

PERCEPTIONS OF PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND LEGAL  
DETERRENTS FOR JOYRIDING

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined factors that encourage and discourage joyriding from three different but compatible perspectives – deterrence theory, situational prevention, and neutralisation theory. Participants were 228 high school students from grades 10, 11 and 12 who responded to a questionnaire in which they ranked the perceived effectiveness of various deterrents to joyriding. Criminal sanctions involving serious consequences such as being convicted and sentenced for the offence were seen to be potentially the most effective legal deterrents. Similarly, informal sanctions involving serious outcomes such as the potential injury and loss of life were seen to be the most effective non-legal deterrents. Situational measures that were considered the most discouraging were those that increased the perceived effort and increased the perceived risk of stealing a car. The most effective neutralisations for joyriding (those most likely to facilitate joyriding) were those contrasting joyriding with the crime of those in power and those shifting the blame to the victim for allowing the car to be stolen; the least effective neutralisations (those least likely to facilitate joyriding) involved denying that joyriding hurt anyone or denying that joyriding is a crime. As predicted, males and self-identified joyriders generally rated the deterrents to joyriding as less effective than did females and non-joyriders. It was argued that prevention approaches need to incorporate a broad, integrated picture of the perceived cost and benefits of joyriding.

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Australia has one of the highest rates of motor vehicle theft in the western world, with one car stolen on average every four minutes<sup>4</sup>. In the state of Queensland, 18,577 vehicles were stolen in 1998/99, an increase of 14% on the previous year<sup>5</sup>. The majority of these cars were stolen by people aged 10-24 years -- with particularly high rates amongst males aged 15-19 years -- for short term use such as joyriding<sup>6</sup>. It is important that this group be targeted for prevention efforts, not just because joyriding accounts for a significant proportion of car thefts, but also because joyriding is associated with serious traffic accidents and high-speed police pursuits that claim young lives<sup>7</sup>.

As Clarke<sup>8</sup> argues, the opportunistic nature of joyriding, when compared to professional thefts and insurance fraud, makes this category of car theft particularly amenable to situational interventions. Casual car thieves are likely to invest less effort than those motivated by financial gain. Most prevention efforts aimed at vehicle theft comprise measures at one of three levels of target hardening. The first level involves encouraging manufacturers to increase the level of security built into new cars<sup>9</sup>. The second level encourages drivers to purchase and install security devices, while the third involves educating the drivers to lock their cars properly when parked. The target hardening approach has had its successes. For example, the introduction of steering column locks in Germany, Britain and America has resulted in a decrease in auto theft that has been maintained for almost forty years in Germany, and for almost thirty years in Britain and America<sup>10</sup>.

The target hardening approach to vehicle theft, however, has ignored the part that the offender plays in vehicle theft, keeping the focus on the behaviour of the victim. Moreover, the second and third levels of target hardening involve media campaigns. Generally, the evaluations of the effectiveness of mass media publicity campaigns aimed at crime prevention have not been very encouraging<sup>11</sup>.

The literature on joyriding behaviour reveals a complex pattern of motivational factors. Joyriding is a pleasurable and thrilling form of risk taking<sup>12</sup> that provides young males with a way of developing their masculine identity when legitimate avenues have been closed off<sup>13</sup>. Joyriding is thus associated with social marginalisation<sup>14</sup>. Adolescents who have been exposed to a range of risk factors in early childhood and adolescence are more likely to be involved in delinquent behaviour<sup>15</sup> with peer relationships playing a key role in initial involvement. Novices learn the skills of car stealing from experienced offenders, as in an apprenticeship<sup>16</sup>.

It also seems that many offenders are unperturbed by the formal and informal sanctions associated with joyriding<sup>17</sup>. Overwhelmingly, most offenders do not consider vehicle theft to be a serious offence, do not think of the risk of apprehension, and do not feel that they would be caught anyway. While offenders often overestimate the chances of a custodial sentence if convicted, lengthening gaol terms does not appear to increase their deterrent value. It has even been shown that tough penalties for vehicle thieves have little deterrent value. For example, a study in Belfast found that the number of joyriding offences was not influenced when “paramilitary organisations carried out 60 beatings and 124 shootings (knee-capping)” in 1987<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, Light et al<sup>19</sup> found that the “experience of serious accidents and fatalities”

associated with car theft, “appeared not to deter the car thief”. For example, although some offenders did concede that the “worst thing about crime” was the “police chases”, some conceded that the chases were a “challenge” and provided an “opportunity to show off their driving skills”<sup>20</sup>. Home<sup>21</sup> also found evidence that media coverage of police pursuits and the dangers of joyriding, had little or no effect on the likelihood of pursuits occurring.

