

AUTO-CRIME'S "HIGH-RISK YOUTH": A PROFILE

A Study and Report on At-Risk Youth in Langley and Surrey, B.C.

Engaged in from January to April, 2005

Participants:

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC)
The Law Courts Education Society (LCES)

Research Evaluators:

Charles K. Curtis, and George Meehan

The research upon which this study is based was funded by a grant from the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia through the Law Courts Education Society of British Columbia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this study was to produce a profile of Fraser Valley youth who were “at risk” to commit auto crime. The nature of such an examination necessitated a brief review of the literature (pages 2 to 4) on youth involved in auto crime not only in British Columbia and in Canada, but also throughout the world at large, where applicable. In this survey, factors that motivate young offenders were explored and their salient characteristics were identified.

Methodology

The two evaluators drafted a list of research relevant questions and drew up four sets of interview protocols (see “Appendices”). They then interviewed, in person or by telephone, police in Surrey and Langley, available school administrators in Langley, and nine youth in three Langley high schools. As well, they reviewed reports from RCMP in Surrey and the results of two B.C. studies. The evaluators’ findings comprise a substantial portion of this study (pages 5 to 16) and are organized in terms of those key factors that put youth at risk to commit auto crime.

Composite Profile of “High-Risk Youth” in Surrey and Langley

The major intent of this study, and its essence, is summarized in the bulleted discussion on pages 17 to 19. This composite profile focuses, first, on why youth commit auto crime — for profit, status, excitement — and then centres on the key characteristics of youth who are “at risk” and examines such indicative factors as their ages and gender, the significance of their home environments and relationships, typical school backgrounds, group affiliations, and some frequent attitudes towards the police and the justice system and towards the victims of auto crime. Many such youth feel marginalized while some see committing auto crime as a kind of “rite-of-passage”.

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1. Purpose Of This Study

Auto-crime is one of British Columbia's most prevalent, persistent and pernicious problems. The major goal of this study is to create a profile of high-risk Fraser Valley youth—"youth" defined as young people between the ages of 12 and 17. Such youth are "high risk" in terms of engaging in auto crime. This "profile" aims to identify and examine such salient "young offender" characteristics as: Motivation to commit auto-crime; Age and gender; Home environment and relationships; School background and relationships; Peer influence; Group affiliation; Attitude toward the police and the Justice System, and; Attitude toward victims. Identifying and profiling who these "high-risk" youths are will assist the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) and the Law Courts Education Society (LCES) to develop more effective auto-crime awareness and prevention programs.

2. Research Methodology

To develop a profile of youth at "high risk", the two independent evaluators (Curtis & Meehan) devised a two-page list of "Research Questions" (Appendix A), and then prepared four separate "Interview Protocols", the first intended for "Police Officers", the second for "School Administrators" (including counsellors and teachers), the third for "Alternative Students" living in Langley and Surrey, and the fourth for "Youth Who Have Committed Auto Crime". These protocols were forwarded to officials at both the ICBC and LCES for their review and vetting, a vetting which included a variety of amendments and additions (Appendix B). After a number of e-mail interchanges and two "all-party" *conference calls*, these protocols were confirmed and finalized, and were subsequently used by the two evaluators when they interviewed—either by phone or in-person—or reported out on people in any of the four above-referred-to constituencies.

3. Background To Study

In 1999, ICBC provided a grant to LCES to develop, implement and evaluate a 13-hour curriculum entitled the "Courtlink Auto Crime Prevention Program" (CACPP) for Senior Elementary and Alternative School "at-risk" students (Gambioli, 1999). By June of 2001 over 2000 students had completed the program, with 868 (715 elementary and 153 alternative students) responding to an in-depth independent evaluation. This evaluation disclosed that the program was "very well" achieving its two key objectives of increasing student knowledge about auto crime and its prevention, and of

promoting positive attitudes about the prevention of auto crime.

Between September 2002 and April 2005, the CACPP program — still offered in some BC schools — has been updated by both ICBC and LCES personnel, with the aim of making it more current and applicable to alternative school students. The modifications have been worked into a “pilot” program for an alternative class at Langley’s “Apex Secondary” school, a program which will be conducted and evaluated in May, 2005.

4. Review of the Literature: A Bulleted Synopsis of Youth and Auto Crime

Motivation

- “The research posits that marginalized young people steal cars as a response to the process of exclusion from public places. The responses of young people who have been charged with joyriding offences clearly indicate that stealing cars offers them the opportunity to move from one space to another. Accordingly, cars provide them with opportunities to interact with friends without the threat of surveillance and allow them a high degree of individual autonomy and freedom often denied to them in other situations” (Reser, 1980, p.281).
- “The data suggests that stealing cars can be a way of obtaining increased status and respect among young people’s peer groups” (Dawes, 2001, p. 6).
- “This research strongly recommends that a concentrated effort be made to construct and disseminate an educational program to highlight the serious nature of car crime offences . . . [and] include mundane details of the harm suffered by the victims of car crime as well as evidence of the sometimes shocking outcomes involving stolen cars.” (Dawes, p.7).
- “The peer group therefore provides a structure for the advancement in status for younger joy riders to learn the skills of car theft and to graduate to the status of leader . . . [for] given their exclusion from areas such as school or the job market . . . the possession of a stolen car for some youth appears to serve as a marker for the transition to manhood” (Conferences, 2001).
- “Two of the most commonly reported motivations for stealing vehicles are excitement and peer pressure, as this delinquent act provides an escape from boredom and a way to gain status amongst peers” (Department of Justice, Canada).

Characteristics of Youth Involved in Auto Crime

a. General

- From a study of 30 young offenders in detention centres: “It is clear that in almost all cases these young people came from low socio-economic backgrounds with their parents or older siblings having either no employment or only employment in low-skilled occupations . . . the majority of youth disengaged from education towards the end of primary school with fewer going on to complete year ten at secondary level” (Conferences, 2001).
- “Few respondents reported feeling any remorse for their victims. Nor did they think about the inherent dangers of driving cars at high speeds while under the influence of drugs and alcohol . . . [and custodial] detention is often interpreted as a logical step in the rites-of-passage to manhood for many youth” (Dawes, p.6).
- “The vast majority of auto-theft offenders are male, and commonly become involved in vehicle offending in their early- to mid-teens. These individuals often grow up with few positive role-models and live in disadvantaged and overcrowded neighbourhoods that lack adequate leisure facilities. . . . Young auto-theft offenders are characterized by high levels of truancy and unemployment, poor self-esteem, economic deprivation, and low levels of educational attainment” (Dept. of Justice, Canada).

