-breakers can be ritualistically sanctioned. The sanction often takes the form of financial reparation and in some cases an insurance fee will be paid before the event to cover any possible costs.<sup>58</sup>

This final condition resembles the premise for laws which require restitution of some form for acts of vandalism. In fact, in a few districts, the students as a whole are assessed the cost for the repair and replacement of material damaged by vandalism.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 29.      <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.      <sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 32.      <sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

The six conditions presented above outline some responses available to the environment. Cohen further described the types of vandalism; that is to say, the reasons why many people vandalize. The author noted that there are "two central stereotypes about vandalism." First, that the behavior is seen in all acts as being homogenous. The second is that the acts are meaningless.<sup>59</sup>

Given the existence of the stereotypes, Cohen reported several types of vandalism. The types of vandalism were:

1. acquisitive
2. tactical
3. vindictive
4. play
5. malicious<sup>60</sup>

These types will be described briefly:

a. The acquisition form of vandalism is generally seen as theft.

b. The tactical type is a deliberate action which has been planned.

c. Vandalism which is vindictive is a primary source of discomfort for many administrators and teachers alike.

Cohen recounted:

The grievance might be imagined rather than real and the eventual target of destruction only indirectly or symbolically related to the original source of hostility.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 41.      <sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

Much school vandalism is motivated by a sense of revenge. More often than is apparent, evidence indicates that the culprits are not outsiders, but pupils of the school. In these cases the vandalism is preceded by punishments, deprivation of privileges, expulsion or other potential sources of grievance.<sup>62</sup>

d. Another type of vandalism is play, which is simply to have fun destroying or defacing property.

e. The final type of vandalism noted by Cohen is malicious vandalism. This form of vandalism is usually related to a student's feeling of one or more of the following emotions:

1. boredom
2. despair
3. exasperation
4. resentment
5. failure
6. frustration<sup>63</sup>

Cohen summed up by saying that "some patterning of the physical characteristics of the targets is also apparent: the property tends to be derelict, incomplete or badly kept."<sup>64</sup> Panko in his research observed:

Examination of the communicative messages transmitted through vandalic acts suggests that vandalic acts may be categorized according to: (1) the purpose of the act, and (2) the relationship of the act to specific occurrence within the school setting.<sup>65</sup>

There should probably be other ways of categorizing acts of vandalism;<sup>66</sup> in addition, most categories of vandalic acts are limited to examining the motives of the vandal.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 45.      <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 50.      <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 101.      <sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

In limiting the categories to the motives of the vandal, administrators and researchers have been including the affects of the school setting on the types and levels of vandalism.

Therefore, it was concluded that vandalism in schools can be categorized into three types. (The use of "descriptive labels" were avoided to limit any stereotyping of the categories.)<sup>68</sup> The following is a brief description of Panko's three categories of school vandalism.

### Three Types of School Vandalism

#### School Vandalism: Type I

These are vandalic acts which have a "strategic purpose."<sup>69</sup> As it was observed, they are acts which may or may not be related to an occurrence within the school environment.<sup>70</sup> An example of this type of vandalism would be the intentional destruction of property to "dramatize" a point of view.

#### School Vandalism: Type II

This particular vandalic type includes all the behaviors normally associated with the "maturation process."<sup>71</sup> In addition, they may have a relationship with events in the school. The author lists behaviors related to

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 102.    <sup>69</sup>Ibid.    <sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.



Type II vandalic acts as:

1. nervous energy
2. youthful mindlessness
3. peer pressure
4. irresponsibility
5. exuberance<sup>72</sup>

#### School Vandalism: Type III

These vandalic acts "are committed for purposes directly related to perceptions about the school setting."<sup>73</sup> A formula was developed to describe this particular scheme of behavior:

$$p_i \cdot x_i = +d_i^{74}$$

$p$  = "perceptions about a specific activity . . . within the school environment."<sup>75</sup>  $x_i$  = "personal characteristics."<sup>76</sup>  $+d_i$  = "dissatisfaction within the individual."<sup>77</sup>

According to a conclusion derived from a review of the literature, "Type III acts of vandalism appeared most frequently in the reviewed documents."<sup>78</sup> The emotions/behavior related to Type III vandalism were listed as:

1. low self-esteem
2. bored
3. alienated
4. frustrated
5. angered<sup>79</sup>

In summary, the literature offers several descriptions of vandalic acts. Of importance are the attitudes which foster, tolerate, and condemn the events known as vandalism in schools.

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 104.    <sup>73</sup>Ibid.    <sup>74</sup>Ibid.    <sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.    <sup>77</sup>Ibid.    <sup>78</sup>Ibid.    <sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

Attitudes

Vandalism may be characterized as a physical act of destruction; in addition, it may be viewed as the product of an attitude as well. The physical act of property destruction will be covered elsewhere in this chapter. Consequently, the purpose of this section will be to explore the nuances of attitudes associated with vandalism.

For all practical purposes there are two attitudes associated with an act of vandalism. One attitude is held by the vandal himself; the other by the individual who perceives an act as vandalism. The literature suggests that people perceive vandalism to be many things.

For all practical purposes there are two attitudes associated with an act of vandalism. One attitude is held by the vandal himself; the other by the individual who perceives an act as vandalism. The literature suggests that people perceive vandalism to be many things.

As it has been suggested, several "types" of vandalic acts exist, and many conditions flourish which promote such acts. An inherent component of the conditions is the development of attitudes which tolerate or abhor such events in a school setting. The following quotation reflects one general attitude toward vandalism.

Vandalism reflects certain human values held by the vandals themselves. Conditions which produce these negative values are probably some or all of the following:

- a. Poor perception of how to use increased leisure time.
- b. Pressures on the human mind produced by population density.
- c. Normal youthful rebellion against traditions and authority.
- d. Population mobility which tends to limit the amount of pride in a particular community.<sup>80</sup>

On the other hand, Laurie Taylor suggested another viewpoint:

Sometimes our reactions to vandalism suggest that we ignore the subject's definition of his environment and imbue him with an artistic or romantic motive reflected from a bourgeois compendium.<sup>81</sup>

The vandal is an individual who acts by himself or in concert with others. Thus, vandalic behavior in a school setting may reflect an individual's attitude toward a school, or it may reflect the attitude of a group. But there are differences in tolerance when acts are committed by those from the school. An interpretation of this notion was provided by J. B. Mays:

The mores of the public school community allow and even encourage such explosive expressive behavior in its restricted setting whereas the casual destructiveness of promiscuous gangs has no such approval to sustain it.<sup>82</sup>

The above statement reflects an attitude with which many adults may agree on the subject of vandalism.

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<sup>80</sup> Parkway School District, Chesterfield, Missouri. "Vandalism. Environmental, Ecological Education Project." (Washington, D.C.: DHEW/Office of Education), 1974, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> Laurie Taylor, "The Meaning of the Environment," in Colin Ward (Ed.), Vandalism, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>82</sup> J. B. Mays, Growing Up in the City, (Liverpool, Univ. Press, 1954). As quoted by Stanley Cohen, op. cit., p. 24.

Vandalism is and is not taken seriously. In a way the bulk of the acts of vandalism are viewed as "pranks." Shackelford has made the following observation, which reflects the way an act may become qualified vandalism:

In this generation, despite our varied ages, we can recall being entertained by our elders with innumerable accounts of pranks, hijinks and escapades which, if committed by strangers, could have been qualified as acts of vandalism.<sup>83</sup>

Hardly any group of persons will be able to discuss vandalism as an issue . . . without at least one person seeking to qualify some form of vandalism as 'pranks,' 'just having fun' . . .<sup>84</sup>

Shackelford went on to say that this particular attitude, which amounts to an ignoring of vandalism, does not escape those responsible for upholding the law.<sup>85</sup>

Rules are ever-present fixtures in schools, especially those which control student behavior. The existence of rules is based on the presumed need for maintaining order in the school setting. Remarks from one study add that:

While values give us some general sense of what is expected, it is the rule which states what actions will be approved and which forbidden.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, some actions of students may be defined as vandalic when they break school rules for preventing property destruction and/or defacement. Yet, rules do not necessarily change

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<sup>83</sup>Doyle Shackelford, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>"Social Organization of the High School," Horace Mann, Lincoln Institute for School Experimentation, 1975. ERIC, ED. 129711, p. 8.

the attitudes of students. For as DeCecco and Richards,<sup>87</sup> and Bellinger,<sup>88</sup> have commented, students will attack the school as a means of attacking the adults. Thus, it may be speculated that by attacking the school they may be attacking an attitude held by adults toward students. To quote Van Patten, "vandals, by their acts, reject the authority represented in and by the school."<sup>89</sup> Authority in schools is found in the form of discipline policies and practices.

Authority has many functions in schools, but it will be important to look at one aspect of authority in particular. Meissner, in his book, The Assault on Authority,<sup>90</sup> alluded to the "paternal function of authority."<sup>91</sup> The description of this form of authority was presented as follows:

It is needed for the survival and development of immature and inadequate persons. Consequently, authority is made necessary . . . by the deficiency of the governed. It presumes the inability or the incapacity of the governed to organize and direct their own activities toward their own proper good.

It is plain, however, that paternal authority has an essentially pedagogical aim. It seeks the attainment or maturation of the capacities of the governed to enable them to govern themselves effectively.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> John P. DeCecco and K.K. Richards, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>88</sup> Amy Bellinger, "What Will Stop Vandalism?" School and Home, St. Louis Public Schools, Vol. 17, #5, January, 1980, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> James J. Van Patten, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>90</sup> William W. Meissner, The Assault on Authority: Dialogue or Dilemma? (Mary Knoll: Orbis Books), 1971.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Extending past authority to discipline in schools, it will be important to recognize the range of attitudes concerning discipline. It is kept in mind that the basis of discipline is couched in the principle of authority. As a concept which is periodically associated with vandalism, discipline is second only to prevention as a means of attempting to control vandalism. The attitudes of teachers and administrators tend to coningle when discipline is considered.

The attitudes of teachers and administrators have been interpreted by Manford (a layman on the subject) as follows:

Many of the educators and administrators with whom I have talked and discussed these problems over the years essentially agree on two things: One, that our society witnesses some minor lack of parental discipline and guidance and that there is too much free time for youngsters because both adult members of the families have to work . . . <sup>93</sup>

That, of course, was from a layman's point of view; the point of view of educators may vary from that of Mr. Manford, yet not by much.

Vandalism is a social problem. Many people may see the problem as being greater than in the past, yet this presumption has been questioned.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, if the notion of vandalism is accepted as being a social problem, one must ask what kind of social problem vandalism characterizes.

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<sup>93</sup> Donald Manford (former member of Missouri State Senate--written statement presented to the Special House Subcommittee on Vandalism and Violence), November, 1977, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> John W. Williams, "Discipline in the Public Schools: A Problem of Perception". Phi Delta Kappan, v. 60, #5, January 1979, p. 385.

To question school officers as to what vandalism represents, they would answer that it is a "financial concern." If you asked a principal, he would probably say that it is a "social problem."<sup>95</sup>

If vandalism is a social problem, and in this study it will be considered as such, then the solutions must be social in nature. Again, this is dependent upon the attitudes of the individuals trying to resolve the problem. When the purpose of discipline is to control students, then it must be assumed that a problem exists. As a social problem, can a solution be found to terminate the problem?

If students react to school authority, i.e., discipline, then how is the reaction to discipline interpreted by the principals? When students react to school authority--discipline, policies, and rules--their behavior is sometimes labeled automatically as a discipline problem. (Recall that vandalism in schools may be characterized, at times, as reactions to discipline policies.<sup>96</sup>) Understandably, vandalism usually results in some form of reaction by school officials to curtail any further vandalism. Determining whether an act is a discipline problem is a problem in and of itself.

It may not always be apparent that some actions should be interpreted as discipline problems.

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<sup>95</sup>A. Bellenter, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>96</sup>DeCecco, op. cit., Bellinger, op. cit., and Van Patten, op. cit.

Discipline problems are basically of two orders:  
REAL and PERCEIVED.<sup>97</sup>

A real discipline problem is one that arises because a student is infringing on the real freedom of the teacher or other members of the class.

A perceived discipline problem is one for which the teacher in a very real sense is the cause because he perceives a problem when, in fact, there actually is none.<sup>98</sup>

Perhaps one of the most interesting concepts related to the attitudes of students and others toward vandalism has been the idea of responsibility. Responsibility will be pursued only briefly, yet it is a very important element in the relationship between vandalism and discipline. A question to ponder: "Who is responsible for vandalism?"

This discussion has looked at some of the whys and hows of vandalism, but what of the responsibilities for the actions? In his dissertation, Antonio Arnold reported that from the people he surveyed, "all groups agree that restitution for damages to school property should be made by the student or his parents."<sup>99</sup> This brings up a very important item emphasized by Neill:

Educators say students' rights have been extended liberally but that the corresponding responsibilities

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<sup>97</sup> George H. Thompson, "Discipline and the High School Teacher," *The Clearing House*, vol. 49, No. 9, 1976, p. 409.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> A. Antonio Arnold, Jr., "Vandalism in an Inner-City School Administrative Complex. Its Relationship to Educational Consumers' Perceptions of Their Schools." Dissertation Abstracts 37, 1976, p. 1313a.



have not been assumed by youth or demanded by society.<sup>100</sup>

Another view of responsibility will be presented below:

Consider also the effect on children of parents who constantly complain about school taxes or teachers or district policies. If the adults appear to have no respect for the education system, why should the children?<sup>101</sup>

Finally, the responsibility for an act of vandalism may extend into profound displays of behavior. Sometimes the attitudes of parents do not allow them to accept that their children have vandalized school property. This is an attitude which many administrators have probably observed in student discipline sessions with parents. Martin pointed out that:

The power of a group determines its ability to keep its people out of trouble with the law even in instances where they have actually violated it . . . when a group's general capacity to influence is high, the official delinquency rates of its children and youth tend to be low.<sup>102</sup>

The attitudes of adults play an important role in the perceptions of students in whether vandalism will be tolerated or punished. Consequently, in a given school the attitudes may lend to the levels of vandalism experienced by a school. (See section "The School and Vandalism".)

