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Vehicle Theft as Leisure Activity: A Study of Young Offenders and their Lifestyle
Centered On Pin Money Economics

by

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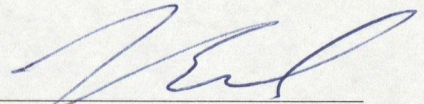
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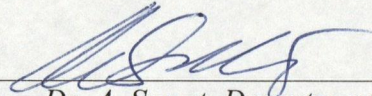
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Vehicle Theft as Leisure Activity: A Study of Young Offenders and their Lifestyle Centered On Pin Money Economics" submitted by Kendy L. Wilkening in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

The present study explored what it is that intrinsically motivates young offenders to commit motor vehicle theft. In turn, it set out to explore what the leisure basis of auto theft is. Moreover, this thesis concentrated on auto theft that is done for economic purposes. It examined the consequences auto theft has for lifestyle, including acquiring a certain level of profit of some kind.

The data collected for this study consisted of qualitative-exploratory interviews with fifteen young offenders on probation or in youth custody for motor vehicle theft charges. The sub-sample that was used in this study consisted of seven of these fifteen young offenders.

The findings of this study suggest that auto theft is a casual leisure activity. However, when it is done for economic purposes (i.e., pin money, illegal drugs) then it gets transformed into a serious leisure pursuit that develops into a lifestyle centered on pin money.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to mom and dad for all the support, encouragement, love, and prayers that they have provided for me over the years.

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CHAPTER ONE:
REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE ON MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

Twelve. That was the average number of vehicles swiped every day from city streets last year. While all the numbers aren't in for this year, cops know car thefts are rising.

(Mike D'Amour, *The Calgary Sun*, August, 2003)

Introduction

The intent of this research, which is part of a national project¹, is to examine what it is that intrinsically motivates young offenders to commit auto theft when that theft is sometimes driven by economic motives. Auto theft makes up 12.8 % of reported property crime committed in Canada (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2001). To provide an idea of the frequency of this criminal offence, The Calgary Sun newspaper in 2003 reported statistics on vehicle thefts in Canada. Below in Table 1.1 are the statistics that were reported:

Table 1.1: Vehicle Thefts in Canada

Total Vehicle Thefts in 2001	Thefts in Major Cities		Unrecovered Stolen Vehicles by provinces as of May 2003	
170,213	Montreal	27,250	British Columbia	13,963
	Vancouver	23,882	Alberta	11,602
	Toronto	18,078	Saskatchewan	2,418
	Winnipeg	10,828	Manitoba	3,205
	Edmonton	7,208	Ontario	56,748
	Calgary	5,623	Quebec	102,488
	Ottawa	4,125	New Brunswick	1,971
	Quebec City	2,008	Nova Scotia	2,264
			P.E.I.	85
			Newfoundland	241
			Yukon	130
			Northwest Territories	52

Source: Holes rampant in registry: Car thefts in Canada. (2003). *The Calgary Sun*, Friday, June 20, 20 NEWS.

¹ This study is part of Project 6116 of the National Committee to reduce auto theft. The title of this national project is: National Study of Young Offender Involvement in Motor Vehicle Theft.

Furthermore, auto theft costs Canadians almost a billion dollars each year, it causes a substantial cost in lives and injuries, and it is indicated to be an entry-level crime that may lead young offenders to pursue more serious crime (Linden, 2003). This research problem is important to answer because the literature on motor vehicle theft has been very limited despite the facts on this criminal offence.

This chapter will provide an overview of the relevant literature on motor vehicle theft, as well as provide a brief discussion on two other crime theories that are not used in this thesis but that are possible alternative explanations, to that of the leisure perspective, on the issue of auto theft. In addition, the research problem that guided this thesis will be stated along with further explanation of it.

Review of Relevant Literature

The common findings found within the literature on auto theft and joyriding suggest that the offenders of these crimes are predominantly male and adolescent in age, majority being between the ages of 15 and 19 (Chapman, 1995; Copes, 2003; Tremblay, Clermont & Cusson, 1994; and Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Furthermore, the social background of those who commit these crimes is that they have: an educational attainment that is low, a high unemployment rate, and a high truancy rate (Chapman, 1995). Besides these general findings on the characteristics of auto theft offenders, there have been specific studies conducted on motor vehicle crime.

For instance, Copes' (2003) study on "Streetlife and the Rewards of Auto Theft", enabled him to examine the "offenders' perceptions of the rewards of auto theft within the sociocultural context of streetlife" (p. 309). Copes (2003) was able to gain insight, through

the use of semi-structured interviews, into how auto thieves choose to take part in motor vehicle theft. He interviewed 45 offenders, who were either on parole or probation for at least one auto theft charge, in a metropolitan area in the state of Tennessee.

In his study, Copes (2003) argued that previous research suggests that a central facet of streetlife is to live a life full of partying (Copes, 2003). Moreover, streetlife not only “encourages the hedonistic pursuit of sensory stimulation” (Copes, 2003, p. 315); it also promotes acting irresponsibly and not being future orientated (Copes, 2003). In fact, because of this, Copes (2003) findings demonstrated that auto theft offenders have various motives for choosing to participate in motor vehicle crime. One motivation is that auto theft provides them an opportunity to make money by stealing vehicles and selling them to either “chop shops”, or stripping the vehicles themselves and selling the parts (Copes, 2003).

A second motivation is to look good to others and to be seen by others (Copes, 2003). If they are seen driving a nice vehicle by others, it will enable them “to garner the respect of others in the community” (Copes, 2003, p. 318). They can further the respect they receive from others by spending their money that they have earned from selling the stolen vehicles on nice clothes and jewellery (Copes, 2003). Looking good is important to these offenders because they believe that “those in ‘the game’ must visually play the role” (Copes, 2003, p. 318).

A third motivation is that auto theft provides a means of transportation (Copes, 2003). Often it is the case that an offender has to get to a party that is far from home or go home from a party that is not close to home: Offenders steal vehicles in order to get to where they want to go (Copes, 2003).

A fourth motivation is that of “living for the moment” (Copes, 2003, p. 321). Copes (2003) findings demonstrated that an impulsive attitude is respectable in the community of streetlife. Offenders in such a community are encouraged to participate in thrilling and risky adventures, auto theft being one of these adventures among the list of others (Copes, 2003). By driving recklessly and dangerously, by being involved in a police pursuit, and essentially putting their personal freedom and physical safety at risk, motor vehicle theft provides its’ offenders an opportunity to “dance with danger” (Copes, 2003, p. 322) and to do things that others are not impulsive enough to do. In turn, Copes (2003) findings suggest that the thrill of partaking in this crime is rooted within the notion of “being successful, or ‘getting away with it’” (p. 323).

A fifth motivation is that of “getting even” (Copes, 2003, p. 324). Within streetlife, personal property is often stolen “as a form of social control” (Copes, 2003, p. 324). Personal property, may therefore, be stolen from victims because of some wrong that they had caused an offender at one point in time (Copes, 2003). Offenders may seek out retribution of some kind, such as stealing the vehicle, from those who had caused them harm (Copes, 2003).

The sixth motivation is that of “staying low” (Copes, 2003, p. 326). In instances in which offenders have committed other crimes, they may steal a vehicle for the sole purpose of getting away from the crime scene or simply to hide their identity by driving around (Copes, 2003).

The six motivations presented in Copes (2003) study provide a valuable contribution to the literature on motor vehicle theft by demonstrating that “[t]he

motivations to engage in auto theft are a product of the hedonistic culture of the street” (Copes, 2003, p. 327); however, his findings do have limitations. One is that his study was conducted only in the state of Tennessee; therefore, it might not be generalizable to other geographical regions. Another limitation is that all of the six motivations are extrinsic motivational factors. Thus, his study fails to provide insight into the intrinsic motivation(s) that explain why a young offender commits auto theft.

Another study on motor vehicle theft is Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson’s (1994) quantitative analysis on car theft. Unlike that of Copes (2003) study, Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson (1994) did not emphasize the hedonistic value that offenders of motor vehicle crime attach to these criminal acts; instead they studied the changing patterns of motor vehicle theft in the province of Quebec². The change in pattern was high rates of unrecovered stolen vehicles versus high rates of recovered stolen vehicles (Tremblay et al., 1994). High rates of unrecovered stolen vehicles, is a result of an increase in vehicles being stolen by professional car thieves³ for the purpose of fencing operations (Tremblay et al., 1994). In contrast, high rates of recovered stolen vehicles, is a result of an increase in vehicles being stolen by joyriders for the purpose of “thrill-seeking...as well as for short-term transportation” (Tremblay et al., 1994, p. 4). On the basis of this, Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson (1994) argued that the factors that motivate joyriders are different than the factors that motivate professional car thieves. For this reason, they incorporated

² Because Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson’s (1994) study was conducted only in Quebec, there study may not be generalizable.

³ It should be noted that Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson (1994) in their study defined professional car thieves as: “Thieves who, on a regular basis, are involved in steal-to-order jobs” (p. 8).

numerous “motivational and target vulnerability variables” (Tremblay et al., 1994, p. 2) throughout their analysis.

Their findings suggest that the factors that influence the changing patterns of unrecovered stolen vehicles are: “market regulations (e.g. control by insurance companies of overcharging practices in the repair industry), exogenous strain factors (decreasing business profits, hungry consumers), and governmental regulations” (Tremblay et al., 1994, p. 14). In contrast, their findings demonstrate that the combined effect of “potentially motivated offenders and the pool of vulnerable targets” (Tremblay et al., 1994, p. 7) are the main factors that influence the changing patterns of joyriding offences from year to year. In turn, the factors that are highly influential on the rates of recovered stolen vehicles are: the numbers of adolescents in a population who have no access to a family vehicle, the proportion of males between the ages of 15-19 in a population, and the arrest risks for joyriding offences (Tremblay et al., 1994).

Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson’s (1994) findings on joyriding offences are similar to the argument that the routine activities perspective makes about crime. The routine activities perspective argues that there are three prerequisites for a crime to occur, which are: a suitable target, a motivated offender, and a lack of effective guardianship (Deutschmann, 1998). Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson (1994), however, do not discuss within their study that a lack of effective guardianship is a factor that influences the changing patterns of recovered stolen vehicles; therefore, the findings in their study and the argument presented by the routine activities perspective are different in that respect.

Nevertheless, Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson (1994) findings do suggest that there must be a suitable target and a motivated offender for joyriding to occur.

Similarly, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) in *General Theory of Crime*, suggest that in order for auto theft to occur there must be a suitable target: “[T]here must be an automobile that is accessible, drivable, and attractive” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 35). Furthermore, there must be “an offender who is both capable of driving and insufficiently restrained” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 35): a motivated offender. Moreover, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that the low self-control, which according to them is a characteristic common in all criminals, is a result of an “absence of nurturance, discipline, or training” (p. 95). Thus, they are suggesting that a lack of effective guardianship is a factor that is influential on whether or not an individual will commit a crime, being it auto theft or any other type of offence.

Despite the contribution that the findings on motivation and motivational factors from Tremblay, Clermont, and Cusson’s (1994) study provide for the literature on motor vehicle crime, the valuable insight that Gottfredson & Hirschi’s (1990) general theory of crime provides for crime theory, and the insight that is derived from the routine activities perspective, each of these sources fail to provide an explanation into the intrinsic motivation of the ‘motivated offender’, or in other words, the reason why the perpetrator steals the motor vehicle.

Another study that was undertaken to study motor vehicle crime was done by Chapman (1995). He examined Turas, a program whose purpose is to reduce automotive crime, which was developed in West Belfast, Ireland. Turas has taken into account the

social, institutional, and personal obstacles that are the causal factors of the high prevalence rates of joyriding within West Belfast (Chapman, 1995).

The “combination of sectarian discrimination over many years and the marginalization of the Northern Ireland economy throughout successive recession” (Chapman, 1995, p. 131), are the social obstacles that Chapman (1995) argues help explain the problem of joyriding within West Belfast. These factors have resulted in: high unemployment rates, a vast amount of poverty, public services that are inadequate, and violent conflict between the republican movement and the state (Chapman, 1995). In turn, the communities’ reaction to crime and the individuals who commit the crime have been worsened by the widespread poverty and violence within Belfast (Chapman, 1995). The community has come to increasingly reject and stigmatize offenders, thereby reinforcing “the processes through which offenders commit crime” (Chapman, 1995, p. 132). As a result, the offenders have become further dependent on criminal efforts because their access to legitimate resources is restricted (Chapman, 1995).

The institutional obstacles that affect the high rate of joyriding in West Belfast are that the criminal justice system and the Probation services are viewed by the community as “bureaucratic, elitist and more concerned with” the institution’s status “in the system than with justice” (Chapman, 1995, p. 132). The institutions further stigmatize and “reinforce the low self-esteem, the alienation and the fatalism which caused the offending in the first place” (Chapman, 1995, p. 133). In turn, the institutions’ reactions towards crime have produced a subculture of joyriding that encourages this criminal offence (Chapman, 1995). “What represents a social problem to the community is to the joyrider an individual solution to the personal problems of living in that community” (Chapman, 1995, p. 133).

One of the personal obstacles that affect the high rate of joyriding offences in Belfast is that joyriding is predominately a young male offence because this sub-group matures more slowly than do females (Chapman, 1995). Chapman (1995) suggests that it is more difficult for males to mature in a community that is filled with unemployment and adult males who value competition and aggression (Chapman, 1995). Consequentially, these young males “become stuck in a role in which valuable items of private property designed for adult use are treated as ‘toys’ to be played with until they are broken or boredom sets in” (Chapman, 1995, p. 133).

A second personal obstacle is that joyriding is not an addiction as it is often described by its offenders, but rather joyriding is “an activity on which young people can become highly dependent” (Chapman, 1995, p. 133). It is an activity that “provides excitement, status, identity, a sense of achievement and power, escape, attention and companionship, money and sex” (Chapman, 1995, p. 133). Furthermore, it is one of only a few activities in which an adolescent can experience “immediate gratification” (Chapman, 1995, p. 133) in a community with the social problems like that which predominate within West Belfast (Chapman, 1995).

The difficulties that exist in West Belfast due to these obstacles are further problematized, because each obstacles’ solutions to the problems they experience end up interfering with each other’s solutions (Chapman, 1995). As a result, Turas was developed to “get closer to the reality of joyriding and to intervene actively in the tension between” (Chapman, 1995, p. 134) the three obstacles. The goal of Turas is for the young offenders to:

Develop a different image of themselves, increasing their sense of personal

responsibility and respect for themselves and others and learning that there are alternatives to crime. Essentially the program is about growing up, a task that society makes increasingly difficult, particularly for young men. (Chapman, 1995, p. 137)

Chapman (1995) provides valuable insight into the type of program that would be beneficial in the process of helping young offenders in the process of exiting out of the criminal lifestyle and particularly that of the auto theft and joyriding subculture. It should be recognized that his study is limited in scope because it is only an analysis of West Belfast, Ireland; therefore, it may not be generalizable to other geographical regions. The findings and explanations provided in Chapman's (1995) study, are like the other studies previously mentioned with respect to the fact that his analysis centers on extrinsic factors that may influence the juveniles' decision to commit auto theft. He does not discuss what the intrinsic motivation is that motivates young offenders to commit motor vehicle crime.

Another analysis of motor vehicle crime was conducted by Katz (1988), in which he coined the term "sneaky thrills" (p. 52). He used the concept of "sneaky thrills" (p. 52), to define any sort of non-violent property crime offences, such as auto theft and joyriding. A commonality recognized by Katz (1988) in all sneaky thrill crimes, was that these crimes "frequently thrill their practitioners" (p. 53). On the basis of this, he argued that there are three prerequisites to create a sneaky thrill (Katz, 1988).

The first, is that offenders must have "the experience of being seduced to deviance" (Katz, 1988, p. 53). Essentially, this stage is when offenders see an object that would be easy to steal and the "seductive powers of [the] objects sway" (Katz, 1988, p. 73) them.

Thus, offenders must already have theft on their mind in order to successfully fulfill the first prerequisite required for sneaky thrills.

The second is that offenders must pull their emotions together in such a way that they will appear to others as being normal: so that others will not see that the offender wants to commit theft of some kind (Katz, 1988).

The third, is accomplished after the theft has been committed (Katz, 1988). It is when the offender after having successfully completed the theft applauds the meaning and implication that the theft has had, but “in a euphoric thrill” (Katz, 1988, p. 53) like manner: The “euphoric thrill” (Katz, 1988, p. 53), is the reason for doing the crime.

In any event, Katz’s (1988) method of carrying out a sneaky thrill, such as auto theft and joyriding, is limited to its implications that the reason someone commits these crimes is because of the euphoric thrill. Moreover, it neglects to recognize the reason behind the thrill as to why an offender steals vehicles and/or joyrides.

The literature on motor vehicle theft is very limited, as it is clear in this literature review; therefore, the findings and insight that come from these few studies are valuable at the least. The studies discussed in this chapter have studied auto theft and/or joyriding either by: looking at the sociocultural context of streetlife and the offenders’ perceptions of auto theft within that context by using a qualitative approach, or by examining the changing patterns of auto theft through the use of quantitative analysis, or by utilizing a theoretical approach to the study of crime in general and then applying the theory to auto theft specifically, or by examining the external factors that have been influential in the progression of joyriding and a community program that has been developed to deal with the

problematic issue of this crime within one specific community. Notably, the shortcomings of the studies on motor vehicle crime is that they all fail to provide a systematic explanation of the intrinsic motivation as to why a young offender commits auto theft; consequently, the question still remains as to: what is the intrinsic motivation that motivates young offenders to commit auto theft for a certain level of economic (i.e., pin money and illegal drugs) usage?

This thesis through the use of qualitative exploratory research and the theoretical leisure perspective, tackles the problem of what it is that causes young offenders to commit auto theft for economic usage. It is economical in the sense that the offenders do not steal vehicles as a job, but rather they commit auto theft because they reap from it certain benefits such as pin money, illegal drugs, and/or material goods that ordinarily they cannot afford. More specifically, however, this thesis will examine what is the intrinsic motivation that motivates young offenders to commit this offence? In turn, this thesis will build on Katz's (1988) concept of sneaky thrills by providing a reason behind the thrill as to why young offenders steal a vehicle for economic purposes.

Theoretical Tradition

Crime theories, such as techniques of neutralization and subculture of youth delinquency are other theories that helps explain why young offenders commit motor vehicle theft. These two theories will be briefly discussed in this section for the purpose of providing some background knowledge on crime theories that are possible alternative explanations for why young offenders in auto theft do what they do. However, these theories are not used in this thesis because of its special interest in and concentration on the

use of the leisure perspective to explain the intrinsic motivation to why young offenders steal vehicles, and more specifically why some of these offenders steal vehicles for economic purposes of some kind.

