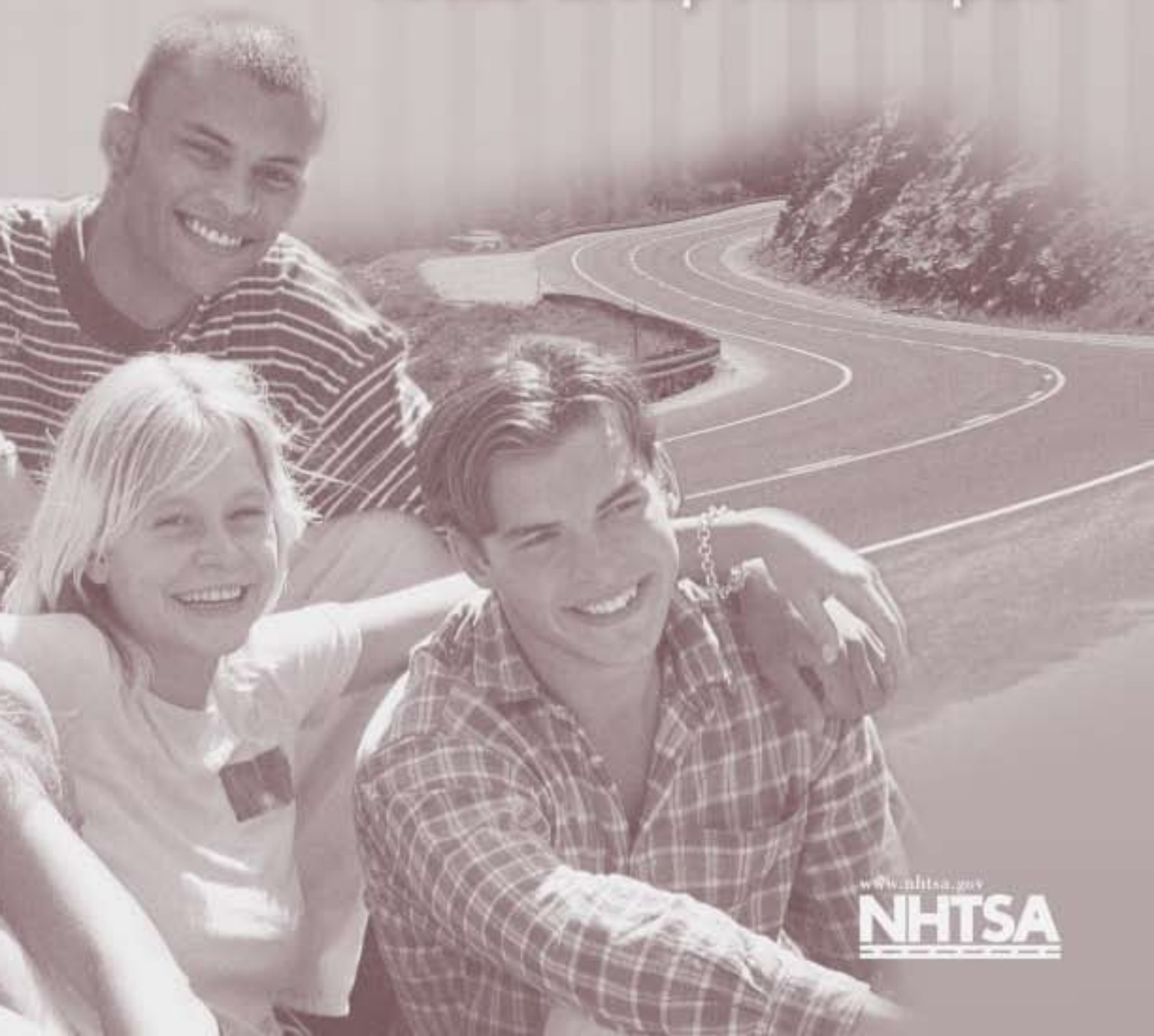


Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors

Focus Group Final Report



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Introduction

Project Background

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds, causing roughly one-third of all deaths for this age group. Teenagers are overrepresented in traffic crashes both as drivers and as passengers. On the basis of miles driven, teenagers are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers. The high crash-involvement rate for this age group is caused primarily by their lack of maturity and driving experience coupled with their overconfidence and risk-taking behaviors. High-risk behaviors include failure to wear safety belts, speeding, and driving while impaired (by alcohol or other drugs), and drowsy or distracted driving. This age group is particularly susceptible to distractions caused by other passengers in the vehicle, electronic devices, and music.

- A larger percentage of fatal crashes involving teenage drivers are single-vehicle crashes compared to those involving other drivers. In this type of fatal crash, the vehicle usually leaves the road and overturns or hits a roadside object such as a tree or pole.
- In general, fewer teens wear their safety belts compared to other drivers.
- A larger proportion of teen fatal crashes involve speeding, or going too fast for road conditions, compared to other drivers.
- More teen fatal crashes occur when passengers, usually other teenagers, are in the car than do crashes involving other drivers. Two out of three teens who die as passengers are in vehicles driven by other teenagers.

The National Organization for Youth Safety (NOYS) has been working with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to identify strategies for counteracting these dangerous driving behaviors among teenage motorists and passengers. The purpose of this project is to support these efforts by identifying messages and communication strategies that are likely to affect teenage driving behaviors.

The first step in this project was to convene a steering committee drawn from the NHTSA program offices and from selected organizations involved in youth traffic safety programs. The members of this steering committee are listed in Appendix C.

The steering committee was asked to define the parameters of the project and to develop recommendations on how the project should proceed. The results of this meeting were summarized in a summary report, delivered to NHTSA in February 2004.

The principal recommendations made by the steering committee are:

- ◆ Concentrate on young drivers ages 15 to 18
- ◆ Examine the motivations for the following behaviors:
 - Speeding and racing

- Alcohol and drugs
- Failure to wear a safety belt
- Drowsiness (night and early morning before school)
- Distracted Driving
 - o friends in car, biggest issue
 - o looking for CDs and radio station, second biggest issue
 - o cell phone and food, minor issue
- Following too closely
- ◆ Conduct a combination of Focus Groups and Affinity Groups
- ◆ Attempt to determine:
 - If behaviors that have been heavily communicated (impaired driving and safety belts) could benefit from a new message;
 - What messages might be successful against newer problem behaviors (i.e., following too closely); and
 - What delivery mechanisms the participants believe could be effective in reaching young drivers.

With regard to the identification of possible messages, the steering committee recommended that, to the extent possible, the focus group report should focus on the conceptual approach and themes that should be used rather than the actual words that should be presented, since the “current” terminology will likely change. This information can be used by NHTSA and by organizations involved in youth safety activities to fine-tune existing program messages and to identify new areas for development.

Organization of the Focus Group Report

The purpose of this document is to summarize the results of these focus groups and to discuss the implications of these results for NHTSA’s youth programs. In the paragraphs below, the following topics will be addressed:

- ◆ Methodology
 - o Focus group matrix city selection
 - o Screeners
 - o Participation profiles
 - o Focus group questions
 - o Methodology issues
- ◆ Summary of Responses by Group
 - o Generic Males
 - o Generic Females
 - o Risk Taking Males and Safer Males
 - o Geographic differences (if any)

- ◆ Findings by Program Area
 - Driver licensing
 - Impaired driving
 - Enforcement
 - Safety belt use
 - Speed
 - Distracted driving
 - Drowsy driving

- ◆ Message and Delivery System Recommendations
- ◆ Additional Thoughts on the Teenage Brain
- ◆ Appendix A: Focus Group Screener
- ◆ Appendix B: Focus Group Questions
- ◆ Appendix C: Summary of Final Working Group Meeting

Methodology

Focus Group Structure

During the first meeting of the steering committee, a matrix was developed for the overall structure of the focus group research, to provide the maximum diversity of locations and participants. The budget allowed for focus groups in four geographically diverse cities, with four discussions held in each city, providing for a total of 16 discussions. In general the groups were designed to gather information from 15- to 18-year-old drivers. These drivers were divided into female and male groups to ensure optimal participation. Because of their increased involvement in crashes, the steering committee recommended that more discussions be held with males than with females and that the male groups be divided according to driving behavior. That is, the male screener for two cities included questions provided by NHTSA to identify tendencies toward riskier behavior. The screeners for all categories of groups are discussed in the next subsection and provided in the appendices.

The steering committee also requested that the discussions with the teen drivers include a mix of focus groups (groups of 10 to 12 participants who do not know each other) and affinity groups (smaller groups of four or five friends). The reason for this is that groups of friends may tend to be more open about their driving experiences since they are among friends rather than strangers. Affinity groups can also delve deeper into a given topic because of their smaller size.

The matrix below presents the overall structure for the focus groups.

CITY 1	CITY 2	CITY 3	CITY 4
Generic Male Focus Group	Generic Male Focus Group	Riskier Male Driver Focus Group	Riskier Male Driver Focus Group
Generic Male Affinity Group	Generic Male Affinity Group	Riskier Male Driver Affinity Group	Riskier Male Driver Affinity Group
Generic Female Focus Group	Generic Female Focus Group	Safer Male Driver Focus Group	Safer Male Driver Focus Group
Generic Female Affinity Group	Generic Female Affinity Group	Safer Male Driver Affinity Group	Safer Male Driver Affinity Group

The Affinity group discussion for a participant category was scheduled after its respective focus group so that it was possible to explore any significant topics in greater depth.

City Selection

The goal of scheduling focus group discussions in four cities was to provide as much geographic and ethnic diversity as possible. Making the logistics arrangements with four different field service companies, however, was problematic at best.

In our initial research to locate field service companies, we located a single company, the Field Work Network that provides field services in 11 different cities, geographically dispersed

throughout the Nation. Working with the COTR, we selected four cities for the focus groups and established a schedule, as shown below:

Location	Date	Structure
Fort Lee, New Jersey	April 7-8, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 1 Focus Group – Males ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Males ◆ 1 Focus Group – Females ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Females
Seattle, Washington	April 19-20, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 1 Focus Group – Males ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Males ◆ 1 Focus Group – Females ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Females
Minneapolis, Minnesota	April 21-22, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 1 Focus Group – Risk-Taking Males ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Risk-Taking Males ◆ 1 Focus Group – Safer Males ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Safer Males
Atlanta, Georgia	April 28-29, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 1 Focus Group – Risk-Taking Males ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Risk-Taking Males ◆ 1 Focus Group – Safer Males ◆ 1 Affinity Group – Safer Males

The Field Work Network, working through its affiliates in each of the four cities, assumed responsibility for recruiting participants from their collective databases of more than 200,000 individuals, providing the meeting and observation rooms, and videotaping the sessions. PerformTech provided the facilitator and an observer.

