

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

A STUDY OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG WHO COMMITTED  
CAR THEFT DURING THE YEAR 1958

Being the Report of a Research Project  
Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Social Work

By

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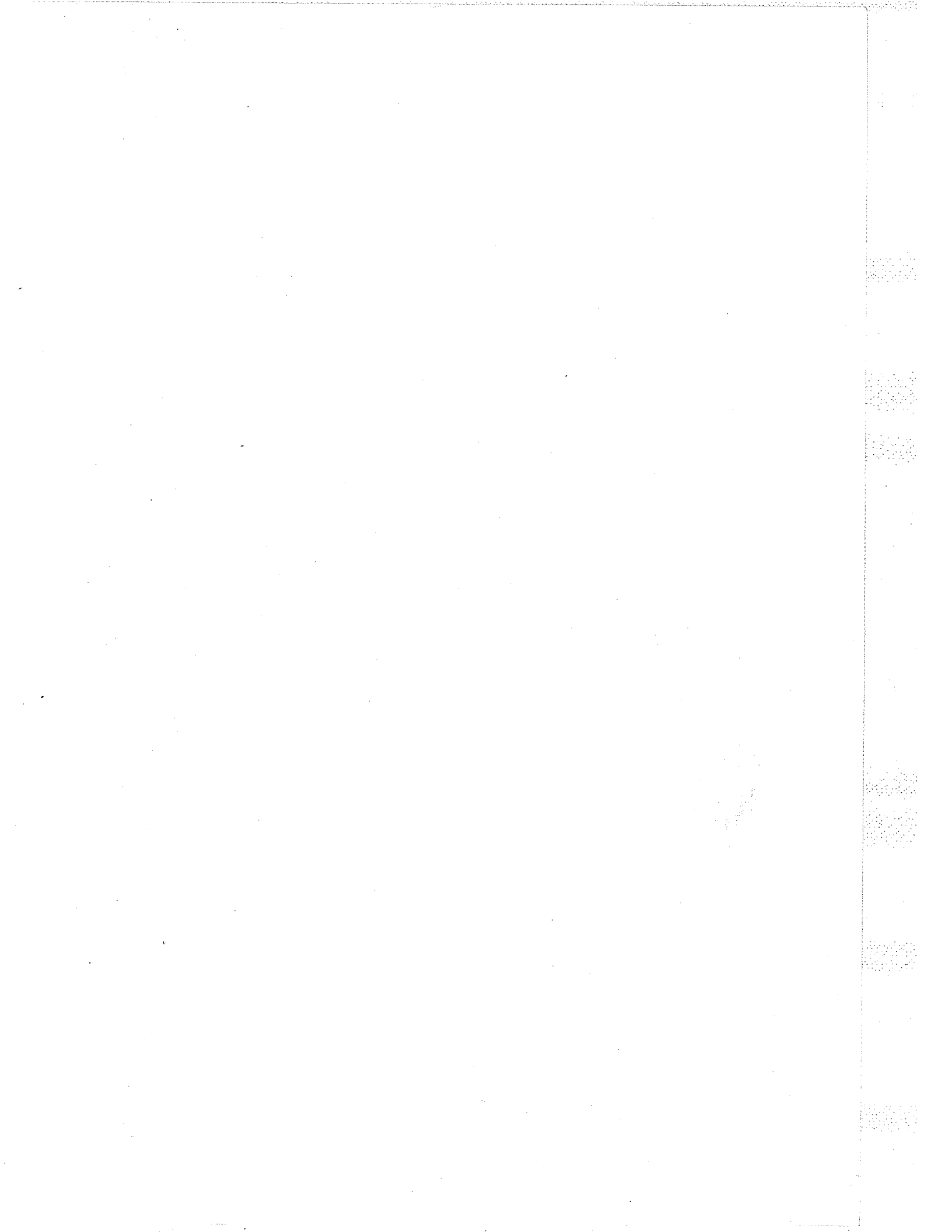
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## PREFACE

This study considers some of the social and environmental factors common to juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who stole cars during the year 1958. The study was done at the suggestion of the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court. The Court had expressed concern about the juvenile car thief and believed that an examination of this aspect of juvenile delinquency might result in a better understanding of the juvenile who steals cars.

This study was undertaken by second year students in the School of Social Work at The University of Manitoba as a group research project in partial completion of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Although the limitations of space prevent our making detailed acknowledgments to all those who assisted us with their suggestions and criticisms, we especially wish to thank Mr. William Zimmerman, Chief Probation Officer at the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court, for his help with and his interest in this project. Also, of course no acknowledgment would be complete without an expression of our deep appreciation to our faculty thesis advisors, Professors M. Roger and B. Hill.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency is a problem of concern to all because of the cost in suffering, money and even life, and it is a problem that has received much attention in the past few years. Hardly a day goes by without an account in the newspapers, on radio or television of a crime by some juvenile. The popular magazines, as well as the more learned journals, report on the incidence of juvenile delinquency, discuss the latest theory as to causation, speculate on treatment. All of this interest points up the waste inherent in juvenile delinquency and the need to do something about this problem.

However, this very plethora of information, often conflicting, ranging in quality from idle fancy to scientific treatise, has created confusion for those who wish to study the problem. One reason for this confusion may be an unclear understanding of the terms juvenile delinquency and juvenile delinquent. Rubin says that juvenile delinquency is "what the law says it<sup>1</sup> is." According to the Juvenile Delinquents' Act, a juvenile delinquent is any boy or girl over the age of seven and under the age of eighteen who is convicted of an offence under the Criminal

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<sup>1</sup>  
Sol Rubin, "The Legal Character of Juvenile Delinquency," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, p.1.

Code, or under a provincial statute, or municipal by-law.<sup>2</sup>

This study is concerned with juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who, in the year 1958, committed a specific criminal offence - car theft. The study was conducted by a group of second year students in the School of Social Work of The University of Manitoba at the suggestion of the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court. The Court, as the agency which must work directly with the juvenile delinquent, had many questions for which it wished answers. Therefore, in 1959 it came to the School of Social Work with its questions.