Neutralization theory, or in other words techniques of neutralization, focuses on “vocabularies of motive” (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 300). It is recognized that most delinquents take part in conventional activities such as family life, school, and religious activities/events, with nondelinquents (Deutschmann, 1998); therefore, “most delinquents are not deviant all the time” (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 300; Sykes & Matza. 1957). Thus, delinquents change between deviance and conventionality (Deutschmann, 1998). According to Sykes and Matza (1957), delinquents are able to escape conventionality to partake in deviant activities by learning how to use “five neutralization techniques to justify or excuse their participation in the subterranean norms of the delinquent subculture” (Deutschmann, 1998). The five neutralization techniques are the following:

1. *Denial of responsibility*. “I didn’t mean to do it.” “The alcohol went to my head.” “I was sleepwalking.”
2. *Denial of injury*. “We were just having fun.” “I just borrowed it.” “The insurance company will pay.”
3. *Denial of or blaming the victim*. “She had it coming.” “He was just a phony.” “They shouldn’t have been there.”
4. *Condemnation of the condemners*. “The authorities are hypocrites.” “Successful people cheat; they just don’t get caught.”

5. *Appeal to higher loyalties*. "I was protecting my family." "My friends needed me." "The gang comes first." (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 300; Sykes & Matza, 1957)

It is suggested that techniques of neutralization when applied to white-collar, middle-class offenders is most effective as opposed to if it were applied to most juvenile delinquents (Deutschmann, 1998). This, however, is in reference to when these techniques occur before the deviant act rather than when they are used after the act (Deutschmann, 1998). Importantly, it has been found in a study by Hindelang (1970) that delinquents may use these techniques as explanations for why they took part in deviant activity when they are discussing it with authorities, meaning that it is after the fact, rather than when they are discussing it or dealing with it with each other (Deutschmann, 1998).

On a different note, the theory of subculture holds that of youth subculture and delinquency, emphasize that subcultures possess values and norms that deviate from those of the wider society (Deutschmann, 1998). It is important to understand that subcultures "co-exist with but differ from the mainstream" (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 283) culture. The values and norms of subcultures that deviate from ever more popular culture are the following:

1. *Argot*. The subculture is frequently characterized by the use an insider language.
...
2. *Vocabularies of motive*. The subculture may include justifications and excuses for behaviour that serve to neutralize the demands of the dominant culture....
3. Subcultures are often marked by *distinctive clothing and body language*....

4. Subcultures may be characterized by *beliefs and norms* that diverge from the mainstream....
5. Subcultures are developed through repeated contacts and maintained in *mutually supporting networks*. ... (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 284)

More specifically, youth subcultures share three common characteristics with one another (Deutschmann, 1998). These characteristics are the following:

1. they are based on *leisure* rather than on work or family;
 2. they are organized around the *peer group* rather than around individual friends, family, or ethnic groups; and
 3. they are focused more on *style* than on political or social ideology
- (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 286; Frith, 1984)

According to Brake (1985), the youth cultures are divided into four groups. The first group is that of the respectable youth who “may dress according to youth fashions, but may avoid involvement in divergent lifestyles” (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 287). The second group is the delinquent youth who are usually considered to be mainly working class youth; however, middle class youth also comprise some of the members of this group (Deutschmann, 1998). In this group, “adolescent males are involved in theft, violence, or vandalism, while females tend to be involved in prostitution or runaway behaviour” (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 287). The third group is cultural rebels who are “members of largely middle-class group that emulates the older ‘bohemian’ tradition of living on the edge of the artistic community, using soft drugs, and embracing nonmaterialistic values” (Deutschmann, 1998, p. 287). The fourth group is the politically militant youth who hold a

various amounts of political viewpoints all along the political spectrum (Deutschmann, 1998).

What is missing from both of these crime theories presented in this section is a discussion of the leisure component on youth crime and auto theft, in particular, the motivational side of this. Consequently, this thesis concentrates on the use of the leisure perspective to understand the motivational side of why these young offenders commit motor vehicle theft.

Research Problem

In order to provide an explanation of what it is that intrinsically motivates young offenders to commit auto theft, this thesis will examine the research problem: what is the leisure basis of auto theft? Before carrying on, it needs to be clear as to what the terms intrinsic and extrinsic motivation mean. An individual is intrinsically motivated when he/she partakes in leisure activities and settings that provide self-realization, self-expression, self-development, and the development of competence (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, pp. 107 – 110). Furthermore, motivation is intrinsic when the rewards for participating in the activity are “seen as coming from engaging in the activity itself” (Neulinger, 1974, p. 17; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, p. 127). Whereas, extrinsic motivation is “when the activity is engaged in primarily because it leads to rewards external to the activity itself, such as money, grades, recognition, and awards” (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997, p. 127; Neulinger, 1974).

In addition, the data presented in this thesis demonstrate that auto theft, for some offenders, evolves into an economic lifestyle of sorts, not in the sense that stealing

automobiles is a job for the offender; rather, motor vehicle theft becomes a way for some young offenders to buy some of the things they want in life. Thus, more specifically, this thesis will examine the question: what consequences does auto theft have for lifestyle, including acquiring a certain level of profit⁴ of some kind? Essentially, it will provide insight into how the leisure side of auto theft gets transformed into an economic lifestyle. In light of this, it is clear that a special theoretical perspective is needed to provide a sufficient answer for this research problem.

⁴ The profit that may be gained by stealing automobiles is in reference to: money, drugs, and/or material goods.

CHAPTER TWO:
SOCIOLOGY OF LEISURE

My reasons for car theft have changed over time. At first it was for the thrill and then it became a chance to earn some money.

(Male interviewee, age 15, 2003)

Introduction

In the previous chapter the relevant literature on motor vehicle theft was discussed along with a brief overview of crime theories that are possible alternative explanations on the issue of auto theft. That chapter ended with a statement of what the research problem is for this thesis as well as a discussion further explaining the research problem. In turn, this chapter will discuss in length the leisure perspective which will cover such topics as: casual leisure, the concept of flow, serious leisure, the issue of risk, boredom, and lifestyle. This discussion will then be supplemented by a brief overview of how the leisure perspective is relevant for auto theft that is done for pin money economics.

Auto theft that evolves into an economic lifestyle is a casual leisure activity that gets transformed into a serious leisure pursuit. This serious leisure pursuit then develops into a lifestyle centered on economics: Economic, in the sense that a young offender will steal the vehicle and use it as an instrumental tool, as a means to an end. Through this chapter, it will be clear how this process of a young offender stealing a vehicle for the purpose of profit, is actually a leisure activity that gets transformed into an economic lifestyle of a sort.

Casual Leisure

Casual leisure is an “immediately, intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity” (Stebbins, 1997a: 18) that requires a small amount or no training at all

to enjoy it. Once a leisure activity requires a high degree of skill, experience, or knowledge, it is no longer considered to be a form of casual leisure (Stebbins, 1997a); rather, it becomes a form of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1997a), which will be discussed later on in this chapter. Stebbins (1997a) suggests that there are six types of casual leisure, each of which can occur separately, or in a combination of two or three that are combined into one activity (Stebbins, 1997a).

Play is one type of casual leisure that refers to any type of casual leisure activity that contains the following three elements:

1. play generally refers to the activity of children or to a 'childlike' lightness of behavior in adults;
2. play is expressive and intrinsic in motivations;
3. play involves a nonserious suspension of consequences, a temporary creation of its own world of meaning which often is a shadow of the 'real world'. (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 19)

Relaxation is a second type of casual leisure that is defined as any casual leisure activity that enables a participant to experience an escape from any tension, whether it be mental or physical (Stebbins, 1997a). A few examples of this type of casual leisure activity are: strolling, sitting, and having a nap (Stebbins, 1997a).

A third type is passive entertainment, it refers to a casual leisure activity that provides for its participants' amusement. Specifically, activities that are considered to be passive entertainment are: reading a book, listening to music, and watching television (Stebbins, 1997a). Essentially, in order to be amused by the entertainment, participants must only "arrange for its delivery" (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 19). To illustrate, a person must

put a DVD into the machine, or open a book, or turn on the television, in order to find amusement in the activity (Stebbins, 1997a). “People simply take in what they perceive, seeing it as something to be enjoyed for its own sake quite apart from any desire or obligation to study it in some way” (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 19).

A fourth type is active entertainment, it requires that the participants must perform the act themselves in order to be provided any sense of amusement (Stebbins, 1997a). The activities must, however, only require a small amount of experience, skill, or knowledge to perform (Stebbins, 1997a). Examples of active entertainment are: board games, riddles, word searches, and puzzles (Stebbins, 1997a).

A fifth type is sociable conversation, which is as an activity that is self-explanatory (Stebbins, 1997a). It provides for its participants a sense of “joy, relief, and vivacity” (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 20); however, the amusement and satisfaction that an individual experiences from it, is dependent upon the participation of others within the verbal exchange (Stebbins, 1997a).

A sixth type is sensory stimulation that is a form of leisure activity that arouses its participants through any of the following: displays of beauty, creature pleasures, thrills of movement, satisfying curiosity, and thrills of deviant activity (Stebbins, 1997a). Displays of beauty can be fulfilled through such things as: art, fireworks, waterfalls, mountains, and clouds (Stebbins, 1997a). Creature pleasures can be enjoyed through eating, drinking, any of the five senses, and drugs that produce pleasant moods and hallucinations (Stebbins, 1997a). Satisfying curiosity can be accomplished through various casual leisure activities such as: bird watching, window-shopping, and people watching (Stebbins, 1997a). Thrills

of movement activities, provide for its participants, “breath-taking experiences” (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 20), which can be experienced through various activities such as: joyriding, bungee jumping, roller coasters, and parachuting (Stebbins, 1997a).

Lastly, thrills of deviant activities are “immoral pursuits” (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 20), in which others can not fathom doing themselves. A few examples of this type of casual leisure activity are: cross-dressing, homosexuality, watching pornography or strippers, and heavy drinking (not alcoholism) (Stebbins, 1997a). The majority of deviant activity is considered to be tolerable deviance because it only slightly threatens the moral norms that are held within a society (Stebbins, 1997a). However, there are also some forms of deviant casual leisure that people find intolerable because they are highly detrimental to the moral code of a society and as a result, these forms of deviant activity demand police control (Stebbins, 1997a). For instance, vandalism, theft, and streaking are three examples, among a list of others, of such intolerable deviant activity (Stebbins, 1997a).

In addition to the six types of casual leisure, there are five benefits that an individual can reap by pursuing a casual leisure activity. One, is the unintended “creativity and discovery” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 206) that can result from participating in an activity. New discoveries are considered to be unintended and accidental, because the purpose of participating in casual leisure is not to find a solution to a problem (Stebbins, 2003b); thus, casual leisure is often closely associated with “serendipity¹” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 206).

The second benefit of casual leisure is that of “edutainment” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 206). It is experienced when an activity provides for those who participate in it both

¹ Serendipity is “the quintessential form of informal experimentation, accidental discovery, and spontaneous invention” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 206). Essentially, serendipity is often an underlying concept of creativity and discovery (Stebbins, 2003b).

education and entertainment at the same time (Stebbins, 2003b). For example, reading popular books, listening to popular music, and watching television can provide edutainment for those who partake of these leisure pursuits (Stebbins, 2003b).

The third benefit is that casual leisure provides for those who participate in it “regeneration, or re-creation” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 207). The fourth benefit is that by participating in casual leisure an individual can develop and uphold interpersonal relationships (Stebbins, 2003b). Finally, the fifth benefit is that those who pursue casual leisure can experience “well-being” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 207). Importantly, well-being is enhanced when the individual acquires an “optimal leisure lifestyle” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 207): It is “the deeply satisfying pursuit during free time of one or more substantial, absorbing forms of serious leisure, complemented by a judicious amount of casual leisure” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 207).

Another benefit of casual leisure, but one not included in the list of five benefits, is that each of the six types of casual leisure are hedonic (Stebbins, 1997a); that is, each of the six types of casual leisure produces pure pleasure for their participants (Stebbins, 1997a). Thus, the rewards gained by partaking of casual leisure are often described as enjoyable and pleasurable, as opposed to those that are gained through serious leisure, which are “fulfillment and rewardingness” (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 21).

Flow

The down side of the hedonic character of casual leisure, is that it fails to provide for its participants the experience of flow (Stebbins, 2003b). Flow is “a form of optimal experience” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 207), which a person may experience while participating

in either work or leisure. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has identified eight components of flow, they are:

1. sense of competence in executing the activity;
2. requirement of concentration;
3. clarity of goals of the activity;
4. immediate feedback from the activity;
5. sense of deep, focused involvement in the activity;
6. sense of control in completing the activity;
7. loss of self-consciousness during the activity;
8. sense of time is truncated during the activity. (p. 49-67)

Each of these components, excluding the first and sixth, are self-explanatory (Stebbins, 2003b). Thus, in reference to the first component, if an activity is too difficult or too easy the person engaging in the activity will not experience flow (Stebbins, 2003b). Flow to be experienced, the activity must be reasonably challenging for the participant (Stebbins, 2003b). Importantly, casual leisure lacks the amount of challenge in an activity that is required for a participant to feel competent (Stebbins, 1997a). This is because those who pursue the activity need only have a minimal amount of skill and knowledge to enjoy it (Stebbins, 1997a); therefore, casual leisure fails to provide for those who partake of it, an opportunity to express this first component of flow (Stebbins, 1997a).

With regards to the sixth component, flow is prevented from reaching its highest potential, when the “uncontrollable external forces” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 208) negatively influence the participants’ perceived control over the execution of the activity (Stebbins, 2003b). This occurs in various casual leisure activities such as; sociable conversations,

roller coasters, and games of chance (Stebbins, 1997a).

On the basis of this, it is evident that flow cannot be experienced to its' fullest extent in casual leisure activities. It should be noted, however, that it can be fully experienced in serious leisure activities (Stebbins, 1997a).

Serious Leisure

Serious leisure is defined as “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3). As indicated, in the definition there are three types of serious leisure activities, they are: career volunteering, amateurism, and hobbyist activities (Stebbins, 1992). Career volunteering is “uncoerced help offered either formally or informally with no or, at most, token pay and done for the benefit of both other people and the volunteer” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 202; and Stebbins, 2004).

In comparison, amateurs are linked with the professionals in four areas of endeavors: art, science, entertainment, and sport (Stebbins, 2003b). Rather than providing a descriptive definition of amateurs or professionals, researchers in this area have instead noted that these two counterparts are joined with one another along with the public; thus, the public, amateurs, and professionals share a three-way relationship with one another (Stebbins, 2003b).

Unlike amateurs, hobbyists lack the professional counterpart that the amateurs are united with (Stebbins, 2003b). Hobbyists consist of five groups: makers and tinkers, collectors, enthusiasts of the liberal arts, players of sports and games, and activity

participants (Stebbins, 2003b). It is important to note that players of sports and games, refers to players who play “in competitive, rule-based activities with no professional counterparts like long-distance running and competitive swimming” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 202). In contrast, activity participant activities are “noncompetitive, rule-based, pursuits such as fishing and barbershop singing” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 201-202). Moreover, in activity participation the rules are either informal (subcultural) or formal (regulatory) (Stebbins, 2003b).

There are six qualities that are characteristic of serious leisure pursuits (Stebbins, 1992). One is the “occasional need to persevere, such as in confronting danger” (Fine, 1988, p. 181): Being able to carry on with the activity in any situation, no matter what circumstances or potential threats may be present, provides for the participant “positive feelings about the activity” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 203). A second quality is “that of finding a leisure career in the endeavor, shaped as it is by its own special contingencies, turning points and stages of achievement or involvement” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 203). The third quality, which is common to all serious leisure careers, is presence of a “significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training, or skill, and indeed, all three at times” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 203). The fourth quality, is that there is a “unique ethos” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 203) around each serious leisure activity; thus, there is a “special social world where participants can pursue their free-time interests” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 203).

“A social world must be seen as a unit of social organization which is diffuse and amorphous in character. Generally larger than groups or organizations, social worlds are not necessarily defined by formal boundaries, membership lists, or spatial

territory....A social world must be seen as an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into a perceived sphere of interests and involvement for participants. Characteristically, a social world lacks a powerful centralized authority structure and is delimited by ... effective communication and not territory nor formal group membership.” (Unruh, 1980, p. 277)

Furthermore, a social world is characterized by the ability and opportunity for its members to leave and come when they want, people can be members of various social worlds at once, the social worlds are organized to a large degree through the use of semiformal communication, they have rare instances of face-to-face interaction, and they lack a heavy influence of bureaucratic components (Unruh, 1979).

The fifth quality, is that the participants of a serious leisure activity “tend to identify strongly with their chosen pursuits” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 204). Lastly, the sixth quality is that there are various “durable benefits” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 203) a participant may experience by participating in a serious leisure career. These are the personal results of this leisure.

Rewards of Serious Leisure

The ten rewards of serious leisure are motivational antecedents that push a person to pursue the activities. The ten rewards are broken-up into two groups, personal and social rewards, they are:

Personal rewards

1. Personal enrichment (cherished experiences)

2. Self-actualization (developing skills, abilities, knowledge)
3. Self-expression (expressing skills, abilities, knowledge already developed)
4. Self-image (known to others as a particular kind of serious leisure participant)
5. Self-gratification (combination of superficial enjoyment and deep fulfillment)
6. Re-creation (regeneration) of oneself through serious leisure after a day's work
7. Financial return (from a serious leisure activity)

Social rewards

8. Social attraction (associating with other serious leisure participants, with clients as a volunteer, participating in the social world of the activity)
 9. Group accomplishment (group effort in accomplishing a serious leisure project; senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic)
 10. Contribution to the maintenance and development of the group (including senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic in making the contribution)
- (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 205)

In addition to these rewards, a participant in serious leisure will encounter various tensions, stresses, disappointments, and dislikes in an activity (Stebbins, 2003b); however, the participants may still consider the activity “as highly satisfying –as (serious) leisure – because it also offers certain powerful rewards” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 204). In any event, those who partake of serious leisure perceive the benefits of the activity to outweigh the costs that are part of it (Stebbins, 2003b).

Moreover, amateurs, hobbyists, career volunteers, and the activities that they participate in, are often considered marginal in society (Stebbins, 1996; 1998). One reason

for this is that serious leisure demands a high degree of commitment from its participants to a pursuit (Stebbins, 1992): Participants commit a large amount of time, emotion, and energy to the activity (Stebbins, 1999). Another reason centers on the passion that those who partake in serious leisure have for the activity (Stebbins, 2003b). Notably, this passion is often considered irrational, in comparison to the commonsense that is thought to be used in “the ever-popular forms of casual leisure” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 206; Stebbins, 1999).

Risk

The misunderstood irrationality often associated with serious leisure is most evident in some hobbyist activities, such as mountain hobbies that are considered “extreme sport” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 101). Extreme sport is performed for various reasons, but one important reason is that it is considered high-risk and is pursued for the “intense thrill it apparently offers” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 101). The risk involved in extreme sport activities is considered “voluntary risk” (Lyng, 1990).

It is commonly believed that those who are involved in voluntary high-risk activity partake of it because the activity itself “endangers life and limb of the participant, even at the individual’s superior level of competence to execute” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 101) it. On the contrary, Stebbins (2003b) has demonstrated that it is not the risk taking of the activity that motivates the participants of such leisure; rather, it is the motivation of “meeting particular challenges faced in nature” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 102).

Being able to succeed at a particular natural challenge provides for the participants to experience flow (Stebbins, 2003b). A nature-challenge hobby is motivating, satisfying, and “when at its height, intensely thrilling” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 102).

Furthermore, “[t]aking risks...abruptly and dramatically diminishes the feeling of flow, for perceived risk emerges unexpectedly, feeding on the sense that the activity has become frighteningly unmanageable” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 103).