The pattern of involvement in joyriding that has emerged from the literature suggests that an integrated approach to reducing joyriding, incorporating situational, criminal justice and developmental methods, offers the greatest potential for success<sup>22</sup>. There are a number of examples of successful integrated programmes. A study was conducted for a Safer Cities project in Sunderland, Britain, with the purpose of describing “car-related offending on the estate” and analysing the “motivation of the young people involved”<sup>23</sup>. This research indicated the need for offender focused measures such as developing activities aimed at diverting the very young; reducing “displays of daring driving” via situational measures; and disrupting “the black market for stolen goods”<sup>24</sup>. In response to these findings, the police and other agencies launched various initiatives. Figures from the Northumbria Police showed that for the first 6 months of 1992, vehicle crime in the Pennywell estate decreased by 27.5% for theft of vehicles and 9.2% for theft from vehicles. These apparent decreases may be attributable to the initiatives launched, but an in depth analysis would need to be conducted to fully ascertain the reasons for the decreases. For example, offenders may have reduced their activities due to the attention that the project generated in the estate.

Another initiative to combat motor vehicle theft, 'Hand Brake Turn (HBT)', was implemented in the city of Dandenong in 1995<sup>25</sup>. The program was a "regional, collaborative 10-week work preparation program" for young people involved or at risk of being involved in motor vehicle crime, including joyriding<sup>26</sup>. The program identified motor vehicle theft as a way marginalised young people with limited options could achieve adult status. The program approach was to provide young people with an environment where motor vehicles could be built, maintained and driven safely, under the supervision of trained staff. The purpose of this was to channel the "fascination and enthusiasm for cars" into the acquisition of new skills, job prospects and a sense of direction<sup>27</sup>. Results showed that more than 60% of participants were employed after completion of HBT compared to fewer than 20% prior to HBT, more than 50% had re-entered education and training compared to practically none prior to HBT, and the proportion of reoffending was estimated to have reduced from 21% to 14%<sup>28</sup>.

Smith<sup>29</sup> has reviewed a number of motor projects that have been implemented in the United Kingdom. The major finding was that motor projects can be effective. Projects that produce longer-term impact are developmental in nature, focused on education and training rather than on the reduction of offenders' criminal involvement. An important finding was that if the opportunities that existed before the intervention did not appear to have changed for the participant, then a return to the previous modes of behaviour can be expected. In view of this, motor projects are now aimed at educational and employment opportunities in the development of life skills. The challenge facing motor projects is to provide viable alternatives that address the excitement that vehicle crime offers. The HBT program appeared to achieve this.

The impetus for the present study was a plan by the Queensland Police Service to target joyriding in a forthcoming car-theft prevention initiative. In particular, the Police Service wanted to devise an educational program on joyriding that would be delivered by police in local high schools. Thus, an immediate practical aim of the study was to investigate perceptions of joyriding by young people that might inform these prevention strategies by identifying possible points of intervention. More broadly, the study sought to provide a comprehensive picture of how young people view the costs and benefits associated with joyriding as a first step in devising ways of modifying the motivations and environments that support the behaviour.

The study was guided by three overlapping perspectives -- deterrence theory, situational crime prevention and neutralisation theory. Deterrence theory provides perhaps the broadest framework within which perception of risk associated with criminal behaviour might be understood. The deterrence model can be summarised as a decision making process that is concerned with the use of information based upon the notion of bounded rationality. Traditional deterrence theory has been expanded in recent years from a sole focus on legal threats to include the internalisation of norms and attachment to significant others as potential forms of sanctions<sup>30</sup>. Underpinning modern notions of deterrence is a model of social control incorporating several 'inhibitory variables'. These variables include moral commitment, threat of social disapproval, threat of legal punishment, and threat of material and/or physical deprivation. The need for this wider concept of sanctions can be seen through the proposals of some writers that the threat of legal punishment is contingent upon the threat of social disapproval. That is, individual's committing offences will only be

deterred by the threat of legal punishment when the threat of social disapproval is substantial. However, there are many other ways in which formal and informal sanctions can interact.

Situational crime prevention, and the rational choice perspective that underpins the approach, provide another way of looking at offender decision-making<sup>31</sup>. While the rational choice perspective and the deterrence model involve similar decision making processes, rational choice focuses on offenders' perceptions of the opportunity structure of potential crime scenes and their decision to maximise gain and minimise loss from the immediate environment. Situational costs and benefits are conceptualised within Clarke's<sup>32</sup> model of situational crime prevention. The taxonomy of 16 prevention techniques involve the design and/or manipulation of the immediate environment in the attempt to increase the effort and risk, reduce rewards and remove excuses associated with offending as perceived by potential offenders. In the case of joyriding, situational deterrents include car alarms, car park attendants, effective street lighting, and so forth. When the costs of these deterrents are judged to outweigh possible gains from joyriding then the behaviour is prevented.