b. Age

- “The majority of joy riders are comparatively young (13-15 years of age) and either desist from car theft or go on to commit either crimes that require the use of a stolen vehicle such as break and entry or ramraids [?]. Joyriding therefore should be analyzed as a fluid culture with a changing membership where individuals live out a selected, temporal role or identity . . . before assuming a different identity” (Dawes, p.5).
- “Data from the *2002 Uniform Crime Report Survey* indicate that youth between the ages of 12 and 17 accounted for almost half (42%) of Canadians charged for motor vehicle theft These offenders are more likely to do so for joyriding purposes” (Dept of Justice, Canada).
- “In 2001, there were about 170,000 thefts of motor vehicles in Canada . . . [and] 42% of persons charged with motor vehicle theft were youths aged 12 to 17 years” (Savoie, 2001, p.9).
- “In Ottawa, 5000 vehicles are stolen, on average, each year. Of those arrested in possession of a stolen vehicle, 71% are youth between 14 and 17 years of age” (Easter, 2003).
- “The average age of a young car thief is 16 years . . . ” (Easter).

c. Gender

- “While the majority of young females had an affinity with car culture, they committed car crimes mainly to escape the constraints of their gender-prescribed roles that consisted of domestic work within the home” (Ogilvie, 1996).
- “Of the 1,854 persons charged with motor vehicle theft in 2002 [in British Columbia], 60% were male adults, 9% were female adults, 26% were male youths and the remaining 5% were female youths” (Summary Statistics, 2003).
- “Nine times out of 10 [the auto thieves] are male” (Easter).

d. Programs Addressing Youth Auto Theft

- “Highlight the serious nature of car crime offences. Such an educational program should include mundane details of the harm suffered by the victims of car crime as well as evidence of the some times shocking outcomes involving stolen cars. . . . An additional feature of the program may consist of integrated writing and drama activities that explore young people’s perceptions . . . while at the same time exploring the repercussions of this type of behaviour . . . to serve as one part of an intervention strategy available to all students” (Dawes, p.7).
- The program: *Youth and Joyriding: Communicating the Facts* consisted “of bringing victims into [Regina] schools to speak to kids about auto theft not being a victimless crime, and was as well a multi-media video poster challenge. As a result, auto theft rates in Regina have been reduced by 30% in six months” (Project #6116, 2002, p.21).

e. Problems and Limitations in Conducting Youth Auto Crime Research

There are a number problems involved in obtaining significant and cohesive information about youth auto crime offenders. Amongst many such difficulties are the following:

- Follow-up of youth offenders through either RCMP or ICBC records is restricted
- Restricted availability for interview of police officers, school administrators, or possibly at-risk youth was restricted, resulting in a small sample size
- “Denial of access to interview auto theft offenders” (Zapotichny, p.83).
- Ability to identify youth who are at-risk for engaging in auto theft. “Consideration should be given to establishing the characteristics of such youth” (Pfeifer & Skakum, 2002, p.22).
- “It is imperative that a number of empirical measures of effectiveness are identified and that base-rate information is gathered” (Pfeifer & Skakum, 2002, p.22).

Research (In Canada)

- Project 6116, in collaboration with the Solicitor General and other justice and health agencies, is researching “the phenomenon of youth involvement in auto theft” and is evaluating “the dynamics of recruitment into motor vehicle theft rings” (Project 6116, 2002, p.4).
- Project 6116 is “currently launching a national research project to look at the dynamics of motor vehicle theft by young people, and their motivations. Five hundred youth from across Canada will be interviewed. The pilot study, launched in Manitoba, was very successful and a lot of information has already been garnered with respect to motivation” (Project 6116, 2002, p.5).

Additional Contacts

- Youth Involvement in Auto Theft Sub-Committee of the National Committee to Reduce Auto Theft. Ms. Marlene Viau, Chair, Project 6116: A National Committee to Reduce Theft.
- Dr. Rick Linden, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg. Project Director, *The Young Offenders and Vehicle Thefts Project*. This project interviewed 100 youth from across Canada who had committed auto theft crimes in order to better “understand the nature and causes of vehicle theft” (Linden, 2002, p.3).
- Chief Edgar MacLeod, Chair, Crime Prevention Committee, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention project designed to “address the root causes of crime among youth by providing police and others with additional tools to assist them in working with young people” (Stone, W., 2001, p.1).

5. Information: Fraser-Valley Police Interviews and Reports

The two RCMP officers who were interviewed, one in Surrey and the other in Langley felt that only a small portion of auto crime in their jurisdictions was committed by youth. “In Surrey, not more than 5%, perhaps even less” (Boettcher, 2005) while “Very little auto crime is committed by youth in Langley” (Wick, 2005), this RCMP officer during the past two years having personally arrested only one youth, a 15-year-old boy. Both officers said that youth begin to commit auto crime as early as 11 years of age, although boys and girls this young are usually “along for the ride and not as part of the theft”. Youth in Surrey are 14 or 15 years of age when they begin to steal cars, the younger offenders more often stealing from the vehicle while the older youth are stealing the car itself. Boettcher noted, however, that most cars in Surrey are stolen by white (Caucasian) males between the ages of 27 and 35, these people typically having drug problems as well as multiple court convictions. Most car thefts in

Surrey occur in either Whalley or the Guildford Mall area.

In terms of theft, girls in both Langley and Surrey are greatly less involved in auto crime than are boys, and they rarely drive the stolen vehicle, although one 16-year-old female arrested in Langley, had not only stolen the car, acting alone, but had been taught how to steal cars by her brother. In Surrey, girls 14 to 15 years of age, when involved in auto crime, “tend to help in committing a secondary crime, where the stolen automobile is being used as transportation to the place where a secondary crime, such as break-and-entry, is committed.”

With respect to the families of young auto-crime offenders, the Surrey experience is that “most of these youth come from homes where the family is dysfunctional (perhaps having only one parent), or from foster homes.” Often one parent or older siblings are well known to the police. Of the youths in Surrey who commit auto crime, “about 75% are well known to the police”. In Langley, the 15-year-old boy and the 16-year-old girl were both from single-parent homes and had mothers who were drug addicts. It is not surprising that the economic conditions in the young offenders’ homes have been characterized by police as tending to be “fairly low” (Surrey), or as being “very low” (Langley).

In regard to the school life of young offenders, RCMP officer Boettcher in Surrey said that, “the majority of youth we deal with have not done well in the educational system, and they seem to have a low educational level. Of those still in school, many are in ‘work-and-learn’ kinds of program, and these programs bring them together with youth of similar backgrounds.” In the case of the two young offenders in Langley, “both the boy and the girl had dropped out of school”.

With respect to key motivating factors in youth auto crime, Boettcher observed that “almost all the youth we apprehend are on drugs, especially ‘speed’ or ‘crystal meth’ [methamphetamine], but also heroin and crack. In order to get money to pay for their drugs, they must break-and-enter. Stolen cars are used to take them to areas of the city where they’ll commit the break-ins. Joyriding is really not a factor in auto crimes being committed by youth in Surrey.” In Langley, Constable Wick felt that key youth auto crime motivating factors were: “Transportation; Recognition from peers; As a means of travelling to a place where they will likely commit a robbery.” In regard to gaining-status-amongst-their-peers as a motivator, Langley felt that amongst their peers “they had status”, while Surrey pointed out that “being able to steal a car and not get caught probably increases status amongst similar youth”. In terms of the motivating role of drugs and alcohol, Surrey said that “drugs play a large part. Most cars are stolen so that the thief can have transportation to a . . . break-and-entry. Alcohol may play a small

part.” Langley noted that “both the boy and the girl we apprehended were on Speed”.