Hobbyists of this kind, claim that there are three types of risk that they may experience while pursuing this sort of activity. With this in mind, it should be recognized that the first two types of risk can for the most part be avoided with “careful preparation and advance information” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 104). The first type of risk is the “[u]nmanaged risk, or risk that emerges only when individuals lose concentration, get fatigued, or otherwise suddenly become unable to draw on their acquired skills, knowledge, and experience that keep them in flow” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 103). The second type of risk is “fortuitous risk, or greatly improbable risk from uncontrollable sources²” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 103). The third type of risk is “social risk” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 104), which is “pressure from peers to engage in the activity at a level considered risky by the pressured participant, that is, personally regarded as going significantly beyond his or her acquired skills, knowledge, and experience...can also include intentionally taking great risks for the fame and perhaps even the fortune that it brings” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 104).

Participants make all attempts to avoid these risks because experiencing even a slight amount of risk during an activity can have a negative effect on their experience of flow (Stebbins, 2003b). Importantly, “[i]t is questionable whether flow is felt at all in social risk, though that may not matter in any case, since the intent here is to establish an identity

² Uncontrollable sources with reference to the high-risk activities that Stebbins (2003b) studied (snowboarding, kayaking, and mountaineering (including ice climbing)), experience such fortuitous risk from snow avalanches, ice slicks, falling rock, and sudden elevations of water (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 103).

as ‘gutsy,’ as a devil-may-care individual” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 104).

Boredom

In contrast to the nature-challenge activities that are intensely thrilling, there are activities that lack interesting and stimulating qualities (Stebbins, 2003a, p. 29); thereby, creating boredom in their participants (Stebbins, 2003a). Clearly, boredom can also be a result of having nothing to do (Stebbins, 2003a). Most importantly, it is a result of personal attitude (Stebbins, 2003a): What is considered thrilling to one person may be boring to another.

Moreover, bored youth are commonly studied in the area of leisure studies (Stebbins, 2003a). This is because it has been demonstrated that boredom is associated with deviant leisure, and some bored youth search for “stimulation in drugs and alcohol or criminal thrills like gang fighting, illegal gambling, and joy riding in stolen cars” (Stebbins, 2003a, p. 30), to overcome the boredom they experience.

It has been found that youth who deal with their boredom by pursuing thrill-seeking deviant leisure activity, often search for activity like this that requires very little preparation, is a regular activity as opposed to infrequent activities such as parachuting or bungee jumping, and at the same time provide preeminent thrill and stimulation (Stebbins, 2003a). Leisure like this “is by definition fleeting” (Stebbins, 2003a, p. 30), yet boredom “can become a gateway for creative leisure” (Stebbins, 2003a, p. 31), as well for a creative lifestyle.

Lifestyle

There are various definitions of the term lifestyles, but the definition developed by Stebbins (1997b) fits well in this thesis, because it is a generic definition of the term that can be used to guide exploratory ethnographic research on lifestyles (Stebbins, 1997b).

A lifestyle is a distinctive set of shared patterns of tangible behavior that is organized around a set of coherent interests or social conditions or both, that is explained and justified by a set of related values, attitudes, and orientations³ and that, under certain conditions, becomes the basis for a separate, common social identity for its participants. (Stebbins, 1997b, p. 350)

It should be pointed out that this definition of lifestyles centers on shared lifestyles rather than individualistic lifestyles; however, it does not deny the existence of the latter (Stebbins, 1997b).

Essentially, people who routinely pursue a leisure activity will develop a lifestyle of some sort (Stebbins, 1997b); however, when people pursue a serious leisure career they will be more likely to develop a lifestyle than if they were to pursue a casual leisure activity (Stebbins, 1997b). Casual leisure activities such as weekend partying can provide participants a shared lifestyle (Stebbins, 1997b); however, in accordance to the definition provided in this thesis, other types of casual leisure activities such as “routine sun tanning or strolling in the park, are often not shared with others and therefore cannot be considered lifestyles” (Stebbins, 1997b, p. 356).

³ Orientation “is defined here as a mental and emotional point of view or frame of reference centered on the common set of interests or social conditions” (Stebbins, 1997b, p. 359).

Auto Theft as Casual Leisure

Auto theft is, in part, a casual leisure activity because it is immediately rewarding, and the pleasure derived from it lasts for a limited time: A young offender will steal a vehicle and the thrill and pleasure reaped from it is from the actual theft itself and the pleasure lasts for only a short time span. For some, the pleasure is also from driving the vehicle, but again, the pleasure only lasts for a short-time.

More specifically, this criminal activity is a form of sensory stimulation that, through thrills of movement and thrills of deviant activity, arouses those who commit this offence. It provides amazing experiences for the young offenders, who drive fast and recklessly, as well it is an activity that most other people cannot imagine doing themselves. Furthermore, it is commonly perceived as an activity that is intolerable and that requires police control.

Moreover, through auto theft, a young offender is able to reap some of the five benefits that are experienced by those who pursue casual leisure activities. It can be an activity that is creative, by the offender discovering new ways to steal a vehicle as well different ways to steal a vehicle according to the model of the automobile. Furthermore, some young offenders develop and sustain relationships with those that they sell the vehicles to for profit, and/or with those that they steal vehicles with. Another reward is that motor vehicle theft is a hedonic activity: It provides enjoyment and pleasure, rather than fulfillment and rewards.

Auto Theft as Serious Leisure

Auto theft may have casual leisure characteristics and for some, serious leisure

characteristics, but when motor vehicle theft becomes an activity that is pursued for profit, it begins to evolve beyond being a serious leisure activity. One reason for this is that it develops into an activity that is systematic, as opposed to irregular, such as, auto theft that is performed as a casual leisure pursuit.

Another reason is that even though it is a hedonic activity (see reward no. 5 presented earlier), it is also a pursuit that an individual may experience flow from. Auto theft for profit, is able to provide flow for its participants partially because it requires a significant amount of knowledge and skill to know how to break into and to know how to start the different types of vehicles, according to the make of vehicle, in comparison to the very limited amount of knowledge that is required for casual leisure activities. Furthermore, if stealing a particular vehicle is too difficult, such as in instances where the alarm that is on the car is too difficult for the thief to conquer, or the car is parked where the chances of getting caught is really high, the young offender does not find committing this criminal act to be enjoyable. Likewise, if a vehicle is too easy to steal and there is no challenge in doing so, such as in cases where the door of the vehicle is unlocked and the keys are in the ignition already, stealing automobiles is not pleasurable or enjoyable for those who partake of this activity.

Similarly, in cases where the offender, while stealing a vehicle, feels that there are forces that are occurring that are out of his control, he no longer experiences flow. Examples of such forces are such things as a light in the house goes on, the family dog barks, the alarm of the vehicle goes off, or when the person they are working with says that he knows how to drive a standard but in actuality, he does not know how.

In any event, auto theft that is performed for economical purposes is a type of

hobbyist serious leisure activity, which can be considered to belong to the activity participant group. This particular activity has its subcultural rules such as, the offender knows that, to make the profit exchange, he must phone a certain number once he has the vehicle, and then take the vehicle to the destiny point given over the phone. Through this interaction he knows that the person he is meeting will check the vehicle over, and then that person will call a telephone number, ordering that the vehicle be picked up. Before the vehicle is picked up, the car thief will be given the payment agreed on. The offender knows that at that point he must leave the scene, and that the person he has just had face-to-face interaction with is not the person who actually picks the vehicle up. This is done so that, in case the offender is ever caught by the officials, the offender is unable to provide a name or a description of the person who picked up the vehicles. Furthermore, this hobby also has informal rules such as the young offender should check the doors of the vehicles to see if they are unlocked before he begins prying at the window.

Overall, the six qualities of serious leisure apply to auto theft that is done for economical purposes, as it has been illustrated for some of these qualities throughout this discussion. Consequentially, this criminal offence provides for its participants the ten rewards of doing serious leisure. For example, it provides for the young offenders an opportunity to experience self-actualization and self-expression through developing and applying their skills, abilities, and knowledge about stealing vehicles. In turn, they can develop a self-image of an auto thief. Also, it provides them financial return, drugs, and/or material goods. As a result, it rewards them with social attraction: It enables them to be associated with others who steal vehicles and to be involved in the social world of criminals.

In fact, car thieves are similar to others who pursue serious leisure with respect to the belief that the rewards and benefits of the activity outweigh the costs. A young offender knows that he can get arrested and might even have to spend time in custody if he steals a vehicle; however, he carries on with the act even though he knows what the possible repercussions are if he gets caught. Likewise, those who steal vehicles may drive fast and reckless even though at times this experience can be very scary and harmful.

Furthermore, those that commit auto theft are similar to serious leisure participants in that they and their activity are also considered marginal in society. For instance, some of the young offenders interviewed in this study, were worried that they would get caught while stealing vehicles, but yet, they carried on with the act. As well, for those who had been involved in police pursuits, they were worried that they might get hurt during the pursuit; however, they carried on with the pursuit until they were caught or until they got in an accident. In light of this, they are similar with other hobbyist participants, because *vis-à-vis* mainstream thought, they demonstrate an irrational passion.

Like that of the extreme sport activities, auto theft is considered a voluntary risk. Furthermore, it also has elements of abhorred risk such as getting injured in a car accident or a friend who is driving the stolen vehicle and is actually a horrible driver. Thus, the three types of risk that are associated with extreme sport activities are all applicable for auto theft. Similarly, auto thieves make all attempts to avoid these risks while pursuing the activity, because experiencing risk can have a detrimental effect on flow. For instance, some of the thieves in this sample did not use drugs or alcohol before or while they stole a vehicle, because they had to be in a clear state of mind to avoid making mistakes. Importantly, it is not so much the risk that is the motivating force that drives these young

offenders to commit this offence; rather, it is meeting particular challenges that may come their way during the activity. These include discovering how to start a new vehicle they have never tried before, driving well during a police pursuit, or learning how to deactivate a certain kind of car alarm.

Finally, because auto theft is a serious leisure pursuit, young offenders who steal vehicles for economic purposes, develop an economic lifestyle through their participation in their serious leisure activity. It is a lifestyle centered on thrill and earning fast profit, whether in monetary payments, drug exchange, or material goods. Yet, it is understood that it is not a livelihood; rather, it is simply a means to an end (e.g., drugs, clothes, pin money). It is a way to acquire some of what normally they cannot afford. Furthermore, it is a lifestyle that agrees with and supports dishonesty, law breaking, and risk taking. It becomes a social identity for those who share this lifestyle.

CHAPTER THREE:
STUDYING JUVENILE VEHICLE THEFT

Exploratory research is about putting one's self deliberately in a place – again and again – where discovery is possible and broad.

(Stebbins, 2001, p. vi)

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a discussion on the leisure theory, which consists of specific areas such as: casual leisure, serious leisure, flow, risk, boredom, and lifestyle. That chapter ended with a brief discussion on how the leisure perspective is relevant for studying and analyzing auto theft that is done for economic purposes of some sort. The current chapter, however, will change the topic some what, and will be discussing the process of studying juvenile vehicle theft. It will touch on such areas as the method of research that was used for this study; the specifics of how the sample was collected, the sample and the sub-sample size, and the demographics that made up the sub-sample that was used in this thesis; problems that were encountered while collecting the sample; the interview guide; reliability, validity, generalizability, and representativeness issues; and ethical considerations for this study.

Method of Research

The method of research that was used in this study was qualitative-exploratory research. According to Stebbins (2001), the purpose of exploratory research is for researchers to “explore when they have little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine but nevertheless have reason to believe it contains elements worth discovering” (p. 6). Moreover, the goal of exploration is to

create new ideas and through these new ideas develop grounded theory¹ (Stebbins, 2001, p. 9; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Importantly, exploratory research uses in its method, flexibility in terms of looking for the data, and open-mindedness with respect to where to find the data, as opposed to prediction and control (Stebbins, 2001; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In light of the fact that the past research that has been done on motor vehicle theft is very limited, it was decided that qualitative-exploratory research would be the method most beneficial to this study.

Before carrying on, it needs to be noted that throughout this chapter I will be switching between the words 'I' and 'we'. 'I' will be used when I am discussing personal experiences or situations that only pertain to me personally. Whereas, 'we' will be used when I am mentioning situations or experiences that myself and the research team that I am a part of for this project, have experienced or have done together.

Sample

The sample for this study was collected via the youth probation officers because these offenders were under the age of eighteen and as a result, their identity is protected by the Youth Criminal Justice Act of 2003. Due to this, the young offenders' names and telephone numbers were unavailable to us in order for us to contact them ourselves, until they and the appropriate parties had signed the Consent for Release of Information form (refer to appendix A). Consequentially, in order to collect the sample for this project, we used a list of the names and telephone numbers for all the youth probation officers that

¹ Grounded theory is theory that is derived directly from the data itself (Stebbins, 2001, p. 9).

worked for the Calgary Children and Youth Services. This list was provided to us by the Manager of Children and Youth Services and it consisted of twenty-two probation officers.

We divided the list into two equal groups, by putting every other name on the list into one group and the remaining names into another. The purpose of dividing the list into two groups was so I and the other assistant researcher could split the list of probation officers into an equal number. From these two lists, we were then each able to proceed to telephone the eleven youth probation officers on our own lists.

In the first set of telephone calls that we made to each of the probation officers, we explained to them who we were, what the project was about, and asked them if they had any youth on their case loads with motor vehicle theft offences. Fortunately, the Manager of Children and Youth Services had already briefed the probation officers about the study and informed them to expect telephone calls from us; thereby, making our initial contact with the probation officers less troublesome. During this first telephone call, we had asked the probation officers if they could talk to the youth with these offences that they had on their case loads, explain to the youth what this project was about, and ask if they would like to take part in an interview that would take anywhere from a half an hour to an hour and a half. We informed the probation officers that if the youth agreed to participate in the interview, that the probation officers, the youth, and the youths' guardian(s) must sign the Consent For Release of Information form. Importantly, this form was a document that Children and Youth Services required be completely filled out and signed by the appropriate people before an interview would take place, to ensure the protection of the young offender. Once the form was signed by all three parties, the probation officers were

then asked to telephone us with an interview time set up with the youth.

After the first set of telephone calls, I would regularly (about every two weeks) make telephone calls to the probation officers on my list. The intent of this was to remind the probation officers about the project and to contact them in case they had any questions for me.

On a different note, this convenience sample may not be representative because I have sampled only those people who have been apprehended for vehicle theft. Thus, generalizability here is more problematic; generalizing from the results from this study should be done tentatively. With this in mind, it should be recognized that it is not uncommon for a study on this population to have a small sample size. An exploratory study done by Resendiz (1996) on auto theft in the United States/Mexico border consisted of a sample of ten individuals.

Our sample size consisted of fifteen young offenders (offenders under the age of eighteen) either from Calgary or the surrounding area, or that were held in custody in Calgary, who had been found guilty of criminal charges concerning auto theft and/or joyriding. The sample had been restricted to juvenile youths because of the appeal of joyriding that occurs between the ages of twelve and seventeen.

Due to my interest, the subsample that was used in this thesis consisted of seven young offenders who had been charged with these offences and who had committed auto theft for economic purposes. Below is a summary of the demographic characteristics of this subsample:

- All seven youth were male.

- All seven were Caucasian.
- Four out of the seven young offenders were 17 years old. One was 18 years old, another was 16 years old, and the other youth was 15 years old.
- All seven young offenders lived in urban areas either in Calgary or the surrounding area.
- Three out of the seven youth had a mother and a step-father who acted as their guardians. Two out of the seven had a single-mother who was their guardian. One youth had both parents, who were divorced, that acted as guardians to him. One out of the seven had no one acting as his guardians because he used to be under foster care.
- Five out of the seven young offenders stated that the financial status of their families was comfortable. One said that his family was well-off. Another said that his family was less than comfortable.
- Three out of the seven had dropped out of school at least once, whereas, four out of seven had never dropped out of school.

Problems with Collecting the Sample

There were several problems that I had encountered while collecting this sample over a period of about seven months. Some of these problems centered on contacting and interacting with the probation officers. For instance, when I began collecting our sample via the youth probation officers, it was during the summer months and each probation officer was on holidays for weeks at a time; therefore, it was very difficult to actually contact

them.

In another instance, one of the probation officers on my list that I had contacted various times had gone on a leave half way through the time during when we collected our sample. This resulted in her case load being transferred to another probation officer. This transferring of cases caused some of the possible leads that she had told me about to be lost in the transfer. To this day, I am not sure if those leads ever came up again during the remaining time of our project because I was never given the names of those particular youth.

Similarly, during the first part of our data collection, I had made some contacts with a probation officer who had informed me about a few leads; however, she ended up changing positions, and someone else came to fill her position. As a result, the leads that the original probation officer was informing me about got lost in the transition. Like that of the previous case I mentioned, I am not sure if those leads ever showed up again, because I was not provided the names of those particular offenders.

Not only were the probation officers difficult at times to contact, but sometimes because they were so busy, they were unable to be as helpful as we hoped. For instance, in one case, a probation officer had just got a new youth on her case load who had these particular charges; however, the youth was held in custody at the Calgary Young Offender Center (C.Y.O.C.) and the probation officer had not yet met him or even spoke to him, and she was too busy to do so at that point in time. She, therefore, provided me the first name of the youth and the name of the wing that he was held in at C.Y.O.C., and suggested that I phone C.Y.O.C. myself and somehow find out if he would like to do the interview. So,

from there I contacted the Program Coordinator at C.Y.O.C. who I had been dealing with there, but she said that I was not allowed to talk to this youth over the telephone, so she herself would have to talk to him for me. She talked to him, and he agreed to participate in the interview; however, I needed to contact his guardian(s) to ask them if I could interview their son.

The probation officer I was dealing with for this case, did not have the contact information for his guardian(s), so I had to telephone C.Y.O.C. again to ask if they could provide me with this information. They did so for me by asking the youth how I could contact his guardian(s). C.Y.O.C. then gave me this contact information and I contacted the guardian(s), explained what the project was about, and informed them that their child had agreed to participate. I proceeded to fax the Consent for Release of Information form to the guardian(s) so that this form could be signed. After this long process, the appropriate paper work was signed by the correct parties and I was able to set up an interview time with the youth.

Probation officers are very busy people and difficult to contact, but other problems that I had faced while interacting with them is that a lot of them did not know at first what I was talking about when I mentioned the Consent for Release of Information form. After I explained to them what it was, they then remembered it. A few times, my supervisor had to fax them a copy of this form, because they did not have it, even though this form was something that Children and Youth Services required must be filled out and signed by the youth probation officers. It was my understanding, from various conversations that I had with probation officers, that this form was not something that they regularly dealt with

anymore, even though at one point in time, this form was in fact commonly used.

Other problems I experienced concerned the difficulty I had contacting the youth. For example, the probation officers would talk with the youth about the interview, the youth would agree to participate in it, and then sign the appropriate paper work. However, afterwards the probation officers would sometimes provide me the names and telephone numbers of those youth so that I could contact them myself to set up interview times. I would have to leave message after message with a guardian at the home, or, for the most part on an answering machine. I never once got a returned telephone call, so I would constantly have to telephone the homes until I was able to personally get in contact with the youth themselves.