Screeners

PerformTech developed the screeners used by the Field Work Network to recruit participants for the focus groups and affinity groups. The screeners used for the two types of focus groups (Generic Males and Generic Females, and Risky and Safer Males) are provided in Appendix A. In the recruitment process, the Field Work interviewers asked the teens a series of questions. For the Fort Lee and Seattle focus groups the questions addressed age, ethnicity, (Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, or other minority) cell phone ownership, length of driving experience, and type of housing, to provide a mix of urban and suburban respondents. The same questions were asked of the male and female respondents.

The Minneapolis and Atlanta focus groups only included males. The participants were divided into Risk-Taking Drivers and Safer Drivers. In addition to the basic screening questions mentioned above, the recruiters in these two locations asked additional questions to sort the

respondents into the appropriate group. These questions probed the respondents’ attitudes towards driving and the skills of other drivers as well as their history of citations and crashes. A total of nine risk factors were identified and an individual was to be assigned to the Risky Driver group if he scored positive for four or more. However, during the recruiting process it was determined that the teens were probably not responding truthfully to the more “damning” questions dealing with such factors as drunk driving and receiving traffic citations. Therefore the recruiters were allowed to assign a respondent to the Risk group if he scored positive for two or more risk factors.

Participation Profiles

The recruiters maintained a record of all participants recruited for the focus groups and these documents are available for review of desired. The table below provides a summary of the profiles for each of the four cities.

Location	Session	Participation Profile					
		Ethnicity			Dwelling		
		Caucasian	African American	Hispanic /Other	Single Family	Townhouse	Apartment
Fort Lee, NJ	Male Focus Group	8	4	1	10	2	1
	Male Affinity Group	6					
	Female Focus Group	8	3	2	7	3	3
	Female Affinity Group	6					
Seattle, WA	Male Focus Group	10	1	1	11	1	0
	Male Affinity Group	6					
	Female Focus Group	9	0	3	11	0	1
	Female Affinity Group	6					
Minneapolis, MN	Risky Male Focus group	10	0	0	9	1	0

Location	Session	Participation Profile					
		Ethnicity			Dwelling		
		Caucasian	African American	Hispanic /Other	Single Family	Townhouse	Apartment
	Risky Male Affinity Group	4					
	Safer Male Focus group	10	1	1	9	2	1
	Safer Male Affinity Group	5					
Atlanta, GA	Risky Male Focus group	7	4	1	11	1	0
	Risky Male Affinity Group	5					
	Safer Male Focus group	7	5	0	10	1	1
	Safer male Affinity Group	5					

Focus Group Discussion

The focus groups and affinity groups were designed to address the following research issues:

- ◆ “Given a list of behaviors, what reasons do the participants offer as possible explanations for the behaviors and which behaviors are most amenable to modification?”
- ◆ “Given a list of behaviors, what message themes would be most effective and well received by the target group?”
- ◆ “Given the diversity of the target population, males and females aged 15 to 18, living in urban, rural, and suburban areas, from the full spectrum of cultural and ethnic groups, what delivery mechanisms do the participants recommend that NHTSA and its partner organizations consider?”

Specific objectives for the focus groups include the following:

- ◆ Determine what new message themes should be explored for impaired driving and safety belt campaigns for youth.
- ◆ Identify the differences between male and female perceptions of unsafe behaviors and possible message themes.
- ◆ Identify the differences between risk-taking males and safer male perceptions of unsafe behaviors and possible message themes.
- ◆ Determine the situations in which the “following too closely” behavior is most likely to occur.
- ◆ Determine if there is an overarching theme, such as fear of disfigurement or fear of hurting a friend, that could be effective in modifying all types of unsafe behaviors.
- ◆ Identify the message sources that are best received by the target populations and by the various subsets being explored.
- ◆ Identify alternative delivery mechanisms, such as the Internet, cell phones, contests, etc. that should be explored by NHTSA and its traffic safety partners for reaching the target populations.

The discussion guidelines developed for the focus groups are included in Appendix B. Based on the reactions received to the questions included in these guidelines, some ad hoc modifications were made to the questions, but these modifications did not affect the overall intent of the questions. Rather they were added to stimulate the desired discussion. For example, the guidelines included the questions below:

“Have you received any traffic citations for a moving violation?”

It quickly became clear that many teens have been pulled over for a traffic violation but they have been able to talk their way out of receiving a ticket. Therefore, we added the follow up questions below:

Have you ever been pulled over for a traffic violation?

Why did you not get a traffic citation for this incident?

Similarly, many teens responded that they had never been involved in a traffic crash. However, when asked if they ever hit anything with their car, many, if not most of the teens indicated that they had hit things, like parked cars, poles, and fences. Therefore, a series of follow-up questions were added to probe this type of collision that the teens did not perceive as a crash.

The initial guidelines asked the teens to rate their driving ability. This question was ultimately broken down into two questions because of the need to differentiate between driving ability and driving style:

How would you rate your driving competency (handling the vehicle in normal and hazardous conditions?)

How would you rate your driving responsibility (adherence to traffic laws, aggressive or risky driving styles, etc.)

With these two characteristics separate, the teens were able to acknowledge their high level of confidence in their driving ability while recognizing their tendency towards irresponsible behaviors.

These modifications represent the only significant departures from the original guidelines presented in the March 13th Focus Group Plan.

Methodology Issues

Given the variability and unpredictability of adolescents, there were amazingly few problems with the methods proposed in the original focus group plan. The few problems that did arise involved three program elements:

- ◆ Screening for risky drivers;
- ◆ Screening for housing type; and
- ◆ Affinity groups versus focus groups.

Risky Driver Screening: As indicated above, the Field Work Network recruiters reported that they did not believe they were getting honest answers to the questions concerning drinking and driving and traffic citations that were included in the primary screening for risky drivers. Without these two risk factors it was difficult to recruit sufficient “risky drivers” for the focus groups. Therefore, PerformTech adjusted the threshold from four risk factors (out of nine) to two. However, we do not believe that this change affected the overall composition of the groups. The teens that participated in the risky driver groups reported having received traffic citations (or being pulled over) even though they denied this fact during screening. It is likely that a parent was nearby during the screening discussions while confidentiality was assured during the focus groups.

Housing Type Screening: It was hoped that participants in focus group would represent a mix of ethnic and geographic backgrounds. Since focus group field service centers are located in major market areas, it was assumed that it would be difficult to recruit true rural residents but every effort was made to provide at least a mix of urban and suburban residents. Housing type was used as a surrogate for area of residence, with the assumption that apartments would be more common in urban areas. However, with the exception of the Fort Lee, New Jersey, location, recruiters found it difficult to locate participants living in apartments or townhouses. The majority of participants were suburban. However, in Minneapolis and Atlanta, participants indicated that a lot of their driving was on rural roads.

Affinity Groups versus Focus Groups: Affinity Groups were recommended by the Working Group as a means of delving deeper into topics and confirming the information gathered during focus groups. The assumption is that teens who know each other will be more forthcoming and can encourage each other to provide more honest answers to questions. We found this to be true. The downside is that it is harder to control a group of teens who are comfortable with each other

– there are more side conversations and general laughing and joking. This made it a little more difficult to address all the desired topics in the time available.

Recruiting for the affinity groups was limited to the single sponsor of the group who was asked to bring four or five friends. For the risky and safer males, it was assumed that a risky male would likely bring equally risky friends. This assumption proved correct in all but one instance. In Minneapolis a male was identified as a risky driver because of his driving record and the fact that he spent seven days in juvenile detention for stealing a car and then wrecking it in a police chase. The friends this young man brought to the affinity group reflected the change he was effecting in his life because of his experience. He and his new friends were now all exemplary drivers.

Screening for Age: While the original intent was to recruit 15- through 18-year-olds, it was difficult to locate 15-year-olds (and even 16-year-olds) with any behind-the-wheel driving experience. As a result, the groups were skewed toward 17- and 18-year-old teens. The younger teens who participated also had fewer experiences to report making it harder to draw any comparisons between age groups.

Summary of Responses by Group

The sections below provide summaries of the responses to the topics raised during the focus groups. Some comments are quoted directly because they seem to capture the essence of the group's reactions. The comments are presented by major topic rather than by individual question since the wording of the questions varied somewhat from city to city.

The presentation of results is organized into the four primary audiences for the focus groups:

- ◆ Generic Males
- ◆ Generic Females
- ◆ Risky Males
- ◆ Safer Males

The presentation of results for the Generic Females, Risky Males, and Safer Males will focus on those aspects that differ substantially from the Generic Males.

Generic Males – Fort Lee, New Jersey, and Seattle, Washington

General Driving Information

Behind-the-Wheel Experience

The range of behind-the-wheel experience was from one week to three years for these boys. One young man with one week's experience only got his learner's permit to participate in the group and should probably have been eliminated.

Driving Ability:

When asked to rate their driving skills, responses fell into the 6-to-10 range with most responses around 8. Driving Responsibility was reported in the 0-to-8 range with most responses around 6. Interestingly, the only young man who gave himself a 10 for skill also gave himself a 0 for responsibility. His experiences will be discussed in greater detail below.

Crash Experience

Most of the Generic Males focus groups in Fort Lee and Seattle reported being involved in a traffic crash. Most of these crashes were minor although a few males in each group reported more serious crashes such as flipping their cars, running into a house, and losing control on wet leaves and hitting a telephone pole.

Citation Experience

In Seattle, all the affinity groups participants and three of the focus groups either had tickets or were pulled over. One member of the affinity group reported receiving a total of 21 tickets for

such things as speeding and reckless driving, but his parents obtained a lawyer for him who managed to get 20 of the tickets thrown out, so he still has his license. All of the other drivers in the affinity group also reported receiving tickets for reckless driving, speeding, and failure to wear safety belts. As a group, these young men exhibited all of the characteristics of risky drivers.

