

**The Joy of Juvenile Joyriding**

**By**

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### Abstract

This thesis evolved from my interest, familiarity and affinity to child and youth care, criminology and my work with young people and young offenders. The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of adolescent joyriding and describe the deeper meanings that were engendered by young people who have experience and knowledge of this activity. The inquiry involved phenomenological interviews with four adolescent males who have participated in joyriding and a hermeneutical analysis of the interview text. The results provide a phenomenological interpretation into the experience of adolescent joyriding. In essence, the interviews revealed that lived experiences associated with joyriding centered around six themes: The Joy in Joyriding; Joyriding as Sport; Predisposers to Joyriding; Justifications Associated with Joyriding; Developmental Needs; and Contact with the Law.

Supervisor: Dr. Frances Ricks, (School of Child and Youth Care)

## Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	v
Chapter 1: IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Car Culture.....	3
Joyriding and the Law.....	6
Defining Joyriding.....	8
Chapter 2: UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM.....	10
Scale of the Problem.....	10
Characteristics of Car Crime.....	13
Types of cars.....	14
Mode of entry.....	14
When cars are taken.....	14
Victims.....	15
Characteristics of Offenders.....	15
Chapter 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY.....	21
An Orientation to Hermeneutic Phenomenology.....	22
An Orientation to Contextual Considerations.....	24
Profile of the location.....	24
Organizational context.....	25
Participant selection.....	26
An Orientation to Researcher's Context and Assumptions.....	28
Informed Consent and Confidentiality.....	30
Phenomenological Interviews.....	31
Approaching the Interviews.....	33
Approaching the Data.....	35
Transcribing the collected data.....	35
Extracting passages.....	36
Formulating categories.....	36
Determining broader themes.....	37
Methods of Verification and Integrity of Data.....	39
Credibility.....	39
Transferability.....	40
Confirmability.....	41
Dependability.....	41
Chapter 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS....	43
Description of Participants.....	43
Participant 1.....	44

Participant 2.....	44
Participant 3.....	44
Participant 4.....	44
Emergence of Themes.....	45
Theme 1: The Joy in Joyriding.....	47
I love cars.....	47
It's fun.....	47
It's a rush.....	48
I get happy.....	49
Theme 2: Joyriding as Sport.....	50
It's a game.....	51
It's a competition of skill.....	51
There are rules of the game.....	52
Theme 3: Predisposers to Joyriding.....	53
Lack of knowledge of the law.....	53
Disapproving parents and siblings.....	55
Approving peers.....	58
Neighbourhood sanctions.....	60
Substance use.....	61
Theme 4: Justifications Associated with Joyriding.....	63
The devil made me do it.....	64
Borrowing versus stealing.....	65
It's addicting.....	65
Theme 5: Developmental Needs.....	66
Belonging.....	67
Loyalty.....	67
Self-Identity.....	69
Risk-Taking.....	70
Theme 6: Contact with the Law.....	71
Getting caught.....	71
Police pursuits.....	73
They're doin' us dirty.....	75
Getting punished.....	76
Reputation.....	77
 Chapter 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS .....	 79
Adolescence in Action.....	80
Masculinity in Motion.....	84
Methodological Concerns and Limitations.....	87
Implications for Policy and Practice.....	88
Implications for Future Research.....	93
Conclusion.....	94
 References.....	 96
Appendix A.....	102

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I believe that we live in a socially constructed world; our thoughts, feelings and actions do not simply materialize from a vacuum, and a thesis is not exempt from this fundamental rule of life. The successful completion of this thesis rests on the influence of so many people, too many to mention here. Certainly, this thesis could not have been started, let alone finished, without the input and guidance of my Research Supervisor, Dr. Frances Ricks. I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of my thesis committee for their patience, wisdom and constructive feedback. My graduate schooling has communicated a sense of imperative about research in child and youth care that will have a long-lasting effect on me for which I am grateful. I would specially like to thank Dr. Sibylle Artz for showing me the door.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Identifying the Problem

*The police noticed a brown Chevrolet El Camino travelling eastbound at a high rate of speed at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Pike Street in downtown Seattle, Washington. The car did not stop or slow down before entering the roadway, and was unable to negotiate a left turn. The car struck the curb on the east side of the street and instantly blew out the passenger side tire. The vehicle kept going on three tires at speeds ranging from 60 to 90 mph and was continually changing lanes. The front tire was flat and sparks were visible from that rim. The right front axle was disintegrating with debris striking the pursuing police vehicle. After three attempts, the police successfully performed a PIT manoeuvre (Pursuit Immobilization Technique) and stopped the car. The juvenile driver fled on foot and was caught by a K-9 service dog. Damages totalled \$989.24.*

*Police observed a 1991 Dodge Spirit being driven in an erratic manner and verified that the car was listed as stolen. Four juveniles occupied the car. As the marked police car followed them, the car accelerated until it reached the intersection at Renton Avenue and Prentice Street in Seattle, where the occupants fled on foot and were found hiding in bushes in a nearby yard. All four boys admitted to taking turns driving. The ignition system had clearly been "punched." Damages to the car totalled \$1,958.40.*

*A bicycle police officer ran the license plates on a new convertible Mustang occupied by three juveniles. By the time the officer received notice of the car's stolen status, the car had left at a high rate of speed. When police saw the car again, the car accelerated, began weaving through traffic, and, instead of stopping, accelerated over the curb, ran*

*over a road sign, and drove north on Factory Avenue in Seattle. After ignoring another stop sign and a red traffic light, the Mustang struck two cars in an intersection and came to a halt in a nearby yard. The occupants fled on foot and were caught after a short pursuit. Damages totalled \$13,941.07.*

### Introduction

Joyriding is frequently thought of as a thrill-seeking endeavour most commonly committed by youths. The problem of joyriding is in many ways overwhelming for communities, both in the number of joyriding incidents and in the complexity of the issue. The above descriptions demonstrate that joyriding is also a serious public safety issue. As the incidents persist, joyriding continues to alarm families, victims, police, and those of us working in the young offender system.

Currently, knowledge about car theft and joyriding by adolescents is largely limited to quantitative statistics and status characteristics of car crime and offenders. While such information contributes to our understanding of the incidents of the phenomenon, there is a lack of knowledge about the meaning of joyriding to youths who engage in it. While it is generally agreed that joyriding can provide a sense of excitement, in practise we know very little about how young people experience and interpret this behaviour. How do youths describe the event? Are there commonalities in their perceptions, beliefs and attitudes? Are there ways to affect adolescents' perceptions of joyriding?

The primary aim of this study was to enrich and enlarge the current knowledge on adolescent joyriding behaviour by examining participants' experiences. Common components of the experience were ascertained in order to develop an understanding of the lived experience. The research question was, "What is it like to experience a joyride?"

## Car Culture

Before embarking on defining the ‘problem’ of joyriding, this section provides a brief overview of the extraordinary impact the automobile has had on modern society. The car is one of the most momentous developments of the nineteenth century and its evolution during the twentieth century prompted a degree of mobility that is now taken for granted in the developed world. We cannot examine joyriding without first being aware of the impact and the reality of this phenomenon, because understanding that a car culture exists, gives us context to the behaviour of joyriding.

Since its first appearance in the 1890s, the automobile has embodied deeply held cultural and emotional values that have become an embedded part of our society and lifestyle. Henry Ford’s first assembly line production in 1908 launched the automobile into the mainstream and made the car more commonly available to the general public. This transition gave people a sense of mobility and freedom that never existed before. Suddenly people could cover distances at ten, twenty, and thirty miles an hour virtually anywhere that the roads led without relying on train schedules or horses.

As the idea of automobile travel took hold, it also permitted other freedoms to occur: where to travel, where to work and live, and where to seek personal pleasure and social recreation. People no longer had to work, shop, or vacation close to home. As a result, our communities began to change and adapt. This change is evident in the suburban sprawl surrounding major cities, the resulting commute on freeways in traffic, and the disappearance of small businesses that were once located in individual neighbourhoods. Recreation options also expanded as people travelled out into the wilderness on ‘road-trips’ and interstate campsites encouraged long-distance travel and exploration of the country. In fact, the term ‘joyriding’ first originated as a positive term

used to reflect the behaviour of these non-utilitarian rides in the countryside (Groomsbridges, 1998). As the automobile became integrated into the lives of people, it lost some of its original mystique and became taken for granted. Like televisions, telephones, central heating and indoor plumbing, cars became a necessity for modern living.

Now, cars are no longer just for transportation; they also hold psychological properties such as the concepts of attachment, loss, and envy. This is evidenced when we experience a sense of loss when our car is sold or traded and a sense of pride when a new one is acquired. Furthermore, cars are often considered extensions of identities and viewed as status symbols or indicators of success used to distinguish us from other people and other cars. Some people transform their automobiles into temporary offices and restaurants. They treat them as semi-private places to talk on the phone, eat meals, do makeup, make notes and listen to music. Some go so far as to personify or identify their vehicles with names, i.e. the blue buffalo, the green hornet, or the red road runner.

For many, cars are evidence of social identity. Obtaining a driver's license symbolizes coming of age and entering adulthood. The status of having a driver's license is generally our first proof of adulthood and a major piece of identification in an age-stratified world. It is something of a rite of passage. Because of the link between driving and social identity, driving becomes not a means to an end but, rather, an end in itself. Take for example the behaviour of 'cruising', which became popular in the postwar period of sub-urbanization. Young people advertise their coming of age by 'cruising' as it seems to denote 'I am old enough to drive'. Cruising sometimes affirms cultural identities as well. For example, the popularity of driving 'low-riders' within some Hispanic communities can be viewed as a sub-culture of cruising.

The culture of the car, the existence of sub-subcultures, and the apparent symbolism of owning a car appear to be noteworthy factors when examining the motivations of young people who become involved in car theft and joyriding. Frequent references in the literature, advertising media, and Hollywood often attempt to exploit themes of freedom, sexual pursuits, status, and excitement. Movies such as Mad Max, Gone in 60 Seconds, and Fast and Furious, have evoked a romanticised view of the exhilaration and ease in which cars can be taken and used to escape the constraints of daily life. Popular children's literature also evokes similar views whether written in 1908 or 1999. For example, Wind in the Willows (Grahame, 1908), and the character, Toad, of Toad Hall, can be viewed as an early example of joyriding in the literature (Groombridges, 1998). This literary example shows the relative ease in which Toad steals 'motorcars', and how Toad's enthusiasm for the motorcar leads him to become a chronic joyrider.

'There cannot be any harm' he said to himself, 'my just looking at it!' The car stood in the middle of the yard, quite unattended, the stable-helps and the other hangers-on being all at their dinner. Toad walked slowly round it, inspecting, criticizing, musing deeply. 'I wonder', he said to himself presently, 'I wonder if this sort of car starts easily?' Next moment, hardly knowing how it came about, he found he had hold of the handle and was turning it. As the familiar sound broke forth, the old passion seized on Toad and completely mastered him, body and soul. As if in a dream he found himself, somehow, seated in the driver's seat; as if in a dream he pulled the lever and swung the car round the yard and out through the archway; as if a dream, all sense of right and wrong, all fear of

obvious consequences, seemed temporarily suspended. (Grahame, 1908/1989, pg. 38-39).

A more recent example of joyriding behaviour is found in the popular series of Harry Potter written by J.K. Rowling. In the second novel, The Chamber of Secrets, (1999) characters Ron Weasley and Harry Potter go joyriding in Mr. Weasley's flying car.

It was as though they had been plunged into a fabulous dream. This, thought Harry, was surely the only way to travel –past swirls and turrets of snowy cloud, in a car full of hot, bright sunlight, with a fat pack of toffees in the glove compartment, and the prospect of seeing Fred's and George's jealous faces when they landed smoothly and spectacularly on the sweeping lawn in front of Hogwarts castle (p. 71 and 72).

Novels however, are not the only arenas that provide evidence of a car culture. Musical lyrics also give a plethora of examples: The Beatles' "Drive My Car"; Janis Joplin's "Mercedes Benz"; The Doors' "Moonlight Drive"; Tracey Chapmans' "Fast Car"; Meatloafs' "Paradise by the Dashboard Lights"; Wars' "Low Rider"; Princes' "Little Red Corvette"; the Beach Boys, "Little Deuce Coup" and Bruce Springstein who sang about wanting a "Pink Cadillac" are but a few examples. Even video games use the car culture in the enormously popular and violent game of Grand Theft Auto, and Vice City, which rewards players for stealing cars and involving police in high-speed chases.

#### Joyriding and the Law

While popular literature depicts descriptions of activities that are recognizable as joyriding behaviour, there is actually no legal offence called 'joyriding'. The term may be widely used by the media, police and community members to describe the behaviour of

adolescents who steal motor vehicles for the pleasure of driving, but it is not described as joyriding in Courts of Law. In other words, the term is a colloquial term, not a legal one.

The legal community uses terms such as 'taking a motor vehicle without permission', 'possession of stolen property', 'grand theft larceny,' and 'grand theft auto'. The following are the charging elements per the Revised Code of Washington Statutes (RCW, 9A) for the offence of Taking a Motor Vehicle Without the Owner's Permission (TMV)-the offence for which the participants in this study have been convicted:

Every person who shall without the permission of the owner or person entitled to the possession thereof intentionally take or drive away any automobile or motor vehicle, whether propelled by steam, electricity, or internal combustion engine, the property of another, shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and every person voluntarily riding in or upon said automobile or motor vehicle with knowledge of taking or driving said automobile or motor vehicle and shall be deemed guilty of taking a motor vehicle without permission (RCW 9A. 56.070(1)).

In Washington State this crime is a Class C felony (indictable offence) and there is no legal difference between the individual who stole the vehicle from those driving the vehicle at the time of apprehension, or the passengers in the vehicle. All riders in the vehicle are considered to have committed the crime of TMV. The onus is on each individual to prove that he or she was unaware the vehicle was stolen.

For young offenders, aged 12 to 18 years, in the State of Washington, the standard range sentencing for Class C Felonies is: zero to twelve months of probation; zero to thirty days of confinement; zero to 150 community service hours and a zero to \$500.00 fine. Passengers and drivers found guilty of TMV are also held equally liable for

financial reimbursement for damages incurred during the commission of the offence including medical costs of any injured parties.

A noticeable difference from Canadian law is that juvenile offences in the State of Washington are not automatically sealed when the youth becomes an adult. The felony offence remains on a young offender's record unless either a Deferred Disposition (Suspended Sentence) is granted or the juvenile later initiates a petition to the courts requesting that his or her juvenile record be sealed from the public. A young offender in Washington State with more than one conviction of TMV will live with that crime on his or her public record as an adult.

### Defining Joyriding

We need to keep in mind that the motivation may be different between stealing a car for profit, stealing a car for use in another crime, or stealing for the sole purpose of joyriding. There is no accurate method to statistically differentiate between vehicles stolen for profit and vehicles stolen for casual use or joyriding. Since the legal meaning or statistical information do not provide a true definition of the activity of joyriding, I turned to other sources.

The Oxford Dictionary defines joyriding as "a car ride taken for pleasure, usually without the owner's permission." Given the risks and safety hazards involved in joyriding, however, it could be argued that there is nothing joyful or pleasurable about joyriding, especially for the victims and families of the injured. I had to consider this as I did not want the use of this colloquial term to undermine or minimize the impact of this behaviour on victims and families. The difficulty was finding an alternative.

Canadian criminologist Farrington (2000) suggests that the term joyriding should be used despite these concerns, because it conveys the sense of the underlying motivation of this particular type of car theft.

The definitive characteristic of joyriding is the reckless pursuit of excitement through unauthorized driving...therefore the term joyriding is useful in emphasizing the hedonistic intentions of joyriders (Farrington, 2000, p.13).

In order to recognize the joyriders' own terms and emphasize the motivational aspect of the activity, I decided that the term joyriding would be used throughout this study,

## CHAPTER 2

### Understanding the Problem

Compared to other types of criminal behaviour, joyriding has received very little attention by researchers. This is surprising given the extent to which joyriding occurs. Joyriding has been an on-going problem since the 1930's; however, it has only gained attention over the past two decades, in part due to the significant increase in occurrences and costs. O'Connell (1998) reminds us that "the pre-1939 joyrider's chosen vehicles do not appear to have been systematically damaged by excessive speeding or dangerous driving as is frequently the case today" (p. 103). He also reminds us that joyriders were originally young men "who borrowed cars without permission to gain 'respect' and to attract the attention of young women" (p. 103).

