

Masculinity: Another Perspective to Understand Auto Theft

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Abstract

Auto theft is prevalent in almost every society and leads to a large amount of economic loss. There are a number of studies investigating causality of auto theft based on the traditional theories such as rational choice, deterrence, routine activity, social disorganization, and subculture theories. Only a little attention has been paid on the causal explanation of auto theft in the masculine perspective. This paper is intended to explore how the masculine perspective explains the occurrence of auto theft and some potential anti-auto theft interventions. Theoretically, masculinity is a convincing perspective on auto theft since it has been noted that auto theft is mostly committed by men rather than by women. In masculine perspective, one of main motivations to commit auto theft is to do gender or to prove manhood. This motivation often appears to be more powerful in the group of young men in the socioeconomic marginalization. Therefore, marginalized young men use cars or auto theft as a source to achieve hegemonic masculinity in their perceptions. To effectively deter auto theft in the masculine perspective, legitimate resources for doing masculinity must be provided to those who are potentially engaged in auto theft and also the attractiveness of the car culture need to be minimized.

Keywords: Auto theft, Masculinity, Car culture, Anti-auto theft intervention

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Introduction

Auto theft is prevalent in almost every society and leads to a large amount of economic loss. Auto theft makes a substantial contribution to the crime statistics of the United States. Although car security has been increased recently, the number of auto thefts committed in the United States has not apparently decreased. There are numerous studies that have investigated causality of auto theft based on the concepts of traditional theories such as rational choice, deterrence, routine activity, social disorganization, and subculture theories. There is only a little attention on the causal explanation of auto theft in the masculine perspective. It has been noted that car theft is mostly committed by men rather than by women and there are several motivations among auto thieves (Savitz, 1959; O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). Also, it has been stated that motivations are different among male and female auto theft offenders. This paper will seek to explain the relationship between masculinities and auto theft. What will be addressed in this paper are general characteristics of auto theft, theoretical concept of masculinities, influence of masculinities on auto thieves, and preventive methods shaped by the masculine perspective.

Overview of Auto Theft

The definitions of auto theft vary across countries. For example, the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program uses the terms of "motor vehicle theft" that is defined as "the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle." Moreover, a motor vehicle is defined as "a self-propelled vehicle that runs on land surfaces and not on rails," which is very broad. A motor vehicle includes automobiles, buses, trucks, motor scooters, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, and sport utility vehicles. However, motor vehicle theft does not include airplanes, farm equipment, construction equipment, bulldozers, houseboats, motorboats, sailboats, or jet skis. However, motor vehicle theft is generally referred to as auto theft. Among vehicle types, 73.4 percent of the stolen motor vehicles in 2007 were accounted by automobile which is the main focus of previous research (FBI, 2007).

According to FBI (2007), there were about 1.1 million thefts of motor vehicles in the United States and the national motor vehicle theft rate was 363.3 per 100,000 residents. The reported number of motor vehicle thefts in 2007 decreased 8.1 percent, when compared with data for 2006. The overall rate for auto vehicle theft has gradually decreased since 2003. About 93.1 percent of the theft of motor vehicle in 2007 occurred in Metropolitan areas. The estimated value of stolen motor vehicles in 2007 was about \$7.4 billion, averaging \$6,755 per stolen vehicle. This monetary cost of auto theft has tremendously increased compared to the stolen cars' value of \$131,558,605 in 1956 (Savitz, 1959). The estimated value of stolen motor vehicles accounted for 42 percent of estimated value of property crime. The total number of arrested persons for motor vehicle thefts in 2007 was 62,766, with 51,382 (82%) males and 11,384 (18%) females. 24 percent of arrested persons (15,289) for motor vehicle thefts were under the age of 18 and offenders who were under 25 years of age accounted for 54 percent of arrested persons. However, auto theft has received less attention from law enforcement agencies, which resulted in the decrease of clearance rates for auto theft (Clarke & Harris, 1992).