The majority of Fort Lee drivers reported receiving tickets or being pulled over for speeding or running red lights. Several of them have been pulled over multiple times.

Unsafe Driving Behaviors

We asked the participants to make a list of the three or four most unsafe things they believed that drivers could do.

The items most frequently mentioned are listed below. Comments about each behavior are provided in the paragraphs that follow. The order in which these items were mentioned varied somewhat from group to group but they all emerged without prompting from the facilitator.

- ◆ Driving drunk (or impaired by drugs)
- ◆ Talking on cell phones
- ◆ Fooling with radio or CD player or getting caught up in the music
- ◆ Road rage
- ◆ Drowsy driving
- ◆ Speeding
- ◆ Driving “old”
- ◆ Talking to friends in the back seat
- ◆ Failure to signal lane changes
- ◆ Street racing (different from driving over the speed limit)
- ◆ Putting on makeup (mentioned by more males than females)
- ◆ Other distractions such as eating, flirting with girls

Drunk Driving

Four of the 12 Seattle focus group participants reported having driven after drinking. The reasons given were:

- ◆ Afraid to ask parents for ride;
- ◆ Have to get home and no other way except driving; and
- ◆ “I wasn’t thinking.”

One young man reported that he drove drunk once because he really did not realize how drunk he was. When he stopped at a stoplight he reported seeing multiple lights, which made him realize that he was “really wasted.” He has not driven drunk since.

Three of the 12 Seattle focus group participants have ridden with a drunk driver. Their reasons included:

- ◆ “The person did not seem drunk.”
- ◆ “He knows his limits and would not drive if he felt he was too drunk.”
- ◆ “I didn’t have a license so there was no choice.”

The majority of respondents reported that they could tell when someone was too drunk to drive. They did not see driving after one or two beers to be a problem. They also indicated that their friends would not endanger them and would not drive if they had had too much to drink. Several participants indicated that they drive with their parents routinely after the parents had been drinking and if that was OK, why should it be different for their friends?

The Fort Lee group reported fewer instances of drunk driving (or riding with a drunk driver) than the Seattle groups. These young males more routinely reported that their parents had drilled the risks of drunk driving into them so they believed it was not worth the risk.

All of the groups had participants who reported taking the keys from a friend who was too drunk to drive. They only considered this though if the person was “totally wasted,” not just “slightly buzzed.”

Talking on Cell Phones

All of the groups indicated that talking on a cell phone was a hazard when other people did it, but they all used their phones while driving. They felt that they were experienced enough drivers to be able to cope with the distraction. Some did report that it was hard to control the car while holding the phone in one hand and a cigarette in the other, or while driving a stick shift. Some reported they had mastered the art of steering with their knees. Only one or two participants reported using a hands-free set for their phones.

Talking to Friends

When describing this hazardous behavior, participants universally demonstrated holding their hands on the steering wheel and turning around to talk to someone in the back seat. This behavior was identified as hazardous for a variety of reasons including:

- ◆ More likely to show off in front of friends;
- ◆ Friends did crazy things like covering up the driver’s eyes or tickling the driver just because it would be fun;
- ◆ Encouraging the driver to speed, chase someone, or do other stupid things, like try to jump a curb or “pop a donut”;
- ◆ Giving sudden orders such as “Turn here!” which the driver may follow without checking for other traffic; and
- ◆ Overcrowding the car with six or seven kids in the back seat, making it hard to see and control the vehicle.

The participants generally indicated that riding with friends was only a problem in the “early days” of driving until the new driver had developed better skills. This early period, however, was reported as lasting just “a few weeks or maybe months.”

When asked about graduated licensing laws that limited the number of passengers, the respondents unanimously complained that they were a bad idea. They did not believe they could be enforced - ("How can a police officer tell if the person next to me is my cousin or my friend?") They also argued that these laws put more kids at risk since they all had to drive separately to meet at the movies or a party rather than carpool. Some also argued that it might be safer to drive with friends because they provide an extra set of eyes to locate hazards, keep you from falling asleep, and help you with directions.

Fooling Around with Radio or CD Player

All of the participants acknowledged that being distracted while driving was a hazard. Looking down to adjust the radio or to find a CD was reported more universally than eating or watching someone outside the car. The groups indicated that this was something they just had to learn to do without taking their eyes off the road.

It is interesting to note that many of the collisions that were reported by participants occurred when they took their eyes off the road for a second. The car in front stopped unexpectedly and they rear-ended it.

Speeding

It was difficult to discuss speeding with the groups because of their perceptions of what constitutes speeding. In all the groups, respondents indicated that they routinely drove from 5 to 10 miles above the speed limit, especially on expressways. They felt that was necessary to keep up with traffic, which is what their driver's education instructors had told them to do.

Participants were most aware of speeding as a problem in bad weather, or on local streets. Generally they claimed to speed less on neighborhood streets (during daylight hours) because they were afraid to hit a small child.

Those who confessed that they drive too fast reported the following as the reasons why:

- ◆ They were late;
- ◆ It gives them a rush;
- ◆ Speed limits are too low;
- ◆ They only do it when no one else is on the road; or
- ◆ They are skilled enough to handle the car.

Drowsy Driving

It is hard to make general statements about drowsy driving. A participant at one extreme reported, “It is more dangerous than drunk driving because there is nothing to do to get rid of the feeling of being really sleepy, but if you concentrate when you are drunk you can make it home.” At the other extreme, some participants reported that they never felt really sleepy so it was not a problem.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had experienced severe sleepiness more than once. Most common times include:

- ◆ Very, very late at night, coming home from an event;
- ◆ Early morning driving to school; and
- ◆ Late afternoon driving home from school.

While most participants indicated it was dangerous, they did not consider not driving. They did not want to pull over and take a nap because they felt that was dangerous. They routinely opened the windows, turned the music up loud, and occasionally exceeded the speed limit to get home sooner.

Street Racing

Focus groups suggest that organized street racing is very popular in Seattle but less so in Fort Lee, although males in all locations reported having driven in excess of 100 MPH. This type of speeding is not the same as simply exceeding the speed limit. It is designed to test the limits of the car, and the skill and courage of the driver. The situations in which street racing is likely to occur include:

- ◆ Semi-organized events at recognized locations (e.g., Renton, south of the Seattle airport) where hundreds of teens gather every Saturday night;
- ◆ At red lights; and
- ◆ On the expressway late at night or early in the morning with very little traffic.

The two *The Fast and the Furious* movies are credited with generating a lot of interest in street racing.

The semi-organized events draw significant police attention but this did not deter most participants from participating in street racing. When asked about alternatives such as using racetracks, the participants responded that those options exist but that they are too expensive (\$35). If they were free, they would use them. The appeal of these events is the ability to test one’s car against the competition, the social aspects of “chilling with other kids,” and the thrill of the adrenalin rush.

More common than the organized street racing is the phenomenon that occurs at red lights. Apparently there is a “look” that passes between two drivers stopped at a red light, challenging each other to a drag race. Teen males believe that this challenge must be accepted.

Even teen male participants who would describe themselves as safe drivers generally admit to having reached speeds of more than 100 mph on the expressway late at night when no one was around. The interesting contrast is how these participants react to that experience. Some report how much fun it was, how thrilling it was, and how they cannot wait to do it again. Others confess to being scared to death and vow they do not need to ever try it again. These two opposite reactions to the same stimulus are discussed in more detail in the section on Risky and Safer Male focus groups.

Things That Others Do

The participants in Seattle and Fort Lee also identified several behaviors that other drivers do that put road users at risk.

These include:

- ◆ Road rage;
- ◆ Putting on makeup, reading books, or doing anything else that totally distracts the driver;
- ◆ Failure to signal lane changes; and
- ◆ Driving “old.”

Even though the male drivers confessed to breaking lots of laws, they felt strongly that the police should more aggressively enforce the laws against violations that others commit. Every group of males, in all four cities, mentioned girls putting on make-up as a very unsafe behavior. (It is interesting to note that none of the female groups mentioned this behavior.) The young men, who reported regularly exceeding the speed limit by more than 10 miles per hour, were the most concerned about other drivers who do not signal lane changes. They relied on these signals as they wove in and out of traffic at high speed. Those who break the law depend on other drivers to be good drivers and to obey the law.

The male drivers also expressed concern about the ability of older individuals to drive. They expressed significant frustration about how slowly they drive.

Behaviors That Were Only Discussed When Prompted

Two behaviors that were of interest to the Working Group were not spontaneously mentioned by the male groups in Seattle or Fort Lee:

- ◆ Failure to wear safety belts
- ◆ Following too closely

Reactions to safety belt use varied widely from group to group and city to city. The male affinity group in Fort Lee reported they all always wore their safety belts, in the front seat or in the back. They claimed that their parents had drilled this into them, refusing to move the car until they were all belted. The boys all went to the same private high school and their parents all knew one another. This same group claimed they would never drink and drive again because their parents had made such a big deal of it.

The Fort Lee Focus Groups reported more mixed levels of use. All participants except one, the only Hispanic, reported they always wore safety belts in the front seat. About half of the focus group participants reported they wore belts always in the back seat with the other half reporting that their use depended on who was driving and general conditions. For example, if a friend who is known to be a reckless driver is behind the wheel, or if they are going on a long trip, they are more likely to buckle up.

The one individual who said he hardly ever wore his safety belt reported that he believed that safety belts could harm you. He believed the stories he had heard about people being thrown free from a crash or others being decapitated by their belts. When one of the other participants told about a crash in which his girlfriend was killed because she was not buckled up in the back seat, the Hispanic teen said he would give it more thought.

In Seattle, 8 out of 12 participants reported they always used safety belts in the front seat but only 2 were regular users in the back seat. Those who were regular users indicated that safety belt use had become a habit. If they occasionally did not buckle up, it was because they had simply forgotten. They also indicated that they felt that the fine for not wearing a belt was too high to take the chance of getting a ticket.

When asked about parental interest in safety belt use, one comment was made that parents are too busy to notice or care. This comment was made by someone who does not regularly wear belts.