Much of the current research that has been conducted on joyriding and car theft has been done to advise policy makers on situational factors that can be dealt with to deter offenders. This is especially evident in the research coming out of the Home Office in Britain. Since the early 1980's Britain has conducted government-supported research on their 'car crime' problem. Australia, Canada, Israel and the United States have also conducted research into their respective car crime concerns, yet despite these efforts, significant gaps continue to remain in our knowledge. The research that has been conducted is largely based on the characteristics of car theft and the status characteristics of the offenders-age, gender, race, and economic status.

#### Scale of the Problem

According to information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports (FBI UCR), in the year 2000, there were an estimated 1.2 million vehicles stolen in the United States. This means that nation-wide, a vehicle theft occurs every 27

seconds and is estimated to cost Americans almost \$7.8 billion annually. This is a 5.7% increase over 1999 and the first increase in eight years (FBI Uniform Crime Report, 2001). In 2001, there were more than 170,000 motor vehicle thefts reported to the police in Canada. This is approximately one in every 100 registered vehicles or, one car every three and a half minutes. This costs the Canadian insurance industry over \$600 million every year, with an additional \$1 billion towards the costs of medical, law enforcement and judicial systems annually (Vehicle Information Centre of Canada, 1999).

More specifically, since 1992, the rate of car thefts in Manitoba has almost tripled. In Regina, the problem of car theft soared between 1991 and 1996 by an unprecedented 373% (Parker, 1997) and Vancouver reports the highest increase in thefts in the country at 25,077 vehicles reported stolen in 1997. According to a study conducted in collaboration with Transport Canada, over 80 deaths resulted in Canada from auto theft between 1999 and 2001, reinforcing the fact that there is also a substantial human cost for this problem.

Car theft is not just a problem for the United States and Canada. Australia, Great Britain, Ireland, Israel and countries in Europe all report similar concerns. In Australia, there were 122,931 car thefts recorded in 1996, costing the insurance \$809 million and representing a 24 percent increase from the previous year (NRMA Insurance Ltd. Technical Research 1996). According to the results of the 2000 International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) that surveyed industrialized nations, people in Great Britain are at greater risk than any other country of having a car stolen. This includes the United States (Van Kesteren, Mayhew and Nieuwbeerta, 2000).

If we look to who is being caught for the crime of car theft, large portions of arrests involve the younger age groups. In Canada, 70.3% of people charged with car

theft in 2000 were 24 years old or younger, and 38.4% of those were 17 years old or younger (Statistics Canada, Crime Statistics for 2000). In 1998, the United States reported that 67% of persons charged with car theft were under 25 years of age and 36% of them were under the age of 18 (FBI UCR, 1999). Countries such as England, Scotland, Australia, and Israel report similar statistics.

Communities wanting to establish a rate for joyriding versus professional theft or theft for profit often look to the recovery rate of stolen vehicles (Webb & Laycock, 1992). The assumption is that vehicles stolen for profit are more likely to be sold or separated into parts making them challenging to recover, while recovered vehicles support the idea that the car was 'borrowed' for a different reason, and was not intended to permanently deprive the owner of the property. This differentiation is important since the majority of vehicles reported stolen are actually recovered. The recovery rate for vehicles stolen in the United States in 1999 was 67% (FBI UCR, 2001). In Canada in 1998, 72% of reported stolen vehicles were recovered (Insurance Bureau of Canada, 1998). That same year 56 % of stolen vehicles in Britain and Wales were recovered (1998 Criminal Statistics for England and Wales). Therefore, it appears that a significant amount of car theft may be defined as joyriding and that juvenile joyriding is a global problem.

In the United States, stolen vehicle statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, rated Washington State auto theft as 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation with 652 vehicles stolen per 100,000 inhabitants. This rate is 52% higher than the national average. Washington State's overall property crime rate dropped almost 5% in 1998, but auto theft rose nearly 14% at that time, making it the fastest growing crime in the State. The National Insurance Crime Bureau reports that 30,182 vehicles have been stolen through

September 2003 in Washington State; a 6.5% increase over 2002. This is in keeping with a decade-long trend of car-related crimes: In 1988, 19,506 vehicles were reported stolen; 10 years later, it increased to 31,563, a 61% rise. At an estimated \$6,646 loss per stolen vehicle, auto theft has cost Washington State citizens 20 million dollars from January 2003 through September 2003.

The data also reveal the danger to the public that car theft can incur. Washington State Patrol collected data on pursuits (high speed chase) from January to August 2003 revealing that they were involved in 236 pursuits. Of those, 38 or 16% involved stolen vehicles and 48% of the stolen vehicles resulted in collisions involving property damage or injury. Data from Washington State from 2003 also reveal that youth account for more than half of all auto theft arrests (1151 in 1997 versus 946 for adults).

#### Characteristics of Car Crime

It is recognized that statistics for car crime mentioned above are made up a number of distinct types of offences. Clarke (1991) classified these as: theft of vehicles for casual use, professional theft and insurance fraud. Joyriding falls within casual use. Neither the justice system nor criminal statistics differentiate between these different types of car crime so it is impossible to get an accurate reflection of the problem of joyriding as it compares to the other types of car crime. Joyriding may also overlap with other criminal activity. For example, joyriders may steal from the car that is stolen and/or use the car in another crime. As mentioned earlier, most communities attempt an estimate of joyriding by looking at the recovery rate of reported stolen vehicles.

A common feature of the literature is the attempt to classify auto theft by its characteristics. Most of this literature focuses on what a typical joyrider is like, when they start, what cars they prefer, how they get into and start them, and whether alarms are

deterrents. Most studies point to evidence that joyriding can begin at a very early age, usually by young males who prefer to steal older cars without car alarms, and enter the vehicle by force (Briggs, 1991, Spencer, 1992; Webb and Laycock, 1991). Studies and others like these all help with the market research of government, car manufacturers, car accessory manufactures, police and planners etc. (Groombridges, 1998). They tell us little about joyriding as a cultural practice.

Types of cars. In general, the newer the car the less likely it is to be stolen. This may be due to increased security on newer cars or perhaps the conspicuousness of a young person driving a new and expensive vehicle. Hollywood movies seemingly glorify the attraction of stealing expensive and powerful cars. In reality joyriders tend to steal smaller, older cars that are easier to steal and drive. Light, Nee and Ingham (1993) identified stolen vehicles as older cars, familiar cars and sports cars. Also looking at what attracts offenders to particular vehicles, a Manchester study (in Webb and Laycock, 1992) showed that unlocked and easy entry vehicles are likely to attract theft.

Mode of entry. Thieves enter cars by force. Locks are broken and windows are smashed. Screwdrivers, barrel pulling and hot wiring are common techniques (Webb & Laycock, 1992). Thieves report they can take a car within 30 to 60 seconds (Spencer, 1991). Cars are taken from the street and from public parking lots, and seem to be safest when parked in the owners' driveway, or even better, in the garage. Most young offenders do not take a car with an alarm (Spencer, 1992; Webb and Laycock, 1992).

When cars are taken. Few studies have looked at variations according to the time of day that car theft takes place. Hope (1987) found that during the day more cars were stolen when drivers were away from home, and, during the night, the trend was reversed, with more cars stolen when owners were at home. The British Crime Survey (2000)

shows that 69% of car theft occurs during the week with 24% occurring in the evening and 40% occurring at night-midnight to 6 a.m. (Kershaw, Budd, Kinshott, Mattinson, Mayhew, and Myhill, 2000). The NICB in the United States shows that car theft is relatively consistent during different times of the year, though July and August have a slightly higher rate (8.8 and 9.1 respectively) while February (7.3) has the lowest (NICB, 1999). This may suggest that opportunity plays a small factor as more cars during the hot months are left with windows rolled down, and convertible tops off, making access into vehicles somewhat easier.

Victims. Despite public and offender perceptions, victims of car theft tend to be younger households and those where the head of the household is unemployed. (Kershaw et al., 2000). Families are often extremely dependent upon their vehicle, needing the car for work and transporting their children.

#### Characteristics of Offenders

A parallel is seen between the early literature on joyriding and the early views on juvenile crime. In the early literature on joyriding, there was a heavy emphasis on 'class' differences and it was believed that juvenile joyriders largely came from white, middle class backgrounds. An American study completed by Wattenberg and Balistreri (1952) characterized auto theft as a 'favoured-group' in delinquency. These researchers completed a study in Detroit in 1948 and found that youths charged with Auto Theft were Caucasian and from relatively well-off neighbourhoods. Sanders (1976) and Gibbons (1977) also found that juvenile joyriders were usually white, middle class youths. The idea of class differences was not challenged until McGaghy, Giordano and Henson specifically set out to question the 'favoured group' theories of these mentioned writers.

In 1977, McGaghy et al. started their research with the assumption that auto theft is concentrated among the socially advantaged: white, middle-class youth. Their research discovered that Wattenberg-Balistreri's and Sanders claim that car thieves primarily were Caucasian and come from better neighbourhoods did not hold true.

Briggs (1991), Light, Nee and Ingham (1993) and Spencer (1992) completed studies that included semi-structured interviews with young offenders. Briggs (1991) reported the results of a questionnaire of 200 male offenders under the age of 17 with a history of car theft. He asked market research questions of how, why, where, when and who that might be used to deter the crime. Self-perceived driving ability was interesting in the Briggs study. Only 5% of the youths reported low or below average driving ability, 80% considered themselves good or very good drivers, while 15% stated they were exceptional. In this same study, 56% thought they were better drivers than the police and 46% said they deliberately tried to get chased by the police. The majority (117) said they used a scaffold bar as a means of entry, and that 'excitement' and 'to impress my friends' were the most common reasons given for taking cars. Seventy-nine percent planned to steal a car and 83% were deterred by a car alarm. They also started very young: 8.5% started between the ages of 8-12 years old; 28% started at 13 years; 30% at 14 years and 23.5% at 16 years. Briggs concludes,

Motor cars are an omnipresent, inescapable feature of contemporary life.... they are attractive, available and furthermore, present little problem for the experienced joyrider to obtain and for whom the chances of detection are extremely low (Briggs, 1991, p.49).

Light et al. (1993) examined car crime 'careers' through semi-structured interviews with 100 car thieves between the ages of 14 and 35. The intent was to assess

their perspective of situational factors and criminal justice sanctions in relation to car theft. They discovered that most offenders overestimated the likelihood of receiving a custodial sentence yet demonstrated a lack of understanding about the seriousness and social costs of car theft. They also found that despite offenders' overestimation of what judicial sanctions they would face if caught; many offenders were still not deterred, supporting the rationale that harsher sanctions will not prove to be an effective deterrent. Participants thought that they would not be caught or put the idea out of their minds. For some, this was because of opinions about police priorities or their own capacity to drive sufficiently well enough not to arouse suspicion. The fact that only a fifth had avoided coming to the notice of the police puts this confidence in context.

Spencer's (1992) study on the Pennywell Estate in Sunderland, England does not just rely on research with known car thieves, but seeks information from the peer group as well. The study showed that motivation for joyriding is often associated with fun, excitement and status seeking. Financial gain became a more prevalent motivation as offenders became older and more entrenched in criminal behaviour as a lifestyle. For these offenders, financial gain soon outweighed the earlier experience of excitement, reinforcing the need for early intervention. Spencer (1992) also found that involvement in a police chase often added to the thrill and that peer groups had a powerful influence. Spencer (1992) concludes that car theft is a collective 'solution' for the boredom felt by young men.

Webb and Laycock (1992) found similar rationales for joyriding. The main reasons for stealing a car reported in their study was for excitement, money, and to show off to peers. They too found that motives changed over time with financial gain becoming more important as they became more entrenched. They also found that offenders planned

their offence more often than it being on impulse. Their main concern of situational measures becomes apparent as they discuss basic negligence by the car owners. Doors were left unlocked, keys were left in the ignition or cars were left running, windows were left open, and valuables were left on display. Nevertheless, the study did show that force was the most common method of entry.

Cookson (1994) presents the results of 538 male inmates and found that car theft seems to be part of the general repertoire of behaviour of young offenders in custody. Of those studied, 64% of the sample said they had first been passengers in stolen cars and 50% said they had stolen a car at least once. A small sub-set of car thieves was compared with the rest of the sample and no difference was found on family background, employment, frequency of drugs or alcohol use, gambling or on the use of video games. What was different was that they were more likely to have TMV in their history, more likely to have a previous history of custody, and more likely to have significantly higher scores on Psychoticism and Impulsiveness on Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire-Revised.

A number of smaller studies have also been conducted that have been consonant with the larger studies. Gow and Peggrem (1991) looked at a Barnardos project in Wales and administered 50 questionnaires to young people already involved in the juvenile justice programs. They found that most cars are stolen between midnight and 6 a.m. and performance cars and ease of theft were criteria used to select the car. Skills were learned from friends. About 70% said they stole vehicles for joyriding and 80% said they stole valuables or the stereo from the cars they stole or rode in.

Scott and Paxton (1997) reviewed the data from 20 males imprisoned for vehicle theft and compared them with a non-joyriding criminal group and a control group of no

known criminal tendencies. They found that no specific ethnographic, motivational, or personality differences were evident between joyriders and those in other crimes of theft. Their study did find evidence that joyriding develops into car theft for financial gain.

Drug and alcohol use by adolescent joyriders obviously increases the risk to themselves and others. Farrington's (2000) research suggests that joyriders use substances more frequently than others do in this age group. Substance use seems to play a significant part in the early involvement of joyriding, helping young people overcome their fears (Farrington, 2000). His research also supports previous findings that suggest that most joyriders have limited insight into the effects of their crime, believing it to be a victimless activity.

Fleming (1998) divided vehicle theft according to the motives involved and found that in British Columbia the majority of car theft is not a result of organized crime motivated by profit, but rather the result of recreational or casual use. Of these recreational thefts, the offenders themselves were driven by their own motivations:

1. Acting out joyriders whom Fleming describes as the most dangerous and disturbed auto theft offender have limited regard for the safety of themselves or others.
2. Thrill seekers are described as enjoying the "rush" and engaging in car stunts. They are also the most likely to be using drugs and stealing cars to finance their drug habit, but will look for their thrill elsewhere if a car is too difficult to steal.
3. Instrumental offenders steal cars for financial gain and seem to put the most thought into committing offences with the least amount of risk.

Fleming notes that acting-out joyriders and thrill seekers often drive recklessly, enjoy police pursuits, and have limited driving skills, whereas instrumental offenders drive more carefully as a method to avoid police detection.

While more research is needed for a detailed profile, joyriders appear to have a number of common characteristics. Offenders have dropped out of school, or are at risk of doing so, and they are not engaged in constructive activities such as sports or youth groups. Like many young offenders they have a lack of parental involvement, an abundance of family problems and are involved in other anti-social activities including drug and alcohol use (Briggs, 1991; Spencer, 1992; Webb & Laycock, 1991). Most studies also point to the evidence that joyriding can begin at a very early age. The majority are males between the ages of ten and twenty, though boys in their mid-adolescence are the most actively involved.

Several of the researchers including Light et al (1993), Spencer (1992) and Briggs (1991) were officially sponsored and published by Britain's Home Office. However, themes that are consistent throughout the literature are chronologies from apprenticeship to career criminal, suggesting movement from one stage to another and situational crime prevention such as best time to steal, how and why. Researchers also agrees that young men steal cars initially for excitement under peer pressure and then increasingly for money. While the studies use surveys and sufficiently structured interviews, they are essentially positivistic in their measures to get at the meaning of the joyriders actions. These meanings are not in the tradition of "verstehen" (understanding). This thesis seeks the youths' understanding of joyriding.

## CHAPTER 3

### Theoretical Framework and Methodology

In order to explore the meanings that adolescents make in their lived experience of joyriding, I needed to select a philosophy and methodology that would guide my investigation and be congruent with my intent to understand the youth's experience. The manner in which knowledge is acquired has historically been understood within one of two paradigms - qualitative or quantitative. Decisions about which research paradigm to use depend upon the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher and the goals of the study. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), "differences in paradigm assumptions cannot be dismissed as mere "philosophical" differences: implicitly or explicitly, these positions have important consequences for the practical conduct of inquiry" (p.112). Ideally, the choice of a research method is determined by what one is trying to learn.

Given that I want to examine the life experience of joyriding in an effort to understand and give the experience meaning, it follows that I work within the paradigm of qualitative research rather than the quantitative paradigm. It is also becoming more recognized that research designs based on measurement, prediction and causal deduction do not always fit with the world of social science where perceptions, feelings and values are some of the variables researchers want to study. My interest in gathering information and data about motives, justifications and understanding would lack the desired depth if considered in purely quantitative terms as it is less adequate, by itself, to offer a deep understanding of young offenders' life experiences, perceptions and antecedents to their joyriding. A qualitative approach offers a better opportunity to delve deeply into issues and find information and relationships that might otherwise be missed.