Neutralisation theory examines the way offenders seek to minimise the psychological costs of their criminal activities<sup>33</sup>. According to neutralisation theory many offenders are not morally committed to their antisocial behaviour but rather share the basic values of the wider community. They seek to protect this non-deviant self-image and avoid feelings of guilt by advancing (to themselves and others) extenuating circumstances or excuses for their involvement in crime. These techniques of neutralisation can be divided into five categories: the denial of responsibility, the

denial of injury, the denial of the victim, the condemnation of the condemners and the appeal to higher loyalties. For example, joyriders may deny causing injury because they returned the car undamaged or deny responsibility by arguing that they were just going along with the crowd. As long as offenders adhere to their neutralisations, then they are able to continue their illegal involvement without experiencing significant psychological costs.

Taken together, deterrence theory, the situational crime prevention approach and neutralisation theory suggest that individuals weigh up a range of potential physical, legal, social and psychological costs and benefits associated with offending. The literature on situational crime prevention highlights the need for crime specific interventions in which the opportunities, rewards and costs that influence the particular crime type must be identified. Deterrence theory helps explain why potential offenders do not commit crime when faced with the opportunities to do so. On the other hand neutralisation theory helps explain how offenders can overcome deterrence messages and engage in crimes to which they are morally opposed. These three approaches have obvious points of intersection and this is reflected in recent developments in the situational crime prevention model. Clarke and Homel's<sup>34</sup> extension of the opportunity-reduction matrix to include 'removing excuses' represents an attempt to challenge offenders neutralisations at a situational level. Similarly, Wortley<sup>35</sup> has proposed situational models that addresses more explicitly the psychological and social dimensions of offending. All this suggests the need for an integrated approach to the analysis of joyriding.

The present study examines the relative salience of various risk factors associated with joyriding. It addresses three major questions: 1) which legal, social and psychological risk factors are judged to be the greatest deterrents? 2) which situational prevention strategies are seen as particularly effective for preventing joyriding? and 3) which neutralisations for joyriding receive strongest endorsement?

However, perceptions of deterrence vary in relation to different characteristics. Given that joyriding is particularly associated with being male and young, this study concentrates on the effects of gender, age and participation in the activity. It is acknowledged however that there are many other characteristics (such as social class, peer relationships, self-identity, and other such things as background – i.e. exposure to risk factors, and ethnicity) that would have an impact on how joyriding is viewed, but these were beyond the scope of this study.

With regard to gender, it has been found that women generally give higher estimates of risk than men<sup>36</sup>. There are five common explanations for this difference. Women are often assumed to have greater stakes in conformity and thus have more to lose if they are sanctioned; men feel pressured to express their masculine role expectations through aggressiveness, courage and autonomy; women have been more closely supervised than men and perceive greater visibility of their behaviour; it is assumed that women should have greater conventionality than men toward law and social norms; and, women and men have differential knowledge of crime and sanctions. Overall, ‘differential visibility’ and ‘differential stakes in conformity’ appeared to be the most promising explanations of gender differences. The excess of male over female crime, which is the case with joyriding, is explained in terms of crime having

less utility for females than for males, and in terms of a greater perceived certainty of arrest by women. For the present study it is predicted that, compared to males, females will 1) regard the legal, social and psychological consequences of joyriding to be greater, 2) regard situational interventions to be more effective in preventing joyriding and 3) be less likely to endorse neutralisations for joyriding.

Perceptions of deterrence also vary according to experience. If an individual takes risks and is successful --for example, going joyriding but not getting caught -- it can lead to a decay in the deterrent impact of the law. Studies have indicated that experience in committing crime reduces an individual's perception of the certainty of arrest<sup>37</sup>. This means that individuals with experience in committing crime attach lower estimates to the risk of punishment than individuals with no experience in committing crime. The lowering of risk has been labelled as the 'experiential effect'<sup>38</sup>. In other words, current perceptions of risk are affected by an offender's previous behaviour<sup>39</sup>. Experienced offenders break the 'shell of illusion' surrounding deviance and thus resort to deviance more readily, while less experienced and non-experienced individuals are constrained by this illusion<sup>40</sup>. Claster<sup>41</sup> conducted a comparison of risk perceptions between delinquents and non-delinquents. The findings supported the contention held by many that delinquents differ from non-delinquents in their perceptions of the risk associated with committing crimes. That is, delinquents' feelings of immunity from the law were related to their greater impulsivity. Overall, in hypothetical situations, delinquents were more likely to violate the law than non-delinquents, and delinquents saw their chances of punishment to be less than non-delinquents. Extrapolating, it is also to be expected that in addition to lower expectations of legal consequences, delinquents will be less concerned by possible

physical, social and psychological deterrents than will non-delinquents. For the present study it is predicted that, compared to non-joyriders, joyriders will 1) regard their chances of being caught for joyriding to be less, 2) regard the legal, social and psychological consequences of joyriding to be less, 3) regard situational interventions to be less effective in preventing joyriding and 4) be more likely to endorse neutralisations for joyriding.