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<sup>100</sup> Shirley Boes Neill, "Causes of School Violence and Vandalism," from Violence and Vandalism--Current Trends in School Policies and Programs, p. 12-18. 1975.

<sup>101</sup> Arnold Madison, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>102</sup> John M. Martin, "Toward a Political Definition of Delinquency Prevention," in DHEW, The Challenge of Youth Service Bureaus, 1970, p. 5. (Pub. # (srs) 73-26024.)

## Incidence

For as the contradictions of our educational system became more apparent, the demands for occupational qualifications upgraded, the pool of unemployed juveniles widened and viable political solutions seem more removed, so will the potential for such delinquency increase.<sup>103</sup>

This statement was written by Stanley Cohen, and in this brief observation, he focused on the future as well as the history of vandalism. A recession, coupled with a decrease in the availability of unskilled jobs, will possibly magnify the employment problems of youth now and in future years. Thus, society's ills will always be translated into frustrations to be borne, particularly by youth. Therefore, it may be predicted that vandalism may increase, especially with the pressures of the economy on youth--both those in and out of school. Nevertheless, the two observers have noted declines in the incidence level of vandalism.<sup>104</sup>

All in all, some form of vandalism will always be with us; the degree of vandalism may vary with the times, and it seems that it will plague administrators for eternity. Yet, the degree of vandalism may also vary because of such factors as the reporting of vandalic behavior in or around a school. As Cohen described in one article:

Vandalism often occurs in waves much like waves of fashion, and the initial reporting of an

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<sup>103</sup> Stanley Cohen, "Property Destruction", op. cit., p. 53.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

incident often has the effect of triggering-off incidents of a similar kind.<sup>105</sup>

What must be recognized and not ignored, is the possibility that violence in schools may be no greater today than ages past.<sup>106</sup> Another problem, associated with the incidence of vandalism, is the general location of such acts of behavior.

Vandalic behavior is not limited to urban areas, as it is so often reported. As Erickson and others have noted:

Many suburban and smaller school districts that have been unaffected by this problem are now experiencing challenges previously unknown.<sup>107</sup>

It was made very clear by Erickson and his collaborators that acts such as vandalism are symptoms of problems originating outside of the school walls.

Finally in another section of this chapter, a discussion will be presented on the practices of reporting vandalism. In advance of that discussion, it will be very important to consider how the reporting of vandalic acts affects the incidence of vandalism. For the incidence of vandalism is dependent upon the reporting of the various acts of destruction and/or defacement of property.

Acts of vandalism cannot be collated into incidence levels, unless those acts are reported. Yet, several

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Joan Newman and G. Newman, "Crime and Punishment in the Schooling Process: A Historical Analysis," ERIC, ED 157-192, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> Maynard L. Erickson, Jack P. Gibbs and G. F. Jensen, "The Deterrence Doctrine and the Perceived Certainty of Legal Punishments." American Sociological Review, vol. 42, 1979, p. 305.

problems arise for some decision-makers, when confronted with acts of vandalism in their schools. One problem in particular, is the potential reaction of their superiors to such acts. Rubel reported that:

School administrators to some extent may have resisted being wholly candid about the nature and extent of their vandalism losses, for, as in the case of many crimes, exposure might have led to concern by district officials or the public.<sup>108</sup>

### The Vandal

V. L. Allen wrote in a report for the National Institute of Education, that there are "three phases of vandalism--before and after destruction."<sup>109</sup> An act of vandalism is the product of an individual's or group's behavior. Many of the studies on vandalism have focused on the individual vandal--Goldman Zimbardo,<sup>111</sup> to name two frequently cited studies on the literature. An excellent description of a vandal was also included in Arnold Madison's book Vandalism: The Not-so-senseless Crime.

The teenage vandal is a primary school child who breaks windows or a high school student who blows up mailboxes with a firecracker. He is a straight. A pupil or consistent scholastic failure, police

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<sup>108</sup>Robert J. Rubel, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>109</sup>V. L. Allen and D. B. Greenberger, "Aesthetic Factors in School Vandalism," in School Crime and Disruption, Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1978, p. 36.

<sup>110</sup>Nathan Goldman, A Socio-Psychological Study of Vandalism, Syracuse: Syracuse University Research Institute, 1959.

<sup>111</sup>Philip G. Zimbardo, op. cit.

point out. He is the heir-apparent to a million dollars or the youngest of thirteen poor children. He is sometimes a she."<sup>112</sup>

If an individual enjoys conjuring up personality types after a label has been suggested to him, the term "vandal" must fill him with volumes of characters. A vandal is one of many persons. It simply depends upon to whom you are talking. Overall, the views of most people probably follow along those suggested by Ward:<sup>113</sup>

We all know the vandal. He is somebody else. In general terms he is someone whose activities in the environment we deplore.<sup>114</sup>

Apparently, some people believe that an act of vandalism is the beginning of a criminal career, especially when it is a crime and when it is committed by a school age youth. If that were true, most American males would be eligible for jail. Contrary to popular belief, there does not appear to be any significant evidence to show a strong relationship between vandalism and a career of crime.<sup>115</sup>

Another argument cited by one author suggested that dropouts cause most vandalism. Although this may be true in some communities, it may be difficult to prove empirically.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Arnold Kmadiso, op. cit., from preface.

<sup>113</sup>Colin Ward, Vandalism New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Stanley Cohen, "The Nature of Vandalism," op. cit., p. 876.

<sup>116</sup>Floyd S. Rose, Jr., "The Effects of Violence and Vandalism on the Completion of the Educational Process." Dissertation Abstract, vol. 38, No. 7, 1978, p. 3865a.

Nevertheless, several attempts have been made to explain the behavior of vandals.

Cohen<sup>117</sup> and many other authors have described vandalism to be more a product of a group versus an individual act. It was suggested that "vandalism is almost always a group rather than an individual offense."<sup>118</sup> Panko qualified this idea by suggesting that the options for acting as either an individual or group are "dependent upon the situation and values they place on each option."<sup>119</sup> A variety of explanations have been developed to describe the reasons for why people, students in particular, vandalize. Several explanations will be presented after the following note of caution given by Garrett:

The search for one or a few explanatory characteristics of an individual too easily ends up in a contradictory explanation which ignores the complexity of real behavior in the real world.<sup>120</sup>

#### A Sample of Explanation for Vandalic Behavior

##### Nowakowski

An assumed relationship between frustration and aggression is often utilized as the basis for theories which attempt to explain vandalism.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>Stanley Cohen, "Property Destruction: Motives and Meanings," op. cit., pp. 23-63.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 50.      <sup>119</sup>Walter Panko, op. cit., pp. 54-57.

<sup>120</sup>J. P. Garrett, "Studying School Crime," School Crime and Disruption (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1978), p. 7.

<sup>121</sup>Rodney E. Nowakowski, "Vandals and Vandalism in the Schools: An Analysis of Vandalism in Large School

Alton Arnold

Revenge and the need for recognition . . . teachers made peer group pressure their number one choice.<sup>122</sup>

Moore

Students who did vandalize did it mostly for "kicks" to show off or because they were bored.<sup>123</sup>

Van Patten

Compulsory education takes away the student's right to choose not to attend school, thus vandalism is a rejection of forced schooling.<sup>124</sup>

Deiullo (on graffiti as vandalism)

Graffiti gives adolescents a certain satisfaction also, for through it they can vent their hostilities, express their fantasies, communicate their triumphs, declare their rebellion, and promote their propaganda.<sup>125</sup>

An act of vandalism usually draws attention to the vandal and not to the conditions which may have prompted the act initially. As it was presented above, the theories or explanations for vandalic behavior abound in the literature.

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Systems and a Description of Ninety-three Vandals in Dade County Schools." Dissertation Abstracts, vol. 28, no. 2, 1966, p. 438a.

<sup>122</sup>Alton A. Arnold, Jr., "Vandalism in an Inner-City School Administrative Complex. Its Relationship to Educational Consumers Perceptions of Their Schools." Dissertation Abstracts, vol. 37, 1976, p. 1313a.

<sup>123</sup>Royce P. Moore, "The Status Of Vandalism in Selected Arizona Public Schools." Dissertation Abstracts, vol. 40, 1980, p. 4389a.

<sup>124</sup>James J. Van Patten, op. cit., pp. 57-65.

<sup>125</sup>Anthony M. Deiullo, "Of Adolescent Cultures and Subcultures," Educational Leadership, April 1978, vol. 35, p. 518.

Before concluding this section it will be important to consider the following statements by Zimbardo.<sup>126</sup>

Perhaps the most psychologically interesting cause of vandalism which is without tactical, ideological, play or revenge bases is that a senseless act is more reinforced than one that is understandable and predictable.<sup>127</sup>

Before embarking upon plans for controlling anti-social behavior such as vandalism, it should be apparent . . . that the first step is to recognize that the focus of the problem is in the way society relates or fails to relate to individuals.<sup>128</sup>

In conclusion, the vandal, as an individual, has been described by many and understood by few. What may be derived from the available literature is that the vandal changes, given the situation he or she is confronted with. At present, a general understanding is lacking, if the literature reflects reality. Therefore, it may be necessary that a considerable amount of research be undertaken for each succeeding generation of students. Of course, there are other ways of looking at vandals.

#### The Vandal As an Alien in the School

Despite the many descriptions of the vandal cited earlier, there is one side of the vandal which must be explored separately. Besides holding the reputation of being a destructor of property, the vandal must be seen as an individual whose behavior conflicts with the norms of the school and of society. In this respect, the vandal may be viewed as an alien in the school community.

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<sup>126</sup>Zimbardo, op. cit.    <sup>127</sup>Ibid., p. 8.    <sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



It is normally thought that a student is a member of his or her school. Although this viewpoint holds the ideal placement of a student, it is far from the truth. Since most schools have dropouts, it should signify the existence of a problem. Yet, before this discussion continues it will be important to look at the concept of alienation.

Frank Johnson wrote in his book, Alienation: Concept, Term and Meanings, that the term alienation:

is an atrocious word . . . alienation has acquired a semantic richness (and confusion) attained by few words of corresponding significance in contemporary parlance.<sup>129</sup>

For the purpose of the present review of the literature, alienation will be considered as:

a student's perception of his/her acceptance in a school setting--by other peers, faculty and/or administration. If the student perceives his acceptance as positive (that is being accepted by the environment), he will feel non-alienated. If his perception is negative (that is not being accepted), he will be alienated.

Overall, the student is an outsider when viewed as an alien in his school. Consequently, if a student discovers a cause to "attack" the school, he is more than likely not attacking his school. Marrota and others stated in their study:

When some youths break into a school over the weekend and rampage officers and rooms, it is not their school that they are defiling. Rather, it

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<sup>129</sup> Frank Johnson, ed., "Alienation: Overview and Introduction," In Alienation: Concept, Term, and Meanings (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), p. 3.

is the school of the teachers and administrators and that group of students who conform to the rules.<sup>130</sup>

Therefore, the student who does not perceive his sharing "ownership" in the school, may not identify with the school. Such an attitude may foster the feeling of vandalizing. Although this may be deemed as speculation, there is some support in the literature for such a statement.

For instance, Murillo presented a conclusion in his study in which it was stated:

It was found that generally the more alienated the student . . . the greater the involvement in vandalism in general and school vandalism in particular.<sup>131</sup>

When a student is alienated from the school, he is more than likely "closed-off" from the truly exciting aspects of school life. As a consequence, a vandal may attack the school to "transform boredom into excitement and to derive pleasure from violating a social taboo."<sup>132</sup> Zimbardo goes on to say that vandalism justifies "a personal acceptance of being alienated from its (society's) institutions . . ."<sup>133</sup>

Again, the vandal, as an alien in his/her school, may be identified with several other labels. One label is the term "drop-out," a label used by many to describe the nature of an alien or student non grata in the school. The drop-outs,

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<sup>130</sup> Joseph A. Marrota, John H. McGrath, and J. Sherwood Williams, "Schools: Antiquated Systems of Social Control." February, 1978. ERIC 157-191.

<sup>131</sup> Robert B. Murrillo, "Vandalism and School Attitudes," Dissertation Abstracts, vol. 38, 1977, p. 3074a.

<sup>132</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, op. cit., p. 8. <sup>133</sup> Ibid.

as Dececco and Richards view them, "can hang around the school building and grounds, occasionally attending class, but mostly just talking and fooling around."<sup>134</sup>

The principal target for the vandal is the school. The vandalic experiences for every school are unique.

### The School and Vandalism

Traditionally, American education has been identified with a structure known as the school. Years of debate have developed a strong sense of why we have schools. Yet, as Ianni has pointed out, "we know very little about how schools operate as social systems."<sup>135</sup> This point is very pertinent to our discussion of vandalism.

Many people, educators in particular, believe that schools are easy to understand, especially since practically everyone has had an intimate relationship with schools for a number of years.<sup>136</sup> In addition, with vandalism being supposedly a new "phenomenon," people generally assume that, wherever it appears, schools can handle it in similar ways.<sup>137</sup>

It is, perhaps, within the realm of imagination that the search for understanding schools and their problems will end soon. Realistically, however, the search will probably never end. Problems such as vandalism are hard to combat

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<sup>134</sup>John P. DeCecco and Arlene K. Richards, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>135</sup>F. A. S. Ianni, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>136</sup>Personal communication with lay individuals and professionals.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

when applying a remedy across the boundaries of several settings. To quote Garrett and others:

Because of the profound differences among settings, generalizations are likely to be of little use.<sup>138</sup>

Nevertheless, it is believed that schools need to be doing something to stem the tide of violent acts such as vandalism.