### An Orientation to Hermeneutic Phenomenology

While there are many types or methods of qualitative research that could be used, such as ethnography or grounded research, I chose hermeneutic phenomenology as the framework to guide this study. Phenomenology has roots in the Greek word ‘phenesti,’ which means to show forth, bringing into the light of day (Hoad, 1993). The term simultaneously refers to a philosophy, a perspective and a research approach. It is a research tradition that dates back to the work of German philosopher Husserl (1962) and extended by existential thought in the works of Heidegger (1962). The jargon of phenomenological philosophy, the lack of a prescribed method and the varying approaches used by phenomenology researchers contribute to the complexity of this approach.

The work of Martin Heidegger is cited in many social science studies as a framework for phenomenological research approach and methods (Girogi, 1994; Kvale, 1996; Moustakas, 1994, van Manen, 1997,). He was a philosopher who believed that as human beings our meanings are co-created. Heidegger believed that a person is a self-interpreting being who defines him or her self in the course of living life. This occurs through the experience of being born human; our collective life experiences, our background, and the world in which we live (Spiegelberg, 1982). Given our differences in culture, history, gender and related life experiences, he acknowledges that people are forever situated within a meaningful context. Our different contexts prohibit an objective viewpoint because we interpret everything in terms of our own experience. This explains why different people can create different meanings about a similar situation.

Phenomenology is often used interchangeably with the term ‘hermeneutics’ despite philosophical differences. Hermeneutics is a method of textual analysis which

historically has been associated with the interpretation of biblical texts, whereas phenomenology focuses on the reflection and description of a lived experience to provide us with a deeper understanding of conscious experience. As outlined by van Manen (1997), hermeneutic phenomenology is a process of exploring one's interests and understanding of a phenomenon, uncovering the essential structure or essence of that phenomenon by gathering stories from those living it, interpreting those stories, and offering implications for practice.

Hermeneutical phenomenology therefore holds that all experience is mediated through language, and it is from language that the phenomenon is understood. The 'raw data' in phenomenological studies are the language of personal experiences, which may be gathered through interviewing, observing, reading, writing, and living. For the purposes of this study, the raw data are the personal experiences of youths who have experienced joyriding as described during in-depth interviews. "As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language" (Seidman, 1998, p.7). I therefore use the method of phenomenological interviews to make genuine discoveries to describe and interpret the meaning of the lived experience of joyriding for several young people.

It is important in phenomenological research to realize the complex nature of the context in which I aspire to conduct this social research and to identify my own position. This is done in order for the reader to better evaluate the significance of my own presuppositions. In thinking about this study and grounding myself within the context, I reflected on my own desire and quest for opportunities to drive as a youth. What is this desire? Where does it come from and why does it exist? Why is driving so important? Why would we ignore laws and take risks? Is the desire to drive so strong that some

young people will damage and steal a vehicle in order to fulfill it? If it is not the desire to drive that leads to joyriding, what is it? In an attempt to answer these questions I recalled my own early experiences of driving in order to make known my experiences and biases. I have several memories of my desire to drive including several experiences of driving illegally. While the circumstances surrounding my experiences seem vastly different from the youths involved in this study, the desire to drive seems strikingly familiar.

### An Orientation to Contextual Considerations

In order to report on the context in which this research took place, the following section outlines the profile of the location, organizational context, participant selection, informed consent and confidentiality. The discussion then proceeds to the context of data collection interviews, data analysis and data verification.

Profile of the location. This study was conducted in Seattle, Washington. Seattle is located within King County, and is located in the Northwest corner of the United States approximately 180 kilometres (112 miles) from the Canadian border. King County is one of 39 counties in Washington State and is the twelfth most populous county out of more than three thousand in the nation. In 2000, King County accounted for a population of 1.7 million or almost one-third (30 percent) of the state's entire population. Almost one-third of these county residents (563, 374) live in Seattle, the largest city in the county, the state and the Pacific Northwest. King County's population has grown 39 percent since 1970 compared to the nation as a whole, which only grew 29 percent over the same period. In 2000, 22.5% of King County residents were 18 and younger, an increase of 16% since 1990. By 2010 the youth population in King County is expected to significantly increase with 25 % expected to be less than 18 years (U.S. Census 2000, May 2001).

Organizational Context. The King County Juvenile Court and the Intake Unit of Juvenile Probation are both located in Seattle, Washington, close to the downtown core. The King County Juvenile Court has exclusive jurisdiction over those youths within King County who violate the criminal laws of the state of Washington. The Probation Department is responsible for the provision of assessment and probation services. Criminal cases are processed through the court system, and virtually every one of the young offenders involved in these cases has contact with a probation counsellor. At the time of this inquiry, both the researcher and the participants were involved with King County Juvenile Court and the Probation Department.

During the course of this study, I held the position of a probation counsellor attached to the Intake Unit of the Probation Department. My caseload consists of youth who have committed their first crime and youth who are chronic offenders and know the system well. As a probation counsellor, I open the case file, interview the youth and family, contact schools and community-based providers for information and conduct a risk and needs assessment of the youth. I also act as a community resource person, facilitate intervention into the lives of young persons and their families, and work collaboratively with relevant helping professionals to meet the needs of the young person to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Given that I held this position, the relationship of power and control between each participant and myself was a concern. My motive was to uncover themes and describe the participant's perspective on events; however, my role as a probation counsellor and my involvement in this study had the potential to unduly influence the participants' discussion.

While my formal relationship as a probation counsellor did not exist with these participants, attention was paid to give as much power to the participants as possible. I accomplished this by ensuring that each participant was continuously aware that all participation in this study was voluntary and knew that they had the right to stop the interview at any time. They could refuse to answer any question that I posed and could withdraw from the entire study without negative consequence. In addition, each participant was given control over editing the transcript and asked for feedback on the final themes developed. While these steps did not eliminate the vestiges of power relationships, they were intentionally taken to ensure that the participants felt as empowered as possible throughout the process of the study.

Participant selection. In order to explore the lived experience of young people who take vehicles for the purpose of joyriding, I purposefully sought participants who could best answer the questions. They were all young people on probation under the jurisdiction of the Superior Court of King County with one or more convictions of TMV in their criminal history. To qualify as potential participants, the youths had to self-identify with having participated in joyriding and be able to examine and articulate his or her experience. Other criteria for selection were: an ability to speak English, the willingness to discuss the experience in a confidential interview, the readiness to volunteer with the understanding that they would be involved in a research project for the author's thesis, and confirmation that they had not been on my professional caseload. The final sample for the study consisted of four adolescent males, ages fifteen and sixteen years.

It could be argued that the process of selecting young people on probation biases the results of this inquiry. This supposition is true and the process of selection by

purposive sampling (Morse, 1994) is intentional. While the findings may say very little about young people who are adept or fortunate enough to avoid getting caught, the chosen participants are individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of joyriding and can articulate their experience. Due to their personal experiences of participating in the activity and their experiences of the effects and consequences of the activity, they yield significant insights into the phenomenon of joyriding. As Morse notes, the most important aspect of purposively choosing participants is that they are knowledgeable about the topic, can articulately reflect on their experiences and have the time and interest to participate in the study (Morse, 1994).

Initially, the purpose and overview of the study was discussed with the supervisors of the five field units (City, North, North-East, South I, and South II) in the county. General requirements of the participants were discussed including the desired number of individuals, the criteria for identifying prospective participants and the methods for securing informed consent and confidentiality. Individual probation counsellors then identified potential participants from their current caseload as youth who have at least one conviction of TMV in their criminal history and self identify the behaviour as joyriding. Probation counsellors gave potential participants a brief description of the research and those who stated interest were asked permission to give the researcher their name and contact number.

Upon the receipt of a potential volunteer, I contacted the youth to confirm that he or she matched the criterion for selection. I discussed the general purpose of the study, established preliminary interest and arranged a time to meet in person. Before approaching the interviews, I took the time to arrange a separate contact with potential participants. The purpose of the contact was to lay the groundwork for the mutual respect

necessary for the interview process. Phenomenological interviewing requires a great deal from the participants and it is important that they understand the nature of the study, how they fit into it, and the purpose of the interviews.

#### An Orientation to Researcher's Context and Assumptions

Phenomenologists assume that researchers are an integral part of the research process and recognise their role in shaping the research process and interpreting themes. As Walters (1995) states, "a researcher is a collaborator in the creation of meanings" (p. 84). Therefore, my context and assumptions as the researcher in this study are examined as an important component of the method, and shared to contextualize this study.

Since my opinions and assumptions largely determined the research plans and methods, it follows that part of my research became a task of examining what I was doing to construct a particular representation of reality. I accomplished this by keeping notes. The notes helped me examine how I participated in the research since my own frame of reference heavily guided what I chose to present as significant.

I believe researchers with different worldviews may see very different things in the same phenomenon. I also believe that there are multiple and subjective realities and given this, it is important to carefully state what is done during the research so that others may be better able to evaluate the significance of the results. Currently I believe the world, as I know it, is shaped partly by my input and partly by input from the world. I also think knowledge is socially and individually constructed therefore research is inherently subjective.

I also believe that the joyriding behaviour of adolescents may be influenced by multiple and simultaneous factors. For example, joyriding behaviour may be influenced by adolescent culture in general, by the culture of their peers, family, school and by the

neighbourhood. This assumption is consistent with Heideggerian thought, which purports that meaning and organization of a culture precede individual meanings.

My view on adolescence as a developmental stage is also relevant in contextualizing this study. I see adolescence as a subculture of society. As with other subcultures, adolescence has its own codes of conduct and standards for behaviour regarding roles and accompanying expectations. Adolescence has its own set of sanctions or coercive factors for ensuring compliance and conformity, which are often evident in the experience of peer pressure. As a result, adolescent contexts differ and are unique from other contexts and subcultures in society. Therefore, the meaning and significance of events or occurrences within adolescent contexts are different and unique.

Self-understanding is described as an awareness of self during which conscious cognitive processes, especially reflection, define and interpret experiences thereby acquiring knowledge about oneself. Developmentally adolescent males age 13 years and older have achieved minimal levels of self-understanding (Erikson, 1968). Consequently, it was my assumption that adolescent males age 13 years and older are able to use cognition and reflection to identify, interpret, assign, and state meanings associated with their joyriding behaviour.

For the past seventeen years, I have worked in one capacity or another as a practitioner for adolescents considered at risk for negative life outcomes. My various roles have included working in residential group care, both community based and institutional based, as a mental health outreach worker, as a high school-based youth and family counsellor, and as a supervisor in three residential programs ranging in size from three to 23 beds. My perceptions of adolescents and behaviour have obviously been shaped by my previous and current experiences of working with adolescents. I therefore

bring a number of beliefs and biases to this study which shapes the way I view and understood the data and interpret my experiences. In turn, I admit to the value-laden nature of the information I gathered and, while I cannot bracket my biases, I have become more aware of them.

#### Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Informed consent refers to the voluntary choice of an individual to participate in research based on an accurate and complete understanding of its purposes, procedures, risks, benefits, and alternatives. For children and youth, age in and of itself does not determine competency to provide consent, though it is believed that even very young children are capable of understanding a great deal of information if it is presented appropriately. In keeping with the Superior Court of King County and the Department of Juvenile Probation protocol on youth and their ability to give consent, youths aged 15-18 years may give their own written consent and their parent or legal guardian will be informed of their participation in the study.

An initial contact visit helped me determine if the potential participant was genuinely interested. It also initiated this process of informed consent. While I did not go over the consent form in the first contact, I went over the aspects that the consent form covers so when I did present it and asked for their signature, they were not surprised. I explained the nature of the study in as broad a context as possible and was explicit about what was expected of a participant. I also answered their questions. Before the first interview, participants reviewed and signed the consent form and were given another explanation of what a phenomenological interview is, without guiding them towards any specific aspect of their experience. Since this study involves more than one interview, the

participants' consent was renegotiated at the beginning of each interview to ensure that he felt no pressure to continue.

### Phenomenological Interviews

At the most basic level, interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996). We use them to gain access to ideas, beliefs, and emotions that we cannot readily identify through observation alone. However, unlike everyday conversations, which are usually reciprocal exchanges, interviews often involve an interviewer who is responsible for the structuring and directing of the questioning. In phenomenological interviews, the researcher uses an unstructured approach and has no theory or presupposition about what to expect from the encounter. The interviews are attempts to understand the world from the participants' point of view, and unfold as the participant views it. Consequently, a series of questions is not formulated in advance but after introducing the topic, thereby allowing the interview conversation to flow from the participant's lead.

I chose phenomenological interviewing as a method appropriate to this study as other techniques do not contain the qualities I am seeking. For example, methods such as a survey or questionnaire would be unable to explore the context and meaning of joyriding behaviour, and the popular method of participant observation has ethical considerations that I cannot overlook, including the potential risk to the car's occupants and the community that cannot, in my opinion, be justified in the name of research. I recognise that by conducting individual interviews I sacrifice the observation of youths in a naturally occurring incident, but as Morgan (1997) points out, due to the accessibility factors just mentioned, I never really had access to the naturally occurring behaviour in the first place.

Like all techniques for collecting data, there are strengths and weaknesses in using interviews. Advantages include greater control over the process, greater opportunity to build rapport with the youths and more time to gain details and clarification about individual opinions and experiences. I also have greater flexibility to use my knowledge, experience, and interpersonal skills to explore interesting or unexpected ideas or themes raised by participants. Since there were no presuppositions about what I was looking for, phenomenological interviews allowed the participant to describe what was meaningful or important to him using his own words rather than being restricted to predetermined categories; thus I believe, participants felt more relaxed and candid. Phenomenological interviews also helped provide credibility because results “rang true” to participants and hopefully make intuitive sense to readers.

Disadvantages of this approach include the absolute need for cooperation from the participants for without it, I would not be able to access the attitudes and experiences of the participants. This approach may also be more reactive to personalities, moods, and interpersonal dynamics of the participant and myself compared with methods such as surveys. There is also the discovered difficulty of analyzing the data, as the volume of data collected can be overwhelming in this technique. Finally, phenomenological interviews are more subjective than quantitative interviews because I decide which quotes or specific examples to include in my report.

Despite these disadvantages, I believe that at the root of all interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. “If our interest is in what it is like for youth, what their experience is, and what meaning they make out of that experience, then it seems that interviewing, in most cases, may be the best avenue of inquiry”(Seidman, 1998, p. 5).

### Approaching the Interviews

While much of the value of phenomenological interviewing lies in its flexibility and openness, it was extremely important to spend time, think through the process, and establish a basic structure and framework to make the study manageable. Both Seidman (1998) and Mishler (1986) support the importance of more than one interview. They believe that a person's behaviour becomes meaningful when put in the context of their lives and the lives around them. Seidman (1998) designed a model of phenomenological interviewing that involves a series of separate interviews with each participant as the primary method of data collection. The first interview focuses on placing the experience of joyriding in context by exploring the participant's life history. The second interview reconstructs and explores the details of a joyriding experience and the third interview encourages each participant to reflect on the meaning of that experience. The three-interview structure "provides a foundation of detail that helps illumine the next" (Seidman, 1998, p. 13). Seidman also allows some variations in the structure of the interviewing process and is not opposed to combining the first and second interviews.

I was intrigued with Seidman's structure and agreed that more than one interview was necessary to place the phenomenon in context. However in thinking through the process and being sensitive to 'power-over' dilemmas, ethically it was not appropriate to include a life-history interview as my topic was the experience of joyriding. To compensate I used the overarching question in the first interview of "How did you come to be joyriding?" My hope was that their responses would reconstruct a range of constitutive events in their past family, school and peer experience that placed their participation in joyriding in the context of their lives without having to delve into their

life history. To accomplish this, I adapted Seidman's approach and conducted two, roughly ninety-minute interviews with each of the four participants.

The goal of the first interview was to hear each participant's story and establish the context of how he or she had come to be joyriding. The goal of the second interview was to reflect on the meaning of what each participant had shared during the first interview. The overarching question in the second interview was "Given what you have said about this experience, how do you understand joyriding? What sense does it make for you?" Making sense or making meaning requires that the participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to steal cars for joyriding. It also requires that they look at a joyriding experience in detail and within the context in which it occurs. The combination of clarifying events that led participants to joyride, and describing the concrete details of their joyriding experience, establishes conditions for reflecting upon the activity.