Another problem that I encountered with the youth was that a few times the youth did not show up for the scheduled interview. For these few cases, however, I re-scheduled the interview and they came for the second interview time. Various reasons for why these youth would miss the interviews were that they forgot, one was sick, and one did not have the time to do the interview because he had to work. Only in one instance did I have to re-schedule twice, and the young offender remained a “no-show”.

Other problems that I encountered concerned receiving entry approval for C.Y.O.C. and affiliated institutions. For example, the first time that I had a young offender who was held in custody at C.Y.O.C. and who agreed to do an interview, it was a long drawn out process for me and the rest of the research team, to get entry approval into that institution. The process began by the probation officer advising me to telephone C.Y.O.C. to set up an interview time with that specific youth. When I telephoned C.Y.O.C. they would not allow

me to come there and do the interview because they had not realized that this project had already been approved by the Calgary Police Services, and Children and Youth Services. I then telephoned the probation officer that I had been dealing with for this particular case, and she then informed me that she would telephone C.Y.O.C. herself and see if she could make any progress for me. She failed, so she contacted her supervisor who had to write a letter to C.Y.O.C., explaining to them what the project was about and that in fact, this project had been approved by the appropriate services. After almost a month of waiting, C.Y.O.C. finally approved of me and the rest of the research team that I was a part of, to enter C.Y.O.C. and conduct interviews.

Similarly, a further difficulty I faced that was associated with C.Y.O.C., was that of getting access permission into the C.Y.O.C. custody camp, named Shunda Creek Youth Correctional Camp. This process first started with the probation officer having to make contact with the young offender out at this camp as well as his key worker. I then, also had to contact the key worker out at the camp, which in itself was a difficult task because key workers are very busy; therefore, it was a long wait for the key worker to return my telephone calls. Furthermore, the key workers at this camp work one week there and then they get one week off to go home, with the shift change beginning on a Thursday. So inevitably, this shift work made the job of contacting the key worker more time consuming.

After contacting the key worker I was informed that I also had to contact the youth's Child Welfare Worker to receive guardian permission. This itself was a problem, because it took a couple of weeks of telephoning the welfare worker and leaving messages for her until she returned my telephone calls. I explained the project to her and informed

her that I needed her signature on the appropriate form before I was able to do the interview. My supervisor then had to fax the Consent for Release of Information form to her so that she could sign it. After all this telephoning and weeks of waiting, I was then allowed to interview this particular youth out at this custody camp.

Lastly, other problems that I experienced were problems that negatively affected our sample size; thereby, explaining why the sample size for this project is as small as it is. For instance, numerous times I was informed by a probation officer that he/she did have a youth on their case load with these offences; however, the young offender was A.W.O.L. (Absent Without Leave). Similarly, in cases when the youth was not A.W.O.L., it was not uncommon that the youth to fail to show up for their meeting that he had with his probation officer. This impacted our sample size, because when the offenders did not show up to see their probation officers, the probation officers were unable to inform them about this project and ask them if they would like to participate in it.

In other instances, the youth would agree to partake in the interview and the probation officer would send the Consent for Release of Information form home with the offender, in order to get the guardian(s) signature; however, the form was not always brought back to the probation officer. Even after numerous telephone calls that the probation officer left at the youth's home reminding the guardian(s) to sign the form, the form was still not returned; thus portraying a lack of interest or approval of the research project either by the young offender and/or the guardian(s), or even a lack of communication between the youth and the guardian(s) in his life.

Another situation that impacted the sample size was that after the youth agreed to

the interview and signed the appropriate paperwork, when asked to set up an interview time, the youth would sometimes decide that he did not want to go through with the interview. As well, when the youth was asked if he would like to participate in the interview, he often immediately decided not to.

A further difficulty that I experienced regularly was that the probation officers often did not have any youth on their case loads with these particular offences. As well, often probation officers would have a youth on their case load with these offences but he was waiting sentence. Consequently, we could not interview the youth because he had not been found guilty yet.

Moreover, in one instance a youth agreed to participate in the interview, but his child welfare worker would not allow him to do so. This decision was justified with the observation that it was thought that the interview might encourage this particular youth to continue to commit crime. Similarly, in one instance a youth had agreed to participate in the interview; however, his foster parents would not approve of his participation in the project because they were concerned with confidentiality, and nothing that the probation officer assured them of would comfort their concerns. The foster parents were supposed to contact me to further discuss their concerns; however, I never received a telephone call from them.

Likewise, another situation that occurred that was out of our control and that affected our sample size was that a youth agreed to do the interview, the appropriate paperwork was signed by all parties; however, the probation officer forgot that this youth had agreed to it. By the time that the probation officer remembered that this offender agreed

to the interview, this offender had already entered into the age group of eighteen years old and older; therefore, he was held in adult custody at the Calgary Remand Center. I was advised to attempt to still go through with the interview; however, having to do so required that I receive permission from the Remand Center. I contacted the Remand Center and explained the project and the situation at hand; however, I was unable to be given permission from them to do the interview with this offender while he was held in adult custody. This decision was based on two conditions. One was that the only way a visitor can come and talk with an offender at the Remand Center is if the visitor is a lawyer. Secondly, I could only be a visitor in this institution if the particular offender that I wished to speak to put my name down on his visitors list.

Interview Guide

The interview guide (refer to Appendix B) that was used in this research project was developed by the project leader, Dr. Rick Linden at the University of Manitoba, director of this national study on motor vehicle theft. The interview guide was used by each research team that was working on this national project across Canada. It consisted of 133 questions, 4 of which were considered 'hot questions'. These 4 questions, numbers 30, 38, 91, and 116 of the interview guide, were considered to be 'hot' because they specifically asked about criminal activities; therefore, the answers could prove incriminating if there were to ever be a future criminal investigation of the interviewees. Interviewees were informed of these questions, and given the option of refusing to answer them.

The 133 questions in the interview guide were a mixture of open-ended questions

and closed-ended questions, which were broken up into seven sections. The first section was family characteristics, which consisted of 15 questions. The second section was lifestyle, which consisted of 20 questions. The third section was concerning drugs and alcohol, with only 3 specific questions for that topic; however, questions relating to those two habits were incorporated throughout the interview guide. The fourth section consisted of 35 questions that were all related to the history and methods of stealing cars. The fifth section consisted of 19 questions concerning the issue of deterrents. The sixth section was made up of 23 questions pertaining to the topic of the criminal justice system and the youth's thoughts of it. Lastly, the seventh section consisted of 13 questions related to the topic of education.

Reliability, Validity, Generalizability, and Representativeness

In exploratory research, in order to convincingly demonstrate that a study is reliable and valid, reliability and validity are best discussed in reference to other sets of exploratory studies in the same area (Stebbins, 2001). This is because in exploratory research, validity “centers on the need to gain an accurate or true impression of the phenomenon under study” (Stebbins, 2001, p. 25; Kirk & Miller, 1986; and Neuman, 1997). Whereas, reliability “refers to replicability, to whether another researcher with similar methodological training, understanding of the research setting, and rapport with its members can make similar observations” (Stebbins, 2001, p. 25; Kirk & Miller, 1986; and Neuman, 1997).

A possible concern with reliability issues is whether there are inconsistencies in terms of how the interview questions are being interpreted and responded to by the

interviewees. With regards to the questions in the interview guide used in this study, question numbers 105 through 113, were the questions that most of the youth that I interviewed had problems with, which was probably because these questions were asked using a likert-scale. It was not uncommon for the youth to re-read these sets of questions over and over again until they answered the question. After which, I would repeat their answer using the words if they had answered with the corresponding numbered answers. Much of the time the interviewees would end up changing their answers after this because they realized that they had made a mistake. As for other questions in the interview, it was difficult to know for sure if there had been inconsistencies with how the questions were interpreted and responded to by the youth who participated in the interviews.

There are three common validity problems that arise in exploratory research that need to be mentioned. They are:

1. Reactive effects of the observer's presence or activities on the phenomenon being observed
2. Distorting effects of selective perception and interpretation on the observer's part
3. Limitations on the observer's ability to witness all relevant aspects of the phenomenon in question. (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 78)

With reference to the first common validity problem, it should be noted that there was the possibility that while conducting the interviews, that the youth who were answering the questions might not have been completely honest with their answers because of the presence of the interviewer (myself or the other research assistant). For instance, it is quite possible that if a friend of the youth were to have asked the young offender the same

questions that we were asking them, that the answers would have been somewhat different. With this said, however, this problem of validity may or may not have been a problem in this particular study, but at the least, it needs to be recognized as a potential threat.

Likewise, the second common validity problem may also have been a potential problem in the present study. Like that of the first validity problem, it is not certain whether or not it is; however, it too needs to be at least recognized as a possibility.

The third common validity problem is a potential issue for this project, because neither of us interviewers were there at the time that the young offender committed auto theft. Thus we are unable to “witness all relevant aspects” (McCall & Simmons, 1969, p. 78) of this specific criminal act. In light of this, it is clear that we were unable to be witnesses of whether the answers that were given to us by the interviewees are true.

Another threat to the internal validity of this study is that of maturation effect (Neuman, 1997). In a couple of interviews, I noticed that it was very difficult for the interviewees to keep their attention on the interview and answering of the questions. For example, one youth that I interviewed asked at about question 50 if we were almost done. There are 133 questions in this interview guide. Throughout the remaining interview this youth was playing and fidgeting with anything that he could get his hands on. Similarly, another youth who I interviewed, was getting really bored with the interview and near the end of the interview he kept rolling his eyes whenever he had to answer yet another question. These two instances could have an effect on the results of this study, because the interviewees might not have answered the questions honestly or to the fullest extent that they could have if they had not been bored or tired with it.

As a response to the lack of attention that occurred during these first couple of interviews, we decided to change the ordering of the questions so that the important questions on the topic of auto theft were closer to the front of the interview guide, and the more demographic type questions, such as family characteristics and education, which were easier and require less brain power to answer them, were at the back of the interview guide. Once this change was made, I found that it helped in obtaining more valuable responses to the more detailed questions within the interview.

Another threat to the internal validity that is a possible issue for this study is that of instrumentation effect (Neuman,1997). This is because there were two different interviewers and the way I interviewed and interacted with the interviewees may have been different from the way the other assistant researcher interviewed and interacted with the young offenders. This could have had a possible effect on the results of the study, because the youth may have felt more comfortable talking to the one interviewer than the other interviewer, thus affecting what and how much the interviewees disclosed during the interview. This potential problem of instrumentation effect is further problematized in this study by the fact that I being female, and the other interviewer being male, may have been reacted to and responded to differently by the young offenders. In turn, this may have had an effect on the results. In light of these two issues addressed under instrumentation effect, it should be recognized that because of the nature of the study, there was nothing that could have been done to prevent these effects. Furthermore, there is also the possibility that these two issues did not impact the results at all.

Another threat to the internal validity of this study is that of mortality. Not in the

sense of who dropped out of the interviews (Neuman, 1997), because this did not occur, but with respect to who agreed to do the interview and then decided not to follow through with his decision. It is likewise with who decided to do the interview, set up an interview time, and then never appeared for the actual interview. As a result, this could be a selection bias.

Selection bias is a threat to the internal validity of a study (Neuman, 1997). Specifically for this study, the issue arises as to whether these individuals who agreed to do the interview but never actually did it, are different from those individuals who decided from the beginning that they would not agree to do the interview, and whether they are different from those who decided to participate with the interview and actually followed through with it. Similar to the instrumentation effect, selection bias and mortality as threats to internal validity are problems that we as researchers could not do anything to prevent due to the nature of the study.

On the other hand, experimenter expectancy is a highly unlikely threat to the internal validity of this study, but nevertheless should be mentioned as a possible threat, can be dealt with through careful conduct of the research. In experimenter expectancy, the researcher may affect the results by communicating to those being researched what they expect the results to be (Neuman, 1997). This assuredly, is not a problem for this study. I did not relay to the youth what it was that I was expecting or hoping his answers to the interview questions would be. As for the other assistant researcher working on this project, it is most assuredly that he did not indicate to the youth his expectations or hopes of what the answers to the questions should be. This can further be assured by the fact that because the method of research used for this study was exploratory, neither of us interviewers had

any expectations as to what the results of the study would be. We each went into this project and the interviewing process with the intent to explore an area where there is not much known of it.

Along the lines of validity issues, it is important to recognize that the Hawthorne Effect could be an issue in this study. The Hawthorne Effect refers to reactivity in which those individuals who are being studied act or respond differently because they know that they are the center of attention (Neuman, 1997). This could have been a possible problem in this study because the youth may have been excited that they were receiving special attention for the criminal acts that they have committed and as a result they might have exaggerated the story, made stories up, answered the questions dishonestly, or they might have even portrayed a false persona. Nevertheless, due to the nature of this study, there was nothing that we as researchers could have done to prevent this from occurring.

With regards to the issue of external validity, which is essentially whether the findings are generalizable to other populations and settings, this as well as internal validity, can only be guaranteed by concatenating research studies in this area and “to treat the question of validity as a condition to reckon with throughout the chain” (Stebbins, 2001, p. 27). Importantly, the validity of an exploratory study is enhanced when the sample of activities, groups, and processes that are being explored are representative (Stebbins, 2001).

With this in mind, however, it is recognized that the representativeness in an exploratory study is not perfect. Moreover, it is difficult to have a perfectly representative sample (Stebbins, 2001). This is because representativeness is dependent upon the way that the group, activity, or processes under study is organized (Stebbins, 2001). As it has been

noted before, the group of interest for this study is poorly organized due to the fact that we are unable to know of everyone who belongs to this particular population, thereby possibly making weak the representativeness of this sample.

Ethical Considerations

This study is ethical on a variety of accounts. One reason is that it required that the young offenders would voluntarily participate in the interview. As it has been previously stated, the young offenders were informed about the project, and were asked by their probation officers if they would like to participate in the interview. This allowed for them to accept or decline the invitation to take part in this research project. Notably, for the youth that had community service hours as part of their sentence, this interview was worth five hours community service. The intentions of having the interview worth so many community service hours was to provide the youth an incentive for participating in the interviews. However, not all the youth who had participated in an interview had to earn community service hours as part of their sentence. Thus, for many, reduction in community service hours was not an incentive to agree to do the interview.

A second reason why this study is ethical is that we received informed consent from the interviewees and their guardian(s). This was first achieved by the probation officers having to explain to the youth what the project was about, get them to sign the Consent for Release of Information form, and then ensure that the guardian(s) sign that same form. In a few cases, the probation officer was unable to get the guardian(s) to sign this form due to reasons such as the young offender never brought the form home to his/her guardian(s),

there was no way to fax them the form, and the probation officer did not have the time to chase the guardian(s) around for a signature. For these cases, the probation officer or myself would telephone the guardian(s) ourselves, explain the study to them, and inform them that their child had agreed to participate but that it was required that I receive their consent before I could go on with the interview.

The interviewees provided further informed consent before the interview began. At the beginning of the interview, we would read to the interviewees a preliminary statement (see Appendix C) that stated what the interview was about, ensuring the youth that their names would never be used in the report of this study, that they could refuse the interview, refuse to answer any questions in the interview, and that they could end the interview at any time. We also mentioned that there were four questions in the interview that could prove incriminating in a future criminal investigation of them, and that we would tell them what questions these were when we are about to ask them during the interview. Once this preliminary statement was read to the interviewee, they were then asked to sign and date two copies of the preliminary statement if they decided that they still wanted to participate. I kept one copy and they kept the other.

A third reason why this project is ethical is that anonymity and confidentiality were met in this study. One way this was achieved was by ensuring that the notes that were taken by me or the other assistant researcher did not contain any names on them. Another way was by requesting that the youth sign their names on the preliminary statement rather than print their names legibly. In turn, these identity concealing procedures prevented the information that we received from these interviews from being linked to the names of the

interviewees. Furthermore, the interviews were hand written by us during the interviews, as opposed to being tape recorded. This was done because the interviewees were under the age of 18, and so the Youth Criminal Justice Act of 2003 does not allow them to be recorded. This further ensured anonymity and confidentiality because the voices of the young offenders could not be linked to them.

A fourth reason why this study is ethical is that no physical or psychological harm was experienced by the interviewees while partaking in the interview. Furthermore, there will be no harm to the youth who have participated, even after the results have been reported. This is because of the confidentiality and anonymity that was ensured by the data collection techniques used in the study. Furthermore, our identity as researchers was not concealed from the interviewees. The interviewees knew that I and the other interviewer were graduate students at the University of Calgary and research assistants on this project. In addition, the nature of the study was explained by the probation officers to every youth who participated in the study, as well during the preliminary statement that was read to them at the beginning of the interview. Thus, the nature of the study was never concealed to the interviewees.

CHAPTER FOUR:
GETTING TO KNOW THE AUTO THIEF

Just like us, they need transportation and they're not taking (Calgary Transit); they're taking your car and they consider it theirs.

(Sgt. Richard Hinse as reported by Nadia Moharib, "Cops put HEATT on auto thieves", *The Calgary Sun*, October, 2003.)

Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the process and method that was used to study the juvenile vehicle thieves, along with other such topics as: the sample size and how it was collected, problems with collecting the sample, interview guide, ethical considerations; and reliability, validity, generalizability, and representativeness issues. The current chapter, however, will provide a detailed description of who the auto thief is. It discusses everything from the family background of the young offenders in this sub-sample, to their peer relations and role models in their lives, to their first auto theft experience, to their reasons for stealing vehicles, to their opinions of the criminal justice system and how it impacts their decision to commit motor vehicle theft, as well as much more. These data will enhance our understanding and knowledge of these young offenders and their participation in auto theft¹.

Family Background

Five of the respondents in this sub-sample have at least one brother and one sister in their families; two of the youth have one sister and no brothers. The majority of these respondents describe the relationship that they have with their guardian(s) as close. Two of the youth, however, describe their relationship with their guardian(s) as a happy-medium, and one youth describes the relationship as nonexistent. Interestingly, over half of these

¹ To protect respondent anonymity in this small – sample study, all arrangements whereby respondents could possibly be identified were avoided.

respondents do not have anyone in their immediate families that have been involved in crime; however, two of the youth have a brother or a father, who have been involved in criminal activity, and one youth does not know for sure but he thinks that his father is or was involved in crime.

As for the respondents' extended families, six of the respondents do not have any extended family, as far as they know, that has been involved in crime. Moreover, the majority of these respondents consider their relationship with their extended families as not close. One respondent, however, considers his relationship to be "not bad"; two other youth consider their relationship to be close.

In addition, over half of the respondents have moved once in the past 3 years with their families. One youth, however, who does live with his family, has not moved at all in the past 3 years. As for the other respondents in this sub-sample, 2 have not lived with their families in the past 3 years. One of these respondents has moved about 4 or 5 times in 3 years, and the other youth has moved about 20 times in the past 3 years.

Running away from home can also be a background condition in youth crime. Importantly, over half of the respondents have run away from home at various times in their life. One youth, however, does not run away from home but he "takes breaks at a friend's house". Whereas, two of the respondents have never ran away from home.

Educational Background

The educational background for 5 of the 7 youth in this sub-sample is that of grade 9 as the last grade completed. As well, grade 10 is the last grade completed for 2 of the 7 youth. Moreover, 2 of the respondents like school now that they are taking it in C.Y.O.C.; 2

other respondents do not like it at all; 2 other respondents think that school is “alright”; and another respondent did not say whether he likes it because he has dropped out of school.