Because social work is a profession which sees as its goal the enhancement of social functioning,<sup>3</sup> it is naturally interested in the problem of juvenile delinquency and thus this type of study falls within its area of concern. The School, therefore, undertook to try to answer the questions of the Court. This study is concerned with the problem of juveniles who steal cars. As presented by the Court, the question was: What kind of boys go in for car theft and what is the best way to deal with them?

The Court's interest in the boy who steals a car as distinct from the boy who truants, commits ordinary theft and so on, arose from a feeling that this was a special kind of delinquent behavior. The Court is not alone in its concern about this modern phenomenon. There have been many theories presented; indeed some have dismissed it as "joy riding": a seeking for thrills and excitement which seems to generate when groups of quite ordinary

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Canada, Statutes, 1929, Chapter 46.

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Werner W. Boehm, "The Nature of Social Work," Social Work, p.13.



youngsters get together.<sup>4</sup> However, whatever the truth might be, if the Court could determine what kind of boy steals cars, then it might be possible to determine the most suitable treatment.

However, as the question asked by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court was considered, several problems immediately arose. The first was the lack of pertinent literature on car theft by juveniles. This will be dealt with at greater length in Chapter II. It is sufficient now to say that, in spite of the superfluity of literature on juvenile delinquency, very little of value about juvenile car theft was found. This had obvious implications for the plan of study. It meant that there was little on which the study could draw for background information and documentation. Some time after the study had started, a reprint was received of a report done in the 1930's at the Juvenile Court in Toronto.<sup>5</sup> This report had no value as a statistical comparison because of the length of time that had elapsed since its completion, but it was interesting to note that, quite independently, the authors of this Winnipeg study had chosen many of the same factors to study as had the authors of the Toronto study.

The paucity of literature was not the only problem. The Court had asked, in the first part of its question, what kind of boy goes in for car theft. This could include a consideration of

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<sup>4</sup> Dorothy McAskill, "Toward Early Detection of Disturbance and Delinquency in Children," Early Detection of Delinquency and Disturbance, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> G. W. Anderson and K. H. Rogers, "A Group of Auto Theft Cases," Child and Family Welfare, pp.1-6.

psychological, constitutional, hereditary, cultural, social factors and would be beyond the scope of any one study. Also, as so much is still unknown about the human personality and the many forces that can be brought to bear upon it, much of what might be obtained would depend on subjective value judgments and opinions rather than objective facts.

As to the second part of the question which asked what is the best way to deal with the boy who steals cars, it would be impossible to make recommendations for treatment from the few facts that might be ascertained in one area of research. This aspect of the question must be left to a time when much more is known about the juvenile who steals cars.

Therefore, having taken into consideration the lack of literature and the magnitude of the original question, it was decided that the focus would be on the social and environmental factors, for these aspects are of particular concern to social workers. The study began from the hypothesis: THERE ARE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS COMMON TO JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG WHO STEAL CARS.

It should be noted from the hypothesis that the inquiry was expanded at one point beyond that requested by the Court. It was decided that girls should be included in the study as well as boys. Therefore, the term "juvenile" was used, meaning any boy or girl under the age of eighteen.

The hypothesis set certain limitations on the research other than those already mentioned: i.e. the fact that social and

environmental factors only would be considered and that these factors would be examined to determine if they were common to the juveniles who steal cars. The act of stealing a car or car theft means exactly that. Truck theft, bicycle theft or motorcycle theft were not included as it was believed that these might have a very different significance. However, car theft includes all cases where a car was stolen, or driven away and abandoned, or such was attempted, by persons not lawfully entitled to the car.

In addition, only those juveniles were considered who had been judged guilty of car theft by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court in an ordinary court procedure as prescribed by the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1929.<sup>6</sup> It is recognized that this eliminates all who might have stolen a car but against whom charges were never made and that this has social implications of import in any study. However, this information was not available.

Because this study was suggested by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court, the area of research was that part of Greater Winnipeg, consisting of the city of Winnipeg and its surrounding municipalities, served by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court. The year 1958 was chosen because this information, from the latest year for which completed figures could be obtained, would be particularly pertinent and useful to the Court.

Although this study was limited to the social and

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<sup>6</sup>  
Canada, Juvenile Delinquents Act, 1929, Section II (Subsection 1, Paragraph H) and Section III (Subsection 1.)

environmental factors common to juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who stole cars in 1958, all the social and environmental factors could not have been studied. Therefore, nine factors were examined. These were: area of residence, age, sex, position in family, school attendance, educational level, home situation, previous offences and whether they stole cars alone or in groups. This study advances certain theories about these nine factors in relation to the main hypothesis. Some of these theories are based on previous knowledge or information but often they are the commonly accepted opinion about juveniles who steal cars. As there is so little literature in this field, it was believed that it would prove of interest to determine, insofar as it would be possible in a limited study, whether or not the common view seemed to be the valid one.

For instance, the theory has been advanced that car theft is more prevalent among juveniles who live in "above average" districts (with reference to the socio economic level, than among those who live in the slums.<sup>7</sup> In this city a representative, and the largest, better district would be the "River Heights" area, or census tracts thirty-eight to forty-eight inclusive.<sup>8</sup> Did a substantial number of the juveniles who stole cars in 1958 live in

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<sup>7</sup>  
W. W. Wattenberg and J. Balilstrieri, "Automobile Theft: A Favored-Group Delinquency," American Journal of Sociology, p.577.

<sup>8</sup>  
Marjorie Forbes, et al., A Comparison of Certain Selected Social Problems of Families of Juvenile Delinquents in Two Areas of the city of Winnipeg, p.23.

this district or in similar ones? Also, there is a close relationship between juvenile delinquency and broken homes in the minds of many. By broken home is meant the home in which one or both of the natural or legal parents is absent owing to death, divorce, desertion or separation. Was this the case with the group of juveniles being considered in this study?

With respect to the sex of the juvenile, it seemed obvious that most would be male. No reliable figures could be located for juvenile car theft as an offence separate from other crimes; however, as far as age was concerned, the Canada Year Book for 1959 states, in its compilation of statistics covering all types of delinquency, that juveniles of thirteen to fifteen years of age comprised the majority of delinquents for 1957.<sup>9</sup> These percentages are based on figures that include all juvenile delinquents up to their sixteenth birthday only. In Manitoba, one is considered a juvenile by the court up to his eighteenth birthday. Therefore, it was believed that the majority of juveniles who stole cars might be from fourteen to sixteen years at their last birthdays.