Beyond this, being a member of a gang was not seen as an issue in Surrey where gangs “are not a problem. The youth we catch appear to be acting alone”, while in Langley the 15-year-old boy “was in a loosely organized gang of 5 or 6 young auto thieves called the ATM -- ‘Auto Theft Machine’.”

Another crucial factor in youth auto crime is the attitude of young offenders towards the law, law enforcement, and the victims impacted by their auto thefts. Exploring this issue with the police had the officer in Langley remark that these youths “do not think about the victims of their crime”, he pointing out that both of their apprehended teenagers “were frightened when they were arrested. But they had no regard for their actions”. In Surrey, the officer said that young offenders “are frustrated when we apprehend them, but they are not concerned about court sentencing or probation. They feel that very little will happen to them. Many have been through the system a number of times before.” He also added that these youth “don’t think or care about their victims”. A final issue, as he pointed out, is that “everyone caught is arrested, but it’s not very likely that anyone will be jailed. The courts do not want to see these youth.” The Surrey officer’s conclusion about auto theft in general was that “the majority of people who steal cars must do so to maintain their drug habit. Getting drugs is all important to them. You really can’t stop them from stealing cars.”

In a “roundtable discussion” facilitated and reported on by the RCMP in Surrey (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2000), 12 adults and 9 young people from Surrey gathered to exchange information aimed at better understanding the motivation of youth involved in auto crime, especially relative to “joyriding”. One conclusion was that joyriding was perhaps meant only to refer to the passenger(s) in a stolen car, or else to the notion of “cruising around” in a car, which the youth participants in this panel-discussion felt was a term of “little value”, they claiming that a clear “purpose is almost always attached to the theft and driving of a stolen car” (p. 3) — although relative to this, see the section “Information: Interviews with At-Risk Youth”, page 10 of this report.

The roundtable panel report indicated that there was a general consensus regarding a number of issues. First, that present measures of penalization of young offenders do not work very well, these measures including: fines (“young people will not pay them anyway”); probation (“it needs to be monitored closely and regularly”); jail (“stints are too short — it becomes a social gathering”). Nor do measures of deterrence such as “anti-theft devices” prove very effective. Included amongst these are the “club” and CAT stickers (least effective), and alarm systems. Albeit, GPS systems, immobilizers, kill

switches, and chips were regarded as “highly effective”. The second issue around which there was clear consensus was that education, information and intervention with respect to auto crime needs to begin at “much earlier ages”, and in earlier elementary grades than is currently the case. As well, it was concluded that attempts to influence young people through the media (television, radio, newspapers, or posters and pamphlets) missed their mark, being more generally aimed at adults and were, therefore, largely ineffective in trying to persuade youth not to engage in auto crime.

As reported in Zapotichny (2003), “vehicles are stolen for the commission of another crime or a series of crimes. . . [and] drug addiction is highly correlated with the commission of crimes, specifically theft of motor vehicles (p. 85)”. Another citing in the Zapotichny project was that the mean age of auto criminals apprehended in Surrey in 2001 was 27.5, and that “few” young offenders were involved. With this group, the most common purpose for committing auto theft was for “Profit”, which included reselling, shipping or exporting, chopping, stripping and, changing vehicle identification numbers (“re-vin”). The second most common motivation for theft was stealing in order to commit a “secondary crime”, a list which included such charges as: Break-and-Entry; Robbery; Dangerous operation and pursuit; Dangerous operation causing bodily harm; Nonfatal injury; Cocaine possession; Methodane trafficking; Marijuana trafficking; Substance abuse / use; Weapons possession; Breach of probation; Bail violation; Assault, level 1; PSP / Proceeds of crime; and even Spousal assault (p.17).

6. Information: School Administrator Interviews and Reports

The two school administrators whom the evaluators interviewed were both in Langley. The first person was the vice-principal of Mountain Secondary School (Stewart, 2005), while the second person was the teacher of an alternative class at Langley’s Apex Secondary School, a school specifically designed for at-risk students (Jentzen, 2005). The teacher explained that at-risk youth were at her school because they had been experiencing “increased behaviour problems” and “low academic success”. She was able to identify the auto-crime at-risk group because they either talked or bragged about it. Factors that she believed motivated these youths were “money, status, or friends”, while in terms of their social milieu, she said “they hang out in groups, glorify violence, and have a pecking order” (Jentzen, p.1). She felt that families had “little control of their children and had few boundaries at home”. This comment echoed the earlier-referenced RCMP (2000) discussion that claimed that many young offenders come from homes whose parent(s) neither know nor care where their kids are.

The responses of the two Langley school administrators differ a little perhaps because the vice-principal was speaking from the perspective of a regular high school whereas the teacher was in a school that dealt only with alternative students. Stewart (2005) said that he became aware of high-risk students through “police liaison officers, youth care workers”, or from “gossip amongst the students”, while Jantzen (2005) pointed out that the students in her school will openly “talk about it”. Her classes are comprised of only alternative students, whereas Stewart’s school’s programs for possible at-risk

students include “adapted programs, modified programs, programs for weak students -- many saying they ‘hate’ school”. He explains that many students were placed in these programs “because they were on drugs -- from age 13 on”, while Jantzen says her students were placed in her school’s classes in order to help them “increase school success, and help them deal with what prevented them from learning.” At her alternative school, students at risk to engage in auto crime were between the ages of from “12 to 16”. At the regular Langley high school such students were usually “15 or older”. At the regular Langley high school, the academic achievement of at-risk students, “almost all boys”, was regarded as “very low -- much below grade level”. On the other hand, at the alternative school such achievement was seen as “low at first, improving through time”. As well, school behaviour records were differently reported. The alternative school said that “problems decreased”, while the regular school said that at-risk students were generally “unprepared for class, have no assignments or homework completed, are seen to be ‘lazy’; often sent to the office; uninterested”. In parallel regard, truancy at the alternative school was seen as a problem “before” coming to Apex, whereas at Mountain Secondary at-risk youth were regarded, truant-wise, as “non-attenders, school-avoiders. When they do come to school, it’s more of a social rather than an educational experience.”

In terms of the percentage of at-risk youths who had been expelled or suspended from school, the story was about the same, most having been expelled or likely to be (in the regular school setting) and usually for truancy and low achievement (which was why many had been moved on to “Apex”), and “many will simply cease coming to school” (Stewart, 2005), whereas in the alternative school setting, “some will end up graduating”. In this latter school, upon leaving, many of the young people will “go on to trades . . . these plans are realistic” for them. Alternatively, at the regular high school, at-risk students “don’t seem to have any plans. If we can, we try to get them interested in the trades. We do all we can to get them on an apprentice program . . . [although] we don’t think there’s much point in keeping these kids in school beyond Grade 10.”