For instance, U.S. Senator Birch Bayh has taken an active interest in the problems associated with elementary and secondary education. In fact, he has promoted research into uncovering some of the facts and figures related to vandalism.<sup>139</sup> Senator Bayh has written the following:

There is abundant evidence that a significant and growing number of schools in urban, suburban and rural areas are confronting serious levels of violence and vandalism.<sup>140</sup>

The principal ingredient in successful efforts to reduce violence and vandalism is not more money or laws, but the active involvement of the educational community in a range of thoughtful and balanced programs.<sup>141</sup>

The quote presented above may be an example of a typical statement on schools and vandalism. In contrast, Coursen has viewed the problem in another way:

<sup>138</sup>J. R. Garrett, S. A. Bass, and M. D. Casserty, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>139</sup>Birch Bayh, "School Violence and Vandalism: Problems and Solution." Journal of Research and Development in Education, 1978, vol. 11, pp. 3-7.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

The precise nature of school vandalism is not generally or systematically understood.<sup>142</sup>

The literature on school vandalism . . . is full of suggestions and assertions but remarkably short on concrete facts documented by scientific research.<sup>143</sup>

Again, there are a variety of viewpoints about the problem. But the problem of school vandalism takes place in the school; consequently, it does affect students. Here again the statement by Ianni should be mentioned: "We know very little about how schools operate as social systems."<sup>144</sup>

The students, faculty and administration make up not only the school community, but a social system as well.<sup>145</sup> As a social system, the members "should share a common culture and organize their universe and respond to it in ways which are considered culturally appropriate."<sup>146</sup> Yet, for schools in the current period of history, their "insularity and autonomy are being gradually eroded."<sup>147</sup> Whereas schools assist the development of society through transmission of its ideas, mores, and culture, vandalism links schools with another side of the society.

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<sup>142</sup>David Coursen, "Vandalism Prevention," ACSA School Management Digest Series, No. 2. ERIC: ED 137894, p. 13.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., p. 12.      <sup>144</sup>Ianni, op. cit.

<sup>145</sup>It will be assumed through the course of this discussion that schools exist for students and not for faculty and administrator.

<sup>146</sup>Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute for School Experimentation, "Social Organization of the High School Study," Columbia University, 1975, ERIC: ED 129711.

<sup>147</sup>Peter J. Cistone, op. cit., p. 94.

Consequently, it is also a responsibility of schools to rectify the differences between the expected behavior of students and what is observed in the form of vandalism.

An act of vandalism in a school may be considered as an attack on that school. Although this may seem to be far from what would be considered as reality, in many ways it is reality.<sup>148</sup> As it was stated before, for many students school life is boring, due mainly to their lack of involvement in school activities.<sup>149</sup> Thus, it may be possible for a school to be socially organized so as to exclude some members of the school. For example, the Horace Mann study group concluded:

The structure of the school determines the ability of any one person within that school to negotiate a role within the system.<sup>150</sup>

In addition, Rubel has suggested that schools may create their problems.<sup>151</sup>

Since vandalism is a problem for many schools, there are several reasons why students vandalize a school. Again, one reason may be the students' reactions to rules controlling their behavior. McPartland has commented on

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<sup>148</sup> See the section on the "Vandal and the School" in this chapter.

<sup>149</sup> Moore, op. cit.      <sup>150</sup> Horace Mann, from abstract.

<sup>151</sup> Rubel, op. cit., p. 7.

this by writing:

An authority system that makes all the important decisions for students and that limits practice at self-reliance, appears to be the usual school practice and opposite to what is needed to foster development of internal motivation.<sup>152</sup>

Once more the "control" of students is normally termed as the disciplining of students. The practice of disciplining students varies not only among districts, but also among schools and administrators as well. Some schools have formal guidelines, where, on the other hand, whole districts may not. Clark and Hanks have written:

School discipline is a narrower concept which generally includes three elements: goals or standards of behavior, procedures for attaining goals or standards, and the resulting state.<sup>153</sup>

Disciplining students is an area which lacks a consensus among practitioners.<sup>154</sup> Yet, it is also an area in which adults sometimes share responsibilities with students for the infractions of school rules.

Once again, the adults in a school setting hold power over students. Consequently, the students normally must bend to the wills of the adults. Nevertheless, Duke has commented that there are six types of adult behaviors

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<sup>152</sup>McPartland, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>153</sup>S. C. T. Clarke and Steve Hanka, "Comparative Views on School Discipline," The Alberta Journal of Education Research, December 19, 1977, vol. 23, p. 305.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., p. 315.

which can influence student behaviors. Duke's categories were listed as follows:

1. Inconsistent rule enforcement
2. Noncompliance with discipline policies
3. Insensitivity
4. Lack of data
5. Lack of classroom management skills
6. Inadequate administration of disciplinary policies<sup>155</sup>

Possibly by coincidence, the disciplining of students may lead to reactions by students, if the students perceive the discipline actions differently from the adults. Yet, Coursen questions this premise by stating that "many of the causes of vandalism are beyond the control of the schools themselves."<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, the schools can control many acts of vandalism.

Several causes of vandalism are school-centered; this is to say that something or someone inside a school helped generate the feelings to vandalize. It may be the connection of "interpersonal relations" as theorized by Harris:

The high damage school is characterized by a high rate of vandalism and negative interpersonal relations of staff, parents, and students.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Daniel L. Duke, "How the Adults in Your Schools Cause Student Discipline Problems, and What To Do About It." The American School Board Journal, vol. 165, 1978, p. 29.

<sup>156</sup> D. Coursen, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>157</sup> Marlene E. Harris, The Relationship Between Student Activities and Vandalism in Urban Secondary Schools, 1979.



In contrast, Arnold discovered in his study that "parents and students" felt that the damage was due to more types of students in a class.<sup>158</sup> It was further stated: "Teachers and administrators felt that it was because of the teachers' attitude and lack of discipline."<sup>159</sup> Therefore, the school--its members--will view the cause of vandalism differently. Finally, it is interesting to note another observation by Ianni:

In responding to the problem of violence and vandalism in the schools, it is tempting to ignore the possibility of school--specific aspects of school crime and to look for explanations, and solutions, in what we think we know about crime rather than in what we think we know about schools.<sup>160</sup>

Beyond the school setting is the community. It should be expected that vandalism is affected by the community, and vice versa.

#### Vandalism and the Community

Vandalism in a school has both a direct and indirect impact on a community. The school, historically, has played a tremendous role in the daily lives of many members of a community. Thus, when an act of vandalism is reported to have taken place in a school, the inhabitants of the community are made aware of a "problem" in the school. In addition, repeated reports of vandalism produce

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<sup>158</sup>Alton A. Arnold, Jr., op. cit., p. 1313.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.    <sup>160</sup>Ianni, op cit., p. 11.

not only an image of the school to people inside the community, but create a reputation for the community outside its boundaries as well.

A community has several definitions. The one which is used must be linked to an identified subject. For schools, it will be suggested that there are two types of communities. The first community may be described as follows:

The community is the aggregate of individuals who live within the boundaries of a school district.<sup>161</sup>

The second description comes from a study by Talmage and Ornstein:

The community is defined as a cluster of adults who reside in the local school district, who are concerned about educational issues, who are willing to voice their concerns, and who may or may not have children presently enrolled in the local school.<sup>162</sup>

The difference between the two types of communities is in the people who must belong and those who are interested in the schools. As such, the community has members who may not be interested in the welfare of the school. Nevertheless, many writers have discussed the importance of the community in controlling vandalism.

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<sup>161</sup>This description was developed by the researcher for the purpose of this study.

<sup>162</sup>Harriet Talmage and A. C. Ornstein, "School Superintendents' Attitudes Toward Community Participation: Advisement Versus Control." The Journal of Educational Administration, vol. 14, 1976, p. 162.

The problems associated with vandalism do not go unnoticed in most communities. Yet it must be remembered that school vandalism is a "community problem."<sup>163</sup> Also, as Stalford has indicated, "community concern may be stimulated when a particularly violent or destructive incident is reported."<sup>164</sup>

Yet, many people hold the belief that schools in urban areas have more vandalism than schools in non-urban areas. In some cases, urban areas are open to "better reporting" or incidents than, say, rural areas. Thus, it is understandable that a former member of an urban school board would state (given the proximity of homes to schools):

Parents' cooperation in curbing the vandalism . . . You can't tell me parents aren't looking around and seeing Johnny throwing a rock through a window.<sup>165</sup>

But this is not to suggest, as Deitz has, that vandalism in the schools is simply a mirror image of the community outside of the school.<sup>166</sup> The reality of the situation may

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<sup>163</sup>Ernest Jones, "A Status Report: Crime and Disruptive Behavior," St. Louis Public Schools, February, 1978, p. 9.

<sup>164</sup>Charles B. Stalford, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>165</sup>K. Klink, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 12, 1970, p. 1a. Statement made by Eugene V. Boisabin, St. Louis School Board.

<sup>166</sup>Marcia Deitz, op. cit., p. 15. "Vandalism in our Schools is a microcosm of vandalism in our society. We become numbed to the horrors through media exposure and come to accept them; without shock or outrage."

possibly be as Ianni has stated:

The assumption that violent communities produce violent schools does not consider the fact that the school climate and community climate do not always coincide.<sup>167</sup>

In conclusion, the community is an important member of the school and vice versa. Vandalism inadvertently effects both the community at large and the community's interests in a school. The prevention of vandalism is shared by both the school and the community.

#### The Principal's Role

The responsibility for the welfare of students and the protection of a school falls upon the shoulders of the principal. A principal must care not only for what happens to the students inside his/her building, but also for what happens to the building as well. Thus, vandalism definitely should be of interest to a principal. With the existing differences among districts and schools, it should be expected that principals must handle problems differently. Many of these problems are associated with vandalism.

The size of a school may be a factor in the prevention or control of vandalism. It was suggested in one article that:

Many schools may have become too large. Administrators find it difficult to maintain personal contact with staff and students in large schools.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>F. A. S. Ianni, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>168</sup>The Practitioner--newsletter. National Association of Secondary School Principals, vol. 2, April, 1976, p. 2.

Neill has commented that "big-city school administrators: cite the similarities of the school with the city, thus suggesting that what is outside the school eventually permeates through the doors with the students."<sup>169</sup> In such cases, Neill has suggested the school is left defenseless without the aid of the community and the parents to fend off the frustrations and anger of the youth.<sup>170</sup>

The individual principal wears many hats, all of which support his role as the leader of a school. The principal must establish the means by which vandalism and other acts of violence are to be handled. Shuttlesworth and Evans have categorized principals as follows:

There are two types of school principals: those who tend to the business of instructional supervision and those who do not.<sup>171</sup>

Although principals generally do not teach, they are responsible for the supervision of teachers. It is in the classroom where many problems surface which are later transformed into vandalism. The principal is responsible for

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<sup>169</sup> Shirley B. Neill, "Causes of School Violence and vandalism," from Violence and Vandalism--Current Trends in School Policies and Programs, pp. 12-18. In The Education Digest, April, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> John Shuttlesworth and N. Evans, "Why a Principal Must be a Supervisor, vol. 18, May, 1974. School Management, p. 46.

the classroom as well. Consequently, Shuttlesworth and Evans concluded:

Non-supervision among principals encourages non-supervision among teachers, and that will probably result in mushrooming disciplinary disorder among problem-prone students.<sup>172</sup>

Besides supervising teachers, the principal must maintain standards set for student contact.

The behavior of students is a very important part of a principal's work. Without belaboring the point, some principals are not successful in controlling student behavior or in having students control their own behavior. The ingredients needed for successful student behavior control today may include qualities cited by Panko:

High visibility during the school day and during after school activities enhances the image of leadership.

Building administration should control student behavior through the use of rewards and sanctions that help students to learn to assume responsibilities for their actions to help students develop an internal control system.<sup>173</sup>

Another factor is that principals should not play favorites with any student or group of students.<sup>174</sup> In addition, too many principals still rely "upon good faith efforts and common sense" to control their schools.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup>Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>Walter Panko, Taxonomy of School Vandalism (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1978), p. 118.

<sup>174</sup>Shuttlesworth, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>175</sup>Neill C. Chamelin and K. B. Trunzo, "Due Process and Conduct in Schools," Journal of Research and Development

The principal has several problems confronting him every day. Although violence and vandalism are indeed "real" problems, there are other problems to be resolved. Yet, those other problems are topics for other reviews. The individual principal must play an important role in controlling vandalism.

He or she has the responsibility to not only influence student behavior, but must also set the tone of expectations for the entire school.<sup>176</sup> This can be very difficult for many principals, especially those whose student bodies come from impoverished backgrounds. Many students with "lower socio-economic" backgrounds may resist to the rules and expectations of principals, as their more affluent peers may be compelled to accept.<sup>177</sup> Finally, the principal's role in controlling vandalism is tied to his role as the leader of the school.<sup>178</sup> Without strong leadership a school may fall victim to a high incidence of vandalism and its many related costs.

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in Education, vol. 11, 1978, p. 74.

<sup>176</sup>Henry Givens, Jr., "Discipline: The School's Role," Educational Administration Quarterly, vol. 6, 1978. pp. 16-17.

<sup>177</sup>Barry Anderson, "Socio-Economic Status of Students and Schools Bureaucratization," Educational Administration Quarterly, vol. 7, 1971, pp. 22-23.

<sup>178</sup>Marlene E. Harris, "The Relationship Between Student Attitudes and Vandalism in Urban Secondary Schools," Unpublished dissertation, vol. 39, 1979, p. 6982a.

### The Price for Broken Glass

As it was mentioned earlier in the chapter, the increase in the incidence of vandalism may be more the result of improvements in the reporting of vandalic acts and not in an actual increase in vandalism. Nevertheless, the costs of education are rising during the current inflated economic situation. The impact of the rise for programs has been great and should be expected. The costs incurred in repairing and replacing materials damaged by vandals have risen correspondingly. A problem develops when dollars appropriated for academic programs are siphoned away for repairing vandalic acts. As it was cited by Jones:

The continued replacement costs for glass panes and the need for additional glaziers diverted already scarce resources from instructional programs.<sup>182</sup>

But, with the relative shrinkage of dollars being made available to schools, administrators must devote more time to justifying expenditures.

Dollar losses resulting from vandalism require two accounting procedures.<sup>184</sup> The first includes an estimate of the dollar value of property destroyed or defaced by vandals.