This study considered the position in the family, or birth order, an important factor. The oldest child often has more privileges than those who follow as well as being assigned more adult responsibility. The youngest is often given special attention as the "baby" of the family. Were most of the juveniles neither the oldest or the youngest of the live children in the family?

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<sup>9</sup>  
Canada: Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Canada Year Book: 1959, p. 323.

The Canada Year Book states that most of the juvenile delinquents were attending school <sup>10</sup> and that almost one half were <sup>11</sup> two or more years below the normal grade for their ages. If "attending school" is taken as being registered in an elementary or secondary school as a full time student, would most of the car thieves be attending school and would one half be two or more grades behind?

The question of previous offences, in this case meaning any previous contacts at Court, was also considered. Had any offences been recorded by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court against these juveniles before the specific car theft with which this study is concerned? It was believed that a record of previous offences might indicate something more serious than "joy riding".

The very great influence of the peer group as well as the older ideal figure during this adolescent period was taken into account and it was thought that the juvenile might have stolen a car as part of a group of two or more adolescents or adults.

Thus, certain questions were asked and certain theories postulated which were set forth as eight supporting hypotheses. Following are these sub-hypotheses in their final form.

Most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars live within census tracts thirty-eight to forty-eight inclusive.

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Ibid., p. 324.

11

Ibid., p. 323.

Most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars are males, fourteen to sixteen years of age.

Most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars are neither the oldest nor the youngest child in the family.

Most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars are attending school.

Half of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars and who are attending school are two or more grades behind the normal grade for their age.

Most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars come from broken homes.

Most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars have committed previous offences.

Most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg act in groups when stealing cars.

These theories having been formulated in support of the main hypothesis, the next step was to attempt to test them. The method will be described in detail in Chapter III; briefly, it took the following form. Certain information was needed about each juvenile who appeared in the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court in 1958 on car theft charges and was judged guilty; this information included his address, sex, age, position in family, whether he was attending school and, if so, what grade he was in,

whether he came from a broken home, had committed previous offences, and acted alone or in a group when stealing the car. To obtain this information the case records of the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court were examined and a schedule, prepared earlier, was filled in for each juvenile who fitted into these categories.

Certain limitations were inherent in this method. As mentioned earlier, only those juveniles who were formally charged and convicted would be included. Thus, the picture of the juvenile who steals cars was necessarily incomplete. Also, this study was entirely dependent for its information on the case records and any inadequacies or inaccuracies in these records would be reflected in the resulting statistics. Of course, from the start a method had been chosen that would give relatively objective data rather than subjective impressions.

In Chapter IV the analysis will be presented in detail. However, at this point one basic limitation should be mentioned. Owing to the lack of specific information on car theft by juveniles and, in particular, the lack of comparable statistics in this area, the study was confined in large part to an examination of the figures obtained at the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

Finally, in Chapter V certain conclusions will be arrived at, arising out of the analysis of information obtained in relation to the original hypothesis, and certain recommendations for further study will be made.

Chapter I then has been concerned with the origins of the problem, has presented an hypothesis and supporting hypotheses, and



has briefly reviewed the procedure in ascertaining the adequacies of theories about this problem. Chapter II will be devoted to a consideration of the literature relevant to the topic. Ordinarily, owing to the relative lack of material, this would have been dealt with entirely in the first chapter. However, it was felt that a fuller presentation was necessary as the lack of background material has implications for the conclusions and recommendations in this study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In looking for background information regarding car theft the literature referred to in the references available in The University of Manitoba Library was investigated. Although there was a considerable number of articles and books on juvenile delinquency, it was found that there was practically nothing written specifically on car theft by juveniles, and what there was, was of little use to this study. However, one report was found of a study conducted in Detroit in 1949 which stated that, in the age group ten to sixteen that the car thieves tended to come from relatively more favoured neighborhoods in the city, to be in the older age group (sixteen), to have good peer relationships, to be in junior high school, and to have records of previous offences.<sup>12</sup>

Accordingly, because of the lack of literature, various authorities were written to, asking for their assistance. Letters were sent to the General Secretary of the American Correctional Association, the Executive Secretary of the Canadian Corrections Association, and the Librarian of the National Probation and Parole Association. The replies were negative, one going so far as to say

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Wattenberg and Balistrieri, op.cit. p. 578.

that the writer was unable to locate the one useful piece of literature that he knew of on the topic. The Section of Social Defence of the United Nations was contacted in the hope that some useful leads could be obtained. They referred the study to an article which had already been perused and to one entitled "Car Thieves" in the British Journal of Delinquency by T. C. N. Gibbens.<sup>13</sup>

In this study of car thieves in Britain, it was found that these boys tended to come from intact homes, to be probably the later members of large families, and to have committed previous offences. In Britain, the overwhelming majority of juvenile car thieves are sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen. This study went into psychological and emotional factors as well which were not applicable to this study of juvenile car thieves in Greater Winnipeg.

A copy of a study on juvenile car theft which was done in Toronto in 1936 was obtained.<sup>14</sup> This study focused on many of the same things that the Winnipeg study considered to be important. The average age of the delinquents was found to be fourteen plus; seventy percent committed the thefts in the company of others; twenty-one percent came from broken homes and the position in the family having the greatest frequency of car theft was that of the second child. Eighty percent were retarded in school achievement and fifty-one percent had been before the Court on one or more

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<sup>13</sup>

T. C. N. Gibbens, "Car Thieves," British Journal of Delinquency, pp. 257-265.

<sup>14</sup>

Anderson and Rogers, loc.cit.

previous occasions. While the Toronto study looked into similar aspects of juvenile car theft, it was felt that their findings were no longer significant because of the greatly changed world in which we now live.

With the dearth of material available on the subject, the investigators were able to start with a fairly clean slate. Accordingly, as time was of the essence, the study was limited to those social and environmental factors information regarding which was readily available at the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

In Chapter I it was stated that this study was concerned with social and environmental factors common to juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars. The specific factors to be examined, and about which certain theories were formulated, were: area of residence, age, sex, position in family, school attendance, educational level, home situation, previous offences and whether they stole cars alone or in groups.