Interestingly, auto-crime youth at Langley’s alternative school are “looked up to” by other students. At the regular high school, such youth are seen by other students as “losers, even crazy -- hoping they get caught by the police”, although amongst “their peer group -- mostly kids on drugs -- they have a high status” (Stewart, p. 3). Both school administrators see the use of drugs or alcohol as characteristic of at least part of the lifestyle of their at-risk youth, albeit “some kids who steal cars may not be ‘everyday druggies’ but they need drugs for courage when they set out to steal a car.” In this regard, at

the regular high school the vice principal observed that “gang membership is not an important factor in auto crime -- most auto crime is a ‘solo’ activity . . . dealing in drugs is more gang-related”, while at the Apex alternative school the teacher felt that most of her students would say no, they weren’t associated with gangs, “but I think ‘yes’ -- they’re just no-name groups”.

In both Langley schools, attitudes towards the police were similar. “Being caught by the police is not a great concern. These kids know that not much will happen to them” (Stewart, p. 3); “They don’t worry about being apprehended because they get away with it. They hate police” (Jentzen, p. 3). Concerning the effectiveness of auto-crime penalties such as loss of driver’s license (“they don’t even have them yet!”), suspension of insurance (“what insurance?”), threat of having a criminal record, or even incarceration — “none of these are a deterrent; none of them will stop these kids from driving or stealing cars”, said the vice principal. Albeit, the alternative school teacher did add that “incarceration is the only deterrent”.

With regard to the family environments of at-risk youth, the two school administrators believed that many of these children were from single-parent homes when “even if the mother and father are together, something is going on in the home -- perhaps one or both parents being alcoholic or on drugs” (Stewart, p. 4). Typically the parents, when contacted by the school, “feel helpless” as the teacher said or, as the vice principal remarked these “parents -- many who are on drugs or alcohol themselves -- have given up on their son, saying ‘Throw his ass out of school’; ‘I’m at the end of my rope, I’ve had it.’ These are parents who want to get rid of him.”

Finally, a look at factors that motivate youth auto crime. At the alternative school, the degree that auto crime was prompted by the desire for financial gain was seen as from “90% to 95%”, while the regular high school vice principal felt that this was “probably not a huge factor, but it may be for some.” Peer pressure at the alternative school was seen as probably a “huge part!” of the motivating influence. In support of this comment, the regular high school reported more extensively that with youth, “their peers are the most important people in their lives. Unfortunately, their peers are kids, like themselves, who don’t know how to deal with their own problems. Likely some kids steal cars just to show their friends they can.” At the alternative school, gaining “Status” was seen as a major influence, the regular school similarly remarking that “mostly peer pressure is the main factor”. That youth auto crime was only an impulsive act, committed without prior planning, was seen as unlikely at the alternative school but thought to be probable in terms of the first theft but, “after that it’s probably not” impulsive.

7. Information: Interviews with At-Risk Youth or Young Offenders

The interviews of young offenders, or at-risk youth, were either conducted by the RCMP in Surrey, or else in Langley classroom settings by one of the two writers of this study. The interview findings were similar, but somewhat different from findings reported in the “Review of Literature”, or the views of police in the two communities.

The Langley In-Person Interviews

In March of 2005, nine Langley youths — with their permission — were audio-taped during “focused interview” sessions of about 30 minutes each. These young people, all boys, were interviewed in three different secondary schools: Mountain, Stafford, and Apex.

a. Ages

In terms of the ages when young people start to commit auto crime in Langley, such as breaking into, damaging or stealing cars, there was a general consensus that they usually begin when around 14 years old, though some interviewees were aware of kids who had started earlier at 12 (“but you have to have someone older to teach you”), or perhaps by 13, but certainly “by 15!”. One boy added that he knows a kid of 12 who steals cars because he “can’t be charged with a crime”, and another boy said that “before they’re 16, kids don’t have licenses so they have to steal cars if they want to learn how to drive.” This point segued the interviewer into the topic of “why do young people steal cars?”.

b. Motivators

When asked why young people committed auto crime, the nine Langley students explained that teenagers steal cars for many reasons, but the most frequent were the following:

- To pay for drugs (such as “speed”, called the ‘drug of choice’ because “it’s like a natural adrenalin”, “ecstasy”, and marijuana), or for alcohol “which is actually more expensive” said one student.
- To get money for things other than drugs, such as “paying off fines”, “buying stuff rather than just stealing it from a store”, “paying off debts”. As well, money can be made by “stripping the car”, or by “taking everything out of it, including change and stuff”, or by taking it to a “Chop-Shop”, or else by “changing the VIN #, if you know someone who can do it, so then the car is legit, and you can sell it”, though usually out of town or in another province.
- To commit a robbery or a secondary crime, like break and entry, or to “steal from somebody and then just run out and drive away”, or to “rob a ‘Grow-Op’”, which is “probably the riskiest thing to do”.
- To get status amongst peers. “Some guys think it’s a cool thing to do.” Another boy said “Some kids

think it's probably big to steal a car, like 'Hey, do you want a ride? Okay wait, I'll just go *jack up* a car' which gives them a lot of status."

- To go somewhere, as a means of transportation. "You have to get to places, specially on weekends, like to parties and things."
- To "joyride", especially amongst 12 to 15 year olds, which would sometimes include girls.
- To experience the "adrenalin rush" said three of the nine interviewees. "You're always a little bit scared at getting caught." And sometimes, out of "boredom -- you want to do something exciting."
- To get away from a parent, one beleaguered student saying, "parents beat up on some of us".

c. Other Motivating Factors

In terms of additional factors that influence teenagers to commit auto crime, the Langley youth mentioned Video games, the media -- "TV news and newspaper reports", and movies. Some video games specifically mentioned were "Grand Theft Auto", "Need For Speed", "Get Away", "Mafia", "True Crime", and "Counter Strike". One alternative student in Langley explained that "video games give you the impression that you're untouchable because, when you crash, nothing happens. You just bounce back up and carry on." Two students enlarged upon this, one saying that "the games give you the impression that it's okay to steal a car because you won't get hurt, or caught." Finally, one of the five students interviewed at a Langley high school concluded that there is "something special about stealing cars rather than stealing out of a store. Cars are quicker, safer. And you don't have to run!"

d. Gender

The nine Langley boys interviewed said that few girls were ever involved, and usually just for the joyride or the excitement of it. One boy explained that girls "don't actually steal; but they'll ride in a stolen car" going on to point out that, for any teenager, "fast cars are fun to steal". A second boy added (somewhat sadly?) that "not one girl I know has ever been involved -- not even for joyriding." Another boy mentioned that there was only one girl he knew who had ever stolen a car, she was "about 16 years old" at the time — and this girl seemed to be the same one that the Langley RCMP officer had mentioned during his interview (see p.5).

e. Worries About the Police

Most of the nine students interviewed felt that teenagers weren't worried much about being caught by the police. Said one student, "Why? You only get a slap on the wrist. Cops are generally too busy with something else." And, "If they catch you drinking or even smoking dope, on a weekend, they just

tell you to stop.” Said another student, “13 and 14 year olds are too young to care whether they could get into trouble or not.”

