

Male college students more likely than less-educated peers to commit property crimes

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Men who attend college are more likely to commit property crimes during their college years than their non-college-attending peers, according to research to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.

Sociologists at Bowling Green State University found that college-bound youth report lower levels of criminal activity and substance use during adolescence compared to non-college-bound youth. However, levels of drinking, property theft and unstructured socializing with friends increase among the college-bound after enrollment at a four-year university, and they surpass the rates of less-educated peers.

"College attendance is commonly associated with self-improvement and upward mobility, yet this research suggests that college may actually encourage, rather than deter, social deviance and risk-taking," said Patrick M. Seffrin, the study's primary investigator and a graduate student and research assistant in the department of sociology and the Center for Family and Demographic Research at Bowling Green State University.

The research, co-authored by Peggy C. Giordano and Stephen A. Cernkovich, draws from three waves of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health and examines education, crime levels, substance abuse and socializing among adolescents and young adults.

A sample of 9,246 respondents from grades 7 through 12 was initially surveyed during the 1994-1995 academic year, with the following two survey waves taking place in 1996 and 2001. The study defined "college students" or "college-bound youth" as respondents who were enrolled full-time in a four-year college for at least 12 months by the third wave of the survey. "Non-college students" were defined as those respondents who either did not attend college through the course of the study or were not enrolled full-time or at a four-year university.

Source: American Sociological Association

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