This data was obtained from the individual case records kept by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court of each juvenile who committed car theft in 1958 and was found guilty of the charge of car theft. The complete records were read, if necessary, including police reports, social histories, probation officers' recording, court proceedings as recorded on the file, and other material such as letters and statements.

The required information for each juvenile was recorded on a schedule prepared for this purpose. An initial test of the schedule was made using a few of the case records pertaining to juveniles who committed car theft in 1958 and were judged guilty. This information was compiled and analyzed and it was found that revisions of the schedule would be necessary. For instance, it had been hoped that it would be possible to find out if both

parents worked as it was believed this might be significant. However, although the files did indicate this, there was no way to determine if both were out of the home at the same time or even the hours of employment. Therefore, the inquiry had to be limited to a question about the physically broken home. An addition was made to the schedule of the classification "institution". The files of the boys in institutions did not contain much of the background material on school, home situation and so on. It was felt it might be necessary to explain this in the analysis. Actually, it was found that when the files were examined more carefully the second time, all the information required could be located. A copy of the final schedule can be found in the Appendix.

To complete the schedules, only those files were read and recorded which dealt with juveniles who stole cars in 1958. Files were discarded in which the juvenile was found to be innocent, or those which did not pertain to car theft specifically: that is, crimes dealing with motorcycle theft, truck theft and bicycle theft. From a total of one hundred and fifteen files examined (one hundred and seven concerning males, eight concerning females), sixty-eight fell within the area of this study. Of the sixty-eight files, only one dealt with a female, and this was not used as it was felt there might be a possibility of identification. Thus, this study is concerned with sixty-seven boys who stole cars in 1958 and were found guilty by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

It was recognized, as already mentioned in Chapter I,

that this method meant that only those who were formally charged and convicted would be included and that many juvenile car thieves may never be officially reported, but this is only supposition and not possible of proof. Also, the method of reporting and the interpretation of data about the sixty-seven boys that were being studied varied from one Court officer to another. This factor had to be taken into account and might be responsible for some degree of error in the analysis of the schedules.

It was found, as the schedules were being filled in, that material recorded by both police and probation officers at the Court was occasionally contradictory. As it was not possible to verify the accuracy of either, preference was given to information taken by the probation officers. It was felt that the juvenile and his parents might feel less threatened by the Court officials and therefore might give data more readily to them.

Even so, the information recorded by the probation officers or other Court authorities might not have been always accurate because they were dependent on the word of the offender, except for data pertaining to name, birthday and facts about the offence itself which had to be documented.

However, although there were basic limitations in method, terms of reference and areas of study were defined as clearly as possible so that the material needed could be recorded and analyzed.

Following are the definitions of terms used in this study and the units of classification set up for the systematic analysis of the material found in the case records.

Definitions

In this study all definitions will apply to juveniles at the time of first court appearance for car theft in the year being examined.

Juvenile: - is any boy or girl under the age of eighteen.

Greater Winnipeg: - includes the city of Winnipeg and its surrounding municipalities served by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

Car theft: - includes all cases where a car was stolen, or driven away and abandoned, or such a taking was attempted by persons not lawfully entitled thereto.

Juveniles who steal cars: - are those who have been adjudged guilty of car theft by the Judge of the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court in an ordinary court procedure as prescribed by the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1929.<sup>15</sup>

Census tracts: - are those delineated in the 1956 Dominion Bureau of Vital Statistics Census.<sup>16</sup>

Years of age: - means years of age at last birthday.

Oldest child: - means first live birth in the family.

Youngest child: - means last live birth in the family.

Attending school: - means registered in an elementary or secondary school as a full time student.

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Canada, Juvenile Delinquents Act, 1929, loc.cit.

16

Canada, Dominion Bureau of Vital Statistics, Tenth Census of Canada: 1956, Population and Housing Characteristics by Census Tracts, Winnipeg.



Grade: - is the standard classification of educational level as determined by the Department of Education of Manitoba.

Normal grade for their age: - one grade per year starting at the age of six is considered to be normal progress but one grade above or below this will be included as normal achievement.

Broken home: - is a home in which one or both of the natural and/or legal parents is absent owing to death, divorce, desertion or legal separation.

Offence: - in this context will include any act by the juvenile which has brought him to the attention of the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

Previous offence: - will include any offence recorded by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court prior to the specific car theft under examination.

Group: - consists of two or more individuals either adult or juvenile.

#### Units of Classification

Area of residence:-

- Census tracts thirty-eight to forty-eight inclusive: marked off by the Assiniboine River to the North; Osborne Street to the East; the Red River, Fort Garry and city of Winnipeg boundary to the South; Tuxedo and city of Winnipeg boundary to the West.
- Census tracts eighteen to thirty-seven, fifty-nine to sixty; seventy-six to eighty-one; inclusive: marked off by the Assiniboine River to the South; Red River to the East; Canadian Pacific Railway to the North;

the Greater Winnipeg limits to the West.

- Census tracts one to thirteen, seventy-two to seventy-eight inclusive: marked off by Canadian Pacific Railway tracts to the South; the Red River to the East; and the Greater Winnipeg limits to the North and West.

- Other areas of Greater Winnipeg:

All those areas not included in the above, also excluding city of St. Boniface and the municipality of St. Vital (census tracts forty-nine to fifty-three and eighty-two to eighty-six) which are not served by the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

Age:-

- Under fourteen years of age.
- Fourteen to sixteen years of age.
- Seventeen years of age up to eighteenth birthday.

Position in family:-

- Oldest child.
- Youngest child.
- Only child.
- Other.

School attendance:-

- Attending school.
- Not attending school.

Educational level:-

- Two or more grades below the normal grade for age.

- Normal grade for age.
- Ahead of normal grade for age.

Home situation:-

- Broken home.
- Unbroken home.

Previous offences:-

- Previous offences: number and age at first offence.
- No previous offences.

Method:-

- Acts alone.
- Acts in groups.

