

AN IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION OF SCHOOL INVESTMENT AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES BY A YOUTH OFFENDER COHORT

Submitted to:

The City of Calgary

Submitted by:

Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family

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May 2008

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family, the Alberta Law Foundation, the City of Calgary or the Calgary Police Service.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The findings from the first year of a study called “A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report” conducted by CRILF in 2007 and released in 2008, examined youth offending trends in Calgary for 2006, compared the criminal histories of 42 Serious Habitual Offenders (SHOs) to a matched sample of 42 non-SHOs, and closely examined the profiles of 123 youth who had various levels of contact with the youth justice system. The results generated a number of further questions regarding school investment and leisure activities. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

- (1) Elaborate on why youth who are more seriously involved with the youth justice system demonstrate less investment in school than others.
- (2) Elaborate on why youth who are more seriously involved in the youth justice system are less likely to participate in family and extracurricular leisure activities than youth less involved with the justice system.

Methodology

The primary purpose of this report is to provide additional information regarding school and leisure patterns revealed in the interim report. A number of additional quantitative and qualitative variables produced from interviews and probation file reviews of the youth cohort but not used in the initial report were identified and analyzed in order to answer additional questions posed by the patterns observed in the first year of the study.

Three research questions directed the analysis in this report:

- (1) Why are youth who are more seriously involved in crime less likely to be in school, or be invested in school, than youth who are less seriously involved in crime?
- (2) Why are youth who are more seriously involved in crime less likely to be involved in structured, out-of-school activities or family activities, than youth who are less seriously involved in crime?
- (3) What are youth who are not invested in structured, out-of-school activities doing in their spare time? What do they wish to be doing in their spare time?

Life history interviews and probation file reviews were conducted for a cohort of 123 youth with various levels of involvement in the youth justice system. The four study groups consisted of:

- Gateway Participants: Youth who have come into contact with police but have been diverted pre-charge to Gateway, an extrajudicial measures

program administered by City of Calgary Community and Neighbourhood Services and the Calgary Police Service.

- One-time Offenders: Youth who have one substantive criminal incident of which they have been found guilty (with no subsequent charges pending).
- Chronic Offenders: Youth who have five or more substantive criminal incidents of which they have been found guilty (not including SHOs).
- Serious Habitual Offenders (SHOs): Youth who have been identified by a Multi-Disciplinary Resource Team and the Calgary Police Service, and designated by the Alberta Solicitor General, according to specific criteria.

Additional qualitative and quantitative variables produced from the interviews and probation file reviews were examined in this report. Quantitative variables were analyzed descriptively using SPSS software, while qualitative data were examined for relevant patterns and themes.

Summary of Findings

Investment in School

Youth who were more seriously involved in crime were less likely to be enrolled in school and invested in school than youth who were less seriously involved in crime. The interim report showed that youths' enrolment in school decreased as they became more seriously involved in crime (MacRae et al., 2008). Youths' attitudes toward school may help to explain this somewhat, with higher proportions of Chronic offenders and SHOs reporting that they did not like school or their teachers; however, it seems likely that other factors are at play. For example, it was interesting that so many Chronic offenders attending school at CYOC reported liking school and their teachers. It may be that schools with smaller class sizes, individualized teaching and attendance that is mandatory, may better fit the needs of these youth and encourage them to increase their investment in school. In particular, it is possible that behavioural problems and absences that are common to Chronic offenders and SHOs are manifestations of the frustrations that they are having with learning in their school environment. Youth who reported doing poorly in school made comments about their lack of focus and concentration and poor attendance as factors influencing their decreased proficiency in school. It may be that these youth require more structure, smaller class sizes and teaching tailored to their individual learning styles in order to maintain a more active investment in school. The data on mental health diagnoses supports this supposition, showing that the majority of Chronic offenders and SHOs had been diagnosed with some form of mental health disorder, many of which included ADHD, Conduct Disorders and Learning Disorders. These disorders could significantly decrease their ability to learn in a non-specialized educational setting and thereby hamper their interest in further continuing school. Consequently, these youth may be more likely to be successful in environments that address their individualized learning needs.

Youth who were more seriously involved in crime were also more likely to skip classes and be suspended. Absences in school make it difficult to maintain a strong connection to school and may impact future attendance and investment. Youth with increased school absences and interruptions may find that the connection they have with school progressively deteriorates and in combination with their learning deficits, they become less capable of success in the school system. This may then lead youth to the decision to simply drop out of school. Interviews with the youth did reveal that Chronic offenders and SHOs were more likely to report skipping classes and be suspended, and that a large majority of them had considered dropping out of school. It is likely that their struggles with learning also play a role in truancy and withdrawal from school.

Out-of-School and Family Activities

As found in the interim report, youth who were more seriously involved in crime were also less likely to be involved in structured out-of-school activities or family activities than youth who were less seriously involved in crime. A number of factors may account for this association. First, the youth's family situation may be an important factor in determining the youth's participation in extracurricular or family activities. The results showed that the majority of youth in the One-time offender, Chronic offender and SHO groups reported that their parents were either never married or divorced and therefore they were living with only one parent, with or without siblings, at the time of the interview. Single parents may find it more difficult to enrol their children in organized out-of-school activities due to either financial reasons or time constraints. This may either completely discourage parents from enrolling their children in organized out-of-school activities or affect their children's level of participation in these activities. Irregular attendance at programs may ultimately decrease the youth's desire to be involved in extracurricular activities at all.

Irregular attendance in extracurricular activities may also be a result of a lack of stability in their family. The interviews revealed that Chronic offenders and SHOs were the most likely groups to indicate that they had previously lived in a group or foster home, with almost 20% of Chronic offenders living in a foster or group home at the time of the interview. Most Chronic offenders and SHOs also indicated that they had run away from home in the past, often starting at a very young age, and further reported greater frequencies of doing so than Gateway clients and One-time offenders. These circumstances may indicate that family life is unstable and as a result can impact on regular participation in extracurricular activities. Youth may find it easier to quit an activity or sport altogether than to attend on a sporadic basis, or may lack the commitment to participate at all. Consequently, these youth may be detached or excluded from family and community supports that often help Gateway clients and One-time offenders to rebound after their initial encounter with the justice system.

In addition, youth with older friends may be less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, especially if their friends are also not involved in leisure activities. Results showed that this may be a possibility for Chronic offender and SHO youth. These groups reported spending the most time with their friends after school and that larger proportions of their friends were older than them. Gateway clients and One-

time Offenders alternatively seemed to report a more balanced distribution of time with their friends, family and extracurricular activities. SHO youth in particular may gravitate toward older friends because of a lack of adult supervision and mentorship at home.

In addition, age of youth themselves may also play a role in participation in extracurricular activities. As youth get older, they may be more likely to find employment – particularly if they have dropped out of school – and spend more time with friends and girlfriends/boyfriends. Given the average age for Gateway youth (15.6) was younger than that of Chronic offenders (16.8) and SHO youth (17), this may contribute to some of the difference in participation rates among the groups.

Finally, some youth also reported that they used to be involved in extracurricular activities, but were no longer participating. Consequently, for these youth it may not be that there are issues with accessibility or availability of programs, but rather that youth lack a desire to participate in these activities or, for Chronic and SHO youth, that they may have become attached to deviant peers and entrenched in a lifestyle involving drug use and other criminal activity. Further research on why youth discontinue their participation in organized out-of-school activities may prove beneficial for understanding why youth become more seriously involved in crime.

The activities that youth reported being involved in outside of school or in their spare time also differed by their level of involvement in the justice system. While Gateway clients and One-time offenders reported activities like spending time with their friends, working, hanging out at home, playing video games and participating in unstructured sporting activities, Chronic offenders and SHOs reported similar activities in concert with less conventional activities like drinking, doing drugs and committing crime. Chronic offenders, however, expressed a strong desire to be involved in sporting activities. A lower proportion of SHOs were interested in getting involved in other activities; however, those who were reported various activities like spending time with friends and family, going to school and participating in sports.

Conclusions

The goal of this supplementary report was to provide further insight into findings regarding school investment and out-of-school activity participation, reported in “A Study of Youth Offending in Calgary: An Interim Report.” The supplementary report has produced a number of interesting findings with regard to school investment, specifically, how the structure of a schooling environment might impact upon youth’s investment in school. It is apparent that the more serious offenders attending West View School, located in CYOC, have more positive attitudes about school and their teachers than those more serious offenders who are attending school in the community. Perhaps more research conducted on the learning environment within schools like West View could help to explain why youth enrolled there had more positive experiences and a greater investment in school. Techniques used there might be expanded to schools within the public system to ensure that youth diagnosed with various disorders (e.g., ADHD, FASD and ODD), who often have specialized learning needs, are appropriately accommodated. Increased access to specialized schools, such as George Woods Learning Centre, for youth with behavioural and mental health issues is also extremely

important in decreasing their offending behaviour. More importantly, access to specialized educational facilities for special needs children at risk for offending should be provided to them at an early age. Such services, hopefully, would lower the probability that these at-risk children would develop patterns of chronic and persistent offending.

Finally, the findings also suggested that youth who are disengaged from the community are more likely to commit delinquent acts. Therefore, programs with drop-in participation may be a viable option for youth who are not able to regularly participate in activities, while subsidized extracurricular activities may also be helpful for those who cannot afford the cost associated with enrolment fees or equipment. Meanwhile, for the many youth who reported being involved in unstructured activities (non-organized sports, self-taught music, etc.), further research on the appeal and benefits of unstructured activities to youth might translate into affordable, adult-supervised activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of those individuals and agencies that made this project possible. First, we would like to thank City of Calgary Community and Neighbourhood Services for providing funding for this study. We would also like to thank Doug Borch for his support and guidance.

This project would not have been possible without the participation of all the youth involved in the study. Their trust, cooperation, and openness were invaluable, and we are tremendously grateful to them for all the information they were willing to provide about their lives.

Tremendous gratitude is also extended to Lorne Bertrand and Joanne Paetsch for their guidance and assistance with reviewing and editing the report. The authors would also like to thank Linda Haggett for her assistance with editing and formatting of the report.

Finally, the authors acknowledge the Alberta Law Foundation for its ongoing funding of the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In March 2008, the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family released the results of the first year of a three-year study on Youth Offending Patterns, Serious Habitual Offenders and System Response in Calgary. This report, "A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report,"¹ examined youth offending trends in Calgary for 2006, compared the criminal histories of 42 Serious Habitual Offenders (SHOs) to a matched sample of 42 non-SHOs, and closely examined the profiles of 123 youth who had various levels of contact with the youth justice system. The results yielded a number of interesting patterns across the youth offender cohort, particularly with regard to family, school, and community experiences.

Specifically, the study revealed that youth who are less seriously involved in crime (i.e., diverted through extrajudicial measures) demonstrate a greater investment in school and extracurricular and family activities. However, this investment decreases significantly for youth who are more seriously involved in crime. Chronic offenders, SHOs and to a certain extent, One-time offenders, are noticeably more likely to skip school, be suspended, or not be in school at all, and are much less likely to participate in structured out-of-school activities.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

The findings from the first year of the study of youth offending generated a number of further questions regarding school investment and leisure activities. With funding from City of Calgary Community and Neighbourhood Services, the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family further examined these issues using additional quantitative and qualitative data available from interviews and probation file reviews of 123 youth who participated in the study.

1.3 Objectives of the Report

The objectives of this supplementary report are to:

- (1) Elaborate on why youth who are more seriously involved with the youth justice system demonstrate less investment in school than others.
- (2) Elaborate on why youth who are more seriously involved in the youth justice system are less likely to participate in family and out-of-school leisure activities than youth less involved with the justice system.

¹ MacRae, L., Bertrand, L.D., Paetsch, J.J., & Hornick, J.P. (2008). *A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report*. Available on-line at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~crlf>.