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<sup>182</sup>Ernest Jones, "A Status Report: Crime and Disruptive Behavior," St. Louis Public Schools, February, 1978, p. 4.

<sup>183</sup>Cherie LeFever McCrasky, "School Vandalism in the United States," Unpublished dissertation, vol. 39, 1979, p. 6407.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid., p. 6408.



The second requires an assessment of the costs to replace objects damaged.<sup>185</sup> But these steps are "after the fact;" other procedures are needed to further understand the real implications of vandalism in a district.

Periodically, groups such as legislative committees convene to examine the problems of schools. Unfortunately, the "hit and miss" investigations are spaced years apart. What has been suggested by Garrett and others is that schools need to examine the delinquency behavior of their students.<sup>186</sup>

The record-keeping of vandalism is related to the school policies concerning student behavior. As Deitz suggested:

School districts have to determine the extent of vandalism before they can attempt to find the solution which best suits their individual needs.<sup>187</sup>

Despite the fact that many reports issued in recent years have suggested that hundreds of millions of dollars are lost annually due to vandalism, other studies have noted that there is great disparity in the practice of recording damages due to vandalism.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> J. R. Garrett, S. A. Bass, and M. D. Casserty, "Studying School Crime: A prescription for Research-based Prevention." In School Crime and Disruption (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education), 1978, p. 9.

<sup>187</sup> Marcia Deitz, "Final Report: Ad Hoc Committee to Study School Boards Association," May, 1976, p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> Cherie McCrasky, op. cit., p. 6408. Royce P. Morre, "The Status of Vandalism in Selected Arizona Public

In conclusion, Garrett, et al., have examined the subject of vandalism and the reporting of vandalic acts. Their conclusion concerning reporting and record-keeping is repeated in the following statement:

There are no widely accepted criteria for identifying and recording various kinds of school crime. For example, in recording instances of vandalism, some school systems include certain categories of apparently accidental damage, while others do not. Some include all destruction, while others include only acts for which a perpetrator is identified; some exclude damage covered by insurance, while others do not.<sup>189</sup>

#### Vandalism Prevention

Vandalism cannot be totally prevented in a school setting without destroying the nature of schooling. Unfortunately, when there is a rash of vandalic acts, school personnel tend to react with a deluge of responses. Some of these responses are well-meaning, while others may be inappropriate for the apparent problem.<sup>190</sup>

As David Coursen noted, schools tend to react to vandalism by emphasizing cosmetic solutions. Coursen stated:

Most programs try to deter vandalism by taking defensive measures that make schools less vulnerable to ravages of destructive intruders.

(They) treat vandalism symptomatically usually by emphasizing improved school security.<sup>191</sup>

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Schools." Unpublished dissertation, 1979, p. 4389.

<sup>189</sup>Garrett, et al., op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>190</sup>David Coursen, "Vandalism Prevention," ACSA School Management Digest, Series 1, no. 2, 1977.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

For example, Irwin has suggested that teachers and other school personnel "adapt sensible security attitudes and habits."<sup>192</sup> Security is an important element in the prevention of vandalism. Nevertheless, the attitudes of school personnel toward vandalism sets forth another concern.

The question arises now and then as to whether school people--teachers and administrators--really care about vandalism. From Arnold Madison's viewpoint in Vandalism: The Not-So-Senseless Crime, attitudes have been leaning toward "complacency."<sup>193</sup> Yet the only true way of stopping a vandal is to capture the vandal. This will not stop all vandalism; however, it should curtail the incidence rate.

For instance Panko, in his dissertation on vandalism, noted the following points when he examined the problem of preventing vandalism:

School vandalism is an event with low-risk of identification, comprehension and punishment for the actor. If the probability of identification, capture, and punishment were increased the incidence of school vandalism would undoubtedly decrease.<sup>194</sup>

To prevent vandalism is to deter someone from committing a vandalic act.

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<sup>192</sup>Frank G. Irwin, "A Study of Features for Lessening Vandalism for Consideration in the Planning of Educational Facilities." Unpublished dissertation, 1975.

<sup>193</sup>Arnold Madison, Vandalism: The Not-So-Senseless Crime, New York: The Seabury Press, 1970, p. 5.

<sup>194</sup>Panko, p. 113.

The deterrence of vandalism is a complex process which requires the acceptance of a few assumptions. Essentially, the process includes the development of a threat which must be accepted as formidable by someone such as a student. A threat might include punishment for the act, such as censure from the school. Zimring has stated:

The general effect of a threat is the response it produces among persons who have not been punished. For this group the threat, and the example of the punishment of others, must influence behavior independent of any personal experience with the threatened consequences.<sup>195</sup>

Deterrence is the means by which vandalism may be controlled. Human resources are needed to develop effective deterrent programs in schools.

Although deterrence of vandalic acts comes in many forms--from the "hardening" of facilities to night watchmen--the final element in controlling vandalism is the human element. People make the difference, especially in their attitudes toward the school and the students.<sup>196</sup>

In summary, a review of the literature on vandalism will necessarily be general in nature, particularly in the case of school vandalism. At the present time a considerable amount of writing, resulting from research, has focused on

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<sup>195</sup> Franklin E. Zimring, Perspectives on Deterrence, Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Mental Health, January, 1971, p. 2.

<sup>196</sup> Coursen, op. cit., and Marlene E. Harris, "The Relationship Between Student Attitude and Vandalism in Urban Secondary Schools." Unpublished dissertation, 1979, p. 698.

the vandal. The incidence level of vandalism has been shown not only to vary among districts, but within districts as well. Finally, the levels of vandalism may be dependent upon the attitudes of the community and school people.

## CHAPTER III

### Methods and Procedures

#### Introduction

The study methods and procedures are presented in this chapter. They include the description of the study, the research questions and null hypothesis, a discussion of the study population and the representative nature of the respondent sample, the procedure of research, a discussion of instrument development, a description of the survey procedure, and the design of analysis. Finally, a summary of the research methods and procedures is presented.

#### Description of the Study

The conspicuous nature of vandalism attracts the immediate attention of school administrators, and at times the public as well. Increasing pressures develop, requiring action on the part of the administrators. Consequently, school administrators may use a variety of tactics to prevent or control vandalism. However, one author has questioned the use of tactics to subdue pressures. James Conant remarked:

...submission to unreasonable pressures weakens the school and increases the pressures until finally the

teaching program itself suffers decline. The protection of the school lies in policy. (197)

The current study looked at the perceptions of high school principals, as to how they perceive their roles in controlling vandalism. The research included a survey of Oakland County, State of Michigan, high school principals.

The study addresses fifteen main questions:

1. Do building principals in urban schools perceive their schools as experiencing more vandalism than their suburban and rural counterparts
2. Do building principals in urban school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their buildings
3. Do building principals in suburban school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their schools
4. Do building principals in rural school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their schools
5. What are the top five major types of vandalism cited by principals in the three groups of school settings
6. Do building principals in urban and suburban school districts differ from principals in rural districts in how they define vandalism.

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James B. Conant, The American High School (New York:

7. Is vandalism perceived by building principals as a serious problem in their schools

8. Do principals believe they can control vandalism

9. Do principals perceive vandalism decreasing in their school

10. Do principals perceive parents as supporting their efforts to control vandalism

11. Do principals link discipline policies and practices with the level of vandalism in their schools

12. Do principals who are not known by all of their students experience greater levels of vandalism in their schools

13. Do principals who are not available and "visible" after school experience greater levels of vandalism in their school

14. Do principals challenge their students to control vandalism

15. Is vandalism by youths more frequent and serious than destruction by adults

#### Procedure

Obtaining answers to questions posed in the problem necessitates collecting and examining data concerning vandalism and how secondary school principals perceive it. The following tasks were undertaken:



1. A review of literature was made to determine current perceptions of vandalism by secondary principals and those who have researched the problem
2. A preliminary study was performed to determine the need and validity of the study on vandalism
3. An instrument that thoroughly investigates the fifteen research questions was constructed
4. From this instrument, mentioned in Task 3, a check-list was devised to record all responses from the people questioned
5. A statistically-determined sample of the population was interviewed, using the structured personal interview technique, in order to gather certain attitudes and information unobtainable through the mail type of questionnaire
6. The instrument was mailed to all participants in the study, to be answered and returned
7. Results were analyzed, relationships pointed out, conclusions drawn, and implications described
8. Lists of all participants, with addressed and whatever biographical data is available, was secured from the registrar or proper authority of each institution involved

Task 1 required extensive reading and analysis of the related literature of secondary school principals' perceptions of vandalism.

Task 2 determined that such an undertaking was

feasible and meaningful. A group of principals from ten major high schools in Macomb County were interviewed and asked to respond to the instrument on vandalism.

The preliminary study provided enough information to give an indication as to whether vandalism is an important issue in today's high schools. In addition, it served to test the survey instrument and its validity.

Tasks 3 and 4 required extensive investigation into vandalism and how secondary principals perceive it.

Task 5 required interviewing a sample of the population to test the validity of the devised instrument and check-list.

Task 6 required research into the identities of the secondary principals in Oakland County. A mailed questionnaire was sent to each principal.

Task 7 provided necessary information for the final interpretation of the perceptins of vandalism by secondary school principals. The O.R.C. (Office of Research Consultation) at Michigan State University will be used to help interpret all data.

Task 8 required a list of all participants responding to the questionnaires.

#### Study Population and Respondent Sample

The study population of this study consisted of those secondary high school principals who were employed in that

capacity as of April 1, 1983 in Oakland County. The total number of the survey population was forty-one. Of this number twenty-three were stationed in the suburbs, twelve in the rural part and six in the urban portion of Oakland County. All forty-one principals responded for this study.

Since most principals have busy schedules during the spring, a mail questionnaire was not utilized. Instead, a personal interview was set up with each of the forty-one principals.

The population, which is all male, has an age range of twenty-six through sixty-two years. The experience level ranges from two through twenty-one years.

#### Instrumentation

A questionnaire was designed to collect data on the perceptions of secondary principals in regard to vandalism. The development of the questionnaire started with a few questions that were asked of Assistant Principals in the Troy Public Schools. These questions ranged from the type of vandalism to the ways in which vandalism can be reduced. Each Assistant Principal added questions until the list reached fifty-five. Some of the questions overlapped, and some were not adequate in dealing with the topic. After rewriting the questions, the list dwindled to thirty-five. This list was taken to Oakland Schools to be read and analyzed by Dr. Robert Kramp. Here the questionnaire was

divided into two parts. The first part was the general background of the principals. This aspect of the questionnaire would deal with the background of the administrator, the age of the administrator, the experience of the administrator and the amount of vandalism which appears in their buildings. The second part of the survey consisted of questions that required short, written responses in regard to vandalism and their schools.

The questionnaire was then presented as a preliminary study to ten high school principals in Macomb County. In this preliminary study it was discovered that some subjects were not familiar with certain technical terms, these were later clarified. Others had difficulty with headings and instructions. Others had difficulty with the short answers and felt there should be choices. The questionnaire took forty-five minutes to complete, and this was more time than most administrators had to spend with this project.

The problems above were dealt with to allow simple reading and to include choices on most of the questions. The questionnaire was shortened to thirty minutes.

The preliminary study was given to five new principals in Macomb County. This time it proved to be satisfactory to those who were surveyed.

#### Survey Procedure

The survey instrument was issued to each of the

forty-one principals during personal contact. The principal had an opportunity to ask questions or relate ideas during the questionnaire. The personal interview approach guaranteed a highly successful rate of response.

During each personal contact the cover letter and questionnaire were given to the principal to read without proctoring. If they cared to, they could ask questions after they had read the directions.

### Data Analysis

The principals surveyed were divided into three groups for the analysis of their responses: Urban, Suburban and Rural.

Using the definition identified in Chapter I, the following number of principals were available groups:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Number Available</u>
Rural	12
Suburban	23
Urban	6

Upon collection of the completed instruments, the individual responses were collated by item. This procedure

was accomplished by transferring the written material to a computer. Data was processed using the Statistical Analysis System package program located in the Oakland Schools Computer System.

The statistics utilized in the analysis of the data were descriptive. Because the study was limited to looking unnecessary for analysis to be extended beyond a descriptive level. Future studies on vandalism may delve into the use of inferential statistics when conducting research on individual schools. The results of the study, based on the data collected, are included in Chapter IV.

#### Summary

The study design was developed to collect data from a sample of forty-one principals of Oakland County regarding their perceptions of vandalism and how they control it. The data was collected by personally contacting each principal in order to have him answer the questionnaire which was designed and pre-tested by the researcher for this purpose.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis of the Data

Studies of school vandalism provide interesting data. These data may be confusing because of a lack of consensus on the meaning of vandalism. The collections and summation of the responses to questions posed to the principals follows:

The principals were divided into three subgroups, reflecting the locations of their school district. The three locations are Urban, Suburban, and Rural.

A breakdown is shown in Table 1 of the subgroup response rates.

TABLE 1

#### BREAK-DOWN OF SCHOOLS IN SURVEY

School Type	No. of Schools	% of Total
Suburban	23	56%
Rural	12	29%
Urban	6	15%
TOTAL	41	100%

### A General Profile of the Principals and Their Schools

Every school is unique, yet it is important for a study to include a general overview of the subjects under examination. A portion of the instrument was composed of items requesting information about the principals and their schools. This section of Chapter IV will consist of a brief discussion of those items requested specifically for the present study.

TABLE 2  
COST OF VANDALISM PER STUDENT

School Type	No. Schools	Tot. Vand.	Avg/ Sch.	Tot. Popul.	Avg. Popul.	Avg. Cost Per. St.
Sub.	23	\$63,500	\$2782	28,083	1221	\$2.26
Rural	12	\$11,100	\$ 925	11,808	984	\$0.94
Urban	6	\$19,700	\$3283	11,346	1891	\$1.74
Total	41	\$94,300	\$2300	51,237	1249	\$1.84

Table 2 shows the results of questions five and six from the Background Information Questionnaire.

Number five asks:

Number of students in your building in grades 10 to 12 or 9 to 12?

and number six asks:

Approximate cost of vandalism in your school, for



the year 1981-82 school year?