The amount of school days missed per year varies widely from respondent to respondent. For instance, 1 respondent said that he misses maybe 2 days a month and another respondent misses about 4 days a month; another youth said that, before he began school at C.Y.O.C., he would go to school at 2 weeks at a time, but that he would always make an appearance in one class a day; and another youth claimed that last year when he was in school he missed 165 days.

For those youth who have dropped out of school, one respondent said that he missed “most days”, while another respondent said that when he was in school he did not miss many days. One youth, who has not been to school for two and a half years, will not provide an answer for this because it was so long ago that he attended school.

Reasons why these youth would and actually do miss school are that they would rather spend their time playing video games, smoking “weed”, and skateboarding; are too “lazy” to get up in the mornings; and have appointments and court dates. For one respondent, it is because he is too involved with organized crime.

The grades that these youth achieve while in school vary between respondents. One youth said his grades are “lower”; another youth said his are “always a pass”; other youth said that their grades are in the seventies; and another respondent said that his grades are in the eighties and nineties. As for one youth, who is now in school in C.Y.O.C., he said that his grades are now “pretty good”, compared to before, when his grades were below a pass.

Three of these youth want to eventually attend trade school; 1 youth wants to attend a university or a college; 1 wants to take computer courses of some kind; and 1 wants to

attend an art school. In contrast, 1 respondent does not want to attend post-secondary school of any kind in the future.

Work Experience

The various types of jobs to which these youth aspire are: computer technician, police officer, computer designer, welder or other works that uses one's hands, and bar owner. Two other youth, however, do not know what kind of job they would like to have in the future. For those respondents that do have future job aspirations, they all said that they have to go to school to achieve the type of job that they desire. Some other youth said that they have to get a loan and "stop doing crime" in order to achieve their desired job.

Each of the respondents, except for one, has had a paid legitimate job of some kind. Types of jobs these youth have had include: cashier, working at a car wash, putting exterior stucco on buildings, working as a cook, working in the fast food industry, and washing dishes. Moreover, two of these youth are currently employed.

Disciplinary Action

Each of the young offenders in this sample has been given a curfew at some point in his life, either by his guardian(s) or by the courts. Two of the youth, however, have only ever been given a curfew by the courts. Furthermore, two of the youth did not care about the curfew set by their guardian(s) and so they did not adhere to the curfew time.

The type of punishment that these youth have been subjected to at home as a result of mis-behaviour ranged across various levels of severity such as grounding, spanking, loss of privileges such as television watching, and being given the belt. In comparison, for all

the youth in the sub-sample except one, the punishment that they have received at school for mis-behaving was suspension, with only one of these cases leading to expulsion. And the punishment that they have received from the courts due to mis-behaviour include such measures as: probation, incarceration at C.Y.O.C., and for some of the respondents, community service hours.

Role Models

Interestingly, six out of the seven respondents do not have role models in their lives. The one youth, however, who does have role models in his life considers a couple of his older “buddies” to be his role models. He can trust them, and they take care of him when they “go out”.

Lifestyles

The majority of the respondents do not watch television, and those that do watch television all watch The Simpson’s, along with other various television shows that are not commonly watched by each of the youth. Over half of the respondents do not read much if anything outside of school material. The few that do read outside of school, read widely different material. For instance, one respondent reads only magazines like that of YM, Teen People, and Maxim; another youth reads only fantasy books; and another youth reads “non-fiction, true stuff....I like books that are going to teach me things”. Furthermore, all but one of the seven respondents likes to play video games. Importantly, they all like to play car racing games such as Grand Theft Auto. As for music, all of them like Hip Hop and/or

Rap, and in some cases R&B. Only one respondent likes Rock in addition to Hip Hop, and another respondent likes Alternative music in addition to Hip Hop. As well, none of the youth is involved in any organized extra-curricular activity and only one is involved in organized sports of any kind.

Other ways that these respondents spend their spare time are doing things such as: stealing things, “doing” drugs, watching movies, “hanging out”, using the computer, spending time with friends, spending time with girlfriends, and “walking around aimlessly”. Because they do not go to school or work, two youth have much spare time so much that the one respondent admitted that he does not know how to describe how he spends his spare time.

The respondents spend their money on various things such as: food, clothes, illegal drugs (i.e. crack, cocaine, methamphetamine), alcohol, cigarettes, and jewellery. One of the respondents spends his money on sporting equipment and gym membership fees. Furthermore, these youth purchase their clothing from various stores such as The Underground, Latitude, Guess, Buffalo, Footlocker, Sears, Zellers, Stiches, Winners, Bootlegger, Sport Mart, Bluenotes, The Bay, 1850, Randy River, 100% Legit, and Athletes World.

Peer Relations

Over half of the youth admitted that some of their friends are involved in street gangs. In contrast, 1 youth does not know whether his friends are involved in street gangs; 2 other youth do not have friends that are in street gangs. Unlike their friends, 5 out the 7 of

these respondents have never been involved in street gangs. The 2 respondents that have been involved have had only minor involvement. For instance, 1 youth was only associated with street gangs and not actually in one, and the other youth was in a street gang for only 1 week.

Each of these respondents has friends that steal vehicles. With the exception of one respondent, they all claim that their friends have never pressured them into stealing vehicles. This one respondent said that he does not know whether his friends have ever pressured him into stealing vehicles.

Criminal History

All of the respondents, except for one respondent who is waiting a trial date for seventeen break and entering charges, have also been convicted of crimes other than auto theft. The types of crimes that these youth have been convicted of are: unlawful entry, robbery, breach, breaking and entry, fraud, carrying concealed weapons, shoplifting, possession of stolen property, assault, property damage, mischief, theft over \$5 000, and theft under \$5 000.

The types of sentences that these youth received for these particular criminal charges were: probation, incarceration in C.Y.O.C. over a period of only a couple of days to a couple of months or more to almost a year, house arrest, no contact orders, no drugs and alcohol rule, fines, and alternative measure sentence (i.e. Wilderness Program Camp). One respondent was banned from a particular British Columbia town. Importantly, if for instance the respondents were already on probation or had already spent time in custody and had committed another offence, then their probation time was increased. Or if they

were sent back to custody, then their custody time was also increased according to the criminal activity they had been charged with.

Drugs and Alcohol Experience

Each of the respondents consumes alcohol. One respondent consumes it only on weekends; 2 other youth consume 1 or 2 times a week; 2 other youth “barely ever” consume it; and 2 other respondents consume it “lots”, with 1 of these youth consuming it “every day”.

All of the respondents, with the exception of one, before they went on probation or went into custody consumed a lot of illegal drugs during a one-week period. Some would consume cocaine or smoke “pot” every day; others would consume ecstasy, mushrooms, crack, and methamphetamine.

Three out of the six youth that use illegal drugs, steal vehicles to support their drug and/or alcohol habit(s). Two of the respondents steal vehicles for the sole purpose to support their drug habits. Whereas, the third youth steals vehicles to support his drug habit; however, his main reason is for the “excitement...for the fun of it. Being in high speed pursuits and stuff”.

Three out of the seven respondents are always under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they steal vehicles. One respondent said that it is the drugs that motivate him to steal vehicles; he “couldn’t do it without it”. Another respondent said that he is usually under the influence of drugs or alcohol when he steals vehicles, but that he can not remember for sure. Two of the youth said that they are never under the influence of drugs

or alcohol, because “you need a straight mind set to steal a car. It’s not worth it”. Another respondent said that he can not do it when he is under the influence, because he needs to concentrate. As well, one respondent said that the one time he has stolen a vehicle was while he was under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

First Auto Theft Experience

The ages of the respondents when they were first involved in the theft of a motor vehicle ranged between 14 years old and 16 years old. One youth, however, was 10 years old the first time he was involved in auto theft, and another youth was 12 years old.

In contrast, the ages of the respondents when they first stole a vehicle ranged between 14 years old and 17 years old. The one youth, however, has never personally stole a vehicle himself, but at age 17 he moved closer to stealing a vehicle by becoming the “watch dog” for his friend who would break into the vehicles.

Over half of these respondents initiated their first time stealing a vehicle themselves. One youth admitted that the only reason he initiated his first time was to see if what he learned in jail from his auto theft inmates would actually work. Whereas, two of the respondents said that their first time was initiated by their friends; another youth could not remember if it was him or his friend who initiated his first time.

Five out of the seven respondents were taught how to steal vehicles by their friends. The sixth respondent taught himself, and the seventh was taught the techniques while he was in custody.

History of Auto Theft Experiences

The number of times each respondent had any involvement in the theft of a motor vehicle, whether actually stealing the vehicle, being the watchdog, being a passenger in the vehicle, and so on, varies from respondent to respondent. Two respondents have been involved in stealing vehicles “lots” of times; 1 respondent has been involved in stealing vehicles “about 20 times, but not more”; another youth has been involved in theft of a motor vehicle 7 times; another respondent has been involved 27 times; another youth has been involved 12 times; and 1 respondent has been involved 5 or 6 times.

With regards to how many vehicles each respondent has actually stolen themselves, each youth reported a different number of vehicles stolen over their life course. One youth has stolen 27 vehicles; another youth has stolen 5 or 6 vehicles; 1 respondent has stolen 7 vehicles. One youth has stolen approximately 100 vehicles; another youth has stolen about 6 or 7 vehicles; 1 respondent has stolen approximately 15 to 20 vehicles; and another respondent has stolen a lot of vehicles but too many to count. To elaborate on this last youth, it is on record that he stole 65 to 70 vehicles between June of 2003 and August 2003.

Importantly, these youth have not, in many cases been caught or even been charged for all of the vehicles that they have stolen. Table 4.1 presents the number of times each respondent has been involved in auto theft, has stolen a vehicle, has been caught for being involved in motor vehicle theft, and how many convictions each respondent has received for auto theft.

Table 4.1: Number of Involvements in Auto Theft, Apprehensions for it, and Convictions because of it.

Respondent	Number of times involved in auto theft	Number of times have stolen a vehicle	Number of times have been caught for being involved in auto theft	Number of convictions respondents have received for auto theft
1	5 - 6	5 - 6	1	1
2	"lots"	100	5	1 ("There's lots coming")
3	"lots"	"Lots. 65 – 70 vehicles in three months"	2	2
4	27	27	2	2
5	12	6 - 7	2	2
6	"about 20"	15 - 20	3	2
7	7	7	3	2

Note: Respondents labeled 1 through 7 are not labeled in any particular order that could be possible to identify respondents.

These respondents are unable to indicate how many vehicles they steal a week because most of them steal vehicles over a longer period of time, than a week. Furthermore, other respondents steal a different number of vehicles each week: Some weeks they will not steal any vehicles, other weeks they will steal many.

Other Auto Theft Experiences

None of these respondents has stolen a vehicle with the owner in it. As well, all the respondents have stolen articles of some sort from vehicles before they began stealing vehicles. They would steal articles such as: compact discs, Discmans, change (i.e. quarters, loonies, etc.), stereos, speakers, sunglasses, and cigarette lighters. Also, only two out of the seven respondents have brought a stolen vehicle to school, and only one of these respondents had been in a contest to see who could bring the nicest vehicle to school. Similarly, only two of these respondents have been in a contest to see who could steal the most vehicles in one night. Moreover, over half of the respondents have never deliberately vandalized a stolen vehicle.

Over half of the respondents have never been in a police pursuit. For those that have been involved in a pursuit, one respondent has been involved in 3 but only caught for 2 of them and was the driver in all 3 of the pursuits. Similarly, another respondent has been involved in 8 pursuits, but has only been caught for 2 of them and was the driver in 3 of the pursuits. In contrast, another youth has been in only 1 pursuit but was caught for it and was the driver.

Moreover, six of the respondents have never tried to get in a police pursuit, and one of the respondents does not know if he has ever tried to get in a police pursuit on purpose. For those little few respondents who have been in a police pursuit, two of them did not worry about getting hurt during the pursuit. As one respondent comments: "Your mind space isn't on that. Your mind is on keeping your ass out of jail". Another respondent said that at the time he just did not think about getting hurt. In contrast, one of these respondents did in fact worry about getting hurt during the pursuit.

Each respondent has been a passenger in a stolen vehicle on various occasions. To illustrate, one youth has been a passenger three or four times; another respondent has been a passenger five times; another respondent has been a passenger a couple of times. Other respondents have been passengers “lots of times” in stolen vehicles. One youth has only been a passenger one time; because he loves to drive, he is always the driver.

Reasons for Stealing Vehicles

Individuals steal motor vehicles as their transportation to commit crimes, to break into shops and homes and do robberies.

(Sgt. Richard Hinse as reported by Nadia Moharib, “Cops put HEATT on auto thieves”, *The Calgary Sun*, October, 2003.)

One of the reasons these respondents steal vehicles is for the opportunity to earn money. Four out of the 7 respondents steal vehicles for monetary funds. To illustrate, 1 youth has been paid \$6 000 dollar per vehicle that he stole; another youth has been paid \$1 600 for 2 vehicles and \$1 200 for 1 vehicle; another respondent has been paid \$1 000 for a vehicle he stole; and another respondent would get paid any where between \$5 000 to \$25 000 per vehicle that he stole. The latter respondent seems to have moved to full time work in this area.

Moreover, these same 4 respondents were paid to steal a certain type of vehicle. Importantly, out of these 4 respondents, 3 of them were hired by an organized group to steal vehicles. Only 1 of these youth, however, knew the other people involved in the organization, and he did in fact know their real names. Furthermore, 2 of the respondents were given a list of vehicles that they were to steal. The 1 youth had a list of vehicles to

steal almost every night, and usually stole high end vehicles such as Porsches, BMW's, and Cadillac's. Whereas, the second youth was only hired once to steal a list of vehicles: He thought that it was boring and that it took too much time.

A second reason why these youth steal vehicles is for use in other crimes. All of these respondents, except for one, have stolen vehicles for this purpose. Most of the youth steal vehicles for use in break and enter crimes, "to transport goods, [and] keep stolen items in it". Or some respondents steal vehicles for the purpose of stealing the stereos out of the vehicles to sell to, or directly exchange with, drug dealers for illegal drugs. Yet, other respondents steal vehicles for the objective of doing "grab and runs", as one youth says: "always at a convenience store. We just grab some stuff, like food and drinks. I would stand by the magazines. Pretend like we are going to pay and then run out the door. We just do it, that's it". Similarly, another respondent did 'grab and runs' at grocery stores and stole meat from the store. He did this because of his extreme hunger that was a result of his drug habit that he had at the time.

A third reason for why these respondents steal vehicles is for transportation purposes. All of the respondents, except for one, have stolen vehicles for this reason. Some of the youth need a vehicle to get to a party, "to just get around", and/or to get home when they are out somewhere. Furthermore, one respondent steals vehicles just because he hates to walk.

A fourth reason for why some of these respondents steal vehicles is for joyriding. Five out of these seven youth steal vehicles for this reason. As one youth comments: "when you don't have a license you need a taste of how to drive ... take them through logging roads and crash them through gates - that would take a few attempts". Furthermore, these

same five respondents steal vehicles for the thrill of it. To illustrate, here are two quotes provided by two of the respondents:

“Joyriding, I love it. I always steal vehicles for joyriding. I do it for the adrenaline rush. I love speed. I love driving so much. I have a passion for it - it’s not even the speed I love, I just love to drive”.

“It’s a rush to drive”.

Similarly, one youth finds that joyriding is thrilling, but he also finds the actual act of stealing the vehicle thrilling: “I would steal a vehicle for both reasons”. The reasons why he finds stealing the vehicle is thrilling is that “it’s not your vehicle, but I also can’t explain it. It’s also thrilling because you can impress your friends”. Likewise, another youth finds the act of stealing the vehicle the thrilling aspect of the crime, “because you never know if someone is going to catch you in the act or if you’ll be able to steal that car”; however, he finds joyriding boring because “once you have the vehicle what are you suppose to do with it? All the excitement is over once you actually have the vehicle”.

Interestingly, the two respondents who have not stolen a vehicle for a joyride have also not stolen a vehicle for the thrill of it. One of these respondents “hate[s]” stealing vehicles; whereas, the other respondent said that he does it for fun because it is “for a good rush”, rather than for a thrill.

Each respondent, with the exception of one, considers that their reasons for motor vehicle theft have changed over time. One youth commented that “when I was 15 I did it because it was cool, but when I was 17 I did it to support my drug habit”. Whereas, another respondent said that it began for the purpose to joyride, but then it developed into a practice

used for break and enter crimes, to transport goods and to keep stolen items. Moreover, another youth admitted “that at first it was for the thrill and then it became a chance to earn some money”. Likewise, another respondent said that he first started stealing vehicles to show people that he could do it, but then it developed into a way for him to make money. Similarly, another youth said that “at first it was just for fun, now it’s for drugs and for the use in other crimes”.

Five of the respondents said that they will not steal vehicles again. According to one respondent, he said: “I’m out of it”. Or in the words of another youth: “I no longer plan on stealing vehicles. I’ll be 18 soon, so I’ll be good. I’m too skinny for real jail. I’m tall, but too skinny”. In contrast, two of the youth are not sure if they will steal vehicles again. They each said that they “probably won’t”; however, one of these respondents when he gets released has a job offer from a fellow inmate that he previously worked with while stealing vehicles. The other respondent is also unsure if he will steal vehicles again: “Well maybe, depending. Actually no, probably never”.

Criminal Justice System Influence

With respect to whether the criminal justice system has any influence on the respondents’ decisions to steal vehicles, five out of the seven youth do not worry about being punished by the courts when they steal vehicles. Most of them at the time just “didn’t think about it”. Furthermore, another youth said: “I thought about it. I didn’t really care. Didn’t think I’d get caught. Thought I was invincible”.

In contrast, the two respondents who do worry about being punished by the courts have various reasons for still carrying on with the act. For instance, one of these two youth

did it anyway “mostly because of the drugs” that he was on at the time. On the other hand, the other youth did it anyway because: “Sometimes it was exciting that we could go to jail if we were caught”.

As for whether the respondents worry about getting caught while stealing motor vehicles, three out of the seven respondents do not worry about getting caught and one respondent only sometimes worries about it. Their reasons for not worrying are: they either do not think about it or, for one respondent, it was because he is usually drunk at the time, and so he is not thinking clearly anyway. Another youth, who usually only steals vehicles from underground parking lots thinks that the police can not get down there fast enough to catch him.

In contrast, the remaining youth from this sub-sample do worry about getting caught; however, they each have their own reasons for why they carry on with the act. To illustrate, two of these respondents despite their worries, continue to steal vehicles because they need the money to support their drug habit. In addition, another youth who worries about getting caught just takes extra safety precautions such as wearing all black and putting duck tape on the soles of his shoes so he will not leave foot prints.

Table 4.2 provides an account for each respondent of what they consider their chances are of getting caught while stealing vehicles and of being convicted in court, on a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being ‘very likely’ and 5 being ‘not likely’ at all.

Table 4.2: Perceived Chances of Getting Caught Stealing Vehicles and Being Convicted in Court.

Respondent	Getting Caught	Being convicted in court
1	5	5
2	5	4
3	4	4
4	4	4
5	3	3
6	3	2
7	2	1

Note: Respondents labeled 1 through 7 are not labeled in any particular order that could be possible to identify them.