Following Too Closely

In Fort Lee and Seattle (and in all other cities as well), following too closely was not spontaneously mentioned as an unsafe behavior but once mentioned by the facilitator, it prompted a lively discussion. In both cities and in all groups, the participants' typical reaction was that they hated it when people tailgated them. They thought it was dangerous and annoying. Their typical reaction was to slow down to punish the tailgater.

However, the same individuals who rallied against tailgaters admitted that they frequently tailgated others. It was most likely to occur on local streets in response to individuals driving at or below the speed limit. While some indicated that they tailgated on expressways, most indicated that it was too dangerous to follow too closely there. When asked if they felt that it was dangerous for them to tailgate, the tailgaters responded that they were confident they could react in time if the car in front stopped suddenly.

Motivation for Changing Behavior

While the males in Fort Lee and Seattle acknowledged that they might not always drive responsibly, they did not believe they should or would change their behaviors. They generally felt that they were in control of their vehicles and would not change their behaviors until perhaps they were older and had children. While they did feel responsible for the people in their cars, most felt that their friends knew their driving habits and by agreeing to ride with them, they were accepting the risk.

When asked what scares them most about being responsible for a serious crash the following factors were mentioned:

- ◆ Fear of going to jail;
- ◆ Fear of the guilt that would come from killing someone else;
- ◆ Fear of losing parent's trust; and
- ◆ Fear of "breaking parent's heart if I died."

When pressed, they indicated that they would not want to die, but if they killed someone else it might be better to have died themselves.

The young man from Seattle with 21 traffic citations listed the things he was most afraid of, in descending order of importance:

- ◆ Wrecking his car;
- ◆ Getting a ticket (which would result in his losing his license); and
- ◆ Losing his life.

Given these fears, however, he refused to consider the possibility of changing his behavior, which consisted of regularly driving over 100 mph. He had already wrecked four cars and had changed his behavior only somewhat because of these crashes. He no longer drove over 100 mph when it was raining because he lost control on a neighborhood street on a rainy night and crashed his car into a house. When the weather is good, however, he believes he can drive at speeds over 100 mph with minimal risk because his “perception is heightened” when he is speeding.

The facilitator then asked the groups to identify what might motivate other teen drivers, not them, to change their driving behavior. The responses included the following:

- ◆ Male teens count on their friends to tell them if they are doing something stupid. Teens therefore are the most likely individuals to be able to influence the driving behavior of their friends.
- ◆ Personal experience is the most likely factor to cause a change in behavior. If a driver has a crash or a near-miss, he is more likely to change behavior after the crash.
- ◆ To bypass the need for actually experiencing a crash in order to drive more carefully, other teens who have had bad experiences should talk to groups of teens about the consequences of the crashes they experienced.
- ◆ Presentations to teens should not spare the gory details. They need to see what it is like to be confined to a wheelchair or to lose a limb. They need to see scars.
- ◆ Increased enforcement would likely have an impact on driving behaviors of young males who are most afraid of losing their ability to drive.

Message Concepts

To begin the discussion of traffic safety messages that might be effective with teen males, the facilitator asked the audience to identify any traffic safety messages they could recall hearing. The results from Fort Lee and Seattle males included:

- ◆ *Click It or Ticket*;
- ◆ An anti-marijuana ad depicting a young man mourning his brother killed in a car crash in which he was driving while stoned;
- ◆ An anti-marijuana ad depicting a young girl getting run down by a group of teens at a fast-food drive-thru;

- ◆ None of the youth recalled hearing or seeing any messages against drunk or impaired driving; and
- ◆ The marijuana ads were remembered more because they were “silly” than because of their impact. The ad involving the brother did have an impact because it touched on their fear of killing someone close to them.

When asked what messages or message styles would be most effective, the Seattle and Fort Lee males responded as follows:

- ◆ Make messages like the Truth ads on cigarettes. They present facts and leave the conclusion up to the viewer. They do not preach or talk down to kids. They clearly respect the intelligence of teens to make smart choices if they are presented with undisputable facts. They “make me think.” They present information in visually shocking ways, like showing a popsicle studded with razor blades and glass, to represent all the hazardous additives in cigarettes. They have “high production values” (teens’ words).
- ◆ Use lots of high-impact graphics that leap off the page or out of the TV set, such as wrecked cars, gory images, and unusual ways of showing the numbers of kids killed.
- ◆ Avoid messages that can easily be mocked. Every group commented on the Dave Chapelle parody of the marijuana fast-food drive-thru ad. The popularity of the parody completely undermines the effectiveness of the real ad.
- ◆ Involve teens talking to teens, preferably teens who have been involved in crashes.
- ◆ Present real statistics that show the magnitude of the problem.
- ◆ Present information that counters the urban myths about safety belts and air bags being dangerous.
- ◆ Have parents deliver message that they care about their children and that they would be devastated if they died. (One young man in Seattle indicated that the reason he drove more carefully than his friends was that his parents asked him to be careful and told him that they loved him every time he took the car.)
- ◆ Communicate that there is a lot of enforcement and that “Cops are everywhere” because, for some, the only thing that will change their behavior is fear of losing their license because of points.
- ◆ New drivers should be told that it is not cool to drive crazy.
- ◆ Some kids might be affected by information about the increase in insurance costs if they have crashes or get tickets. Many of the kids, however, reported that their parents pay for their crashes and tickets so this message might not impress them.
- ◆ One young man suggested a visual image of people moving in traffic without their cars to show how vulnerable they really are.

Delivery Mechanisms

The groups were asked to review a list of possible delivery mechanisms for communicating traffic safety messages to teens. The group then discussed each item on the list. The mechanisms recommended by the Seattle and Fort Lee males, and the comments made about them are listed below:

- ◆ **Radio:** Teens listen to the radio a lot but they do not like to listen to commercials. Radio should be used but it should be carefully used. DJs should read copy rather than using pre-recorded messages because the kids will change stations as soon as they hear a pre-recorded commercial. The messages should consist of statistics and probing questions that make the kids think about driving differently. Morning drive time is the preferred time since kids listen to the talk/music shows while driving to school. The Seattle group emphasized the need to create the illusion that police are everywhere. DJs could do this by simply interjecting, “You better slow down, did you see that cop behind you?” Males in each city identified their favorite radio stations.
- ◆ **Web sites:** Web sites that cater to males could be used, but they will not be as successful as radio stations. Web sites dealing with car modifications, car sales, and sports (e.g., Autotrader.com, custom car sites, and ESPN.com) would be the most promising. The Fort Lee males recommended Rotten.com, a site that shows disgusting pictures of car crash injuries, diseases, and deformities. This group also placed the most emphasis on using gore to capture attention. Pop-ups should not be used at all to convey messages because it will backfire since “everyone hates pop-ups.”
- ◆ **Magazines:** The generic males generally did not like magazines as a delivery mechanism because they do not read much. If magazines were going to be used, it should be limited to car magazines, racing magazine, and sports magazines that appeal to young males. Men’s magazines (Playboy, Maxim) were also mentioned but it seemed to be more of a joke than a real suggestion. Articles in the car magazines, with compelling graphics, would be the most effective, focusing on statistics of car crashes.
- ◆ **Celebrities and Sports Figures:** Sports figures would be the most believable, particularly if they have been involved in a serious crash and can report on the effect it had on them. Racecar drivers might also be effective. Some males indicated that celebrities associated with street racing, such as Vin Diesel or Paul Walker, could be used, but others in the groups thought they would seem hypocritical.
- ◆ **Local Figures:** The only local figure who could have an impact on teens would be the local coroner or medical examiner or paramedics. These spokespersons should address school groups to talk about the kids who get killed. Police officers are viewed as “the enemy” and are not respected.
- ◆ **Cell Phone and Internet Text Messaging:** These mechanisms should not be employed because they are considered annoying. It is possible that messages could be placed on the welcome screens to AOL, Instant Messaging, and MSN because some people might click

through to learn more. Again, they should be factual news stories that present information to make the teens think.

- ◆ **Cable TV Networks:** If powerful TV commercials could be made, they should be placed to run on popular cable networks and around popular shows, such as *The Simpsons*, Comedy Central, the Cartoon Network, ESPN, Spike, and MTV.
- ◆ **Movie Theater Trailers:** There were evenly divided reactions to placing traffic safety messages in movie theaters. Some males thought it was a great idea because they loved going to the movies and they have nothing else to do but watch the screen. Others felt that it would be annoying to watch serious messages when they are expecting to be entertained. If messages are run in movie theaters they must be high-impact and thought-provoking, with lots of facts and graphic images.
- ◆ **School officials:** These should not be used. School events can be considered. The males in Fort Lee and Seattle indicated that events like Dead Outs and wrecked cars have an impact on some kids. Placing a wrecked car on the school lawn, especially if you can still see the blood, captures attention.
- ◆ **Other:**
 - Billboards, placed at on-ramps, should be considered. They should consist of a high-impact photo (and maybe no words), to serve as a reminder.
 - Small group discussions held in school can be effective in getting kids to express how they feel and to hear some facts that they may not have considered.
 - Panel presentations at school assemblies involving people who have lost loved ones to crashes or who have been responsible for killing someone else should be considered.
 - Parents should be aware of how much of an impact they have on their teenage kids. They should be telling their children how much they worry about them, how important it is that they wear their safety belts and drive responsibly, and how they would be devastated if anything happened to their child.

Generic Females – Fort Lee, New Jersey, and Seattle, Washington

General Driving Information

Behind-the-Wheel Experience

The range of behind-the-wheel experience was from six months to two years for these girls.

Driving Ability:

When asked to rate their driving skills, responses fell into the 6-to-10 range with most responses around 7. A young woman with just six months behind-the-wheel experience rated herself with a 6. Driving responsibility was reported in the 3-to-9 range with most responses around 6.

Crash Experience

The Fort Lee female focus groups participants at first indicated that they had no crash involvement, but when asked if they ever hit anything with their car, about half of them indicated that they had run into things like parked cars, poles, and a deer.

In the Seattle focus group, 4 of the 12 participants reported being involved in crashes. One participant had been involved in seven crashes, although not all of them were her fault. All but one of the affinity group participants had been involved in at least one crash with several of them involved in two to four crashes. The crashes generally involved rear-ending the car in front or backing into something in driveways or parking lots.