## METHOD

### Participants

The study was concerned with perceptions of both joyriders and non-joyriders. Hence, rather than employ a sample of convicted joyriders, the study was conducted in two state high schools in suburban Brisbane. Participants were drawn from grades 10, 11 and 12, since the offence of joyriding is concentrated in this age group. A total of 228 students were surveyed (107 from one high school and 121 from the other). The sample comprised 44.7% males (n=102) and 43% females (n=98), with 12.3% (n=28) giving no response. The mean age of participants was 16.4 (SD 0.87) years. The majority of participants (n=184) were between 15 to 17 years. However, there was a small number who were 18 (n=12), one 19 year old and one 21 year old.

### Materials

A questionnaire was devised to measure joyriding behaviour on a number of different levels. All questions required a response of a 5-point Likert-type scale. The first section measured the importance accorded to various legal (eg 'Being caught for joyriding might mean a criminal conviction'), social (eg 'My family would disapprove of joyriding'), and psychological (eg 'Joyriding would make me feel guilty')

consequences that can be associated with joyriding. High scores indicated importance, and low scores indicated non-importance. The second section measured the perceived effectiveness of a range of situational crime prevention techniques such as target hardening (eg 'A parked car has a steering column lock in place on the steering wheel'), natural surveillance (eg 'A car is parked under a very bright streetlight') and access control (eg 'A car is parked in a car park with parking lot barriers'). High scores indicated effectiveness, and low scores indicated ineffectiveness. The third section measured acceptance of neutralisations for joyriding including denial of responsibility (eg 'People can't be blamed for joyriding when they are drunk or high'), denial of the victim (eg 'A person who parks his car in a deserted side street is asking for it to be taken for a joyride'), denial of injury (eg 'If a car is returned undamaged then really no harm has been done in joyriding') and condemning the condemners (eg 'Joyriding is nothing compared with the things police and politicians get away with every day'). High scores indicated rejection of the neutralisation, and low scores indicated acceptance of the neutralisation.

To distinguish a participant's level of involvement in joyriding, they were asked a series of questions concerned with temptations, being a passenger, being a driver, being caught, penalties imposed, friends' involvement and likelihood of being caught.

### Procedure

Students completed the questionnaires during class time allocated to the research. The purpose of the questionnaire and instructions on how to answer the questions were explained by one of the researchers. Due to the age of participants, written parental consent was obtained for all participants. In addition, participants were told that their

participation was voluntary and that all individual results were confidential.

Participants were requested not to put any identifying information on the questionnaire. Questionnaires were returned directly to the researcher.

## RESULTS

On the basis of self-report, 10.1% (n=23) of participants had been passengers in cars that had been taken for a joyride in the last 12 months, while 4.4% (n=10) of participants had been the driver of a car that was taken for a joyride in the last 12 months. With respect to passengers, 52.2% (n=12) were male and 34.8% (n=8) were female, with 13% (n=3) giving no response. With respect to drivers, 80% (n=8) were male, with 20% (n=2) no response. None of the drivers were known to be female. Because of these small numbers, a total joyriding category was created by combining passengers and drivers. (Participants who were both drivers and passengers were counted only once.) Overall, 11.4% (n=26) participants were classified as joyriders, 80.7% (n=184) had no involvement in joyriding, and 7.9% (n=18) gave no response. Of those participants classified as joyriders, 57.7% (n=15) were male, 30.8% (n=8) were female, with 11.5% (n=3) no response. The mean age of joyriders was 16.9 (SD .73) years. All of the joyriders were aged between 16 and 18 years of age.

### Deterrence Measures

The means for the perceived effectiveness of each deterrence measure are shown in Table 1. These means are based on the scores for the entire sample for each question on a 5-point unimportant/important scale where 1 = Very Unimportant, 2 = Unimportant, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Important, and 5 = Very Important. The questions used are summarised in Table 1. Overall, it was seen that measures that were associated

with potential consequences of the act such as death and injury were accorded the most importance (eg 'An innocent bystander might be injured or killed in the act of joyriding'). The next most important measures involved the potential legal consequences of joyriding (eg 'Being caught for joyriding might mean a criminal conviction'). Social disapproval (eg 'My family would disapprove of joyriding') and general feelings that the behaviour is morally wrong (eg 'Joyriding would make me feel guilty') were rated as relatively unimportant. A lack of the necessary specialised skill (eg 'I don't know how to go about getting a car to go joyriding') was also a minor consideration.

#### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

To explore the relation between gender, level of involvement and effectiveness of deterrence measures, a 2 x 2, between-subject multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed on 16 dependent variables. The independent variables were gender (male/female), and involvement in joyriding (yes/no). The dependent variables were the deterrence questionnaire items. Age was set as a covariate. Each effect was adjusted for all other effects. However, because of the small number of participants involved in joyriding, it was not possible to examine the interactions among the independent variables, as cell sizes would be too small. Therefore, only the main effects were specified.