To conclude, this chapter has provided a detailed picture of who these seven auto thieves are. Furthermore, it offers insight into the nature of their auto theft experience. This discussion has, therefore, furthered our understanding and perception of these young offenders and the crimes that they commit.

The following main generalizations emerged from this part of the study:

- **Strong generalizations:** (Strong generalizations emerge when between five and seven out of the seven respondents answered the questions in more or less the same way).

It was found was that five out of the seven respondents:

- have at least one brother and one sister in their families.

- have completed grade nine as the last grade completed.
- have never been involved in street gangs.
- were taught how to steal vehicles by their friends.
- steal vehicles and then use the vehicles for joyriding.
- steal vehicles for the thrill of it.
- said that they will not steal vehicles again.
- have never brought a stolen vehicle to school.
- have never been in a contest to see who could steal the most vehicles in one night.
- do not worry about being punished by the courts when they steal vehicles.

It was found was that six out of the seven respondents:

- do not have any extended family that has been involved in crime.
- have had a paid legitimate job of some kind.
- have been suspended from school.
- do not have role models in their lives.
- like to play video games, specifically car racing games.
- are not involved in organized sports of any kind.
- want to attend some kind of post-secondary school in the future.
- have never been pressured by their friends to steal vehicles.
- have been convicted of crimes other than auto theft.
- before they went on probation or went into custody, consumed a lot of illegal drugs during a one-week period.

- have never tried to get in a police pursuit on purpose.
- have never been in a contest to see who could bring the nicest vehicle to school.
- have stolen vehicles for use in other crimes.
- have stolen vehicles for transportation purposes.
- consider that their reasons for auto theft have changed over time.

It was found was that all seven respondents:

- have been given a curfew at some point in their lives.
- like to listen to Hip Hop and/or Rap music.
- are not involved in any organized extra-curricular activity.
- have friends that steal vehicles.
- consume alcohol.
- have never stolen a vehicle with the owner still in it.
- have stolen articles of some sort from vehicles before they began stealing vehicles.
- have been a passenger in a stolen vehicle on various occasions.

- **Weaker generalizations:** (The weaker generalizations emerge when three or four out of the seven respondents answered the questions in more or less the same way).

It was found was that three out of the seven respondents:

- steal vehicles to support their drug and/or alcohol habit(s).

- are always under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they steal vehicles.
- are never under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they steal vehicles.
- were hired by an organized group to steal vehicles.
- do not worry about getting caught while stealing vehicles.
- do worry about getting caught while stealing vehicles.
- consider their chance of being convicted in court for auto theft as unlikely.

It was found was that four out of the seven respondents:

- describe the relationship that they have with their guardian(s) as close.
- do not have anyone in their immediate families that has been involved in crime.
- consider their relationship with their extended families as not close.
- do not watch television.
- do not read much if anything outside of school material.
- have moved once in the past three years with their families.
- have run away from home at various times in their life.
- have friends involved in street gangs.
- initiated their first time stealing a vehicle themselves.
- have never been in a police pursuit.
- have never deliberately vandalized a stolen vehicle.
- steal vehicles to make money.

CHAPTER FIVE:
GETTING TO KNOW THE CRIMINAL ACT: MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

Vehicle theft cost Canadian consumers almost \$600 million in insurance claims for unrecovered vehicles and components. But, the bare numbers can't begin to address all consequences of car theft – which include emotional upset, the loss of irreplaceable personal belongings and other crimes often committed with stolen vehicles.

(Mike D'Amour, *The Calgary Sun*, August, 2003)

Introduction

The previous data chapter discussed the data that provides information that furthers one's understanding of who the motor vehicle thief is. It provided data on information such as: family and educational background, work experience, disciplinary action, role models, lifestyles, peer relations, criminal history, drugs and alcohol experience, first auto theft experience, history of auto theft experiences, other auto theft experiences, reasons for stealing vehicles, and the criminal justice system influence. This current data chapter, on the other hand, essentially provides a further understanding of what auto theft is. It elaborates on how auto theft is accomplished, the youths' opinions about vehicles, what they do with the vehicle once they have stolen it, their ideas and suggestions of what would deter them from partaking in this criminal activity, their opinions of what the criminal justice system could do differently to prevent offenders from stealing vehicles, as well as other important issues and topics. This information will provide valuable insight into the reality of motor vehicle theft that is done for profit of a certain level and it will enhance our understanding into what needs to be done in order to prevent it.

Methods of Stealing Vehicles

As with some forms of criminality (e.g., safe cracking and counterfeiting) there is a technical side of auto theft. A common description, provided by these seven respondents on

how they steal a vehicle, is that they will break into the vehicle through the window. To do this they use a flat head screw driver, or what some of the respondents call “a flattty”, to pry the window far enough out to unlock the door. The flat head screwdriver can be used to “snap the plastic that goes around the window, then pull the window back”. The youth then proceed to put their hands inside the vehicle to unlock the door or to role the window down if it is a manual window. Once inside the vehicle, if there are no keys to be found in the vehicle, they will hotwire it. To hotwire the vehicle, they “pop open” the ignition column underneath the steering column and then “wire it”. Once this is done the ignition column will hang down, and the youth will have to drive with the seat really close to the steering wheel with their left knee up high a little. This is so they can cover the ignition so that passing vehicles can not see that it is hanging down low.

Another way that these youth can break into a vehicle is to use a dent puller to pull out the key lock. Instead of hotwiring the vehicles, another way to start the vehicle is by taking out the ignition box if it is a glow ring. To do this, the youth use a flat head screwdriver to pop out the glow ring until they reach a circle that is inside it. They then proceed to twist the circle. Once the glow ring is out, a rock or something must be placed there so that the ignition key lock does not come out as well. Importantly, it has been mentioned that plastic ignitions are easy to bypass using this method.

Depending on the vehicle, sometimes the steering column has to be broken. A way that the steering column can be broken is to use The Club if the vehicle is protected thus. The youth can use a lot of force to pull The Club around the steering handle, which will eventually break the pins in the steering column. As one respondent said, “The Club makes our job usually a lot easier”.

One way that The Club can be bypassed is by using a piece of copper piping to bend the little piece of the arm that attaches to the steering handle. A second way is by drilling a hole through the key hole of The Club. A third way is by sawing The Club off of the steering wheel.

To bypass car alarms, as reported by these respondents, there is sometimes a switch under the outside of the car where the steering column would be, that can turn the alarm off. In cases where there is no switch, the youth will get into the vehicle and pull the hood latch to open the hood in order to cut the power supply to disconnect the alarm.

Some of the respondents only steal vehicles that have keys in them. Importantly, six of the seven respondents have stolen a vehicle at least once with the keys in it. These youth walk down the street and try all the door handles to see if any of the vehicles are unlocked. Once inside the unlocked vehicle they search for a key. Sometimes the keys are in the ignition, in the cup holder, in the counsel, on the seat, or in the glove box. For the most part, the youth do not have to search too long until they find a key inside the vehicle. In addition, depending on whether a youth is working for someone to steal vehicles, and depending on who that person is, a youth may be provided a “fixed key” that is essentially a factory key for vehicles that have a computer chip.

The amount of time that it takes some of these respondents to break into a vehicle and to steal it, if they do not have any keys for the vehicles, is on average about two and a half minutes to ten minutes depending on the vehicle. Other respondents said that it can take as little time as thirty seconds to as long as twenty minutes.

Once They Have the Stolen Vehicle

The length of time that these respondents will keep a stolen vehicle ranges from a couple of minutes, sometimes for only a couple of blocks, to less than an hour, a couple of hours, one night, a couple of days, to a couple of weeks. When the youth steal vehicles for any extended length of time, they store the vehicles in various places such as apartment parkades, underground parkades, parking lots, wherever it is “under people’s noses, where they don’t expect it”, and/or anywhere “out of sight”.

Once the respondents steal a vehicle, some of them joyride with it; others sell them. Some just park them and leave them; others park them and steal the stereos out of them, leaving the vehicle there. Others “ditch” the vehicles and light them on fire; and others “drive it around town for a couple of hours”.

Opinions about Vehicles

Each respondent seems to target different models of vehicles and prefers certain years of vehicles. Some like “earlier models” or older souped-up vehicles, newer vehicles such as year 2000 and up, or in some cases 1995 models and up; whereas, others like to target more specific models of vehicles such as Honda Civics, Saturn’s, Dodge Neon’s, Chryslers, Fords, and Mustangs. In some cases the model of the vehicle or the year of the vehicle does not even matter: “If it was stealable ...steal anything”.

The reasons why particular vehicles are preferred over others, or why some vehicles are targeted for theft, are that they are either easy to steal and/or the respondents just personally prefer them. For instance, six of the youth said that there are certain vehicles that

they will not steal such as, Volkswagen's, because according to one youth he thinks they are "ugly"; Dodge Stealths and vehicles with alarms. One said he "won't steal old one's with no gas ...if you do, you might have to walk home a far ways". Escalades are avoided because they are "impossible" to steal according to one respondent.

Vehicles that are mentioned by the respondents as being easy to steal are: Mazda Miadas, Jeeps, motor bikes, Durangos, Dakotas, and anything with plastic steering columns or ignitions. In comparison, vehicles that are mentioned by some respondents as being tough to steal include any vehicles with an alarm. For other respondents, they consider Viper's, Fords, Escalades, Porsches, BMW's, and usually any high end vehicle as being tough to steal. Or as one respondent said: "It's all about opportunity".

Making Plans

Two out of the seven respondents do not make plans to steal vehicles: "It just kind of happens". Another respondent only makes plans to steal vehicles when he is working on a job for someone. Other than that he just walks around, and will steal a vehicle if he sees one that he likes. In contrast, four out of the seven youth always make plans to steal vehicles. However, one of these respondents plans only that he is going to go out that night to steal a vehicle, he does not make a plan as to what specific vehicle he is going to steal.

What Changes the Likelihood of Auto Theft Occurring

Special events (e.g., Calgary Stampede, hockey games, and concerts) do not change the likelihood of four of the seven youth from stealing vehicles. One youth would still steal

a vehicle if there was a special event going on, but only if he was drunk. Whereas, two of the youth do not know if special events would change the likelihood of them stealing vehicles.

Three of the respondents said that holidays will not change the likelihood of stealing a vehicle. Another youth said that Christmas would change the likelihood but no other holiday would, and another youth said that big holidays would stop him from stealing vehicles. As well, another youth said that holidays change somewhat the likelihood, if for instance the holiday occurs in the winter because then it is too dangerous to drive on the ice. Lastly, one respondent does not know whether holidays would change the likelihood of him stealing a vehicle.

Two of the respondents said that the time of year does not change the likelihood that they will steal a vehicle. Whereas, three of the youth said that the time of year does prevent them from stealing vehicles: They are more inclined to not steal in the winter months because of the dangerous road conditions. Two other respondents do not know if the time of the year changes the likelihood that they will steal a vehicle.

Co-workers or Not

Two out of the seven youth always work alone on the job. One of these respondents said that he works alone, because he thinks that if other people are involved then it will be more likely that he will get caught. Moreover, three of the youth “never” work alone while stealing vehicles, and two of the respondents “usually” or “most of the time” work alone.

Six of the respondents said there is no pattern such as taking turns on who steals the vehicle and who rides as a passenger. One respondent, on the other hand, said that who

ever steals the vehicle is usually the one who drives the vehicle: “Whoever stole it drove it”.

Time and Place for Auto Theft

Each of the respondents steal vehicles any time after midnight up until about four o’clock in the morning, or until it begins to get light. As one respondent said: “The dead time of the day, it is primetime”. One youth, however, steals vehicles during the day, as well as after midnight.

In addition, the places that these youth most often steal vehicles from are: alleys, underground parkades, parking lots, apartment blocks, residential communities, the country, and areas that have lots of shadows so that they can blend in with the shadows. They never steal vehicles where it is too populated. Or as a couple of the respondents said: “Steal vehicles from anywhere”.

“Wherever I see a nice car that I like. It doesn’t matter where, as long as the area is not too busy”.

Deterrents

Three of the respondents have never defeated any anti-theft devices. The remaining respondents have defeated one or more of the following: car alarms, Combat Auto Theft (CAT) decals, and The Club. The ways that these anti-theft devices can be defeated has been discussed previously in this chapter. Importantly, each of these respondents has

learned how to defeat these anti-theft devices through friends, through their own experience, and by listening to others talk about it.

Table 5.1 provides an account of the number of respondents that rate the effectiveness of the four anti-theft devices, on a scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being ‘very effective’ and 5 being ‘not effective’.

Table 5.1: Effectiveness of Anti-Theft Devices

Anti-Theft Devices	Very Effective (1)	2	3	4	Not Effective (5)	Do not know
The Club	2	1	0	2	2	0
Alarms	1	3	1	1	1	0
Electronic Immobilizers	3	1	1	1	0	1
CAT decals	0	0	0	2	5	0

One respondent said that the following prevents him from stealing a particular vehicle: “A gut feeling that something is not going right. Or see lights turn on, or if I can’t stop the alarm”. Likewise, as another respondent said: “Paranoia-spider sense that something is wrong”. Similarly, as another youth said: “Gut feeling. Feeling paranoid”. And one youth said that, if he feels someone is watching him, he will not steal. Another youth said that an alarm stops him from stealing a vehicle. Whereas, one youth suggested that “not much” stops him from stealing a vehicle.

In addition, six of the respondents admitted that a baby seat would not stop them from stealing a vehicle. One youth, however, said that if there was a child in the baby seat then he would not steal the vehicle. Whereas, one respondent said that a baby seat would

prevent him from stealing a vehicle, and another youth said that he does not know because he has never been in a situation like that before.

Table 5.2 outlines how many of the seven respondents' minds would be changed, by any of the five scenarios listed in Table 5.2, when they are considering stealing a vehicle.

Table 5.2: Scenarios as Deterrents to Motor Vehicle Theft.

Scenarios	Yes	No	Do not know	Maybe
Security guards	4	3	0	0
Parking lot attendants	3	4	0	0
Security cameras	3	3	1	0
Bright lighting	4	3	0	0
Vehicles in garage*	4	1	0	2

* Vehicles kept in a garage protected with a home alarm.

Notably, one of the respondents, who would steal a vehicle kept in a garage that is protected with a home alarm, said that it depends on whether the garage door is open. Furthermore, one of the respondents said that security cameras would only change his mind if he knew the cameras were around. He has stolen a vehicle before where there were cameras, but he did not know that they were there until after he stole the vehicle. In addition, five of these youth do find out if any of these measures are in place before they steal a vehicle, and two respondents do not. One respondent says: "I walk in unknowing. That's part of the fun".

There are various ideas provided by these youth about what should be in a commercial that has the purpose of stopping automotive thieves from stealing vehicles. One idea is that the commercial should emphasize: “It ain’t worth it. The time you’re losing off your life. You’re wasting your time sitting in jail waiting for your release date. It’s only worth it until you get caught”. A second idea is that there should be a lot of pictures of The Club in the commercial, emphasizing that people need to buy them. Furthermore, “the commercial should have someone driving a stolen vehicle and then hitting someone with the vehicle. The driver should then get sent to jail for a really long time”. A third idea is that the commercial should have a kid in an accident like that of the drunk and driving commercials. Lastly, a fourth idea is that the commercial should emphasize: that people need to lock their vehicle doors, park the vehicle close to the house, have spot lights and motion detectors, do not be careless with car keys, and get a dog.

Justice System

Five of the respondents feel that their sentence is fair and appropriate for what they have done; one youth thinks that his sentence is too lenient for what he has done; and another youth feels that his sentence is too harsh, because he does not wreck vehicles, he just takes them.

With regard to what sentence these youth think is fair for stealing a vehicle when there are no prior offences and no injuries involved, some of the suggestions are probation; probation and curfew; one month in C.Y.O.C.; community service, restitution, and an apology letter; and community service. One respondent said there should be given no sentence at all.

In addition, the respondents' thoughts about proposed penalties such as suspension of driving privileges and suspension of insurance privileges vary. Four of the youth said that "it doesn't matter", 1 said that "it would suck", 1 said that it is "good", and another said that he would be afraid that he would not be able to get a license and that he does not know what he thinks about suspension of insurance privileges. With reference to loss of wages as a proposed penalty 2 of the youth said that "it doesn't matter", 2 said that it would be good, 2 said that it "would suck", and another said that he does not know.

Five of the youth feel that tougher penalties would not deter them from stealing vehicles; however, a few of these respondents said that it "might be" a deterrent. One respondent said that tougher penalties "probably" would be a deterrent, and only one youth said that tougher penalties would be an effective way to deter individuals to commit auto theft.

Importantly, five of the respondents feel that there is nothing that the criminal justice system can do differently to prevent people from stealing vehicles. This is because these respondents believe that "people make their own decisions" and that "if people want to steal vehicles they're going to anyways". Suggestions made by these youth of what the criminal justice system could do differently are: possibly have longer sentences, have more police officers around, and/or "show movies in schools that show a bad accident happening when someone stole a car – this might prevent some kids from doing it". Importantly, one respondent thinks that sending young offenders to "juvie", makes young offenders worse because "it messes you up". He thought that when he was held in custody for a week, it felt like he was in a daycare. Interestingly, another youth believes that auto theft prevention is dependent upon the vehicle manufacturers, because according to him: "Manufacturers are

idiots. They make it easy”. Whereas, another respondent does not know what the justice system could do differently to prevent auto theft.

All of the respondents believe that auto theft has victims, and that the victims are the people who own the vehicles that they steal. Moreover, each respondent was asked to judge the seriousness of auto theft, by thinking where vehicle theft fits compared to nine particular criminal acts. The scale of seriousness is rated from 1 through 5, with 1 being ‘much less serious’ and 5 being ‘much more serious’. Table 5.3 indicates the number of youth who think how serious auto theft is compared to a particular criminal act.

Table 5.3: Seriousness of Auto Theft Compared to Other Crimes

Criminal acts	Much less serious (1)	Less serious (2)	About the same (3)	More serious (4)	Much more serious (5)	Do not know
Shoplifting	0	0	0	2	5	0
Pickpocket	0	1	2	3	1	0
Stealing money from a friend	1	1	0	3	2	0
Stealing money from parents	1	1	0	2	3	0
Stealing a bicycle	1	1	0	3	2	0
Vandalism	0	2	1	2	1	1
Breaking into a house	0	1	4	0	2	0
Striking a complete stranger	0	1	0	4	2	0
Sexual assault	5	0	1	0	1	0

To conclude, this chapter has enhanced our understanding of what auto theft is and how it is carried out. Moreover, it provides valuable insight into possible prevention strategies for other motor vehicle theft incidences that occur for pin money economic purposes like those that these respondents have been a part of, as well as a better understanding of auto theft that is done for these intentions.

The following main generalizations emerged from this part of the study:

- **Strong generalizations:** (The strong generalizations emerge when between five and seven out of the seven respondents answered the questions in more or less the same way).

It was found that five out of the seven respondents:

- do find out if any of the five security scenarios listed in Table 5.2 are in place before they steal a vehicle.
- feel that their sentence is fair and appropriate for what they have done.
- feel that tougher penalties would not deter them from stealing vehicles.
- rate the effectiveness of CAT decals as being not effective.
- feel that there is nothing that the criminal justice system can do differently to prevent people from stealing vehicles.
- think that auto theft is much more serious than shoplifting.
- think that auto theft is much less serious than sexual assault.