It could be stated that auto theft is concentrated in big cities and normally committed by young men (O'Connor, 2006). In other words, auto theft is viewed as an urban phenomenon. Interestingly, the problem of auto theft has shifted from juvenile joyriding into a more severe problem of auto theft for profit committed by professional, adult thieves (Clarke & Harris, 1992). It has been found that there is certain variation among models of vehicle in their vulnerability to be stolen. In addition, Clarke and Harris (1992) found that preventive strategies have more focused on increasing difficulties of auto theft than reducing the motivation or increasing the risks. For example, many security improvements have been built in at manufacture and helped to prevent auto thefts sometimes. However, the auto theft rate has not largely decreased while car security was tremendously improved.

To classify auto theft, Challinger (1987) categorized auto theft into three groups; thefts for recreation, thefts for transport, and thefts for financial gain. Theft for recreation include thefts for challenge of stealing a vehicle, for fun, and for status seeking. Based on the differences in offender motivation and levels of skill, Clarke & Harris (1992) grouped auto theft

into three main categories: thefts for temporary use, professional thefts, and thefts from vehicles. Moreover, criminologists have focused widely on temporary use of vehicles and it has been identified that there are three types of temporary use for auto theft including joyriding, short-term transportation, and long-term transportation (Clarke & Harris, 1992). The temporary use of vehicles falls into the first two Challenger's categories of auto theft. The traditional theories used to test the causation of auto theft include routine activity, rational choice, social disorganization, and social learning theories.

Statistically, most cars that were stolen in America were recovered, according to the FBI's UCR. For example, more than 90 percent of stolen cars were recovered in 1956 (Savitz, 1959). In 2007, almost 60 percent of stolen cars were recovered (FBI, 2007). Moreover, it has been found that the countries with high levels of car ownership have rates of auto theft somewhat lower than countries with lower levels of ownership (Clarke & Harris, 1992). This can be explained that when people in the countries with high levels of vehicle ownership have more legitimate access to a car, thus they are unlikely to commit auto theft.

The costs of auto theft can be viewed into two main perspectives: direct costs to victim and other social costs (Clarke & Harris, 1992). The direct costs to victims are only a small part of the full costs of vehicle theft to society. Other social costs include the cost of preventive measures of car owners, the cost of insurance, the criminal justice cost of vehicle theft, and the cost of accidents while escaping or joyriding.

The differences in targets that vary largely from area to area may possibly differences in the popularity of the car models in each area. The most common location for auto theft is the street outside the home of victim, followed by parking lots (Clarke & Harris, 1992). Regarding time, auto thefts mostly take place at night. This indicates that risks of auto theft are greatest on the street at night where surveillance by guardians is least. This can be properly explained by opportunity theories such routine activity and rational choice theories. In addition, Savitz (1959) reported that the amount of stolen cars vary with economic conditions, number of cars available, resale value of the car, the amount of traffic in the area, presence of main highways, and size of the community.

Moreover, it has been found that the risk of auto theft varies with the vehicle's age. More specifically, newer models are more likely to be stolen than older models (Liddy, 1987). It is also found that variation in rates of auto theft appears to vary markedly across vehicle makes and model types. The vulnerability of vehicle models to auto theft varies across time and place. For example, Ford models were the main target of auto theft during 1969 and 1974 because of poor ignition locks. Moreover, high performance cars are more likely to be stolen than other cars since they are more appealing and attractive to joyriders or thieves. In general, the differences in vulnerability of auto theft are more likely to reflect variations in the attractiveness of vehicles for joyriding or for profit than in their levels of security or in their accessibility to offenders (Clarke & Harris, 1992).

Since the vehicle security has been markedly improved, the number of carjacking has increased in recent years. Improved anti-theft technology makes auto theft more dangerous, time-consuming, and difficult to commit. Moreover, it is more difficult to sell and risky to drive a hot-wired car. Therefore, carjacking become an alternative to overcome these difficulties. Carjacking is defined by the US Department of Justice as a form of robbery that is committed by a stranger who uses force or threat of force to occupy a car. Between 1992 and 1996, an average of 49,000 carjackings were committed each year and this number increases 40 percent from an earlier average of about 35,000 carjackings each year between the period 1987 to 1992 (BJS, 1999). Carjacking was about 2 percent of all motor vehicle thefts before 1992 and increased to 3.5 percent in 1996. The attractiveness of carjacking is that it is fairly uncomplicated and quick to commit (Jacobs, Topalli, & Wright, 2003).