Citation Experience

In Seattle, one girl had her license suspended because she received two speeding tickets while driving under a restricted license. All of the remaining girls reported either receiving a ticket (for speeding usually) or being pulled over but succeeding in talking their way out of it. Being able to talk (or cry) their way out of tickets seemed to be a common skill. Several of the Seattle girls indicated that they were very afraid of getting a ticket because they believed their parents would take their cars. Other Seattle girls indicated that they were driving their parents' cars and therefore had to be careful because their parents would be very upset if they got a ticket.

Unsafe Driving Behaviors

The items most frequently mentioned by the generic females are generally the same as those identified by the generic males. The girls in Seattle identified tailgating without any prompting from the facilitator. Only three people identified speeding as a dangerous activity, and no one identified street racing – although a few girls in Seattle admitted to street racing. Comments about each behavior that are different from the comments made by the generic males are provided in the paragraphs that follow:

- ◆ Driving drunk (or impaired by drugs);
- ◆ Eating (with forks);
- ◆ Running red lights;
- ◆ Talking on cell phones;
- ◆ Singing, dancing, and playing with the radio;
- ◆ Talking to, arguing with, and wrestling with friends in the car;
- ◆ Speeding;
- ◆ Drowsy driving;
- ◆ Street racing;
- ◆ Tailgating; and
- ◆ Other distractions such as checking on baby in backseat, putting on makeup, talking to people outside the car, and reaching for things in the back seat.

Drunk Driving

The generic girls generally saw themselves as pretty responsible with regard to drinking and driving. None of the Fort Lee girls reported ever drinking and driving. Two Seattle girls admitted to doing it once, but they were scared to death. Two girls indicated that they have driven when they were a little “buzzed,” but they both felt they were totally in control.

More girls admitted they had ridden with drivers who had been drinking “a little.” The girls expressed total confidence that their friends would not drive and endanger their lives by driving if they were too drunk. More concern was expressed about driving with their parents who had been drinking.

The girls as a group indicated that they felt that they were the responsible people in their groups and frequently played the designated driver role. They have no qualms about taking the keys from one of their friends.

The girls in Fort Lee indicated that marijuana use was probably more of a problem than underage drinking, but that they did not believe that being stoned affected driving as much as being drunk.

Eating (With Forks)

Girls in both cities made a point of talking about eating with forks as being a problem (more than just eating a sandwich). Apparently they frequently try to eat things like pasta that require utensils. This means the driver has to balance a plate in her lap and use a fork, all while trying to steer. They frequently spill food, which causes another distraction. While they all acknowledge that this is a bad idea, they do not anticipate changing their behavior or their menu choices.

Running Red Lights

Focus groups indicated that girls seemed to be more aware of this as a problem, although it was not clear if it is something they do or if they are just concerned because others do it. The one girl who indicated that she had done it attributed it to being distracted by what was going on in the car and not noticing the light.

Talking on Cell Phones

As with the boys, all the girl participants regularly spoke on their cell phones, although they admitted it was hard sometimes to talk, steer, and shift or smoke a cigarette. Only one had a hands-free set, but she never used it.

Singing, Dancing, and Playing With the Radio

Girls, more so than boys, indicate in the focus groups that they get totally caught up in the music. They sing out loud, dance, and spend a lot of time fiddling with the radio and CDs. They like it very loud, and it is a major part of the social aspect of driving with their friends. They also indicate that it is a major source of distraction, which they recognize as a bad thing, since most of the crashes they have had resulted from being distracted and taking their eyes off the road.

Talking to Friends

Girls reported in the focus groups that they do not want anyone to take their friends out of the car. Friends pose the same distractions to girls as they do to boys, but the girl participants mentioned arguing with friends more frequently. One also included wrestling with friends. Girls reported that they were also more opposed to restrictions on the number of kids in the car, although they acknowledged that perhaps new drivers could benefit from some limitations. The 17- and 18-year-old girls reported that their driving had “matured” since they started driving and they could handle any distractions caused by passengers. One girl, however, indicated that while she was a better driver at 17 after she had driven for a while, she thought that a lot of 18-year-old drivers had gotten too comfortable and were not as careful.

In the focus groups, the girls also reasoned that family members were just as much of a distraction as friends, yet it was OK to drive younger siblings around; so the [graduated licensing] “law was a bad idea.”

Speeding

As with boys, it was difficult to differentiate between exceeding the speed limit by 5 to 10 mph, which the girl participants do not really consider speeding, and driving really fast. The girl participants seemed to be more aware of the various factors that affect how fast they drive. They mentioned that they drive slower at night, partly because it is more dangerous, and partly because it is harder to spot the police. They drive slower on local streets because they worry about hitting someone. “The biggest thing I am afraid of is hitting a pedestrian.”

Driving at high speeds seems to be much more popular in the Seattle area than in Fort Lee (which could be caused by the significant traffic congestion in the area of the Fort Lee focus groups). Several Seattle girls participated in the street-racing scene in Renton, Washington. The Seattle girls also drove at very high speeds (in excess of 100 mph) on the expressways.

One possible difference that can be inferred from the focus groups between the girls and boys with regard to speeding is that girls are more likely to speed when they are alone in the car while boys are more likely to speed when they are with friends. One girl reported that she drives much more slowly when her child is in the car with her, and another reported that she was much more cautious about speed when her younger siblings were with her.

Girl participants reported “being late” as the primary reason for routine speeding. One girl said, “I have a huge problem with speed. I always drive 90 to 100 mph and I don’t get caught. I am always late.” Another Seattle girl reported being pulled over for driving 110 mph during the day, but she talked her way out of a ticket. “I know the right places to speed; I will slow down if I know there is a cop there, but there are lots of places where you never get caught.”

Drowsy Driving

Since a lot of girl participants seemed to be out very late, it is not surprising that they had trouble with drowsy driving. All the girls indicated that they had driven when really sleepy, either driving to school, driving home from school, or driving home late at night. One girl reported that she frequently falls asleep at stoplights. Another girl said that rumble strips had awakened her several times. Several girls report that they have arrived home but cannot remember any part of the trip. They do not see any alternative. They have to get where they are going. They open the window, turn the music up, and drink some caffeine if available. Several girls reported that they call their friends on their cell phones to keep awake. Girls in Fort Lee indicated that this was another good reason to eliminate the ban on carrying passengers since they would help keep them awake.

Street Racing

Fewer girls than boys reported being involved in street racing, and all of them were in Seattle. Three girls from Seattle (age 17) are regular participants. The most dedicated street racer indicated that her parents did not know or did not care that she was out at 3 a.m. on every Saturday in violation of the curfew for young drivers. Some of the girls were dating boys who participated in the street races regularly. They did not enjoy it, but they would ride with them in the races if it was cold outside because they did not want to stand around in the cold.

Tailgating

Fewer girl participants reported that they regularly tailgate than boys, although they all complain about how annoying it is. The girls indicated that they were particularly bothered by being tailgated by large trucks or pickups with the bright lights on the roofs. Three of the 11 girls in the Fort Lee focus groups indicated that they tailgated, although they acknowledged that it was not safe to do. They said that they did it because they were bothered by someone driving too slowly. The Seattle girls who speed excessively also report that they routinely tailgate because everyone is going so much slower than they are. As a result, they do not have any problem with people tailgating them because no one can keep up.

Other Distractions

The girl participants had a somewhat different list of other distractions than the boys identified. It included checking on the baby in the back seat, digging in a purse to find something, talking to and flirting with people outside the car, and putting on makeup. They all feel that they can handle the distractions, although several reported that their minor crashes occurred when they took their eyes off the road for a second.

Behaviors That Were Only Discussed When Prompted

None of the girl participants reported failure to wear a safety belt as a dangerous behavior. This could be because they are more likely to routinely buckle up than the boys, at least in the front seat. All of the girl participants in Fort Lee and all but one of the girl participants in Seattle reported that they always buckled up in the front seat. All but a few indicated that they did not

always buckle up in the back seat. One Seattle girl only buckled up on long trips. As girls in both Fort Lee and Seattle indicated, “There is no good reason not to.”

Motivation for Changing Behavior

The girls in Fort Lee and Seattle felt that they were all pretty good drivers and did not need to change their behaviors. Several commented that they were better drivers than their parents.

When asked what scares them most about being responsible for a serious crash the following factors were mentioned:

- ◆ Increased insurance cost
- ◆ Wrecking a car
- ◆ Telling parents
- ◆ Guilt about hurting or killing someone
- ◆ “How will I pay for all the expense?”

A girl who was a passenger in a serious crash said that the experience has changed her own driving habits. She checks her blind spots all the time and waits a long time at stop signs.

Another girl from Seattle, however, reported that she does not see anything changing if she had a bad crash, unless maybe she killed someone. Her parents are not going to take her car away because “they are not about to start driving me around again.”

When asked to identify what might motivate other teen drivers, the girls’ responses mirrored the boys’, focusing on the need to experience something in order to learn from it. The girls did add the concept of parents playing a bigger role, by imposing more discipline in their children and making them more accountable. The girl participants who had to pay for their tickets, increased insurance, and car repairs felt that they were more careful drivers than the girls whose parents kept replacing wrecked cars.

The girl participants agreed with the boy participants that kids might benefit from hearing horror stories from their peers complete with all the gory details.

Message Concepts

The girl participants could recall the same traffic safety messages as the boy participants, and only one could recall a drunk driving message, *Drive Hammered – Get Nailed*. They were most familiar with the anti-marijuana ads and the Truth ads for cigarette smoking. They also talked about the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program, which they thought was “worthless” because it just made them more curious about the different drugs. They recalled an additional anti-marijuana ad, one dealing with a little girl drowning in a swimming pool because no one was there to help her. This one impressed them with the importance of intervening with a friend with a problem.

When asked what messages, or message styles, would be most effective, the generic girls made the same general recommendations as the boys. They shared the boys' enthusiasm for the Truth ads and also commented on the antipregnancy ads, specifically the "Youngest Grandma" spot.