All interviews were conducted in English and were conducted in accordance and with approval from the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee. Each interview was conducted in a place that was mutually acceptable for both the youth and myself. There was adequate lighting and heat, and the noise level was minimal. The recording equipment was always in view and only the two of us were in the room so privacy was ensured. The second interview took place within ten days of the first. This allowed me time to transcribe the interview and give each participant time to mull over their discussion without losing the connection between interviews. Participants were then invited back a third time to offer feedback about the themes captured of their experiences and to make additional comments regarding the experience of joyriding and my analysis. Three of the four participants contributed to this follow-up session. The fourth participant

did not participate as he was sent to an institutional facility several hundred miles from Seattle. He was still at this facility at the time of the final writing. I determined that his interviews could still be included as data as there was agreement among the other three of the categories and themes ascertained.

### Approaching the Data

The chief task of thematic analysis is to identify the themes at the core of the participants' experiences. To accomplish this analysis, I organized passages from the transcripts into categories and then searched for connecting threads and patterns both within and between categories that could be called themes. I carefully examined and then re-examined all the data collected. Each phase of the data analysis involved a continual attempt at data reduction followed by data reconstruction in order to reduce the reams of collected data and bring meaning to the words of the participants. As this process continued, certain features of the phenomena became salient. The meaning of the whole text was understood before understanding meanings of the text's individual parts.

Transcribing the collected data. Verbatim transcriptions were made immediately upon the completion of each interview. In order to achieve full immersion and familiarity with the data, I personally transcribed the audiotapes of the interviews. In an attempt to capture significant para-linguistic communications, I included sighs, hesitations, emphasised words and changes in voice tone. This was a time consuming process, but I believe it assisted in the quality of analysis. The transcripts were entered directly into my word processor to facilitate data management and help ensure a systematic process. Each transcript was stored electronically by date, participant, and type of interview and saved on my hard drive, floppy disk, and as a hard copy.

After the transcription process, each text was read as a whole while simultaneously listening to the tapes of the corresponding interview tapes. This was done to ascertain the accuracy and integrity of transcriptions and to correct errors that were made in the transcribing process. Listening to the tapes and transcribing the interviews provided my initial opportunity for sorting and analysis. It also helped to recapture dynamics associated with gestures, non-verbal behaviour, and the mood and atmosphere during the interview. In short, listening to the tapes facilitated the re-living of interviews.

During the hermeneutic process of listening, writing, reading and listening to the tapes, I wrote notes in the margins on what I heard in the data and developed tentative ideas about categories and relationships. My initial efforts were to capture the interview material, and I did not try to make sense of every meaning statement or every sentence.

Extracting passages. This step involved marking and extracting passages I found interesting. I acknowledge that by extracting passages I exercised judgement that was biased on my own experience and point of view. During a second round of listening to tapes and reading transcripts simultaneously, I identified passages of narrative from each transcript that I found surprising, interesting, thought provoking, or repetitive. These passages included single words, phrases, complete sentences, and series of sentences. After passages were identified, I read the transcripts without the accompaniment of tapes and paused to consider whether the passage could be labelled. I went through the transcription and extracted passages I felt were significant and listed them as ideas and key concepts.

Formulating categories. As I read and reread the transcripts, I grouped passages into categories according to their shared subject meaning. This step formed the initial categories that helped me lend insight into the experience of joyriding. Tapes and

transcriptions were reviewed again to ascertain the integrity, relevance and significance of categories. As a result of this review, categories were modified and revised and passages re-arranged accordingly.

The idea of formulating categories is to think about the material and link what the respondents say to the categories generated. To keep track of original material, passages were linked in order to remind me of the original context from which the categories were developed. I used a pseudonym for each participant, a Roman numeral for the number of the interview, and Arabic numbers for the sequence in the transcript that the passage occurs (Seidman, 1998). I also used different coloured paper. I continued to remain open to the data and did not lock into categories too early. Some that seemed promising in the beginning faded away or blended into new ones that appeared. Passages were redistributed among revised categories on the basis of shared subject matter. “The participants have spoken, and now the interviewer is responding to their words, concentrating intuition and intellect on the process. What emerges is a synthesis of what the participant has said and how the researcher has responded” (Seidman, p.28, 1998). After sorting all the marked passages, I re-read all of them and started shifting out the ones that were compelling and setting aside the ones of less interest. Given the amount of data that was collected, some information did not hold as much credence and was discarded in order to reduce the data (Wolcott, 1994). For example, one participant shared a story about a close friend’s relationship with his mother. This passage was discarded as irrelevant to the research question. Upon completion, 25 categories remained.

Determining broader themes. I did not begin to read the original transcripts with a set of pre-determined categories. Rather, the categories arose out of the passages I

marked as interesting and themes arose out of the categories created. My goal was to develop a short list of tentative themes regardless of the length of my database to facilitate the sharing of the interview data with others. As I organized the data further, new understandings emerged and my scheme underwent changes (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Categories were grouped according to shared themes. As I developed broader themes, I stepped back and attempted to form larger meanings of what was going on and evaluated my emerging understandings by exploring them through the data. For validation reasons I had a second person familiar with qualitative research read the transcripts to determine if there were more or different passages, categories and themes that needed to be recognized.

In using this approach, it was important to recognize that there is no beginning or end. As researchers learn more about a topic, they explicitly move back and forth between their own experiences, the experience of others and the literature to see what others have written about similar experiences (Heidegger, 1962). This interplay between experiences is referred to as the hermeneutical circle. As new knowledge is uncovered by looking at the parts, the researcher re-examines biases and presuppositions, which results in new interpretations of the whole. This interplay also recognizes that since a multitude of interpretations are possible; a full understanding of a phenomenon is not. van Manen (1997) emphasizes this aspect by stating, "A phenomenological description is always one interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary or even potentially richer or deeper description" (p. 31). A researcher's interpretation of a lived experience is just that – an interpretation, it will never replicate the experience. Therefore, in some respects it must necessarily fall short of a complete conveyance of the experience. "To do hermeneutic phenomenology is

to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretative description of some aspect of the 'lifeworld' and yet to remain aware that life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal" (van Manen, 1997, p.18).

#### Methods for Verification and Integrity of Data

Logical positivists have criticized qualitative research for its failure to reveal explicit rules for achieving reliability, validity and objectivity (Sandelowski, 1993). A major component of this criticism is an inability to trust and to verify the data through empirical testing. However, methods for the verification and integrity of data are necessary for any research method to understand and accurately represent the phenomena it studies. Giorgi (1985) describes his phenomenological method as "the practice of science within the "context of discovery" rather than in the "context of verification" (p. 14). Patton (1990) asserted that the major aim or purpose of qualitative analysis was to provide meaningful, useful, and credible explanations and interpretations rather than causal statements about phenomena.

Sandelowski (1993, 1986) notes that scientific adequacy (sometimes called "rigor") as it pertains to qualitative research is "less about adherence to the letter of rules and procedures than it is about fidelity to the spirit of qualitative work" (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 2). She indicates four areas, which need to be addressed in order to stay true to this spirit: credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. In this section I describe each of these areas and discuss the ways in which I have addressed them in this inquiry.

Credibility. The concept of credibility refers to the quality of the data or how well I captured the multiple realities of the experience. In phenomenology, one reports multiple statements representing the diverse perspectives on the phenomenon being

explored (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, if the participants reveal multiple understandings and meanings, then multiple explanations of their behaviours and attitudes are articulated. Because qualitative research is inherently an interpretative process, my interpretations can be more credible if I demonstrate how I related to the phenomenon studied. To accomplish this, I had direct contact with the participants, thus increasing confidence in the validity of the responses. The young people in my study were viewed as active participants and every attempt was made to make them feel at ease and to have a “voice” in the research process. Working closely with the youths and using direct quotes partly achieved this. My hope was that despite the limited number of interviewees, their data was detailed and provided a thick, rich description.

I also used the additional strategy of having a peer, who was familiar with hermeneutic phenomenology, review my data to see what themes she detected. The categories and themes that she identified were similar but not identical to mine. In my view we used different words to capture the same expressed ideas of the youths. Having another person analyze and confirm the data provided a fresh perspective and enhanced credibility. By conducting in-depth interviews with four people, analysing the transcripts, having a third party review the transcripts for themes, and encouraging participants to ensure I had captured their experience and to provide further information, I believe the credibility of the study was addressed adequately.

Transferability. The concept of transferability refers to the ability to generalize the findings, or to determine if they are relevant to another similar situation. However, my intent was not to generalize but form a unique interpretation. The uniqueness of the study limits against replicating it. Hycner (1985) asserts that a consequence of purposive

sampling and the limited number of participants is that the results of the research cannot be generalized, they can only inform us about these particular participants' experiences.

However, in the process of even investigating the experience of one individual, we can learn much about the phenomenology of human beings in general.

Though the results in a strict sense may not be generalizable, they can be phenomenologically informative about human beings in general (Hycner, 1985, p.295).

The specific strategy of using thick descriptions provided me with enough information to make judgements about the themes and categories that in turn can be used by others to judge the appropriateness of my findings to other settings.

Confirmability. The concept of confirmability relates to a concern about investigator bias. This concept is important because, as the researcher, I am involved in the creation of meanings through the context of an interview. My thoughts concerning how to organize the data have been stored chronologically in journal entries in order to provide an audit trail. Such a trail should lead those reading it to determine how I came to the observations and conclusions I did and to provide an understanding of the thought processes behind the research. Tape recording all the interviews and allowing the participants to read his or her transcript for accuracy also increased the technical quality of the study.

Dependability. To ensure an interpretative study is dependable, one must ask the question "how do I know that the interpretations I draw from the data are similar to the ones that you might draw?" This study addresses dependability in two ways. First, a colleague familiar with qualitative research independently interpreted the data to ensure

that she identified similar themes. Second, I use quotations throughout the study to provide the reader with an understanding of why I made a given interpretation.

I have described the framework of phenomenology and phenomenological interviews, my role as a researcher, the study setting and sample, data collection procedures, data analysis, and methods used for verification and integrity of data. This framework provides the basis on which I approached the next chapter concerning results of data analysis and interpretation.

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis of Data and Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of this study. I begin with a brief introduction of each participant followed by the emergence of the themes developed from the data analysis. Appendix 2 depicts the results of this analysis in outline form, however, the interpretation and discussion of this outline is presented in Chapter Five. The following findings represent the major themes that were identified from the analysis of data.

#### Description of Participants

This inquiry consisted of narrative interviews with four adolescents who have experience stealing cars for the purpose of joyriding. Pseudonyms have been assigned to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. The introductions are based on social information obtained from each participant as he shared his story and reviewed his experiences.

Participant 1. Sam was a sixteen-year-old Caucasian boy who was tall, slender and neatly dressed. During the interviews he spoke readily and at length. His eye contact was good and he maintained an even temperament throughout. He normally lived with his mother, father and a younger brother. His older brother whom he greatly admired had moved out and was working as a car mechanic, something he also aspired to become. Sam was fourteen when he first began to joyride. He was using marijuana, alcohol and 'sherm' (marijuana dipped in formaldehyde or PCP), and had participated in joyriding, street racing and high speed chases. He had three convictions of TMV and one conviction of Residential Burglary.

Participant 2. Mike was a fifteen-year-old Caucasian boy with five convictions of TMV and one of Vehicle Prowl. He was dressed in the currently popular gangster attire including several silver chains and a medallion around his neck. Mike spoke willingly and at length. He normally lived with his single working-class father and several siblings. He was not attending his Alternative Program on a regular basis and was smoking marijuana daily. He recognized his early attraction to cars and had participated in joyriding, street racing and high speed chases. He was twelve when he first began joyriding and was soon turning a profit with the help of his brother and an adult.

Participant 3. Jack was a fifteen year-old Asian American with five convictions of TMV, one conviction of Eluding a Pursuing Police Vehicle, and one for Theft and Attempted Robbery. He was gang involved and marginally compliant on probation. He was casually but neatly dressed and maintained a consistent stream of conversation. He normally resides in a two-parent family with no mention of siblings. Jack turned sixteen during the course of this study and was in Detention for TMV on his birthday. Given numerous convictions of TMV he was on his way to a penal institution for 30-52 weeks and was feeling lucky about his plea deal. He was thirteen and half when he started joyriding and he too had participated in joyriding, street racing and high speed chases with police.

Participant 4. Peter was a fifteen-year-old Hispanic boy who spoke softly and hesitantly and with little affect through most of the interview, although he noticeably brightened when discussing adrenaline rushes. He normally resides at home with his single father, younger brother and older sister, but was often 'on the run' for days at a time. He was expelled from school during the course of this study for gang-related activity but believed he was expelled because the principal was "racist and hated

Mexican's". He had been convicted of three TMV's and had participated in joyriding and one high-speed chase with police.

### Emergence of the Themes

The comprehensive description of the lived experience of joyriding was a synthesis of six themes, 25 categories and 127 codes developed from 354 quotations taken from the transcripts. Data collection provided a total of eleven hours of audio taped interviews with four participants. The transcribed interviews yielded 117 pages of single-spaced, narrative write-ups. The identified themes were: 1) The Joy in Joyriding, 2) Joyriding as Sport, 3) Predisposers to Joyriding, 4) Justifications Associated with Joyriding, 5) Developmental Needs, and 6) Contact with the Law (see Appendix A).

During the initial interview, each participant was asked how he came to be joyriding. They all reported several memorable joyriding experiences. The following captures recollections of Sam and Mike's first time joyriding.

Sam: I was just about to turn 15 when I generally started to get into it. The first time, my friend showed up in a Honda Accord. I can hear him out my window this "Boom, Boom Boom, Boom", you know? And they're over there burning wheelies in front of the whole entire apartments. My friend was like "come here" and I was like "whoa, look at that car". But I didn't know it was stolen at first though. After driving around he told me and I wanted to get out. But he kept coming like, day after day, and I was like, okay. I got kinda used to it. Seven different cars, every week it's a new car. I don't know, I got comfortable with it for a little bit. Its fun you know, just to sit in there, all of us in the car. I don't know. It's fun like, turning it at 100, you know, scare people, it's fun, going on

the grass, you know what ever normal people do isn't fun, you know. You gotta do it fast.

Mike believed he was "about twelve" the first time he went joyriding so I asked him to tell me about it.

Mike: I guess I was about 12 when I first drove a stolen car.

Susie: Tell me about that time. Take a moment to go back and reflect on that time.

(Pause) Hmm (pause). Okay. What are the details you remember?

Mike: Well, my first time, my brother stole a 97 Honda for me. He had a different one for himself. I was driving and I was trying to keep up with him. He was going around 120 miles per hour and I was going around 120. But I was so far behind him that I didn't even see him push on his brakes and turn. I tried to go around the corner fast, like around 80, and it was just a sharp corner and I flipped the car three times and landed on the hood in somebody's front yard. Yah (pause) that was scary. I climbed out really fast. My brother seen me crash and so he just put the car in reverse and came back and picked me up and then left. There was no one else in the car. Just me. That's when I barely knew how to drive. I'm surprised I was even going that fast, I'm surprised I didn't wreck even going straight (pause). It was really fun. It was scary, but it was fun.

As the researcher, I spent time trying to establish how each participant understood joyriding as an activity and what was meant by the word. This provided us with a starting point for examining and discussing the topic. Mike provides a good example of this:

Susie: What is your understanding of joyriding? How would you describe or define it?

Mike: Fun, it's a rush, an adrenaline rush, it's, to me it's fun just to drive fast and drive anywhere. You can go anywhere you want. It's like you're traveling, like you finally get to travel somewhere. It's like you can be on your own for at least a couple of hours where you don't have to tell your parents where you are and like to go as fast as you want or as slow as you want.

Susie: You mean, it's about fun, travel, and independence?

Mike: Yeah, exactly.

### Theme 1: The Joy in Joyriding

The experience of joyriding included a global feeling of joy which was manifested in the following: 1) I love cars, 2) It's fun, 3) It's a rush, and 4) I get happy.

I love cars. All of the participants indicated an early love for cars. Two of the four boys identified a desire to turn their love of cars into a profession and become mechanics. Sam recalls his childhood: "When I was little, I had all the cars. I had low-riders and race-cars. I had cars. I love cars. I want to be a mechanic. I know a lot about cars." Peter said, "I just love cars, I love to look at them and I love to work on them." Mike stated, "I've always liked cars, I think they're really cool, and I've always wanted to drive one". He later goes on to comment that "I was really attracted to them, and over the years I got older just started getting in trouble with cars when I steal them but I just have fun driving them." Mike believes that "most of the kids aren't bad kids they just love cars, like I do." Sam takes his love of cars a step further by personifying vehicles: "Cars get hurt, oh my god, I feel bad for the cars. Anyone who damages cars are stupid."