In addition, the recent improvement of auto theft due to the increased vehicle security is that auto thieves illegally obtain keys to steal cars (Copes & Cherbonneau, 2006). The improvement of anti-theft device mandated by legislation has reduced the auto theft rates, at least in temporary, in America (Webb, 1994) and in Britain (Levesley, Braun, Wilkinson, & Powell, 2004). However, offenders are fast to adjust to the changes of opportunity of vehicle theft and the use of keys becomes a new alternative for auto thieves (Beekman, 2004; Copes & Cherbonneau, 2006; Levesley et al., 2004). Key thieves obtaining keys by using burglary, robbery or fraud are not just opportunistic but they have some degree of reasoning when

stealing cars (Levesley et al., 2004). The trend of key theft becomes prevalent lately since it is an ideal method for auto offenders, especially with the effort, risk of being arrest, and financial gain, and available for unskilled auto thieves (Copes & Cherbonneau, 2006).

Masculine Perspective of Crime

In this section gendered nature of crime will be discussed. In general, gender has been found to be one of the strong predictors of crime. Many types of crime such as conventional crime were disproportionately committed by men. Whereas only few types of crime such as prostitution were committed by females. Interestingly, traditional criminological theories are inadequate to understand why men engage in more conventional crimes and more serious crimes than women. Therefore, the gendered perspectives of crime such as feminism and masculinities have been emerged in the recent decades.

Although the gendered character of crime has been frequently ignored by traditional criminologists, this issue was previously addressed by some theorists including Lombroso, known as the father of positivism (Messerschmidt, 1993). The question that they generally asked was not “how men construct masculinity that leads to more crime than women?” but “why women do not commit crime?”

According to the biological perspective, men and women were born biologically different. The Lombroso's conception of the born criminal is considered as the strict biological determinism. While Lombroso constructed his biological theory of crime based on men, he also recognized that women have less involvement in crime than men because of the special biology of women including piety, maternity, sexual coldness, want of passion, underdeveloped intelligence, and weakness (Messerschmidt, 1993). Women, thus, commit crime that requires a little degree of intellectual and physical force such as abortion, infanticide, and poisoning (Lombroso, 1911). Moreover, Bonger (1916) also supported the biological concept and included economic factors to explain the gendered character of crime. On the other hand, Pollak (1950) proposed that men and women are equal to offend, but

women's crime is largely masked by women's biology that interacts with some social conditions.

In addition to biological characteristics, the male sex role or the gendered social conditions lead to specific gendered patterns of crime (Messerschmidt, 1993). In other words, socialization of sex roles lead to different types and amounts of crime committed by boys and girls, and by men and women. For example, Sutherland (1947) argued that girls are supervised more strictly, while boys are taught to tough. This leads to the higher crime rate for boys. Similarly, Hagan (1989) explained woman's low crime rate by arguing that girls are more strictly monitored by parents than boys, especially in patriarchal families where the wife/mother works at home and the husband/father works outside the home. Therefore, daughters in patriarchal families are less likely to offend than sons. Whereas, daughters in egalitarian families, where both husband/father and wife/mother works outside the home, are more open to delinquency like sons. Moreover, the male sex role socialization causes a compulsive masculinity, which in turn leads to juvenile delinquency (Parson, 1947; Cohen, 1955). For instance, boys join a delinquent street gang because gang activities can represent the nature of male sex role or masculine behavior of them.

Furthermore, the high gender ratio in crime can be explained by differences in aggression between males and females (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985). Biology creates certain differences that can be amplified by social conditions into culturally constructed sex roles. Therefore, the biological difference in aggression and aggressive culture of boy and men lead to high involvement in crime.