1.4 Organization of the Report

The following chapter will outline the research questions addressed in this report and summarize the methodology used to develop the profiles of 123 youth offenders in the initial study. Chapter 3.0 will present the findings of the supplementary study, with Chapter 4.0 discussing the conclusions and implications of this report.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

As indicated in Section 1.2, the primary purpose of this report is to provide additional information regarding school and leisure patterns revealed in “A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report.” A number of additional quantitative and qualitative variables produced from the interviews and probation file reviews but not addressed in the initial report were identified and analyzed in order to answer additional questions posed by the patterns observed in the first year of the study.

2.1.1 Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this supplementary report:

- (1) Why are youth who are more seriously involved in crime less likely to be in school, or be invested in school, than youth who are less seriously involved in crime?
- (2) Why are youth who are more seriously involved in crime less likely to be involved in structured, out-of-school activities or family activities, than youth who are less seriously involved in crime?
- (3) What are youth who are not invested in structured, out-of-school activities doing in their spare time? What do they wish to be doing in their spare time?

2.2 Youth Offender Profiles

“A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report” utilized a number of methodologies to develop profiles of four different groups of youth offenders. Relevant to this supplementary report were the interviews and probation file reviews conducted with the 123 youth. This section will summarize the participants and research strategies involved in the interviews and probation file reviews, and outline the data analysis strategy used for this particular report. For further information on the methodology used in the original study, please refer to the interim report.

2.2.1 Participants

A cohort of 123 youth with various levels of involvement in the youth justice system participated in the study, belonging to four different study groups. They included:

- (1) Gateway Clients under Extrajudicial Measures (n=20)

Gateway is a pre-charge extrajudicial measures program under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* (YCJA) that currently operates in all eight police districts in Calgary. Under this program, youth are diverted by the police from the traditional

youth justice system to over 25 community agencies that have agreed to offer services to youth. Youth are referred to this program for offences ranging from theft under \$5,000, to mischief, break and enter, and minor assault. Gateway is a partnership of City of Calgary Community and Neighbourhood Services and the Calgary Police Service.

(2) One-time Offenders (n=42)

This group includes youth having one substantive (i.e., *Criminal Code*; *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*) offence or incident of which he/she has been found guilty (with no subsequent charges pending). *Incident* was defined as all charges pertaining to the same person and having the same date of offence. Administration of justice incidents (i.e., breaches, failures to appear) were not counted as substantive incidents.

(3) Chronic Offenders (n=41)

This group included youth having five or more substantive (i.e., *Criminal Code*, *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*) offences or incidents of which he/she has been found guilty (not including SHOs). Again, *incident* was defined as all charges pertaining to the same person and having the same date of offence. Administration of justice incidents were not counted as substantive incidents.

(4) Serious Habitual Offenders (SHOs) (n=20)

The goal of the Calgary Police Service Serious Habitual Offender Program (SHOP) is to identify youth at risk of a career of crime and provide access to resources in order for them to be successful members of society. Referrals to SHOP are made by the Calgary Young Offender Centre (CYOC), the Calgary Youth Attendance Centre (CYAC), Calgary and Area Child and Family Services, City of Calgary Youth Probation and the public and Catholic school boards. Each referring agency is required to complete an intake form providing information on historical risk factors (i.e., violent acts/offences, exposure to violence), social/contextual risk factors (i.e., peer delinquency, parental management, personal support, etc.), and individual risk factors (i.e., emotional difficulties, attitudes, risk taking, substance use, etc.). Referral information is received by the Calgary Police Service SHOP unit, who check the youth's criminal history. If appropriate for the program, the youth's information is forwarded to the Multidisciplinary Resource Team (MDRT), who review and assess the youth's records and determine whether he/she is appropriate for SHOP. Youth who are targeted by the program are profiled, with responses based on these profiles being developed to support the youth's successful reintegration. These youth are regularly monitored by the Calgary Police Service.

Gateway participants were identified and recruited through the Gateway program. One-time and Chronic offenders were identified via City of Calgary Youth Probation Services. SHOs were identified with the help of City of Calgary Youth Probation Services and the Calgary Police Service.

2.2.2 Data Source

Life history interviews were conducted with all 123 participants from July 2006 to June 2007. The interview schedule was developed by CRILF researchers, with questions covering seven main topic areas: basic facts (i.e., demographic, familial); community (i.e., community characteristics, feelings of safety); school (i.e., school status, experience); social life (i.e., friends, activities, delinquency); offending history (i.e., contact with the criminal justice system); gangs (i.e., knowledge and experience of gangs in Calgary); and future (i.e., goals). Interviews were conducted in person with the exception of Gateway participants, who were interviewed by telephone.

Probation file reviews were conducted for each youth interviewed for the study, with the exception of the Gateway sample (who were not under the jurisdiction of Calgary Youth Probation) and a small number of youth in other groups whose probation files simply could not be accessed. The file review was meant as a supplemental and validating instrument to the interview.

A probation file review form was developed following a preliminary examination of probation files. The form included demographic, familial, social, and offending information. File reviews were conducted at Youth Probation Offices. Researchers examined each probation file and filled out the electronic review form with the necessary information.

2.2.3 Data Analysis

In order to examine patterns regarding school investment and leisure activities more closely, a number of additional qualitative and quantitative variables produced from the interviews and probation file reviews were examined. Quantitative variables were analyzed descriptively using SPSS software, while qualitative data were examined for relevant patterns and themes.

2.2.4 Limitations

A few limitations identified in the initial study are worthy of mention. First, sample sizes for each group differed quite substantially, potentially affecting comparability. Where the response was strong for One-time (n=42) and Chronic (n=41) offenders, the samples of Gateway (n=20) and SHO youth (n=20) were less than half the numbers planned. Second, given the high rate of incarceration for SHOs and Chronic offenders and that some were interviewed in CYOC, self-reported delinquency, particularly for the past year, may be underrepresented. They simply were not able to engage in these acts because they were in custody. Third, given the method by which Gateway youth were recruited for the study, their crime, by definition, occurred within the past year. Therefore, their self-reported delinquency for the past year may be inflated. Overall, by definition, youths' membership in each of the groups influences the findings. For example, One-time offenders will have only one finding of guilt on their record, and are generally sentenced only once. Similarly, given the criteria used to designate a youth as a SHO, youth are more likely to have a history of delinquency and violent behaviour, extensive criminal records, exposure to family violence, a lack of parental/social support

and supervision, substance abuse and/or psychological difficulties, negative peer associations, etc. Finally, much of the data analyzed in this report is the result of follow-up questions to queries about schooling, extracurricular activities, self-reported delinquency and transit behaviour. Therefore, sample sizes often decreased when the follow-up questions did not apply, and the representativeness of the responses consequently also declined.

2.3 Ethics and Security Issues

Protocols were implemented to preserve the anonymity, confidentiality, and secure use of information for the 123 youth who consented to be interviewed in the original study. No identifying information was used in the supplementary report. For more information on the ethical and security measures taken, please refer to the interim report.

3.0 OFFENDER PROFILES

This chapter presents selected findings from the interview and file review data. Results are restricted to information in the file review and responses from youth that help to answer the research questions posed in the previous chapter. Comparative data are presented for each of the four groups of offenders: Gateway clients (n=20); One-time offenders (n=42); Chronic offenders (n=41); and SHOs (n=20).

3.1 School Investment

In order to assess a youth's investment in school, a number of different variables from the interviews and file reviews were analyzed, including the youths' attitudes towards school, their proficiency in school, mental health diagnoses and their skipping and suspension behaviour. Schooling variables from the interviews were only available for youth currently enrolled in school at the time of the interview, whereas the file review data contained information on most of the youth in the study, with the exception of Gateway clients, who were not under the jurisdiction of Calgary Youth Probation. As presented in the previous report "A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report," the majority of the youth interviewed for the study were enrolled in school when interviewed, except for the SHO youth (MacRae et al., 2008). Only 45% of SHOs were currently enrolled in school, which included those who were required to be in school because they were incarcerated at the time of the interview. In comparison, 100% of the Gateway youth, 66.7% of the One-time offenders and 68.3% of Chronic offenders were enrolled in school at the time of the interview.

3.1.1 School Attitudes

Overall, the majority of youth who were currently enrolled in school reported liking school and their teachers. Table 3.1 shows that a high majority of the Gateway youth reported liking school (73.7%). A lower proportion of One-time offenders (51.7%) and Chronic offenders (55.6%) reported liking school, while only 20% of the SHO youth enrolled in school reported liking school. One-time offenders who reported not liking school made comments that indicated they would "*rather work than go to school*," or felt that "*school was a waste of their time*." Three One-time offenders expressed a preference for correspondence or home schooling over public school, and three spoke about their school experiences improving over the past year and that having a lot of friends and being involved in school activities, like football, made school a more positive experience for them.

Table 3.1
School Attitudes of Youth Enrolled in School, by Study Group

	Gateway		One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Like School								
Yes	14	73.7	15	51.7	15	55.6	2	20.0
No	4	21.1	10	34.5	7	25.9	6	60.0
Sometimes	1	5.3	4	13.8	5	18.5	2	20.0
Total	19	100.0	29	100.0	27	100.0	10	100.0
Like Teachers								
Yes	13	72.2	13	48.1	14	53.8	5	50.0
No	1	5.6	4	14.8	6	23.1	3	30.0
Some	4	22.2	10	37.0	6	23.1	2	20.0
Total	18	100.0	27	100.0	26	100.0	10	100.0

Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

A few of the Chronic offenders also reported that their school experiences had improved over the past year. Interestingly, most of the Chronic offenders enrolled at West View School (n=14), located within the Calgary Young Offender Centre (CYOC), reported liking school (10), while only 4 did not. Other Chronic offenders made comments about liking school “*somewhat*,” liking “*some parts of school*” and liking school “*sometimes*.” Some youth noted that they liked school as long as they were doing well, or did not like school based on the fact that they are struggling through it.

Given that less than half of the SHOs are enrolled in school, this might already be an indication of their attitudes toward school. Of the youth who were enrolled, those who responded that they did not like school cited reasons such as “*I’m lazy and can’t focus on work*” or “*I don’t like school at all, I don’t like having to do homework*.” Others cited that they only like specific subjects like “*gym and math*.” SHOs who were enrolled in West View School (n=3) generally reported that they did not like school. Only one student enrolled in West View stated that they liked school.

The majority of Gateway youth reported liking their teachers (72.2%). Most reported that their teachers were “*good*,” they liked them and got along with them, or that “*they are pretty nice*.” Table 3.1 shows that a lower proportion of One-time offenders liked their teachers (48.1%), with many of them citing that they liked specific teachers. Slightly more than a third of the One-time offenders made comments like: “*Some are pretty cool; some understand me*,” and “*I like some of them, some are annoying*” and “*I like most of them, except for the guys*.”

Similarly, the Chronic offender group was also divided with respect to liking their teachers. While 53.8% of the group reported liking their teachers, 23.1% said that they did not like their teachers. Another 23.1% reported liking some of their teachers. Again most of the youth enrolled in West View responded that they liked their teachers, commenting, for example, “*teachers are good in here*” and “*yes, I might finish grade 12 here*.” Of those enrolled in West View School, only three responded that they did not like their teachers, while the rest either responded that they liked them, or at least liked most of them.

