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**Adolescent stealing: A study of the causal factors for and prevalence of
stealing in New Zealand intermediate school students.**

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Judith Elizabeth Seeto

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Abstract

A self-report questionnaire was used to measure stealing behaviour, attitudes and values, family variables, attachment to school and past-times of peers of students at a New Zealand intermediate school. Incidence rates of stealing, gender differences and school class level differences in stealing behaviour were identified from the data and compared with those found by other researchers of general delinquent behaviour and more specific stealing behaviour. Causal factors believed to be related to delinquent behaviour were measured to determine whether they were also related to stealing behaviour and to each other, as proposed in a model of delinquent behaviour. A very high proportion of participants reported having engaged in some form of stealing, reflecting the findings of other researchers. Marked gender differences in rates of stealing were found, with boys reporting significantly higher levels of theft than girls. Year 8 students reported significantly more stealing than Year 7 students. Being male, in Year 8 at school, associating with delinquent peers, holding delinquent values and having a low level of attachment to parents were factors found to be related to higher levels of stealing behaviour. These findings are discussed in relation to various theories of delinquent behaviour.

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Adolescent Stealing: A Study of the Causal Factors for and Prevalence of Stealing in New Zealand Intermediate School Students

Stealing is one of the most common criminal offences in our society, and is becoming an increasing problem in schools. Jackson (1984) believes that crimes of theft are the greatest single form of crime that any civilisation has to deal with. He defines stealing as: *"taking something that belongs to another person or persons with the intent to keep it"* (p.7). Similarly, Renshaw (1977) sees stealing as a widely prevalent act, which is centuries old, recognised in all cultures, occurring in all classes and creeds, yet poorly understood. She suggests that statistics of various stealing offences show an "alarming" rate, yet reflects how little research has been done on the act of stealing itself compared with a greater amount of research looking at delinquency in general.

Stealing

Incidence of stealing. In the few studies specifically directed at stealing behaviour, very high rates of stealing are reported. Belson (1975), for example, interviewed 1425 boys in London, ranging in age from thirteen to sixteen years and found that all of his sample had already stolen. Of these, 18% had done so by age seven, and 42% by age ten years. Half of his sample stated that they had never been caught stealing by anyone. Belson (1975) gained this data by asking the boys questions about 44 categories of theft behaviour, ranging from keeping something they had found to stealing money and vehicles.

Similarly, Jackson (1970) found that 99% of his sample of grade six children (aged from 11-12 years) admitted to having stolen previously, but it is not clear just what it is that they have stolen. In his 1979 study (cited in Jackson, 1984) however, he reports that 10% of his eleven year old subjects resisted all temptations to steal in the hypothetical temptation to steal dilemmas. These dilemmas consisted of seven separate

situations in which the child was asked to predict what his/her behaviour would be. Each of the situations offered the opportunity for a deliberate choice of yielding to or resisting stealing behaviour without fear or coercion. Each situation involved the rights of others in some way. The dilemmas included situations such as being given too much change, peer pressure to steal sweets from a shop, finding a purse with money in it, and stealing to help a sibling out of trouble.

A questionnaire and interview format was used by Malewska and Muszynski (1970) to study the stealing behaviour of 2222 Polish children aged from twelve to thirteen years. In this study, stealing was defined as taking something that did not belong to them. Of their sample, they found that 63% had already stolen, and that 34% of all thefts by children were of money.

High rates of theft were also found by Dodson and Evans (1985) amongst their school-aged subjects. They found the highest rates of theft amongst eighth and tenth graders, with a uniform effect of students reporting that theft is a major problem in their schools.

With incidence rates ranging from 63% (Malewska & Muszynski, 1970) to 100% (Belson, 1975), the problem of stealing is certainly an issue. The ages of students engaging in stealing in these studies is also relevant, with some obviously starting before age seven years (Belson, 1975) and almost all students likely to have stolen something by the age of eleven (Jackson, 1970) or sixteen (Belson, 1975).

Gender differences in stealing. In the few studies of stealing that have been carried out, generally males have been found to steal more frequently and to take items of greater value than females. For example, Steffensmeier (1983) notes that the value of thefts by males are likely to be greater, and that females are more likely to steal on their own or as part of a small, non-permanent crime group. Jackson (1968, cited in Jackson,

1984) also found, in a self-report study, that boys stole more frequently than girls. On the other hand, Haines, Jackson and Davidson (1979, cited in Jackson, 1984) found that girls yielded to stealing temptations with about the same frequency as boys.

Delinquent Behaviour

While little research has looked specifically at stealing behaviour, stealing is frequently used as an indicator variable for more general delinquent behaviour (Moffitt, 1993; Hagell & Newburn, 1994). Delinquency refers to acts that can place a youth at risk for adjudication (Thornberry, 1987). Such acts can range from status offences, such as running away, to more serious violent activities.

According to Moffitt (1993), there are two forms of delinquency, life-course-persistent antisocial behaviour, and adolescence-limited antisocial behaviour. He believes that life-course-persistent antisocial behaviour is a continuous pattern whereby individuals exhibit changing manifestations of antisocial behaviour throughout their life. These can include biting and hitting at age four, shoplifting and truancy at age ten, selling drugs and stealing cars at age sixteen, robbery and rape at age twenty-two, fraud and child abuse at age thirty. He suggests that such antisocial behaviour is consistent across all situations. These delinquents lie at home, steal from shops, cheat at school, fight in bars and embezzle at work. On the other hand, he believes that adolescence-limited antisocial behaviour is likely to account primarily for crimes that serve to meet adolescents' lust for acknowledgment and privilege which may be caused by the maturity gap between biological adulthood and ascribed adulthood. Such crimes include theft, vandalism, public order and substance abuse.

In their instrument for the measurement of self-reported delinquency, Moffitt and Silva (1988) used delinquency items ranging from norm-violating acts such as going to R-rated movies without parental permission and making rude telephone calls, to illegal

offences, including a range of stealing offences and using a weapon in a fight. Agnew (1991) used six measures of delinquency in his research on the interactive effects of peer variables on delinquency. These included felony assault, minor assault, robbery, felony theft, minor theft and status offences. Theft, in various forms, is inherent in all of these interpretations of delinquency. In many of them, it is amongst the more serious of the offences included.

Incidence of delinquency. Using arrest data from the United States, Moffitt (1993) shows that the rates of delinquency are highest during adolescence, peaking at about age seventeen and then dropping away sharply for those persons who are delinquent only during adolescence. However, since the advent of alternative measurement devices, most notably self-report; researchers have found that arrest statistics reflect only the tip of the iceberg.

In a self-report study, Moffitt (1993) predicts that less than 10% of males are likely to show extreme antisocial behaviour that begins during early childhood and is sustained throughout childhood and adolescence (life-course-persistent delinquency). However, he predicts that the majority of males will show levels of antisocial behaviour similar to the life-course-persistent delinquents, but only during adolescence (adolescence-limited delinquency). He suggests that very few teenage males abstain from all delinquent behaviour.

A longitudinal study in Dunedin, New Zealand used parent, teacher and self-reports to measure the levels of antisocial behaviour of participants. Moffitt (1993) reports that only 5% of the boys in the sample were rated as very antisocial at each assessment (ages three, five seven, nine, eleven, thirteen and fifteen) by each reporting agent (self, parent, teacher). This five percent, according to Moffitt (1993) already display stable antisocial behaviour, which is likely to be life-course-persistent. Between the ages of eleven and

fifteen, however, Moffitt (1993) found that about one third of the sample were beginning to show delinquent behaviours. Despite their lack of previous antisocial experience, by age fifteen these boys had caught up on their life-course-persistent antisocial peers in the variety of laws they had broken, the frequency with which they broke them and the number of times they had appeared in juvenile court. This finding raises an important point to consider in the cross sectional study of adolescence, since the two groups were indistinguishable in their delinquency at this stage, yet each group had shown different patterns leading up to this age. It would seem then, that although only five to ten percent of males are expected to commit delinquent acts throughout their lives, at least one third of males do display delinquent behaviour during adolescence.

These rates of delinquent offending show a similar pattern to that indicated by the studies of stealing behaviour, in that many adolescents are expected to commit some delinquent act. Of course, this is to be expected given that stealing is a component of delinquency, as defined by these researchers. Thus if an adolescent steals, they are also, by definition, committing a delinquent act.

Gender differences in delinquency. Cloward and Piven (1979) report a difference in the types of delinquency carried out by females, compared with males. They state that the majority of female deviance is individualistic and self-destructive; for example, suicide, prostitution, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness and physical sickness. Steffensmeier (1983) also believes that the types of offences committed by males and females differ; with females more likely to commit sex-related crimes, petty theft and hustles, while males are likely to commit a wider range of offences.

Gender differences among delinquent adolescents were also found by Rhodes and Fischer (1993) in their study of adolescents participating in a court diversion programme. They found that boys were more likely to have been referred to the programme for

breaking the law, while girls were more likely to be referred for truancy and running away, and for social or personal problems. Self-reported delinquency findings, however, indicated that boys and girls were equally likely to commit these status offences (running away and truancy), but that girls were more likely to be brought to court for them.

Reports of gender differences in crime rates and types of crime vary somewhat from study to study. For example, Hagell and Newburn (1994) found that boys outnumbered girls in their study of persistent young offenders. They sampled adolescents (aged ten to sixteen years) in two geographical areas, finding 16% of those arrested more than three times in one year were female in a Midlands sample, and only 5% were female in the London sample.

As with the stealing data, delinquency data supports the theory that there is a gender difference in the type and frequency of offending, with males being more likely to commit more frequent and more serious delinquent acts than females.

Why do people steal? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look to theories of more general delinquency, since so little research has looked specifically at factors related to stealing.

Theories of Delinquent Behaviour

Traditionally, three major theories relating to delinquent behaviour have been used to explain delinquent behaviour; these being the strain theory, the social control theory and the differential association theory. These theories have a sociological basis (Agnew, 1992), that is, they all explain delinquency in terms of the individual's social relationships.

Strain theory. Strain theory (Agnew, 1992) focuses explicitly on negative relationships with others. Agnew suggests that adolescents are pressured into delinquency by negative affective states, such as anger, which arise from negative

relationships. He describes three main types of strain which he believes to contribute to delinquency. These are:

1. The failure to achieve positively valued goals;
2. The removal of positively valued stimuli from the individual (for example, loss of boyfriend/girlfriend, death or illness of a friend, moving to a new district, divorce/separation of parents, suspension from school);
3. The presentation of negative stimuli (for example, child abuse, neglect, criminal victimisation, physical punishment, negative relations with peers or parents, adverse school experiences, stressful life events).

Failure to achieve positively valued goals could be the strain underlying female adolescent delinquency. Caspi, Lynam, Moffitt and Silva (1993) believe that female adolescent delinquency can be ascribed partly to the fact that adolescents currently become biologically mature approximately five to ten years before they are legally allowed to assume adult responsibilities and status. For many, the onset of puberty coincides with entry to high school, which is dominated by older peers. From the adolescent perspective, many of these older peers do not suffer the maturity gap. They are able to obtain possessions which are otherwise inaccessible to teens (for example, cars, clothes, drugs) by theft or vice. They seem to be free of family, they make their own rules and they are more confident with the opposite sex. Thus, delinquency is modelled for the younger girls, and many of its consequences are powerfully reinforced from a teen perspective. Caspi et al. (1993) found that girls who showed little antisocial behaviour during childhood (that is, few or no behaviour problems) became aware of peer delinquency on puberty. Girls with a record of behaviour problems in childhood, however, were familiar with delinquent peers long before reaching puberty. The two factors necessary for the initiation and maintenance of female delinquency appear to be

puberty and boys. Caspi et al. (1993) found that girls who matured early were more likely to begin to engage in delinquent behaviour, particularly if they were enrolled in a mixed sex school.

Another barrier to the achievement of positively valued goals is that youths who have displayed antisocial behaviour all their life have had a reduced chance to develop many conventional behaviours, thus limiting their options for post-secondary education, good marriages and desirable jobs, entrenching them in the antisocial path (Moffitt, 1993).

In a thirteen year longitudinal study, Fergusson, Horwood and Lynsky (1992) examined the strain of parental discord and the removal of positively valued stimuli. Their findings confirmed the hypothesis that exposure to parental discord between birth and age ten leads to increased risk of early offending (between ages twelve and thirteen). However, they emphasise that while parental conflict is a significant factor in the early onset of offending, not all children exposed to parental conflict will develop offending behaviours.

Malewska and Muszynski (1970) found that the presentation of negative stimuli, such as neglect and physical punishment, are strain factors related to petty theft, in a survey of school children aged twelve to thirteen years of age. They found that complete neglect of the child's financial needs by parents and severe punishment at home are significantly correlated with stealing. Jackson (1984) similarly suggests that extremes of parent behaviour, poor or disturbed parental relationships with children, and type of discipline used in the home are linked with children's stealing.

Moffitt (1993) classifies delinquent behaviour into two distinct categories: one category which engages in antisocial behaviour throughout their life, and a larger group which is antisocial only during adolescence. He believes that for life-course persistent

delinquents, causal factors are located early in their childhoods and are related to strain. He suggests that parents of children who are difficult to manage often lack the necessary psychological and physical resources to cope constructively with a difficult child. This may be related to a decreased level of child attachment to parents. Similarly, family attachments can break down due to the challenges of coping with a difficult child, thus evoking a chain of failed parent-child encounters. He further believes that children who are vulnerable to problems often come from adverse neighbourhoods, and homes where their parents are also vulnerable to problems. Snyder and Patterson (cited in Quay, 1987) also present data which suggests that parenting practices and family interaction are associated with the development of antisocial and delinquent behaviours. The relationship between these variables is not a clear causal one however, some unknown third variable may be implicated here. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (cited in Quay, 1987) found that parental rejection of the child is a strong predictor of delinquency, while parent aggressiveness is a moderately strong predictor. Some weaker predictors are parent absence, parent health and socioeconomic status.