Building on their belief that parents could and should be a more significant factor, one girl recommended a TV commercial showing parents waiting up for the child to come home at night, then answering the door to a policeman telling them about a fatal crash. The impact of this news on the parent would have an impact on teen drivers. They also think there should be more messages directed at parents telling them to impose more controls on their children.

The girls shared the boys' belief that the messages should be scary, but believably scary, by using real-life examples. The graphics should grab their attention and are probably more important than the words as long as they make you think. As an example, someone referenced the Truth billboard with a picture of an ashtray filled with cigarette butts and ashes, comparing it to your lungs.

Some effort should be made to make saving someone's life a really cool thing rather than a "goody-two-shoes" thing.

Delivery Mechanisms

The reactions to the delivery mechanisms list were similar to the boys' reaction with only a few variations.

- ◆ **Radio:** Girls indicated that powerful radio commercials such as the Truth ads could be effective for traffic safety. They also wanted the DJ to do more talking citing statistics whenever possible.
- ◆ **Web sites:** Girls in Fort Lee also recommended Rotten.com for gory pictures of car crashes. They could not think of any other Web sites that would appeal to girls. They were more likely to explore welcome screens from messaging sites, however (see below).
- ◆ **Magazine:** The generic females were more receptive to using magazines to delivering messages. They seem to read more magazines. They recommended *Cosmopolitan*, *YM*, *Seventeen*, *US Weekly*, and similar publications. They recommended "cool ads like the Truth ads" and pop-out ads that capture your attention. They also said they would read articles that presented real life example of kids in crashes and the effects it had on their lives, friends, and family.

- ◆ **Celebrities and Sports Figures:** The girls were less enthusiastic than the boys about using celebrities or sports figures. They should only be used if they have a personal story to tell. One girl said that celebrities should not be used because “you know they are getting paid so you cannot believe anything they say.” Another girl commented, “You have to know they care.” She cited Doug Flutie’s ads about autism, which are believable because his son has autism and the father seems very sincere. If sports figures were going to be used, they should be younger athletes, preferably Olympic athletes, and world champions rather than professional sports figures because they are more believable and less interested in just getting paid.
- ◆ **Local Figures:** The girls agreed that presentations made by trauma center personnel could be effective.
- ◆ **Cell Phone and Internet Text Messaging:** While the girls agreed that Cell Phone Text Messaging is a bad idea, they were more open to placing information on the welcome screens to AOL, Instant Messaging, and MSN. They seem to be more likely to click through on interesting links and to take quizzes and respond to surveys.
- ◆ **Cable TV Networks:** The girls suggested that more traffic safety story lines be used in the plots for popular TV shows like *The OC*. The plots should try to make it cool to not like drunk driving. Kids need some role models and strategies for standing up to people. They also thought it would be good to create a *COPS*-like show that just focuses on traffic crashes. Everything has to be real, “I am a street racer, and here is what happened to me.” Truth-like ads should also be placed around popular shows like *Oprah*, *Friends*, *Will and Grace* re-runs, and shows on the WB network.
- ◆ **Movie Theater Trailers:** Girls universally supported running traffic safety messages in movie theaters as long as they were powerful and true. They should include real people, be shocking, and be placed with appropriate movies. “Don’t show blood and gore in front of a chick flick.”
- ◆ **School officials:** Assembly speakers are usually a bad idea. It would be better to have small groups like this focus group so kids could talk about their experiences. They have drugs groups at school. There should be some type of driving group. Don’t call it traffic safety though. One girl mentioned the Requiem for a Dream film that is shown at schools as a good film. It would be good to have a new one for driving that showed the effect of the crash on everything: the car, the injuries, the tickets, the court system, juvenile detention, parents, etc. You need to scare some kids. Another person suggested that quick moments are better than long lectures.
- ◆ **Other:**
 - High-impact posters in local hangouts.
 - Use parents more – the girls were even more emphatic about the influence that parents have on them and how, when parents tell them what they expect and what they worry about, kids as a rule don’t want to let them down.

Risky and Safer Males – Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Atlanta, Georgia

Because the differences between the risky males and the safer males are so subtle, it will be easier to compare and contrast their responses if they are presented side by side rather than in separate sections. The information below does not repeat the basic comments made by the initial generic male group unless they are used to highlight the differences between the risky males and safer males.

General Driving Information

Behind-the-Wheel Experience

The risky males ranged in age from 15 to 18 and had been driving for 4 to 42 months. Some of the risky males admitted that they had had several more years than that because they had been driving without a license since they were 12 or 13.

The safer males were also 15 to 18 years old but were driving for 6 months to 3 years. None of the safer males reported driving before they got their licenses.

Driving Ability:

The Risky Drivers rated their driving skills from 6 to 10, with the average coming in around 8.5. They rated their responsibility from 3.5 to 9.5, with the average coming in at 7.5.

The Safer Drivers rated their skills from 2 to 10 (only one male) with most coming in at 8. They rated their responsibility at 4 to 9, with an average rating of 6.5

Crash Experience

Ten of the 27 Risky Males were involved in a crash of some kind. The crashes involved rear-ending someone, being hit by someone, and backing into a fixed object. Half of them also know someone who was involved in a serious crash involving severe injuries. It is important to note that the Risk Male Affinity Group in Seattle only had one participant who could qualify as a risky driver. The organizer of the group had changed his life after the incident that qualified him as a risky driver. His new friends would all qualify as safer drivers, as would he.

Nineteen of the 30 safer drivers were involved in some form of crash. These crashes also involved being hit by someone else or backing into a fixed object.

Citation Experience

Twelve of the 27 risky males reported receiving traffic citations for such violations as speeding, following too closely, failure to wear a safety belt, reckless driving, driving without a license, and running a red light. An additional 12 reported that they were pulled over but talked their way out of a ticket.

Nine of the 30 safer drivers reported being pulled over, with 5 of them receiving tickets.

In Seattle, all the affinity group participants and 3 of the focus group participants either had tickets or were pulled over. The sponsor for the affinity group reported receiving a total of 21 tickets for such things as speeding and reckless driving, but his parents obtained a lawyer for him, who managed to get 20 of the tickets thrown out so he still has his license. All of the other drivers in the affinity group he organized also reported receiving tickets for reckless driving, speeding, and failure to wear safety belts. As a group, these young men exhibited all of the characteristics of risky drivers.

Unsafe Driving Behaviors

The risky drivers and safer drivers listed the same unsafe behaviors, but the comments made about each behavior are significantly different. The risky drivers seem to be justifying their own unsafe driving behaviors while the safer drivers are complaining about the unsafe things everyone else does.

The items most frequently mentioned are listed below. Comments about each behavior are provided in the paragraphs that follow. The order in which these items were mentioned varied somewhat from group to group but they all emerged without prompting from the facilitator.

- ◆ Speeding
- ◆ Driving drunk (or impaired by drugs)
- ◆ Talking on cell phones
- ◆ Fooling with radio or CD player or getting caught up in the music
- ◆ Road rage
- ◆ Drowsy driving
- ◆ Street racing
- ◆ Driving “old”
- ◆ Talking to friends in the back seat
- ◆ Failure to signal lane changes
- ◆ Putting on makeup and other distractions such as shaving, eating, flirting with girls

Drunk Driving

Only four of the risky drivers admitted to driving after having consumed a beer or more. All of these males indicated that it was pretty stupid to do and they would not do it again. One young man said that the one time he had done it, it really scared him. He fell in the door and he got really upset that he might have hurt someone else.

Four drivers also said they had ridden with another driver who had been drinking. In most cases it was a parent who had been drinking.

The risky males as a group were more anti-drinking and driving than the generic males.

- ◆ “It’s stupid!”
- ◆ “It is not worth it!”

- ◆ “People think they can drive but they can’t.”

They attributed their attitudes to school messages, MADD, and DARE (one male said he had a really cool DARE officer.)

One risky driver indicated that the issue is not the drinking. “Everyone is drinking. But I throw my keys to a friend whenever I know I will be drinking to make sure I don’t drive.”

It should be noted that the Minneapolis Safer Driver focus group did not mention drunk driving as a problem until the facilitator asked about it. When asked about it, they spent more time reporting the problems their friends have had which seemed to have had an influence on them. Only 4 of the 30 drivers reported that they had driven after drinking. It was a one-time thing, and they were not planning on doing it again.

Four of the safer drivers also reported that they had driven after drinking once or twice. They all vowed not to do it again because they were really frightened. They reported being very aware of the effect on their driving ability even though they were only driving a short distance. The safer drivers also mentioned driving after smoking marijuana. They all indicated they believed it improved their driving ability.

The safer drivers seemed more opposed to driving with someone else who had been drinking. “I am not going to trust someone else with my life.” They were also more focused on the consequences of drinking and driving. “I don’t want any of my friends to die.” The safer drivers also reported that they were afraid of what their parents might do if they got a ticket for DWI.

Both the risky drivers and safer drivers reported that they regularly stopped their friends or their parents from driving drunk.

Both groups seemed to think that one or two beers are not a problem, but the safer drivers recognized that when they drank a “40” or even a “40 and a half” (40 or 60 ounces of beer) they might be affected.

A recurring contrast between the risky and safer drivers is how they perceive and react to high-risk situations, such as driving while impaired or speeding. The risky drivers experience the risky situation as a thrill that should be pursued again and again, while the safer drivers perceive exactly the same situation as terrifying, and they decided to avoid it in the future. The physical sensation of the adrenaline surge is probably the same for both types of drivers, but safer drivers do not experience any pleasure as a result, while risky drivers claim they become addicted to the sensation.

Talking on Cell Phones

Cell phones were not a high-priority hazard for any of the risky or safer driver focus groups. They all acknowledged that it was hard to drive, smoke a cigarette, or shift gears while talking on the phone. They also reported that it is hard to text-message while driving, but they seem to manage it. The risky drivers felt they could handle it without any real problem although other drivers could not. The safe drivers indicated that they did not spend a lot of time chatting on the phone. They “just take care of business.”

Talking to Friends

Friends can be a problem for both the risky and safer drivers. However, their response to this problem is markedly different. The risky drivers indicated that they were able to handle the noise and confusion of having other people in the car. They agree that laws restricting the number of passengers is a good idea for new drivers, but believe that after three-to-six months, they are experienced enough to handle it so they can enjoy the benefit of having people in the car, such as providing directions or another set of eyes. The risky drivers reported a variety of stupid things that their friends have done that make it difficult to stay focused, but they could handle them all.