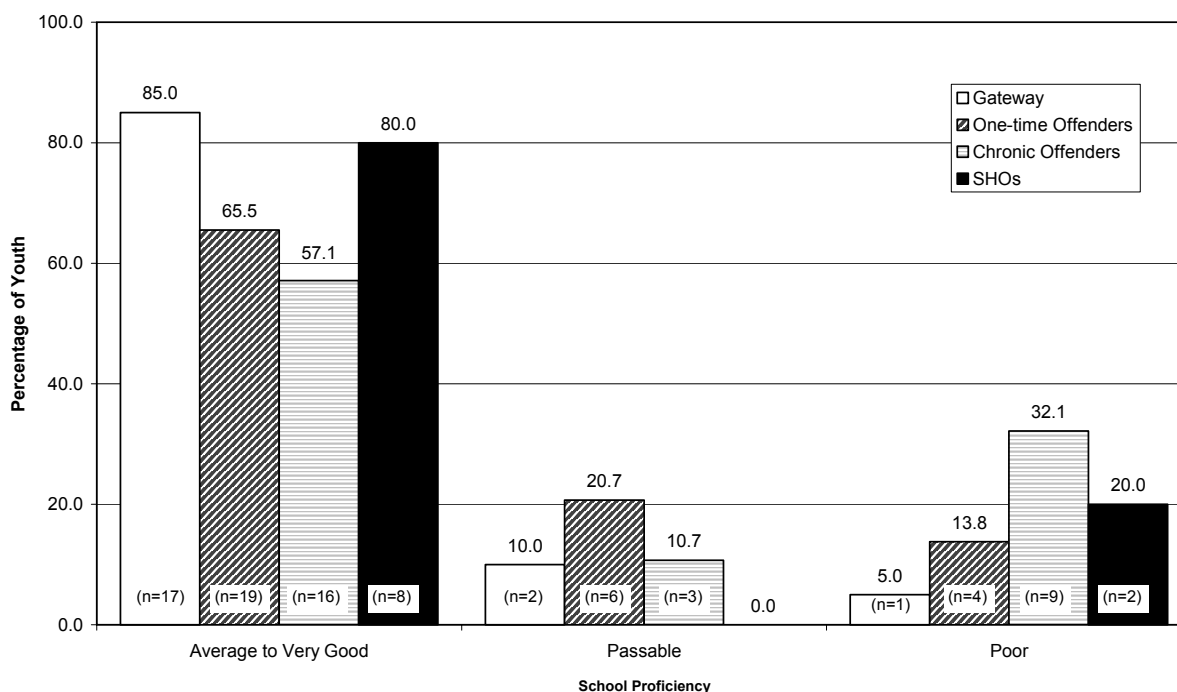
Of the SHOs enrolled in school, 50% reported liking their teachers, while 20% reported liking some of their teachers. Similar to the youth in the Chronic offender group, SHOs enrolled in West View School also mostly liked their teachers (2 out of 3).

3.1.2 Proficiency in School

Youth's investment in school can also be reflected in how well they do in school, their expectations for how much schooling they think they will complete, their feelings towards dropping out of school, and frustrations with school, which may be a result of a mental health diagnosis, such as Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

When asked how well they are doing in school, youth responded with a variety of answers. In order to capture the overall pattern between the different groups of youth offenders, responses were coded into three categories: average to very good, passable, and poor. As shown in Figure 3.1, most of the Gateway youth were coded average to very good in school (85%). Typical responses from the Gateway youth included: *"Pretty good," "Average," "Really well, I'm getting marks in the 80s,"* and *"I'm getting high 70s, low 80s."* Of the 20 Gateway youth who responded to the question, only 10% reported that their marks were passable with responses that included: *"I could be doing better, I'm getting 50s and 60s"* and *"I'm passing."* Only one Gateway youth reported that they are getting failing grades in school.

Figure 3.1
School Proficiency of Youth Enrolled in School, by Study Group



Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

The majority of One-time offenders also reported doing well in school (65.5%). These youth made comments such as: *"I'm doing pretty good, but I have some trouble in math," "I'm doing pretty good, my lowest mark is a B," "I made the honour roll last year" and "Pretty well, I'm doing work independently and I do really well in this type of unstructured school."* The 20.7% of One-time offenders who were coded to the passable category made the following comments: *"Not too well, pass," "Decent, borderline passing," and "Pass, I do good enough."* Only 13.8% of One-time offenders reported doing poorly with comments such as: *"I'm doing horrible in school, I only have 23 credits, it's going to be a long time until I can graduate," "Horrible," "I'm not doing too well, my average is 40%," and "Because of the past year and running away a lot, I'm not doing good now. Before that I did well (passed)."*

The majority of Chronic offenders enrolled in school reported doing average to very good in school (57.1%). Typical responses from this group included: *"Average," "Pretty good, I have an 85% average," Medium," "Well" and "I get 80s and 90s, but I don't like math."* Of those who were coded to the average to very good group, six were attending West View School in CYOC. Their responses included: *"I'm doing well in school while in CYOC, I'm getting 80s and 90s," "When I try I do pretty good," "Good, except English," "Do good," "Very well in all subjects but math" and "Good if I try, I get 80s."* Smaller proportions of the Chronic offenders were coded to the passable (10.7%) and poor category (32.1%). When asked how well they were doing in school, those in the passable group responded: *"Just pass," "So-so, not that good," and "If I work hard, I can do well. I mostly get by."* Some of those coded to the poor group responded: *"If I put my mind to it, I can do well, but most of the time I'm on drugs and so I don't do any work," "I don't pay attention, I distract other kids," "Not too well, not sure if I passed last year," "Not well, I can't sit in a classroom for more than 15 minutes without getting bored," "I can't concentrate well. I can focus more in CYOC, I have struggles with concentration in bigger classes and bigger schools."*

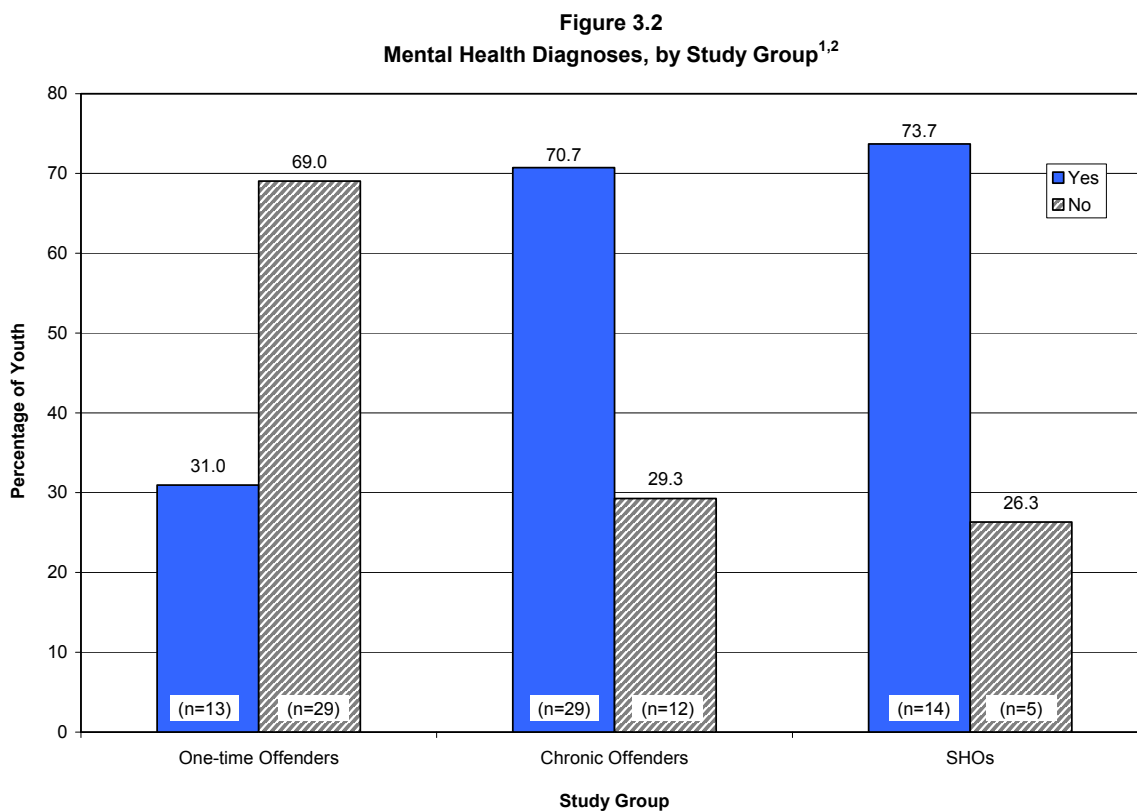
While 50% of SHOs were not enrolled in school, the majority who were reported that they were doing "pretty good" in school (80%). Many made comments about doing well when they applied themselves, such as: *"If I do the work and concentrate, I do pretty well," "Good now that I'm in custody, I have to go to school here," or "O.K., but it depends on whether I feel like it, I do well when I apply myself."* Those who were coded into the poor category responded: *"Not so great" and "When I go I do alright, but when I'm in the community, I don't really go."*

Youth who were currently attending school were asked how much schooling they expected to complete. As noted in the previous report "A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report," the majority of the Gateway clients stated that they expected to complete college or university (68.4%) as did the majority of One-time offenders (51.8%). In contrast, the majority of Chronic offenders (57.2%) and SHOs (55.5%) stated that they either did not expect to finish high school, or that completing high school was the highest level of education they expected to attain (MacRae et al., 2008).

When asked if they had ever considered dropping out of school over one-half of youth who were currently attending school in the One-time offender (57.1%), Chronic

offender (67.9%), and SHO (77.8%) groups indicated that they had. Less than one-third (30%) of the Gateway clients had considered dropping out of school (MacRae et al., 2008).

Probation file review data revealed that youth more seriously involved in crime were also more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder or a disability that could affect their performance in school, as well as their general ability to function in society. This information was not available for Gateway clients, given that they did not have a probation file. As shown in Figure 3.2, the majority of both Chronic offenders and SHOs had been diagnosed with some form of mental health disorder. The most common diagnoses included Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Conduct Disorder, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and learning disorders. Figure 3.3 shows the prevalence of these disorders amongst youth who were diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Youth who suffer from mental health disorders associated with learning, such as ADHD, FASD, or various conduct disorders, such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), may experience frustration with school and consequently decrease their investment in school.

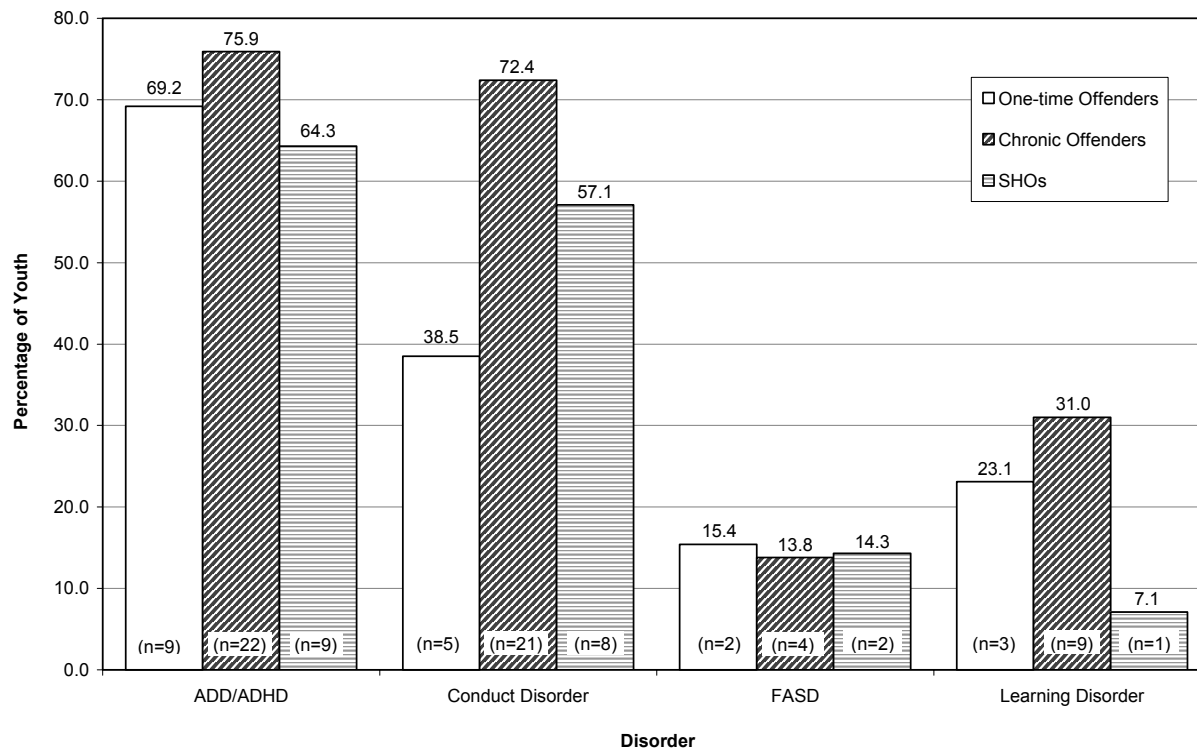


Source of data: Youth Probation File Review.