Adverse school experiences and negative relations with parents are strain factors associated with a specific sub-group of delinquents (Moffitt, 1990). Using longitudinal data collected in Dunedin, New Zealand, Moffitt (1990) has identified a sub-group of delinquents who have also been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). This made up only 4% of the cohort and approximately 25% of the delinquents. As a group, they began life with significant motor skills deficits and high levels of family adversity. By age five they displayed IQ deficits which remained stable throughout development. When they entered school they experienced reading failure and their behaviour deteriorated significantly over the years. The greatest increase in the antisocial behaviour of this group occurred between ages five and seven, a period which coincides with

school entry and early reading failure. The boys who were identified as delinquent at age thirteen, but had no history of ADD made up 12% of the cohort. Their antisocial behaviour emerged after age eleven, but by age thirteen they had reached the same level of antisocial behaviour shown by ADD and delinquent boys. Their delinquency was, however, considered to be less aggressive than that of the delinquents with ADD.

Stressful life events may have been a cause of persistent offending in Hagell and Newburn's (1994) study. They found that a high proportion of female offenders (aged ten to sixteen years) were either pregnant or had a child; while half of the total sample were previously known to social services, mostly for welfare rather than criminal issues. They also found that alcohol and drug use were high amongst their subjects.

The research clearly shows a number of factors supporting the strain theory of delinquency. Negative relationships with parents, failure to measure up to older peers, adverse school experiences resulting in a low commitment to school, motor skills deficits and stressful life events have all been found to be related to adolescent delinquency. When considered more specifically in relation to stealing behaviour, the strain theory explains stealing as a result of a need for food, clothing or acceptance, and sometimes also as the result of ineffective parental discipline.

Social control theory. Social control theory focuses on the absence of significant relationships with conventional others. According to social control theory, delinquency is most likely when the adolescent is not attached to parents, school or any other conventional institution. In social control theory, then, an absence of relationships and attachments is the key, as opposed to the external strains and stresses inherent in the strain theory.

In a longitudinal study of delinquency and drug use among American youth, Elliott, Huizinga and Ageton (1985) proposed that strain, inadequate socialisation and social

disorganisation are the primary causes of weak bonding to conventional groups, activities and norms. They measured the conventional bonding variable by adding the amount of time spent with family to the amount of time spent on academic work at school. A measure of commitment to conventional social norms at home and at school was also included. Results showed that the social-psychological constructs of strain and conventional bonding have weak and indirect effects on delinquent behaviour and drug use. However, low conventional bonding, when combined with high bonding to delinquent peers, was found to lead to a substantially higher frequency of delinquent behaviour. Elliott et al (1985) also suggest that weak conventional bonding and/or high levels of strain lead some youths to seek out and become bonded to delinquent peer groups. They found that bonding to delinquent peer groups and delinquent behaviour are mutually reinforcing variables with approximately equal influence on each other. Another conclusion drawn by Elliott et al (1985) was that bonding to delinquent peers is the best predictor of delinquent behaviour.

In a study examining the relationship between juvenile delinquency and ties to conventional institutions, Liska and Reed (1985) found that parents, not school are the major institutional sources of delinquency control. For most adolescents in high school, the good opinion of teachers and school administrators may be considerably less important than that of their parents.

Jackson (1979) looked at how parental behaviour affected children's likelihood to steal, as measured by the hypothetical "temptation to steal" test, where children read seven moral dilemmas and then finish the stories according to what they themselves would do in that situation. Parent behaviour was measured by examining the children's perceptions of their parents' behaviour. This was done by using multiple choice questions relating to what children believed their parents would do in a number of

situations. He found that there was a strong difference in the way that parents were perceived to treat their children dependent on the sex of the child. Girls were more likely to be reasoned with and boys were more likely to be shouted at and/or smacked. Interestingly, children who perceived their parents as being less cross were less likely to yield to the temptation to steal. Children whose parents modelled insights into the consequences of stealing also tended to have lower stealing scores.

Similarly, Krohn, Stern, Thornberry and Jang (1992) found that the affective bonds between parents and children appear to be effective deterrents to the development of delinquency. In a study examining the effect of family variables on delinquency, they found that low attachment to parents was the most consistent predictor of both self-reported and official delinquency.

Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (cited in Quay, 1987) found that poor parental supervision is a strong predictor of delinquency. Lack of family discipline and lack of involvement were slightly less powerful predictors, while parent absence was found to be a weaker predictor. Greenwood (1992) also believes that high risk youth are likely to have inadequate or inconsistent supervision at home. According to children in Jackson's (1970) study, lack of parental surveillance and perceived expectations of parents were among the reasons given for stealing.

Negative feelings about school were a common factor for many of the young offenders studied by Hagell and Newburn (1994). They studied a large sample of ten to sixteen year olds, all of whom had been arrested at least three times in one year for a variety of offences, including stealing and traffic offences. They found an absence of any significant relationship with the school. In fact, many of their subjects had already left school.

Moffitt (1993) also acknowledges the effect that the school environment can exert on behaviour patterns. He suggests that deviant behaviour patterns later in life may reflect early individual differences that were perpetuated or exacerbated by interactions with the social environment, first at home and later at school. Greenwood (1992) also highlights the effects of negative feelings about school in his statement that high risk youth are best identified by poor school attendance and behavioural problems. Similarly, Samson and Laub (1990) describe a link between educational failure and childhood delinquency.

In a study looking specifically at the effect of school variables on adolescent offending, LeBlanc, Vallieres and McDuff (1992) concluded that an important amount of the variance of adolescent offending can be explained by a developmental and interactional school social control theory. They found that offending is the indirect consequence of a weak bond to school, and that an interdependent relationship exists between the adolescent's bond to school and his/her academic performance. On the basis of these findings, they suggest that an adolescent's level of offending will be higher if his/her school misbehaviours are frequent and if the school authorities' disciplinary actions are regular. Such misbehaviours will be amplified by the presence of a weak bond to school, low performance, and gender (specifically, being male).

Another conventional institution credited by Belson (1975) as working against the continuance of delinquency is the church. He found that frequent church attendance, being of Jewish denomination and having a grandparent in the house were all factors working against the continuation of stealing. The presence of a grandparent would perhaps work to prevent delinquency by providing increased supervision and greater opportunity to form attachments.

Moffitt (1993) believes that those who take up delinquency for the first time during adolescence have already had ample time to develop a repertoire of pro-social behaviours and basic academic skills which could be considered to be conventional, and to which they can return later in life. He believes therefore, that the adolescent-limited delinquents simply lack consistency in their antisocial behaviour across situations. For example, they might shoplift and use drugs with friends, but continue to obey the rules at school. He suggests that they maintain control over their antisocial responses, engaging in delinquent acts when it seems profitable to do so, but abandoning antisocial behaviour when pro-social styles are more rewarding. It would seem then, that the attachments to parents, school and other conventional institutions inherent in social control theory are present, but that they are forgotten from time to time during adolescence, when other forces take over.

Sampson and Laub (1990) found that the conventional values of job stability and strong marital attachment in adulthood work to inhibit adult criminal and deviant behaviour. On the other hand, communities characterised by sparse friendship networks, unsupervised teenage peer groups and low organisational participation have disproportionately high rates of crime and delinquency (Sampson & Groves, 1989).

Renshaw (1977) suggests that many children steal on immediate impulse and often want to undo the act by returning the object. She believes that guilt and shame are powerful inhibitors of unacceptable behaviour such as stealing. She suggests that easy, successful and undetected stealing may be providing the thief with a sense of power at outwitting authority, thus prolonging and continuing the habit. On the other hand, if a thief is caught the first time and made to suffer full consequences and shame, she sees this as a critical learning factor in preventing the habit re-occurring. Similarly, Belson (1975) found that an expectation that one would not be caught was related to stealing

behaviour. On the other hand, getting caught or knowing about mates being caught (by police) seemed to work against the continuance of stealing.

Social control theory presents three main conventional groups which can contribute to the prevention and control of adolescent delinquency. Parental factors such as weak affective bonding to parents, inadequate parental supervision and inconsistent discipline at home have been found to be related to delinquency. School is another institution which has some control over adolescent behaviour. Research in this area shows that negative feelings about school, poor attendance, behavioural problems and poor academic performance are all related to delinquent behaviour. Church attendance has also been shown to be a factor in controlling adolescent delinquency, perhaps by reinforcing conventional values and instilling feelings of guilt and shame for delinquent activities. According to social control theory, then, stealing might occur because children do not have adequate role models in the home, school or church settings, or they do not (for various reasons) sufficiently respect the role models they do have. Similarly, ineffective discipline and supervision in these settings can lead to increased chances of stealing occurring.

Differential association theory. Differential association theory (also referred to as social learning theory) focuses on positive relationships with deviant others. According to differential association theory, delinquency results from association with others who model and reinforce delinquent behaviour, and who transmit delinquent values. The main influences for transmitting deviant behaviours under this theory are likely to be parents, peers and other social groups such as gangs. Given that criminalistic influences exist, Tittle (1983) explains differential association as the different levels of exposure experienced by different people to these criminalistic influences. He states that those with the most frequent, intense and enduring exposure to these influences have the

greatest probability of displaying criminal behaviour. Similarly, Greenwood (1992) suggests that those most likely to exhibit problem behaviour in the future are those who have exhibited it in the past, or who associate with others who have.

According to Jackson (1984), parents with lenient attitudes towards stealing and parents who steal themselves influence children's stealing. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (cited in Quay, 1987) similarly found that parent criminality and parent aggressiveness were moderately strong predictors of delinquency, thus reiterating the link between association with deviants and the opportunity for modelling deviant behaviour.

Association with delinquent peers has been found by a number of researchers to have links with delinquency. Agnew (1991) gives three reasons why delinquent peers may cause adolescents to engage in delinquent behaviour. He suggests that:

1. Association with delinquent peers may lead the adolescent to internalise definitions favourable to delinquency;
2. Such peers may reinforce delinquency in certain settings;
3. Such peers may model delinquent behaviour, which is then imitated by the adolescent.

Belson (1975) investigated a large number of hypotheses about causal factors in the development of juvenile stealing. He found that truancy was related to stealing behaviour, perhaps because it gave the adolescent greater chance to associate with deviant peers. Belson (1975) also found that association with thieves was related to stealing behaviour, yet getting caught or knowing about mates being caught (by police) seemed to work against the continuance of stealing. According to Caspi, Lynam, Moffitt and Silva (1993), mixed-sex educational settings seem to offer more favourable conditions for girls' deviant behaviours to be reinforced and continued. They believe

that deviant behaviours need peer group support, not only for initiation, but also for maintenance.

Moffitt (1993) states that antisocial individuals appear to be likely to affiliate selectively with antisocial others, even when selecting a mate. It is not clear, however, whether such an association is the cause of the antisocial behaviour, or whether it merely reinforces and maintains it. What Moffitt (1993) does make clear is that as the life-course-persistent delinquent travels further down the track, their options for conventional behaviour are narrowed. Even residential treatment programmes become another chance to associate with delinquent peers, to learn new delinquent behaviours and to further reinforce and be reinforced by others. Knight and West (1975, cited in Moffitt, 1993) however, believe that only the adolescence-limited delinquents need peer support for crime, while the life-course-persistent offenders are willing to offend alone.

In Jackson's (1970) study, reasons given by the children who yielded in temptation to steal situations included factors relating to their associations with others, such as owing a favour, revenge and social (peer) pressure. Further reasons given by Jackson (1984) include perceived expectations of others, lack of detection and magnitude of the theft (that is, small is O.K.). Hagell and Newburn (1994) found that many of the persistent young offenders they studied committed their offences with others. Greenwood (1992) also believes that high risk youth are likely to associate with high risk peers. Similarly, Moffitt (1993) considers one predictor of short term offending to be time spent with delinquent peers, creating an awareness of peer delinquency. Matsueda (1988) considers that at least at an individual level, criminal behaviour is learned in association with other people.

Along with deviant parents and peers, gangs may also provide reinforcement for delinquent behaviour. In a study examining the role of gangs in delinquency,

Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte and Chard-Wierschem (1993) concluded that gang members are more likely than non-gang members to commit more offences, especially violent and serious offences. Their results showed that when boys were active members of a gang, they exhibited higher rates of delinquency than before or after gang membership. These rates were substantially higher than delinquency rates for non-gang members.

Three main forces appear to be behind the modelling and reinforcement of delinquent behaviour represented by differential association theory. Research shows that parents with lenient attitudes towards delinquency, who are aggressive, or who have committed criminal acts themselves frequently have children who exhibit delinquent behaviours. Similarly, adolescents who regularly associate with delinquent peers are likely to commit delinquent acts. A third force shown to contribute to delinquent behaviour is gang membership. According to differential association theory, then, stealing is likely to occur because adolescents have seen peers, parents or others doing it undetected to obtain items they were otherwise unable to afford.

Interactional theories. There is, however, a fourth school of thought, which, unlike the previous theories of delinquency, does not view delinquency as simply an outcome or consequence of a social process. Alternatively, interactional theories see delinquent behaviour as an active part of a developmental process, which interacts with a variety of social factors over a period of time to determine a person's ultimate behavioural repertoire.