Table 2 shows the specific number of students in each category in regard to types of schools. The suburban schools have the most students and the urban communities have the fewest. The Table also shows the vandalism cost break-down of each type of school district while showing the average vandalism cost of each Oakland County high school being twenty-three hundred dollars.

Another aspect of the Table is the break-down of each type of school in relationship to the cost per student. Generally urban communities are perceived to have more vandalism (Table 13, pg. 90) than suburban and rural districts.

TABLE 3  
BREAK-DOWN OF VANDALISM IN DOLLARS

Sch. Type	No. Sch.	Tot. Vand.	300-500	501-1000	1001-1500	1501-2300	2301-3500	3500-5500
Sub.	23	\$63,500	1	7	2	1	7	5
Rur.	12	\$11,100	6	3	0	0	3	0
Urb.	6	\$19,700	0	1	0	0	3	2
Total	41	\$94,300	7	11	2	1	13	7

Table 13 expresses that 76 percent of all principals in Oakland County feel that vandalism in Urban schools is greater. However, Table 2 shows that per student, the

suburban school have the highest cost with urban second and rural schools the lowest per student cost.

Table 3 shows the break-down of each type of school district and the cost of vandalism in six categories. The table shows that 8/23 or 35 percent of the suburban high schools have vandalism of less than one-thousand dollars, while the rural communities have 9/12 or 75 percent of their schools being vandalized at this rate. The urban schools have 1/6 or 17 percent of their schools at this level.

The table also shows that the suburban schools have 12/23 or 52 percent of their schools having twenty-three hundred dollars or more vandalism while the rural has 3/12 or 25 percent of their schools at this level and the urban schools have 5/6 or 83 percent of their schools being vandalized at this rate.

Table 3 shows that from the population of forty-one high schools, only three (7 percent) have vandalism in the range of \$1000-2300. Oakland county high schools seem to have much vandalism (20/41 or 49 percent over \$2300), or they have little vandalism (18/41 or 44 percent under \$1000); the middle amounts are void of schools.

Table 4 shows the results of question number two on the Background Information Questionnaire. The question asks:

Age of principal? \_\_\_\_\_years

The Table shows that the bulk of the principals (32/41

or 78 percent) fall into the age group of 46-older while only 3/41 (7 percent) are under the age of thirty-five.

TABLE 4  
BREAK-DOWN OF PRINCIPALS AGES

Sch. Type	Tot. Sch.	26- 35	%	36- 45	%	46- 52	%	53- Older	%
Sub.	23	0	0%	4	17%	9	39%	10	43%
Rur.	12	3	25%	1	8%	6	50%	2	17%
Urb.	6	0	0%	1	17%	2	33%	3	50%
Tot.	41	3	7%	6	15%	17	41%	15	37%

TABLE 5  
PRINCIPAL AGE VS. \$2300 OF VANDALISM

Sch. Type	Tot. Sch.	26- 35	%	36- 45	%	46- 52	%	53- Older	%
Sub.	23	0	0%	3	75%	6	67%	4	40%
Rur.	12	0	0%	0	0%	3	50%	0	0%
Urb.	6	0	0%	1	100%	2	100%	2	67%
Tot.	41	0	0%	4	67%	11	67%	6	40%

All three of the principals under age thirty-five are from the rural communities while 10/15 (66 percent) of 53-older

group are from the suburban schools.

Table 5, which is an extension of Table 4, shows the same age groups of principals in comparison to twenty-three hundred dollars of vandalism. The Table reflects that zero percent of the principals in the age group of 26-35 have vandalism in excess of twenty-three hundred dollars. This is not a major statement because only 3/41 of the principals (7 percent) fall into this category. The other three categories have a balanced number of principals in the twenty-three hundred dollar or higher range. The 36-45 age group with 67 percent the, the 46-52 age group with 65 percent and the 53-older age group has 40 percent.

The age of a principal does not appear to have any relationship to the amount of vandalism within a school.

TABLE 6  
EXPERIENCE OF PRINCIPALS

Sch.	Tot.	1-5	%	6-10	%	11-15	%	16-Higher	%
Sub.	23	3	13%	6	26%	10	43%	4	17%
Rur.	12	4	33%	5	42%	2	16%	1	8%
Urb.	6	0	0%	3	50%	2	33%	1	17%
Tot.	41	7	17%	14	34%	14	34%	6	15%

Table 6 shows the results of question number three on the Background Information Questionnaire. The question

asks:

Total years experience as a secondary school principal? \_\_\_\_\_ years

TABLE 7  
EXPERIENCE VS. \$2300 OR HIGHER

Sch. Type	Tot. Sch.	1-5	%	6-10	%	11-15	%	16-Higher	%
Sub.	23	2	67%	3	50%	5	50%	2	50%
Rur.	12	0	0%	2	40%	1	50%	0	0%
Urb.	6	0	0%	3	100%	2	100%	0	0%
Tot.	41	2	29%	8	57%	8	57%	2	33%

The Table shows a fairly balanced rate of experience throughout all three types of school districts. The most experienced principals are between 6-15 years of experience with 68 percent of the principals ranking in this category.

Table 7, which is an extension of Table 6, compares the experience level against twenty-three hundred dollars of vandalism. As Table 7 shows, the vandalism over twenty-three hundred dollars is fairly even across all four categories. The highest being 57 percent shared by both the 6-10 years of experience level and the 11-15 year experience level while the lowest being 29 percent by the 1-5 years of experience level. The experience level, as age groups, does not seem to matter in regard to vandalism.

All of the experience levels are struck with a vandalism problem.

TABLE 8  
AGE OF FACILITIES

Sch. Type	Tot. Sch.	3-5	%	6-10	%	11-20	%	25-40	%
Sub.	23	4	17%	10	43%	6	26%	3	12%
Rur.	12	4	33%	5	42%	3	25%	0	0%
Urb.	6	0	0%	0	0%	3	50%	3	50%
Total	4	8	20%	15	37%	12	29%	6	15%

TABLE 9  
AGE OF FACILITY VS. \$2300 OF VANDALISM

Sch. Type	Tot. Sch.	3-5	%	6-10	%	11-20	%	25-40	%
Sub.	23	2	50%	4	40%	4	67%	2	67%
Rur.	12	0	0%	2	40%	1	33%	0	0%
Urb.	6	0	0%	0	0%	2	67%	3	100%
Total	41	2	25%	6	40%	7	58%	5	83%

Table 8 reflects the answer to question number 7 on the

Background Information Questionnaire. The question asks:

Age of Facility? \_\_\_\_\_years

As the Table reveals, the age of the facilities are evenly distributed throughout the individual categories and the totals of each category.

Table 9, an extension of Table 8, shows the relationship between each category and twenty-three hundred dollars worth of vandalism. The 25-40 year old schools have suffered the worst with 83 percent of their schools being vandalized at twenty-three hundred dollars or more. The 3-5 age group report suffered the least amount, but even these schools are reporting 25 percent of their schools at the average or higher amount of vandalism. The middle age groups (6-20 years) are even in percentage of vandalism; however, these schools are reporting 40 and 50 percent of their schools being victims of high cost vandalism.

There is no age group untouched by vandalism. The age of the facility as the age of the principal or the experience of the principal plays no important role in where vandalism occurs.

### Findings of the Research Questions

#### Question I: Vandalism: Urban VS. Sub/Rural

The first question for the study was stated as follows:

Do building principals in urban high schools perceive their schools as experiencing more vandalism than their suburban and rural counterparts?

The items, listed in the survey, which pertained to this question were the following:

Item A. Is vandalism a serious problem in your building

Item B. Over the past five years has vandalism

increased  
stayed the same  
decreased

Item C. Do you expect the amount of vandalism to

increase  
stay the same  
decrease

in your school during the next school year

Item D. In your opinion, is vandalism more of a problem in an

Urban  
Suburban  
Rural

school district

#### Analysis of Research in Question One

As one analyzes this research question, one must look at Tables 10, 11, 12 and 13. The question stated is:

Do building principals in urban high schools perceive their schools as experiencing more vandalism than their suburban and rural counterparts?

Item a, in Table 10, seems to display that the answer to this question is "yes." The urban principals



unanimously concur that vandalism is a serious issue in their schools.

TABLE 10

IS VANDALISM A SERIOUS PROBLEM  
IN YOUR BUILDING?

ITEM (a)

Location	Yes	No	Total
Urban	6 100%	0 0%	6/41 15%
Suburban	11 48%	12 52%	11/41 27%
Rural	3 25%	9 75%	3/41 7%
Total	20	21	20/41 49%

One hundred percent of those surveyed say this is true; however, the urban principals account for only 15 percent of the total population of Oakland County. When the urban schools are compared to the suburban schools, in Table 10, only 48 percent of the suburban schools feel that vandalism is a serious issue. In rural school districts, only 25 percent feel that vandalism is serious. Urban schools perceive vandalism as a more serious problem than the other two groups of school districts. However, as a county, only 49 percent feel that vandalism is a serious problem.

TABLE 11  
THE PAST FIVE YEARS ACCORDING TO PRINCIPALS  
ITEM (b)

Location	Increased	Same	Decreased
Urban	5 83%	0 0%	1 17%
Suburban	12 52%	4 17%	7 30%
Rural	9 75%	3 25%	0 0%
Total	26 63%	7 17%	8 20%

Table 11, Item b, continues to support research question one as "yes." The urban schools feel that vandalism will increase over the next five years according to 83 percent of the principals from this area. Seventeen percent feel that it will decrease; and, no one stated that vandalism would remain the same. This is quite different than the 52 percent of principals in the suburban school districts who feel that vandalism will increase. Seventeen percent of suburban principals feel that vandalism will not increase or decrease at all; while 30 percent, feel that vandalism will decrease in the next five years. Seventy-five percent of rural principals feel that vandalism will

increase in the next five years. This figure, while not as great as that of urban school districts, but combined with the statistic that rural schools (25 percent) feel that vandalism will stay at its current rate shows that they, too, feel strongly about the future of vandalism.

TABLE 12  
THE EXPECTED TREND OF VANDALISM OF THE 1983-84  
SCHOOL YEAR AS PERCEIVED BY PRINCIPALS

ITEM (c)

Location	Increased	Same	Decreased
Urban	6 100%	0 0%	0 0%
Suburban	10 43%	4 17%	9 39%
Rural	8 67%	4 33%	0 0%
Total	24 59%	8 20%	9 22%

Table 12 continues the thoughts of Table 11, brought to a closer future. The question on the trend of vandalism for the 1983-84 school year shows almost the same results as Table 11. The urban schools again unanimously agreed that the 1983-84 school year will show an increase in vandalism. This combined with the suburban perception that

it will increase by only 43 percent shows a remarkable difference in expected vandalism. Thirty-nine percent of suburban principals feel that school vandalism will decrease next school year, while 17 percent feel that it will not change at all. The rural school districts feel that this is a serious problem for next year as they cite that the vandalism in their community will increase or stay the same. Nobody from this community can foresee the problem lessening.

TABLE 13  
THE LOCATION WHERE VANDALISM IS THE WORST  
ITEM (d)

Location	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Urban	6 100%	0 0%	0 0%
Suburban	17 74%	6 26%	0 0%
Rural	8 67%	2 17%	2 17%
Total	31 76%	8 20%	2 5%

The strongest argument for the first research question comes from Item d, on Table 13. This table shows that 100 percent of the principals in the urban community feel that

they have the worst vandalism problem. As a group, they do not cite the other two categories as having serious vandalism problems. The suburban community seems to be undecided between the urban schools and themselves; seventy-four percent chose the urban schools while twenty-six percent chose themselves. Again, nobody chose the rural schools as having a serious problem. The rural community chose the urban people as having the most serious problem. Sixty-seven percent of the rural principals chose the urban, while 17 percent chose the suburban and 17 percent chose themselves as having the most serious vandalism problem.

In reviewing these items and tables, one can see that the urban principals feel that they have the most serious problem regarding vandalism. Not only do they feel this, but the other two groups also concur that this is where the most serious vandalism appears. These items and tables combined with Table 2, show that 83 percent of the urban schools have twenty-three hundred dollars a year or more vandalism. Building principals in urban high schools perceive their schools as experiencing more vandalism than their suburban and rural counterparts.

Question Two, Three and Four:

Vandalism: Inside Factors V.S. Outside Factors

The second, third, and fourth questions proposed for the study were formulated to delineate groups of

principals. The questions are presented below:

Question 2. Do building principals in urban school districts cite factors outside of their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their schools?

Question 3. Do building principals in suburban school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their school?

Question 4. Do building principals in rural school districts cite factors outside their schools as contributing to vandalism inside their schools?

The item for these questions included in the survey was stated as follows:

Are there factors outside of your school which contribute to vandalism of the school?  
(List them)

- A. Declining neighborhoods
- B. Adult education (night time)
- C. Parks and recreation using your facilities
- D. Industrial areas which are not populated at night
- E. Cutbacks by police patrol by city
- F. Cutbacks in millage--schools more vacant
- G. -----  
(other)

In research question number two, urban principals were asked if there were any outside situations that may add or contribute to the vandalism within their school. The answer, on Table 14, shows that 100 percent of the principals from this category claim there are outside factors adding to the vandalism of their schools.

TABLE 14  
FACTORS OUTSIDE SCHOOL CAUSING VANDALISM

Location	Yes	No
Urban	6 100%	0 0%
Suburban	17 74%	6 26%
Rural	10 83%	2 17%
Total	33 80%	8 20%

Table 15 explains the factors that were most commonly given that contribute to vandalism. In urban schools the most often answer was "declining neighborhoods." Most of the urban high schools were in declining neighborhoods. Answer number two, three and four are not surprising. The middle three items, Table 15, are items that a high school principal has little control over. These factors give a great deal of support to the premise that a good school district needs support from the community and the people within it before it can expect to control vandalism.

The suburban school principals also fault outside factors for much of the vandalism within their schools. Seventy-four percent of the principals cited external

factors for much of the vandalism. Twenty six percent say that their own population is responsible for vandalism. The reasons for externally caused vandalism in the suburban schools range from: (1) adult education, which uses the buildings during the evening, to (5) police refuse to patrol school property. If one looks closely at all five of the reasons for suburban school vandalism according to the principals, one can see that the highest three responses show innocent people who probably do not even know they are vandalizing. Number four and five are items that a high school principal has little control over.