Owing to the lack of specific information on juvenile car theft, and, in particular, the lack of comparable statistics in this area, the analysis was limited in large part to the figures collected at the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

The total number of juveniles who appeared at the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court on car theft charges in 1958 and who were judged guilty was found. The specific statistics that were obtained for each category of the units of classification were in almost all cases compared against this total. The information obtained was discussed and tables and graphs were used where applicable. The method of analysis is detailed below.

Area of residence:-

The percentage of the total number of juveniles who stole cars and lived within the following census tracts was determined. These census tracts were: (1) Thirty-eight to forty-eight;

(2) Eighteen to thirty-seven, fifty-nine to sixty, seventy-six to eighty-one; (3) One to thirteen, seventy-two to seventy-eight; (4) Other areas of Greater Winnipeg excluding the city of St. Boniface and the municipality of St. Vital (forty-nine to fifty-three and eighty-two to eighty-six.) A table was then prepared showing the number of juvenile car thieves in each of the four areas.

Age:-

A table was compiled giving the number of juveniles who stole cars by age. A graph of this same material was also drawn; in the discussion of this material the percentage that were from fourteen to sixteen years of age was noted.

Position in family:-

Percentages were determined of the oldest, youngest, only and other children and put in the form of a table.

School attendance:-

A table was compiled showing the percentage of those attending school and the percentage not attending school.

Months of the year:-

The time of the offence was listed on the schedule so that only those juveniles who stole cars during 1958 would be included in the analysis. When these schedules were checked it was noted that there seemed to be a concentration of car thefts during certain months of the year. This information was thought to be significant and was shown in the form of a graph.

Educational level:-

A table was compiled of those who were attending school and who were two or more grades behind the normal grade, in the normal grade, and those ahead of the normal grade. A second table was used to show the educational level compared with age distribution.

Home situation:-

Originally it had been planned to do this in two steps. The first was carried out; this was to determine the percentage in broken homes and in unbroken homes by means of a table. The schedule had also included a question on the specific reason or reasons for the absence of one or both parents: i.e. divorce, desertion, death, or legal separation. However, it was found that so few juveniles came from broken homes it was not believed necessary to include this information.

Previous offences:-

The percentages were determined of those who had committed previous offences and those who had not. Tables were used to show the age of the juvenile at the time of his first offence, and the number of previous offences.

Method:-

Percentages were determined of the total number who committed car theft alone and of the total number who committed it as part of a group. This information was given in the form of a table.

The methods of analysis having been described, the following chapter will set forth the actual analysis of the material obtained from the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS

The analysis is a result of an examination of the material obtained from the schedules filled out for each juvenile in Greater Winnipeg who committed car theft in 1958 and was judged guilty. In all, sixty-seven boys were found guilty of stealing cars. One girl was also found guilty but this case was discarded because of the possibility of identification.

In Table 1 the area of residence of the sixty-seven boys is shown by census tracts to indicate the distribution of the juveniles throughout Greater Winnipeg.

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG  
WHO STOLE CARS IN 1958, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE

Areas Defined by Census Tract	No. of Juveniles Who Stole Cars	Percentage
38-48 inclusive	7	10.44
18-37, 59-60, & 76-81 inclusive	32	47.77
1-13, 72-75 inclusive	12	17.91
Other Areas of Greater Winnipeg <sup>a)</sup>	16	23.88
Total	67	100.00

<sup>a</sup> Excluding City of St. Boniface and St. Vital Municipality.

The figures shown in Table 1 fail to substantiate the sub-hypothesis which stated that most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars live within census tracts thirty-eight to forty-eight inclusive. Instead, the largest percentage of boys who stole cars in 1958 lived within the area of census tracts eighteen to thirty-seven, fifty-nine to sixty and seventy-six to eighty-one inclusive. These census tracts represent the area between the Assiniboine River to the South, the Red River to the East, the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks to the North, and the Greater Winnipeg limits to the West. This area is a combination of commercial establishments, industries and residences.

The incidence of juvenile car theft in these two areas could be considered also. There are 63,148 people living within the area of census tracts thirty-eight to forty-eight. Within the area of census tracts eighteen to thirty-seven, fifty-nine to sixty and seventy-six to eighty-one, there are 139,645 people. The incidence of juvenile car theft in the former area is approximately one in 9,000, while the incidence of juvenile car theft in the latter area is approximately one in 4,000.

In Illustration 1 and Table 2 the ages of the sixty-seven boys are shown at the time of the specific car thefts with which this study is concerned. The concentration of age groupings can be shown most clearly by means of a graph.

ILLUSTRATION 1

GRAPH OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG WHO STOLE CARS IN 1958, BY AGE