Elliott, Huizinga and Ageton (1985) proposed an integrated model of delinquent behaviour. They suggested that bonding with delinquent groups combined with weak bonding to conventional groups and norms, leads to a high probability of involvement in delinquent behaviour. From a longitudinal study of adolescents, they concluded that prior delinquency and involvement in delinquent peer groups are the main factors

influencing delinquency. They believe that strain and strong bonding to parents and/or school can affect the level of involvement with delinquent peers, thus indirectly affecting delinquent behaviour.

Warr (1993) believes that the differential association and social control theories work together to determine whether or not an adolescent will engage in delinquent behaviour. He analysed data from the National Youth Survey to conclude that the amount of time spent with family can reduce and even eliminate peer influence. However, he suggests that attachment to parents (as measured by adolescents' perceptions of the importance of family life and their relationship with their parents) has no such positive effect, but can influence delinquency indirectly by inhibiting the formation of delinquent friendships.

A more comprehensive theory of delinquency is proposed by Thornberry (1987). He presents an interactional model, which focuses on the interrelationships among the following six concepts which are also important in the other theories of delinquency:

- Attachment to parents,
- Commitment to school,
- Belief in conventional values,
- Associations with delinquent peers,
- Adopting delinquent values,
- Engaging in delinquent behaviour.

The link with the strain theory of delinquency can be found in the *attachment to parents* and *commitment to school* concepts of Thornberry's (1987) model, when these components have negative or low values. According to Agnew (1992), strain factors can include negative relationships with parents, physical punishment, parental conflict and adverse school experiences. Thornberry (1987) believes that the family is the most

salient arena for social interaction and involvement during early adolescence, and therefore attachment to parents has a stronger influence on other aspects of the youth's life at this stage than in later developmental stages.

The social control theory is evident in the model when the *attachment to parents*, *commitment to school* and *belief in conventional values* components are positively involved. When these links to conformity are attenuated, Thornberry (1987) believes that the potential for delinquent behaviour is substantially increased. The social control effects seem to be the key to identifying why some youth and not others will be pulled into this spiral of increasing delinquency. As Thornberry (1987) notes, it is when the bonds to the conventional world are substantially weakened that the individual is freed from moral constraints, and is at risk for a wide range of deviant activities. The main mechanisms that bind adolescents to the conventional world are their attachment to parents, commitment to school and belief in conventional values, which are three of the variables in Thornberry's (1987) model.

The differential association theory of delinquency is recognised in Thornberry's (1987) model by the inclusion of *associations with delinquent peers* and *delinquent values*. These two variables are interactive and form a mutually reinforcing causal loop, along with delinquent behaviour itself, leading towards ever increasing delinquency over a period of time.

Interactional theories of delinquency typically combine the three previously mentioned theories; these being strain, social control and differential association, to create a more complete picture of the factors influencing delinquency. The relationships between these factors are shown clearly in Thornberry's (1987) model of delinquent involvement.

Thornberry's Reciprocal Model of Delinquent Involvement at Early Adolescence

Thornberry's (1987) reciprocal model of delinquent behaviour at early adolescence is shown in Figure 1. This model refers specifically to the period of early adolescence (that is, ages eleven to thirteen years) when delinquent careers are beginning (Thornberry, 1987; Moffitt, 1990). The fact that the model is specific to adolescence perhaps reflects Moffitt's (1993) assertions that the rate of delinquency becomes artificially high during this period due to the emerging importance of peer associations.

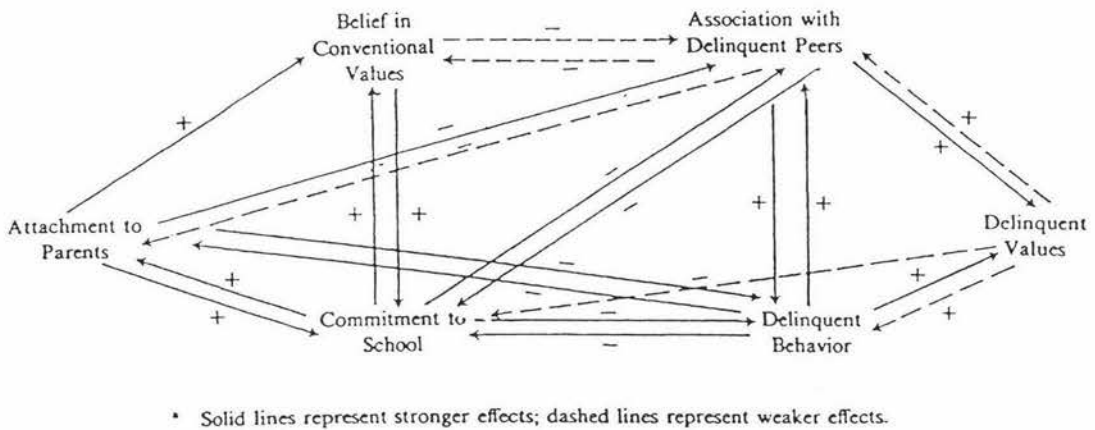


Figure 1: *Thornberry's (1987) Reciprocal Model of Delinquent Involvement at Early Adolescence.*

The model shows the relationships between the six concepts mentioned previously. A strong negative reciprocal relationship between delinquent behaviour and commitment to school is shown, and similarly between delinquent behaviour and attachment to parents. Delinquent behaviour and association with delinquent peers show a strong positive reciprocal relationship. Delinquent behaviour is also shown to be positively related to delinquent values, but the reciprocal relationship is not as strong.

Variables in Thornberry's model.

Attachment to Parents. Attachment to parents involves the affective relationship between parent and child, communication patterns, parenting skills including monitoring and discipline, conflict and so on. According to Thornberry's model, attachment to

parents affects four other variables, these being commitment to school, conventional values, association with delinquent peers and delinquent behaviour. The rationale for these relationships rests on the premise that parents who have a strong affective bond with their children, who communicate with them and exercise appropriate parenting skills are likely to lead their children towards conventional actions and beliefs and away from delinquent friends and actions. Attachment to parents is not, however, impervious to the effects of other variables. For example, associating with delinquent peers, not being committed to school and engaging in delinquent behaviour are so contradictory to normal parental expectations that they are likely to decrease the level of attachment between parent and child.

Commitment to School. Commitment to school reflects such factors as success in school, perceived importance of education, attachment to teachers and involvement in school activities. Thornberry's model (1987) shows that commitment to school is involved in reciprocal loops with both of the other bonding variables, these being attachment to parents and belief in conventional values. Children who are attached to their parents are likely to be committed to and succeed in school, and that success is likely to reinforce the close ties with their parents. Similarly, youths who believe in conventional values are likely to be committed to school, where they are expected to act in accordance with those values; therefore success at school is likely to ensue and further reinforce conventional beliefs. Commitment to school also directly affects two of the delinquency variables. Students who are committed to succeeding at school are unlikely to associate with delinquents or to engage in serious delinquent behaviour. Low commitment to school is not however, believed to lead directly to the formation of delinquent values, but may influence them indirectly through allowing greater association with delinquent peers and more time for delinquent activity. Commitment to school is,

however, affected by each of the three delinquency variables. Youths who accept delinquent values, associate with delinquents and engage in delinquent behaviour are unlikely to maintain an active commitment to school and the conventional world that school represents.

Belief in Conventional Values. Thornberry (1987) defines belief in conventional values as the representation of middle class European-based cultural values, such as education, personal industry and financial success. This concept is involved in two causal loops, strongly affecting and being affected by commitment to school. Effectively, this constitutes a loop parallel to that of delinquent values and delinquent behaviour. A weaker relationship exists between belief in conventional values and association with delinquent peers. In other words, youths who do not hold conventional values are more likely to associate with delinquent peers with similar views. Such friendships are likely to further weaken their belief in conventional values. A weak conceptual link exists between belief in conventional values and delinquency. Belief in conventional values is apparently not affected by delinquent behaviour. An apparent anomaly occurs with respect to the relationship between belief in delinquent values and belief in conventional values. Thornberry (1987) sees conventional values as being unrelated to delinquent values. However it seems unlikely that an individual could hold strong conventional values and also strong delinquent values, therefore a negative correlation between conventional and delinquent values might be expected.

Association with Delinquent Peers. Thornberry (1987) sees association with delinquent peers as including the level of attachment to peers, delinquent behaviour and values of peers, and peer reinforcement of the adolescent's own behaviour. A reciprocal relationship exists between the three delinquency variables (association with delinquent peers, delinquent values and delinquent behaviour) such that each reinforces the others

over a period of time. In a conventional setting people often take on the behaviours of their associates, yet, at the same time, often seek out associates who share their behavioural interests. There is no reason to assume that deviant activities such as delinquency should differ substantially in this regard.

Delinquent Values. Delinquent values are the legitimate acceptance of delinquent activities and a general willingness to violate the law to achieve other ends (Thornberry, 1987). The link between delinquent values and delinquent behaviour can also be compared with conventional values and behaviour. Does behaviour lead to attitude formation, or do attitudes form behaviour patterns? Most theorists would agree that a reciprocal relationship exists between these variables, both in normal and deviant situations.

Delinquent Behaviour. Delinquent behaviour is the primary outcome variable in Thornberry's (1987) model, and refers to acts that place the youth at risk for adjudication. These acts range in seriousness from status offences to serious violent activities. The three delinquency variables of association with delinquent peers, adoption of delinquent values and delinquent behaviour are embedded in a causal loop, with each reinforcing the others over time. In other words, no matter where an individual enters the loop, delinquency will increase associations with delinquents, and delinquent values; the adoption of delinquent values will increase delinquent behaviour and associations with delinquents; and associations with delinquents will increase delinquent behaviour and delinquent values.

Rationale for the Current Study

Research has shown that a number of factors interact, particularly during adolescence, to precipitate delinquent behaviour. Perhaps the most comprehensive model of such interactions is that proposed by Thornberry (1987). While stealing is

almost universally recognised to be a component of delinquent behaviour, little research has focused purely on this facet, despite the fact that it appears to be one of the most commonly occurring components of delinquent behaviour.

The current study aims to investigate the relationships between the variables in Thornberry's (1987) reciprocal model of delinquent involvement at early adolescence specifically in relation to stealing behaviour. Students of the same age group as that represented in Thornberry's model (eleven to thirteen years) will be surveyed to determine which variables are most strongly related to stealing behaviour. The study also aims to compare incidence rates of stealing with those found by previous researchers, and to investigate gender differences and school class level differences in stealing behaviour.

Hypotheses

Hypotheses for the present study are as follows:

1. Between eighty and one hundred percent of students will report having stolen something at some time.
2. Serious patterns of stealing, will be shown by five to ten percent of students.
3. Male students will report more frequent stealing behaviour than female students.
4. Year 8 students will report more frequent stealing behaviour than Year 7 students.
5. The relationships inherent in Thornberry's (1987) reciprocal model of delinquent involvement at early adolescence will be found in relation to stealing behaviour. More specifically, the following relationships will exist:
 - (a) Attachment to parents will be positively related to a belief in conventional values;

(b) Attachment to parents and commitment to school will show a positive relationship;

(c) Belief in conventional values and commitment to school will show a positive relationship;

(d) Attachment to parents and stealing behaviour will show a negative relationship;

(e) Commitment to school and association with delinquent peers will show a negative relationship;

(f) Association with delinquent peers and stealing behaviour will show a positive relationship;

(g) Attachment to parents will be negatively related to association with delinquent peers;

(h) Association with delinquent peers will be positively related to delinquent values;

(i) Stealing behaviour will be positively related to delinquent values.

Method

Stealing is a covert behaviour and is, by nature, difficult to observe. Some sort of reporting is necessary to measure its occurrence. Parental and/or teacher reporting has a high potential for inaccuracy. Self-report was chosen for this study for its potential to be the most accurate and revealing method of collecting such data when anonymity is carefully protected. Therefore a self-report questionnaire was constructed, as detailed below. It was administered under the following circumstances in order to guarantee anonymity of participants.

Questionnaire Construction

A four part questionnaire (see Appendix) was designed to gather data about subjects as follows:

Section A: Classification data, peers pastimes, attachment to school.

Section B: Family variables.

Section C: Attitudes and values regarding stealing.

Section D: Self-report of stealing behaviour.

Measures of Variables

Attachment to Parents. Section B, items 5, 6 and 7 relate to the importance of family togetherness and communication. These items were used by Warr (1993) to measure parent attachment. Items 8 and 9 deal with parental knowledge of the whereabouts of their adolescent offspring, and aspirations to be like their parents are covered by items 10 and 11. Items 8 to 11 are the same as those which Hagan and Kay (1990) asked their adolescent respondents, in order to measure parental control. Answers to questions 5 to 11 in section B were numerically coded 0, 1 or 2, with 0 showing a low attachment level, 1 medium and 2 high. The measure of attachment to parents was the sum of scores on these items, with a possible range from 0 to 14.

Commitment to School. To determine their commitment to school, subjects were asked to rate, on a three point scale, how much they enjoy going to school, how important school is to them, and how well they get on with their teachers (Section A, items 7, 8, 9). These items were modelled on the format used by Warr (1993) to determine parental attachment. Answers to items 7 to 9 in section A were numerically coded from 0 to 2. The measure of commitment to school was reached by adding the scores on these three items, thus giving a possible range from 0 to 6.

Conventional Values. According to Thornberry (1987), conventional values represent the "granting of legitimacy" to middle class values such as education and personal industry. Thus item 8 in Section A, referring to the importance of school and item 5 in Section B, relating to the importance of family togetherness are included in the measure of conventional values. The conventional values measure, similar to that used by Thornberry (1987), was reached by adding scores on item 8 (section A) and item 5 (section B); with possible scores of 0 to 2 on each item this gave a range of responses from 0 to 4 for this measure.