¹ Includes confirmed and suspected mental health diagnoses. Suspected cases include youth who were prescribed drugs for the treatment of mental health disorders, with no accompanying psychological assessment report, as well as diagnoses that could not be confirmed by the clinician, but fit criteria for the disorder.

² Data for suspected and confirmed mental health diagnoses were based only on information available in the youth's probation files, which may therefore underestimate the number of diagnoses.

Figure 3.3
Selected Mental Health Diagnoses, by Study Group of Diagnosed Youth^{1,2,3}



Source of data: Youth Probation File Review.

¹ Includes confirmed and suspected mental health diagnoses. Suspected cases include youth who were prescribed drugs for the treatment of mental health disorders, with no accompanying psychological assessment report, as well as diagnoses that could not be confirmed by the clinician, but fit criteria for the disorder.

² Data for suspected and confirmed mental health diagnoses were based only on information available in the youth's probation files, which may therefore underestimate the number of diagnoses.

³ Total N for One-time Offenders with at least one diagnosis = 13; Total N for Chronic Offenders with at least one diagnosis = 29; Total N for SHOs with at least one diagnosis = 14.

The probation files also cited that many of the youth were diagnosed with multiple mental health disorders. Table 3.2 shows that, in fact, all of the Chronic offenders who had been diagnosed with a mental health disorder reported multiple diagnoses. These ranged from the commonly reported ADHD and Conduct Disorder to the more atypical disorders such as Phonological Disorder, Panic Disorder, Neurobehavioral Disorder and Personality Disorder. Many of these disorders reflect not only the physiological states of the youth, but also the environmental conditions of their upbringing, which again may impact on their investment in school.

Table 3.2
Number of Mental Health Diagnoses^{1,2}, by Study Group

	One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Number of Mental Health Disorders						
1	5	38.5	0	0.0	5	35.7
2	5	38.5	8	27.6	4	28.6
3	1	7.7	11	37.9	3	21.4
4 or more	2	15.4	10	34.5	2	14.3
Total	13	100.0	29	100.0	14	100.0

Source of data: Youth Probation File Review.

¹ Includes confirmed and suspected mental health diagnoses. Suspected cases include youth who were prescribed drugs for the treatment of mental health disorders, with no accompanying psychological assessment report, as well as diagnoses that could not be confirmed by the clinician, but fit criteria for the disorder.

² Data for suspected and confirmed mental health diagnoses were based only on information available in the youth's probation files, which may therefore underestimate the number of diagnoses.

3.1.3 Skipping and Suspensions

As a final source of information on youth's investment in school, youth were asked about their skipping and suspension behaviour. When youth enrolled in school were asked if they skip classes, at least one-half of the respondents in each group stated that they did. Proportions ranged from 50% of youth in the Gateway group to 59% in the One-time offender group to 77.8% in the Chronic offender group and 80% in the SHO group (MacRae et al., 2008). Table 3.3 shows the frequency of each study group skipping classes. Of the Gateway clients who reported skipping classes, 60% reported skipping at least once a week. Of the One-time offenders who skip classes, 52.9% reported skipping at least once per week, while 23.5% skip once per month. Given that a high proportion of the Chronic offenders and SHOs were enrolled in West View School, located in the CYOC, most were unable to skip (66.7% of the Chronic offenders and 50% of the SHOs).

Table 3.3
Skipping and Suspensions of Youth Enrolled in School, by Study Group

	Gateway		One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Frequency of Skipping Classes								
At least once a day	1	10.0	3	17.6	0	0.0	1	12.5
At least once a week	5	50.0	6	35.3	2	9.5	1	12.5
About once a month	1	10.0	4	23.5	2	9.5	0	0.0
Occasionally	1	10.0	0	0.0	1	4.8	2	25.0
Used to skip a lot, not anymore	2	20.0	2	11.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Used to skip a lot, now attends on probation order	0	0.0	2	11.8	2	9.5	0	0.0
Used to skip a lot, now attends CYOC school	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	66.7	4	50.0
Total	10	100.0	17	100.0	21	100.0	8	100.0
Number of Suspensions								
1	5	62.5	6	25.0	3	13.0	1	11.1
2-5	1	12.5	5	20.8	6	26.1	2	22.2
6-10	0	0.0	3	12.5	1	4.3	0	0.0
11-15	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.3	0	0.0
16-20	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.3	0	0.0
More than 20	0	0.0	2	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Not suspended in past year	2	25.0	8	33.3	11	47.8	6	66.7
Total	8	100.0	24	100.0	23	100.0	9	100.0
Reasons for Suspensions¹								
Fighting	2	33.3	10	37.0	9	36.0	0	0.0
Drugs/Alcohol at School	3	50.0	9	33.3	3	12.0	2	40.0
Fooling around in class	1	16.7	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0
Mouthing off to teachers	0	0.0	4	14.8	3	12.0	1	20.0
Skipping	0	0.0	1	3.7	7	28.0	2	40.0
Weapons at school	0	0.0	3	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Smoking on school property	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0
Hit teacher	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0

Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

¹ Multiple response data, percentages are based on total number of responses.

Youth who were currently attending school were also asked if they had ever been suspended. As reported in the interim report, rates of suspension were quite high for youth in the One-time offender, Chronic offender, and SHO groups and ranged from 82.8% of the One-time offenders to 90.9% of the SHOs (MacRae et al., 2008). Gateway clients were considerably less likely to report that they had been suspended (40%) and for those who had been suspended the majority said they had been suspended one time (Table 3.3). In contrast, many of the Chronic offenders (47.8%) and SHOs (66.7%) reported that they were not suspended in the past year, which may be due to their incarceration status.

When asked why they had been suspended, Gateway youth reported various reasons, including fighting (n=2), drugs at school (n=3), and fooling around in class (n=1). One-time offenders also reported similar reasons, but further reported that they were suspended for “*getting up in teachers’ faces*” or mouthing off to teachers (n=4), skipping (n=1), and for bringing weapons to school (n=3). Many of the Chronic offenders indicated that they were suspended for fighting (n=9) and skipping school (n=7), while the few SHOs who reported being suspended in the past year said that they

were suspended for possession of drugs and alcohol at school (n=2), mouthing off to teachers (n=1), and skipping (n=2).

The youth who reported being suspended often were also asked to indicate how old they were when the suspensions began. Over half of the youth in the One-time offender group reported that their suspensions began at the age of 12 or under (n=8). These youth revealed that their anger management and behavioural issues led to the suspensions at an early age. One girl who said that her suspensions began in grade two or three said, *"I used to get suspended a lot. I would get suspended because I got into fights with teachers and I was very angry at school. In grade two I punched a kid, and got stabbed. I'm a trouble maker; I often start fights with words."* Another youth commented that his suspensions began at an early age because he *"liked to fight."* One-time offenders who reported that their suspensions started between the ages of 13 and 16 (n=4) indicated that their suspensions began for a variety of reasons. One youth commented *"In the beginning of grade nine, I used to get suspended all the time, for fighting, skipping, smoking pot at school. Everything changed, I changed."* Another youth said that he was facing problems and threats at school, while another youth commented, *"I did things before, but this year I got caught."*

Multiple suspensions began at the age of 12 or younger for the majority of youth in the Chronic offender group as well (n=11). When asked why the suspensions began, these youth made comments like: *"I started doing bad stuff, had a negative influence," "because I hate school"* and *"because friends would look to me for help, to fight for them."* Other youth whose suspensions began in elementary school also reported that their suspensions began because they fought with other children and because they were disrespectful towards their teachers. Some youth also reported that their suspensions began because of behavioural problems. These youth commented: *"I was an active kid. I was in a behavioural school, but got suspended for stupid stuff like fighting"* and *"I had behavioural problems. I had been in lots of behaviour classes, but they don't teach you, they just hold you."* Another youth also responded, *"cause I was a bad kid"* and went on to state that he had ADHD.

The majority of SHOs were either not enrolled in school at the time of the interview, or reported that they had not been suspended in the past year. Therefore, it is difficult to determine when and why suspensions began. For those who did report on their suspension behaviour, most youth said that their suspensions began in elementary school (n=2) because of their anger management problems or poor attendance. Others reported that their suspensions began in junior high due to fighting or because they had an *"attitude with authority."*

3.2 Extracurricular Activities

In order to determine why youth who are more seriously involved in crime are less likely to be involved in structured, out-of-school activities or family activities than youth who are less seriously involved in crime, a number of characteristics about the youth interviewed were analyzed. These include the extent to which youth offenders participate in structured out-of-school activities, including sports, lessons or clubs, and the extent to which they take part in leisure activities with their parents. Characteristics

about the youth's family and friends were also analyzed to give insight into why youth who are more seriously involved in crime may not be enrolled in structured out-of-school activities.

3.2.1 Structured Out-of-School Activities and Family Activities

As shown in Table 3.4, the interim report revealed that only 10% of the SHOs engage in organized activities after school or in their spare time, compared to 22% of Chronic offenders, 31% of One-time offenders, and 75% of Gateway clients (MacRae et al., 2008). Gateway clients stated that they participated in a variety of activities, from soccer, hockey, and basketball to darts, cadets and guitar lessons.

Table 3.4
Characteristics of Respondent's Leisure Activities, by Study Group

	Gateway		One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Involved in Organized Activities After School								
Yes	15	75.0	13	31.0	9	22.0	2	10.0
No	5	25.0	29	69.0	32	78.0	18	90.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Involved in Adult Coached Sports								
Yes	11	55.0	9	21.4	4	9.8	0	0.0
No	9	45.0	33	78.6	37	90.2	20	100.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Involved in Organized Non-sport Activities								
Yes	7	35.0	3	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
No	13	65.0	39	92.9	41	100.0	20	100.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Involved in Clubs/Groups with Adult Leadership								
Yes	3	15.0	5	11.9	2	4.9	0	0.0
No	17	85.0	37	88.1	39	95.1	20	100.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Frequency of Leisure Activities with Parents								
Several times per week	4	25.0	4	10.0	4	10.8	3	15.8
Once per week	8	50.0	8	20.0	9	24.3	2	10.5
Once every few weeks	0	0.0	2	5.0	3	8.1	2	10.5
Once per month	1	6.3	2	5.0	1	2.7	1	5.3
<Once per month	1	6.3	5	12.5	1	2.7	1	5.3
Never	2	12.5	19	47.5	19	51.4	10	52.6
Total	16	100.0	40	100.0	37	100.0	19	100.0

Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

None of the SHOs stated that they were involved in adult-coached sports, while 9.8% of Chronic offenders, 21.4% of One-time offenders, and 55% of Gateway clients said that they did participate in sports (MacRae et al., 2008). Gateway youth named sports such as hockey, basketball, football, kickboxing and soccer as adult-coached activities that they participated in. A number of the One-time offenders (n=4), Chronic offenders (n=6) and SHOs (n=3) said that they used to be involved in sports, but were no longer participating, either because they were no longer attending school, or because they became involved with drugs.