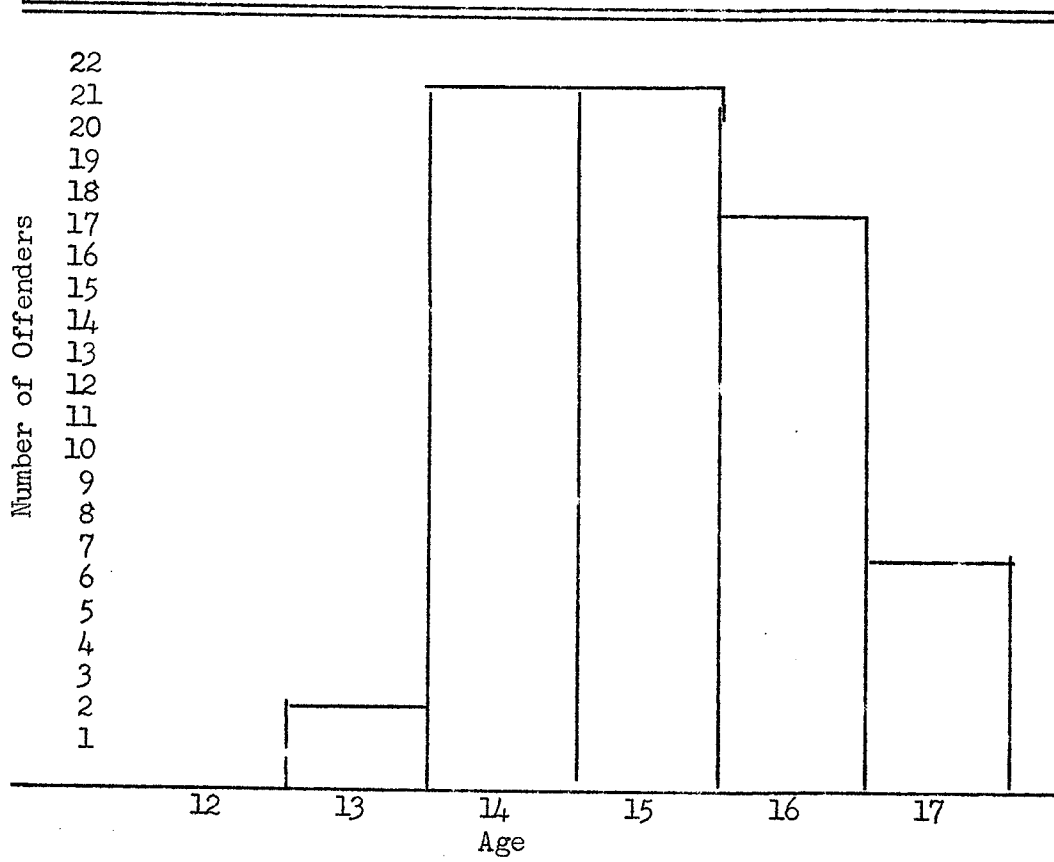


TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG WHO STOLE CARS IN 1958, BY AGE

Age	No. of Offenders	Percentage
13	2	2.98
14	21	31.35
15	21	31.35
16	17	25.37
17	6	8.95
Total	67	100.00



The figures compiled in this table indicate that the group from fourteen to sixteen years of age was responsible for most of the car thefts under study. This group comprises fifty-nine of the sixty-seven cases and constitutes 88.07 percent of the total group.

Birth order or the position in the family of the sixty-seven boys was also considered to be an important factor and this is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3  
DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG WHO  
STOLE CARS IN 1958, ACCORDING TO THEIR  
POSITION IN THE FAMILY

	Number of Juveniles	Percentage
Oldest	18	26.86
Youngest	20	29.86
Only	7	10.44
Other	22	32.84
Total	67	100.00

The findings indicate that neither the youngest child nor the oldest was more involved in car theft and thus the sub-hypothesis has been substantiated. Instead it was the other (in between) child who was most involved in car theft. However, it should be noted that the percentages for all positions in the family except "only" are relatively similar. Also, "other" may include children ranking from second to any number in the family.

Another factor that must be taken into account in a study of social and environmental factors common to these boys who stole cars in 1958 is that of school attendance. Did they attend school? Table 4 is concerned with this factor.

TABLE 4  
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF JUVENILES IN GREATER  
WINNIPEG WHO STOLE CARS IN 1958

	Number of Juveniles	Percentage
Attending	51	76.12
Not Attending	15	22.39
Not Known	1	1.49
Total	67	100.00

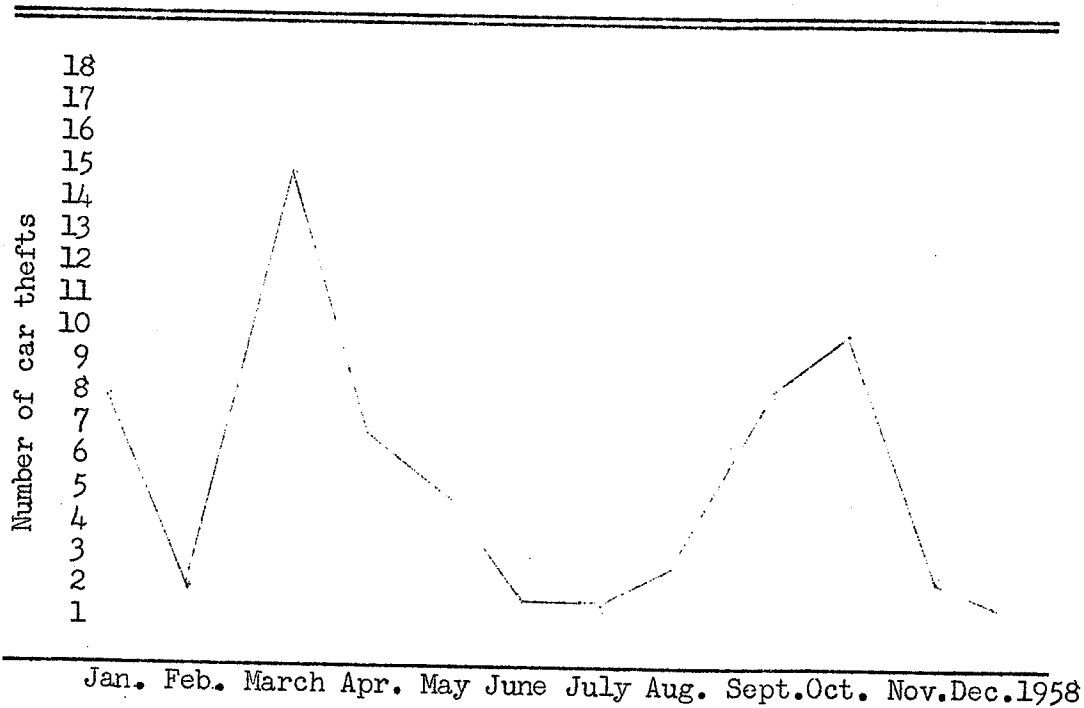
The findings indicate that the majority of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who stole cars in 1958 did attend school. Later in the study it will be found that the majority of those who attended school also maintained an adequate educational level.

However, during the analysis of figures from the schedules it was noted that the car thefts seemed to cluster around certain seasons of the year. This is illustrated in the following graph. This might suggest that, although most of the car thieves attended school and maintained an adequate educational level, there might be a possible correlation between car theft and learning pressures in school. Of course, there may be other explanations for the concentration of car thefts in certain months but it is interesting

to note that the boys were attending school and not on holidays when the majority of thefts took place. Illustration 2 relates the time of the year to the car thefts.

ILLUSTRATION 2

DISTRIBUTION OF JUVENILE CAR THEFTS IN GREATER WINNIPEG BY MONTHS OF THE YEAR 1958



Thus it can be seen that the highest rate of car thefts by juveniles occurred during the months of March when there were fifteen cases of car theft, October - ten cases, January and September - eight cases each.