Association with Delinquent Peers. Two questions are related to peers' behaviour; one being a three point scale to determine students' impressions of the degree of trouble their peers got into, the other asking them to indicate which activities their friends were involved in from a list including three delinquent activities (Section A, items 5 and 6). Scores on these two items were added to reach a measure of peer delinquency, the range being from 0 to 4.

Delinquent Values. Section C includes a list of 20 items for subjects to state whether or not each constitutes stealing. Three of these statements (items 5, 14, 17) are definitely not stealing, these being included in the questionnaire to ensure that participants did not simply tick every box the same way. These items were not used in

the analysis of data. Three items regarding breach of copyright (items 1, 3, 9) were taken from Hagan and Kay (1990), while the remainder come from examples of stealing on a discussion sheet included in the Stealing Kit prepared by the New Zealand Police for use in schools. These include relatively minor stealing incidents; such as taking clothing from a lost property box, copying a friend's work, taking a sandwich from someone's lunch. Elliott et al (1985) used a similar method to measure participants' attitudes towards delinquency. They asked participants how wrong it is to commit certain acts, and suggested that a high score on this scale reflected a conventional, pro-social orientation towards behaviour, while a low score will indicate delinquent values. A delinquent values measure, similar to that used by Elliott et al (1985) was reached by adding scores on all items in section C, except those mentioned above. Items identified as stealing scored 1, those identified as not stealing scored 0. A low score was considered to reflect delinquent values, since respondents were apparently unable to recognise many of these acts as stealing. The range of possible values on this scale was from 0 to 17.

Stealing Behaviour. In Section D, subjects are asked to indicate how often they have done each of the 27 items, using a three point scale (never, sometimes, often). The items all constitute a form of stealing, ranging in seriousness from "I have kept something I have found" (item 1), to "I have stolen a car or a truck or a van" (item 25). All of these items were used by Belson (1975), although Belson also had other items which were not included here. Items 7, 15, 16 were used also by Moffitt and Silva (1988b) as norm-violation offences, while items 4, 14, 23, 25, 26, 27 are referred to by Moffitt and Silva (1988b) as illegal offences. Three measures of stealing behaviour were evaluated; one being sum of scores on the entire scale (never = 0, sometimes = 1, often = 2), giving a range from 0 to 54; one including only norm-violation offences (from Moffitt

& Silva, 1988b), with a range from 0 to 6; and the third including only illegal offences (from Moffitt & Silva, 1988b), with a range from 0 to 12.

Other Measures. Classification data was gathered, which included school class level, gender, ethnic identification and age. Other family variables were gathered, including who lives in the family home and the amount of time spent at home. The items dealing with time spent at home (Section B, items 2, 3, 4) are directly derived from the questionnaire used by Warr (1993). This data was collected in order to compare general rates of stealing with those obtained by previous research, and also to investigate gender and school class level differences in stealing behaviour.

Participants

The participants comprised the entire population of adolescents enrolled at an intermediate (Years 7 and 8) school in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand. This included approximately 329 adolescents aged from 11 to 13 years. This age group was chosen because it is the age at which delinquent careers are beginning (Thornberry, 1987; Moffitt, 1993). Of these adolescents, data was obtained from 278 students, the remainder of students were either absent from school on the day the questionnaire was administered (48 students), or did not consent to complete the questionnaire (3 students). The sample of 278 students included 142 boys and 136 girls.

Procedure

Prior to administration of the questionnaire, parents of participants were informed about the survey, through a regular school newsletter. They were invited to view the questionnaire at the school office, and if they wished, withdraw their child from participating. No parents took up either of these options. The questionnaire was presented to all students present at school on a class by class basis. Before beginning the questionnaire, students desks were moved apart so that they could not see each others'

answers. On being read the details about the survey at the top of the questionnaire form, students were asked to indicate on the form whether or not they were willing to complete the questionnaire. Those who opted not to were asked not to complete any further questions. Students were then asked to answer the questions as they were read aloud; the author read each question and the possible answers in full, as worded on the questionnaire, for every class. This was considered desirable to reduce the problem suggested by Moffitt and Silva (1988b), that the population who are regularly participating in delinquent behaviour are likely to have poor reading skills. When all questions had been completed the author collected all questionnaires. Administration time was about 20 minutes per class.

Reliability

Test-retest reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated by correlation of the data from two administrations, separated by one week, for 21 subjects. An average of 88% test-retest agreement was reached between the two tests. The Pearson correlation obtained was $r=0.94$, supporting the retest reliability of the instrument.

Results

Table 1 shows the percentage who reported stealing in each of the categories in section D of the questionnaire. This shows that apart from keeping something they had found, which 87.4% of respondents had done at least once; the next most common offence was stealing money, with 34.2% of respondents reporting having done this at least once. Having something they knew to be stolen was also quite common, with 31.6% reporting to have done this, while almost 25% of respondents reported cheating someone out of money, and 23.4% having pinched sweets.

Table 1: Frequency of reported offences

| OFFENCE | NEVER | SOMETIMES | OFTEN |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------|
| I have kept something I have found. | 35 (12.6%) | 201 (72.3%) | 42 (15.1%) |
| I have stolen something just for fun. | 212 (76.3%) | 61 (21.9%) | 5 (1.8%) |
| I have taken something for a dare. | 232 (83.5%) | 42 (15.1%) | 3 (1.1%) |
| I have stolen something from a shop. | 221 (79.5%) | 50 (18%) | 7 (2.5%) |
| I have pinched something from my family or relations. | 198 (71.2%) | 74 (26.6%) | 6 (2.2%) |
| I have pinched something when I was in someone else's home. | 258 (92.8%) | 17 (6.1 %) | 3 (1.1%) |
| I have got away without paying the bus fare. | 256 (92.1%) | 18 (6.5%) | 4 (1.4%) |
| I have taken things belonging to children. | 240 (86.3%) | 32 (11.5%) | 6 (2.2%) |
| I have got something by threatening others. | 246 (88.5%) | 29 (10.4%) | 3 (1.1%) |
| I have pinched sweets. | 213 (76.6%) | 52 (18.7%) | 13 (4.7%) |
| I have stolen cigarettes. | 262 (94.2%) | 10 (3.6%) | 6 (2.2%) |
| I have stolen something from a changing room or cloakroom. | 263 (94.6%) | 9 (3.2%) | 5 (1.8%) |
| I have stolen fruit or some other kind of food. | 212 (76.3%) | 64 (23%) | 2 (0.7%) |
| I have got into a place and stolen something. | 258 (92.8%) | 16 (5.8%) | 4 (1.4%) |
| I have stolen something belonging to a school. | 227 (81.7%) | 45 (16.2%) | 6 (2.2%) |
| I have stolen something belonging to someone at school. | 222 (80%) | 51 (18.3%) | 5 (1.8%) |
| I have stolen from a park or a playground. | 253 (91%) | 23 (8.3%) | 1 (0.4%) |
| I have stolen milk. | 262 (94.2%) | 14 (5%) | 1 (0.4%) |
| I have stolen a letter or a parcel. | 257 (92.4%) | 21 (7.6%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have cheated someone out of money. | 209 (75.2%) | 56 (20.1%) | 12 (4.3%) |
| I have had something that I knew was stolen. | 190 (68.3%) | 79 (28.4%) | 9 (3.2%) |
| I have stolen something out of a garden or out of the yard of a house. | 211 (75.9%) | 60 (21.6%) | 5 (1.8%) |
| I have stolen a bike or a motorbike. | 269 (96.8%) | 4 (1.4%) | 4 (1.4%) |
| I have stolen something from a bike or a motorbike. | 265 (95.3%) | 10 (3.6%) | 3 (1.1%) |
| I have stolen a car or a truck or a van. | 271 (97.5%) | 4 (1.4%) | 2 (0.7%) |
| I have stolen something from a car or a truck or a van. | 252 (90.6%) | 21 (7.6%) | 4 (1.4%) |
| I have stolen money. | 182 (65.5%) | 78 (28.1%) | 17 (6.1%) |

Stealing from their family or relations was reported by 28.8% of respondents, while 23.7% had stolen something just for fun. Except for minor offences, such as keeping something they had found, and taking sweets, frequent stealing was very limited.

Table 2 further breaks down these results into male and female frequencies for each stealing behaviour. Percentages of the total male and female participants are recorded in brackets. It is apparent that a larger percentage of males reported performing almost all of the stealing offences listed. However, more females reported having sometimes kept something they had found (77.9% of females, 67.6% of males), although a larger percentage of males reported having done this often (22.5% of males, 7.4% of females). Similarly, a larger percentage of females reported having stolen cigarettes sometimes (3.7% of females, 2.8% of males), but again more males reported having committed this offence often (3.5% of males, 0.7% of females). A greater percentage of females also reported having sometimes stolen something out of a garden or out of the yard of a house (23.5% of females, 19% of males), although once again, more males reported having done this often (4.2% of males, 0% of females). The most common offences reported by male respondents were keeping something they had found, which 90.1% of male respondents reported having done at least once, stealing money (42.3%) and having something they knew was stolen (37.3%). For female respondents, the most common offences reported were having kept something they had found (85.3%), stealing money (24.2%), stealing something out of a garden or out of the yard of a house (23.5%) and pinching something from family or relations (22.8%). These results support Hypothesis 3, which states that male students will report more frequent stealing behaviour than female students.

Table 2: Comparison of Male/Female Stealing Behaviour

| OFFENCE | SEX | NEVER | SOMETIMES | OFTEN |
|--|-----|-------------|-------------|------------|
| I have kept something I have found. | M | 14 (9.9%) | 96 (67.6%) | 32 (22.5%) |
| | F | 20 (14.7%) | 106 (77.9%) | 10 (7.4%) |
| I have stolen something just for fun. | M | 100 (70.4%) | 37 (26.1%) | 5 (3.5%) |
| | F | 114 (83.8%) | 22 (16.2%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have taken something for a dare. | M | 109 (76.8%) | 27 (19.0%) | 3 (2.1%) |
| | F | 121 (89.0%) | 15 (11.0%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen something from a shop. | M | 103 (72.5%) | 32 (22.5%) | 7 (4.9%) |
| | F | 118 (86.8%) | 18 (13.2%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have pinched something from my family or relations. | M | 95 (66.9%) | 41 (28.9%) | 6 (4.2%) |
| | F | 105 (77.2%) | 31 (22.8%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have pinched something when I was in someone else's home. | M | 128 (90.1%) | 11 (7.7%) | 3 (2.1%) |
| | F | 130 (95.6%) | 6 (4.4%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have got away without paying the bus fare. | M | 125 (88.0%) | 13 (9.2%) | 4 (2.8%) |
| | F | 131 (96.3%) | 5 (3.7%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have taken things belonging to children. | M | 116 (81.7%) | 20 (14.1%) | 6 (4.2%) |
| | F | 124 (91.2%) | 12 (8.8%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have got something by threatening others. | M | 118 (83.1%) | 19 (13.4%) | 4 (2.8%) |
| | F | 127 (93.4%) | 9 (6.6%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have pinched sweets. | M | 100 (70.4%) | 31 (21.8%) | 11 (7.7%) |
| | F | 113 (83.1%) | 21 (15.4%) | 2 (1.5%) |
| I have stolen cigarettes. | M | 133 (93.7%) | 4 (2.8%) | 5 (3.5%) |
| | F | 130 (95.6%) | 5 (3.7%) | 1 (0.7%) |
| I have stolen something from a changing room or cloakroom. | M | 130 (91.5%) | 8 (5.6%) | 3 (2.1%) |
| | F | 135 (99.3%) | 1 (0.7%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen fruit or some other kind of food. | M | 100 (70.4%) | 39 (27.5%) | 2 (1.4%) |
| | F | 111 (81.6%) | 25 (18.4%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have got into a place and stolen something. | M | 124 (87.3%) | 14 (9.9%) | 4 (2.8%) |
| | F | 135 (99.3%) | 1 (0.7%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen something belonging to a school. | M | 106 (74.6%) | 30 (21.1%) | 6 (4.2%) |
| | F | 121 (89.0%) | 15 (11.0%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen something belonging to someone at school. | M | 100 (70.4%) | 37 (26.1%) | 5 (3.5%) |
| | F | 123 (90.4%) | 13 (9.6%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen from a park or a playground. | M | 128 (90.1%) | 13 (9.2%) | 1 (0.7%) |
| | F | 126 (92.6%) | 10 (7.4%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen milk. | M | 129 (90.8%) | 12 (8.5%) | 0 (0%) |
| | F | 133 (97.8%) | 2 (1.5%) | 1 (0.7%) |
| I have stolen a letter or a parcel. | M | 128 (90.1%) | 14 (9.9%) | 0 (0%) |
| | F | 129 (94.9%) | 7 (5.1%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have cheated someone out of money. | M | 92 (64.8%) | 39 (27.5%) | 9 (6.3%) |
| | F | 118 (86.8%) | 15 (11.0%) | 3 (2.2%) |
| I have had something that I knew was stolen. | M | 87 (61.3%) | 46 (32.4%) | 7 (4.9%) |
| | F | 107 (78.7%) | 27 (19.9%) | 2 (1.5%) |
| I have stolen something out of a garden or out of the yard of a house. | M | 107 (75.4%) | 27 (19.0%) | 6 (4.2%) |
| | F | 103 (75.7%) | 32 (23.5%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen a bike or a motorbike. | M | 133 (93.7%) | 4 (2.8%) | 4 (2.8%) |
| | F | 136 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen something from a bike or a motorbike. | M | 130 (91.5%) | 9 (6.3%) | 3 (2.1%) |
| | F | 135 (99.3%) | 1 (0.7%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen a car or a truck or a van. | M | 136 (95.8%) | 3 (2.1%) | 2 (1.4%) |
| | F | 135 (99.3%) | 1 (0.7%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen something from a car or a truck or a van. | M | 122 (85.9%) | 15 (10.6%) | 4 (2.8%) |
| | F | 130 (95.6%) | 6 (4.4%) | 0 (0%) |
| I have stolen money. | M | 79 (55.6%) | 47 (33.1%) | 13 (9.2%) |
| | F | 100 (73.5%) | 29 (21.3%) | 4 (2.9%) |

Table 3 shows the percentage of male and female respondents who reported stealing at least one item once, on each of the three stealing scales used. Percentages of those scoring three or greater, and those scoring six or greater on the illegal scale are also

included. In total, 92.5% of the students surveyed reported having committed at least one of the stealing offences in section D of the questionnaire, this being well within the range predicted in Hypothesis 1. Norm-violation offences, as defined by Moffitt and Silva (1988b) were recorded by 32.4% of respondents, and 42.1% of students admitted to illegal offences. Only 2.9% of students recorded scores of six or more (from a possible twelve) on the illegal offence scale, however, 10.1% of respondents scored three, four or five on this scale. Over 50% of all male respondents reported having committed at least one illegal offence, compared with almost a third of female respondents. Substantially more male respondents than females recorded scores of three or more on the illegal offences scale, and no female respondents recorded a score greater than five on this scale. Hypothesis 2, which states that five to ten percent of students will show serious patterns of stealing, is rejected; since only 2.9% of respondents scored greater than five on the illegal stealing scale. However 5.6% of male respondents showed serious patterns of stealing using this criteria.