Feminist perspective of crime and masculinities

Since femininity and masculinity are related to each other, understanding in feminist perspective on crime is important to understand the relationship between masculinity and crime. Although radical and socialist feminism do not directly address the gender ratio of crime, they deserve certain attention since they can provide certain guidelines for the study of masculinity and crime, such as particular theoretical positions on men, masculine dominance, and crime (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Radical feminism argues that masculine power and privilege (patriarchy) that is the social structural base of racial, political, and economic power relations is the root cause of inequality in the society (Millet, 1970; Schwartz & Hatty, 2003). Masculine dominance, violence, and power are viewed as social phenomena that are reproduced through social processes and practices. It has been argued by radical feminists that men commit crime against women such as rape, physical violence, sexual assault, etc. to preserve their power control. Within radical perspective, women are taught by a masculine dominated culture to be inferior to men and men are taught to exert power through physical force. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity, according to radical feminism, is a coercive and unlimited sexuality (Messerschmidt, 1993).

Socialist feminists argue that capitalism and patriarchy are necessary to understand human behavior and masculine dominance (Schwartz & Hatty, 2003). It has been stated that there are two basic groups in patriarchal capitalist societies; a powerful group of men and capitalist classes and a powerless group of women and the working classes. Criminal involvement is linked to the distribution of power in both the home and market. Thus, power in terms of class and gender is a central key to understand criminality (Messerschmidt, 1986).

Hegemonic masculinity and crime

Hegemonic masculinity characterized by heterosexuality and homophobia is the idealized form of masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity naturalized in the form of the hero is frequently used as the central focus in discussing masculinity. A fundamental element of hegemonic masculinity is that women are subordinates and potential sexual objects for men since women can provide heterosexual men with sexual validation and men fight against each other for this (Donaldson, 1993). Male behaviors formed by hegemonic masculinity are characterized as control, authority, values of courage, autonomy, inner direction, mastery, certain forms of aggression, technological skills, adventure, large amounts of toughness in mind and body, group solidarity (Donaldson, 1993). Hegemonic masculinity that subordinates other masculinities is different from other masculinities in controlling of men, not just of women (Connell, 1987). Most men have engaged in various activities including delinquency and crime that try to gain and maintain hegemonic masculinity.

Messerschmidt (1993) argued that gendered power is important to understand why men offend more and commit more serious crimes than woman. Power is a relationship structuring social interaction not only between males and females but also among males. Therefore, gender relation of power not only explains why men offend more than women but also why men engage in different sorts and amounts of crime.

Masculinity is gender identity of men who actively strive to maintain his masculine identity. Masculinity is seen as structured action in which men do masculinity according to particular situations (Copes & Hochstetler, 2003; Messerschmidt, 1993). Thus, men do gender in response to the socially structured conditions where they live. Since masculinity is a behavioral response to the social circumstances in which men engage, types of masculinity vary according to the social conditions and situations in which men find themselves (Messerschmidt, 1993). In other words, social settings, social activities, and social occasions provide resources for doing masculinity. In fact, boys and men construct masculinity differently. Thus, masculinities are constructed differently by age, race, class, and specific social situations such as family, school, peer group, and workplace (Messerschmidt, 1993). Moreover, masculinities are created through practices that keep certain types of relationships between women and men and among men. Generally, men try to express their hegemonic masculinity through physical appearance, speech, activities, dress, and relations with others.

Men do masculinity to socially differentiate them from women and girls. Social practices that present manliness of men are undertaken when men participate in a setting. Men generally want other to perceive them as men through their appearance and behavior. Therefore, criminality may serve as a suitable resource for constructing a specific type of masculinity or doing gender for many men. Criminality and masculinity are related since criminal behavior can demonstrate physical strength, proof of achievement, or certain sort of aggressiveness (Oakley, 1972). For many men, certain types of crime may be able to present their manhood when other masculine resources are not available for them. Consequently, men may be able to affirm their gender identity, which is an essential nature of a boy or man and different from all that is feminine. In sum, some men are willing to commit crime to

express their masculine identity because they view criminality as a suitable resource for doing gender when other masculine resources are unavailable for them.