Even fewer respondents stated that they engage in organized non-sport activities. No SHOs nor Chronic offenders reported engaging in these activities, and only 7.1% of One-time offenders reported being involved in activities such as guitar, modelling and badminton lessons. Three additional One-time offenders reported that they used to be involved in music lessons, choir and drama. A total of 35% of Gateway clients stated that they did participate in organized non-sport activities, which included dance lessons, guitar lessons and choir.

Few respondents in any group indicated that they participated in clubs or groups with adult leadership: responses ranged from 0% for the SHOs to 15% for the Gateway clients. Gateway clients reported participating in cadets and school clubs, while One-time offenders indicated that they were involved in their Church's youth groups, Boys and Girls Club of Calgary, and Calgary Youth Friendly Volunteer Corps. The Chronic offenders who reported belonging to any clubs or groups with adult leadership listed: Alcoholics Anonymous, the Back Door, Exit and Side Door, which are programs developed specifically for street youth.

As discussed in the interim report, when youth were asked how frequently they engage in leisure activities with their parents, Gateway clients reported that this happens with the greatest frequency, with 75% indicating that they engage in activities with their parents either several times per week or once per week. Approximately one-half of the One-time offenders (47.5%), the Chronic offenders (51.4%), and the SHOs (52.6%) stated that they never engage in leisure activities with their parents (MacRae et al., 2008).

3.2.2 Family Characteristics

Youths' participation in leisure activities may be impacted by their parents' marital status, living arrangements and running away behaviour. Single-parents may find it more difficult to participate in leisure activities with their children or enrol them in structured out-of-school activities for financial or time availability reasons. Also, unstable home environments that result in foster or group home placements make it difficult for youth to maintain their participation in out-of-school activities. Running away from home can also be an indication of an unstable home environment, which can lead to decreased participation in structured out-of-school activities and family leisure activities.

In the interim report, MacRae et al., (2008) reported that the majority of Gateway youth indicated that their parents were married at the time of the interview (55%), followed by divorced (25%), and never married (10%). Only one respondent each reported that their parents were separated or widowed. The majority of youth in the other three study groups reported that their parents were never married (21.4% of One-time offenders; 34.1% of Chronic offenders; 35% of SHOs) or divorced (31% of One-time offenders; 24.4% of Chronic offenders; 20% of SHOs). Only 33.3% of the One-time offenders' parents were married, with low proportions also observed in the other two groups (17.1% of Chronic offenders and 25% of SHOs).

In terms of the youths' living arrangements at the time of the interview, equal proportions of the Gateway clients indicated that they lived with both parents (50%) or with one parent (50%), with or without siblings. The highest proportion of youth in the other three groups reported that they lived with one parent, with or without siblings (45.2% of One-time offenders; 34.1% of Chronic offenders; 55% of SHOs) (MacRae et al., 2008). In addition, a total of 19.5% of the Chronic offenders were living in a foster or group home at the time of the interview, compared to 4.8% of the One-time offenders and none of the Gateway clients or SHOs. Youth in the Chronic offender and SHO groups were also most likely to report that they had lived in a foster home at one point in their lives (36.6% for Chronic offenders and 50% for SHOs) (MacRae et al., 2008). Similarly, Chronic offenders and SHOs were also most likely to indicate that they had previously lived in a group home (70.7% and 65%, respectively). Gateway clients were least likely to report ever living in either of these settings (MacRae et al., 2008).

Youth were asked if they had ever run away from home, and their responses are presented in Table 3.5. The majority of respondents in the Gateway group stated that they had not run away from home (80%) and for those who had, most indicated that they had only run away once. Half of the One-time offenders indicated that they had run away from home (50%), with two-thirds of them reporting that this had occurred five times or less (66.7%). Most of the Chronic offenders and SHOs reported that they had run away (85.4% and 80% respectively), and further reported greater frequencies of running away. Most of the youth reported that they first started running away between the ages of 12 and 15, while large proportions of Chronic offenders and SHOs first ran away under the age of 12 (48.4% and 37.5% respectively).

Table 3.5
Characteristics of Running Away, by Study Group

	Gateway		One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ever Run Away								
Yes	4	20.0	21	50.0	35	85.4	16	80.0
No	16	80.0	21	50.0	6	14.6	4	20.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Frequency of Running Away								
Once	3	75.0	8	38.1	3	8.6	4	25.0
2-5 Times	0	0.0	6	28.6	9	25.7	0	0.0
6-10 Times	1	25.0	1	4.8	6	17.1	1	6.3
11-15 Times	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	11.4	1	6.3
Numerous times	0	0.0	6	28.6	12	34.3	10	62.5
Unknown	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.9	0	0.0
Total	4	100.0	21	100.0	35	100.0	16	100.0
Age of First Run Away								
6 and under	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	6.5	4	25.0
7-11	0	0.0	5	25.0	13	41.9	2	12.5
12-15	2	66.7	13	65.0	14	45.2	10	62.5
16-18	1	33.3	2	10.0	2	6.5	0	0.0
Total	3	100.0	20	100.0	31	100.0	16	100.0

Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

When asked why they had run away, the Gateway youth spoke about running away as isolated incidents. One youth detailed her experience: *"I got in a fight with a girl and my mom got mad and took away my cell phone and other privileges, so I left and stayed with a friend for a week and a half, but my mom knew where I was."* Another two youth spoke about their single experiences, saying: *"I tried once, but didn't really make it, I tried because I was getting in trouble for stuff,"* while another said *"I ran away to get away from my mom's boyfriend at the time. I was really young and didn't really go through with it; I ended up going back home."*

The responses from the youth in the One-time offender group were more varied. Many reported fighting with their parents (n=7), while others reported more specific circumstances: *"One time my parents got mad because I came home late, so I ran away"* or *"I had just got back from a foster home placement and I was angry at my mom"* and *"My friend left his house for a night, so I decided to go with him."* Others shared that they had run away because of issues related to drugs and alcohol: *"The first time I tried weed my mom slapped me so I left"* or said *"I was high on drugs," "I would go to parties that would last a couple of days"* and *"I went AWOL because I wanted to go partying."* Finally a couple of the One-time offenders said that they just wanted their freedom.

Many of the Chronic offenders said that they ran away because they were not happy with their parents' rules (n=7). These youth made comments like: *"My parents said no to me and I didn't want to listen to them," "I ran away because I was angry, I was upset with their rules"* or *"I got told no, and got grounded. I don't like rules!"* Similarly, some youth cited fighting with family members as reasons for running away (n=6). Other youth in the Chronic offender group spoke about violence or drug abuse in their homes (n=6): *"I run away because I argue with my mom when she drinks, she's an alcoholic"* or said *"My dad beat me up and my mom was always out with her friends and never had time for me. I was always in trouble."* A number of the Chronic offenders also spoke about running away from group homes or foster homes (n=3), while another youth said: *"My parents sent me to Woods stabilization and I hated it. I went back home and they threatened to send me back, so I left."* Two other youth commented that they had been kicked out of the house by their parents, rather than running away. Similar to the One-time offenders, some Chronic offenders also stated that they had run away for drug related issues (n=3): *"I ran away because I didn't want to be around, I was dealing and doing drugs and I had a place to go, so I wasn't going to be on the street,"* while another youth said, *"I didn't like structure and mostly I was on drugs. There was just too much structure at home."* Finally, some of the Chronic offenders reported running away so that they could be on their own or because they *"just wanted to"* (n=5).

SHOs reported a variety of reasons for running away. One youth said it best when they responded *"Girls, drugs, money, parties and just because I didn't want to be home."* Some youth also reported violence in their homes as reasons for running away (n=2), while others ran away because they did not like their parents or their rules (n=4). A couple of youth also said that they ran away because they were in trouble at school, while another two said that they were on the run from the police. Finally, one other

youth also responded that he ran away to get away from the group homes that he lived in.

3.2.3 Friends

The age group of youths' friends may also be associated with their participation in structured out-of-school activities and family leisure activities. Those with older friends may be less likely to participate in such activities. When asked about the age of their closest friends, few respondents in any of the study groups indicated that their friends were mostly younger than themselves. The most common response for Gateway clients (75%), One-time offenders (53.7%) and Chronic offenders (60%) was that their friends were the same age as the respondent. The most common response provided by the SHOs was that their friends were mostly older (45%), followed by the same age (40%) (MacRae et al., 2008).

3.3 **Other Out-of-School Activities**

For those who were not involved in organized out-of-school activities, youth were asked what they did after school, or in the case that they were not enrolled in school, what they did after work or in their spare time. In order to understand what else youth were doing with their time, youth were also asked about their employment status and the number of hours that they work, the time that they spend with their friends as well as when and how often they use alcohol and drugs and their stealing behaviour. Youth were also asked if there were other activities that they wish to be involved in.

3.3.1 Unstructured Out-of-School Activities

The majority of Gateway youth who reported that they were not involved in organized activities reported that they hang out with their friends after school (n=6). Many of them also reported working (n=3), doing homework (n=3) and playing the guitar (n=3). In addition to these activities, Gateway youth also reported going to the mall, hanging out at home, going on the computer, babysitting and talking on the phone as other things they do after school. One youth also reported drinking as an after-school activity.

Many of the One-time offenders also reported hanging out with friends after school when they are not involved in organized out-of-school activities (n=10). Many One-time offenders reported multiple activities, such as: hanging out at home (n=6), playing video games (n=5), going on the computer (n=4), doing homework, watching TV (n=4), working (n=3), sleeping (n=3), or doing nothing (n=2). Other youth also reported being involved in unstructured sporting activities (n=8), like biking, basketball, football, hockey, skateboarding, rollerblading and snowboarding. For those not enrolled in school, youth said: *"After work, I work at side jobs, play video games, watch movies and I go to the bar once in a while," "After work I sometimes go out with friends," or "I sometimes play my guitar in my free time" and "In my free time, I play basketball with my friends, bike a lot, sleep and play on the computer."* Again only one youth reported drinking after school.

While most of the Chronic offenders and SHOs reported similar activities after work and school as Gateway youth and One-time offenders (i.e., hanging out with friends, hanging out at home, playing video games, going on the computer, watching TV and movies, working, sleeping, doing nothing and unorganized sports), some reported less conventional activities, like drinking, partying, doing drugs, and committing crime. One Chronic offender commented: *"In my spare time, I get drunk, smoke dope and sell weed."* An additional five youth in the Chronic offender group also reported that they did drugs in their spare time, while two more reported selling drugs and stealing cars.

Responses from SHOs were split between those similar to Gateway youth and One-time offenders (n=12) and comments made about spending their time doing drugs and committing crime. When asked what they did in their spare time many of the SHOs made comments like: *"I do some sports with my friends in my spare time," "In my free time I chill with friends and go on the computer," "I go to the Y, relax, and hang out with my girlfriend"* or *"In my free time I'll work on the house I live in (repairs) and lift weights at home."* Meanwhile, other SHOs would report similar activities in concert with less conventional activities: *"In my free time I listen to music, hang out, walk around, hustle and commit crimes," "I sit, drink, smoke weed, and shoot hoops with my younger brother, my older brother is f**ked up on meth,"* and *"In my free time I sell drugs, watch movies, drive around with my friends, but I can't really do much anymore because the police always stop us."*

3.3.2 Employment

While some youth did report that they worked in their free-time, many of them only reported what they did in their spare time after school and after work. Therefore, in order to further understand what youth are doing if they are not enrolled in organized out-of-school activities, it is important to identify if they are working. As discussed in the interim report, respondents were asked about their employment status and the number of hours they work per week (MacRae et al., 2008). As shown in Table 3.6, approximately one-half of the respondents in each group indicated that they were employed, which ranged from 45% of the SHOs to 55% of the Gateway clients. The majority of Gateway clients reported that they work between 10 and 30 hours per week (63.6%). One-time offenders (44.4%), Chronic offenders (65%), and SHOs (55.6%) were most likely to state that they work 31 to 50 hours per week. Further, many of the youth who reported that they did not participate in organized out-of-school activities, did in fact report that they were employed (Gateway n=4, One-time offenders n=11, Chronic offenders n=16 and SHOs n=7).