TABLE 15

## FACTORS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOLS CAUSING VANDALISM

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 -----  
 Location--Urban (most popular answers in order)  
 -----

Declining neighborhoods

Industrial areas which are  
 not populated at night

Cutbacks in millage

Cutbacks in policy by city

Not enough jobs for students  
 -----

Location--Suburban (most popular answers in order)  
 -----



TABLE 15 - Continued

-----  
 -----  
 Location--Suburban (most popular answers in order)  
 -----

Adult education using schools  
 at night

Parks and recreation using  
 facilities

No respect by visiting students  
 during extra-curricular  
 activities, i.e., football and  
 basketball games

Cutbacks in millage--more  
 schools vacant

Police refuse to patrol school  
 property

-----  
 -----  
 Location--Rural (most popular answers in order)  
 -----

School location--most rural  
 areas not that developed

Adult education using buildings  
 at night

Police not able to patrol because  
 of shortage of police departments,  
 i.e., many rural schools are  
 patrolled by the County Sheriff  
 Patrol and they have too much  
 territory now

Cutbacks in millage--schools more  
 vacant

Parks and recreation using your  
 facilities at night

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 -----  
 Question number four deals with the rural principal

and whether he cites outside factors contributing to his school's vandalism. Ten out of the twelve, or 83 percent, say "yes" there are outside factors. The reasons cited are not different than those for the other two groups with the exception of the first reason. In the rural areas, they cited that the number one reason for outside vandalism is that the areas around the schools are not that well developed and this creates a non-populated area around the schools. Adult education (number two), lack of police support (number three), cutbacks in millage (number four) and parks and recreation (number five) all seem to have appeared in the other areas also.

All three areas indicate outside factors for vandalism in their schools. A total of 80 percent (Table 14) have cited outside factors, while only 20 percent of the total population blame their own students, staff and administration. The reasons for the outside vandalism seem to be closely linked, except for a few responses, and most of these seem to be either innocent people who are ignorant to what they are doing or a non-controllable item that an administrator cannot do anything about.

#### Question V: Major Types of Vandalism

The fifth item asked for responses to the following:

Please list the five types of vandalism which occur most frequently in your building. Rank by order of frequency--greatest first.

A. Walls	I. Graffiti	Q. Lawns
B. Alarm	J. Furniture	R. Ceiling tiles
C. Lockers	K. Lights	S. Rest rooms
D. Doors	L. Speakers	T. Litter
E. Thefts	M. Spray paints	U. Fires
F. Books	N. Break-ins	V. -----
G. Glass	O. Equipment	(other)
H. Stair rails	P. Desks	

This item was included in the survey instrument to provide information to answer the research question:

What are the top five major types of vandalism cited by principals in the three groups of school settings?

In the responses of the survey question, there was no clear answer as a whole. The items of "furniture/desks" ranked high but only because it was the number one answer of the suburban school districts with more principals than the other two groups. The question was then divided into urban, suburban and rural to decide where each was having difficulty with vandalism.

The urban group had "thefts" as their number one vandalism problem. Thefts from the school included equipment and stealing from fellow students or teachers. Vandalism should be considered when stealing happens, even if it is from each other. The second choice was "fires." Most fires were set intentionally. Vending machines were third, followed by "graffiti/walls." Lastly, "break-ins/glass" was last (See Table 16). In analyzing urban school districts, vandalism appears to be malicious and pre-meditated.

TABLE 16

## TOP FIVE TYPES OF VANDALISM

-----  
 -----  
 Location--Urban (most popular answers in order)  
 -----

Thefts--both from the school  
 and from people within the  
 school

Fires

Vending Machines

Graffiti/walls (this is where  
 it is written)

Break-ins/glass (normally breaking  
 of windows to enter building)

-----  
 -----  
 Location--Suburban (most popular answers in order)  
 -----

Furniture/desks

Equipment, i.e. typewriters, lab.  
 equipment, and office equipment

Break-ins/lockers (although they  
 vandalize breaking into the  
 building, they also break into  
 lockers)

Walls/graffiti

Lawns (many people drive across  
 them and some set fire to them)

-----  
 -----  
 Location--Rural (most popular answers in order)  
 -----

Glass

Furniture/desks

TABLE 16 - Continued

-----	
-----	
Location--Rural	(most popular answer in order)
-----	
Walls/graffiti	
Fences	
Books	
-----	
-----	

The suburban schools list "furniture/desks" as being most frequently vandalized. This can be destruction from writing on the desks to breaking parts of furniture. The second choice was "equipment." This vandalism was to the machines themselves and not the stealing of them. Thirdly, this group chose "break-ins of lockers", which is a sign of pre-meditated vandalism. Fourth, they chose "walls/graffiti." This again is a serious vandalistic problem, but hardly to the degree of the first three answers from the urban school districts. Lastly, the suburban group chose the vandalistic problem of "lawns." This, as other types of vandalism is a serious but it classifies itself as a "prank" or "goofing-around" crime.

The suburban vandalism problem, although serious to taxpayers and people who observe it, seems to be basically innocent in nature by people who feel "they have done

nothing wrong." The exception is the pre-meditated vandalism of breaking into lockers, a serious and malicious vandalistic act.

The rural areas chose glass breakage as their number one response. This is not related to break-ins or other malicious acts. Second on the list was "furniture/desks," by people who feel they are not vandalizing but in reality are. "Walls/graffiti" was the next choice and this, again, seems to be present in all schools. The fourth choice is different than the other two groups as the rural community cited "fences" as a major vandalism problem. the fifth. problem by the rural group was "books."

The rural principals, who have vandalism, seem to have a mild version. The problems cited seem to be a degree that people within a community accept. The difference between the rural and the urban is that the rural community experiences a very innocent vandalism, while the urban schools have malicious and intentional vandalism (see Table 16).

#### Vandalism: A Definition

The sixth question centered on discovering the definitions of vandilism as used by the principals. The survey item presented to the principals for their responses was as follows:

Please give your definition of vandalism of school property

This survey question corresponds to the research question of:

Do principals in urban and suburban school districts differ from principals in rural districts in how they define vandalism?

Each principal of each group focused on a given aspect of vandalism in their responses. However, their answers paralleled their response in Table 10. All six of the urban principals gave definitions of malicious intent and seriousness, while the rural principals centered on the "pranks" and the "childish" behaviors which cause vandalism. The suburban principals defined vandalism as a serious issue that is expected to happen to our schools. These definitions of vandalism show the attitudes of the principals of the three groups reacting to their own vandalistic problems and not vandalism as a whole.

#### Question VII: The Seriousness of Vandalism

In the seventh question, the principals were asked to respond about the seriousness of vandalism in their schools. The research question was stated as follows:

Is vandalism perceived by building principals as being a serious problem in their schools?

The survey question presented to the principals was stated as follows:

Is vandalism a serious problem in your building?

And

If you had a rash of acts of vandalism in a given month, how would your superintendent react?

Your school board?

- A. Verbal reprimand
- B. Work closely with you to solve problems
- C. Written reprimand
- D. Direct more funds for clean-up
- E. Direct more funds for more security
- F. Discuss the problem with students, staff and administration
- G. Ask the local media for support
- H. Remove you from your position
- I. Look toward universities for seminars and information
- J. Ask local law enforcement people for assistance
- K. Decrease your merit pay
- L. \_\_\_\_\_  
(other)

In attempting to analyze this question, one must refer back to research question six: principals define vandalism according to their own situation. This may also be true with regards to research question seven. The seriousness of the vandalism problem may be only as serious as the repercussions an administrator will feel if vandalism is high in his building. Table 17 shows that the initial



responses of superintendents and school boards will be a warning of some nature. Even the middle steps do not harshly reprimand the administrator and it is not until the last steps of "decreasing merit pay," "temporarily replacing you" or "removing you from your position" that the administrators really begin to feel pressure. This could explain the reason for Table 10 as well as Table 17.

In Table 10, 100 percent of the administrators of urban communities felt that vandalism was a serious problem, and in reviewing Table 17 we see that the school boards of those communities will tolerate and help the administrator without "replacing him." This, of course, allows the administrator to be extremely open and candid about the amount of vandalism. The superintendent is the only person that administrators feel would severely punish them; however, the superintendent cannot pursue this action without the school board's approval.

The suburban principals, according to Table 10, show only 48 percent of the principals feel that there is a serious problem. When we look at Table 17 we see that three out of five responses by both the superintendent and the school board are severe reprimands that result in loss of pay or position. These principals would have a greater reason to feel that vandalism is not serious--to protect themselves.

TABLE 17

SERIOUSNESS VERSUS PRIORITY

-----	
-----	
Location--Urban	(most popular answers in order)
-----	
Superintendent	School Board
-----	
Discuss the problem with administration only	Written reprimand
Verbal reprimand	Local law enforcement
Written reprimand	Funds for security
Decrease merit pay/ promotion	Local media for help
Remove you from your position	Decrease merit pay
-----	
Location--Suburban	(most popular answers in order)
-----	
Superintendent	School Board
-----	
Verbal reprimand	Written reprimand
Written reprimand	Discuss with administrator
Temporarily replace you	Decrease merit pay
Decrease merit pay	Temporarily replace you
Remove you from your position	Remove you from your position
-----	
Location--Rural	(most popular answers in order)
-----	
Superintendent	School Board
-----	
Severe discussion with administration	Written reprimand

TABLE 17 - Continued

-----  
 -----  
 Location--Rural (most popular answers in order)  
 -----

Written reprimand	Ask to confront administration
Decrease salary	Decrease salary
Ask administration to confront school board	Temporarily replace administration
Remove you from your position	Remove you from your position

-----  
 -----

The rural principals feel the same as the suburban principals. Four out of five of the superintendents' actions result in showing an unfavored administrator, and four out of five responses of the school boards' actions would cause a principal to say that vandalism is not a major problem.

In essence, the ostensible seriousness of the buildings' vandalism may rest on the reprimand that the principal will feel if he does have a rash of vandalistic acts. Again, the perception of administrators is reflected by their own situation.

#### Question VIII: Principals Controlling Vandalism

The eighth question focused on the issue of whether or

not principals believed they could control vandalism in their schools. The research question was stated as:

Do principals believe they can control vandalism?

The literature has suggested that many principals, plus other members of school communities, may ignore vandalism. Some principals may choose to ignore vandalism rather than attempt to control it.

Principals may believe that they do not have the authority or "backing" from their superiors, to enforce existing rules to curtail an existing level of vandalism.

Item (a) requests the following:

Item (a). In your opinion, what measures should be taken by a principal to control vandalism?

- A. Offer rewards for the conviction of vandals
- B. Hire security guards for patrol during school
- C. Hire security guards for patrol after school
- D. Have more teachers/administrators patrolling the hallways during the school day
- E. Have student clean-up crews during the day to minimize vandalism
- F. When caught vandalizing, the vandals must pay for the entire clean-up project
- G. When caught vandalizing, the vandals must clean entire problem themselves
- H. Develop better relationships between students and staff
- I. Students monitor in hallways and bath areas

J. Night custodians pinpoint what adult education class or organizations were vandalized

K. Better and more light inside and outside of buildings

L. \_\_\_\_\_  
(other)

As supplements of the item above, the principals were presented the following items:

Item (b). Does your budget have a special line item for the repair and replacement of property damaged by vandalism?

Item (c). Does your district's central office expect you to report all acts of vandalism in you building?

Item (d). Does your district provide you with either a policy or written guidelines on how to prevent or control vandalism in your school?

The majority of administrators in Oakland County feel that they have the authority to control vandalism. Table 18 clearly shows that 85 percent of the principals feel they have control over vandalism. These figures show that only 50 percent of the urban districts, the ones with the most vandalism, have control over vandalism. In the suburban districts 91 percent of its principals have control even though 57 percent of their schools have had twenty-three hundred dollars or more vandalism in the past year. The rural school principals, with the lowest percentage of vandalism, claim that they have the authority to control vandalism.

Item (a) is clear that the majority of principals feel that they have authority to control vandalism (85 percent),

but if they have control, why did Oakland County have nearly \$100,000 in vandalism last year?

TABLE 18  
HAVING AUTHORITY TO CONTROL VANDALISM  
ITEM (a)

Location	Yes	NO
Urban	3 50%	3 50%
Suburban	21 91%	2 9%
Rural	11 92%	1 8%
Total	35 85%	6 15%

Item (b) reflects that only 22 percent of all the high schools in Oakland County have vandalism as a budget item. This could be a message to most school districts that: "if it does not appear on the budget list, it is not important" (see Table 19).

Item (c), Table 20, shows that 83 percent of the schools require a report on vandalism. This indicates that 100 percent of the urban schools must report, while only 78 percent of the suburban and 83 percent of the rural schools are required to report. This may be the area in which some schools are actually hiding vandalism, and it may also be

the reason why urban schools are showing the most vandalism. The other two groups may be hiding facts on vandalism.

TABLE 19  
VANDALISM AS A BUDGET ITEM  
ITEM (b)

Location	Yes	No
Urban	0 0%	6 100%
Suburban	4 17%	19 83%
Rural	5 42%	7 58%
Total	9 22%	32 78%

Item (d), which is shown in Table 21, shows that only 15 percent of the schools in Oakland County have written guideline on handling vandalism. This may be the reason why many principals believe that they have control when they in essence do not. They are trying their own policies or programs to deter vandalism, when in reality these may be very poor and unproven techniques. This could cause a principal to believe he is in control when he really lacks control.

TABLE 20  
 REQUIREMENT OF REPORTING VANDALISM  
 ITEM (c)

Location	Yes	No
Urban	6 100%	0 0%
Suburban	18 78%	5 22%
Rural	10 83%	2 17%
Total	34 83%	7 17%

The entire question of whether principals have control over vandalism or not seems to be negative. The principals feel that they do have control but the facts of \$100,000 worth of vandalism last year show that they really do not have good control. Their perceptions and the reality do not seem to coincide. To support this fact, question number five on the survey instrument reflects such a widespread diversity that it is not possible to graph. All principals have different techniques to control vandalism; and, only a few seem to be working. However, techniques which are not working, may never be abandoned, because the principals using them perceive the practices to



be working.