Within social context, research on juvenile has found that boy and girls tend to construct particular normative heterosexuality and gender division of labor and power regardless of race and class differences. Within a group, men try to be superior not only to women but also to other men to show their power. Thus, competition among young men in the group is one of many means of expressing masculinity. Competition may take several forms both legal and illegal according to group culture. For example, middle-class, working-class, and lower-working-class boys create particular types of masculinity according to their social structural divisions of labor and power (Messerschmidt, 1993). Because young men have different experience in their everyday life from a particular position in society, therefore, they construct different cultural ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

According to Messerschmidt (1993), for white, middle-class boys, they achieve masculinity through participation in academic success and sports. Sports are seen by white, middle-class boys as resources for constructing masculinity since they provide toughness and endurance. Thus, hegemonic masculinity in this group includes control, dominance, and independence. In general, white, middle-class boys accomplish masculinity by conforming to rules and regulations of school and by dominating student groups. However, since school may be emasculating for some white, middle-class boys, they act outside the school to restore hegemonic masculinity somehow diminished in school. Therefore, delinquent behavior such as vandalism, minor thefts, pranks, mischief, and drinking outside the school reestablish a public masculine identity discouraged in school. These activities are used to impress other boys as well girls. In sum, white, middle-class boys construct masculinity differently depending on academic achievement. Boys, who do not do well in school and have little athletic ability or interest, are labeled as the losers. Thus, specific types of crime engaged in by the losers serve as a resource for constructing opposition masculinity when other types of academic resources are not attractive or not interesting.

In white, working-class groups; many of them perceive school as emasculating power and turn to do masculinity outside the school (Messerschmidt, 1993). School, in their view, is

unmanly and not relevant to their working-class masculinity in which the real men prefer manual, not mental labor. White, working class boys engage in certain types of crime such as physical violence and property crimes to gain independent opposition masculinity.

Lastly, as mentioned by Messerschmidt (1993), lower-working-class racial minority boys who spend their life on the street rather than in the school or the workplace view school as unrelated to their future. They deny masculine status in the occupational and educational systems, which are accepted by white, middle and working classes as major resources of masculine status. Thus, they are likely to choose other means to accomplish gender such as physical violence. Consequently, they tend to have violent problems in the school as well as outside the school and are likely to commit more serious property crimes such as robbery. Within their social context, certain types of crime mentioned previously serve as resources for masculine construction of essential toughness, maleness, and hardman for them. For lower-working-class racial minority boys who join the street gang their idealized hegemonic masculinity is to gain and maintain status and to protect their turf.

Masculine Explanation on Auto Theft

Although the overview of auto theft and the concepts of masculinities are previously discussed, the relationship between auto theft and masculinities has not been clearly addressed. Therefore, in this section certain specific relationship of auto theft and masculinities will be elaborated.

Material resources such as cars help create social structural power relations and apparently enhance power of masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993). In western society, men consider cars as a symbol of freedom, success, power, and excitement (Dawes, 2002; O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). The masculine car culture is characterized by its competitiveness, mateship, freedom, technical skill, agility, display, performance, and speed (Walker, Butland, & Connell, 2000). These characteristics of car culture can be thought of as a type of hegemonic masculinity superior to other masculinities (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006; Walker et al., 2000). Therefore, participation in car culture provides men opportunities to express their ability, to

uniquely stand out, and feel that they meet socially defined masculinity. However, men who are marginalized in society are often denied access to car culture and other means to do masculinity (Walker et al., 2000). Auto theft provides marginalized young men an opportunity to engage in car culture and gain the rewards of excitement, power, and status that symbolize a type of hegemonic masculinity.

The car culture may contribute to the types of cars that young men target for theft. In this sense, sporty cars may be the main target for young thieves since they can call some attention from girls and friends and look good and fast (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). Moreover, young offenders tend to look for cars to steal that can represent themselves (Copes, 2003). These car thieves try to display their certain images such as power and physical strength while driving stolen cars. Stealing and driving good looking cars can project some prestige to onlookers as well as onto the auto thieves themselves (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). For these young men, these activities are viewed as part of being a man. Therefore, participating in auto theft that holds certain gendered meaning is perceived as an affirmation of hegemonic masculinity.