Table 3.6
Employment Characteristics of Respondents, by Study Group

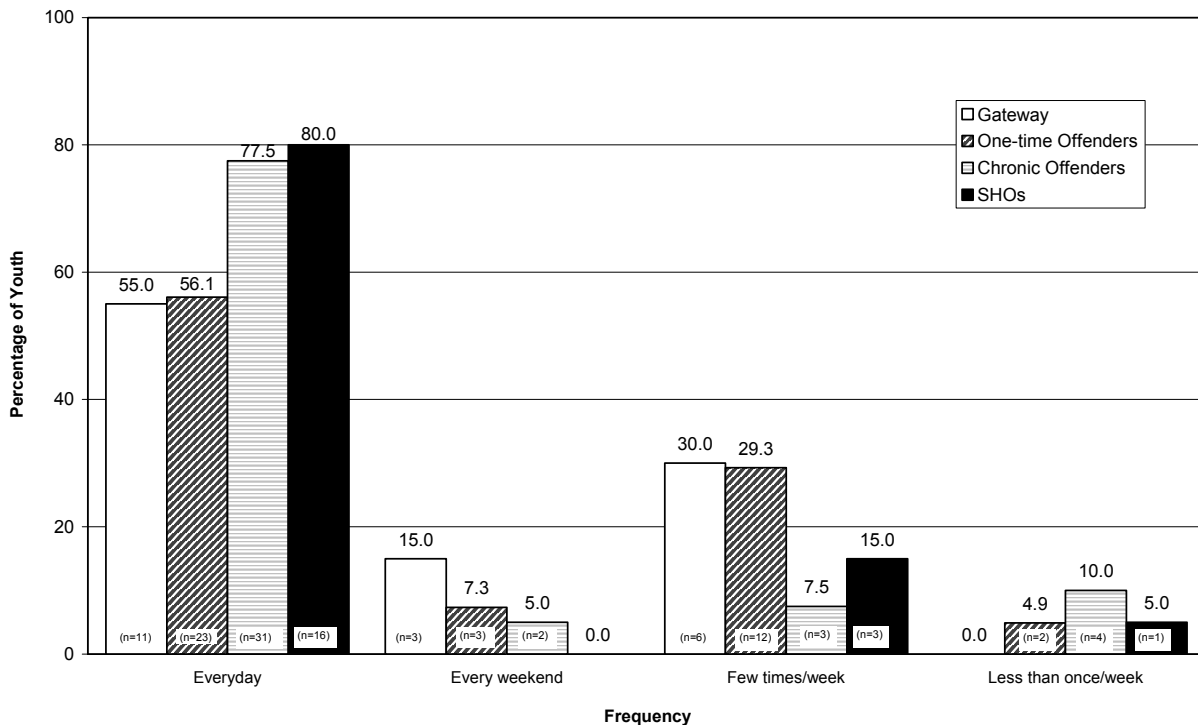
	Gateway		One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Currently Employed								
Yes	11	55.0	19	45.2	20	48.8	9	45.0
No	9	45.0	23	54.8	21	51.2	11	55.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Number of Hours Worked per Week								
<10	1	9.1	3	16.7	0	0.0	1	11.1
10-30	7	63.6	4	22.2	2	10.0	3	33.3
31-50	3	27.3	8	44.4	13	65.0	5	55.6
>50	0	0.0	2	11.1	4	20.0	0	0.0
Varies	0	0.0	1	5.6	1	5.0	0	0.0
Total	11	100.0	18	100.0	20	100.0	9	100.0

Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

3.3.3 Friends

Youth were asked how often they see their friends after school. As indicated in the previous section, for those who did not participate in organized out-of-school activities, many of them said that they spent time “hanging out with friends.” Figure 3.4 shows that the majority of youth in all four groups reported seeing their friends everyday, with a substantial majority of Chronic offenders and SHOs (77.5% and 80.0% respectively) stating this is the case.

Figure 3.4
Number of Times per week Youth See Their Friends Outside of School, by Study Group



Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

3.3.4 Alcohol and Drug Use

Youth were asked a variety of questions about their alcohol and drug use and the results are presented in Table 3.7. When asked if they had ever had 5 or more drinks of alcohol on one occasion, three-quarters (75%) of the Gateway clients, 88.1% of the One-time offenders, and all of the Chronic offenders and SHOs responded yes (MacRae et al., 2008). When further asked if they had done this in the past year, the vast majority of respondents said yes (ranging from 70% of the SHOs to 94.6% of the One-time offenders). While most of the Gateway youth reported consuming alcohol a few times a year (42.9%), many of the One-time offenders reported consuming alcohol weekly (28.6%) or twice a month (17.1%). Chronic offenders reported greater frequencies of consuming alcohol, with 25.7% indicating that they drink weekly, and 22.9% several times per week. SHOs on the other hand were split between reporting that they consumed alcohol either a few times per year (21.4%) or several times per week (28.6%). The majority of all the youth reported consuming alcohol at parties, or with friends, mostly on weekends and at night. Some youth also reported drinking at bars or at the mall.

Respondents also reported high levels of illegal drug use (MacRae et al., 2008). Gateway clients reported the lowest levels of illegal drug use at 60%, followed by the One-time offenders (83.3%). All of the Chronic offenders and SHOs reported ever having used illegal drugs. Again many of the youth reported using drugs at parties, while a couple of the One-time offenders also reported that they use drugs when they are stressed or frustrated, or when they want to relax and sleep. Some youth also reported that they were more likely to use hard drugs like cocaine and ecstasy at parties, while pot or weed is used anytime, or “whenever.”

Chronic offenders reported a variety of responses when asked when they use drugs. While many of them said they used drugs at parties, others made comments like *“When I’m bored and I have nothing to do,” “Whenever I have free time or time to myself,” “When I’m bored or stressed,” “When I’m depressed, when I want to get things out,”* and *“Whenever I go out.”* SHOs reported similar responses to One-time offenders and their comments included: *“I usually do drugs when I’m selling, or if I go out and party it usually leads to drugs”* and *“I usually do drugs close to the end of my shift dealing drugs.”*

Table 3.7
Characteristics of Alcohol and Drug Use, by Study Group

	Gateway		One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Had 5 or More Drinks on One Occasion								
Ever Yes	15	75.0	37	88.1	41	100.0	20	100.0
No	5	25.0	5	11.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Past Year Yes	14	93.3	35	94.6	35	85.4	14	70.0
No	1	6.7	2	5.4	6	14.6	6	30.0
Total	15	100.0	37	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
Frequency of Consuming Alcohol¹								
Daily	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	11.4	1	7.1
Several Times a Week	1	7.1	3	8.6	8	22.9	4	28.6
Weekly	2	14.3	10	28.6	9	25.7	2	14.3
Twice a Month	3	21.4	6	17.1	1	2.9	2	14.3
Monthly	1	7.1	3	8.6	2	5.7	0	0.0
A Few Times a Year	6	42.9	10	28.6	8	22.9	3	21.4
Once a Year	1	7.1	0	0.0	2	5.7	1	7.1
Used to Drink, Now Stopped	0	0.0	3	8.6	1	2.9	1	7.1
Total	14	100	35	100	35	100	14	100
When Alcohol is Consumed^{1,2}								
At Parties / With Friends	7	87.5	19	55.9	16	66.7	4	57.1
After Work	0	0.0	1	2.9	1	4.2	0	0.0
Weekends	1	12.5	9	26.5	2	8.3	0	0.0
At Night	0	0.0	5	14.7	5	20.8	3	42.9
During the Day	1	12.5	0	0.0	1	4.2	1	14.3
Whenever	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	29.2	3	42.9
Other	0	0.0	4	11.8	2	8.3	0	0.0
Ever Used Illegal Drugs								
Yes	12	60.0	35	83.3	41	100.0	20	100.0
No	8	40.0	7	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	20	100.0	42	100.0	41	100.0	20	100.0
When Drugs are Consumed^{1,2}								
At Parties / With Friends	5	55.6	12	31.6	12	28.6	5	27.8
After Work/School	0	0.0	2	5.3	1	2.4	1	5.6
Weekends	1	11.1	3	7.9	2	4.8	1	5.6
At Night	2	22.2	1	2.6	2	4.8	2	11.1
Everyday	0	0.0	2	5.3	2	4.8	2	11.1
Anytime of the day	1	11.1	2	5.3	2	4.8	3	16.7
Whenever	0	0.0	12	31.6	11	26.2	2	11.1
Other	0	0.0	4	10.5	10	23.8	2	11.1

Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

¹ Responses are based on responding "yes" to past year.

² Multiple response data, percentages are based on total number of responses.

3.3.5 Characteristics of Stealing Behaviour

The interim report discussed the characteristics of youths' involvement in property crimes, which found that overall, the level of respondents' involvement in property crimes increased with the extent of criminal involvement of the study group (MacRae et al., 2008). The vast majority of youth in the four study groups reported having stolen something in the past (81% of One-time offenders, 85% of Gateway

clients, 95% of SHOs and 100% of Chronic offenders). Youth were also asked about when they normally steal and why. Responses to these questions may also give an indication of what youth are doing when they are not enrolled in structured out-of-school activities.

Many youth reported stealing at night, or as one youth remarked: *“When it’s dark out, night time.”* A number of One-time offenders and Chronic offenders also stated they would steal anytime, or whenever the opportunity arose. A few of the Chronic offenders and SHOs stated that they would steal in the morning or during the day (n=4).

As shown in Table 3.8, the main motivation for stealing for many Gateway youth was that they did not have the money to pay for the items they wanted (n=5). Common responses included: *“I didn’t have the money”* or *“I needed money, so I took 10 to 20 dollars from my mom.”* Others commented that they *“just wanted it”* (n=4), or one Gateway youth stated: *“It was a phase I was going through. I’ve grown out of it now.”*

Table 3.8
Characteristics of Stealing Behaviour, by Study Group

	Gateway		One-time Offenders		Chronic Offenders		SHOs	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Why Youth Normally Steals¹								
No Money	5	27.8	10	27.8	4	7.7	5	26.3
Being Stupid	3	16.7	0	0.0	3	5.8	0	0.0
Under the influence of drugs/alcohol	1	5.6	3	8.3	3	5.8	0	0.0
No reason	2	11.1	2	5.6	6	11.5	1	5.3
Peer pressure	1	5.6	1	2.8	0	0.0	1	5.3
Just wanted it	4	22.2	8	22.2	6	11.5	2	10.5
To get money for drugs	0	0.0	1	2.8	4	7.7	1	5.3
For fun	0	0.0	7	19.4	9	17.3	1	5.3
To make money	0	0.0	1	2.8	9	17.3	5	26.3
It’s easy/ Good at it	1	5.6	1	2.8	2	3.8	0	0.0
Other	1	5.6	2	5.6	6	11.5	3	15.8

Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews.

¹ Multiple response data, percentages are based on total number of responses.