As well, the Langley students interviewed said that such possibilities as losing drivers’ licenses (“under 16’s don’t even have them!”), or insurance privileges (“what are they?”), or being “charged” by the police were not deterrents. The loss of either a license or insurance was commonly viewed as “not much of a threat”. Said one alternative student, “we know the rules”, suggesting that he knew how much, or little, to expect. In this connection, however, comments from another student were rather different. He began by saying that “Cops don’t do much. They try to scare you by telling you what they’re going to do with you if they catch you, like beat you and leave you in a ditch.” This student went on to allege, however, that he had a couple of friends to whom this had happened, or at least the hitting part. Another student seemed to agree with this saying that “Langley cops aren’t nice guys or even respectable necessarily” using scare tactics and “some are brutes and hurt you physically.” But, said he, “the result is it makes us more angry and more determined not to get caught.”

A younger student said that he was worried about being caught because when a police car pulls up beside him when he’s driving a stolen car his “heart beats a little faster -- it’s like a rush, and then the relief when they drive off without even looking at me.” He added that losing his license or being charged would have little effect on him because “I didn’t even care in the first place.” An alternative school student said that some of the police are rough but that “a lot of kids just think they’re bullshit. They try to scare you -- but they’re supposed to be there to protect you too.”

f. Gang Involvement

Being in or part of a gang is “definitely not necessary for stealing cars” said one alternative student. “It’s not like it was ‘organized crime’ or anything. There aren’t many gangs in Langley, though maybe in Vancouver you’d find gangs doing autos.” He added that “most kids who steal cars aren’t even in school.” Another student stated that auto crime in Langley, as far as he knew, wasn’t done in gangs, “kids just do it for the heck of it -- and to try and get their status up for being a tough guy.” A third student remarked, “Not gangs but groups, maybe”, while a fourth said, “You do it in twos and threes”, there being only a few kinds of gangs, like the “LLM, short for the Langley Lynch Mob”.

g. Easiest Vehicles to Steal

To this question, the students gave answers both in terms of the makes of vehicles as well as their quality, type, or condition. The most frequently mentioned makes were Toyotas, Honda Civics, Ford

trucks (“because their ignitions are easy to ‘fix’”), Chevy trucks and some General Motors cars. With some vehicles “it’s easy to find where the hidden key is”. In terms of condition, two people pointed out that “older cars with less complicated ignitions” were the easiest. Other examples mentioned were cars that had the keys still in them, or had doors that were unlocked, or that were lacking protection with no clubs or other deterrents. Even vehicles with deterrents, however, were seen as viable targets because clubs “can be hack-sawed” or “cut the steering wheel cut and then just slide the club off”. And “alarms can be overcome” or silenced quickly, although one boy opined that “alarm systems really scare people off.” The hardest vehicles to steal were seen to be those with immobilizers (“because the ignition just won’t start no matter what you do”), or secondly “cars that you have to push a button to get them started”, as well as most of “the nicer and more expensive cars”, presumably fitted with deterrents.

h. Best Locations for Auto Theft

A number of students mentioned that, during the day, large unattended parking lots or shopping malls were the best places for stealing cars, whereas, at night, areas that were dark were the best, or else “the parking lots behind apartment buildings or large complexes”. In addition, one student said that any area that had lots of cars and no attendant was “an easy place to steal from”.

i. Can Kids Stop Stealing Cars?

One alternative school student had an interesting answer to the question about kids he knew who had in fact stopped stealing cars. “They had a picture in their mind of having lots of money, but after a year and a half or so they decided ‘this isn’t going to get me where I want to be’, so why do it?” He added that what they were getting out of auto theft was “petty”, and that they realized they weren’t making much money but were “taking huge risks”. Others added, however, that it wasn’t easy to stop and that few kids they knew had done so yet, though one boy said that he had a friend who decided that “if he did it one more time and got caught, they could really put him away for a while.” He added, “but none I know are still in school.” Finally, one boy said that “what finally stops kids is that they go to prison, but then if they can’t get jobs, because they have records, some go back to stealing.”

j. Home Backgrounds

Amongst the nine Langley students there was a general consensus that, in most cases, the parents didn’t know that their kids were committing auto crime and, in many cases, the parents didn’t care much what their children were doing. One student said that “they generally don’t know what’s going on, and if parents are on drugs too, then they don’t even care.” Another said, “It’s unbelievable how

kids lie to their parents about where they're going." A third student added that many parents "don't care because their kids are older, and you just need to tell them I'm going to sleep over at so-and-so's house, but you're really going out to steal!"

One student said that when his mother found out about him, "She was devastated! She said, 'Go live with your dad!', and then everything I told him was bull crap." Relative to this comment, some students said that a number of the kids they knew came from single-parent homes, while one alternative school boy said "It's not just single parent homes. A lot of kids come from a variety of homes", and then he spoke of some of the problems in these homes, including the use of drugs and alcohol, concluding that the kids are "basically just trying to help themselves . . . to get some footing." Finally, one boy with perhaps a greater sense of respect and kindness said, "Your parents know that when you're between 14 and 18 you don't want them to smother you with a lot of questions, so they don't press too hard. Then, if they do find out, they could be in shock."

k. Relationships and Status at School

As one student pointed out, "most of the teenagers who steal cars don't even go to school any more. They drop out in grade 10 or 11." As a result, they end up having to "hang out with 'Jet Heads [?]'". Another boy said that "no regular kids want to hang out with them, or hop in a car with them." He explained, with surprising articulation, that you need a "certain set of mind not to get involved in their activities." When youth who commit auto crime are at school, "they aren't doing particularly well (failing or getting C minuses or the occasional C); you sure don't find any on the school's honour roll", said one alternative school boy. He went on to explain that a stealer "gets known as a thief, or as 'an idiot', because stealing a car doesn't make you a 'big fellow', so he finally drops out of school." Said a Langley secondary school student, "some of the guys who commit auto crime were always trouble makers, and this and that" and went on to say that "some of those guys like the reputation they get of speeding down a street, especially in a classy car, and getting money with it and from it."