The safer drivers reported that their friends are likely to do the same crazy things, but the safer drivers don't put up with it. They indicated that they tell the unruly passengers to stop or they kick them out of the car. They also ignore being egged on to do stupid things. They also supported the graduated license restriction on the number of passengers for the first three months.

Fooling Around With the Radio or CD Player or Other Distractions

Safer and risky drivers both approach these distractions the same way but for different reasons. Risky drivers are very confident of their abilities to multitask in the car. So they do not see this as a hazardous behavior for themselves, although they acknowledge that other drivers are more easily distracted.

Safer drivers recognize that there are many distractions in the car but they work hard to avoid problems with them. They try not to take their eyes off the road. The safer drivers were more likely to make comments like “I am a responsible driver and I don't want to hurt anyone else, in my car or on the road.” One safer driver said, “People need to take driving more seriously.”

Speeding and Street Racing

Everyone in both the safe or risky driver groups reports driving over the posted speed limit. Both groups claim to generally keep up with traffic, at whatever speed that may be, usually 10 mph over the limit. Neither group thinks this is particularly dangerous, as long as it is limited to the appropriate conditions. Neither group claims to be speeding in neighborhoods. One exception to this is the one Atlanta risky driver who regularly takes speed humps at 80 mph to become airborne. He claims that he only does this late at night when no one is on the road.

Street racing is more accepted in the risky driver group. They claim to do it wherever there are no police officers. Teens know the back roads where they all meet. The top speed mentioned was 155 mph, although most only claim to reach speeds of 110 to 120. The risky drivers pursue this because it is fun, and “a thrill,” and because it is very popular, thanks to *The Fast and the Furious* movies. They do not know anyone who has been hurt in a crash during street races.

Safer drivers generally limit their street racing to challenging other drivers at red lights and seeing who can get to the next intersection faster, although there is a limited amount of more organized street racing. The safer drivers reported being frightened at the high speeds although they cannot admit this to their friends. They cannot refuse a challenge to drag racing, but they do not think it is a big hazard since most of their cars cannot go very fast.

Drowsy Driving

The risky drivers and safe drivers report having the same reactions to drowsy driving as the generic males and the generic females, although the males are more likely to take a nap in the car. Several have swerved off the road or fallen asleep at stop lights. It happens when they are driving to school, or coming home after school or late at night. The risky drivers reported trying to stay awake until the 5 a.m. curfew is lifted. The safer drivers see drowsy driving as a big problem but they feel that driving drunk is a bigger problem.

Tailgating

The risky drivers and safer drivers both admit that tailgating is dangerous, but the risky drivers report that they seem more likely to do it anyway because they get impatient with someone who is driving too slowly. Safer drivers made statements like, “I like to leave enough space to react.” If a risky driver is being tailgated, he is likely to hit the brakes, slow down significantly, and otherwise annoy the tailgater to force him or her to move over or back off. The safer driver is more likely to move over to get out of the way of the tailgater, although he will be very annoyed. He is less likely to slam on the brakes because he does “not want to get rear-ended.”

Things That Others Do

The risky and safer drivers also identified behaviors that others do that cause problems for them.

These include:

- ◆ Road rage
- ◆ Failure to signal lane changes or swerving
- ◆ Driving “old”

Their reactions to these behaviors are the same as the reaction of the generic males. One safer driver stated that “older drivers [are] more dangerous than teens, yet teens get all the bad publicity.”

Behaviors That Were Only Discussed When Prompted

Failure to wear safety belts was not mentioned by any group as a hazardous behavior. It would appear that safer drivers are just as likely as risky drivers to fail to buckle up. There are some safer drivers and risky drivers who always wear their belts in the front seat. Fewer numbers always wear them in the back. At least one risky and one safer driver claim never to wear a belt, or only when they see a cop.

[MJ1]

Those who always wear belts claim it is just a habit that their parents insisted on. Others say that tickets are too expensive. Occasional users might buckle up when the weather is bad. Some claim that the safety belt causes an injury in a crash. The comment was made, "They call them accidents for a reason!" indicating that there was nothing that could be done if your number was up. Other drivers only buckle up if someone who they do not trust is driving.

Motivation for Changing Behavior

The risky drivers and safer drivers have common reactions to the thought of a crash. They are concerned about:

- ◆ What will my parent say?
- ◆ How will killing someone affect me, especially if it was one of my friends?
- ◆ How will I find the money to pay for everything?

Risky drivers seemed to be more worried about losing their license, and they are more likely to mention money as one of their concerns. The safer drivers focused on the personal relationships, and how a serious crash would devastate their parents. All of the safer drivers were concerned that their parents would be devastated if they were killed and that this influenced their driving. Only some of the risky drivers expressed concern about how their parents would react. The risky drivers focused more on how they would feel if they killed a friend.

Both groups indicated that friends are the most likely groups to be able to change a behavior. Girls have the greatest influence on young men. They also shared the view that experience would have the most lasting effect on improving behavior. Safer drivers believe that friends can influence other drivers but risky drivers felt that friends or family would only change their behavior for a short while, not permanently.

Message Concepts

The risky and safer drivers reported hearing the same messages as the generic males and females. One safe driver also reported hearing the Bacardi commercials about drinking responsibly and knowing your limits. He thought that it was "pretty silly" for a liquor company to sponsor the ad. These two groups did focus more attention on the programs that their schools sponsored such as the Grim Reaper/Day of the Dead, and the wrecked car for the prom, although they did not believe they had any lasting effects.

When asked what messages, or message styles, would be most effective, the risky and safer drivers responded similarly to the generic males and females. A safer driver added one style

comment, that the messages should be very fast-paced in recognition of the notion that everyone has ADD. Another safer driver indicated that whatever is developed needs to be “eye-popping!”

Delivery Mechanisms

There was little or no difference in how the risky and safer groups responded to the various delivery mechanisms compared to the generic males. The notable differences are mentioned below.

- ◆ **Radio:** While kids listen to the radio, it would only work in the morning drive time programs when kids are less likely to change the station to avoid talking. The Atlanta groups were asked about OutKast and Jay-Z who have embedded safety messages in their music. While they knew the songs, they did not feel that they were delivering a real safety message. “It was just a song.” A safer driver said that whoever delivers a message has to be “totally real – not actors.” Something has to push the limits because teenagers think they are invincible.
- ◆ **Web sites:** Although both groups were relatively skeptical about the value of Web sites, they suggested some possibilities. The risky drivers mentioned car sites and auto racing sites, while the safer drivers mentioned music downloading sites such as Kazaa.
- ◆ **Magazines:** Like the generic males, most of the safer and risky drivers did not like magazines as a delivery mechanism because they do not read much. If magazines were going to be used, they also suggested car and racing magazines, *Rolling Stone*, and sports magazines that appeal to young males.
- ◆ **Celebrities and Sports Figures:** Sports figures might be effective if they are locally known, such as Kevin Garnett from the Minnesota Timberwolves. Both the risky and safer drivers in Minneapolis thought it would be good to have a local sports hero, especially if that person could talk about a personal experience.
- ◆ **Local Figures:** The risky and safer drivers shared a common disregard for local police. They believe they pick on boys in particular. These groups were split on whether a paramedic would be effective.
- ◆ **Cell Phone and Internet Text Messaging:** These should be absolutely avoided.
- ◆ **Cable TV Networks:** Once concern was made that anything that ran on Comedy Central would not be taken seriously. Ads should be placed on popular shows such as *Pimp My Ride*, on MTV. A fact-based program with lots of statistics should be developed and shown Sunday night when there is nothing else good to watch.
- ◆ **Movie Theater Trailers:** These groups were also evenly divided for and against movie trailers. Some risky drivers thought it would be annoying while others felt that they were already at the theater and watching the screen so why not show some good messages.

- ◆ **School officials:** The safer drivers were more likely to support school assemblies and guest speakers, assuming that it was an interesting event. The risky drivers discounted these events as boring.
- ◆ **Other:**
 - Billboards are popular.
 - Several participants said that something should be done to make Driver's Education more interesting, with more relevant information, not just how to pass the test.
 - The risky drivers thought that consequences should be increased to really make an impact on reckless drivers.
 - Developers of programs have to recognize what driving means to kids. The car means freedom, thrills, having fun, and being with friends. Perhaps you could use that as leverage to get kids to be more careful, while still having fun.
 - Mexico places traffic safety messages on beer bottles. Maybe they should try that here.

Geographic Differences

There were very few regional differences observed in the responses from the focus groups participants. The most significant is the prevalence of street racing. The focus groups suggest that it is very popular in Seattle, not very popular in Fort Lee, and perhaps growing in popularity in Atlanta and Minneapolis. The data also suggests that Atlanta street racing seems to be more ad hoc, without a clearly defined area as exists in Seattle and to a lesser extent in Minneapolis. As was indicated earlier, according to the focus groups it does not seem very popular in Fort Lee, although teens there still try to get find opportunities to push their car to the limit. Population density and traffic congestion in Fort Lee make it harder to find a suitable location.

In the focus groups, more males reported driving trucks and spending time on rural roads in Minneapolis and in Atlanta, although some Seattle youth do take long trips to more remote areas. The focus groups also suggest that prevalence of trucks seems to affect how the teens drive and what they expect from their vehicle. Teens who drive trucks commented that they felt safe in their trucks and therefore did not feel the need to wear safety belts. Teen pickup drivers report that they did not feel their vehicles could hit the same high speeds as some of the other car models that teens were driving.

Findings by Program Area

Although the purpose of this project was to obtain information to assist in the design of messages for teen drivers, so much information was learned about highway safety programs, it seemed worthwhile to pick out some of these insights and present them in the paragraphs below. Please be advised that these comments reflect the insights and beliefs of the focus and affinity group participants. These statements do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Transportation.