As mentioned previously, auto theft is mostly committed by men who do gender through social interaction to express their manliness associated with authority, control, and power. This is consistent with radical and socialist feminism mentioned previously. Thus, auto thefts act as a symbol of masculine status (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). Auto vehicle thefts may be committed for the purpose of excitement, transportation, and financial gain. These motivations to commit auto theft have been found not only in lower-working class but also upper class groups, as mentioned by Messerschmidt (1993). Therefore, it is possibly noted that auto theft can be employed as a suitable resource to construct masculine identity for certain men regardless of social class.

In the masculine perspective, masculinity may be obviously seen as a main motivation in auto thefts for recreation including thefts for challenge of stealing a vehicle, for fun, and for status seeking and temporary use of vehicles such as joyriding since this type of auto thefts can provide immediate and apparent masculine identity necessary for men to prove their manhood. For instance, joyriding becomes a culture among marginalized young men for

expressing their masculinity or a rite of passage to achieve adult status in society (Dawes, 2002). Enjoyment and excitement that is considered as a type of masculine characteristics can be obtained from committing auto theft. Moreover, auto theft can provide men with autonomy and freedom to travel at will (Copes, 2003). Stealing cars symbolizes a form of power and wealth that represents the dominating young men's life styles (Atkinson, 1993).

Moreover, some male auto thieves purposively get into police pursuit because they want to challenge police and to show off their ability to elude the police. These types of thieves often involve in drug use and alcohol consumption that can enhance their pleasure of auto theft and suppress their fear (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). In addition, some auto thieves hold competitions with stolen cars. For example, these young men may hold a competition to steal the most cars in a period of time and in a specific areas or places. Competitions considered as a feature of hegemonic masculinity can provide these auto offenders a lot of fun and excitement as well as feeling of powerful and important (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). These activities, also known as games for auto thieves, may be frequently motivated by foreground factors such as thrill and fun as proposed by Jack Katz (1988). It is fairly apparent that auto theft is a thrilling and exciting activity and it becomes more exciting and thrilling when there is a competition or game among young men (Copes, 2002). Therefore, these games are used by auto thieves as a means to prove themselves to others that they are indeed men.

In some cases, young men who steal cars as part of a group focus on their ability and skills. Stealing cars allows young men to show off their skills to their friends and gain admiration from others involved, which helps reaffirm their masculinity (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). When these young men once successfully stole a car, they feel proud of their improved skills. Therefore, skill level is considered as a measure of masculinity.

However, motivation of masculinity may be also found in auto thefts for financial gain. For example, it has been found that auto theft help promote streetlife by bankrolling their daily activities (Copes, 2003). Some young men who are highly skilled at stealing cars involve in selling stolen cars. Their purpose of stealing vehicles is for financial gain. Some of them use the money from selling stolen cars to party, drink, pay rent, and so on. This money may be

used to reaffirm their masculine identity through buying new clothes or other things that can identify manliness (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006).

Certain motives for women to engage in theft of motor vehicle are basically similar to men. However, women who commit auto theft may have different motivations from male offenders. For example, since auto theft is not viewed as a way to achieve hegemonic feminine, young women have different motives for their engagement in auto theft (Copes, 2003). Auto theft is committed by some female offenders in order to escape from the boredom and their predictable everyday lives (Dawes, 2002). Some female auto thieves may steal a specific type of cars just because it is easy to steal regardless of its appearance and capacity (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006). For most women, auto theft is not a source of thrill or gender identity for them. Thus, they less like to engage in theft of motor vehicle. Moreover, female offenders tend to steal vehicles from people they knew and most of them do not steal cars by themselves; they frequently participate in theft of auto with young men and often have a subordinate role (O'Connor & Kelly, 2006).

Some criminologists may argue that low involvement of women in auto theft because of their biological nature that is less aggressive, strong, intellectual, and skilled than men. As discussed earlier, auto thief need to have some skills in successfully stealing cars. In addition, some criminologists may content that auto theft is less committed by women because of their social position and sex role that is not conducive to auto theft.