It's fun. All four boys used the word "fun" when describing their experience of joyriding. Mike stated, "Joyriding is fun. To me it was fun just to drive fast and drive anywhere (pause). We just like to have fun." Jack remarks that: "It's just, like, more fun

than playing football and I used to love football.” He further remarked on his belief of how his father would react if he informed him he was motivated by fun. “I mean, like, if I tell him I do it for fun, he’ll be like what? What! I mean he’d be like, ‘okay you’re dumb, but we raised you up more smarter than that’. So I just show them I’m sorry.”

When describing an incident of joyriding off-road Sam stated, “I mean it was really fun. We were like driving in the woods, seeing if we can hit the trees. Fun. It’s really fun, it’s like a maze, but you’re in a car, you’re just having fun.” Peter describes his fun as, “You know its fun just driving and accelerating and turning the corner however quick, and seeing how fast I can turn the corner, and just seeing my friends doing all these donuts. It’s fun. It’s pretty fun.”

It’s a rush. This category was raised several times over the course of the study. Accompanying the sense of fun, all four participants spoke about the rush and adrenaline they experienced before, during and after the event. This sensation had not been experienced to this extent prior to joyriding and it was noted as being important to the experience. Sam stated, “The main thing about joyriding I think is the adrenaline rushes. Just the adrenaline rushes. It’s just a really good adrenaline rush having a car.” Mike stated, “It’s a rush, an adrenaline rush to drive fast and drive anywhere. ‘Cause after we steal a car we get all excited like, yeah! We did it! It’s just a rush and it gets me pumped.” Jack stated, “I think the biggest thing is probably the feeling, like I said before you know, like the rush. It’s the feeling I get from stealing a car. It’s like no other feeling. I just feel free.” Peter talked about the distraction of adrenaline and stated, “I guess I found a like, rush in it you know, like an adrenaline rush. Every time I steal a car I just get a rush. I don’t think about nothing else.” All four boys agreed that the adrenaline rush experienced

by their apprehension of stealing a car, the actual stealing of it and the getting away with it was an essential element of joyriding and decision to participate.

I get happy. In conjunction with the fun and the rush came a change and improvement in mood. This category was not initially evident but became more apparent as we explored the joy of joyriding in more depth. The following is an example of this from Mike's second interview:

Susie: Let's see if we can go deeper with this. Help me understand what it is that, I mean, what it is about the fun and the rush you experience. What else do you get out of it? I think I understand it up to a point, but is there something else to it? For instance, the first time you drove a stolen car to joyride, the car rolled over and you got hurt and scared. Then your friend got killed while joyriding when he ran into traffic trying to get away from police. Even with these experiences, you say joyriding is about having fun and getting a rush. What else is going on?

Mike: Well, I get happy. 'Cause, like you get mad it takes out some of your stress. Shit that's going on at home or school or someone like, makes you mad. It's hard for me to control my anger, so it helps me. I just get happy whenever I get in and go. 'Cause whenever I start the car, I know I'm gone.

Peter had the following to say about this change in mood:

Yeah (pause). It's like a rush, 'cause when I'm mad I just go nuts. And in a car I know I'm gonna have fun inside the car. It takes out my stress. It's just a rush. It gets me pumped. I just start stealing and it would go away and I was just, yeah, I got it. Relief.

Sam believes that finding happiness also plays a role and stated, "Most people steal cars 'cause they got messed up families. They need happiness and that's the only way they

find happiness.” Sam himself was experiencing the burden of stress as a result of his own family situation and agreed that joyriding created a sense of happiness and stress relief for himself as well as his friends. Peter also acknowledged a friend’s experience with this and said, “You see that’s his fun. He’s always depressed and when he’s in that car he’s happy, he’s happy.” Jack also spoke of the sense of relief he receives from joyriding:

Jack: When I’m joyriding, I’m just free you know?

Susie: Free? Free from what?

Jack: Everything. The world. The world. Like you know, in my life, like my car theft life and my gang banging and stuff, you know. It’s like, put weight on my shoulders you know. It’s like slowing me down from continuing my life.

Joyriding helps that weight you know.

Mike talked about needing to find a way to substitute this and stated “I ain’t gonna even worry about that happiness anymore. I’ll just go and do something else to get happy. Like go to my girlfriend’s house or something.” The emotional context of joyriding was significant. The participants sought out the activity as a source of fun, adrenaline and stress relief with an object they were especially attracted too.

### Theme 2: Joyriding as Sport

Another prevalent perception among the four participants was that joyriding was a game, a competition, and a test of their driving skills. In discussing their joyriding experiences, each participant revealed challenges and strategies they had encountered or developed and stipulated rules that governed some of the aspects of joyriding. Categories embedded in this theme included: 1) It’s a game, 2) It’s a competition of skill and 3) There are rules to the game.

It's a game. Participants expressed awareness that joyriding provided them with a pastime and amusement. Peter spoke of a game he played by trying to “blend in the traffic”, while Sam recounted a variety of games he would play, including bumper cars, going over jumps, and driving on trails and in the woods.

Sam: All these weird games you can play in a car. You can play bumper cars. We get really old cars, beat up cars and I'm over here in the middle and there is a big square ring and whoever gets bumped out the edge is out. We make up these silly games. It's fun.

Sam continued to give examples of games he would play with his peer group:

We go in parks, and on the grass and on the trails. We call it the bat cave. We got these big ass woods with these little trails in them that are big enough for like two cars and we have this tape that plays the batman song, you know, ‘danananadana nana, batman!’ (sings) and we're going through the bat cave. Just driving around in the bat caves.

Jack felt that joyriding could be equated with a game of chess, “basically you know it's a game, it's like um, it's almost like chess ‘cause we move a piece every single time. It's just like a game. I guess I like games”. Several hours were often spent inventing games, playing these games, and establishing the basic ground rules of how winners would be determined.

It's a competition of skill. Participants acknowledged that they took an active interest in the competitive engagement of joyriding and competed with each other according to a set of rules. Within each participants peer group, it appeared that they vied for top honours regarding driving abilities. In addition, participants also said that sometimes they practised extreme methods to give proof of their abilities and thus ensure

a reputation as a skilled driver. For instance, Peter stole several cars in one night and took pictures of each accomplishment. Jack also did this and stated, "We found this camera in a car and you know it was brand new, so each of the cars that we stole we took a picture of it to make sure we got credit with our homies." Sam stated, "We compete on a lot of things. Like popping the ignition really fast without cracking everything around it and making it look not stolen by putting a key in it." Peter described the competition with a rival gang:

Peter: We stole at least 8 -9 cars that day. Just in that one night. They only stole four. I was like "oh yeah, you guys think you're bad. Look at us we doubled yours". They said, "Okay, fair and square you won man". They were like "man we didn't know you guys could pull in that many cars". We were like, "hey we're not rookies.

Jack believed that, "Probably, one out of ten of us went for the money, but the rest of us do it for like the same thing you know, like telling each other, I can steal more cars than you, no I can steal more cars than you."

Competition with peers was not the only aspect of this category. Three of the participants also described competing with themselves. Jack described this as:

So yeah, I could get away from a cop car with just a regular Honda Civic. But then say, I got a fixed up Honda Civic, then I wanna see if my skills can match up to the ability of the car, you know. I want to have a contest with myself to see if I can do it.

There are rules to the game. As with most sports, rules were often established and understood amongst the participants respective peer groups. Jack spoke about the rules created regarding the theft of a vehicle:

The rule is you can't, uh, the rule that we have is that you can't keep no stolen car for more than 3 days. 'Cause, okay, the first day, it's hot but only the police station knows it's stolen. Say we stole it in Seattle right, then only Seattle knows, not Tacoma or Kent or anything. And the second day, they start talking to people you know, like hey, there's a stolen car around. Third day, it's national hot. National. Anywhere you go, if the police come behind you and run your plates it's gonna come up stolen.

Other rules involved contact with the police. For instance Mike acknowledged that during a police chase, "my friend was gone and we were split up. That's what we do. When someone's getting chased by the police we split up."

### Theme 3: Predisposers to Joyriding

Five categories were associated with this theme. The categories are: 1) Lack of knowledge of the law, 2) Disapproving parents and siblings, 3) Approving peers, and 4) Neighbourhood sanction. As a theme, passages described the efficacy of knowledge level, family influence, peer pressure and environmental surroundings upon participants' joyriding behaviour. Each category is discussed in terms of being a predisposing factor that underlies joyriding among participants.

Lack of knowledge of the law. Passages under this category identified participants' sources of joyriding knowledge as well as their current understanding of the laws and rights. Misinformation of the law, their legal rights and their legal situation was noted by all four participants. Their knowledge seemed primarily acquired from their peer group and seems to first occur before receiving any information about the consequences of the behaviour. Other knowledge sources included media influences and

the street. Participants also reported that siblings and older peers provided information about strategies to employ in stealing a car.

Mike believed that he could not get arrested if he were in the back seat of the car:

Mike: I knew passengers got burned but I didn't know the person in the back seat got charged for it. I told the detectives I was in the back of a stolen car, in the back seat, only in the back seat, but they got me for it. I only learned that I get in trouble for that like two days ago.

Sam and Jack believed that you had to be the driver so if you were not caught while driving, no legal action could be taken against you. Peter believed that he was not liable for any wrongdoing as he was not the one that actually stole the vehicle, though he admitted to driving the car several times before getting caught. Sam stated, "I didn't think you get in trouble for just being the passenger. Like a dummy I guess you know, now look what happened." There was also confusion about eluding police contact. For instance:

Mike: They said it was an elude, an elude, but they didn't have their sirens on the whole time. And they said an elude is when they have to have their sirens on.

That's what I was told. And they only had their lights on, but whenever they seen something jump out in front of me they turned their sirens on.

Susie: Where did you hear about this difference about lights and sirens?

Mike: Ah, my homies told me. Yeah. They said they have to have their sirens on, and until they do, you can't get charged with an elude.

Restitution and financial obligations including attorney fees were initially unknown consequences and outcomes of a conviction. Sam acknowledged, "I got a lot of restitution. Thousands. Burglaries, I don't owe anything, just the cars. I got three

thousand on one, and I owe like seventeen or twenty thousand total. Yah, that's the thing about joyriding, you gotta pay a lot of money if you get caught."

All the respondents reported confusion and difficulty in understanding the tracking of their cases. Sam and Mike were both surprised that they were being held responsible for thefts they did several months or years ago. Sam stated,

Sam: Oh the stories were all lies. But now look where I'm at. I have over a two year old charge, I didn't think they could do that. Over two years ago, like goddamn. This happened in 99 or 2000. I'm almost seventeen now. They're gonna send me up.

Disapproving parents and siblings. This category contains passages which identify and describe the nature of parental influence upon joyriding behaviour. Generally it seemed that parents attempted to establish boundaries and protocols for behaviours. Peter stated that he was expected to perform duties around the house, received an allowance as a result of completed chores, and had established meal and bed times. He also stated that there would be "consequences" for violating established boundaries, which he did "quite often". Sam describes his parent's response to his joyriding behaviour: "They're so cool, my mom and dad are so cool. When they find out I'm in a car they're like dang, they come down on me they're like 'you little fucker you're not getting a car again' and I'm like, 'yeah, yeah, okay, I'm going to play my video games now'".

Both mothers and fathers conducted parental discussions about joyriding and car theft. Jack and Peter described their dread of the lecture as a primary reason for not being honest with parents about the reasons for their behaviour. Mike described these discussions as including messages of "I don't want to be carrying your casket". Sam equated this lecture with good parenting, "My mom is the best; she'll sit and lecture me

for hours” and said he’d “whoop my own child if he was caught joyriding”. Jack acknowledged his parents disapproval of his behaviour.

Jack: I’m kinda upset for being in here right now ‘cause my mom and dad never told me to steal cars or anything. They always told me to go the good way but I just chose to go this way; that’s why I accept my sentence. (Pause) ‘Cause it was all me, you know.

All four participants felt supported by their parents despite their continuing behaviour. Sam reported, “My mom and dad come to the court, every time.” Mike attributes his change of behaviour to his father but is frustrated with old charges still appearing.

Mike: My dad don’t like me stealing. He’s scared of me getting sent up. He knows I didn’t do nothing this time and he don’t want me to get sent up. My dad told me not to steal cars anymore so I quit, but I’m still getting things pointed at me.

Jack acknowledges that his parents support him financially. “I mean, ‘cause everything I get is from my parents you know like, anything I want, they buy it for me, that’s why I love them so much.” Jack admits to lying to his parents about his generous allowance, which he actually saves.

Jack: Yeah, and my mom would be like, ‘ah how come I give you money all the time and it’s going so fast. Where do you spend it?’ I lie to her, you know. But what I’m really trying to do is save enough to buy my own car.

Jack also stated that some of his friends “came from split families” in which only one parent lived. He felt that boundaries for their behaviour were not identified specifically nor stringently enforced for some of his friends and peers. As a result, Jack stated that his

friends, “They don’t stay home (pause) they don’t like to stay home. (Pause) Most of the time, they don’t do nothing but steal cars.” Sam also feels his parents support his friends. “My mom and dad help a lot of people out, you know, from going bad; my mom helps them out you know gives them money and says your gonna stay with us ‘til you do good and stay off probation.”

Whereas Sam, Peter and Jack all reported that they had taken their parent’s cars without permission, Mike reported that he draws the line at home.

Mike: I would never steal anybody’s car in my family never.

Susie: What’s the difference?

Mike: ‘cause, you don’t want to steal your family’s car ‘cause they won’t have trust in you ever again and they probably won’t like you and they’d probably want you locked up. They’ll probably get a restraining order where you can’t see them no more and that’s not what I want to happen, ‘cause I love my family.

Two participants identified that their first introduction to joyriding was obtained from older siblings-one was a half-brother. Sam seemed especially influenced by his older brother’s legal involvement with cars:

Sam: I don’t know. I just wanna be like my older brother basically. I wanna be as good as him ‘cause he can strip a car and put it back together like it’s nothin’.

Yah, my brother, he knows how to fix any car. I just looked up to him and he liked cars. And he had this legit car and I wanted a car so I was like ‘aahhh I want a car!’ and he’s over there just teasin’ me with it.” Mike’s older brother showed him how. “My brother got me hooked up and my brother is the one that showed me how to steal cars.

Sam's brother was not stealing cars as he had his own; however he was involved in buying stolen parts for his car. Despite this he did not approve of Sam's car theft and attempted to stop Sam from continuing.

Sam: He beat me up really bad, he was like, you little punk you gotta stop stealing cars. He was really trying to get it in my head to stay away from them. Once you stop and once you're off probation, you can come to my house and have fun. He don't like me smoking marijuana he don't like me doing any of that stuff. He'll go down on me again. It wasn't a bad beating. He'd like hit me, 'you better stop you better stop', he'd be like choking me, 'you better stop'. I didn't steal another car after that, but I hung around them though that's the problem.

Jack had a friend whom he equated as his brother and also described the physical fights they would endure as each tried to convince the other to stop joyriding.

Jack: I didn't want him stealing cars no more. And like, me and him got into a big fight about it you know. He was like no man, it's my life I can do whatever I want. I was like yeah, I respect that, but I look at you like you were family, you know.

Approving peers. Peers as a category contained passages that identified common behavioural attributes and patterns of peer influence. Jack and Peter accounted for their early experiences of joyriding to older peer influences. Peter stated, "I never really had a car. I see all my friends have a car and I always wanted to be part of it." An older peer also influenced Sam who envied his older brother's legal car. "He kept coming like day after day with him and I was like okay, I got kinda used to it (pause). He kept telling me that he needs some help you know, and I knew how to do a little bit you know?"

Mike was one of the boys who liked to steal cars in groups. When asked to explore this further he stated that “you’re safer in groups. ‘cause if someone runs out on you ‘cause they see you stealin’ their car, you gotta a whole lot more people to back you up so you don’t have to sit there and get beat up.” Sam explained that you needed a group of people when stealing a car. “Four people. That’s why you like, see four kids, it takes four people to break the steering column.”

Jack: Like I told you before, I had a little crew going on you know. We had all different like we had Filipino, Samoan, Asians, ah, African American, and Caucasians, you know. The thing is, it’s just like, when I steal cars it’s just like a group of kids that have one thing in common.

Girlfriends played a positive role but despite this, the behaviour continued. Jack mentioned that his girlfriend did not approve of his behaviour: “She’s kinda mad at me for being in a stolen car. She’s kinda mad at me, so you know, I gotta stop stealing cars.”

