Title: **The Need for Comprehensive Crime Prevention Planning: The Case of Motor Vehicle Theft**

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Summary*:*
Most crime prevention programs are poorly planned and implemented, and therefore do little of nothing to prevent crime. Those responsible for the programs rarely undertake a careful analysis of their community's problems, and programs are often implemented because they are fashionable rather than because they have been shown to be successful. In fact, communities that have been able to make meaningful reductions in crime rates have done so by taking a comprehensive approach to crime prevention in which they implement an integrated series of programs that coordinate the efforts of a broad range of partners and participants. This article illustrates how this process can be applied to the prevention of motor vehicle theft.

Comprehensive initiatives can be of two types:

- Those that focus on the needs of an entire community or on high crime neighborhoods in the community, and
- Those designed to address a particular problem, such as domestic violence or vehicle theft, on a broad scale.

In either case, the common theme is an attempt to deliver an integrated series of programs by coordinating the efforts of a broad range of partners and participants.

The need for a comprehensive approach to vehicle theft
- The cost of motor vehicle theft is about $1 billion per year: $600 million for insurance premiums and $400 for criminal justice and health care costs (Wallace 2004). The deaths and serious injuries caused by crashes involving stolen vehicles add to the seriousness of this problem.
- We cannot rely on the deterrent effect of the justice system to reduce motor vehicle theft. Other prevention strategies must be developed in order to reduce the high rates of this crime.
- The more we know about patterns and causes of motor vehicle theft and about the background and motivation of the most serious offenders, the more likely it is that we will be able to develop successful prevention strategies.

What we know about vehicle theft
- Vehicles are most often stolen from parking lots, followed by streets and home garages and driveways (Wallace 2003). A high proportion of vehicle thefts take place in low-income, high-crime communities (Mirrlees-Black, Budd, Partridge, and Mayhew 1998).

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- The presence of large numbers of motivated offenders, combined with the availability of older cars that are easy to steal and a lack of private or enclosed parking facilities, means that the socioeconomically disadvantaged are the main victims of vehicle theft.
- Joyriding is facilitated by the ease with which some older cars can be stolen.
- Due to its high reporting rates, we now a great deal about the victims of vehicle theft. However, we are less certain about our knowledge of auto thieves, because the low clearance rate means that we cannot be sure that those who are arrested are representatives of all those who steal motor vehicles. We can, nevertheless, use data about those arrested to make some inferences about offenders.
- Young people are very involved in vehicle theft. In 2001, young offenders made up 42% of those arrested for vehicle theft (Wallace 2003). This is a higher proportion than for any other offence.
- Research in Sweden has found that vehicle theft is a *precursor* offence, meaning that young people whose first involvement with the law is for vehicle theft are more likely to continue their criminal behaviour than those whose first involvement is for any other offence (Svensson 2002).
- Most vehicle thefts are committed by males.
- Interviews with incarcerated young offenders have shown that their primary motivation for stealing cars is excitement rather than profit (Anderson and Linden 2002).
- Joyriders are more likely to have and adversarial relationship with the community, to feel excluded by the dominant institutions and culture, and to be poorly supervised by their parents (Sharley and Associates 2002; Rice and Smith 2002). Joyriders also report low rates of participation in sports and other non-criminal recreation and high rates of school truancy (Fleming 1996; Anderson and Linden 2002). Joyriding is typically committed in the company of peers.

Preventing vehicle theft
The important questions to ask are: "Does it work?" and "Under what circumstances?" Preventing vehicle crime will require different prevention methods. Such methods represent a broad range of types and solutions, including situational measures, social development programs for offenders and high-risk youth, community action, police strategies, and legislative/administrative actions.