TABLE 21  
WRITTEN GUIDELINES FOR PRINCIPALS  
ITEM (d)

Location	Yes	No
Urban	2 33%	4 67%
Suburban	3 13%	20 87%
Rural	1 8%	11 92%
Total	6 15%	35 85%

Question IX: Vandalism ~ Past and Future

The ninth research question relates to a segment of question number one. This section pertains to the issue of how principals perceive the trend of vandalism in their schools. That is to say, do principals perceive the trend of vandalism decreasing or increasing? The question for the study was as follows:

Item (a). Over the past five years has vandalism:

1. increased
2. stayed the same
3. decreased

in you school?

Item (b). Do you expect the amount of vandalism to:

1. decrease
2. stay the same
3. increase

in you school during the next school year?

This discussion is an extension of research question one. The principals, as a whole, do not perceive vandalism decreasing over the next five years. Returning to Table 11, we see that 80 percent of all principals in Oakland County feel that it will increase or stay the same, while 20 percent feel that it will decrease. The suburban school districts seem to feel the strongest about vandalism decreasing; 30 percent of its principals feel that vandalism will actually decrease. No principal in the rural communities foresees a decrease and only one of the six urban principals predicts a decrease in the next five years.

The 1983-84 school year does not appear to be any brighter in regard to vandalism. Seventy-nine percent of all the principals of Oakland County feel that vandalism will increase or stay the same, while 22 percent feel that it will decrease.

The perception of principals dealing with vandalism is

a negative one. They cannot see vandalism decreasing, as a whole; however, many of these principals feel that vandalism is not a serious issue in their schools. Possibly, they feel that vandalism is more serious in other places, but never could it affect their schools.

Question X: Parents as Supports

Question ten was simply stated as follows:

Do principals perceive parents as supporting their efforts to control vandalism?

The item for the principals' responses is presented below:

Have the parents of your students supported your procedures for working against vandalism?

In Table 22, we see that the principals perceive the parents to support their programs. Ninety-three percent of the total principalship of Oakland County believes this while only 7 percent felt that the parents did not support their policies. The rural schools, which also show the least amount of vandalism, perceive that their parents support their policies unanimously. This may be compared to the urban schools, which have the most vandalism per capita, which say (67 percent) that the parents support them while the other 33 percent say the opposite. Possibly, this supports the assumption that parents play a very important and definite role in school vandalism

control.

**Table 22**  
**PARENTAL SUPPORT VERSUS ADMINISTRATION**

Location	Yes	No
Urban	4 67%	2 33%
Suburban	22 96%	1 4%
Rural	12 100%	0 0%
Total	38 93%	3 7%

**Question XI: Policies and Practices: A Link to Vandalism?**

Discipline is another area related to the issue of controlling vandalism. The policies of acceptable student school behavior are normally reflected in rules and procedures. Question eleven was stated as follows:

Do principals link discipline policies and practices with the level of vandalism in their schools?

The principals of Oakland County (76 percent) perceive that there is a relationship between school discipline policies and school vandalism.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE  
POLICIES AND SCHOOL VANDALISM

-----		
-----		
Location	Yes	No
-----		
Urban	5 83%	1 17%
Suburban	16 70%	7 30%
Rural	10 83%	2 17%
-----		
Total	31 76%	10 24%
-----		
-----		

Even schools with greater vandalism agree. In the urban schools, 83 percent of them agree, while 70 percent of the suburban schools and 83 percent of the rural schools are in agreement.

Although there is agreement among the three groups, all do have vandalism; however, the policies of each group would be considerably different. The principals may perceive a relationship between policies and discipline, but the link may not be strong.

Question XII and XIII: Administrator Exposure - Is it Important?

In question twelve and thirteen the issue is whether a principal's relationship with his/her students is related to the amount of vandalism reported by the school. The questions were given as follows:

Question 12. Do principals who are not known by all of their students experience greater levels of vandalism in their schools?

Question 13. Do principals who are not available and "visible after school" experience greater vandalism in their school?

The survey questions corresponding to these questions are listed below:

Question 18. As the principal of your school, are you known by the majority of your students?

Question 19. As the principal are you available during after-school activities?

Table 24 shows a total of 13/41, or 32 percent of the principals perceive themselves as being well-known. In this sub-group of thirteen administrators, the average vandalism was \$501 to one thousand dollars with no vandalism costing fifteen hundred dollars or more reported. A total of 84 percent of this group experienced one thousand dollars or less in vandalism, while 16 percent was at the one thousand dollars to fifteen hundred dollars range. This figure is far below the twenty-three hundred dollars average for vandalism in Oakland County.

In comparison to these figures are the twenty-eight

principals, or 68 percent of the principals who are not known by their students. This sub-group shows that 71 percent of the vandalism in these schools costs twenty-three hundred dollars and more. This figure is 49 percent of all the principals in Oakland County. The second highest figure in this sub-group is the \$501 to \$1,000 category into which 28 percent of the schools fall. As a total figure, this second sub-group has 75 percent of its schools with fifteen hundred dollars or higher vandalism, while 25 percent have between zero dollars and one thousand dollars.

Table 24

## PRINCIPAL BEING KNOWN VERSUS VANDALISM

Principal known	under \$500	\$501- \$1000	\$1001- \$1500	\$1501- \$2300	over \$2300
Yes (13 total)	6	5	2	0	0
Total sub-group	46%	38%	15%	0%	0%
Total principal	15%	12%	5%	0%	0%
No (28 total)	1	6	0	1	20
Total sub-group	4%	21%	0%	4%	71%
Total principal	2%	15%	0%	2%	49%
Total	7	11	2	1	20
	17%	27%	5%	2%	49%

These statistics seem to indicate that a "well-known" principal will have less vandalism. The principals who are not seen and not well-known are experiencing more vandalism. Being "well-known" by all people in a community seems to be important. Whether it is talking to high school students or visiting adult education classes or parks and recreation games, it appears that some personal contact could deter some vandalism. Questions twelve and thirteen are a definite "yes" when it comes to being unknown around your own building.

Question XIV: Student Roles in Controlling Vandalism

The fourteenth question in the study looked at the issue of principals interacting with students as a deterrent to vandalism. The question was stated in the following terms:

Do principals challenge their students to control vandalism?

Only one item was presented to the principals; it is:

As the principal, do you discuss with your students, other than those that have vandalized, how vandalism effects their school?

Table 25 shows that 83 percent of the total population of principals claim to discuss the problems with their students. Sixty-seven percent of the urban principals, 83 percent of the suburban principals and 92 percent of the rural principals discuss vandalism; and, vandalism still



cost \$100,000 in the past school year.

Table 25  
DISCUSSIONS OF VANDALISM  
VERSUS VANDALISM

Location	Yes	NO
Urban	4 67%	2 33%
Suburban	19 83%	4 17%
Rural	11 92%	1 8%
Total	34 83%	7 17%

Possibly talking is not the answer, or that administrators are talking to the wrong people. Perhaps, they should discuss it with the outside influences (i.e., night school students, parks and recreation, etc.) that were mentioned earlier.

In the survey instrument a question that relates to this conversation is:

Have you ever held an assembly or partial assembly with vandalism as the topic of the assembly?

None of the principals claim they have had an assembly or partial assembly to discuss vandalism. This, in essence, is showing that the administrators are perceiving

themselves to be talking, but possibly the time and place is not correct.

Question XV: School Vandalism: Youth V.S. Adults

The research question as stated:

Is vandalism by youth more frequent and more serious than destruction by adults?

This question refers back to Tables 14 and 15 concerning outside factors causing vandalism. Eighty percent of the principals stated that outside factors caused vandalism and that the majority of outside vandalism came from adult education, parks and recreation, and other after-school activities. This question combined with question thirteen which asks:

Please estimate how much of administrative time is spent during an average week with student discipline problems concerning vandalism.

shows that at least 50 percent of the vandalism is perceived by principals to come from the adult sector. Question thirteen had a response of 15 percent on the average for the entire County. Fifteen percent does not require that much time be devoted to vandalism and its problems; however, the question stated "students discipline" and not correction of vandalism. This indicates a high rate of adult or outside vandalism occurring in the schools.

This concludes the presentation of the findings of the study. The following chapter will include a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations

#### Introduction

This study examined the high school principals' perception of vandalism. A survey instrument was distributed among high school principals of Oakland County. This survey was in relationship to fifteen research questions developed to guide the study. A summary of those findings will follow below.

#### Summary of Findings

In the county of Oakland, State of Michigan, there are forty-one high schools. The survey contacted and received responses from all forty-one schools. The principals from the forty-one schools were divided into the following three groups: Urban, Suburban, and Rural. The urban schools consisted of six schools, or 15 percent of the total population; the suburban schools consisted of twenty-three schools, or 56 percent of the total schools; while the rural districts consisted of twelve schools or 29 percent of the total.

A general profile was established of the principals and their schools, wherein it was noted:

A. The principals ranged from age twenty-six through

sixty-two years.

B. Years of experience ranged from two through twenty-one years.

C. The average urban high school in Oakland County has a population of 1891 students

D. The average cost for vandalism in urban high schools is \$3,283 for the 1981-82 school year

E. The average cost per student in urban schools is \$1.74 for the school year 1981-82

F. The average suburban high school in Oakland County has a population of 1221 students

G. The average cost for vandalism in suburban high schools is \$2,782 for the school year 1981-82

H. The average cost per student in suburban high schools is \$2.26 for the school year 1981-82

I. The average rural high school in Oakland County has a population of 984 students

J. The average cost for vandalism in rural high schools is \$925 for the school year 1981-82

K. The average cost per student in rural high schools is \$0.94 for the school year 1981-82

L. The average per student cost for vandalism in Oakland County is \$1.84 for the 1981-82 school year

The following statements will serve as summaries of the principals' responses to the items of vandalism:

A. Forty-nine percent of Oakland County principals perceive vandalism as a serious issue

B. Sixty-three percent of the respondents feel that vandalism has increased over the past five years

C. Fifty-nine percent of Oakland County principals feel that vandalism will increase during the next school year

D. Seventy-six percent of Oakland County principals believe that urban schools have the most vandalism while only 5 percent feel that rural schools have the most

E. Eighty percent of the principals feel that there are factors outside of school that cause vandalism

F. Factors outside of schools causing vandalism varied from urban to suburban to rural school districts

G. The definition of vandalism varied among the principals

H. The top five types of vandalism varied between the three different groups of school districts

I. Eighty-five percent of the principals feel they have the authority to control vandalism

J. Eighty-three percent of the principals stated that they were required to report all vandalism

K. Only 15 percent of the respondents have written guidelines on controlling or deterring vandalism

L. Ninety-three percent of the administrators feel they have parental support in controlling vandalism

M. Seventy-six percent of the respondents feel that there is a relationship between school discipline policies and school vandalism

N. Fifty-one percent of the principals indicated that the cost of vandalism feel between three hundred dollars and twenty-three hundred dollars for the past school year

O. Only 32 percent of the principals in Oakland County feel they are known by the majority of their students

P. Eighty-three percent of the principals have had discussions with their students regarding vandalism

### Conclusion

Oakland County school districts are continually faced with the problem of vandalism, which takes funds from other needed programs. Vandalism is an everyday occurrence which is beginning to concern more people. The present study sought to open a viewpoint on the problem of vandalism and how secondary principals perceive it.

A. Vandalism is widespread and occurs in urban, suburban and rural school districts without regard to the age of the complex or to whom is administering the building. The cost of vandalism averages twenty-three hundred dollars per school.

B. Most agree that vandalism is more serious in the urban schools. Although 83 percent of the urban schools have been vandalized at twenty-three hundred dollars or more, the suburban schools have 57 percent of its schools on the same plateau and the rural schools have 25 percent

of its schools on the same level.

Perception towards the urban schools has another side. Table 2 (pg. 80) shows that the suburban schools have the most per-student cost of \$2.26. The urban school has \$1.74 per-student vandalism cost which equates to \$0.52 less per-student.

C. There is reason to believe that the urban schools have the most violent forms of vandalism. Although it does not have the highest per-student vandalism cost, it does classify as the most dangerous vandalism of the three groups. Table 16 (pg. 100) shows that the urban vandalism comes in the forms of thefts from each other, fires (to the building or to the areas around them) and the malicious destruction of vending machines. The other two categories rank more passive forms of vandalism such as writing on furniture, books or the damaging of lawns.

D. The size of schools plays a very important role in vandalism. The urban schools, which house the most individuals, are frequent receivers of vandalism. This occurs while suburban schools, in the middle in regard to population, have less than the urban but more than the rural; rural house the least amount of people.

E. Administrators of high schools are pessimistic about the future in regard to vandalism. Their forecast for next year is that 79 percent of these administrators predict the same or more vandalism.

F. Administrators are frustrated by the problem of

vandalism. Administrators feel they have control of vandalism (85%) and they have parental support (93%), but there are many outside factors which cause vandalism. The administrator has control of the student in his building during school hours but he does not have control of other individuals who use or enter the buildings and grounds.

G. There is no universal definition of vandalism. This is shown by the difference in answers and perceptions throughout the study.

H. Principals who are not well-known have more problems concerning vandalism than those who are well-known. As shown in Table 24, twenty-eight principals claim not to be well-known; and from this list of twenty-eight principals, twenty of them had vandalism in excess of twenty-three hundred dollars in their school during the past year. Only one principal from this group had five hundred dollars or less in vandalism costs.

There are thirteen principals who feel they are well-known; and, from this list no principal had vandalism over fifteen hundred dollars. Forty-six percent of this group had vandalism under five hundred dollars and 85 percent had one thousand dollars or less damage from vandalism.

I. With the absence of written guidelines, many principals may not be certain of what is expected of them controlling vandalism. This is especially true when many principals reported factors outside of their schools



influenced the levels of vandalism inside.