It was mentioned earlier that the majority of the boys who attended school maintain an adequate education level. This can be seen in Table 5.

TABLE 5

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG  
WHO STOLE CARS IN 1958 AND ATTENDED SCHOOL

Educational Level	Number of Juveniles	Percentage
Above Normal	2	3.92
Normal	42	82.36
Below Normal	7	13.72
Total	51	100.00

It can be seen from the preceding table that the vast majority of the boys who were attending school and who committed car theft in 1958 were of normal educational level in school.

Another comparison can be made about the boys attending school, and this is in relation to their ages. This is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG  
WHO STOLE CARS IN 1958, AND WERE ATTENDING  
SCHOOL, ACCORDING TO THEIR AGE DISTRIBUTION

Grade	A G E					Total
	13	14	15	16	17	
VI	1	1	-	-	-	2
VII	1	4	1	1	-	7
VIII	-	10	4	2	-	16
IX	-	2	6	3	1	12
X	-	2	5	4	-	11
XI	-	-	-	1	-	1
Ungraded	-	1	1	-	-	2
Total	2	20	17	11	1	51
Percent	3.92	39.21	33.33	21.58	1.96	100.00

Taken individually, the fourteen year old in Grade Eight was the one most involved in car theft. He was followed closely by the fifteen year old in Grades Eight, Nine and Ten.

Taken as a whole, most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who stole cars in 1958 were from fourteen to sixteen years of age and in Grades Eight, Nine and Ten.

Information about the home situation of the boys, insofar as to whether or not they came from physically broken homes, was also obtained from the records of the Juvenile Court. Table 7 is a compilation of these figures.

TABLE 7  
HOME SITUATION OF JUVENILES IN GREATER  
WINNIPEG WHO STOLE CARS IN 1958

Home Situation	Number of Juveniles	Percentage
Broken Home	13	19.41
Not Broken Home	53	79.10
Not Known	1	1.49
Total	67	100.00

The findings fail to support the sub-hypothesis which stated that most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars come from broken homes. Most of the boys (seventy-nine percent) who stole cars in 1958 came from homes where both parents were present. This would seem to indicate that it is not necessarily the physical breakup of a family which might

have adverse effects upon the children but there might be other causes such as the emotional instability of the parents.

Of the four boys living in an institution, two came from broken homes and two from homes where the natural parents were living together.

This study was concerned with previous offences recorded at the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court as another factor that might be of importance. It was learned that, of the sixty-seven boys who stole cars in 1958, forty-two or 62.68 percent had committed previous offences. For twenty-five boys, 37.31 percent, car theft was their first recorded offence.

In connection with previous offences committed by the juveniles, information was also obtained as to the age of the boy at the time of the first recorded offence and the number of offences committed before the specific car theft under study. These are shown in Tables Eight and Nine respectively.

TABLE 8

AGE AT THE TIME OF FIRST OFFENCE OF JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG WHO COMMITTED CAR THEFT IN 1958

Age at First Offence	No. of First Offences Prior to Car Theft	No. Where Car Theft Was First Offence	Total
9	2	-	2
10	4	-	4
11	4	-	4
12	8	-	8
13	8	-	8
14	9	11	20
15	5	7	12
16	2	5	7
17	-	2	2
Total	42	25	67

This table indicates that the fourteen year old was not only more vulnerable with regard to car theft but that this was also the age at which the greatest number of recidivists could be found.

TABLE 9

NUMBER OF OFFENCES COMMITTED BY JUVENILES  
PRIOR TO THEIR CAR THEFT OF 1958

Number of Offences	Number of Juveniles
1	13
2	11
3	7
4	5
5	-
6	4
7	-
8	-
9	1
10	1
Total	42

Considering the fact that twenty-five juveniles committed the car theft under study as their first offence and that twenty-four boys had committed one or two offences prior to the car theft, there would seem to be an indication that the offence of car theft is not necessarily the result of a series of progressive delinquent acts.

Finally, the question was examined as to whether the boys stole cars when alone or as part of a group of peers or adults. The results are shown in Table 10.

TABLE 10  
DISTRIBUTION OF CAR THEFTS COMMITTED BY JUVENILES  
IN GREATER WINNIPEG IN 1958: ALONE OR IN GROUP

	Number of Juveniles	Percentage
Group	51	76.12
Alone	14	20.90
Not Known	2	2.98
Total	67	100.00

As can be seen from above, the large majority of boys who stole cars in 1958 acted as part of a group.

Chapter IV has presented an analysis of the material obtained from the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court about the sixty-seven boys who committed car theft in 1958 and were judged guilty. Chapter V will be concerned with some of the broader implications of the material collected, especially in relation to the original hypothesis, will draw certain conclusions and make certain recommendations.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the data from Chapter IV will be evaluated with reference to the original hypothesis and the sub-hypotheses.

Regarding area of residence, the Detroit Study indicated that juveniles who steal cars live in "more favored areas of the city;"<sup>18</sup> therefore it was thought that most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars might live in the census tracts thirty-eight to forty-eight inclusive, which is the River Heights area and a representative "more favored area." It was found, however, that the majority of these juveniles lived in the area of census tracts eighteen to thirty-seven inclusive, fifty-nine to sixty, and seventy-six to eighty-one. These areas are a combination of commercial establishments, industry and residences and therefore could not be classified as "more favored areas of the city."

The population figures in Table 1 cannot be considered as conclusive due to the fact that the census figures are those of 1956 whereas the juvenile car thefts under consideration were recorded for the year 1958. Figures relating to juveniles who

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<sup>18</sup>

Wattenberg and Balistrieri, loc.cit.

steal cars can also be misleading in relation to the area of residence because of the fact that not all car thefts are handled by legal authorities. This could be especially true in areas inhabited by people of higher economic standards where people seem to be able to handle these incidents without the use of legal authority.

It was thought that most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars would be males, aged fourteen to sixteen years. It was found that 88.07 percent of the total number of juvenile car thieves in Greater Winnipeg were in this age group while 62.7 percent were fourteen and fifteen years of age, which would seem to raise a question about what it is that we are actually confronted with: car theft (in the adult sense) or illegal driving. In other words, if the legal driving age were lowered to fourteen years from sixteen, would there be as many car thefts by juveniles? It may be noted also that juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars would appear to be younger than those in Detroit or in Britain.