Table 3: Percentage of Respondents Reporting Stealing Behaviour

| | SCORE | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Full Scale | >0 | 95.1% | 90.4% | 92.5% |
| Norm-violation | >0 | 43.0% | 21.3% | 32.4% |
| Illegal Offences | >0 | 52.8% | 30.9% | 42.1% |
| | >2 | 16.9% | 2.9% | 10.1% |
| | >5 | 5.6% | 0% | 2.9% |

A comparison between male and female students on each of the variables is shown in Table 4. One-tailed t-tests indicate significant male/female differences on all variables except delinquent values. The male rate of stealing is significantly higher than that of the female respondents on all three measures of stealing behaviour, further supporting Hypothesis 3.

Table 4: Male/Female Comparison of Variables

| VARIABLE | SEX | MEAN | S.D. | TOTAL | T-VALUE |
|-------------------------------------|-----|---------|--------|-------|-----------|
| Association with delinquent peers | M | 1.1099 | 0.6963 | 157.6 | 0.0003 |
| | F | 0.8204 | 0.7105 | 112.4 | |
| Commitment to school | M | 4.0563 | 1.2591 | 576 | 0.0008 |
| | F | 4.5037 | 1.0787 | 617 | |
| Attachment to parents | M | 10.9014 | 2.4734 | 1548 | 0.0372 |
| | F | 11.4307 | 2.4609 | 1566 | |
| Conventional values | M | 3.2958 | 0.8059 | 468 | 0.0590 |
| | F | 3.4453 | 0.7852 | 472 | |
| Delinquent values | M | 11.4718 | 2.7488 | 1629 | 0.1797 |
| | F | 11.7737 | 2.7440 | 1613 | |
| Stealing behaviour (entire scale) | M | 7.0704 | 7.3751 | 1004 | 0.0000004 |
| | F | 3.5328 | 3.5873 | 484 | |
| Stealing behaviour (norm-violation) | M | 0.7746 | 1.1070 | 110 | 0.0000002 |
| | F | 0.2409 | 0.4930 | 33 | |
| Stealing behaviour (illegal) | M | 1.2887 | 2.0955 | 183 | 0.00001 |
| | F | 0.4599 | 0.8045 | 63 | |

Year 7 (Form 1) and Year 8 (Form 2) students are compared on all variables in Table 5. Significant differences in stealing behaviour on all three measures are indicated by one-tailed t-tests, with Year 8 students reporting more stealing behaviours than Year 7 students, as predicted in Hypothesis 4.

Table 5: Year 7/Year 8 Comparison of Variables

| VARIABLE | YEAR | MEAN | S.D. | TOTAL | T-VALUE |
|-------------------------------------|------|---------|--------|-------|-----------|
| Association with delinquent peers | 7 | 1.0209 | 0.6798 | 136.8 | 0.1191 |
| | 8 | 0.9194 | 0.7511 | 132.4 | |
| Commitment to school | 7 | 4.2761 | 1.1787 | 573 | 0.4853 |
| | 8 | 4.2708 | 1.2131 | 615 | |
| Attachment to parents | 7 | 11.7463 | 2.1299 | 1574 | 0.0000519 |
| | 8 | 10.6111 | 2.6605 | 1528 | |
| Conventional values | 7 | 3.5597 | 0.6884 | 477 | 0.0000382 |
| | 8 | 3.1875 | 0.8525 | 459 | |
| Delinquent values | 7 | 12.2164 | 2.6397 | 1637 | 0.000334 |
| | 8 | 11.1181 | 2.6799 | 1601 | |
| Stealing behaviour (entire scale) | 7 | 3.7090 | 4.3352 | 497 | 0.000005 |
| | 8 | 6.8542 | 7.0483 | 987 | |
| Stealing behaviour (norm-violation) | 7 | 0.2836 | 0.6326 | 38 | 0.0000119 |
| | 8 | 0.7292 | 1.0526 | 105 | |
| Stealing behaviour (illegal) | 7 | 0.5448 | 1.0593 | 73 | 0.00034 |
| | 8 | 1.2014 | 2.0055 | 173 | |

Year 8 students also score significantly lower on the delinquent values scale (indicating their values are more delinquent), while Year 7 students score higher on

conventional values and attachment to parents. No significant difference was found between these two groups on measures of commitment to school or association with delinquent peers.

The cross-tabulation of the attachment to parents and conventional values variables are shown in Table 6. A positive correlation ($r=0.6157$) was found between these variables. It is apparent that the majority of respondents scored highly on both of these variables, that is, they are attached to their parents and hold conventional values, as predicted in Hypothesis 5a.

Table 6: Attachment to Parents/ Conventional Values

| CONVENTIONAL VALUES | ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|
| | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | TOTAL |
| | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 7 |
| | 2 | 0 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 5 | 35 |
| | 3 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 40 | 33 | 85 |
| | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 40 | 109 | 151 |
| | Total | 0 | 10 | 27 | 94 | 147 | 278 |

Commitment to school and attachment to parents variables are cross-tabulated in Table 7. A positive correlation coefficient ($r=0.4190$) was calculated between these variables, providing support for Hypothesis 5b.

Table 7: Attachment to Parents/ Commitment to School

| | | ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-----------------------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|
| COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | TOTAL |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 10 |
| | 3 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 19 | 16 | 46 |
| | 4 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 38 | 41 | 89 |
| | 5 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 25 | 52 | 83 |
| | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 32 | 42 |
| | Total | 0 | 10 | 27 | 94 | 147 | 278 |

Once again, it is apparent that most respondents scored at the top end of each scale, although responses on the commitment to school variable appear to be more widely spread.

A strong positive relationship ($r=0.6250$) was found between commitment to school and conventional values, as shown in Table 8. This result was predicted in Hypothesis 5c. Most of the respondents recorded high scores on both of these variables.

Table 8: Conventional Values/ Commitment to School

| COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL | CONVENTIONAL VALUES | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---|----|----|-----|-------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | TOTAL |
| | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 7 |
| | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 10 |
| | 3 | 3 | 20 | 19 | 4 | 46 |
| | 4 | 0 | 7 | 32 | 50 | 89 |
| | 5 | 0 | 1 | 20 | 62 | 83 |
| | 6 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 35 | 42 |
| | Total | 7 | 35 | 85 | 151 | 278 |

Weak negative correlations were found between attachment to parents and all three measures of stealing behaviour. The strongest correlation was for the full scale of stealing offences (Table 9; $r=-0.2819$), with weaker relationships between attachment to parents and illegal offences (Table 10; $r=-0.2160$) and attachment to parents and norm-violation offences (Table 11; $r=-0.1930$). These correlations, while indicating the direction of the relationship predicted in Hypothesis 5d, are not significant.

Table 9: Attachment to Parents/ Stealing (full scale)

| | ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|
| STEALING (full scale) | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | TOTAL |
| | 0-7 | 0 | 4 | 18 | 69 | 125 | 216 |
| | 8-15 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 19 | 14 | 44 |
| | 16-23 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 12 |
| | 24-31 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | 32-40 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| | Total | 0 | 10 | 27 | 94 | 147 | 278 |

Table 10: Attachment to Parents/ Stealing (illegal)

| | ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|
| | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | TOTAL |
| STEALING (illegal) | 0-2 | 0 | 8 | 20 | 81 | 141 | 250 |
| | 3-5 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 2 | 20 |
| | 6-8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| | 9-11 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Total | 0 | 10 | 27 | 94 | 147 | 278 |

Table 11: Attachment to Parents/ Stealing (norm-violation)

| | ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|
| | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | TOTAL |
| STEALING (norm-violation) | 0 | 0 | 7 | 12 | 60 | 109 | 188 |
| | 1 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 21 | 25 | 55 |
| | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 21 |
| | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 12 |
| | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Total | 0 | 10 | 27 | 94 | 147 | 278 |

A negative correlation ($r=-0.2382$) was found between measures of commitment to school and association with delinquent peers. The cross tabulation of these two variables is shown in Table 12. This shows that most of the respondents scored high on the commitment to school scale and tended to score lower on the association with delinquent peers measure. A negative relationship was predicted by Hypothesis 5e, but the correlation found here is not significant.

Table 12: Commitment to School/ Association with Delinquent Peers

| | COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|-------|
| | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | TOTAL |
| ASSOCIATION WITH DELINQUENT PEERS | 0.0-0.9 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 11 | 26 | 22 | 25 | 86 |
| | 1.0-1.9 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 27 | 59 | 61 | 14 | 173 |
| | 2.0-2.9 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 12 |
| | 3.0-4.0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| | Total | 1 | 7 | 10 | 46 | 89 | 83 | 42 | 278 |

Association with delinquent peers was positively related to all three measures of stealing behaviour. The strongest relationship was with the full scale of stealing

behaviour ($r=0.3712$) shown in Table 13. Illegal stealing offences (Table 14) and norm-violation offences (Table 15) were slightly more weakly related to association with delinquent peers ($r=0.3466$ and $r=0.2526$ respectively). This positive relationship between association with delinquent peers and stealing was predicted in Hypothesis 5f. Most of the students surveyed recorded reasonably low stealing scores and also low scores on the association with delinquent peers measure. The small proportion of students who recorded high stealing scores also tended to record more frequent associations with delinquent peers. It would seem then, that most students do not engage in stealing, nor do they associate with delinquent peers. However, those few students who do engage in high levels of stealing (that is, they go beyond keeping something they have found) do indicate that they associate with delinquent peers. This relationship is more pronounced in the illegal and norm-violation stealing scales than the full scale, perhaps reflecting the more serious nature of offences in these two scales.

Table 13: Association with Delinquent Peers/ Stealing (full scale)

| | ASSOCIATION WITH DELINQUENT PEERS | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| | | 0.0-0.9 | 1.0-1.9 | 2.0-2.9 | 3.0-4.0 | TOTAL |
| STEALING (full scale) | 0-7 | 75 | 135 | 6 | 0 | 216 |
| | 8-15 | 9 | 29 | 3 | 3 | 44 |
| | 16-23 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 12 |
| | 24-31 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | 32-40 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| | Total | 86 | 173 | 12 | 7 | 278 |

Table 14: Association with Delinquent Peers/ Stealing (illegal)

| | ASSOCIATION WITH DELINQUENT PEERS | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| | | 0.0-0.9 | 1.0-1.9 | 2.0-2.9 | 3.0-4.0 | TOTAL |
| STEALING (illegal) | 0-2 | 82 | 158 | 9 | 1 | 250 |
| | 3-5 | 3 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 20 |
| | 6-8 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| | 9-11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | 86 | 173 | 12 | 7 | 278 |

Table 15: Association with Delinquent Peers/ Stealing (norm-violation)

| STEALING (norm-violation) | ASSOCIATION WITH DELINQUENT PEERS | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| | | 0.0-0.9 | 1.0-1.9 | 2.0-2.9 | 3.0-4.0 | TOTAL |
| | 0 | 64 | 116 | 6 | 2 | 188 |
| | 1 | 14 | 38 | 2 | 1 | 55 |
| | 2 | 7 | 12 | 1 | 1 | 21 |
| | 3 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 12 |
| | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Total | 86 | 173 | 12 | 7 | 278 |

A negative correlation ($r=-0.2391$) was found between measures of association with delinquent peers and attachment to parents, as predicted in Hypothesis 5g. This is shown in Table 16. Most of the respondents scored high on the attachment to parents measure, and low on the measure of association with delinquent peers, however almost 10% of students scored relatively low on both measures. Those who scored highest on the association with delinquent peers measure, also tended to score highly on the attachment to parents scale.

Table 16: Association with Delinquent Peers/ Attachment to Parents

| ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS | ASSOCIATION WITH DELINQUENT PEERS | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| | | 0.0-0.9 | 1.0-1.9 | 2.0-2.9 | 3.0-4.0 | TOTAL |
| | 0-2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 3-5 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 10 |
| | 6-8 | 5 | 15 | 4 | 3 | 27 |
| | 9-11 | 18 | 72 | 2 | 2 | 94 |
| | 12-14 | 60 | 82 | 3 | 2 | 147 |
| | Total | 86 | 173 | 12 | 7 | 278 |

A negative correlation ($r=-0.2171$) was found between association with delinquent peers and delinquent values. The cross-tabulation of these variables is shown in Table 17. It is important to note that the scale used to measure delinquent values works on the basis that the lower the score on the scale, the more delinquent the values. Therefore the negative correlation found here does, in fact, indicate a positive relationship between delinquent values and association with delinquent peers, as predicted in Hypothesis 5h.