Many of the principals believed that they had support from their administrators and parents to control vandalism. Yet, they seem to be guided more by unwritten policies.

### Recommendations

Ten recommendations have been developed as a result of the current study. The recommendations are listed below:

1. An effort should be undertaken, by either an educational group or the state, to develop a consensus among educators on which acts of behavior constitute vandalism.
2. There should be a study to develop and define what "outside" factors cause vandalism and its effect on the overall administrative role in controlling vandalism.
3. A complete seminar/course program should be developed by local universities or agencies to address the current vandalistic situation and create relevancy for the administrator. This curriculum should be a "hands on" program that administrators can practice in their buildings. This possibly means gearing each seminar/course to particular schools or types of school districts.
4. A program of observation should be developed between school districts to give administrators the opportunity to see other preventive measures that may work for them. This program should be interchanged between

rural-suburban and urban school districts.

5. Administrators should be motivated in a positive fashion by school board members and central office personnel. Either an incentive program or a program of positive reinforcement should be used.

6. A second principal should be hired to control night functions or extra-curricular activities. One principal cannot stay within a building every day and night to prevent vandalism.

7. Principals must become more visible and verbally active. This includes visiting night classes, attending extra-curricular activities, and hourly hall patrol or school patrol during the day hours.

8. Central office and school boards should give written guidelines for the control, prevention and reporting of vandalism.

9. Principals as well as central office personnel should review the school's discipline policies and observe how they relate to vandalism.

10. Principals should discuss more seriously with students the affects of vandalism upon their school. This should be done in an assembly, impersonal surroundings such as hallways, or on a one-to-one basis when necessary.

### Preliminary Study and Analysis

Before a valid study could be pursued on vandalism, a preliminary study was performed. This preliminary study on vandalism was necessary to test the instrument for validity and structuring of questions. The preliminary study took place in Macomb County, which is adjacent to Oakland County, where the major study took place. The preliminary study consists of two separate phases.

The first phase used ten high schools and their principals. These principals were personally interviewed, with their reactions and responses recorded. This part of the preliminary study resulted in the rewriting of eleven questions on the original questionnaire.

The preliminary study led to the strengthening of several questions, as follows:

Question two originally read:

Please list the five types of vandalism which occur most frequently in your building. Rank by order of frequency--greatest first.

This question proved to be too ambiguous and was not direct enough. The people who were interviewed challenged the question. This cannot be done using a mailed questionnaire. Having heard their answers after the proctoring, the idea of listing many choices for their convenience, with the use of "other" as a last choice,

seemed to be a preferable system. The question on the final survey reads:

Please list the five types of vandalism which occur most frequently in your building. Rank by order of frequently--greatest first.

- |                |                  |                |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. walls       | 9. graffiti      | 17. lawns      |
| 2. alarms      | 10. furniture    | 18. ceiling    |
| 3. lockers     | 11. lights       | 19. rest rooms |
| 4. doors       | 12. speakers     | 20. litter     |
| 5. thefts      | 13. spray paints | 21. fires      |
| 6. books       | 14. break-ins    | 22. (other)    |
| 7. glass       | 15. equipment    | -----          |
| 8. stair rails | 16. desks        |                |

The question now becomes one that has a choice for a respondent to choose from.

Number five created a great deal of conversation between the respondent and the proctor. Also, the answers were so varied that it caused a question of legality versus ethics. What can a principal do to control vandalism? This is not the question; however, it became the answer the majority of the respondents gave. The minority of answers were dealing themselves with, "What are the legal aspects of controlling vandalism?" For example, can police patrol parking lots? What is the due process of students? What about students who vandalize on weekends--are they students or citizens? All of this conversation created a great deal of proctoring, something that cannot be done on the final questionnaire. In order to assist the respondents, a guide list was created. Question number five now reads:

In your opinion, what measures should be taken by a principal to control vandalism? Please rank, in order, the top five answers.

- A. Offer rewards for the conviction of vandals
- B. Hire security guards for patrol during school hours
- C. Hire security guards for patrol after school hours
- D. Have more teachers/administrators patrolling the hallways during the school day
- E. Have student clean-up crews during the day to minimize vandalism
- F. When caught vandalizing, the vandals must pay for the entire clean-up project
- G. When caught vandalizing, they must clean entire problem themselves
- H. Develop better relationship between students and staff
- I. Student monitors in hallways and rest areas
- J. Night custodians pinpoint what adult education classes or organizations have vandalized
- K. Better and more light inside and outside of buildings
- L. Other

This allows all respondents a choice of answers.

The next question revised is number six on the original questionnaire:

Does your district's central office expect you to report all acts of vandalism in your building?

This question was challenged by all of the respondents in the preliminary study. They felt limited in their answers to the inside of their building. During the proctoring of

the question, other places within their jurisdiction were noted as being part of the reporting process on vandalism. These places included: parking lots, lawns, exterior of the building and athletics fields. The question is now revised to state:

Does your district's central office expect you to report all acts of vandalism to, in and on school grounds that you are responsible for?

This allows for respondents to have more freedom in their answers; and, forces them to be more honest and not hide the facts.

The next observation was that number nine could not be answered without discussing number five. The question stated:

In your opinion, what measures should be taken by a principal to control vandalism?

During the discussion of this question, it became apparent that the question was redundant to number five. The solution was to discard the question to keep from confusing the respondents.

Question number ten originally read:

In your opinion, what should a principal expect of parents, when their son or daughter has been disciplined for an infraction of a school rule?

In responding to this question, it was not clear what the question was asking. The respondents knew the survey dealt with vandalism, but read the question to mean all discipline. This, of course, was not the purpose of the question. The question was rewritten so that it addressed

the problem of vandalism. The question now is stated:

In your opinion, what should a principal expect of parents when their son or daughter has been disciplined for an infraction of a school rule concerning vandalism?

Question number thirteen, on the original survey, caused some serious problems with regard to the statistics that would be presented. The question was stated:

Please estimate how much of your time is spent during an average week with student discipline problems.

In answer to this question, principals were stating less than 10 percent. However, this is not representing the entire administrative staff. Many principals are away from the building a great deal of the time and they are not aware of all the vandalism--just the major problems. This resulted in the statistics of this question being biased.

When the question was restated, the results of the question soared in the opposite direction. The question is now stated:

Please estimate how much of administrative time is spent during an average week with student discipline problems concerning vandalism.

With this as the question, the administrators averaged 25 percent of administrative time was spent on vandalism problems--no matter how minor. The changing of this question is vital to having a successful instrument.

The next change occurs in question seventeen, originally stated:

Are there factors outside of your school which contribute to vandalism inside your school?

This question, as others, was too open-ended and became extremely difficult to answer. During the discussions with the respondents, a list was created that could aid the respondents in their answers. The question, rephrased, creates a choice from which a respondent can choose. The new question is stated:

Have you ever held an assembly with vandalism as the topic of the assembly?

This question states that a complete assembly would help to prevent vandalism. The notion that there should be assemblies that deal completely with vandalism has merit; but realistically does not appear feasible. The question was reconstructed to include more of an option to the respondent. The question now reads:

Have your ever held an assembly or partial assembly with vandalism as the topic of the assembly?

This leaves room for assemblies that have vandalism discussed in partial form. The results of the question changed from "absolutely not," in the original question, to "a great deal" in the reconstructed question.

The last question that needed change was number twenty-four. As this question was read, people became flustered and could not answer. The reason being, the respondent had no direction and they felt intimidated by the question. The original question asked:



If you had a rash of acts of vandalism in a given month, how would your superintendent react?

Your school board?

During this discussion, a list of consequences were developed. This list gives the respondent a chance to review what might be said or done plus gives him an option to write in his own thought. The newly written question is:

If you had a rash of acts of vandalism in a given month, how would your superintendent react?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Your school board?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

- A. Verbal reprimand
- B. Work closely with you to solve problems
- C. Written reprimand
- D. Direct more funds for clean-up
- E. Direct more funds for security
- F. Discuss the problem with students, staff and administration
- G. Ask the local media for support
- H. Remove you from your position
- I. Look toward universities for seminars and information materials
- J. Ask local law enforcement people for

assistance .

K. Decrease your merit pay

L. -----  
(other)

The second aspect of the preliminary study took place after the new questions were developed. This included five different high schools in Macomb County. The purpose was to test the new instrument without any proctoring.

The results were good. Not one of the five respondents had any questions in regard to the instrument or its structure. All felt it to be valid and strong in the sense of expression.

Again, the results are not the major emphases of this preliminary study, but do indicate a need for correction of vandalistic problems in public education. The preliminary study pointed out a strong weakness in the original instrument which could have resulted in an invalid study.

## APPENDIX

Joseph C. Goslin  
2255 Highbury  
Troy, Michigan 48098

Dear Principal:

School vandalism is an issue which has drawn considerable public attention during recent years. In an effort to expand the field of educational administration's understanding of the problem, I am soliciting your assistance to complete the questionnaire enclosed.

I recognize that this is a hectic time for your office. Nevertheless, I would appreciate your taking a few minutes to complete the form, which includes only thirty-five items. Your responses will be kept in complete confidence.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the stamped envelope enclosed with the form.

Gratefully,

Joseph C. Goslin

Questionnaire on Vandalism

## Background Information

1. Location of school? \_\_\_\_\_  
(To determine place of school)
2. Age of principal ? \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. Total years of experience as a secondary school principal? \_\_\_\_\_ years
4. Number of years as principal at present location? \_\_\_\_\_ years
5. Number of students in your building in grades 10 to 12 or 9 to 12? \_\_\_\_\_ students
6. Approximate cost of vandalism in your school, for the year 1981-82 school year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (estimate)
7. Age of facility? \_\_\_\_\_ years
8. Number of custodians? \_\_\_\_\_ custodians
9. Have you ever attended a seminar on vandalism?  
Yes                      No (circle answer)
10. Does your district have a security officer or director of security?  
Yes                      No (circle answer)
11. Does your budget have a special line item for the repair and replacement of property damaged by vandalism?  
Yes                      No (circle answer)

Please complete the following questions:

1. Please give your definition of vandalism of school property.

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2. Please list the five types of vandalism which occur most frequently in your building. Rank by order of frequency--greatest first.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- |                |                 |                  |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| A. Walls       | I. Graffiti     | Q. Lawns         |
| B. Alarms      | J. Furniture    | R. Ceiling tiles |
| C. Lockers     | K. Lights       | S. Rest rooms    |
| D. Doors       | L. Speakers     | T. Litter        |
| E. Thefts      | M. Spray paints | U. Fires         |
| F. Books       | N. Break-ins    | V. _____         |
| G. Glass       | O. Equipment    | (other)          |
| H. Stair rails | P. Desks        |                  |

3. Does your district provide you with either a policy or written guidelines on how to prevent or control vandalism in your school?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

4. Is vandalism a serious problem in your building?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

5. In your opinion, what measures should be taken by a principal to control vandalism? Please rank in order, the top five.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Offer rewards for the conviction of vandals
- B. Hire security guards for patrol during school hours
- C. Hire security guards for patrol after school hours
- D. Have more teachers/administrators patrolling the hallways during the school day
- E. Have student clean-up crews during the day to minimize vandalism
- F. When caught vandalizing, the vandals must pay for the entire clean-up project
- G. When caught vandalizing, the vandals must clean entire problem themselves
- H. Develop better relationships between students and staff
- I. Student monitors in hallways and rest areas
- J. Night custodians pinpoint what adult education class or organizations have vandalized
- K. Better and more light inside and outside of buildings
- L. \_\_\_\_\_  
(other)

6. Does your district's central office expect you to report all acts of vandalism to, in and on school grounds that you are responsible for?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

7. Has your office ever been vandalized?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

8. In your opinion, is there a relationship between a school's discipline policies and the level of vandalism experienced in a school?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

9. In your opinion, what should a principal expect of parents when their son/daughter has been disciplined for an infraction of a school rule concerning vandalism?

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10. In your opinion, do high school students of today display:

\_\_\_\_\_ greater  
\_\_\_\_\_ the same  
\_\_\_\_\_ less

self-discipline than students of ten years ago?

11. During your academic preparation in administration, did any of your courses cover student discipline practices or vandalism prevention?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

If yes, please describe:

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---

12. Please estimate how much of administrative time is spent during an average week with student discipline problems concerning vandalism.

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13. Do you expect the amount of vandalism to:

☐ decrease  
☐ stay the same  
☐ increase

in your school during the next school year?

14. In your position, do you believe that you have enough authority and support to control vandalism in your school?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

15. Have the parents of your students supported your procedures for working against vandalism?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

16. Are there factors outside of your school which contribute to vandalism of the school? (List if yes.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Declining neighborhood
- B. Adult education (night)
- C. Parks and recreation using your facilities
- D. Industrial areas which are not populated at night
- E. Cutbacks by police patrol by city
- F. Cutbacks in millage--schools more vacant
- G. \_\_\_\_\_

(other)

17. Over the past five years has vandalism:

☐ increased  
☐ stayed the same  
☐ decreased

in your school?



18. As the principal of your school, are you known by the majority of your students?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

19. As the principal, are you available during "after school" activities?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

20. As the principal, do you discuss with your students, other than those that have vandalized, how vandalism affects their school?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

21. Have you ever held an assembly or partial assembly with vandalism as the topic of the assembly?

Yes                      No (circle answer)

22. In your opinion, is vandalism more of a problem in an:

\_\_\_\_\_ urban  
 \_\_\_\_\_ suburban  
 \_\_\_\_\_ rural

school district?

23. If you had a rash of acts of vandalism in a given month, how would your superintendent react? (List five things)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

Your school board?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Verbal reprimand
- B. Work closely with you to solve problem
- C. Written reprimand
- D. Direct more funds for clean-up
- E. Direct more funds for more security
- F. Discuss the problem with students, staff and administration
- G. Ask the local media for support
- H. Remove you from your position
- I. Look toward university for seminars and informational material
- J. Ask local law enforcement people for assistance
- K. Decrease your merit pay
- L. \_\_\_\_\_  
 (other)

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