Addressing the notion of such students having career plans or life goals, one boy said that most of them "don't consider any of that." Another boy pointed out that the guys out of school, but "working at some poor-paying job", are mainly worried about having "their wages garnisheed if they get caught still stealing cars again." "Most of these guys don't even have career plans -- until after they stop stealing, and then they realize they're screwed" said another boy. Finally, an alternative school student said that it's the "athletes in most schools have the higher status" going on to explain that at his school

“the guy with the biggest ‘Rep’ [reputation] is big and tough and likes to fight. He and guys like him have the most status here -- not the car thieves -- because no one can touch them!”

l. Victims of Auto Theft

Most of the nine Langley boys interviewed felt that young offenders don’t either care “or even think at all about the people” who are the victims of the auto crimes they commit, especially if they are “just the car’s owner” although, added one student, “maybe when they think of innocent bystanders getting hurt, that may be another thing.” Car owners “are probably insured” stated another, implying that stealing their cars therefore became a less serious matter. One interviewed boy who had participated in auto theft interestingly clarified the issue this way. “You actually never think about victims at all. You don’t care. You’re thinking ‘how fast can I get this car out of here.’ Because stealing cars can be addictive, like drugs can, so whose car it is or who might get hurt is not in your head at all.” Finally, one boy summed things up by saying that auto thieves, if they’re “not serious about stealing a car, just use it then ditch it -- damaging doesn’t matter and victims are actually the furthest thing from anyone’s mind!”

m. Educational Programs: Would They Help?

There was some divided opinion amongst the nine Langley boys with respect to whether having ICBC run a program about preventing auto crime would help reduce auto crime amongst teenagers. “That could be a really good thing” was one student’s opinion, “but you’d have to start it by grade 7 or 8 at the latest, because that’s when you suddenly learn about all these things, and drugs and that.” He felt that such an educational program should focus on the harm that auto crime does, and the “penalties for doing it, and why it’s definitely not worth it”. Another student felt that “getting a program when you’re already in high school is too late”, although an alternative school student believed that such a program could be effective saying, “Oh, there has to be such a program. Programs like DARE [how did he know about this one?] and MADD are only trying to influence us to stop . . . and they are definitely effective.” On the other hand, if some kids have been doing something illegal for a long time most programs “are probably not very effective, but they could have some effect.” Finally, another alternative school boy felt that such a program against auto crime could be effective “if they would actually put you in jail for a few months.” He went on to say that committing auto crime was “like cancer, it just moves and you can’t get rid of it -- unless you have major surgery.” Consequently, such a program should also feature the most lurid and unwanted results of such crime, “even showing the

blood, and the gore, and the bodies!”

The Surrey RCMP Interviews

Nine youths were present amongst the 21 people who participated in the “Roundtable Discussion” held by the RCMP’s Surrey Detachment in August, 2000. In terms of motives for committing auto crime, the young people replied that teenagers did so: *because they could, with little chance of getting caught; *because there are no consequences if caught -- probation and fines meaning nothing; *because of the challenge of stealing cars; *for the “rush”; *to get respect from peers; *to commit other crimes; *for the convenience of it, not wanting to walk, especially to court or to probation [!]; *to see how many cars could be stolen during a given time frame -- as a competition; *to get into a police chase; *because the opportunity of theft presented itself, i.e., an easy car to steal, or a driver who left the keys in the car, sometimes even with the motor still running! (RCMP, 2000, pp.3-5)

These nine Surrey young people concluded that existing prevention measures against auto crime were largely ineffective. Jails are referred to as “day care; too lenient; you learn more tricks; play Sony”; although some offenders are “scared straight” and won’t reoffend. Probation “doesn’t work -- it’s just a threat or bluff, some guys even driving to probation in stolen cars . . . [with] the penalties for breaching probations seen as a joke -- like one day in jail!”. Fines “aggravate offenders, who will then steal cars or commit crimes to pay off the fine. Auto-theft devices, except for immobilizers, are “easily by-passed”. “School / Community presentations do not work -- they’re too late”. Media persuasion on TV or over radio “doesn’t work, and commercials -- like ICBC’s -- are humorous”, while posters and pamphlets are perhaps “good for adults, but not for young people.” (RCMP, 2000, pp.8-9)

In the RCMP panel survey, the nine youth participants recommended that new auto-crime prevention measures should include at least six strategies. Harsher jail penalties: “longer sentences [and] the courts have to back this up by making youth spend the entire time incarcerated, as opposed to 1 - 2 month suspended sentences, or bail”. “First offence convictions should be severe, instead of a conditional sentence or probation.” Harsher Jails: “strip the jail’s use of Nintendo, TV, etc. which has a hotel setting, instead of something more uncomfortable.” Mass Media approaches: “commercials need to be directed at youth instead of at car owners, and should be more graphic / violent, showing consequences, such as an innocent bystander being killed.” Psychological or Psychiatric Help: With auto theft being like an addiction, the young people reported that “someone needs to get into our heads to re-program them instead of trying to send us to jail.” “Counselling should be a mandatory part of

probation.” Education: All nine teenagers agreed that “education [about auto crime] has to start from a much, much earlier age in life.” Police Methods: “The youths agreed that many aspects of police work need to be improved.” Two examples were given: “Why are unmarked police vehicles always Ford Explorers” and, “Why do the police in general not use their own police frequencies which would make scanning by offenders impossible?”. (RCMP, 2000, pp.12-13)

8. A Composite Profile: “High-Risk Youth” in Surrey and Langley

Motivation: Why do youth commit auto crime?

- To get money from vehicle itself (ransacking, stripping, chopping, reselling it)
- To use vehicle as transportation to a place where secondary crime committed
- To raise money to purchase drugs, pay off debts and fines, buy other articles
- To gain recognition from and status with peers (the most important people in their lives)
- To experience the emotional excitement, the adrenalin “rush”
- To have means of convenient transportation for travelling, joyriding, going to parties
- To experience autonomy, freedom, and a kind of “rite-of-passage”

Broadly speaking, for young people auto crime is:

- Committed for financial gain or profit over 90% of the time
- Influenced by specific video games that suggest you are untouchable, that auto crime is okay

Characteristics of youth “at risk” to commit auto crime

a. Age

- Start breaking into, damaging, or stealing cars around 14 years of age
- Most auto-crime youths become involved in their early to mid-teens
- Begin planned stealing of cars by 15 or 16 years of age
- In B.C. in 2002, average age of young car thieves who were arrested was 16.1
- Majority of youth who only get involved in order to joyride are 13 to 15
- In Canada in 2001, 42% of persons charged with auto theft were youths from 12 to 17
- In Surrey / Langley, “5% or less” of all auto thefts are committed by youths
- In Surrey in 2001, the mean age of all arrested auto criminals was 27.5
- A majority of the 16 to 18 year old auto criminals no longer attend school

b. Gender

- In Canada, 90% of all auto crimes are committed by males
- In B.C. in 2002, only 5% of all auto crimes were committed by female youths
- Few young girls are involved in auto crime, usually for excitement or joyriding

c. Home Environment and Relationships

- Family socio-economic conditions characterized as fairly low (Surrey) to very low (Langley)
- Many at-risk youths come from single-parent homes
- In two-parent homes, often one or both parents on alcohol or drugs, or known by police
- Many families are dysfunctional, with parents or older siblings known by police
- In Surrey, 75% of all arrested youth known by police
- Parents or siblings either in low-skilled occupations, or unemployed
- Many parents have little control over kids
- Many parents provide few boundaries or restrictions
- Many parents don't know where kids are
- Parents don't care where kids are

d. School Backgrounds and Relationships

- Attendance characterized by behavioural problems, trouble-making, low academic achievement
- Generally unprepared for class; assignments and homework undone or incomplete
- School more of a social experience than an educational one
- High levels of truancy. Become school-avoiders & non-attenders
- Frequently get suspended or expelled from school
- Many youth offenders drop out of school by grades 10 or 11
- Most "high-riskers" don't have long-term career plans, life goals, or even employment plans
- Amongst their peer group, at-risk youth and young offenders have status
- Most regular students hold them in low esteem, try to avoid or ignore them

e. Group Affiliation

- Gangs not seen as problem in Surrey
- Most youth offenders act solo or occasionally with a friend or two
- Some loosely-knit youth gangs in Langley, but not "organized crime" ones as such
- In Fraser Valley, not "gangs" so much as youth groups, and almost totally male