Mike also stated that his girlfriend did not approve:

Susie: What kind of influence does your girlfriend have?

Mike: She told me don’t do it. ‘Cause she’s a good girl. She don’t want me doing it ‘cause she don’t want me locked up and she don’t want me to die or nothing and she said that it’s stupid. She said she’s going to break up with me if I keep on doing it, that’s why I’m not doing it no more, that’s part of the reason why. ‘cause I’ve been going out with her for like 2 years now, 2 or 3 years.

Susie: Does she get into the cars with you?

Mike: No.

Susie: Do you ever steal cars in order to go see her?

Mike: Sometimes, I go steal a car. One time I stole a car and went into the store and bought her a rose and went to her house. Parked the car down the street and went to her house and gave her a rose. This was like a day after I got out of jail. I never got caught for that one.

Neighbourhood sanctions. Passages in the category of neighbourhood identified essences of neighbourhood influence upon participant's behaviours. School was not immune and provides for a level of exposure and opportunity. Sam states,

All the kids bring stolen cars to school. They have them parked in the parking lot all around the parking, showing off, doing, working on them, burnin' out in the parking lot seeing who can burn out the most. I'm just watching looking you know, I didn't think I was gonna do it, you know? I told myself that I wasn't gonna do it, then I was like, okay, I'll try.

Jack explained his behaviour of taking stolen cars to school:

Jack: Well, like, uh, half of me wanted to show off and the other half just wanted to get to school, but if I get to school I'm not going to go to class anyways so basically I don't know. I wasn't thinking, you know. I mean 'cause, what I was determined to do was go to school with a car but you know, just get to school, you know, I wasn't trying to do anything with it. But like every time I go to school with a car I always end up leaving at lunch.

Mike and Sam reported that their respective neighbourhoods were prime areas for car theft. Mike said, "there used to be a lot of high-speed chases on my street. I had a couple of friends who were stealing cars and driving by my house. And I told them not to 'cause then I'm going to get caught and my street was getting really bad."

Sam said, “There are a lot of car thieves everywhere, Burien, Renton, everywhere. When I walk outside I see kids driving cars, like it’s a normal thing. Everyone’s doin’ it.”

Substance Use. Drug and alcohol use was prevalent among all four participants, however drinking and driving was not an activity any of them supported. All reported driving while under the influence of marijuana, and all reported that they did not drive while drinking.

Mike: We’ll go to the store and buy things like beer and whole bunch of stuff and then maybe get tore up at a park or something and walk from the park. Leave the car there. ‘Cause we ain’t trying to (pause) ‘cause we’re drunk. We don’t know what we’re doing, so we ain’t trying to kill ourselves in the car, you know drinking and driving. That’s one thing we don’t do is drink and drive.

Peter stated, “we are not drinking and driving. If you guys are drinking and driving then you gotta let me out. And they say, hell no, I’m not drinking and driving. I’m not stupid.”

Sam reported that,

Sam: Drinking and driving, you don’t know what you’re doing. And ‘cause when you’re drunk it looks like you’re going like this (makes a swerving motion). So you can’t see straight. So you might even drive off a cliff or something.

Jack reports a preference for marijuana as his substance of choice and acknowledges that his drug use began around the same time as his joyriding behaviour. “That’s when I started smoking weed and stuff you know, started smoking weed. I didn’t really drink that much ‘cause I’m not a heavy drinker, I hate drinking.” Jack also acknowledges that marijuana helps him cope with the anxiety of the car theft:

Susie: You mentioned a couple times that stealing cars and smoking weed kinda go together.

Jack: Yeah.

Susie: What do you mean by this?

Jack: When I smoke weed, before we go steal a car, we go smoke weed. 'Cause like, when I'm sober, the voices, still come to my head, but then when I smoke weed, they're not there.

Susie: So weed helps you deal with the voices?

Jack: Yup. When I smoke weed I think I'm superman.

When asked about driving while intoxicated on marijuana, Jack responded:

Jack: The first time I drove high I was with my homeboys. That was my very first time driving high and we were like, all high in the car. Everyone was just sitting there like, whoa. As soon as my high goes away, I start thinking, what if I get caught, I can't get caught, I can't get caught. After that, the only way that can go away is if I smoke some more weed. When we smoke weed, we're totally relaxed. We don't care about nothing else. We don't care about police passing by, we just look at them and go, 'right, look at the police go by. Yah'.

Two participants spoke of his respective use of 'sherm', the street name for marijuana or tobacco that is laced with PCP or formaldehyde. Some young people understand 'sherm' as marijuana dipped in formaldehyde. What youth may not be aware of is that "embalming fluid" has historically been street slang for PCP. While it is difficult to ascertain exactly what Peter and Mike were smoking, most, if not all, of the effects attributed to their 'sherm' high are consistent with the effects of PCP.

Peter explains his understanding and experience of this drug:

Peter: When you're on sherm, nothing's really scary to you, but the sherm makes you like dangerous and crazy. We usually have it in a cigarette. It's actually

embalming fluid and you, like, dip a cigarette in it a little bit, and smoke it thru the filter. The sherm comes all the way up the cigarette and then you take out the filter and light it. It melts too, and it stinks. But your first time trying it, you can't even walk. 'Cause you're like stuck. You daze off and people ask you something and you're like 'okay', and then daze off again and they still got to keep on asking you.

Mike describes how the sherm encouraged him to take greater risks:

Mike: I was just pumped. I just wanted to fight that day. I just wanted to fight. He (brother) wanted to fight too, 'cause we were on a drug called sherm and that makes us wanna fight. So we got the car slowly 'cause we didn't want to be loud. Nobody ever came out so we took the car. That's why we took someone's car, to see if they'll run out. 'Cause most likely if they see you stealing their car they're gonna try and fight you.

#### Theme 4: Justifications Associated with Joyriding

Passages accompanying the categories of this theme convey, express, recount, or make clear, the justifications of the participants, as well as in the minds of their peers regarding joyriding and joyriding behaviour. This theme included the categories 1) The Devil made me do it, 2) Borrowing versus stealing, 3) It's addicting.

The devil made me do it. Participants identified thought patterns that impacted on their choices.

Jack: You know it's just I didn't think twice about stuff. If I have conflict with myself about doing stuff, I'm gonna do it. Like I said before, you know, I got those voices in my head you know.

Susie: Yeah, you called them the devil and the angel.

Jack: Yeah it's like that, but the devil always wins. I guess I let it win but I do think twice you know, but I don't think hard enough. I don't try to fight it hard enough, you know. So I said, yeah, you know, I'm gonna steal this car. And as I'm going I start thinking about it, you know. Like, hold on is it really worth it? But then I just end up doing it anyway. I just end up doing it.

Susie: Hmm. Why do you think the devil wins like that?

Jack: I let him.

Susie: You let him?

Jack: Yeah. I mean once he just sticks his fork down, you know, I make my decision. I guess that kills the angel, you know.

Susie: Kind of. Tell me more about this.

Jack: Like sometimes, before I go steal a car I ask everybody, 'okay you guys ready?' And then they ask me, and I go, hold on. And then after that I start thinking. I start thinking and thinking and thinking, thinking, thinking and thinking.

Susie: Thinking about what?

Jack: Man, should I go steal this car? Man, what if I get caught? Man, you're not gonna get caught. Ya you are. No you're not. Ya you are. No you're not. I just (laughs) go back and forth. And then, finally, I don't know. I just give up. The last thing that crosses my mind is to go do it. After that the devil says, go do it right now!

Sam reported that he believed he would never participate. "I told myself that I wasn't gonna do it, then I was like, okay, I'll try it. Now look where I'm at? I thought I was never gonna do it, but I ended up doing it. Everyone's doing it."

Borrowing versus stealing. Despite the view that taking cars was wrong, the participants did not consider their actions as a serious offence. All four boys seemed to have limited insight into the impact their joyriding behaviour had on others. Despite being a victim of car theft himself, Sam believed that since they caused little damage and often returned the car it made the offence less serious:

Sam: I feel bad 'cause when I was a kid my car got stolen like nine times. We got it back with the ignition all torn out but we still used it. Goddamn, they stole the car nine times. I got pissed off. So when I take a car I park it right back in the same parking spot and put the ignition back in, and I put a letter in, be nice about it you know. Most of my friends put the car right back, they put it right back. They even leave little stickers with a smiley face, you know, I'm sorry, (laughs) but thanks for the adrenaline rush.

It's addicting. All four boys made statements referring to their desire to stop or quit. For these participants they believed there was an addictive quality to their activities. Mike stated, "I want to quit. I thought it was all fun and games but now it's just life and death 'cause you don't know if you're gonna stay alive or you're gonna die."

Sam: It gets addicting, stealing the cars. It's addicting. You can't stop. I didn't steal a car for like six months and then my friend comes up with a new car and was like 'look at this' I was like 'oooohhh, I gotta try it, I gotta see how fast I can spin the wheel, reverse and put it in drive and burn out and go turn corners when it's wet and slidy'. I was like 'okay, I'll do it one more time.

Mike: I see kids who are like 'I wanna stop so bad but I can't'. They're just so addicted just to take it and the adrenaline rush just to drive it, and they know they can't drive for a really long time and they're like 'what the hell, one more time' and they just go, two more times. As soon as they steal one it's all over with, trust me. They're not stopping.

Sam: Look at my friends, they cry at their houses 'I wanna stop but I can't'. It's like all those games and the all the little things we can do and all those friends just having fun and all that, they're like druggies. They love doing it. They can't stop. They cannot stop.

Peter: It's so funny. I don't know why they can't stop. They keep going back. They tell me it's the adrenaline rush. Your heart pounds but it's hard for them to stop. All my friends are like 'man, I need to stop' and they come to my house and I'm like you're not going, but the next thing I know, I can't stop them and he's gone. Lost another friend.

#### Theme 5: Developmental Needs

Adolescents are in a unique stage of human development. Given that I have almost two decades of experience working with adolescents, I acknowledge a heightened awareness of and interest in this developmental stage. As I read and re-read the transcripts and redistributed passages from the transcripts, I began to see some classic developmental patterns emerge. Four categories continued to emerge before I recognized them as psychosocial issues that young people deal with their adolescent years. These include: belonging, loyalty, self-identity, and risk taking. All were expressed by the four young men.

Belonging. It is crucial to the social development of adolescents that they feel like they fit in and feel needed by someone. Sam explained this need when he said:

They kept telling me that they need some help, you know, putting a Honda engine in and stuff and I know how to do a little bit. I always change the wheels, I know how to take off the wheels, you know. I'm really good at taking cars, you know, taking wheels off and taking engines out. They come to me.

Along with a sense of belonging is a need to fit in and be popular. Sam and Peter believe that joyriders are motivated by this need to be popular among their peers.

Sam: Most of them do it because they want to be popular. I mean there's this little game where you gotta follow the guy. He's like the leader of the group. It's like a car club and if you can follow him doing everything he does and stay right behind him all the time and don't miss, you're popular. If you can keep up with him and pull in front of him, you're popular, and if you win all the money and have the best car and you're crazy, if you're the craziest, you're popular.

Sam: I like getting in the passenger seat and seeing what the guy can do. If he can do a one eighty then he's cool.

Susie: You're cool if you have the skills?

Sam: Exactly. You got skills. Whoever's got the best skills is the most popular guy down there. Try to see what you can be. You take the car and you go practise somewhere with all your friends and you go joyriding. I'm like "yeah, when I go down there I'm gonna beat this guy now."

Loyalty. Sam and Jack made references to the sense of loyalty that they had to their peers who were also involved in their joyriding activities. Sam would often agree to 'tag along' with others to keep them company in the event they were caught:

Sam: I'll drive with you, you know. I'll be a passenger in the back seat. 'cause they want people to come with you just in case they get caught. You know, they don't feel alone going to jail. That's basically why they want people to come with them. I'm like yeah, I'll take the chance.

Sam went as far as turning himself into authorities after he had managed to escape apprehension but his partner had not.

Sam: I ran into the wheat fields and got away, and I could have got away too. I was like on the top of the hill and the police didn't know where I was at. I was thinking, I can't leave my friends there you know; he's gonna go to jail by himself so I started walking down. I walked for like 10 minutes before they even saw me. They were mad.

Sam also displayed a willingness to take responsibility for the crime on behalf of his friend.

Sam: And the next thing you know the police were like, 'you two' 'cause he read the license plate, 'put your hands in the air' and I was like 'Oh no', you better go, come on let's go'. He was like 'fuck'. He got out of the car and put his hands up. You know I was scared for my friend I was like, okay I'm not going to let him go to jail again for sixty two to sixty five (weeks), so I dragged him through the bushes and he got away. But they know me real well, right, (makes knocking sound), 'all right you two we know it's you' and I was like, 'no it wasn't me. I'm not letting you take my friend to jail.' They thought it was me, you know that he was dragging me. I didn't tell them who my friend was and they were like 'just tell me who your friend was, who was with you,' and I was like 'okay I stole the car whatever.' But I only gotta serve 15-20 days or something, and he had to

serve a year and half or something, and I'm like you can't do that. You know he's really trying, but he can't stop and I can stop. But if he's still stealing cars now, oh god I'm going to beat him, oh god, I did not take that for no reason, no no.

Jack spoke of his attempts to have his friend stop joyriding due to his increasing responsibilities. While Sam threatened to use violence to stop his friend from further activities, Jack stated that he did in fact use violence to get his point across.

Jack: I told him that um, I didn't want him stealing cars no more. And like, me and him got into a big fight about it you know. He was like no man, it's my life I can do whatever I want. I was like yeah, I respect that, but I look at you like you were family, you know. He's a Dad now so I was like man look, you're a dad you know see. What if you get put away. He was like, 'so what man, I'll go down with you', and I was like 'nah'. Look man, you got a fam, you're gonna have a family to look after, you know what I'm saying. He was like yeah, so what, he's just being hard headed you know, until finally, it resolved in a fist fight. And finally, I just hit him hard enough for him to realize, okay, I'm gonna stop.

Self-Identity. All four participants achieved a sense of identity from their joyriding behaviour. Jack was especially proud of the concept others had of him:

Jack: My homeboy said that we're just like Gone in 60 Seconds, like the crew, you know, with Nicholas Cage and his little brother and stuff you know. And I was like yeah, I just picture myself like that. And he says, 'look man, you're the leader, you're Nicholas Cage'. I was just like, 'man. I kinda am huh?

Jack: When I go to parties and stuff you know. And me and my crew go in, they're like 'how did you guys get here?' And my hommie said 'go ask the leader

right there' (points). And then they ask me, 'how did you guys get away from the cops?' I have the skills, you know. I have the experience and the skills.

Sam not only felt a sense of being needed by his peers for his mechanical abilities, he also achieved a sense of identity of being capable and helpful. "I'm good you know. I can do things with the car that others can't. I like cars, if I see anyone like messing around with their car, I'm like 'do you need help?' and go over and help."

Risk-taking. The boys seemed to take risks deliberately and openly. They all engaged in risky driving practices including speeding, not wearing a seatbelt, having several friends in the car, and driving while impaired. Jack labels his behaviour as risk-taking:

Jack: I guess I'm a big risk-taker.

Susie: What do you mean by risk-taker?

Jack: It's like, well, like one night when I stole a car right. And this was the fastest car I ever stole, so I tried to test my skills. So I seen a police car, you know, at the stop sign. So I just blew the stop sign, and he then like, started tailing me. After that he tried to pull me over, and after that ah, I was like, you know what? Catch me if you can. It's just the daredevil you know. Like if a daredevil could ride on a motorcycle and jump over 10 buses, then he's going to try and go for like 20, you know.

Peter also identifies his actions as risk-taking:

Peter: There's a suped up Mustang that might have an alarm, but I'm gonna take the risk. I want the risk. I want the adrenaline. I want the challenge, see how long it takes, how quick I can do it. Time me.

When exploring a rollover accident from Mike's first joyriding experience, I asked him if he was wearing a seatbelt:

Mike: No cuz I was so scared that the police were going to turn on their lights and come and get me that I'd ah have to stop the car and hurry up and jump out. I don't have to worry about taking off my seatbelt to slow me down.

#### Theme 6: Contact with the Law

Categories in this theme identified participants' ideas about the effects and outcomes of joyriding and described their realities associated with police, detention, and ideas of getting caught. The categories in this theme included: 1) Getting caught, 2) Police pursuits, 3) They're doin' us dirty, and 4) Getting punished.