Significant multivariate results were found for both the main effects of gender ( $F(16, 164) = 1.83, p < 0.05$ ), and level of involvement ( $F(16, 164) = 3.20, p < 0.001$ ). Age was not significant ( $F(16, 164) = .95$ ). This indicates that a participant's perceptions of legal and social deterrent measures were dependent upon whether the participant

was male or female, and a non-joyrider or a joyrider, at the multivariate level. Post-hoc univariate  $F$ -tests for gender and level of involvement were performed to explore the multivariate effects further. The means for those items for which significant ( $p < .05$ ) differences were found are shown in Table 1. As predicted these analyses reveal that females tend to place greater importance on deterrence measures than do males. In particular, females are more likely than males to find the potential for injury associated with joyriding to be a deterrent.

Similarly as predicted, analyses reveal that non-joyriders place greater importance on deterrence measures than do joyriders. There were significant differences between the groups on 11 of the 16 items. Interestingly, the groups did not differ with respect to the highest-rated deterrent, that is, the possibility of an innocent bystander being killed or injured.

#### Situational measures

Mean ratings for the perceived effectiveness of situational measures are shown in Table 2. As for the deterrence measures, these means are based on the scores for the entire sample for each question, but on a 5-point ineffective/effective scale where 1 = Very Ineffective, 2 = Ineffective, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Effective, and 5 = Very Effective. The questions used are summarised in Table 2. These means revealed that the most effective situational strategies are perceived to involve target hardening (eg an engine immobiliser) and increasing surveillance (eg a car alarm). VIN etching is perceived to be an ineffective strategy, and this is consistent with the fact that joyriders generally do not attempt to sell the cars they steal. Media campaigns are judged to be the least effective strategy.

## TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Using the same multivariate model as the previous analyses, but this time with the 18 situational measures as the dependent set, significant multivariate results were found for both the main effects of gender ( $F(18, 145) = 1.78, p < 0.05$ ), and level of involvement ( $F(18, 145) = 2.50, p < 0.001$ ). Age was not significant ( $F(18, 145) = .63$ ). These results indicate that a participant's perceptions of the effectiveness of situational measures depended upon whether the participant was male or female, and a non-joyrider or a joyrider, at the multivariate level. Post-hoc univariate F-tests for gender and level of involvement were performed to explore the multivariate effects further. These analyses revealed significant gender differences on just 3 of the 18 items. In two cases -- items 4 and 8 -- the differences were in the predicted direction, with females attributing more risk than males. However, on item 13 ('The owner has securely locked their car'), males attributed greater deterrence effect than did females. This is a surprising finding, as it might be assumed that males would have regarded the measure to be less effective than females. One possible explanation is that males may simply have had a more realistic idea of the effectiveness of this situational measure because of a greater familiarity with cars.

The analyses also revealed that non-joyriders attributed more risk than joyriders to situational measures. There were differences on 7 of the 18 items. This is in accordance with the experiential effect. In particular joyriders were less deterred by target hardening measures such as engine immobilisers and steering wheel locks, and

were prepared to take greater risks with respect to car park attendants and a police 'blitz'.

### Neutralisation Measures

Table 3 shows the means for the acceptance of neutralisation measures. Again, these means are based on the scores for the entire sample for each question, but this time on a 5-point strongly agree/strongly disagree scale where 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree. The questions used are summarised in Table 3. Neutralisations concerned with the denial of responsibility and the denial of injury received less endorsement than neutralisations concerned with the denial of the victim and the condemnation of the condemners. That is, respondents found it relatively more difficult to neutralise their responsibility of the act, and any injuries caused by their act. Put another way, these excuses were least likely to facilitate involvement joyriding so in relative terms provided the greatest deterrence. However, respondents accepted the notions that the victim was responsible if their car was stolen to go joyriding if they didn't take necessary precautions, and that joyriding was a minor offence on the scale of offences that are committed. That is, these excuses were most likely to facilitate involvement in joyriding.

### TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

As before, a MANCOVA was performed on the data with the same specifications and parameters, but this time with the 14 neutralisation measures as the dependent set.

Significant multivariate results were found for both the main effects of gender ( $F(14, 171) = 2.00, p < 0.05$ ), and level of involvement ( $F(14, 171) = 6.40, p < 0.001$ ). Age was not significant ( $F(14, 171) = 1.12, p > 0.05$ ). Results indicate that a participant's

perceptions of neutralisation measures were dependent upon whether the participant was male or female, and a non-joyrider or a joyrider. Post-hoc univariate  $F$ -tests for gender and level of involvement were performed to explore the multivariate effects further. These analyses revealed that females endorsed neutralisations less than males for just 4 of the 14 items.

These analyses also revealed that non-joyriders endorsed neutralisations less than joyriders. This effect occurred for 12 of the 14 items. The only items that did not discriminate between the groups were items 7 ('If a car is returned undamaged then really no harm has been done by joyriding') and 13 ('If the owners leave their keys in the car they are asking for it to be taken for a joyride'). These findings indicate a generalised tendency for joyriders to neutralise their behaviour in order to redefine their unfavourable behaviour as acceptable.