Most of the students surveyed reported low associations with delinquent peers, and low levels of delinquent values (indicated by high scores on the delinquent values scale).

Table 17: Association with Delinquent Peers/ Delinquent Values

| | | ASSOCIATION WITH DELINQUENT PEERS | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-------|-----|
| DELINQUENT VALUES | + | 0.0-0.9 | 1.0-1.9 | 2.0-2.9 | 3.0-4.0 | TOTAL | |
| | 0-2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | |
| | 3-5 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | |
| | 6-8 | 2 | 19 | 3 | 2 | 26 | |
| | 9-11 | 27 | 52 | 2 | 4 | 85 | |
| | 12-14 | 43 | 75 | 7 | 0 | 125 | |
| | 15-17 | 13 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 35 | |
| | - | Total | 86 | 173 | 12 | 7 | 278 |

Positive relationships were found between delinquent values and all three measures of stealing behaviours, as predicted in Hypothesis 5i. The full scale of stealing behaviours (Table 18) produced the strongest correlation ($r=-0.2544$), while the illegal offences scale (Table 19) showed a slightly weaker correlation ($r=-0.2204$). Norm-violation offences (Table 20) showed a weaker correlation ($r=-0.2060$) with delinquent values. As in Table 17, the negative correlation indicates a positive relationship, since the measure of delinquent values works on the basis that the lower the score on the scale, the more delinquent are the values. It is obvious that the majority of respondents reported a low level of delinquent values (indicated by a high score on the delinquent values scale) and also a low level of stealing behaviour. It is interesting to note that many of those reporting three or more illegal stealing offences still did not show strong delinquent values.

Table 18: Delinquent Values/ Stealing (full scale)

| | + DELINQUENT VALUES - | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|
| STEALING (full scale) | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | 15-17 | TOTAL |
| | 0-7 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 66 | 99 | 32 | 216 |
| | 8-15 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 15 | 19 | 1 | 44 |
| | 16-23 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 12 |
| | 24-31 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | 32-40 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| | Total | 2 | 5 | 26 | 85 | 125 | 35 | 278 |

Table 19: Delinquent Values/ Stealing (illegal)

| | + DELINQUENT VALUES - | | | | | | | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | 15-17 | |
| STEALING (illegal) | 0-2 | 1 | 4 | 19 | 78 | 116 | 32 | 250 |
| | 3-5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 20 |
| | 6-8 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| | 9-11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | 12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Total | 2 | 5 | 26 | 85 | 125 | 35 | 278 |

Table 20: Delinquent Values/ Stealing (norm-violation)

| | + DELINQUENT VALUES - | | | | | | | TOTAL |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | 0-2 | 3-5 | 6-8 | 9-11 | 12-14 | 15-17 | |
| STEALING (norm-violation) | 0 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 58 | 93 | 25 | 188 |
| | 1 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 16 | 21 | 7 | 55 |
| | 2 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 21 |
| | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 12 |
| | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Total | 2 | 5 | 26 | 85 | 125 | 35 | 278 |

Discussion

Incidence of Stealing

The results show that 92.5% of the students surveyed reported having stolen something at some time. This finding is similar to those reported by other researchers.

Belson (1975) found that all of his sample of boys aged from thirteen to sixteen years had stolen, 46% of these by age ten years. We can assume then, that the remaining 54% of the sample stole for the first time between the ages of ten and sixteen years, the age under investigation in the current study. Similarly, Jackson (1970) found that 99% of his sample of grade six children had already stolen. Polish children aged twelve to thirteen years interviewed by Malewska and Muszynski (1970) showed a slightly lower incidence of stealing with 63% of their sample having stolen.

The incidence of stealing in the current study appears to reflect the general trend for stealing within this age group. The rate does, however, seem to be considerably higher than the expectation that at least one third of males display extreme delinquent behaviour during adolescence (Moffitt, 1993). This may be because many of the behaviours defined as stealing within the current study do not merit the title of delinquent behaviour, as defined by Moffitt. The percentages of students engaging in norm-violation offences (32.4%) and illegal offences (42.1%) better fit the expected ratio of adolescents displaying delinquent behaviour. These more serious stealing offences seem to be more representative of general delinquent behaviour.

Since Moffitt's (1993) study used an all male sample, it is necessary to look more specifically at the male data in the current study in order to compare more realistically. Moffitt (1993) reports that about one third of his sample displayed delinquent behaviour between the ages of eleven and fifteen. The current study found considerably more than a third of male respondents reported some norm-violation offences (43%) and illegal

offences (52.8%). The differing incidence rates are most likely to result from differences in research procedure. The data used by Moffitt (1993) differed from the current study in that it was collected at age thirteen and age fifteen, as part of a comprehensive longitudinal study. While both Moffitt (1993) and the current study used self-report data, the scale used by Moffitt contained many general delinquency items which were not included in the current study. Some of these items included starting fires, sniffing glue, petrol or other substances, smoking cannabis and buying alcohol. All of the stealing items from Moffitt's (1993) scale were included in the scales used in the current study, except for stealing goods or money from a video machine, public telephone or vending machine, stealing money from milk bottles (not considered to be relevant now that milk deliveries are waning) and stealing alcohol from home or friends' homes. All of the norm-violation and illegal items used in the current study were taken from the scale used by Moffitt (1993).

Serious Offending

For the purposes of this study, serious stealing behaviour was defined as a score of six or more on the scale of illegal offences, where possible scores ranged from zero to twelve. The six offences making up the illegal scale were stealing from a shop, getting into a place and stealing something, stealing a bike or motorbike, stealing a car or truck or van, stealing from a car or truck or van and stealing money. To score six or more on this scale, respondents would need to have reported committing all six of these offences "sometimes" (that is, at least once), or at least one offence "often" and several more "sometimes". Only 2.9% of the students surveyed fit this definition of serious offenders. However, when the figures were examined by gender, 5.6% of male respondents showed serious offending patterns as defined above. This reflects Moffitt's (1993) finding that

approximately 5% of male adolescents can be expected to show stable antisocial behaviour.

The current study found the most commonly reported stealing offences to be keeping something they had found and stealing money. Malewska and Muszynski (1970) also found the theft of money to be common amongst adolescents. They reported that 34% of all thefts committed by their twelve to thirteen year old subjects were thefts of money.

Moderately serious offending, defined as a score of three or more on the illegal offences scale, was reached by 10.1% of the sample. In order to score three or more on this scale, students must have reported committing at least three illegal offences "sometimes" (once or more), or at least two illegal offences, one "often" and one "sometimes". Illegal offences ranged from shoplifting to stealing a vehicle, thus even a score of three on this scale could certainly be considered serious.

Gender Differences

Males reported significantly higher levels of stealing behaviour than females on all three measures of stealing behaviour in the current study. This is consistent with Jackson's (1968, cited in Jackson, 1984) finding that boys steal more frequently than girls. Haines et al (1979, cited in Jackson, 1984), on the other hand, found that girls yielded to stealing with about the same frequency as boys. However their study involved hypothetical temptation to steal situations, rather than self-report of actual stealing behaviour.

Previous research suggests that the types of offences may differ between males and females (Cloward & Piven, 1979; Steffensmeier, 1983). While the two most commonly reported offences in the current study, keeping something found and stealing money, were common to both genders, there were some offences which appeared more likely to

be committed by one gender. For example, 23.5% of females reported having "sometimes" stolen something out of the yard of a house, compared with only 19% of males. Female respondents were also slightly ahead of males in reporting having "sometimes" stolen cigarettes, although males were more likely to have stolen them often. The third most common offence for male respondents was having something they knew was stolen, however, this rated only fifth most common amongst female respondents.

Only one offence sees more females than males reporting they have done it "often", this is stealing milk. However with only one respondent in total reporting this offence, it can hardly be seen as any sort of a trend. The fact that male respondents consistently recorded higher proportions on committing offences "often" than females reinforces the belief that boys are more persistent young offenders (Hagell & Newburn, 1994). Alternatively, the male respondents may be merely more honest in their responses, or may have perceived the difference between "sometimes" and "often" differently.

The differences between male and female respondents in the current study seem to become more pronounced as the offences get more serious and more frequent. While 30.9% of females committed at least one illegal offence compared with 52.8% of males, only 2.9% of females reported three or more illegal offences compared with 16.9% of males, and no females reported six or more illegal offences compared with 5.6% of males. Such a comparison is consistent with the finding that boys are more likely to be caught breaking the law, while girls are more likely to be referred to the courts for status offences (Rhodes & Fischer, 1993). The gender difference on the illegal scale could also be compared with the finding that the values of thefts by males are likely to be higher (Steffensmeier, 1983), since the illegal offences on this scale tend to be those relating to thefts of more valuable items.

School Class Level Differences

As expected, Year 8 students (ages 11-13 years) reported significantly more stealing offences on all three measures of stealing behaviour than Year 7 students (ages 10-12 years). This is consistent with the finding that a sizeable proportion of antisocial behaviour emerges after age eleven, and is present at age thirteen (Moffitt, 1990). Similarly, Caspi et al (1993) consider the onset of puberty to be a factor in delinquency, particularly for females, and this is more likely to occur during Year 8 than Year 7.

There was no significant difference between the level of commitment to school for the two class groups, despite this being seen as an important indicator of delinquency (Hagell & Newburn, 1994; Greenwood, 1992; LeBlanc et al, 1992). This may reflect the theory proposed by Liska and Reed (1985), that teachers and school administrators are less important to adolescents than parents. This is supported by the evidence that Year 7 students were significantly more attached to their parents than Year 8 students in the current study, and also reported significantly less stealing behaviour.

Year 7 students scored significantly higher than Year 8 students on the conventional values measure in the current study. This measure combined students views on the importance of school with their thoughts on the importance of family togetherness in order to determine the value placed on these conventional ideas. Since Year 7 students generally scored higher than Year 8 students on both commitment to school and attachment to parents variables, it is little wonder then, that they also scored more highly on this measure.

Delinquent values also differed significantly between Year 7 and Year 8 students. Year 7 students recorded higher scores on this measure, thus indicating their values are less delinquent than those of their Year 8 peers. Elliott et al (1985) used a similar method to measure subjects' attitudes towards delinquency, and suggest that a high score

on a scale such as this reflects a conventional, pro-social orientation towards behaviour. This may explain, at least in part, the lower rate of reported stealing offences by Year 7 students.

Causal Factors

Attachment to parents and conventional values. In the current study a strong positive relationship ($r=0.6157$) was found between the attachment to parents and belief in conventional values variables. This finding is consistent with Thornberry's (1987) model of delinquent involvement, which predicts such a relationship. Both attachment to parents and belief in conventional values are seen by Thornberry (1987) as links with conformity, as is commitment to school. A strong affective bond with parents is expected to lead adolescents away from delinquent friends and actions and towards conventional actions and beliefs. However, when the bonds to the conventional world are weakened, the adolescent is at risk for becoming involved in deviant activities (Thornberry, 1985).

The family is one of the most important institutions influencing young adolescents (Thornberry, 1985; Liska & Reed, 1985). Therefore it is expected that adolescents who have a strong affective bond with their parents are also likely to hold many of the same values as their parents. On the other hand, those who show little attachment to their parents due to poor parental supervision, lack of discipline, lack of parental involvement or parent absence (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, in Quay, 1987; Greenwood, 1992; Jackson, 1970) are less likely to be aware of or believe in the conventional values which may be held by their parents.

Attachment to parents and commitment to school. The current study found a moderate positive correlation ($r=0.4190$) between attachment to parents and commitment to school, consistent with the relationship shown in Thornberry's (1987)

model of delinquent involvement. As with the previous relationship, both of these variables are links to conformity. When these links are weakened, the adolescent is freed from moral constraints, and is more likely to participate in delinquent activities (Thornberry, 1987). Children who are attached to their parents are more likely to be committed to and succeed in school; and such success is likely to further reinforce the close ties with their parents. On the other hand, early individual differences and behavioural problems experienced at home are likely to be perpetuated by interactions with the social environment, first at home and later at school. Thus negative relationships with parents are likely to lead to negative experiences and feelings towards school (Moffitt, 1993).

Elliott et al (1985) similarly report findings suggesting that a link between attachment to parents and commitment to school is likely. They consider both of these variables to represent bonding to conventional institutions. The current results seem to reflect this theory. Conversely, Moffitt (1990) believes that adverse school experiences and negative relationships with parents are factors associated with a quarter of life-course-persistent delinquents. This may explain the presence of a small number of students reporting low levels of attachment to parents and low commitment to school in the present study.

Liska and Reed (1985) however, consider that parents are a more crucial influence than school in the lives of young adolescents. The current results show some support for this theory, in that more than half of the students reported the highest possible level of attachment to parents, while the majority of scores on the commitment to school variable were spread between the middle and top of the range. This relationship is based on the assumption that the parents hold conventional values and support conventional behaviour in their children. It is possible that some children with high levels of attachment to their

parents will have parents who hold criminal values and beliefs. These children are likely to reflect their parents values and attitudes by scoring lower on conventional values and commitment to school variables. This possibility may explain why the relationship between attachment to parents and commitment to school was not stronger in the current study.