Masculinity and Implications for Anti-Auto Theft Interventions

Generally, preventive options have been taken into three main different strategies; increasing risks, increasing the difficulties of thefts, and reducing the motivation for auto theft. With increasing the risks for auto theft, many measures have been exercised by police including neighborhood watch programs, informant hotlines, curfew decals, vehicle tracking devices such as LOJACK, sting operations, "gotcha" cars, and automatic number plate readers. With increasing the difficulties of auto theft, all means require the cooperation and involvement of all parties; inside and outside the criminal justice system such as car owners,

insurance companies, car manufacturers, vehicle licensing authorities, and parking lot owners. These means employed in the past include “Lock Your Car” campaign, protecting parking lots, improving vehicle registration and documentation of ownership, built-in security of vehicle at manufacture, and others. To reduce the motivation for theft, certain legal means has been employed in the past by increasing severity and certainty of punishments for auto theft. Moreover, the federal law that deals with crime of vehicle including joyriding act in America is the National Motor Vehicle Theft Act, known as the Dyer Act (Savitz, 1959). However, there is little or no evidence supporting the deterrent effect of the increased punishments.

According to masculine perspective, as long as motor vehicles serve as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity for young men, auto theft will provide them a way to avoid social marginalization (Dawes, 2002). It is almost impossible to prevent auto theft since cars and stealing cars are considered as resources to gain masculine identities for young men in the marginalized society. These young men are marginalized not only in terms of economic but also academic performance and other forms of marginalization (O’Connor & Kelly, 2006). They will seek out ways such as stealing cars to express their masculine identities.

When opportunities for auto theft have been reduced by improving vehicle security, auto thieves may take pride in their skills and ability to overcome new security technology. Auto thieves can find ways around to defeat new devices or to steal demanded cars. For example, improvement of anti-theft devices has increased the number of carjacking and cars stolen by keys (Jacobs et al., 2003).

Since auto theft is often committed by young men who are still in schools, school environment improvement may be workable for auto theft prevention and reduction. Schools should provide activities such as sports and other recreational activities for young men to have fun with their friends and gain masculine ideals. Thus, when schools can be the place for young men to have fun and express masculine behavior, they will not do masculinity outside the school or seek masculine identities through committing auto theft.

Peer interventions may also be effective since most auto thieves learn techniques and skills to steal cars from friends and some of them commit theft of motor vehicles as a group. Therefore, controlling for peer relationships is necessary. Parental supervision and discipline

may help to control their children's behavior and association with peers (Dhami, 2007). Since young men are closely supervised, they will be less likely to engage in delinquent behavior such as auto theft and mingle with delinquent friends such as auto thieves. Thus, opportunities to become an auto thief are blocked, when they are under effective parental supervision. Then, they turn to legitimate means to do masculinity.

Since the car culture is very impressive for young men and statistics indicate that car ownership or car access has certain effect on auto theft, young men should be provided with access to driving (Slobodian & Browne, 2001). Moreover, these young men should be educated on safe driving and the danger of reckless and speed driving. They should be informed that when they carelessly drive a car, they can cause an accident that leads to the damage of car, other or public property and injury or even the loss of life both themselves and others. This might be able to reduce the attractiveness of car culture somehow.

Conclusion

Masculinity can provide a convincing perspective on auto theft. Gendered character of crime, such as auto theft, may be explained by different characteristics of male and female. In masculine perspective, one of main motivations to commit auto theft is to do gender or to prove manhood. This motivation often appears to be more powerful in the group of young men in the social or economical marginalization. Moreover, car culture is attractive to men since it can represent manhood and masculinities. Therefore, marginalized young men use cars or auto theft as a source to achieve hegemonic masculinity in their perceptions. In order to effectively deter auto theft in the masculine perspective, legitimate resources for doing masculinity must be provided to those who are potentially engaged in auto theft and at the same time the attractiveness of the car culture need to be minimized.

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