#### Perceived risks and punishments

The final section of the questionnaire examined the relationship between involvement in joyriding and perceived risk of getting caught. Involvement was gauged on a number of different levels ranging from one's own involvement in joyriding, including being caught and punished, to friends' involvement, including being caught and punished. A Pearson's correlation was performed on the data. In relation to the examination of scatter plots, only one of the variables (estimation of the chances of being caught) was at the continuous level, and there were no concerns over outlying data. All other variables were of a dichotomous nature.

As Table 4 shows, there was a positive correlation among the various levels of involvement in joyriding. For example, being tempted to go joyriding is significantly correlated with being a passenger, a driver, being caught, and friends' involvement. The association between overall levels of involvement ranged from being quite weak ( $r = -0.17, p < .05$ ) to relatively strong ( $r = 0.65, p < .01$ ). In regard to a participant's estimation of the chances of being caught, their level of involvement in joyriding was negatively correlated. That is, experience with joyriding decreased the perception of the likelihood of being caught, even if they in fact had been caught or had friends who had been caught. Thus, risk perceptions were reduced with experience irrespective of the outcome of that experience.

#### TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

### DISCUSSION

This study was concerned with identifying the factors that encourage and discourage joyriding. The analysis was approached from three different but compatible perspectives – deterrence theory, situational prevention, and neutralisation theory. In terms of deterrence theory, the most effective perceived deterrence to joyriding were those involving potentially severe consequences. In regard to legal sanctions, participants appeared most influenced by the prospect of going to court and receiving a criminal conviction. Likewise, in regard to non-legal deterrents, joyriders appeared most influenced when the potential consequences of joyriding were associated with serious outcomes such as death and injury. The factors that were least likely to discourage joyriding -- that created least discomfort -- were concerned with potential disapproval by friends or teachers and anticipations of feeling guilty. These findings

suggest the need for an increased perception of the consequences (both legal and non-legal) in relation to the offender's actions. This might be done in the context of media campaigns or school educational programs (of the sort proposed by the Queensland Police Service). However, as Homel<sup>42</sup> has observed, threats of increased punishment alone are not sufficient. Potential joyriders must also believe that there is a good chance that they will be caught and exposed to these consequences.

The situational prevention strategies judged to be most effective were those aimed at making the car more difficult to steal (engine immobilisers and steering-column locks) or increasing the chances of detection (car alarms, car park attendants and 'gotcha-cars'); the least effective measures were judged to be media campaigns, and attempts to reduce temptation (a car that is not fun to drive). These results suggest that prevention programs aimed at reducing joyriding should specifically target increasing the perceived effort and risk. It is suggested that this greater emphasis on physical measures can be explained by the opportunistic nature of joyriding. For example, joyriding can be seen to be an expression of the daily routines of life, and thus decreasing the opportunities for the crime to occur will reduce the temptations and occurrences of joyriding. However, as observed earlier, the literature on persuading motorists to increase security measures has not been very encouraging.

With respect to neutralisations for joyriding, the most effective excuses (those most likely to facilitate joyriding) were those contrasting joyriding with the crime of those in power and those shifting the blame to the victim for allowing the car to be stolen; the least effective excuses (those least likely to facilitate joyriding) involved denying that joyriding hurt anyone or denying that joyriding is a crime. These results suggest

that joyriding behaviour was inhibited by the inability to completely neutralise the measures depicting injury and responsibility. This study suggests the need for reducing an individuals' ability to neutralise their behaviour, thereby reducing the facilitation of the act. Ways of directly challenging neutralisations again include media campaigns and educational programs. It is noted that the situational strategy involving a publicity campaign (Table 2, item 18) was rated as the least effective measure by participants. However, the message in that campaign -- 'Say no to joyriding' -- does not directly challenge a specific neutralisation. Neutralisations can also overlap situational strategies in other ways. For example, locking cars not only makes them more difficult to steal, (Table 2, item 13) it also makes it more difficult for potential offenders to blame the victim for the theft (Table 3, item 13).

As predicted, males and self-identified joyriders generally rated the deterrents to joyriding as less effective than did females and non-joyriders. As far as implications for prevention go, the difference between joyriders and non-joyriders can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, a case can be made that emphasis in prevention should be given to those deterrents which both joyriders and non-joyriders equally identified as effective, since these would seem to be the factors that have already shown success in deterring joyriding. For example, joyriders and non-joyriders did not differ in their ratings of the deterrent effect of the prospect of an innocent bystander being killed (Table 1, item 1) with both groups rating this the most effective deterrent. This message then may be one that needs to be emphasised in prevention efforts.