- “Gang-related” crimes are usually those dealing in drugs
- Most teenagers (who may commit auto crimes together) are not even in school
- Few positive role models in any group

f. Attitude Towards Police and Justice System

- Not greatly concerned about being caught. Nothing much ever happens
- Feel that police only able to use scare tactics, resort to bullying. Many “hate the cops”
- Most not worried that police can do much with them legally, except arrest them
- Loss of license, insurance privilege, even brief incarceration, not seen as deterrents
- Most not worried about jail, probation, fines or any other penalties
- Many see laws as ineffective, same as most anti-theft devices, other than “immobilizers”

g. Attitude Towards Auto-Crime Victims

- Youth offenders neither concerned nor think about the “owner” victims
- Not concerned and don’t care about how victims might feel
- Not bothered by stealing, damaging, stripping or ditching victims’ vehicles
- Incidental bystander-victims sometimes seen as regretful event
- Otherwise, little sense of remorse ever experienced

h. General Observations

- At-risk youth not much impressed by media attempts to influence them re auto crime
- Feel that education about auto crime should start before end of elementary school
- Think that by their mid-teens, their minds are made up re pro and con of auto crime
- Many high-risk youth feel marginalized, or in transition from childhood to adulthood

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APPENDIX A

The Research Questions

The interviews, either in person or by telephone, with police, school officials, and both Surrey and Langley youth are designed to answer the following general questions, developed from an extensive review of the existing literature on auto crime and youth offenders.

Age Characteristics

- What is the average age of youth when they first become involved in auto crime?
- What types of auto crime are youth likely to be engaged in when they first become involved?
- What role are young people most likely to play when first involved in auto crime (e.g.: passive participants such as joy riders, or active participants breaking into and stealing cars)?
- What is the average age of young offenders who have been apprehended for auto crime?

Gender

- Are girls involved in auto crime? If so, to what extent?
- What is the ratio of boys versus girls involved in auto crime?
- What is the average age of girls who are apprehended for auto crime?

Family Characteristics

- To what extent do young offenders involved in auto crime come from single-parent families?
- What tends to be the relationship between young offenders and their parent or parents?
- Have any of these young people run away from home? If so, how often?
- Does family involvement in criminal activity tend to characterize the homes of young offenders?
- Does parental employment, or unemployment, in low-skilled occupations tend to be a feature of families of youth who engage in auto crime?
- What seem to be the attitudes of parents toward their children who commit auto crime?
- Are there any apparent ethnic characteristics amongst youth who commit auto crime?
- Do youth who commit auto crime tend to live in particular localities, for example in low income and / or older areas of the town or city?
- Do the family characteristics of boys and girls involved in auto crime tend to differ?

School Relationships

- Are there any particular school program(s) that young auto-crime offenders tend to be in?
- If these youths have been placed in a special program (e.g., an alternative class), why were they placed in it, and at what age?
- What is the typical academic performance record for young auto-crime offenders? Are their grade levels appropriate for their age?
- Do higher levels of truancy characterize attendance records of youth who commit auto crime?
- What classroom or school behaviour describes the attitude that these youth have towards school?
- Do the school disciplinary records of youths who commit auto crime differ significantly from the records of those of youths who do not so engage?
- Have many such youths been suspended or expelled from school?
- How many of these youths graduate from Grade 12?
- Do these young people express future educational aspirations or vocational objectives? If so, how realistic are these goals?
- What status in the school setting is accorded to youth who engage in auto crime?
- Is there any difference in auto-crime patterns, or in school or familial relationships, between boys and girls in terms of their involvement in auto theft or other criminal activity?

Motivation

- How, and by whom, were young offenders introduced to auto crime?
- To what extent did peers influence their decision to become involved in auto crime?
- What reasons do teenagers give for becoming involved in auto crime?
- Is status within a specific group (or “gang”) a motivational factor to engage in auto crime? If so, within what group? How is this status recognized within the group?
- To what degree is the need to have personal transportation a motivator?
- To what degree is auto theft for financial profit a factor?
- In what way do youth engaged in auto crime explain the “joy riding”?
- What feelings do youth experience as they engage in auto crime? What need or needs to these feelings seem to satisfy?
- Do the motivations of boys and girls engaged in auto crime differ?
- Do youth tend to be knowledgeable about the kind and make of cars they steal? In what ways?
- To what degree is youth auto theft just an impulsive act, committed without prior planning?

Group Affiliation

- Are most acts of auto crime committed by an individual youth acting alone?
- Are many youths who commit auto crime members of gangs? If so, are most of these gang members engaged in criminal activity of some sort?
- What benefits do young people see in gang membership?

Attitudes toward Law Enforcement and Society

- How do youth who commit auto crime attempt to justify or rationalize their actions?
- What attitude do these youth have toward the police? Toward being apprehended?
- Do youth who commit auto crime express a concern for their victims?
- Have youth who commit auto crime an awareness of the cost to society of their illegal actions?
- Does the illegal use of drugs or alcohol characterize youth who commit auto crime?
- For how long, typically, do youth continue to commit auto crime?
- To what degree are youth who commit auto crime concerned about being caught, or receiving a sentence?
- To what degree are auto-crime youth deterred by penalties such as loss of their driver’s license, or the suspension of their insurance?

Prior Criminal Activity

- Before they are apprehended, are most youth who commit auto crime known to the police?
- Do youth who are apprehended for auto crime have a record of prior offences? If so, of what kind of offences?

APPENDIX B

The Interview Protocols

“Focused interviews” will be used to collect the information required to answer the research questions. The focused interview is a combination of exploratory and structured approaches (Merton, Fisk, & Kendall, 1956), and is conducted in a manner that permits persons being interviewed to express their information in their own terms (Vockell & Ahser, 1995, p. 199). According to Mouly (1978, p. 203), because the focused interview enables the interviewer to get “more adequate answers” than are likely to be yielded by a set of specific questions and, additionally, allows the interviewer to “follow through on what may turn out to be very significant ideas”, it is particularly appropriate during the early stages of an investigation. Borg and Gall (1983, p. 442) believed that the focused interview, which they referred to as the “semi structured interview” was “reasonably objective” but, nevertheless, permitted a “more thorough understanding” of a respondent’s opinions and the reasons behind them than would be possible with a rigidly structured format.