One-time offenders largely stole because they did not have enough money: *“Because I need something and I don’t have the money. I see things I want and I can’t get them.”* Many One-time offenders also stated that they would steal just because they *“wanted stuff.”* These youth were fairly vague and would simply state: *“Cause I wanted it.”* Many of them commented that stealing was *“fun,”* *“Cause it’s fun, it’s a way to get things I want,”* *“For the thrill, I’ve never been caught”* or another One-time offender said *“I just feel like it. I don’t want to spend money on things when I can get them for free. Plus it’s an adrenaline rush!”*

Similar comments were also popular amongst Chronic offenders who said: *“I like the rush and it’s something I’m good at,”* *“I like the rush you get from stealing”* or *“Stealing is like an addiction, I like the rush, the money”* and *“For the excitement, the adrenaline”* and *“The thrill, the adrenaline, everything I see, I want.”* Others had more varied responses like: *“I don’t know, it’s stupid. I don’t want to spend money on*

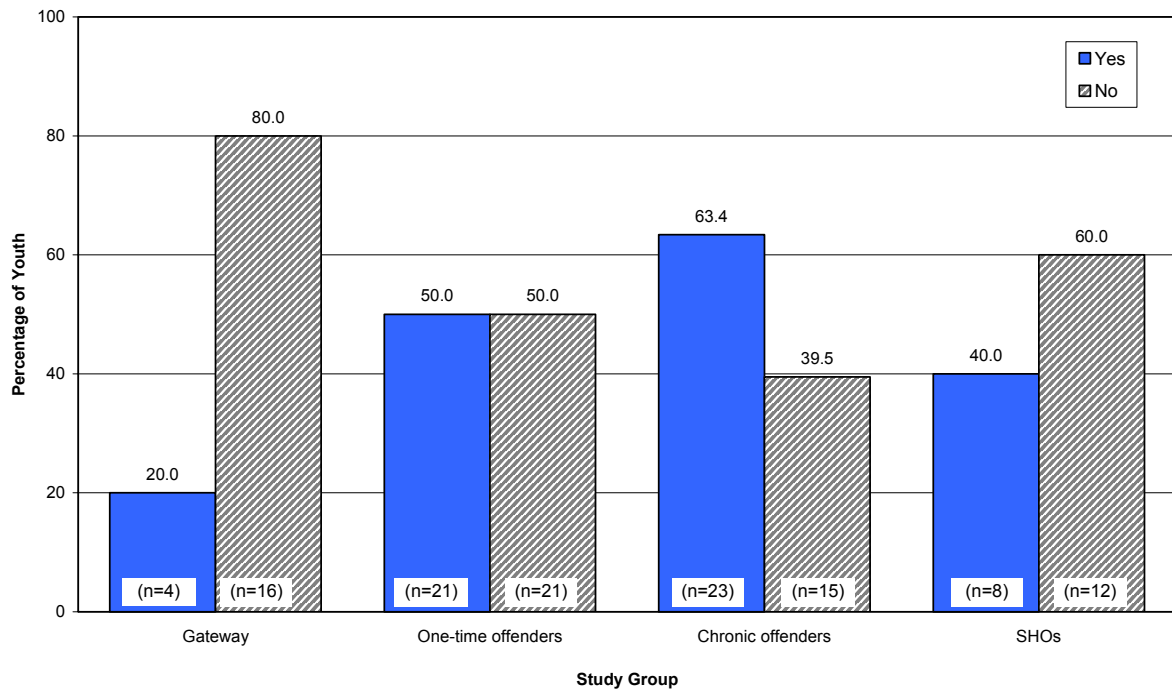
something I can steal and I only steal from businesses, not from friends,” “I used to think it was cool” or “Someone stole from me. I’m not proud of what I did. I won’t steal from friends” and “I liked driving, go travelling around and then we’d leave the car in a parking lot.”

Overall, the main motivation for stealing for SHOs was money. SHOs either spoke about stealing because they could not afford the things they wanted, or to make more money for themselves. Some youth had a variety of reasons for stealing: *“I steal for the rush, to feel the adrenaline, but it needs to be something expensive. Sometimes I need the money. Sometimes I’m pressured by friends,” “Every situation is unique. I often don’t like the person, so I’ll steal from them. Sometimes I’ve stolen because I need things for the money.”*

3.3.6 Desired Activities

Finally, youth were asked if they wished to be involved in other activities after school. As shown in Figure 3.5, the majority of Gateway youth responded no. The four youth who responded yes said they wished to be enrolled in soccer (n=2), yoga and one youth said he wished to be enrolled back into public school (as opposed to home schooling). On the other hand, One-time offenders were split when asked if they wanted to do something else after school. Those who reported yes said that they would like to participate in various sports (n=9), get a job (n=2), learn how to DJ, work on cars, break dance, go to more social events, listen to music, watch TV and movies, and learn how to play an instrument or play in a band. Two youth in this group said that they would like to smoke weed and drink. A large majority of Chronic offenders reported that they would like to do something else after school, with many of them citing various sports and outdoor activities like hockey, boxing, martial arts, soccer, running and hackie (n=23). Some youth made such comments: *“I want to get back into hockey. I quit three years ago,” “I want to get into boxing when I’m out [of CYOC]” or “Playing hockey. I quit three years ago when I started hanging around the wrong group” and “I’d like to play football. I used to be really into sports and then I started having a social life.”* Other Chronic offenders said that they would like to get a job (n=2), stop drinking, or sleep. For those in the SHO group who responded that they would like to do something else, some expressed an interest in returning to school (n=2): *“I was trying to get some ACAD classes and I was almost in, but then the charges happened. There was a teacher that was going to help me get in without a high school diploma.”* Others said that they wished to spend time with their friends and family: *“I’d like to go out with my mom more, go out with better, more positive friends to movies and stuff.”* Finally three other SHOs were interested in getting involved in sports like basketball and boxing.

Figure 3.5
Desire to do Something Else After School, by Study Group



Source of data: Youth Offender Interviews

4.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Summary

Findings from the first year of the study “A Profile of Youth Offenders in Calgary: An Interim Report” yielded further questions regarding school investment and leisure activities among young offenders in Calgary. A number of additional quantitative and qualitative variables produced from interviews with the youth cohort but not used in the initial report were identified and analyzed in order to answer additional questions posed by the patterns observed in the first year of the study. A summary of the results of the further analysis are presented below.

Gateway Clients

- A large majority of Gateway clients reported liking school and their teachers.
- The majority of Gateway clients were proficient in school and expected to complete college or university. Less than one-third of Gateway clients had considered dropping out of school.
- Half of Gateway clients reported that they did not skip classes at all. More than one-quarter of all Gateway clients reported skipping classes at least once per week, while another quarter of the youth reported skipping classes less regularly.
- Gateway clients were less likely to report that they had been suspended as compared to the other study groups and the majority of those suspended reported only one suspension. Reasons for their suspensions included: fighting, drugs and fooling around in class.
- The majority of Gateway clients reported regularly participating in organized out-of-school activities, such as soccer, hockey, darts, cadets and music lessons. A large proportion of these youth also reported engaging in leisure activities with their parents either several times per week or once per week.
- More than one-half of Gateway clients indicated that their parents were married at the time of the interview and one-third said that their parents were separated or divorced.
- One-half of Gateway clients indicated that they lived with both parents and one-half were living with one parent. Gateway clients were the least likely to report that they had ever lived in a foster or group home of the four study groups.
- The majority of Gateway clients stated that they had not run away from home; for those who had, most spoke about their experiences as isolated incidents.

- Most of the Gateway clients indicated that their friends were the same age as the respondent.
- Gateway clients who were not involved in organized out-of-school activities reported that they spent time with friends, worked part-time, spent time on homework, and played the guitar, among other activities.
- More than one-half of Gateway clients reported working part-time and seeing their friends everyday after school.
- Three-quarters of Gateway clients reported that they had consumed 5 or more drinks of alcohol on one occasion, and almost half of these respondents indicated that this happened only a few times per year, mostly at parties or with friends, on the weekends.
- More than half of Gateway clients reported using illegal drugs, mostly at parties or with friends, at night.
- Gateway clients who reported that they stole indicated that they were involved in stealing either after school or at night. Among other responses, respondents reported that they stole because they did not have money to purchase the item, they just wanted it, or because they were *“being stupid.”*
- Most Gateway clients were content with the extracurricular activities that they were currently involved in. A few respondents expressed a desire to be enrolled in soccer and yoga.

One-time Offenders

- Approximately one-half of One-time offenders reported liking school and their teachers.
- The majority of One-time offenders were proficient in school and just over one-half of the respondents expected to complete college or university. More than one-half reported that they had considered dropping out of school.
- The majority of One-time offenders were not diagnosed with a mental health disorder. For those that were, ADHD and Conduct Disorder were the most common mental health diagnoses.
- Almost 60% of One-time offenders reported skipping classes, with many of them skipping at least once per week. Some youth in this group were no longer able to skip classes due to their probation orders.
- One-time offenders were very likely to report that they had been suspended. One-third reported that they had not been suspended in the past year and almost 50% were suspended 5 times or less. Reasons for their suspensions included: fighting, drugs or alcohol at school and mouthing off to teachers.

- Almost one-third of One-time offenders reported regularly participating in organized out-of-school activities and approximately half engaged in leisure activities with their parents.
- The majority of One-time offenders indicated that their parents were either never married or divorced at the time of the interview and one-third said that their parents were married.
- Almost one-half of One-time offenders indicated that they lived with one parent, with or without siblings, while a small number were currently living in a foster or group home.
- One-half of One-time offenders stated that they had run away from home, with two-thirds of them reporting that this had occurred 5 times or less. The majority of respondents indicated that they had run away because of problems or altercations with their parents.
- Most One-time offenders indicated that their friends were the same age as them.
- One-time offenders not involved in organized out-of-school activities reported that they spent time with friends, participated in unstructured sporting activities, and spent time at home, among many other activities in their spare time.
- Almost half of One-time offenders reported being employed, while over one-half of the respondents said that they spent time with their friends everyday after school.
- Almost 90% of One-time offenders reported that they had consumed 5 or more drinks of alcohol on one occasion, and more than half of these respondents indicated that this happened more than once a month, mostly at parties or with friends, on the weekends and at night.
- A large majority of One-time offenders indicated that they use illegal drugs, mostly at parties or with friends, on weekends or just “*whenever*.”
- Most One-time offenders indicated that they were involved in stealing mainly at night or whenever the opportunity arose. Many respondents commented that their main motivation for stealing was because they did not have enough money.
- One-half of One-time offenders expressed an interest in participating in various sports, getting a job, and getting involved in other extracurricular activities.

Chronic Offenders

- Approximately one-half of the Chronic offenders reported liking school and their teachers.

- The majority of Chronic offenders were proficient in school, however more than half of them stated that they either did not expect to finish high school, or that high school was the highest level of education they expected to attain. Two-thirds of respondents had considered dropping out of school.
- Probation file review data revealed that two-thirds of Chronic offenders were diagnosed with a mental health disorder. The most common disorders included ADHD, Conduct Disorder and a Learning Disorder. All of the youth were diagnosed with more than one disorder.
- Three-quarters of Chronic offenders reported that they skipped classes. Given that a high proportion of Chronic offenders were enrolled in CYOC at the time of the interview, most were unable to skip classes in the past year.
- Chronic offenders were very likely to report that they had been suspended, with suspensions beginning at the age of 12 or younger for the majority of respondents. Reasons for their suspensions included: fighting, skipping school and possession of drugs or alcohol on school property.
- One-fifth of Chronic offenders reported regularly participating in organized out-of-school activities, including some sports, Alcoholics Anonymous and programs geared specifically toward street youth. A little less than one-half of respondents engaged in leisure activities with their parents.
- The majority of Chronic offenders indicated that their parents were either never married or divorced at the time of the interview, while less than one-fifth of respondents said that their parents were married.
- One third of Chronic offenders indicated that they lived with one parent, with or without siblings, while almost 20% were living in either a foster home or group home at the time of the interview. Chronic offenders were also more likely to indicate that they had previously lived in a foster or group home in the past than Gateway clients and One-time offenders.
- Most Chronic offenders stated that they had run away from home, and a large proportion of respondents reported that they first ran away under the age of 12. Many of the respondents indicated that they had run away because they were not happy with their parents' rules or because of violence or drug abuse in their homes.
- Most of the Chronic offenders indicated that their friends were the same age as the respondent.
- Chronic offenders not involved in organized out-of-school activities reported that they spent time with friends, participated in unstructured sporting activities, and also reported taking part in less conventional activities like drinking, partying,

doing drugs and committing crime, among many other activities in their spare time.