On the other hand it can be argued that greatest attention is due to those items where joyriders were less deterred than were non-joyriders, since these would seem to indicate deficits that need to be redressed. For example, joyriders are significantly less likely to be affected by disapproval from their families (Table 1, item 8). This may mean that the families of joyriders are less likely to be concerned about joyriding or that joyriders are less concerned about the opinions of their families. Whatever the case, responses on this item would seem to indicate that inappropriate family dynamics are contributing to joyriding. Similarly, joyriders are more likely than non-joyriders to believe that joyriding is not really stealing (Table 3, item 2) and so a campaign addressing this euphemistic labelling – as Clarke<sup>43</sup> proposed with respect to shoplifting – is suggested.

This study measured subjective responses to a range of hypothetical situations as reported in self-complete questionnaires, rather than behaviour change in response to real preventative measures. It is acknowledged that such pencil and paper ratings may not reflect behaviour in real situations. For example, while participants said that 'killing an innocent bystander' was the greatest deterrent, this does not necessarily mean that in practice it would be the most influential consideration. But the focus of this paper is in the realm of perceptions. While it is acknowledged that there may be a gap between perceptions and behaviour, the analysis of the reasons for behaviour given by joyriders nevertheless provides some ideas about potentially powerful preventative measures that can be tested through the evaluation of intervention programs. Moreover, it can be argued that offenders' neutralisations can only ever be accessed through direct reports.

Overall, results suggest that there is utility in taking a broad, integrated view of the potential offenders' calculation of the costs and benefits associated with joyriding. Certainly the results of this study reinforce the message that simply putting effort into catching and punishing offenders is not enough. In fact, participants who had been caught for joyriding gave lower estimates of risk of capture than participants who had not been caught, suggesting that their experience with the criminal justice system did little to deter future involvement in joyriding.

## Notes

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Table 1 Perceived effectiveness of deterrents for joyriding

	Overall Mean*	Gender**		Involvement**	
		M (N=90)	F (N=93)	Yes (N=22)	No (N=161)
1 An innocent bystander might be injured or killed in the act of joyriding.	4.47 (0.86)	4.21 (0.11)	4.55 (0.11)		
2 A friend might be injured or killed in the act of joyriding.	4.39 (0.92)	3.96 (0.11)	4.44 (0.11)	3.86 (0.18)	4.55 (0.06)
3 Being caught for joyriding might mean a criminal conviction.	4.14 (0.94)	3.63 (0.12)	4.10 (0.13)	3.48 (0.20)	4.25 (0.07)
4 Being caught for joyriding would result in going to court.	4.03 (0.89)				
5 Being caught for joyriding would mean it is harder to get a job.	4.00 (1.02)	3.72 (0.13)	3.98 (0.13)		
6 I might go to a youth detention centre if caught for joyriding.	3.95 (1.08)	3.58 (0.14)	3.83 (0.15)	3.33 (0.23)	4.08 (0.08)
7 Being caught for joyriding can result in a loss of license.	3.92 (1.85)				
8 My family would disapprove of joyriding.	3.92 (1.18)			2.91 (0.24)	4.09 (0.08)
9 Joyriding is against the law.	3.88 (1.18)			2.96 (0.25)	3.98 (0.09)
10 Joyriding is morally wrong.	3.68 (1.16)			2.76 (0.25)	3.79 (0.09)
11 Chances of getting caught for joyriding are too high.	3.58 (1.10)			2.66 (0.23)	3.67 (0.08)
12 Joyriding would make me feel guilty.	3.53 (1.19)			2.86 (0.25)	3.60 (0.09)

13 My friends would disapprove of joyriding.	3.23 (1.18)	2.18 (0.25)	3.33 (0.09)
14 I don't know how to go about getting a car to go joyriding.	2.97 (1.32)	2.07 (0.28)	3.07 (0.10)
15 My teachers would disapprove of joyriding.	2.90 (1.44)	2.17 (0.31)	2.95 (0.11)
16 Joyriding is difficult and requires special skills.	2.54 (1.13)		

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Note. The higher the score the greater the perceived importance.

\*Standard deviations in brackets.

\*\*Only the mean scores for gender and involvement for which significant differences were found have been reported. These are adjusted means that have been evaluated using the covariate mean age of 16.32 years. The standard errors of the adjusted means are in brackets.

Table 2 Perceived effectiveness of situational prevention strategies for joyriding

Situational Measure	Overall Mean*	Gender**		Involvement**	
		M (N=80)	F (N=86)	Yes (N=21)	No (N=145)
1 A car is fitted with an engine immobiliser that stops a car from starting if it is hot wired.	4.12 (1.07)			3.68 (0.22)	4.25 (0.08)
2 A car is fitted with a car alarm that when activated makes a lot of noise and causes the indicator lamps to begin flashing.	3.80 (1.08)				
3 A car is parked in a car park that has car park attendants providing security.	3.63 (0.84)			3.15 (0.18)	3.72 (0.07)
4 A 'gotcha car' (a decoy vehicle designed to catch joyriders) is parked in a busy shopping centre car park.	3.61 (1.02)	3.47 (0.14)	3.63 (0.15)		
5 A parked car has a steering column lock in place on the steering wheel.	3.50 (1.02)			2.87 (0.21)	3.64 (0.08)
6 The owner of a car has parked their car in their yard rather than parking it on the street.	3.36 (0.96)			2.96 (0.20)	3.46 (0.07)
7 Police launch a media campaign aimed at making car owners aware of prevention techniques.	3.32 (0.90)				
8 A car is parked in a car park, which has automatic ticket gates.	3.18 (1.01)	3.11 (0.14)	3.26 (0.15)		