Krathwohl (1993, p. 371) advised that the focused interview should begin with broad questions that encourage respondents to express themselves as freely as possible without initial guidance from the interviewer. Schumacher and McMillan (1993, p. 428) provided an example of such a question with “Tell me what you know about” As the focused interview continues, the interviewer moves on to semi structured questions that elicit responses to general topics or to questions that were suggested by the respondents’ comments to the initial questions. Finally, if information is still required to satisfy the objectives of the interview, the interviewer resorts to structured questions that require respondents to provide specific answers.

I. Interviews with Police Officers

Opening Question: What can you tell me about youth who engage in auto crime? (or)
How would you describe / characterize youth who engage in auto crime?

Semi structured Questions

1. What are the age and sex of youth who are involved in auto crime?
2. How would you describe the homes of youth who engage in auto crime?
3. What can you tell me about the educational experiences of youth who commit auto crime?
4. What do you think motivates youth to engage in auto crime?
5. What can you say about the out-of-school activities of youth who engage in auto crime?
6. Could you describe the attitudes of these youth toward auto crime and its possible consequences?
7. Are girls who engage in auto crime different in any way from the boys who do?

Structured Questions

1. At what age do youth typically begin to commit auto crime?
2. At what age do youth start to steal automobiles?
3. What kinds of auto crime are committed by very young youth? By older youth?
4. To what extent, and in what ways, are girls involved in auto crime?
5. How early do girls become involved in auto crime? Are there any specific ways in which girls involved in auto crime differ from boys?
6. Are there particular factors that characterize the homes of young offenders who engage in crime? For example, do most youth who commit auto crime come from intact or from single-parent families? Could you describe the relationship of these youth to their parents and siblings?
7. Do most youth who commit auto crime come from homes where parents or siblings are known

to engage in criminal activities?

8. Could you describe the economic conditions in these homes?
9. What do you know about the academic life of youth involved in auto crime, their behaviour in school and in their classroom.
10. To what extent do you think that gaining status amongst peers is a motivating factor for committing auto crime?
11. Why do you think youth engage in auto crime?
12. Are many youth who commit auto crimes members of gangs?
13. Do drugs and alcohol play a role in auto crimes committed by youth?
14. What attitude do you believe these youth have toward the law and law enforcement?
15. Do these youth tend to sympathize with the victims of their crimes?
16. What percentage of such youth are known to the police prior to being apprehended?
17. For these youth, could you say something about the frequency of their arrest, and the likelihood of their being jailed?
18. Can you suggest measures that might deter youth from committing auto crime?
19. Which cars, their makes or models, are the easiest to steal?

II. Interviews with School Personnel: Teachers, Administrators, Counsellors

Opening Question: Do you have students in this school who have engaged in auto crime or who you believe to be at-risk to commit auto crime? If so, what can you tell me about them?

Semi structured Questions

1. Are there any specific school programs or classes in which these students tend to be enrolled?
2. What can you tell me about the educational experiences of these youth?
3. How do you decide that a student is likely to be at-risk to commit an auto crime?
4. What do you know about the families and neighbourhoods from which these students come?
5. What factors do you think motivate these youths to engage in auto crime?
6. Could you describe the social milieu of these students, both in school and in the streets?

Structured Questions

1. How did you become aware of the students in your school who have committed auto crimes?
2. In what programs or classes do these students typically seem to be enrolled?
3. If these youths were placed in a specific program (e.g., an alternative class), why were they placed in it, and at what ages?
4. What are the ages of the students in your school who have engaged in auto crime or whom you expect are at-risk to do so?
5. What percentage of these students are boys? Girls?
6. Could you describe their levels of academic achievement?
7. What is their behaviour record in your school?
8. Is truancy a problem with these youths?
9. What percentage of these students have been suspended or expelled from school?
10. What percentage actually complete the requirements for a BC high school graduation certificate?
11. Can you tell me what these youth typically plan to do upon leaving high school? Would you say that these plans are realistic?
12. What status or reputation do these students enjoy in your school among students in regular programs, or among students in alternative programs who are not engaged in auto crime?
13. Do your responses to these questions pertain equally to boys and to girls?
14. Is gang membership a characteristic of the youth in your school who have already committed, or who are likely to commit auto crime?
15. Do you think that drug or alcohol usage is a characteristic of youth who commit auto crime?
16. What attitudes do you think these youth have toward the police? Do you think that they worry about being apprehended?
17. Are many of these youth from single-parent families?
18. How do their parents react when contacted by the school because of their child's behaviour?
19. What part do you think that peer pressure plays as a motivating influence on auto crime?
20. To what degree do you think that youth auto crime is prompted by the desire for financial gain?
21. To what degree is such crime only an impulsive act, an act committed without prior planning?
22. To what degree is such crime deterred by penalties such as loss of driver's license, suspension of insurance, or the threat of either a criminal record or of incarceration?
23. What other factors are likely to influence youth to engage in auto crime?

III. Interviews with Alternative School Students

Opening Question: Do any of you know of any kids who have been involved in auto crime like vandalizing or stealing cars? If you do, what are these kids like?

Structured Questions

(Because of time available for a class interview, the evaluators decided to proceed directly to a series of structured questions.)

1. How old were these kids when they started to damage or steal cars?
2. How did these kids get started in auto crime?
3. Why do you think they started?
4. Are these kids still stealing or damaging cars? If so, why do you think they are doing so?
5. If some have already stopped doing so, do you know why?
6. What kind of a reputation does a kid get who steals cars? Is it cool to steal a car?
7. Who do these kids usually hang out with after school?
8. Do you think that young people who steal cars worry about being caught by the police?
9. If caught, do you think that these kids are worried about losing their driver's licenses, or their insurance, or being charged with a criminal offence, or even being jailed?
10. Do many of these kids you know who commit auto crimes use drugs or alcohol?

IV. Interviews with Youth Who Have Committed Auto Crime

Opening Question: I'm told that some of you here have stolen cars. Would anyone like to tell me about it?

Structured Questions

1. At what age did you begin to take part in stealing automobiles?
2. Why did you start then?
3. For how long did you continue? Why did you quit?
4. Did you do any other kind of illegal stuff before you started in with cars?
5. Were you a member of a gang of kids who stole cars?
6. If you were a member of a gang, what kind of things did the gang do?
7. How do you feel about police officers?
8. Do you worry about getting caught committing an auto crime? What would worry you most?
9. Do you think about the effect you might have on the person whose car you stole?
10. If you started to steal cars again, why would you do so?
11. What might make you quit stealing cars?
12. How did your parents feel when you were caught stealing cars? Did this bother you?
13. Do you take drugs or alcohol?
14. How do you feel about school? Did you learn anything useful in school? What were your grades like?
15. When you get out of school, or away from here, what do you want to do for a living?
16. In your experience, where are the best or easiest places to steal cars?