Getting caught. The participants had a feeling that they would not be caught in the act or they put it out of their mind. Peter stated, "When you actually do it you don't think about getting caught. It didn't occur to me. I kept thinking 'ah man, I won't get caught.'" Mike thought, "Its fun and we don't think we can get in trouble, we think we can out run the cops and get away with it anyway." Jack struggled with this issue a little more than the others but in the end always succumbed to his desire to follow through:

Jack: It's like the cartoon you know, where they have the devil and the angel, like talking to you. Like yeah, that's what's going on in my head, you know. You'll steal it, and you'll get money, and no no don't your gonna get caught and then your Mom's going to be mad at you. But when I'd approach the car the thoughts would pass away. The thoughts were puff away, gone after that I just do what I gotta do.

Peter thought he would not get caught because "the police had more important things to do." Sam believed that,

In the morning time with the traffic the cops can't really find you, 'cause you know how many Honda accords are out in the morning in traffic and they don't know which one. They try to look for it but they can't.

Participants also believed that if they drove sensibly and did not panic when they encountered police, there was little chance of being apprehended. Jack pointed out, "As long as you drive normally you're okay. You just act cool and the cops drive on by."

There was also an assumption that they could fool police by having girls in the car. Jack:

We figure like if police see a guy and girl like driving, they always think they're like a couple. But when I'm with my homeboy; that's a whole different story.

After I started comparing the two I was like okay hold on, you know, I'm getting pulled over with my homeboys, but then like when I'm with my, my, I call her my sister, every time I have a sister in my car I'm okay.

Jack claimed to have escaped apprehension so many times that he ceased to worry about it. "I didn't get caught, so I was like hold on, I didn't get caught that time so I guess I'm good, you know." Peter also felt similarly: "At first I worried about it, but after stealing so many cars and not getting caught, it just went to the back of my mind." Jack and Peter also rationalized their occasional apprehension:

Jack: The first time I got caught I was like 'ahhh that's only one time', the second time I got caught I say it's only two times, you know, that's nothing. Third time, sheesh, fourth time, I started getting, hmmm, I started getting kinda cautious. But the thing that made me do it again was because, when I got caught one time and then, right when I got out I stole another car and it took like a couple more months for the second time. The second time it took like four, four and half months to get my third time caught. And the third time it took me like two and half months.

Peter: The second time I was you know, kinda more skilled you know. I could hit corners you know and I like I know what to do like when like I'm followed by cops and then as soon as I hit a turn you know you just off your lights, you know and just park somewhere.

Mike: No, I didn't get caught. I did it once, and I didn't get caught. So I can do it again and again and again and still not get caught.

Police pursuits. Of particular concern to the police and the community are the chases involving stolen vehicles and the danger they pose to the offenders, police and the public. All four participants reported being involved in at least one police chase. Two participants drove erratically, antagonized police and encouraged police chases. Sam suggested that "some kids are just dumb and they like to mess with the police. They pull up and honk and roll down the window and say 'look at my ignition' and just, you know, race off. I think they're mad at the world or something."

Peter and Jack spoke of deliberately provoking the police into chasing them. The other two participants panicked and attempted to flee. Mike recalls his thoughts during a significant and dangerous high-speed pursuit after he panicked:

I thought they were still chasing me so I went through a stop, a four way stop and I ran through a busy street and the red light was on me too again and I just kept on going, and the police slowed down. The car felt like it was flying to me. It didn't feel like it was on the ground. It's, it's scary. 'cause you don't know if you're gonna kill somebody, you don't know if you're gonna kill yourself. You don't know if you're gonna crash, you don't know anything...I was scared. That was the most scariest thing in my life. I was thinkin', I'm gonna die I'm gonna die, I'm gonna get shot by the police or something. 'cause I heard that they can shoot

you when they tell you to stop. I thought they were gonna shoot the wheels and accidentally miss and shoot thru the glass and shoot me. I didn't want that.

It was also noted by the participants that getting chased and caught by police was the worst experience of their joyriding incidents, but getting away was the best experience. Sam recalls his experience:

Oh my heart pounded. I soon started slowing down and slowing down and here he had his lights on. I guess I didn't use my blinker when I was turning out the parking lot going out onto the main road. My heart started pounding and pounding, scared me. Everyone was screaming and crying. I just wanted to see what it was like. And now look I didn't like it.

Jack stated,

The second time, actually my second high speed chase, that was ah, like a fun time, you know cuz, like the best time. I was so happy that I got away from the police, you know.

Peter: Oh I couldn't stop smoking cigarettes. It was my first one ever I'm like (inhales) I'm holding on. But we were driving really slowly. On the freeway you know, like doing 50 or 60. We weren't trying to get away, you know, we was just trying to get a few minutes before we went to jail again.

Jack also believes he has some control over the situation:

Yeah, and plus like whenever I don't feel like driving, I just pull over. I just give up. I'm like okay. And every time I give up like, they let me go at the precinct. But after that I got to come to court, they're gonna file on me duh duh duh. But at times I don't want to get caught or whatever or I don't feel like sitting at the

precinct for three, three and half hours, I just think okay, I'm getting away from you.

Getting chased involved a mixture of fear and excitement and offered a chance to test driving skills. Jack would choose his cars deliberately because of the cars ability to match or exceed the power of police cars:

Jack: I mean they (police) got training and stuff, you know. They can hit corners and stuff you know, but the thing is, their car is automatic, and I never drive automatic. I always drive stick shift so you know. I know what's under the cops car engine and I know when and how and how hard you gotta turn to hit an angle right so I have a little advantage.

They're doin' us dirty. Sam and Mike mentioned the aggressive behaviour of the police when they were caught:

Sam: That when the spikes showed up. I was just scared. I thought they were gonna beat us and drag us all that mean stuff. They were kinda mean to us. They made us crawl under the barb-wired fences. They didn't give us nothing and we had this nasty cotton stuff in our mouths and they didn't give us nothing. They were really mean. They were like "that's what you deserve you little punk-ass this and that" and they like, dragged us. I'm like goddamn they're doin' us dirty. They were really mean. And they didn't like my friend 'cause he was black. They were really mean to him. They were being really rude to him. They were just yelling at him and just "you little son of a bitch". He was over there just "you little punk, we're gonna get you, you're going to adult jail this and that, we're gonna keep you in there for years you little son of a bitch.

Mike: I had seven cop cars on me and my friend had three cop cars on him. And then they tried to taze me, I seen this stuff fly past me, the little strings, but it didn't get me. And they had dogs after us (pause) and helicopters. And then the police when they caught me, they punched me. He said don't run from me you little punk and started punching me. Hit me with his pistol in my back.

Sam and Mike believed the consequences of a police beating acted as an extra incentive to get away in the future.

Getting punished. Prior to stealing a vehicle, participants gave minimal thought to what the punishment may be if they were caught. When they did consider it, they tended to overestimate the gravity of the consequences. Despite this factor, they continued to persist in stealing cars. This challenges the view that most offenders will be deterred by lengthy custodial sentences. It also challenges the opposite view that most offenders even if caught believe they will 'get away with it.'

Sam: I didn't want to do it, cuz they were like talking about juvenile and I thought that juvenile you could get raped in the showers and I didn't want that and I was like I don't want to get in that car, I'm like I don't wanna these people are going to beat me up, and I was scared, and they were like no no , and the next thing you know and one day in and I'm like oh okay this place isn't so bad, no one's beating me or stabbing me. Oh the stories were all lies, they exaggerate.

All four boys had received custodial sentences for TMV, however, they all expected a much longer period of time than they actually received. Sam stated, "I was in and out in one day. One day. That's nothing." Jack was expecting two years in custody for his offences and was surprised to find out he may only receive four to nine months. "I

feel lucky, you know.” Sam believed that while a short time in custody would not deter him, a longer stay would:

Sam: Detention is no big deal, but the institution would be. I don't think I can get used to an institution. I know a lot of people in there, but I don't think I can get used to it though, 'cause it's not the same as a couple of weeks in juvie.

Two of the participants made reference to the court system and their feeling that they are not listened too. Sam stated that, “The courts don't really believe anything you say anyways, so you plead guilty, take the plea, get out and go back to school.” Peter felt the judge was unfair. “That judge is a racist. She won't believe anything you say anyways.”

Reputation. All four boys spoke of being well known to police authorities. This caused them some frustration especially as they attempted to stop joyriding and continued to be suspects for thefts they did not commit. There were also some complaints about police tactics:

Mike: My dad told me not to steal cars anymore so I quit, but I'm still getting things pointed at me. I have a reputation. Police came one time; they came to my house and knocked on my door. They pushed my little sister aside and came in and got me and I was like what the heck is going on here and then came to my sister's house and got me for no reason. They said they wanted to talk to me, not arrest me, they said I wasn't gonna get arrested, but I went to go talk to him and he said put your hands behind your back you're under arrest. The Detective said that's just to help them out to catch me. I said you guys can't do that, you can't tell somebody that you just need to talk to them, and then arrest them. You can't. That's just (pause) you can't do that.

Sam: I didn't do it. Fingerprint the goddamn car I didn't do it. They didn't find no fingerprints but they want to charge me. They know me too well. Any cars around me for miles and they knock on my door even though there's thousands of car thieves all around. They just come directly to me. And then they go to my friend's house next. I don't know why.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion and Implications of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences associated with joyriding among participants. Throughout this study, the adolescent participants were given the opportunity to discuss and examine their experiences of joyriding. The discourse provided a mechanism for the young participants to contemplate their actions and to explore the meaning of the experience. By interviewing four self-identified joyriders, I came to a better understanding of the meaning of joyriding among adolescents and am now at the junction where I am asking what I learned from conducting the interviews, studying the transcripts, marking and labelling significant passages and organizing them into themes. The following chapter is my opportunity to respond to what this research experience was like and what it means to me. I attempt to create a discussion that presents my interaction with the participants with a full understanding that others reading the same material may develop different stories.

The limited literature in joyriding suggests that joyriders are young males, living in socially marginalised areas with disrupted family backgrounds, poor school histories, and low employment aspirations. These young male joyriders tend to become introduced to joyriding at a very young age through older friends or siblings, as it offers 'something to do' in an otherwise 'boring' lifestyle. The literature also portrays a movement or progression through stages as what begins as fun and excitement soon acquires a more entrenched economic motive as joyriders begin to sell stole vehicle parts for cash. While valid and informative, the literature findings did not articulate the underlying meaning of the experience of joyriding. While similar themes emerged in this inquiry, it is not my

intention to validate these themes, but rather to personalize what I found as important, interesting, and meaningful.

### Adolescence in Action

Given my situation and perspective, I am sensitive to the fact that adolescence is a developmental stage of rapid changes in physical, intellectual, emotional, and social growth at a rate of speed unparalleled since infancy. Consequently, adolescence can be a frustrating time in life as young people struggle with questions of identity, competency, autonomy and independence from the family. Ultimately, the ability to successfully resolve these developmental needs is what prepares adolescents for the challenging tasks of adulthood. The narratives shared by the four participants in this study offered evidence of these needs and led me to query the connection between joyriding behaviour and the developmental stage of adolescence.

An interesting feature of this study is the implications that while all young people traverse this adolescent stage of development, some youths manage to do so with little difficulty, while others face significant hurdles. It has been my experience that while many adolescents meet their needs of competence and self-efficacy, via meaningful involvement with positive peer groups, recreation, education and vocational opportunities, the youth in this study, seem to meet these needs via delinquency and deviance (i.e. joyriding). Much like researchers who questioned resiliency, I found myself exploring why some young people drift towards unhealthy activities and others do not.

Participants in this study reported that their peer group largely acted as a catalyst for their introduction and persistence of joyriding. During adolescence, it is appropriate for young people to have and demonstrate a need to separate from their parents and

establish their own identity. As adolescents pull away from parents in a search for their own identity, the peer group takes on a special significance. By adolescence, time spent interacting with peers exceeds time spent interacting with the parent or any other socialization agent (Larson & Richards, 1991). It is also during this period of life that the need to be accepted by peers becomes most important (Crosiar, 1996, p. 43).

Accordingly, friendship groups provide the first setting in which young people can practice their social skills with those who are their equals. It is with friends that they learn how to begin, maintain, and terminate relationships, practice social skills, and become intimate.

Peer influence seems to operate through two means: social comparison and conformity. Through social comparison, adolescents measure their own behaviour by comparing it to others (Sprintall & Collins, 1988). Since childhood comparisons would be regressive and adult comparisons would be too advanced, adolescents turn to their peers as the primary reference group for defining themselves and their social identities. Social conformity to peers, which peaks at about age fourteen, influences adolescents to adapt their behaviour and attitudes to that of their peers (Berndt, 1979).

It is also widely assumed that peer influence plays an important role in adolescent crime (Reiss & Farrington, 1991). Participants stated that most of their peer influence was generated through interaction and exposure. Peter for instance believed that “if you have friends that are always taking cars, then you might be doing it, but if you got friends that are straight, you tend to be like them.” Mike described the influence affiliated with peer relationships in this manner. “I had never experienced stealing a car before but I had friends that were always talking about it. And like, you don’t contribute to the conversation because you’re not experienced. I know I was thinking about it, so I just

went and did it with them.” Sam felt an obligation to engage in joyriding to keep his friends. “I didn’t feel very comfortable at first, but to me, I wanted to keep my friends and so I basically did what they wanted me to do.”

Questions arise with regard to why young people choose to associate with peers who are delinquent and why collectively these peer groups choose antisocial behaviours. Do delinquent youths have as many options to define themselves as powerful and competent as do their non-delinquent counterparts? Do the participants in this study find in joyriding the personal competence they lack elsewhere in their lives? Could it be that many adolescents would rather endure the risks associated with joyriding than to be ostracized or out of favour by peers?

It was evident that participants in this study were accepted by their peers and even some adults once they demonstrated deviant behaviours and continued to choose to behave in socially non-normative ways. Ungar (2002) finds that high-risk youths explain their problematic behaviours as strategic ways to compose healthy stories about themselves that bring them experiences of control and acceptance. It can also be said that attachment to the peer group helps the young person avoid the problem of alienation, even when the identification is with a group of delinquents (Hurrelmann & Engel, 1992; Newman & Newman, 1976).

Though we do not typically think of deviance as a pathway to healthy development, it appears that the adolescents interviewed may act out in anti-social ways as part of a strategy to feel good about themselves. This interpretation is supported by research with socially marginalized children who appear to use their problem behaviours to sustain well-being when resources that support healthy functioning are scarce (Simon, Dent, & Sussman, 1997; Totten, 2000; Tyler, Tyler, Tommasello & Connolly, 1992).

Participants wanted others to know that they were mature and capable. However, pro-social means such as academic success, sporting abilities and employment were unavailable due to personal or environmental constraints. To compensate, they achieve this status through antisocial behaviours such as joyriding, drug use and other forms of delinquency and risk-taking behaviours. Thus for some youth like Sam, Mike, Peter, and Jack, being bad was the best solution to feeling good.

Risk-taking is so commonly identified with adolescence that it is often considered the norm, not the exception. A popular notion is that adolescents' involvement in risky behaviours can often be attributed to their thinking of themselves as invulnerable. This notion essentially operates from a belief that adolescents often exhibit the "it won't happen to me" fable which causes young people to take unnecessary risks such as speeding, drinking and driving, having unprotected sex, smoking or any of the numerous and wide range of risk-taking behaviours (Ponton, 1997). The same can be inferred with joyriding; reckless driving offers adolescents opportunities to take risks openly and prove that they are not afraid of physical harm (Katz, 1999, p. 77).

Over the years adolescents' involvement in risk-taking behaviours has been explained in a number of ways. Jessor and Jessor (1977) suggested several functions for risky behaviour including asserting one's opposition to adult authority and conventional society and dealing with anxiety and frustration. Some researchers suggest that adolescents tend to be especially high in sensation seeking (Zuckerman, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1978). Others suggest that they use these behaviours to appear more mature (Jessor, 1987) or because they have heightened egocentrism (Dolcini, Cohn, Adler, Millstein, Irwin, Kegeles, & Stone, 1989; Elkind, 1985). Many authors (e.g., Arnett, 1992; Jessor, 1987) attribute these behaviours to a combination of individual, social, and

environmental factors. Despite this research, very little is actually known about the antecedents for engaging in risk-taking behaviour.

Larson and Asmussen (1991) point out that young people report feeling bored much of the time, but they report feeling very happy and motivated when with their friends. The researchers believe that, from a systems theory perspective, groups that provide a lot of positive feedback, such as young people report experiencing with their friends, encourage action to maintain the good feelings. Those actions could entail engaging in risky behaviours to keep the fun going.