- All Chronic offenders reported that they had consumed 5 or more drinks of alcohol on one occasion, and almost two-thirds of these respondents indicated that this happened at least once a week, mostly at parties or with friends, at night.
- All Chronic offenders indicated that they use illegal drugs, mostly at parties or with friends, or just “*whenever*.”
- Most Chronic offenders indicated that they were involved in stealing mainly at night or whenever the opportunity arose. Many respondents commented that they experience a thrill or “rush” from stealing and had many reasons for engaging in this type of behaviour.
- A large majority of Chronic offenders reported that they would like to do something else after school, or in their spare time. Respondents expressed an interest in various sports and outdoor activities.

SHOs

- A small proportion of SHOs reported liking school, while more than half reported that they liked at least some of their teachers.
- While only half of SHOs were enrolled in school, the majority of them reported that they were doing well in school. Most stated that they either did not expect to finish high school, or that high school was the highest level of education they expected to attain, and more than three-quarters of SHOs said that they had considered dropping out of school.
- Probation file review data showed that three-quarters of SHOs had been diagnosed with a mental health disorder. The most common disorders included ADHD and Conduct Disorder.
- Most SHOs enrolled in school reported that they skipped classes.
- Almost all SHOs indicated that they had been suspended from school at one point in time. Reasons for their suspensions included: possession of drugs or alcohol on school property, mouthing off to teachers and skipping.
- Only 10% of SHOs reported participating in organized out-of-school activities. They did not participate in organized non-sport activities or any clubs or groups with adult leadership. More than one-half of the respondents stated that they never engage in leisure activities with their parents.

- The majority of SHOs indicated that their parents were either never married or divorced at the time of the interview, with one-quarter of respondents reporting that their parents were married.
- Over half of the respondents indicated that they lived with one parent, with or without siblings. SHOs were also more likely to indicate that they had previously lived in a foster or group home in the past than Gateway clients and One-time offenders.
- Most SHOs stated that they had run away from home, and had done so on numerous occasions. Respondents reported a variety of reasons for running away, including violence at home, problems with parents' rules, trouble at school or because they were on the run from the police.
- Almost half of the respondents said that their friends were older, and 40% said they were the same age.
- SHOs not involved in organized out-of-school activities reported that they spent their spare time with friends, participated in unstructured sporting activities, and also reported spending time in other less conventional activities like drugs and committing crime.
- Less than half of SHOs reported being employed, while more than three-quarters of the respondents said that they spent time with their friends everyday after school.
- All SHOs reported that they had consumed 5 or more drinks of alcohol on one occasion, and almost half of these respondents indicated that this happened at least once a week, mostly at parties or with friends, at night.
- All SHOs indicated that they use illegal drugs, mostly at parties or with friends, at night or "*whenever.*"
- Most SHOs indicated that they were involved in stealing mainly at night. Overall, the main motivation for stealing for SHOs was money; either they could not afford the articles they stole, or they stole them to make more money for themselves.
- The majority of SHOs reported that they are content with the activities they engage in, in their spare time.

4.2 Discussion and Conclusions

The objective of this report was to elaborate on why youth who are more seriously involved with the youth justice system are less invested in school and are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities and family leisure activities. Three research questions directed the analysis in this report:

- (1) Why are youth who are more seriously involved in crime less likely to be in school, or be invested in school, than youth who are less seriously involved in crime?
- (2) Why are youth who are more seriously involved in crime less likely to be involved in structured, out-of-school activities or family activities, than youth who are less seriously involved in crime?
- (3) What are youth who are not invested in structured, out-of-school activities doing in their spare time? What do they wish to be doing in their spare time?

To answer these questions, a number of additional qualitative and quantitative variables produced from the interviews with 123 youth were examined. However, given that offender profiles were generated from bivariate analysis, causal inferences cannot be made. The information generated from this report should be used only as a base for understanding the factors that are associated with decreased investment in school and leisure activities for youth more seriously involved in crime.

4.2.1 Discussion

Investment in School

Youth who were more seriously involved in crime were less likely to be enrolled in school and invested in school than youth who were less seriously involved in crime. The interim report showed that youths' enrolment in school decreased as they became more seriously involved in crime (MacRae et al., 2008). Youths' attitudes toward school may help to explain this somewhat, with higher proportions of Chronic offenders and SHOs reporting that they did not like school or their teachers; however, it seems likely that other factors are at play. For example, it was interesting that so many Chronic offenders attending school at CYOC reported liking school and their teachers. It may be that schools with smaller class sizes, individualized teaching and attendance that is mandatory, may better fit the needs of these youth and encourage them to increase their investment in school. In particular, it is possible that behavioural problems and absences that are common to Chronic offenders and SHOs are manifestations of the frustrations that they are having with learning in their school environment. Youth who reported doing poorly in school made comments about their lack of focus and concentration and poor attendance as factors influencing their decreased proficiency in school. It may be that these youth require more structure, smaller class sizes and teaching tailored to their individual learning styles in order to maintain a more active investment in school. The data on mental health diagnoses supports this supposition, showing that the majority of Chronic offenders and SHOs had been diagnosed with some form of mental health disorder, many of which included ADHD, Conduct Disorders and Learning Disorders. These disorders could significantly decrease their ability to learn in a non-specialized educational setting and thereby hamper their interest in further continuing school. Consequently, these youth may be more likely to be successful in environments that address their individualized learning needs.

Youth who were more seriously involved in crime were also more likely to skip classes and be suspended. Absences in school make it difficult to maintain a strong connection to school and may impact future attendance and investment. Youth with increased school absences and interruptions may find that the connection they have with school progressively deteriorates and, in combination with their learning deficits, they become less capable of success in the school system. This may then lead youth to the decision to simply drop out of school. Interviews with the youth did reveal that Chronic offenders and SHOs were more likely to report skipping classes and be suspended, and that a large majority of them had considered dropping out of school. It is likely that their struggles with learning also play a role in truancy and withdrawal from school.

Out-of-School and Family Activities

As found in the interim report, youth who were more seriously involved in crime were also less likely to be involved in structured out-of-school activities or family activities than youth who were less seriously involved in crime. A number of factors may account for this association. First, the youth's family situation may be an important factor in determining the youth's participation in extracurricular or family activities. The results showed that the majority of youth in the One-time offender, Chronic offender and SHO groups reported that their parents were either never married or divorced and therefore they were living with only one parent, with or without siblings, at the time of the interview. Single parents may find it more difficult to enrol their children in organized out-of-school activities due to either financial reasons or time constraints. Many organized out-of-school activities require a financial investment that single-earner families may be unable to accommodate. At the same time, given Calgary's geographical dispersion, youth often have to travel a great distance to their games, practices and lessons, many having to rely on their parents to drive them. Single-parent families may find it difficult to allocate time to drive or accompany youth to their various activities, which may not be located in the communities that they live in. This may either completely discourage parents from enrolling their children in organized out-of-school activities or affect their children's level of participation in these activities. Irregular attendance at programs may ultimately decrease the youth's desire to be involved in extracurricular activities at all.

Irregular attendance in extracurricular activities may also be a result of a lack of stability in their family. The interviews revealed that Chronic offenders and SHOs were the most likely groups to indicate that they had previously lived in a group or foster home, with almost 20% of Chronic offenders living in a foster or group home at the time of the interview. Most Chronic offenders and SHOs also indicated that they had run away from home in the past, often starting at a very young age, and further reported greater frequencies of doing so than Gateway clients and One-time offenders. While Gateway clients commented on running away as isolated incidents, Chronic offenders and SHOs stated various reasons, from conflicts with their parents and their rules, violence or drug abuse in their families and because they wanted to be on their own. These circumstances may indicate that family life is unstable and as a result can impact on regular participation in extracurricular activities. Youth may find it easier to quit an activity or sport altogether than to attend on a sporadic basis, or may lack the

commitment to participate at all. Consequently, these youth may be detached or excluded from family and community supports that often help Gateway clients and One-time offenders to rebound after their initial encounter with the justice system.

In addition, youth with older friends may be less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, especially if their friends are also not involved in leisure activities. Results showed that this may be a possibility for Chronic offender and SHO youth. These groups reported spending the most time with their friends after school and that larger proportions of their friends were older than them. Gateway clients and One-time offenders alternatively seemed to report a more balanced distribution of time with their friends, family and extracurricular activities. SHO youth in particular may gravitate toward older friends because of a lack of adult supervision and mentorship at home.

In addition, age of youth themselves may also play a role in participation in extracurricular activities. As youth get older, they may be more likely to find employment – particularly if they have dropped out of school – and spend more time with friends and girlfriends/boyfriends. Given the average age for Gateway youth (15.6) was younger than that of Chronic offenders (16.8) and SHO youth (17), this may contribute to some of the difference in participation rates among the groups.

Finally, some youth also reported that they used to be involved in extracurricular activities, but were no longer participating. Consequently, for these youth it may not be that there are issues with accessibility or availability of programs, but rather that youth lack a desire to participate in these activities or, for Chronic and SHO youth, that they may have become attached to deviant peers and entrenched in a lifestyle involving drug use and other criminal activity. Further research on why youth discontinue their participation in organized out-of-school activities may prove beneficial for understanding why youth become more seriously involved in crime.

The activities that youth reported being involved in outside of school or in their spare time also differed by their level of involvement in the justice system. While Gateway clients and One-time offenders reported activities like spending time with their friends, working, hanging out at home, playing video games and participating in unstructured sporting activities, Chronic offenders and SHOs reported similar activities in concert with less conventional activities like drinking, doing drugs and committing crime. Chronic offenders, however, expressed a strong desire to be involved in sporting activities. A lower proportion of SHOs were interested in getting involved in other activities; however, those who were reported various activities like spending time with friends and family, going to school and participating in sports.

4.2.2 Conclusions

The goal of this supplementary report was to provide further insight into findings regarding school investment and extracurricular activity participation reported in “A Study of Youth Offending in Calgary: An Interim Report.” The supplementary report has produced a number of interesting findings with regard to school investment, specifically, how the structure of a schooling environment might impact upon youth’s investment in school. It is apparent that the more serious offenders attending West

View School, located in CYOC, have more positive attitudes about school and their teachers than those more serious offenders who are attending school in the community. Perhaps more research conducted on the learning environment within schools like West View could help to explain why youth enrolled there had more positive experiences and a greater investment in school. Techniques used there might be expanded to schools within the public system to ensure that youth diagnosed with various disorders (e.g., ADHD, FASD and ODD), who often have specialized learning needs, are appropriately accommodated. Increased access to specialized schools, such as George Woods Learning Centre, for youth with behavioural and mental health issues is also extremely important in decreasing their offending behaviour. More importantly, access to specialized educational facilities for special needs children at risk for offending should be provided to them at an early age. Such services, hopefully, would lower the probability that these at-risk children would develop patterns of chronic and persistent offending.

Finally, the findings also suggested that youth who are disengaged from the community are more likely to commit delinquent acts. Therefore, programs with drop-in participation may be a viable option for youth who are not able to regularly participate in activities, while subsidized extracurricular activities may also be helpful for those who cannot afford the cost associated with enrolment fees or equipment. Meanwhile, for the many youth who reported being involved in unstructured activities (non-organized sports, self-taught music, etc.), further research on the appeal and benefits of unstructured activities to youth might translate into affordable, adult-supervised activities.