It was found was that six out of the seven respondents:

- have stolen a vehicle at least once with the keys in it.

- said that there are certain vehicles that they will not steal.
- said that there is no pattern such as taking turns on who steals the vehicle and who rides as a passenger.
- admitted that a baby seat would not stop them from stealing a particular vehicle.

What was found was that all seven respondents:

- break into a vehicle through the window.
 - believe that auto theft has victims, and that the victims are the people who own the vehicles that they steal.
 - steal vehicles any time after midnight up until about four o'clock in the morning, or until it begins to get light.
- **Weaker generalizations:** (Weaker generalizations emerge when three or four out of the seven respondents answered the questions in more or less the same way).

It was found was that three out of the seven respondents:

- said that holidays do not change the likelihood of them stealing a vehicle.
- said that the time of year does prevent them from stealing vehicles.
- never work alone while stealing vehicles.
- have never defeated any anti-theft devices.
- rate the effectiveness of alarms as being somewhat effective.
- rate the effectiveness of electronic immobilizers as being very effective.

- said that a gut feeling or a paranoia feeling prevents them from stealing particular vehicles.
- would reconsider stealing a vehicle if there are security cameras present.
- would not reconsider stealing a vehicle if there are security cameras present.
- think that auto theft is more serious than pick pocketing.
- think that auto theft is more serious than stealing money from a friend.
- think that auto theft is much more serious than stealing money from parents.
- think that auto theft is more serious than stealing a bicycle.

It was found was that four out of the seven respondents:

- always make plans to steal vehicles.
- said that special events do not change the likelihood that they will steal vehicles.
- would reconsider stealing a vehicle were security guards present.
- would not reconsider stealing a vehicle were parking lot attendants present.
- would reconsider stealing a vehicle if there is bright lighting.
- would reconsider stealing a vehicle if the vehicle was kept in a garage protected with a home alarm.
- think proposed penalties such as suspension of driving privileges and suspension of insurance privileges “don’t matter”.
- think that auto theft is about the same seriousness as breaking into a house.
- think that auto theft is more serious than striking a complete stranger.

CHAPTER SIX:
AUTO THEFT AND ITS IMPORT FOR SOCIOLOGY OF LEISURE

If we wish to understand the decision-making process of offenders. "It is useful to examine the worlds in which much of their life is spent" (Shover 1996, p. 93). To do this it is necessary to situate their decisions within the principal lifestyle that frames their choices.

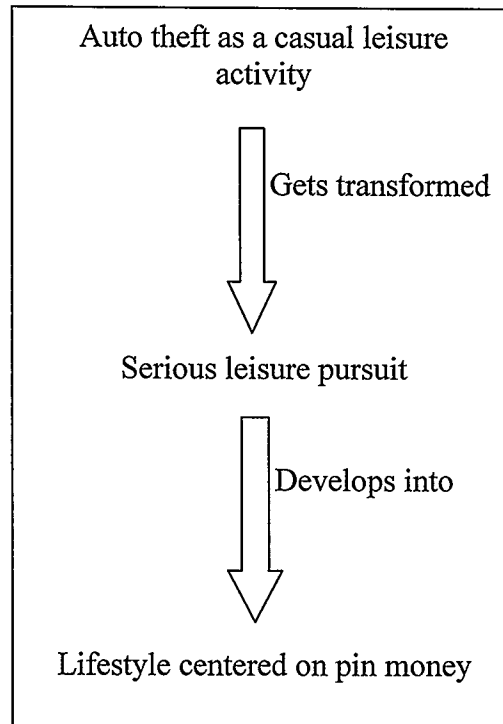
(Copes, 2003, p. 311)

Introduction

There are numerous findings that have resulted from this study, as it has been demonstrated in the previous two chapters. These findings range from strong generalizations to weak generalizations, and to findings that are limited to only a few individuals as opposed to being able to generalize to the entire sample. The intent of this chapter is to pull together the main findings, which are those that are considered strong generalizations, of this study and examine their import for the sociology of leisure theory that was presented earlier in this thesis. Moreover, the practical implications of these generalizations and possible directions future research may take will also be discussed.

Below is outlined in Diagram 6.1 a reiteration of what has been discussed in a previous chapter of the process of how auto theft as a casual leisure activity for some youth, gets transformed, eventually developing into a sort of economic lifestyle centered on pin money. The process that is illustrated in the diagram is how the current chapter is organized in order to provide a clear understanding of this particular process that this thesis has set out from the beginning to explore.

Diagram 6.1: The Process of Auto Theft Evolving into an Economic Lifestyle



Auto Theft as a Casual Leisure Activity:

- Type of Casual Leisure: Sensory Stimulation

Reasons for Stealing Vehicle

In general, these respondents:

- *steal vehicles and then use the vehicles for joyriding.*
- *steal vehicles for the thrill of it.*

Auto theft is a sensory stimulation casual leisure activity that arouses its participants through thrills of movement and thrills of deviant activity. To illustrate, the main findings that are italicized directly above, indicate that these respondents in general steal vehicles to joyride. Furthermore, these findings demonstrate that these youth steal vehicles for the

thrill of it, whether the thrill is from the actual act of stealing the vehicle or driving the stolen vehicle, or both. Clearly, because each of these respondents has stolen a vehicle and has received a criminal charge at least once for this criminal act indicates that auto theft is a thrill of deviant activity that is considered intolerable to society.

- Auto Theft as a Casual Leisure Activity: Two Benefits

1. Unintended “creativity and discovery” (Stebbins, 2003a, p. 206)

Methods of Stealing Vehicles

In general, these respondents:

- *break into a vehicle through the window.*
- *have stolen a vehicle at least once with the keys in it.*

The first of these two main findings, indicate that one of the benefits of partaking in auto theft as a casual leisure activity is that it allows for its participants to discover that breaking into a vehicle is easily accomplished via the window. The second of these two main findings suggests that another discovery that these youth encounter during their casual leisure pursuit is the different places inside the vehicle to look for automotive keys such as the glove box, coffee holder, counsel, and the like. In addition, these youth learn to look inside the vehicle through the window first to see if there are any vehicle keys that are visibly noticeable and quick to access; thereby, making their job much easier.

2. Develop and uphold interpersonal relationships

Peer Relations

In general, these respondents:

- *have friends that steal vehicles.*
- *have never been involved in street gangs.*

Another benefit that is reaped for individuals who partake in auto theft as a casual leisure activity is that they are able to develop and uphold interpersonal relationships. The first of these two findings indicate that the youth from this study all have friends that also commit this criminal offence. Consequently, this enables these youth to maintain their relationships with their friends, by providing an activity that they can do with each other and a topic of discussion that they can talk about with one another. Moreover, their friends can introduce them to other people who are involved in this crime and in turn, develop other relationships. For example, one respondent was introduced to auto theft for profit through a friend of his who introduced him to a person who hires individuals to steal specific vehicles. On a further note, entering into the community of auto thieves provides these youth with a group of friends who all have at least one similar interest; therefore, preventing these youth from searching for this community of friends and developing friendships in other areas such as street gangs.

Auto Theft as Flow: Transforms into a Serious Leisure Pursuit

- Flow: Five of its eight components are experienced during auto theft

In a previous chapter it was stated that there are eight components of flow. The following discussion will demonstrate that five of these eight components are experienced during motor vehicle theft.

1. Sense of competence in executing the activity

Opinions about Vehicles

In general, these respondents:

- *said that there are certain vehicles that they will not steal.*

These youth all indicated that there are certain vehicles they will not steal, because certain vehicles are too difficult to steal. In contrast, other respondents also mentioned that they will not steal a vehicle if they know that there are keys in the vehicle, because then the act of motor vehicle theft is too easy. Hence, these young offenders do not experience flow if stealing a particular vehicle is too easy or too difficult. In other words, auto theft must be reasonably challenging for these respondents in order for these auto thieves to feel a sense of competency.

2. Requirement of concentration

Drugs and Alcohol Experience

In general, these respondents:

- *before they went on probation or went into custody, consumed a lot of illegal drugs during a one-week period.*
- *consume alcohol.*

As it is clearly stated by these two particular main findings, these respondents consume alcohol and regularly consume a lot of illegal drugs. The consensus, however, on whether they consume drugs or alcohol while they steal vehicles varies from respondent to respondent: Some of the youth do while other youth do not. For those youth who do steal vehicles while impaired argue that it is the intoxicating substances that

motivate them to steal vehicles. On the other hand, for those that do not steal vehicles while impaired, reason is that they need full concentration in order to steal vehicles and because stealing vehicles while impaired increases the chance that they might get caught. Thus, for some respondents stealing a vehicle requires a certain degree of concentration to carry out the activity.

3. Clarity of goals of the activity

Reasons for Stealing Vehicle

In general, these respondents:

- *steal vehicles and then use the vehicles for joyriding.*
- *steal vehicles for the thrill of it.*
- *have stolen vehicles for use in other crimes.*
- *have stolen vehicles for transportation purposes.*

Consider the basic argument of this thesis: Auto theft may have casual leisure characteristics and for some, serious leisure characteristics, but when motor vehicle theft becomes an activity that is pursued for profit, it begins to evolve beyond being a serious leisure activity. This component of flow is experienced in auto theft as a serious leisure pursuit by the actuality that these youth partake in the activity for some of or for all of these four reasons listed above. Importantly, the main goals for why these youth steal vehicles are not explicitly stated within these four main findings; however, they were mentioned in previous chapters. To reiterate then, the main goals for stealing vehicles is to exchange for money or illegal drugs, to steal the stereos out of the vehicles for money or drugs, or to use the vehicle in other crimes such as break and enters in order to sell the stolen goods for money or drugs. Essentially, the goals are economic, whether they be monetary funds or

drug exchange. Thus, these youth clearly know what their goal(s) is for stealing a vehicle at a particular time.

4. Immediate feedback from the activity

With regard to this component of flow it is clear from the data presented in this thesis that the immediate feedback received from this particular serious leisure pursuit is the thrill received from stealing the vehicle and/or from driving the vehicle. As well, other immediate feedback received from stealing vehicles are monetary funds, illegal drugs, and/or material goods that can be exchanged for money or drugs. Notably, stealing vehicles for these respondents eliminates deferred gratification by quickly providing them money, illegal drugs, and material goods that they normally do not have or can not afford.

5. Sense of control in completing the activity

Other Auto Theft Experience

In general, these respondents:

- *have never tried to get in a police pursuit on purpose.*
- *have never stolen a vehicle with the owner still in it.*

“Uncontrollable external forces” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 208) negatively influence the participants’ perceived control over the execution of the activity (Stebbins, 2003b). Thus, in reference to these two findings presented above, auto theft as a serious leisure pursuit does experience this fifth component of flow. To illustrate, these respondents have never tried to get in a police pursuit on purpose. This is because pursuits quickly increase the chance that they will be caught for what they have done. Thereby, making police pursuits one form of uncontrollable external force that influences the participants’ experience of flow. It can also be suggested that these youth have never stolen a vehicle

with the owner still in it for the reason being that if the owner were in the vehicle it would have a negative influence over the youths' perceived control over the activity and otherwise impact negatively their flow experience.

Type of Serious Leisure Pursuit: Auto Theft as a Hobbyist Activity

Of the five groups of hobbyists, auto theft fits under the activity participants group. As noted earlier in another chapter, activity participant activities are rule-based, noncompetitive pursuits (Stebbins, 2003a, p. 201 - 202). It is clear by the following main findings that auto theft is a noncompetitive activity for its participants.

Other Auto Theft Experience

In general, these respondents:

- *have never been in a contest to see who could bring the nicest vehicle to school.*
- *have never been in a contest to see who could steal the most vehicles in one night.*

Moreover, the rules in activity participant activities can be formal or informal. Below are main findings that illustrate the noncompetitive informal and formal rules of auto theft, thereby demonstrating that motor vehicle theft is a type of activity participant activities.

Making Plans

In general, these respondents:

- *said that there is no pattern such as taking turns on who steals the vehicle and who rides as a passenger.*

Time and Place for Auto Theft

In general, these respondents:

- *steal vehicles any time after midnight up until about four o'clock in the morning, or until it begins to get light.*

Deterrents

In general, these respondents:

- *do find out if any of the five security scenarios listed in Table 5.2 are in place before they steal a vehicle.*

Methods of Stealing Vehicles

In general, these respondents:

- *break into a vehicle through the window.*

Characteristic Qualities of Serious Leisure: Auto Theft Application

1. The occasional need to persevere

One of the main findings, which have already been mentioned, is that in general these respondents have never tried to get into a police pursuit on purpose. In the case of actually being in a police pursuit, it was indicated within the interviews that these respondents do in fact try to out race the police. Hence, these youth carry on joyriding even though they know that if they are caught they will be faced with serious charges and that if they were to get into an accident they could be seriously injured.

2. Effort, training, knowledge, and skill

In serious leisure pursuits there is presence of a “significant personal effort based on specially acquired knowledge, training, or skill” (Stebbins, 2003a, p. 203).

Deterrents

In general, these respondents:

- *do find out if any of the five security scenarios listed in Table 5.2 are in place before they steal a vehicle.*

In order for these youth to know whether any of the five security scenarios listed in Table 5.2 are in place before they steal a vehicle, it requires effort on their part along with special knowledge and skill to know how to find out if such security measures are in place, where to look for such security measures, and how to look without looking conspicuous.

Opinions about Vehicles

In general, these respondents:

- *said that there are certain vehicles that they will not steal.*

Similarly, in order for these respondents to say that there are certain vehicles they will not steal, they need special skill and knowledge as well as personal effort to indicate which vehicles are the toughest and which are the easiest vehicles to steal. Moreover, they need special knowledge, skill, and training to know how to defeat the anti-theft devices that are used on some vehicles.

3. Unique ethos (social world)

Auto theft is its own social world that is comprised of certain actors, practices, and events that are internally recognized by its members. The actors are the auto thieves themselves, their friends who steal vehicles (which is one of the main findings that has already been discussed), along with other individuals who they may have encounters with

once they have stolen a vehicle, as well as the victims who are involuntarily involved in this crime.

The events and practices that comprise the social world of motor vehicle theft are the following main findings, most of which have already been stated and discussed within this chapter:

Other Auto Theft Experience

In general, these respondents:

- have stolen articles of some sort from vehicles before they began stealing vehicles.

Reasons for Stealing Vehicle

In general, these respondents:

- *steal vehicles and then use the vehicles for joyriding.*
- *steal vehicles for the thrill of it.*
- *have stolen vehicles for use in other crimes.*
- *have stolen vehicles for transportation purposes.*

Drugs and Alcohol Experience

In general, these respondents:

- *before they went on probation or went into custody, consumed a lot of illegal drugs during a one-week period.*
- *consume alcohol.*

4. Durable benefits (rewards)

Below are six of the ten rewards of serious leisure experienced by the youth who pursue motor vehicle theft.

I. Personal enrichment: Rather than a specific main finding to support this claim, data come here from the actual conduct of the interviews themselves. During the interviews these youth were proud and excited to tell their stories of police pursuits that they were in, types of vehicles they have drove, how they break-in and steal vehicles, how fast they have driven stolen vehicles, how much money they have been paid for stolen vehicles, and the different crimes that they have committed while in the possession of a stolen vehicle. It was evident during these interviews that these youth cherished these auto theft and other criminal experiences.

II. Self-actualization: Auto theft as a serious leisure pursuit provides for these youth an opportunity to develop skills, abilities, and knowledge on how to steal vehicle, how to defeat anti-theft devices, how to look for security measures, and knowledge on what vehicles are tough and easy to steal. This information has previously been examined in this chapter and therefore will not be reiterated here.

III. Self-expression: These youth not only develop these auto theft techniques that are stated in the previous point, but they also express these already developed skills, abilities, and knowledge. This point is self-explanatory and so will not be further discussed.

IV. Self-image: One of the main findings already discussed, is that these youth steal vehicles, among other reasons, for use in other crimes. To elaborate further, one youth, for example, stole vehicles for use in break and enter crimes. People he knew would put in requests for material goods that they wanted him to steal, and in return they would pay him in monetary funds or provide him with illegal drugs. Hence, auto theft

as a serious leisure pursuit provides for its participants a self-image as a motor vehicle thief.

V. Financial return: As has been stated throughout this chapter, auto theft as a serious leisure activity provides its participants with pin money, illegal drugs, and other material goods that they can not normally afford. This point is further elaborated by the following main finding:

Reasons for Stealing Vehicle

In general, these respondents:

- *consider that their reasons for auto theft have changed over time.*

Notably, these youth began stealing vehicles for the thrill or the fun of it and for joyriding, but then it became a way to earn some money, to support a drug habit, and for use in other crimes that also in return provide money and illegal drugs for these respondents.

VI. Social attraction: One of the main findings, which has already been discussed in this chapter, indicates that these youth have friends that also steal vehicles and that this activity provides relationships with other individuals involved in the auto theft industry. In turn, motor vehicle theft provides a social attraction for these youth who pursue this activity.

Auto Thieves' Social Standing: Marginal in Society

Auto theft at the serious leisure level is like other serious leisure activities in that the pursuit demands a large amount of time, energy, and emotion be devoted to the activity. To illustrate, it takes time and energy for these youth to find out if any of the security measures

listed in Table 5.2 are in place before they steal a vehicle, to decide which vehicle they are going to steal, and in situations that they have a list of vehicles to steal it takes time and energy to find all the vehicles on the list.

Furthermore, like other serious leisure pursuits auto theft participants have a passion for their pursuit, and subsequently, this passion that is often considered irrational marginalizes those who possess it. As it has been noted already in this chapter, one of the main findings of this study is that these respondents steal vehicles for the thrill of it. They love the driving aspect of auto theft and, for some youth, the actual act of stealing the vehicle. This passion to drive a stolen vehicle, to drive fast and recklessly, to be in a situation of not knowing whether they will get caught, to be challenged by certain events that may hinder their abilities to steal a vehicle and then get away with it (i.e., police pursuits, anti-theft device they do not know how to defeat, and the owner catches them in the middle of the act) are passions that are considered irrational by most nondeviant individuals. This is because, as a previous chapter has already noted, the world is dominated by effortless, hedonic casual leisure.

Risk Involved in Auto Theft

Nature-challenge hobbyists claim that there are three types of risks that they may experience while pursuing their activities (Stebbins, 2003b, pp. 103 – 104). Below are a few of the main findings of this study that illustrate that these three types of risks also take place during motor vehicle theft.

The first type of risk is “unmanaged risk, or risk that emerges only when individuals lose concentration, get fatigued, or otherwise suddenly become unable to draw on their

acquired skills, knowledge, and experience that keep them in flow”. As it has already been noted, some of the respondents indicated that they will not consume any intoxicating substances before or while they are stealing vehicles, since they feel they need to be strongly concentrated while stealing vehicles and drugs or alcohol would reduce their concentration. Thus, for some respondents a loss of concentration is considered a risk, because it prevents them from successfully and controllably drawing on their acquired skills, knowledge, and experience.