Situational measures
- Vehicle immobilizers: They prove to be the best measure. The success of immobilizers has been demonstrated in many studies, including research done in Canada (Tabachneck et al. 2000) and Australia (Potter and Thomas 2001).Due to its complexity, it is very difficult to defeat an immobilizer and rates of theft of immobilizer-equipped vehicles are very low. Western Australia has made installation of immobilizers mandatory.
- Parts marking: In order to prevent cars from being stolen and dismantled in 'chop shops', parts can be marked in a variety of ways with a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

Social development programs for offenders and at-risk youth

- Motor projects: vehicle-oriented recreational programs for offenders and at-risk youth, including go-cart racing, driving lessons, and mechanical training. Australia has been particularly innovative in using mechanical training to attract young people to programs that also involve mentoring, intensive case management, recreational programming, and vocational support (Sharley et al. 2002).
- Rehabilitation programs: the most effective are based in the community (Pfeifer and Skakun 2002). Effective programs will also be based on a careful assessment of the offenders' needs so that they can be provided with the programs that are more likely to be effective.
- Restorative justice programs: These programs have been effective for some low-risk offenders, but no research has been specifically conducted on vehicle theft offenders.

Community actions

- Educational programs: Research evidence shows conclusively that these campaigns, by themselves, have little impact on vehicle theft (Riley 1980: Geason and Wilson 1990); however, they can be useful in sensitizing the public to the need for other kinds of actions and in warning potential offenders of programs such as the use of bait cars.
- More secure parking lots: In the UK, the government has established a program in which a parking lot can be inspected and certified as a Secured Car Park if certain criteria are met. CCTV (Tilley 1993) and natural surveillance (Laycock and Austin 1992) are two of the most effective ways of improving parking lot security.

Police strategies

- Bait cars: a bait car is left by the police in a high-theft location in the hope that it will be stolen. These cars are fitted with electronic systems that enable them to be tracked and monitored by the police if stolen. The police are also able to shut down the vehicle and lock the doors remotely so that the thieves can be apprehended. While bait cars do result in apprehensions, they are mainly indented to act as a deterrent. Crucial to achieve this, is demonstrating to offenders that the chances that they will be apprehended have actually increased: programs in which arrests are rare will not be effective.

- Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR): ANPR Systems digitize moving licence plates and check the numbers against various databases. Current systems operating in the UK, can scan more than 3,000 vehicles per hour and can scan vehicles moving up to 160km/h. Several pilot projects have been run in England and have been very successful both in arresting people in stolen vehicles and in reducing rates of vehicle theft (Whitely et al. 2002).

Legislative/administrative solutions

- Greater information sharing: VINs or scrapped vehicles must be better documented through written-off vehicles registers that are shared with other

provinces. Australia has implemented a National Exchange of Vehicle and Driver Information System (NEVDIS) program that contain information on all registered vehicles and licensed drivers. The sale of stolen cars would also be more difficult if policies are in place requiring physical inspection of vehicles being newly registered from another state or territory.

Regina: A case study of a comprehensive auto theft program
In 2001, Regina had the highest rate of vehicle theft in North America. Typically, vehicles were stolen by young people who used them for a few hours and then abandoned them. City's mayor, chief of police and the department of justice developed an initiative incorporating three levels of committees: a Steering Committee made up of senior people, including the deputy minister of justice who oversaw the initiative: below them was a Management Committee made up of supervisors representing the police, the Crown, Probation and Youth Corrections; and finally, there is a Working Group of front-line personnel, who are in almost constant contact with each other. The program also involved insurance companies, school divisions, the media, and members of the public.

Key components of the strategy are early intervention programs for first-time offenders and coordinated and extensive supervision of repeat offenders. There are three levels of programs, based upon the criminal history and risk assessments of the offenders:
- CARWASH – for entry-level offenders who are at risk of reoffending.
- CRO –for chronic repeat offenders with a high risk of reoffending.
- SHOCAP –for serious habitual offenders with a high risk of reoffending.

The program also involves educational programs aimed at getting vehicle owners to use anti-theft devices in their cars and at discouraging young people from getting involved in vehicle theft. The rate of auto theft in Regina declined by 33% between 2001 and 2003