Although the universe is composed entirely of boys, it was originally intended to include girls who stole cars. One girl was found guilty of car theft during the year 1958, but the case was discarded because of the possibility of identification. This one case would represent approximately 1.47 percent of sixty-eight cases and would add no significance to the study as such.

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Ibid. and  
Gibbens, op.cit. p. 261.

Regarding position in the family, it was thought that the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars would be neither the oldest nor the youngest child in the family. The largest group was found to be "other" children. However, as stated in Chapter IV, "other" children include a large number ranging from the second to any number in a family, and therefore the significance of this figure is diluted.

It was thought that the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars would be attending school but that half would be two or more grades behind the normal grade for their age. However, the findings show that while 76.12 percent are attending school, 82.35 percent of these are functioning at the normal level. This corroborates the findings of the Detroit study, that is, that the majority of juvenile car thieves are in junior high school.<sup>20</sup> Therefore it may be assumed that the majority are of normal intelligence and that academic difficulties do not play a dominant role in delinquency with these boys.

It was interesting to note that the greatest number of car thefts were committed in March and October, with fifteen and ten respectively. These are school months, therefore one wonders whether car theft is committed out of restlessness with the coming of spring and winter, boredom due to inadequate school curriculum or lack of recreational facilities.

As 79.1 percent of car thieves came from homes which are not physically broken one might be tempted to take this at face

value, that is, that a physically unbroken home is also emotionally stable. This, however, is not necessarily so, but this study was not able to assess the emotional climate of the home because information was not available on this aspect. The study done in Britain by Gibbens showed that the British boys tended to come from intact<sup>21</sup> and affectionate homes.

It will be remembered that the fourteen-year old in Grade Eight accounted for the highest incidence of car theft. It was further found that this age group was more prone to recidivism. Almost two-thirds of the cases studied had committed previous offences which leads one to wonder whether car theft is only "joy riding"<sup>22</sup> as some have said, or whether it is another sign of hostility towards authority. What are these children expressing in this type of behavior? Although this study would seem to indicate that car theft among juveniles may be more than "joy riding", Tables 8 and 9 show that car theft is not necessarily part of a progressive pattern of delinquency as twenty-four of the forty-two recidivists had committed only one or two offences prior to the car theft under examination. Both the Detroit and British studies found that most of the juveniles who steal cars had committed previous offences.<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the way these juveniles operate, it was

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Gibbens, op.cit. p. 259.

22

McAskill, loc.cit.

23

Wattenberg and Balistrieri, loc.cit. and  
Gibbens, op.cit. p. 260.

thought that most of them would steal cars in groups rather than alone. It was found that 76.12 percent of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who stole cars in 1958 acted in a group. This raises a number of questions with regard to the significance of the group, such as: would these juveniles act in this way individually? Does the group give security or is the juvenile seeking status within the group?

In organizing the study certain questions were set out regarding juvenile car theft. The findings show that most of these children do not come from census tracts thirty-eight to forty-eight inclusive; most of the boys in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars are fourteen to sixteen years of age, are attending school, but are in the normal grade for their age; that the other (in between) children are the ones most involved; most of the juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars do not come from broken homes, have committed previous offences and act in groups when stealing cars.

From this it is possible to substantiate the hypothesis which was: "There are certain social and environmental factors which are common to juveniles in Greater Winnipeg who steal cars."

It must be taken into consideration that this study was concerned with a relatively small number of cases known to the Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court during only one year and that it was limited to only a few of the social and environmental factors. There is very little literature on the subject of juvenile car theft which raises the question: is it really important as a part of juvenile delinquency? On the other hand, it was noted

that very little is written about other specific types of juvenile delinquency but rather that the literature concerns itself with "delinquency" - which is an all-encompassing term.

The Winnipeg Juvenile and Family Court asked the question "What kind of boys go in for car theft and what is the best way to deal with them?" This study was concerned with only the first part of the question and to a very limited degree. However, the data collected would seem to indicate a fairly positive picture of the social and environmental aspects of the problem. This raises the question as to what else is operating with these boys. Further studies should be conducted to obtain data regarding the emotional and psychological aspects of juveniles who steal cars, from which broader and more meaningful conclusions might be drawn. The juvenile would then be seen in relation to the nature of the offence he commits, and it would appear to follow from this that an effective treatment could be devised for the various types of delinquency. This study agrees with Rubin, who has stated that what is needed in this whole problem of juvenile delinquency is: "one, facts, and two, explanations of the relationships among facts."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>

Sol Rubin, Crime and Juvenile Delinquency, p. 203.

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APPENDIX

File No.

JUVENILES IN GREATER WINNIPEG WHO STOLE CARS

Between January 1st, 1958 and December 31st, 1958

Surname

Given Name (s)

1. NAME :
2. ADDRESS: No.....Street.....
3. DATE OF OFFENCE OF CAR THEFT:
4. DATE OF FIRST COURT APPEARANCE FOR CAR THEFT:
5. AGE (In years at time of first court appearance for car theft):
6. SEX: Male.....Female.....
7. DOES JUVENILE ATTEND SCHOOL: Yes.....No.....  
(a) If in school, which grade.....
8. ANY PREVIOUS OFFENCES RECORDED AGAINST JUVENILE: Yes....No....  
(a) If yes, how many.....  
(b) Age of juvenile at time first recorded offence.....
9. CAR THEFT: Committed alone.....Committed in group.....
10. JUVENILE'S POSITION IN FAMILY:  
(a) Oldest (c) Only  
(b) Youngest (d) Other
11. WITH WHOM DID JUVENILE LIVE AT TIME OF FIRST COURT APPEARANCE FOR CAR THEFT:  
(a) Natural Mother..... (b) Natural Father.....  
(c) Step Mother..... (d) Step Father.....  
(e) In Institution..... (f) Other(s) (Specify).....

Note: If natural parent(s) are dead, divorced or separated mark Dd, Dv, or S respectively.

Recorder's Initials.....