Conventional values and commitment to school. As expected from Thornberry's (1987) model of delinquent involvement, a strong positive relationship was found between the belief in conventional values and commitment to school variables. Conventional values and commitment to school are two of the three bonds to the conventional world included in Thornberry's model, the third being attachment to parents. As such, it is expected that they show a strong relationship towards one another. Similarly, youths who believe in conventional values are more likely to be committed to school, since education is one of the concepts represented by conventional values. At school they are expected to behave in accordance with other conventional values, such as respect and cooperation, therefore success at school is also likely to reinforce these same conventional values.

Another possible explanation for the strong relationship between the conventional values and commitment to school variables in the current study occurs as a result of the measure used for conventional values. The score for conventional values used here combined students views of the importance of family togetherness and the importance of school, thus a strong link with both the attachment to parents and commitment to school variables is to be expected.

Attachment to parents and stealing behaviour. Weak negative correlations were found in the current study between attachment to parents and the three measures of stealing behaviour. There is much evidence in the literature supporting a link between

lack of attachment to parents and delinquent behaviour such as that found here. Factors such as poor parental supervision, lack of family discipline and lack of involvement are reported to be predictors of delinquency (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, in Quay, 1987). Similarly, extremes of parent behaviour, poor or disturbed relationships between parents and children (Jackson, 1984), neglect and physical punishment (Malewska & Muszynski, 1970) have been linked more specifically with stealing.

Krohn et al (1992) also consider the affective bonds between parents and children effective deterrents to the development of delinquency. According to Liska and Reed (1985), parents are the major institutional source of delinquency control. If this were the case, however, a stronger relationship between parental attachment and stealing behaviour might be expected. Warr (1993) believes that the amount of time spent with family, rather than attachment to parents can reduce the peer influence on delinquency. According to this theory, an indirect link between attachment to parents and delinquent behaviour, such as the weak relationship found here, could be expected. This may be due to high levels of attachment to parents inhibiting the formation of delinquent friendships, and thus reducing the possibility of delinquent behaviour.

Fergusson et al (1992) found that exposure to parental discord led to an increased risk of early offending. They emphasise however, that while parental conflict is a significant factor, not all children exposed to it will develop offending behaviour. This may explain why the relationship found in the current study is not stronger, since parental attachment is only one of many factors likely to influence delinquent behaviour.

As one of the more important links to conformity for adolescents, Thornberry (1987) believes that attachment to parents has a capacity for reducing delinquent behaviour. Parents with a strong affective bond with their children are more likely to communicate effectively and exercise appropriate parenting skills, thus leading their

children towards conventional beliefs and actions and away from delinquent values and behaviours.

Commitment to school and association with delinquent peers. A weak negative relationship was found between commitment to school and association with delinquent peers in the current study, consistent with the relationship shown in Thornberry's model of delinquent involvement (1987). Such a relationship is likely because students who are committed to succeeding at school are unlikely to associate with delinquents, and conversely, those who associate with delinquents are unlikely to maintain an active commitment to school and the conventional world that school represents (Thornberry, 1987). The weakness of the relationship is likely to be due largely to the small number of participants who scored above the median on the measure of association with delinquent peers in the current study.

Elliott et al. (1985) imply a similar relationship to that found in the current study. They suggest that low conventional bonding (such as commitment to school) combines with high levels of bonding with delinquent peers in adolescents displaying a high frequency of delinquent behaviour. The proportion of students showing low levels of commitment to school and high levels of bonding with delinquent peers in the current study is approximately the same as that of students reporting serious stealing behaviour, which suggests the link outlined by Elliott et al (1985) may be reflected here.

Belson (1975) found that truancy was related to stealing, suggesting that it may have been because truants had greater opportunities for associating with deviant peers. Since truancy is likely to be an outcome of low commitment to school, the relationship between commitment to school and association with delinquent peers may be explained, at least in part, by this theory.

Moffitt (1993) on the other hand, suggests that adolescence-limited delinquents (that is, those who participate in delinquency only during adolescence) simply lack consistency in their behaviour. Adolescence-limited delinquents are likely to obey the rules at school, and demonstrate reasonable levels of commitment to school, yet still shoplift and use drugs with their friends. This theory may explain why the relationship between commitment to school and association with delinquent peers is not stronger in the current study, since the majority of adolescent delinquents are considered to display such antisocial behaviour only during adolescence (Moffitt, 1993).

Association with delinquent peers and stealing. A moderate positive relationship between association with delinquent peers and stealing was found in the current study, similar to that indicated in Thornberry's model of delinquent involvement (1987). Thornberry (1987) compares such a relationship with more conventional behaviours, suggesting that people often take on the behaviours of their associates, also seeking out those with similar behavioural interests. He proposes that the same is true of deviant behaviours, that those in the company of delinquents tend to take on the same behaviours and that adolescents with deviant behaviour patterns will tend to seek each other out to form delinquent peer groups.

Elliott et al. (1985) similarly, suggest that bonding with delinquent groups is one of the main factors influencing delinquency. From this perspective, a stronger relationship between association with delinquent peers and stealing than was found in the current study might be expected. However, it may be that the combination of delinquent associations, along with low commitment to school and low attachment to parents has the strongest influence on delinquent behaviour.

A number of other researchers have indicated a relationship between association with delinquents and resulting delinquency (Greenwood, 1992; Tittle, 1983; Belson,

1975; Caspi et al, 1993; Moffitt, 1993), thus supporting the current finding. However, the small proportion of students reporting mid to high levels of association with delinquent peers in the current study (6.8%) makes it difficult to draw any useful conclusions.

Knight and West (1975, in Moffitt, 1993) believe that only adolescence-limited delinquents need peer support for crime, while life-course-persistent offenders are more willing to offend alone. The cross-sectional nature of the current sample does not allow the data to be separated in this manner, so it is possible that the inclusion of life-course-persistent offenders may compromise the data relating to adolescence-limited delinquents on this variable.

Association with delinquent peers and attachment to parents. The weak negative correlation between association with delinquent peers and attachment to parents found in the current study is similar to that outlined by Thornberry (1987) in his model of delinquent involvement. He suggests that parents who have a strong affective bond with their children, communicating effectively and exercising appropriate parenting skills, are likely to lead them away from delinquent friends. In the real world, however, very few parents are able to sustain effective communication and appropriate parenting skills day in, day out, particularly through the difficult adolescent years. The measure of attachment to parents in the current study is likely to reflect students' short-term perceptions of their relationship with their parents, which may not be indicative of the overall level of attachment. Those adolescents who associate with delinquent peers are, however, likely to decrease their level of attachment to parents, because such associations are so contradictory to their parents' expectations.

Elliott et al (1985) also indicate that weak conventional bonding, such as to parents, is likely to lead some youths to seek out and become bonded to delinquent peer groups.

Strong bonding to parents can, however, reduce the level of involvement with delinquent peers. Factors likely to affect the level of parental attachment such as poor parental supervision, lack of discipline, parental absence and lack of involvement (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, in Quay, 1987; Greenwood, 1992; Jackson, 1970) would also be likely to provide more opportunities for adolescents to associate with delinquent peers.

The amount of time spent with family, rather than attachment to them, can reduce or even eliminate peer influence according to Warr (1993). However, he concedes that attachment to parents, as measured in the current study can indirectly affect delinquent behaviour by inhibiting the formation of delinquent friendships. The weak relationship between attachment to parents and stealing behaviour found in the current study would seem to bear this out.

Moffitt (1993) believes that adolescence-limited delinquents exhibit inconsistent behaviour across situations. For example, they may be strongly attached to their parents, yet still associate with delinquent friends and participate in delinquent behaviour at times. This may explain why the relationship found in the current study wasn't stronger, since adolescence-limited delinquents are thought to make up the majority of all delinquents within this age group.

Association with delinquent peers and delinquent values. The relationship between association with delinquent peers and delinquent values, despite being negative, is consistent with the model of delinquent involvement proposed by Thornberry (1987). The negative nature of the correlation occurs because the measurement of the delinquent values variable in the current study resulted in delinquent values being represented by a low score on the scale used, rather than a high score. If delinquent values are seen to be the acceptance of delinquent activities as legitimate, and a general willingness to violate the law to achieve other ends is acceptable (Thornberry, 1987), then it seems likely that

holding delinquent values will encourage the association with delinquent peers, since it is normal to seek out and associate with those who hold the same values as yourself. Similarly, associating with delinquents is likely to reinforce delinquent values.

Agnew (1991) also supports a relationship between association with delinquent peers and delinquent values, as he believes that associating with delinquents may lead an adolescent to internalise definitions favourable to delinquency. It may not be just peers who influence delinquent attitudes, however. Jackson (1984) found that parents with lenient attitudes towards stealing or who steal themselves are likely to pass on these values to their children.

Delinquent values and stealing. The current study found delinquent values and stealing to be related, as they are in Thornberry's model of delinquent involvement (1987). Again, the negative nature of the relationship can be explained by the measurement of the delinquent values variable. Thornberry (1987) considers delinquent values and delinquent behaviour to be part of a mutually reinforcing loop. Hence participating in delinquency will increase delinquent values, and adopting delinquent values will increase delinquent behaviour.

Assuming that values are passed on by significant others such as parents, the finding that parent criminality and parent aggressiveness are moderately strong predictors of delinquency (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, in Quay, 1987) is not surprising. The modelling of such criminal activities by parents is likely to send the message to impressionable youngsters that such behaviour is acceptable. The expectation of not being caught (Belson, 1975) and easy and undetected stealing (Renshaw, 1977) have also been found to be related to the continuance of stealing behaviour. Such occurrences are likely to add to the acceptance of delinquent behaviours as appropriate and desirable, thus building stronger delinquent values.

The measure of delinquent values in the current study was an indication of which stealing behaviours were seen by the respondents to constitute stealing. Thus the high scores recorded by most students on this variable reflects that they are generally aware of what stealing is. It is apparent, however, that although students are aware that their behaviour constitutes stealing, and therefore show conventional values relating to this behaviour, other forces take hold from time to time during adolescence which over-ride these values. Moffitt (1993) suggests that adolescents use antisocial behaviour only in situations where it may serve an instrumental function. Such inconsistency of adolescent behaviour across situations is likely to explain why the relationship found here is not stronger.

Limitations

The size and nature of the sample used in the current study make generalisation of these results inadvisable. The sample comprised students from one school in one area of Hawkes Bay, thus is not necessarily representative of adolescents in Hawkes Bay, adolescents in New Zealand nor adolescents in general. Further sampling from a larger population group would be necessary to ascertain the representativeness of the current sample.

The instrument used for the collection of data in the current study was the result of modification of a number of different instruments used by previous researchers. While test-retest reliability for the instrument was adequate, the various scales used may not have been reliable indicators of the variables they were intended to measure. For example, the measure of delinquent values used in the current study was adapted from a scale of general delinquent acts to a more specific one measuring only values related to stealing behaviour. Similarly, the measure of conventional values used here is weakened

by the fact that its indicators are also used in the measure of commitment to school and attachment to parents.

Even given that the instrument used in the current study does accurately measure the given constructs, the relationships found between these constructs are still, at best, weak. They do however give an indication of the direction of the relationship. Further analysis of data using structural equation modelling was not recommended in this case because of the limitations inherent in the sample selection.

The method of data collection used in the current study is another area which could influence the outcome. While all care was taken to keep the administration of the questionnaire uniform, it is likely that some groups received slightly different presentations of the instructions, perhaps due to the answering of students' questions or time constraints. An effort was made to ensure that all students, irrespective of their reading ability, were able to complete the questionnaire independently, by having the administrator read each question aloud.

Self-report data, as used in the current study, could also have introduced some inconsistencies to the results. Although students' desks were separated to avoid them seeing each others' responses, and despite the assurances by the administrator of confidentiality, some students may have felt threatened by the presence of other students, the administrator of the questionnaire or the classroom setting in which it was administered, and therefore not recorded all responses honestly. Alternatively, some students may have put on a front of bravado and chosen all the "bad" answers possible in order to look or feel "cool".

The use of an adolescent cross-section as a sample also limits the value of the results in the current study, if Moffitt (1993) is correct in identifying two distinct types of adolescent delinquents. Only a longitudinal study could distinguish developmental

differences between those who offend only during adolescence and those who offend throughout their lives.

Conclusions

The current study found that 92.5% of the adolescents surveyed have already committed some kind of theft. This compares with incidence rates of 100% (Belson, 1975), 99% (Jackson, 1970) and 63% (Malewska & Muszynski, 1970). The most likely explanation for the variations in these rates is the methodology employed by the researchers. The measures of stealing behaviour were different in each of the studies. The measure of theft in the current study included behaviours ranging from merely keeping something one has found to stealing a vehicle. The method of collecting data differed in each of these studies also. While the current study used a self-report format, Belson (1975) interviewed each of his sample, and Malewska and Muszynski (1970) used a questionnaire and interview format. Although Belson (1975) individually interviewed each of his sample, he was an anonymous stranger to them. In the current study, however, the administrator of the questionnaire was a teacher at the same school as the students, and therefore known to the students and a figure of some authority. This may have inhibited some students from being completely honest in reporting stealing behaviour, as may the school setting in which the questionnaire was carried out. Differences in the culture, location and selection of the samples in these studies may also account for some of the variation in incidence rates of stealing in these studies. Belson's (1975) study took place in London, Malewska and Muszynski (1970) studied Polish adolescents, Jackson's (1970) study looked at Australian youths, while the current study took place in New Zealand.

Such a high incidence rate of theft amongst adolescents is not necessarily of concern to police, since many of the acts included as theft here are not serious enough or of sufficient magnitude to warrant use of police time and resources. However, if they are an indicator of future criminal activity or a sign of the values being adopted by our youth,

then time and effort spent educating and reforming young thieves in these early stages may well save resources in tracking down more experienced burglars later in life.