The second type of risk is “fortuitous risk, or greatly improbable risk from uncontrollable sources” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 103). Evidently, one of the main findings with reference to this is the issue of police pursuits. It is an illustration of an uncontrollable source that auto thieves may encounter and the risk that can come with being involved in a police pursuit.

The third type of risk is “social risk” (Stebbins, 2003b, p. 104) which is pressure from one’s peers to participate in the activity at a level that is not comfortable for the pressured participant. For these respondents, however, the following main finding indicates that this risk is not so much of an issue for most of these youth.

Peer Relations

In general, these respondents:

- *have never been pressured by their friends to steal vehicles.*

Lifestyle

According to the definition of lifestyles provided in this thesis in an earlier chapter, a lifestyle is “behavior that is organized around a set of coherent interests or social

conditions or both, that is explained and justified by a set of related values, attitudes, and orientations” (Stebbins, 1997b, p. 350). Auto thieves within their lifestyle of motor vehicle theft have various shared interests. This is illustrated by the following main findings:

- They generally have the same interests as to why they steal vehicles.

Reasons for Stealing Vehicle

In general, these respondents:

- *steal vehicles and then use the vehicles for joyriding.*
- *steal vehicles for the thrill of it.*
- *said that they will not steal vehicles again.*
- *have stolen vehicles for use in other crimes.*
- *have stolen vehicles for transportation purposes.*
- *consider that their reasons for auto theft have changed over time.*

Other Auto Theft Experience

In general, these respondents:

- *have never brought a stolen vehicle to school.*

- They generally have the same lack of interest for role models.

Role Models

In general, these respondents:

- *do not have role models in their lives.*

- They generally have the same interest as to how they spend their spare time.

Lifestyles

In general, these respondents:

- *like to play video games, specifically car racing games.*
- *are not involved in organized sports of any kind.*
- *like to listen to Hip Hop and/or Rap music.*
- *are not involved in any organized extra-curricular activity.*

Drugs and Alcohol Experience

In general, these respondents:

- *before they went on probation or went into custody, consumed a lot of illegal drugs during a one-week period.*
- *consume alcohol.*

Moreover, auto thieves have behavior that is organized around a set of social conditions that the following main findings illustrate:

Family Background

In general, these respondents:

- *have at least one brother and one sister in their families.*
- *do not have any extended family that has been involved in crime.*

Educational Background

In general, these respondents:

- *have completed grade nine as the last grade completed.*
- *have been suspended from school.*
- *want to attend some kind of post-secondary school in the future.*

Work Experience

In general, these respondents:

- *have had a paid legitimate job of some kind.*

Peer Relations

In general, these respondents:

- *have never been involved in street gangs.*
- *have friends that steal vehicles.*

Criminal History

In general, these respondents:

- *have been convicted of crimes other than auto theft.*

These shared interests and social conditions are explained by a set of orientations, values, and attitudes that these auto thieves possess that, in turn, develop into a social identity for these auto theft participants. The following list outlines the main findings that illustrate these values, orientations, and attitudes:

Justice System

In general, these respondents:

- *feel that their sentence is fair and appropriate for what they have done.*
- *feel that tougher penalties would not deter them from stealing vehicles.*
- *feel that there is nothing that the criminal justice system can do differently to prevent people from stealing vehicles.*
- *think that auto theft is much more serious than shoplifting.*
- *think that auto theft is much less serious than sexual assault.*

- *believe that auto theft has victims, and that the victims are the people who own the vehicles that they steal.*

Deterrents

In general, these respondents:

- *rate the effectiveness of CAT decals as being not effective.*
- *admitted that a baby seat would not stop them from stealing a particular vehicle.*

Criminal Justice System Influence

In general, these respondents:

- *do not worry about being punished by the courts when they steal vehicles.*

Disciplinary Action

In general, these respondents:

- *have been given a curfew at some point in their lives.*

With regards to this last point about curfew, it is considered a value or attitude that is common among these respondents, because as it has been mentioned in a previous chapter, the majority of these respondents did not adhere to the curfew set for them by their guardian(s). For other respondents, this point can also be considered a social condition, because their guardian(s) either did not provide a curfew for their child or in other cases they did not enforce the curfew that they gave their child.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of how the sociology of leisure theory is relevant for the examination of auto thieves, specifically for auto theft that is done for economic purposes of some sort. The process of auto theft as a casual leisure for these respondents that eventually gets transformed into a serious leisure pursuit that further develops into a lifestyle centered on pin money economics is clearly illustrated in this chapter. The main findings – generalized from five or more of the respondents – worked as the evidence to support this particular process. Thus, this chapter has demonstrated that the intrinsic motivation as to why these young offenders commit motor vehicle theft that is sometimes driven by economic motives is explained by the fact that this criminal offence is a serious leisure pursuit that also develops into a lifestyle for these youth.

Overall, by using the leisure perspective to study motor vehicle theft that is done by young offenders, this thesis has added to the study of crime in general an outlook on criminal activity, which is depending upon the type of criminal activity in question, as a form of creative leisure and creative lifestyle as opposed to the approach that examines the stigmatizing of the participants of such activities by labeling the activities that they partake in as deviant. Furthermore, by using the leisure perspective it enables individuals who are interested in the study of crime to really understand the motivational side of why offenders commit the crimes that they do by aiding in the understanding of the offenders' definition of the situation: It provides a further understanding of why offenders do what they do.

Practical Implications

One of the practical implications that has resulted from the main findings of this study is the set of reasons why these youth steal vehicles. Firstly, these reasons may indicate that these youth lack things to do in their lives that are stimulating and exciting. In turn, they search for ways to overcome their boredom through such things as stealing vehicles, joyriding, and consuming alcohol and illegal drugs. Secondly, there is a possibility that these findings imply that the guardian(s) of these youth are not providing for their adolescent children a means of transportation, thus explaining part of the reason why these youth steal vehicles for transportation purposes. Thirdly, these findings may indicate that auto theft is an entry-level crime, because these youth steal vehicles for the use in other crimes. Fourthly, these reasons possibly indicate that because these youth steal vehicles for minor economic purposes, for the most part the end product of their financial earnings is for illegal drugs, which indicates that there are adolescent youth who have serious drug addiction problems.

A second practical implication that has resulted from these main findings is that people need to be extra attentive to keeping their keys on their person and not in their vehicle. Moreover, automobile and or anti-theft manufacturing companies need to come up with a security measure that would prevent auto thieves from breaking into the vehicle via the window.

A third implication that is reiterated in these main findings is the observation that friends are extremely influential in an adolescent's life. Thus, guardian(s) need to be aware of who their children's friends are, what the friends are like, and what the friends are interested in.

A fourth implication centers on enforcing a curfew for youth either by their guardian(s) or by the law , thereby preventing many youth from stealing vehicles during the midnight hours. A fifth implication from these main findings is that stealing articles from vehicles is a possible precursor of a youths' involvement in motor vehicle theft, specifically auto theft for economic purposes.

A sixth implication is that auto theft that develops into an economic lifestyle begins as auto theft that is done mainly just for the thrill of it. Thus it is also possible that other young offenders who are involved in auto theft just for thrill will experience a change in the reasons for why they steal vehicles.

The seventh implication is in reference to how youth spend their spare time and the amount of spare time that they have. These are factors that may influence whether the youth will get themselves involved in auto theft or other criminal activities. For instance, the amount of time youth play video games, the types of video games they play, the type of music they listen to, and whether they are involved in any organized extra-curricular activities or sports of any kind are factors that should be considered to keep youth out of crime.

The eighth implication is that the family structure is very important with regards to whether there is both a mother and a father. It was noted in a previous chapter that each of these respondents have a mother in their life but no father, except in some cases there are step-fathers that are present. For these youth that do have a step-father in their lives, they do not like and do not get a long with their step-father. Thus, the presence of a youths' father in their life is a possible important antecedent for whether the youth may get involved in auto theft and possibly other criminal offences.

Lastly, the ninth implication is that these youth do not feel threatened by the justice system and its penalties nor do they feel that the justice system can do anything to prevent people from stealing vehicles. Thus, the justice system, its subsequent penalties, and its court system should be re-examined and the relevant changes should be made in order to produce fear and respect in the youth for the justice system, its penalties, and the court system.

Future Research

Possible directions that future research might take is to study youth who steal vehicles for economic purposes and then build some sort of economic lifestyle from it, whether they continue to steal vehicles for profit as they enter into adulthood, whether they end their economic lifestyle of this sort completely, or whether they become increasingly involved in other criminal activity. Another avenue future research might take is to study why female youth do not build an economic lifestyle based on auto theft for profit, and in what areas do females , if any areas at all, develop an economic lifestyle by means of a criminal activity that is also a leisure pursuit for them.

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APPENDIX A: Consent for Release of Information Form



CD 264 (R2001-03)

THE CITY OF CALGARY

COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I, _____
 authorize The City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services, _____
 _____ Division,
 to receive/release the following information _____

 from/to an official representative of (Agency/Professional) _____

It is understood that this authorization is valid for only six months and this information will not be further released to any other party/agency.

 (Date)

 (Client's Signature)

 (Guardian's Signature where warranted)

I have explained to _____
 the meaning of this consent form. I am satisfied that the intent is understood.

 (Date)

 (CNS Staff)

The personal information on this form is collected for the purpose of obtaining/releasing information to/from the specified agency under the authority of Section 32(c) of the Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act. Inquiries can be directed to Community and Neighbourhood Services at 268-5111.

DISTRIBUTION: White - CNS Canary - Client Pink - Agency/Professional

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide

Family characteristics:

1. What is your current age? _____
2. Where do you live? Urban _____ Rural _____ Don't Know _____
3. Do you have any brothers or sisters at home? Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____
4. Who acts as a parent to you? Single-mother _____ Single-father _____
Mother/Father _____ Adoptive Parents _____ Guardian _____
5. How would you describe your relationship with your parent/guardian?
Very Close _____ Close _____ Not Close _____ No Real Relationship _____
6. Have you ever been given a curfew? Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____
7. By who? (If applicable) Parents _____ Courts _____ Other _____ DK _____
8. What type of consequences have you been subjected to as a results of mis-behaviour:
 1. At home: _____
 2. School: _____
 3. Court: _____
9. How would you describe the financial status of your family?
Well off _____ Comfortable _____ Poor _____
10. How many times has your family moved in the past three years?
11. Have you ever ran away from home? Yes _____ No _____ Don't Know _____
12. Do have a significant role model in your life? Yes _____ No _____ DK _____
13. Have any of your immediate family been involved in crime?
Major Involvement _____ Minor Involvement _____ None _____ DK _____
14. Have any of your extended family been involved in crime?
Major Involvement _____ Minor Involvement _____ None _____ DK _____
15. How would you describe your relationship with your extended family?
Very Close _____ Close _____ Not Close _____ No Real Relationship _____

APPENDIX B continued

Lifestyle:

16. What television shows do you regularly watch?
17. What do you normally read, outside of school?
18. What video games do you like to play?
19. What type of music do you normally listen to?
20. What do you usually spend your money on?
21. What stores do you usually buy your clothes from?
22. Are you involved in organized sports of any kind? Yes ____ No ____ DK ____
23. Are you involved in any organized extra-curricular activities?
Yes ____ No ____ Don't Know ____
24. How do you spend your spare time?
25. Are any of your friends involved in street gangs?
Very Involved ____ Somewhat Involved ____ No Involvement ____ DK ____
26. Have you ever been involved in street gangs?
Very Involved ____ Somewhat Involved ____ No Involvement ____ DK ____
27. Do any of your friends steal cars?
All of them ____ Most of them ____ Some of them ____ None of them ____ DK ____
28. Have your friends ever pressured you into stealing a vehicle?
Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____
29. Explain:
30. Have you ever been part of an organized group hired by someone to steal cars?
Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____
31. Did you know the other people involved? Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____
32. Did you know their real names? Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____
33. Have you ever been paid to steal a certain type of vehicle?
Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

APPENDIX B continued

34. Have you ever been convicted of crimes other than auto theft?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

35. Specify:

36. What type of sentence(s) did you receive?

Drugs/Alcohol:

37. How many times do you consume alcohol (in a week)? ___ times per week

38. How many times do you use illegal drugs (in a week)? ___ times per week

39. Have you ever stolen cars in order to support either of these habits?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

History and Methodology of Stealing Cars:

40. When you steal a vehicle, how often do you work alone?

Always ___ Usually ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___ N/R ___

41. Are you ever under the influence of drugs or alcohol when stealing a vehicle?

Always ___ Usually ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___ N/R ___

42. Describe how you steal a vehicle? (By-pass locks and ignition)

43. How long does it usually take you to steal a vehicle?

44. What models of vehicles do you target?

45a. Are there certain years of vehicles that you prefer?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

45b. Explain:

46. Are some brands of cars easier to steal than others?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

47a. Easy cars to steal:

47b. Tough cars to steal:

48. Do you ever make plans to steal a car? Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

49. Special events Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

50. Holidays Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

51. Time of the year Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

52. What time of day do you usually steal vehicles? am _____ pm _____

53. Where do you normally steal vehicles from?

54. How old were you when you were first **involved** in the theft of a motor vehicle?

55. How old were you when you **stole** your first vehicle?

56. Who initiated this?

57. Who taught you how to steal a vehicle?

58. Approximately how many automobiles have you stolen in your life?

59. How many vehicles would you normally steal in an average week?

60. What would you end up doing with the vehicle after you were done with it?

61. How long do you keep the stolen vehicle for?

62. Where do you store/park the stolen vehicle when using it for extended transportation purposes?

63. Have you ever deliberately vandalized a stolen vehicle?

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R

64. How many police pursuits have you been involved in?

65. How many pursuits when you have been the driver?

66. How often have you been the passenger in a stolen vehicle?

67a. Is there a pattern such as taking turns on who steals the car and who rides as a passenger? Yes _____ No _____ DK _____ N/R _____

67b. Explain:

68. Did you steal articles from cars before you began stealing cars?

Yes _____ No _____ DK _____ N/R _____

APPENDIX B continued

69a. Have you ever stolen a vehicle with the owner still in it?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

69b. Explain:

70. Have you ever stolen a vehicle with keys in it?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

71. Have you ever stolen a vehicle for money? Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

72. Have you ever stolen a vehicle for a joy-ride? Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

73. Have you ever stolen a vehicle for use in other crimes?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

74. Have you ever stolen a vehicle for transportation?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

75a. Have you ever stolen a vehicle for the thrill? Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

75b. Have your reasons for car theft changed over time?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

75c. Explain:

Deterrents:

76. What might stop you from stealing a particular vehicle?

77. Would a baby seat stop you from stealing a vehicle?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

78a. Are there certain vehicles that you will not steal? Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R ___

78b. Explain:

How would you rate the effectiveness of the following anti-theft devices:

79. The Club	Very Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Not Effective	DK
80. Alarms	Very Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Not Effective	DK
81. Electronic Immobilizers	Very Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Not Effective	DK
82. Combat Auto Theft Decals	Very Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Not Effective	DK

APPENDIX B continued

83a. Have you ever defeated any anti-theft devices? Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

83b. Which ones? Club ____ Alarms ____ Immobilizers ____ CAT decals ____

83c. How did you defeat them?

Club:

Alarms:

Immobilizers:

CAT decals:

84. How did you learn to do this?

If you were to consider stealing a vehicle, would any of the following change your mind?

85. Security guards Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

86. Parking lot attendants Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

87. Cameras Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

88. Bright lighting Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

89. Vehicles kept in a garage protected with s home alarm

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

90. Do you find out if any of these measures are in place before you steal a car?

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

91. How long do you plan on stealing cars?

92. If your job was to create a commercial that stops car thieves from stealing cars, what would you put in it?

What are your thoughts about proposed penalties such as:

93. Suspension of driving privileges _____

94. Suspension of insurance privileges _____

95. Loss of wages/income _____

APPENDIX B continued

Thoughts about the Criminal Justice System:

96. Have you tried to get in a police pursuit on purpose?

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

97. Did you ever worry about getting hurt during the pursuit?

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

98. Do you feel that your sentence is fair and appropriate for what you have done?

Too harsh ____ Appropriate ____ Too lenient ____ DK ____ N/R ____

99. Did you ever worry about being punished by the court when you were stealing cars?

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

100. Did you ever worry about getting caught when stealing cars?

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

101a. **[Yes]** If you were worried about getting caught, why did you still do it?

101b. **[No]** Why didn't you worry about it?

102. What could the criminal justice system do differently to prevent people from stealing cars?

103. Would tougher penalties be a deterrent? Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

104. Do you believe that auto theft has any victims?

Yes ____ No ____ DK ____ N/R ____

APPENDIX B continued

In order to judge the seriousness of vehicle theft, where do you think car theft fits when compared to the following acts:

For example: *Auto theft is _____ than shoplifting. (Much more serious = 5)*

Much less serious Less serious About the same More serious Much more serious DK

105. Shoplifting	1	2	3	4	5	DK
106. Pickpocket	1	2	3	4	5	DK
107. Steal money from a friend	1	2	3	4	5	DK
108. Steal money from parents	1	2	3	4	5	DK
109. Stealing a bicycle	1	2	3	4	5	DK
110. Vandalism	1	2	3	4	5	DK
111. Breaking into a house	1	2	3	4	5	DK
112. Striking a complete stranger	1	2	3	4	5	DK
113. Sexual assault	1	2	3	4	5	DK

When you consider stealing a vehicle, what do you believe your chances are of:

114. Getting caught Very likely 1 2 3 4 5 Not likely

115. Being convicted in court Very likely 1 2 3 4 5 Not likely

116. How many times have you been **involved** in stealing cars?

117. How many times have you been caught?

118. How many convictions have you received?

119. What sentence do you think is fair for stealing a motor vehicle? (No priors, no injuries)

Education:

120. What was the last grade of school that you have completed?

121. How many days a month do you miss school?

122. What are your reasons for missing school?

APPENDIX B continued

123. Have you ever dropped out of school?

Yes ___ No ___ Expelled ___ DK ___ N/R___

124. How do you like school now?

125. What are your grades like in school?

126. Have you ever brought a stolen a vehicle to a school before?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R___

127. Have you ever been in a contest to see who could bring the 'nicest' car to school?

Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R___

128. Have you ever been in a contest to see who could steal the most vehicles in one

night? Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R___

129. Do you plan on attending:

College___ University___ Trade school ___ No Post-secondary ___ DK ___ N/R___

130. What job would you like to have?

131. How do you think that you will get that job?

132. Have you ever had a paid legitimate job of any kind? Yes ___ No___ DK ___ N/R___

133. Are you currently employed? Yes ___ No ___ DK ___ N/R___

APPENDIX C: Preliminary Statement

Preliminary statement read to interviewee by interviewer

I am asking you to participate in a nation-wide study of motor vehicle theft, the goal of which is to learn why stealing motor vehicles appeals to some young people. Your name will never be used in any report of this study, for we are interested only in broad ideas about vehicle theft and not about individual people involved in it. Further, you can refuse this interview, refuse to answer any question that bothers you, or even leave the interview before it is finished. No one will punish you for doing any of these things. Note also that four questions (30, 38, 91, and 116) ask about criminal activities, the answers to which could prove incriminating in a future criminal investigation of you. Although it is highly unlikely that the legal authorities will ever call us to give evidence, I will still tell you when I am about to ask one of these four questions.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this statement and that I am aware of what it says:

(signature of interviewee)

date