The boys' reference to "getting happy" supports this. Not only does joyriding seem motivated by the positive reinforcement of experiencing a feeling that is extraordinary, such as "the rush" and "the fun", it also offers an opportunity to reduce depression and cope with stress. By engaging in the excitement of joyriding, participants could amend difficult feelings of inadequacy, identity, and trauma. This is not surprising given that joyriding comes fully equipped with its own potent chemical substance, adrenaline. Theoretically the adolescent brain may be receptive to the adrenaline high that is created by joyriding, and a craving could develop quite rapidly. The participants acknowledge this in their passages about the addictive qualities of joyriding. This suggests that it would be worthwhile for further research in joyriding to explore the similarities with substance addiction and for prevention programs to target joyriders with depressed moods.

### Masculinity in Motion

Given the above discussion, how are we to understand joyriding? Do we understand it as peer influence, adrenaline and risk-taking, boredom; alienation; a chance to fit in and belong; or a motive for profit? All have been mentioned in the literature,

media and this study. What seems routinely ignored, however, is the fact that the participants, in an overwhelming majority of cases, are young men. How does this knowledge, so often ignored because it is so taken-for-granted, help us to think about the problem of joyriding?

Sutherland (1942) first recognized the significant fact that nothing “is so frequently associated with criminal behaviour as being male.” (p.19). He believed this was due to the differences in the social codes that girls and boys are taught as they grow up. “From infancy girls are taught that they must be nice, while boys are taught that they must be rough and tough” (p.101, 1947). Thereafter, feminists concerned with crimes of violence by men against women were the first to notice the connection of crime with masculine values. In reading and re-reading the transcripts of this study, I began to recognize that masculine values were evident in the narratives. Much like the idea that the developmental stage of adolescence is epitomized in joyriding, I noticed that joyriding neatly dovetails with the values associated with masculinity.

While not initially evident, it is my interpretation that joyriding is the perfect incarnation of a whole range of masculine rituals: risk-taking, testing confidence, challenging others, and achieving status. It also illustrates excitement and careless courting of death and destruction. According to the notion of symbolic self-completion (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982), people make use of material possessions, amongst other strategies, to compensate for perceived inadequacies in their self-concept. According to this theory, a young man can compensate for not feeling masculine enough by using an object, such as a car, to tell both self and others that he is indeed ‘masculine’.

While the participants in this study did use the term masculinity, the categories suggest this connection. In meeting with three of the participants to discuss the themes

that were becoming evident the boys were unconvinced that joyriding was about proving their 'masculinity'. Yet, they all agreed that joyriding provided them with a means to increase their confidence, status, competitiveness, and proof of their courage and skill. In discrediting the masculinity theme, they were quick to point out that females were also involved in the activity. When this argument was explored in greater depth, it became clear that, while girls were present they were discouraged from committing the actual theft, nor were they permitted to drive the stolen vehicle. Their main involvement seemed to be that of passenger and audience. Sam said "we don't let girls drive 'cause we don't want them getting in trouble for it." Mike said, "We don't let them (girls) drive, 'cause we're scared that they're gonna crash." Peter believed that "girls are no good at taking cars (pause), they're too slow." I wondered if the boys unconsciously believed that, if girls could steal and drive stolen cars, it would limit the value of the joyriding for 'doing masculinity'.

My journal writing also made reference to the connection of masculinity and the media. Participants acknowledged that movies and media provided exposure to joyriding and all of them indicated they had tried techniques and manoeuvres seen on television or in the movies. At the same time participants acknowledged that while some of what was viewed on movies was influential, it was not real life.

The mass media simultaneously bombards us with images and icons linking sex, power, cars and car sport. Groombridge's (1998) research demonstrates how the role of masculinity is closely aligned with the culture of the automobile and how the car strongly determines our language and our thinking. A clear example of (heterosexual) manliness is found in the advertising used in some of the glossy car magazines. The reader is bombarded by words like "power", "muscle" and "control". Photos of scantily clad

women on top of car hoods assault the reader's attention. This culture is clearly a heavily gendered one and, if looked at more closely, the links between car possession and the enticing promise of virile manliness are firmly established. Ultimately, the car comes to be socially constructed as the epitome of masculinity, and driving as the public assertion of this masculine power.

Given the preponderance of male offenders, there ought to be more overlap between the literature on masculinity and joyriding. Could it be that the decision to participate in joyriding is not rebellion against the dominant values in society but rather a demonstration of the norms of a masculine values? Clearly, if taking and driving cars is about how some young men construct their own masculinity, then masculinity should be examined. We will miss much if we fail to notice this masculinity in motion: the fun, thrills and excitement of young men testing themselves, against themselves, against each other, and against other young men.

#### Methodological Concerns and Limitations

The phenomenological approach was a design well suited to the research question; what is the experience and meaning of adolescent joyriding? It allowed for the obtaining of data without restraints that may have otherwise limited descriptions of joyriding by affording me the ability to create a space for each participant to give voice to his experience in an open and non-structured manner. As a result, I was able to respect the capacity of each participant to self-knowing and move past the superficial explanation or description of the experience and in attempt to gain depth in understanding.

One limitation of this approach is the possible withholding of data on the part of the participants, which would result in an incomplete meaning of joyriding. The adolescents may have been reluctant to tell me about certain features of their joyriding

behaviour due to embarrassment or lack of established acquaintance. Fear of repercussions may also have played a role in such topics such as drug and alcohol use, peer pressure, and illegal activities.

Another limitation of this study is the nature of the sample. The first three referrals to the study all agreed to be interviewed. The fourth referral was female and she opted out of the study upon hearing the time commitment involved. The fifth referral agreed. By happenstance, all of the resulting participants were male and within the middle adolescent age range, from ages fifteen to sixteen, despite information about the study given to adolescents of various ages. Whether this was due to a preponderance of middle adolescents on probation at the time of recruitment, a stronger willingness on the part of this age group to participate, or a higher rate of joyriding in this subgroup is not known. As a result, the findings discussed in this study may not reflect the experiences of early or late adolescents.

It was also not possible to assess personal variables such as cultural background and social competence in this study. Nor was I able to examine the differences between male and female participants. Despite these limitations, I attempted to obtain the fullest descriptions possible under the circumstances.

#### Implications for Policy and Practice

In recent years, I believe there has been less emphasis on adolescent development as an area of knowledge essential for the young offender system. The assumptions found in adolescent development and those found in delinquency theories contradict many contemporary views of juvenile justice. Emerging knowledge about cognitive, psychosocial, and neurobiological development in adolescence supports the conclusion that these factors are likely to shape adolescents' choices, including their criminal

choices, and may undermine competent decision making. Thus, typical adolescent criminal conduct is driven by transitory influences that are constitutive of this developmental stage. An understanding of developmental stages as well as the biological and psychosocial correlates of delinquency is essential for both policy and practice with young offenders.

It is often suggested that one possibility for reducing joyriding may be for the courts to impose longer custodial sentences. However, a growing body of statistical and ethnographic research suggests that many of today's persistent young offenders cannot be deterred from committing crimes simply by toughening the criminal penalties. As Shover (1996) argues, some of today's young offenders know little and care less about the schedule of penalties. In fact, for many youth, going to prison is a badge of honour or a rite of passage. We should therefore question the value of prisons and the multibillion dollar corrections industry which have shown no positive effect on those incarcerated and have resulted, ironically, in no decrease in crime (Cayley, 1998). The results of this study may shed some light on this.

Research suggests that one of the most important constraints on potential offenders is the belief that they will get caught (Walker, Stieber, Ramsey, & O'Neil, 1991). The joyriders in this study, however, considered the prospect of getting caught as highly unlikely; if they considered the risk at all. They also tended to believe that if detected, they could out-run the police and avoid actual apprehension. To accentuate this, the number of times that they got away with the offence did little to belie their optimism. It is also far from clear how lengthier sentences would achieve any deterrent impact, as the boys already overestimate the risks and length of a custodial sentence. On the other hand, the participants' disregard for penalties may reflect their ignorance of the law and

the effect it may have on them. This lack of knowledge has implications for educational techniques.

For instance, given the success of the long-term educative effort in reducing drinking and driving, this type of intervention may offer promising results in changing the climate of offender opinion on the seriousness of car theft. Deterring young people through retribution may not be as successful as attempting to shift attitudes. We need to reduce the motivation to offend rather than obstruct or deter motivated offenders.

Participants in this study and in the literature can be characterized as having a passion for cars from an early age. Passion for cars accentuates the progression from thrill to profit at a very early age and this factor underlies the importance of early intervention. Given that participants had already experienced the advantage of making money by the age of 15 suggests that we have a very short window of opportunity in which to intervene before they become skilled and entrenched in the activity. The early identification of car-obsessed youngsters may help to make considerable inroads into reducing the number of offences committed. Some jurisdictions in United Kingdom have established 'motor-projects' that generally involve the teaching of driving and maintenance skills interspersed with messages about the risks of joyriding, the impact on the victims, and the consequences for the offender. Motor-projects may be something worth exploring if they are found to have some positive impact.

Another distinctive feature is the unusual degree of psychological reward in terms of the 'rush', which was noted by all participants and may account for the excess rate of offending. While participants seemed to consider it wrong to steal a car, they did not view the offence as serious enough to deter them from the rush. In addition, among their peer group, little to no stigma was attached to their behaviour. Rather status and respect

for their skill seemed to be more apparent. Therefore, the excitement, status and enhanced self esteem that is gained from joyriding need to be clearly kept in focus in any form of intervention. This focus may be extremely important for those youth not (yet) motivated by making money.

There is growing evidence that certain types of social programs can succeed at keeping at-risk youth out of trouble (Greenwood, 1996). Identified modes of intervention include early childhood interventions for children at risk for later antisocial behaviour, interventions for families with children who are “acting out”, school based interventions, and interventions for troublesome young people who are early in delinquent activity. The fundamental principle of early intervention is paramount and society must begin to act on this behaviour in order to prevent crime in general, and car-crime, specifically.

Also worth attention is a concerted effort to educate adolescents about the serious social costs of joyriding and the impact of the offence on victims and themselves. An intervention that strikes me as having potential is restorative justice. Local initiatives modeled on aboriginal restorative justice forums have been shown to be effective for both property crimes and crimes of violence and, of much more benefit to communities, perpetrators, and, in some cases, victims (Burford & Pennell, 2000; Van Den Berg & Grealish, 1996). Such localized initiatives maintain community ownership for problems and solutions. It is also an example of “reintegrative shaming” (Braithwaite, 1989). Braithwaite suggests that an element of shaming is imperative to effectively reduce crime. However, in order for shaming to be most effective it needs to be reintegrative, not disintegrative. In other words, its aim must be to redirect the offender back into the non offending community rather than reinforce his links and identity to the criminal subculture.

Reintegrative shaming speaks directly to the approach that police should take when apprehending joyriders. Participants reported classic disintegrative shaming when they reported the verbal taunts and physical assaults directed at them by police when detained. This behaviour only serves to reinforce the young person's stigmatization and identity as a criminal and belief that they are unable to fit into society appropriately. This behaviour also accentuates the negative aspects of labelling theory.

Labelling theory posits that the labelling of youths as delinquents results in stigmatization, a condition from which young people may never recover (Rubington and Weinberg 1968). This early finding continues to be corroborated. Tyler, Tyler, Tommasello, and Connolly (1992) examined the lives of homeless youths in Bogota, Colombia, and Washington, DC, noted: "When I use the words street youth, delinquents, and alienated kids to describe these youth, I am also separating them from society by words that become labels. Such labels are often inaccurate, stigmatizing, and damaging not only to the children's self-esteem, but to their survival" (p. 206).

Police and those working with young offenders must understand that the development of children and youth is a process that allows for learning, growing, changing, and maturing. Just as youth are vulnerable to negative influences, they are just as likely to be amenable to positive influences if adults can figure out how to reach them, or recognize they must be reached. Labels only serve to further limit their opportunity and separate them from the non criminal community.

Finally, in terms of situational factors, certain locations and makes of cars are more identified as being at high risk for car theft. This may be information that would be useful for better police targeting. Also, given that offenders believe they are unlikely to be apprehended, especially when driving sensibly or with females, officers may benefit

from training in what to look for when identifying a vehicle as possibly stolen. Car manufactures also need to be encouraged to make more of an effort to include anti-theft devices as standard equipment on all new cars. Owners of older cars which are currently more attractive to offenders have little option but to augment their car security and take heed of risky locations and leaving valuables on display.

#### Implications for Future Research

The nature of joyriding in adolescents remains a relatively unexplored area. This study needs replication and the addition of research of other designs to further define joyriding in this age group. Although each participant experienced identifiable external pressures that may have led to joyriding, siblings with the same pressures did not always participate. It is important to understand both the decisions that young people make in selecting friends and the role that those friends play in decisions about attitudes and behaviours. Resiliency and vulnerability to joyriding are large topics awaiting exploration.

Joyriding is sometimes viewed as a crime of acquisition and, as such, not viewed as serious or significant. However, this view ignores the fact that young people who joyride are often willing to drive recklessly, ignore traffic regulations and drive at very high speeds. Research demonstrates that youth development programs that help young people learn skills in decision-making, problem solving and refusal are successful in promoting positive behaviour (Fischhoff, Crowell, and Kipke, 1999). Programs that incorporate these skills with participants have shown delayed or reduced sexual activity (Jemmott III & Fong, 1998), better ability to refuse drugs and alcohol (Epstein, Griffin, & Botvin, 2000), and less likelihood to be depressed (Carris, Sheeber, & Howe, 1998). It

may therefore be worthwhile exploring these skills in relation to criminal activity and joyriding.

The results of a study that explores developmental relations between depressed mood and delinquency in male adolescents suggest that it would also be worthwhile for delinquency prevention programs to target male adolescents with depressed moods (Beyers and Loeber, 2003). It is therefore suggested that the topic of depression and joyriding behaviour be examined more thoroughly.

The adolescent brain may be quite receptive to the adrenaline high that is created by joyriding, and participants believe that a craving develops quite rapidly. This perception begs the comparison to substance addiction. Future research could explore a chronic joyrider's experience of tolerance, withdrawal, loss of control, and activity seeking in an attempt to explore the addiction category in greater detail. Future studies could also investigate levels of sensory activation in high versus low risk takers as well as other possible functions of risk-taking behaviours.

### Conclusion

This study examined the lived experiences of four adolescents who have experience with the activity of joyriding. The young males were given a voice to be heard. Through this voice, they shared their experiences and, through sharing of their experiences I was able to catch a glimpse of their lives and examine the meanings embedded in their stories.

Joyriding cannot be understood outside the context within which taking a car becomes a means to acquire status, identity and excitement. The automobile offers us a vehicle of personal democracy, acting as a social levelling force, granting more and more

of us a wide range of personal choices. This car culture needs to be kept in mind when addressing this phenomenon.

While joyriding brings long-term costs both financially and legally, it also supplies a number of short-term benefits. For many young drivers, driving means independence and freedom. It can also mean an exhilaration of flirting with the rules, of going too fast or driving dangerously. Joyriding may serve many useful developmental functions including coping with feelings of inadequacy, establishing a sense of personal identity, and marking a transition to a more mature status. A desire to drive may also stem from the symbolic power the car has on masculinity, status, freedom and rebellion.

These practical and symbolic qualities may play a role in the motivations of young people who become involved in joyriding. Within the circumstances of these participants, joyriding becomes a positive choice that is open to them. Therefore, one of the most important things we need to change is our interpretation of adolescent behaviour. The more we understand why delinquency occurs, the more we are obligated to use our skills to improve or remediate the situation. If we provide appropriate care, support and discipline early, we will not lose a generation of children to crime. In working with adolescent joyriding, an enlightened justice system cannot ignore the construction of a number of masculinities or the psychological realities of the developmental stage of adolescence.

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## Appendix A

## Themes and Categories

Theme	Category
The Joy in Joyriding	I Love Cars
	It's Fun
	It's a Rush
	I get Happy
Joyriding as Sport	It's a Game
	It's a Competition of Skill
	There are Rules to the Game
Predisposers to Joyriding	Lack of Knowledge of the Law
	Disapproving Parents and Siblings
	Approving Peers
	Neighbourhood Sanctions
	Substance Use
Justifications of Joyriding	The Devil Made Me Do It
	Borrowing versus Stealing
	It's Addicting
Developmental Needs	Belonging
	Loyalty
	Identity
	Risk Taking
Contact with the Law	Getting Caught
	Police Pursuits
	They're Doing Us Dirty
	Getting Punished
	Reputation