9 A car is parked in a car park with parking lot barriers.	3.17 (1.01)			
10 The type of car has a reputation for being difficult to take for a joyride	3.11 (1.02)			
11 The police are having a ‘blitz’ on joyriders.	3.05 (0.91)		2.57 (0.19)	3.13 (0.07)
12 Police publicise the risk of joyriders getting caught and punished.	2.92 (0.94)		2.32 (0.21)	2.97 (0.08)
13 An owner has securely locked their car.	2.84 (1.05)	3.00 (0.15)	2.59 (0.16)	
14 The car is run down and doesn’t look like it would be much fun to take joyriding.	2.80 (1.11)			
15 A car has had its window etched with a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).	2.68 (1.01)		2.02 (0.21)	2.74 (0.08)
16 A car is parked under a very bright streetlight.	2.58 (1.05)			
17 The car only has a four cylinder motor and wouldn’t be very much fun.	2.42 (1.18)			
18 Police launch a media campaign ‘Say No to Joyriding’.	2.24 (1.02)			

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Note. The higher the score the greater the perceived effectiveness.

\*Standard deviations in brackets.

\*\*Only the mean scores for gender and involvement for which significant differences were found have been reported. These are adjusted means that have been evaluated using the covariate mean age of 16.39 years. The standard errors of the adjusted means are in brackets.

Table 3 Acceptance of neutralisations for joyriding

	Overall Mean*	Gender**		Involvement**	
		M (N=92)	F (N=96)	Yes (N=23)	No (N=165)
1 Joyriding does not hurt anyone because most vehicles are insured.	4.21 (0.91)	3.75 (0.11)	4.12 (0.12)	3.53 (0.18)	4.33 (0.07)
2 Joyriding is not really stealing.	4.14 (1.05)			3.20 (0.21)	4.28 (0.07)
3 People can't be blamed for joyriding when they are drunk or high.	4.10 (1.02)			3.75 (0.19)	4.29 (0.07)
4 If it is late at night and there is no other way home, sometimes you have no choice other than to joyride.	4.04 (1.06)			2.94 (0.21)	4.22 (0.08)
5 People can't be blamed for joyriding if they are just going along with the crowd.	4.04 (0.98)	3.37 (0.12)	3.91 (0.12)	3.07 (0.19)	4.21 (0.07)
6 A person can't help it if they take a car for a joyride in the 'thrill' of the moment.	3.99 (1.06)	3.41 (0.13)	3.78 (0.14)	3.07 (0.22)	4.13 (0.08)
7 If a car is returned undamaged, then really no harm has been done in joyriding.	3.97 (0.98)				
8 Taking a BMW for a joyride is okay because people who own BMW's are obviously rich and can afford the loss.	3.96 (1.20)			3.10 (0.25)	4.08 (0.09)
9 Joyriding is a stage all teenagers go through.	3.91 (1.10)			2.79 (0.22)	4.05 (0.08)

10 Everybody would go joyriding at one time or another if given the opportunity.	3.71 (1.18)			2.11 (0.23)	3.90 (0.08)
11. A person who parks their car in a deserted side street is asking for it to be taken for a joyride.	3.40 (1.15)			2.84 (0.24)	3.55 (0.09)
12 If people leave their car unprotected, it is their own fault if it is taken for a joyride.	3.37 (1.18)			2.70 (0.25)	3.46 (0.09)
13 If the owners leave the keys in the car they are asking for it to be taken for a joyride.	2.91 (1.29)				
14 Joyriding is nothing compared with the things police and politicians get away with everyday.	2.90 (1.21)	2.29 (0.16)	2.75 (0.16)	2.07 (0.25)	2.96 (0.09)

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Note. The higher the score the less the acceptance.

\*Standard deviations in brackets.

\*\*Only the mean scores for gender and involvement for which significant differences were found have been reported. These are adjusted means that have been evaluated using the covariate mean age of 16.33 years. The standard errors of the adjusted means are in brackets.

Table 4 Correlations for level of involvement and perceived chance of being caught for joyriding.

	Friends Joyride	Tempted	Passenger	Driver	Caught	Friends caught
Tempted	0.39**					
Passenger	0.33**	0.53**				
Driver	0.25**	0.32**	0.36**			
Caught	0.20**	0.31**	0.41**	0.58**		
Friends caught	0.65**	0.40**	0.26**	0.26**	0.25**	
Chance of being caught	-0.27**	-0.11	-0.18*	-0.17*	-0.24**	-0.26**

\*p <.05

\*\* p<.01