Serious stealing was defined in the current study as having committed at least six illegal stealing offences; such as shoplifting, breaking and entering, stealing a bike, stealing a vehicle, stealing from a vehicle and stealing money. Such serious stealing was reported by 2.9% of those surveyed, and by 5.6% of males. This is similar to Moffitt's (1993) finding that approximately 5% of adolescent males show stable and consistent antisocial behaviour. The similarity of these figures may be explained partly by the fact that both studies took place in New Zealand, although in different areas, with slightly different cultural mixes. The methodologies employed differed somewhat, in that Moffitt (1993) used a combination of teacher, parent and self-reports, while the current study used only a self-report format. However, the scales used to measure the behaviour were similar, with the illegal offences scale in the current study being taken from Moffitt and Silva's (1988b) instrument for measuring delinquency. The main difference in the scale used here was that only stealing offences were used, while Moffitt and Silva's scale included items of general delinquency in addition to the stealing offences.

The similarity of serious stealing rates in the current study and Moffitt's (1993) stable antisocial behaviour would seem to suggest several useful conclusions. Firstly, it would seem that the self-report format may be sufficient on its own as a measure of antisocial or delinquent behaviour, since the result recorded in the current study, using only self-report, was similar to that found by Moffitt (1993), who used parent, teacher and self-reports. Secondly, the similarity of results would also seem to suggest that stealing may be an indicator of more general antisocial or delinquent behaviour. This could be of use to police in dealing with young offenders, who may be brought in for stealing offences during adolescence. At present, police have little power to do more

than caution such young offenders. However, perhaps more serious consequences at this early stage in what appears likely to become a criminal career may help to halt the progress of the young criminal.

Marked gender differences in rates of stealing were found in the current study, with these differences becoming more distinct as the offences become more serious and frequent. Such gender differences are consistent with other self-report research into stealing behaviour. For example, Jackson (1968, cited in Jackson, 1984) found that boys stole more frequently than girls; Steffensmeier (1983) found that thefts by boys were likely to be of items of greater value; and Hagell and Newburn (1994) found that boys outnumbered girls in their study of persistent young offenders. When stealing was measured by hypothetical "temptation to steal" scenarios, however, Haines, Jackson and Davidson (1979, cited in Jackson, 1984) found that girls yielded to stealing with about the same frequency as boys. Such a result would seem to suggest that girls are either more likely to "cheat" when self-reporting offences by not recording all offences carried out, or that their perceptions of their expected behaviour in certain situations, such as the temptation to steal scenarios, differs from their actual behaviour in such situations in real life. Actual arrest data would seem to suggest that the latter is true, since Rhodes and Fischer (1993) found that of the adolescents taking part in a court diversion programme, boys were more likely to have been referred for breaking the law, while girls were more likely to be referred for truancy, running away, or for social or personal problems. Similarly, Cloward and Piven (1979) and Steffensmeier (1983) note that the type of delinquency displayed by male and female adolescents is likely to differ.

Such differences between male and female offending, particularly at the more serious end of the stealing scale suggest that reform programmes or values education needs to be aimed more specifically at male adolescents. No females in the current study

reported six or more illegal stealing offences, while 5.6% of males admitted to this extent of stealing. Perhaps it is just another aspect of the "macho" culture which pervades society that leads to such major gender differences in this type of behaviour.

Year 8 students reported significantly more stealing than Year 7 students in the current study. This finding is consistent with that of Dodson and Evans (1985), who found that seventh graders (the American equivalent to Year 8) reported substantially more thefts than sixth graders (equivalent to Year 7), in a study spanning grades four to ten in the United States. They found the highest rates of theft occurred amongst grade eight students, which would equate to Year 9 (the first year at high school) in the New Zealand education system. Moffitt (1993) reports United States arrest data show rates of general offending peak at age 17, while his own new Zealand longitudinal data showed that one third of previously non-delinquent boys began to display delinquent behaviour between the ages of 11 and 15 years, having caught up with life-course-persistent peers in the frequency of the delinquency by age 15. Such findings reflect the higher rate of stealing by Year 8 students in the current study and suggest that the rate of stealing is likely to continue to rise as children get older, up until about age 15 to 17 years. Such similarities are interesting to note, given the methodological differences between the studies. Dodson and Evans (1985), for example, although still using a self-report format, had students reporting the occasions that they had been victims of theft, rather than self-reporting their own criminal record as in the current study. Their method of data collection should have eliminated the problem of students not reporting thefts, as they are not reporting any illegal activity on their own part. However, it may not give an accurate picture of the ages of the offenders, since they are not necessarily of the same class level as the victims. Moffitt (1993) used a similar self-report format to that used in

the current study, but included more general delinquency items in addition to the norm-violation and illegal stealing offences included in the scale used here.

The difference between Year 7 and 8 students in rates of stealing could have useful implications for educators and law enforcement agencies. If delinquent behaviour and stealing is beginning at Year 7, then it would seem that this is the opportune time for values education and harsh consequences for thieves of this age who are caught. If young thieves are caught and dealt with before such behaviour has been reinforced or becomes a habit, then the chances of them continuing the stealing habit are likely to be reduced (Belson, 1975). If the rate of stealing is to continue to rise through to age 15 to 17 years, as Moffitt's (1993) data suggests, then this Year 7 and 8 age group may be the best group to target for prevention or at least reduction of later criminal activity. It is likely, however, that a high proportion of these adolescent offenders will only offend during adolescence (Moffitt, 1993). It may therefore be argued that harsh punishment at this age is inappropriate, given the possible temporary nature of the criminal activity. Until such time as more is known about which adolescents are likely to persist in a life of crime and which adolescents will be limited to criminal activity during adolescence, this is certainly a debatable point.

The current study identified relationships between the six variables of Thornberry's (1987) reciprocal model of delinquent involvement at early adolescence which parallel those indicated by Thornberry. However the strength of the relationships identified in the current study were not all of the expected magnitude. Strong links were identified in the current study between attachment to parents and conventional values, and between conventional values and commitment to school. A moderate relationship was found between attachment to parents and commitment to school, and between association with delinquent peers and stealing. Weak relationships were identified between delinquent

values and stealing; attachment to parents and stealing; commitment to school and association with delinquent peers; and association with delinquent peers and delinquent values. While the direction of these relationships is consistent with Thornberry's model, their strength suggests that this model does not explain stealing behaviour adequately.

The differences between the strength of the relationships in the current study and in Thornberry's (1987) model are most likely to be due to methodological differences. The measurement of the variables in the current study was based on Thornberry's definitions of his variables, and the measurement of similar variables by other researchers. While test-retest reliability of the questionnaire used in the current study was satisfactory, the internal validity of the measures for each of Thornberry's variables may not have been adequate. Alternatively, it may be that this model of delinquent involvement at early adolescence does not generalise to involvement in stealing, because different factors may contribute to stealing behaviour than to general delinquency. Whatever the reason for the disparity between the current results and the model of delinquent involvement at early adolescence proposed by Thornberry (1987), it is apparent that the model does not offer a comprehensive explanation of adolescent stealing behaviour.

The current study has identified the following factors which increase an intermediate school student's likelihood of engaging in stealing behaviour:

- being male,
- being in Year 8 at school,
- associating with delinquent peers,
- holding delinquent values and
- having a low level of attachment to parents.

These factors can be related back to the three main theories of delinquency, these being strain, social control and differential association. Being in Year 8 at school could

be considered to be a strain factor, since this is the final year before students start at secondary schools. It is a time when, for many adolescents, puberty is beginning to strike, they are becoming aware of the opposite sex and at the same time, higher standards of academic work and behaviour are expected in preparation for secondary school. Perhaps this strain is greater for boys, as many of them lag behind their female peers in physical and emotional maturity.

The low level of attachment to parents which was identified in the current study as a factor related to stealing behaviour can be attributed to the social control theory of delinquency. According to this theory, delinquency is more likely when the adolescent is not attached to parents, school or any other conventional institution. Associating with delinquent peers and holding delinquent values form part of a loop in the differential association theory of delinquency. According to this theory, associating with delinquent peers promotes delinquency by modelling and reinforcing delinquent behaviours and transmitting delinquent values.

The factors identified in the current study serve to reinforce the need for an integrated theory to explain stealing, and perhaps also delinquent behaviour. It is apparent that a combination of factors from the strain, social control and differential association theories interact to increase the likelihood of stealing behaviour occurring. If further research can more accurately determine what these factors are, and can differentiate between those factors influencing life-course-persistent delinquents and adolescence-limited delinquents, then perhaps the crime rate can be successfully reduced.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to find out what factors may cause adolescents to steal. You will be asked questions about yourself, your friends, your family, what you think is stealing and what you have stolen. None of your answers will be able to be traced to you, as the questionnaire is completely confidential. If you do not wish to complete the questionnaire, just tick the appropriate box below and do not answer any more questions.

- ☐ I am willing to complete the questionnaire.
- ☐ I do not wish to complete the questionnaire.

SECTION A

1. What form are you in? ☐ Form 1
☐ Form 2

2. Are you... ☐ male
☐ female

3. Which culture do you identify most strongly with?

- ☐ New Zealand
☐ Maori
☐ Pacific Islands
☐ Chinese
☐ Other (please state)

4. How old are you? _____ years

5. Which statement best describes your friends?

- ☐ Often in trouble
☐ Sometimes in trouble
☐ Never in trouble

6. Tick the things that your friends like to do.

- ☐ Play sport
☐ Use computers
☐ Go to movies
☐ Play in an orchestra
☐ Hang out on the street
☐ Act in plays
☐ Steal things
☐ Go to the library
☐ Tag
☐ Do things with their families
☐ Ride horses

7. Do you enjoy going to school?

- ☐ Very much
☐ OK
☐ Not at all

8. How important is school to you?

- ☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important at all

9. Do you get on well with your teachers?

- ☐ Very well
☐ OK
☐ Not well at all

SECTION B

1. Which of these people live in your home?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> mother | <input type="checkbox"/> grandmother | <input type="checkbox"/> brother/sister (preschool) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> father | <input type="checkbox"/> grandfather | <input type="checkbox"/> brother/sister (primary school) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> stepmother | <input type="checkbox"/> aunt | <input type="checkbox"/> brother/sister (intermediate) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> stepfather | <input type="checkbox"/> uncle | <input type="checkbox"/> brother/sister (secondary) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> other adult | <input type="checkbox"/> brother/sister (left school) |

2. How many afternoons during the last school week, from the end of school until tea-time, have you spent talking, working or playing with your family?

Write the number. afternoons

3. How many evenings during the last school week, from tea-time until bedtime, have you spent talking, working or playing with members of your family?

Write the number. evenings

4. How much time did you spend last weekend talking, working or playing with members of your family?

Tick the appropriate box:

- ☐ very little
☐ a little
☐ some
☐ quite a bit
☐ a great deal

5. How important is it to you to have a family that does a lot of things together?

- ☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important at all

6. How important is it to you to get along well with your parents?

- ☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important at all

7. How important is it to you to have parents you can talk to about almost everything?

- ☐ Very important
☐ Somewhat important
☐ Not important at all

8. Do your parents know who you are with when you are away from home?

- ☐ Always
☐ Sometimes
☐ Never

9. Do your parents know where you are when you are away from home?

- ☐ Always
☐ Sometimes
☐ Never

10. Would you like to be the kind of person your mother is?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

11. Would you like to be the kind of person your father is?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't know

| |
|-----------|
| SECTION C |
|-----------|

| |
|--|
| Which of these situations do you think are stealing? |
|--|

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dubbing a music album onto a blank tape. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2. Picking up a two dollar coin off the ground. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 3. Copying a videotape onto a blank tape. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 4. Picking a bunch of flowers in the park. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 5. Returning a named pencil to its owner. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 6. Taking a jacket from the lost property box. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 7. Helping yourself to a biscuit while doing the staff morning tea dishes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 8. Copying a friend's work while he/she is not looking. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 9. Copying computer software without copyright permission. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 10. Accepting lunch from a mate who has stolen the money to buy it. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 11. Taking an item from a shop without paying. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 12. Taking a pen from someone who took one from you last week. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 13. Keeping extra change that was given to you by mistake. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 14. Borrowing a friend's bike with permission and returning it later. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 15. Taking one sandwich from someone's lunch. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 16. Forgetting to give back a friend's felt pens that you've borrowed. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 17. Finding a sweatshirt and putting it in the lost property box. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 18. Taking a few coins from your mother's purse without asking. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 19. Distracting the shopkeeper while your friends take lollies in the dairy. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 20. Giving your friends special rates to the school disco when you're selling tickets. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

SECTION D

Show how often you have done each thing.

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. I have kept something I have found. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 2. I have stolen something just for fun. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 3. I have taken something for a dare. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 4. I have stolen something from a shop. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 5. I have pinched something from my family or relations. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 6. I have pinched something when I was in someone else's home. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 7. I have got away without paying the bus fare. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 8. I have taken things belonging to children. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 9. I have got something by threatening others. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 10. I have pinched sweets. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 11. I have stolen cigarettes. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 12. I have stolen something from a changing room or cloakroom. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 13. I have stolen fruit or some other kind of food. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 14. I have got into a place and stolen something. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 15. I have stolen something belonging to a school. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 16. I have stolen something belonging to someone at school. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 17. I have stolen from a park or playground. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 18. I have stolen milk. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 19. I have stolen a letter or a parcel. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 20. I have cheated someone out of money. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 21. I have had something that I knew was stolen. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 22. I have stolen something out of a garden or out of the yard of a house. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 23. I have stolen a bike or a motorbike. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 24. I have stolen something from a bike or a motorbike. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 25. I have stolen a car or a truck or a van. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 26. I have stolen something from a car or a truck or a van. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |
| 27. I have stolen money. | <input type="checkbox"/> Never | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Often |