Driver Licensing

- ◆ The focus groups suggest that graduated licensing programs are very hot topics with teen drivers. Not unexpectedly, teen participants reported that they do not like the restrictions that are placed on their driving, particularly restricting the number of passengers they can carry. However, when pressed most did acknowledge that it was probably a good idea for brand new drivers.
- ◆ Not all teen participants are aware of the reasons behind the various restrictions. They are also unaware of the statistics regarding their increased risk of being involved in a crash, especially when they are carrying several passengers. Given the participants' keen desire for factual information, driver licensing agencies might consider providing statistics about the increased risk of crash involvement when teens carry several friends as passengers. They should be local or State statistics whenever possible.
- ◆ Many teen participants reported that the graduated licensing restrictions are not enforced, making it very easy to ignore them. Local police may need some training on how and why these laws should be more aggressively enforced.
- ◆ A large number of teen participants reported problems backing into parked cars, garbage cans, telephone poles, and fences. Several also reported problems changing lanes and not seeing other vehicles in their blind spots. These problems may be attributed to skill deficiencies that were not addressed in Driver's Ed. Consideration should be given to paying more attention to these two skills in Driver's Ed and driving tests.

Impaired Driving

- ◆ In the focus groups, teens from all these four cities had no memory of any drunk-driving-related messages. They feel bombarded with anti-marijuana ads, which they generally discount as being "lame."
- ◆ The teen participants do not see anything wrong with underage drinking and very little wrong with driving after having consumed just a beer or two. Many believe they can tell when they are too drunk to drive. Some consideration should be given to providing teens more hard data on the effects of alcohol on judgment and motor skills.

- ◆ Most teen participants believe that marijuana does not affect their driving. Some even believe they are better drivers when they are stoned. The current marijuana campaign is not succeeding at changing this opinion.
- ◆ Project Prom-type programs (e.g., The Grim Reaper, crashed car, etc.) are memorable, but several students commented that they only saw them at the end of the school year. Since they all agreed that the impact of these programs has a very short lifespan, it might be worthwhile to repeat them throughout the year to maintain awareness.

Enforcement

- ◆ It was amazing how many teen participants reported that they could get out of getting a ticket by begging, crying, being nice, etc. One teen reported that he was in a car driven by someone who had been drinking. They were pulled over and the teenage driver had a blood alcohol concentration of .08. The officer drove them to the driver's home and turned them over to the parents with just a lecture rather than a DWI citation. This tendency convinces kids that enforcement is totally arbitrary, based on wanting to meet quotas rather than saving lives.
- ◆ Teenage participants report holding police officers in very low esteem. This may not be fixable but it should be kept in mind when police officers conduct assemblies in schools. The issue of quotas came up in at least half of the focus groups and should be addressed head on when talking to kids.
- ◆ Several teen participants with the worst driving records reported that their biggest fear was getting a ticket because it put their licenses in jeopardy. These same teens said that enforcement should be stepped up significantly if the community expected it to stop kids from speeding or drinking and driving. They know where to speed and where they can do crazy things with little risk of getting stopped. Even the enforcement at the Renton Street racing areas was called a joke because there were hundreds of kids and the police just chased them away for a little while.
- ◆ The focus groups suggest that teens might benefit from some information on what to do if pulled over by a police officer. The participants reported that they become frightened when this happens and don't know what they're supposed to do or how to behave. The focus groups indicated that more information could be included in a Driver's Ed program or with their initial information from the DMV related to this topic, and that police officers might be able to distribute some information at the traffic stop as well.

Safety Belts

- ◆ Teen participants in all four cities were aware of the *Click It or Ticket* campaign. As a result, fear of enforcement was the only reason some could offer for wearing a safety belt. Many reported that they only would put their safety belts on when they saw a police officer.

Consideration should be given to capitalizing on this awareness to increase the perception of risk of enforcement as a way of increasing belt use.

- ◆ Teen participants are particularly gullible when it comes to urban legends. They all can recite the stories they have heard about people being decapitated by their safety belts, being horribly burned by their air bags, or walking away from a crash when they were ejected from their vehicle. They need more factual information about what really happens in a crash and why being belted is a good idea. To be believed, however, this information may need to be disseminated as a new urban legend on the Internet. Some social marketing research should be conducted into how urban legends are generated and disseminated.
- ◆ Teen participants know what the law is and they know that they are only required to buckle up in the front seat. They do not know that it is dangerous to ride unbelted in the back seat. When the facilitator provided some information about the risks of riding in the back seat without a belt, several teens were surprised. Consideration should be given to a campaign to educate teens about buckling up in the back seat. Parents should be encouraged to be as insistent about buckling up in the back seat as they are about the front seat. These messages should begin at an early age and continue through adolescence.
- ◆ The teen participants who reported always being buckled up, front seat or back, did so because it was an ingrained habit, not because it was the safest thing to do. They credit their parents with instilling this habit. It is important to encourage more parents to stress the importance of buckling up in the back seat as well as the front.

Speeding and Aggressive Driving

- ◆ Teens “feel the need to speed,” to borrow a popular quote from the movie *Top Gun*. They do not consider driving 5 or 10 miles above the speed limit to be dangerous. Rather, it is perceived as just keeping up with traffic, which many were advised to do in Driver’s Ed. Teen participants report that they ignore antispeeding campaigns and enforcement efforts that target this low level of speeding because they see no danger. But they need information about the very real risks of extreme speeding (speeds over 100 mph), which is very alluring to teens. Focus groups indicate they may need facts to counter the effects of popular films like *The Fast and the Furious*.
- ◆ Many young male participants complain about other drivers who fail to signal their lane changes or who drive in the left lane, because they make it difficult to swerve from lane to lane at very high speeds. The young male participants believe that they are totally focused on the road ahead and can anticipate every action, thereby minimizing the risk of collision. They do not see their driving as being aggressive, just highly skilled. Steps must be taken to educate these young men about reaction times and the laws of physics.

Distracted Driving

- ◆ Focus groups suggest that teen participants do not seem to see the relationship between the numerous things that distract them in their cars and their high rate of minor fenderbender-type crashes. A high percentage of the crashes reported by the teens involved rear-ending a car that had stopped while the teen driver was looking away from the road. If teens cannot be dissuaded from multitasking while driving, perhaps they should be encouraged to increase their following distance to provide a longer buffer zone.
- ◆ Focus groups indicate that teen drivers need to be empowered to impose some rules on their passengers. They all recognize the risks caused by lots of passengers: tickling them, covering their eyes, shouting out directions, and egging them on to do stupid things. However, they do not seem to have the confidence or strategies for keeping their passengers under control.
- ◆ Cell phones are not perceived as a serious risk by most teen participants, yet they complain about other drivers who do stupid things while talking on their cell phones. They do not seem to connect the many close calls that they have had while driving when using their cell phones. They need to be reminded what conditions make it too risky to answer or make a call. Consideration should be given to distributing hands-free sets at no cost, similar to earlier programs to give out free bicycle helmets as a way to jumpstart helmet use.
- ◆ Focus groups suggest that music plays a huge part in a teenager's life, especially when they are driving. The prospect of a long or short trip with no music is almost intolerable. Yet teen participants acknowledge that adjusting the radio or switching CDs causes them to look away from the road and that crashes can occur in those milliseconds of inattention. Focus groups indicate that teens may need some suggestions on how to accommodate their passion for music while maintaining their focus on the road.
- ◆ One strategy for training teen participants to deal with distractions might include developing visualizations of what might happen when someone tries to answer a cell phone, searches for a new CD, or spills ketchup on his lap. These could be developed as Flash animations that can be run on various Web sites such as Hotmail or Yahoo. While the boys said they never click on links on these pages, they also indicated that they are always looking for something cool.

Drowsy Driving

- ◆ Teen participants reported that they are perpetually tired. They report that their school schedules force them to get up much earlier than their circadian clock would prefer. Their schedules keep them on the run from early morning to late at night. Their social interests keep them up late at night. And they use their cars to get from place to place no matter how little sleep they may have had. They are desperately in need of information on how to cope with drowsiness when they drive. However they are not likely to accept any advice to refrain from driving.

Message and Delivery System Recommendations

While this project calls for the development of recommendations for messages and delivery systems, it should be noted that development efforts should not be based solely on focus group studies. More extensive quantitative research should be conducted to determine the relationship between the unsafe behaviors identified in this study and traffic crashes for 15- to 18-year-olds. For example, does street racing actually cause serious crashes or does it just seem to be dangerous?

Further focus group and one-on-one interview research should be conducted to explore in greater depth the attitudes and preferences expressed by the participants in these focus groups. For example, how widespread is the view that parents should play a stronger role in controlling their children's behavior?

The recommendations below, therefore, are given with the caveat that it is premature to begin development of any specific strategy until further research is conducted.

Message Content and Style

- ◆ The focus groups in this study suggest that the current generation of new drivers needs to hear factual messages about drunk driving and safety belt use.
- ◆ The focus groups also indicate that teen participants may also need to hear messages about other behaviors that have been determined to be risky for this population, such as following too closely, excessive speed, and the consequences of common distractions. Teen participants report that they seem to base their perception of what adults consider important by the number of public service announcements they hear. They are not hearing any messages about these behaviors.
- ◆ Teen participants reported that parents need to learn that if they communicate their concerns, affection, and expectations to their children, they may be able to affect their child's driving behavior. The teen participants who knew that their parents would punish them if they violated the law, and that their parents would be devastated if any harm came to them, were more likely to be regular belt users. They seemed to be more conscious of the consequences of their actions, and they modified their behavior to avoid negative consequences.
- ◆ The focus groups indicate that one way messages can be aimed at teens is modeling after the Truth ads developed to combat smoking. That is, the advertisements should avoid preaching or telling teens what decisions they should make, and concentrate on providing the teens with facts on which to base their decisions.
- ◆ Focus groups indicated that traffic safety messages for teens should employ powerful graphic images more than lengthy narrative to capture a teen's attention. These graphics should force

teens to think about traffic crashes in a new way because they currently believe that they know all there is to know.

- ◆ While teen participants reported that they generally enjoy puzzles, contests, and surveys, they do not seem interested in this delivery approach for traffic safety messages.
- ◆ In the focus groups, teen participants report that traffic safety messages must be “real” to teens, meaning that they should include true stories about their peers who were involved in crashes or about parents who lost a child. Since many teen participants report that they have trouble predicting consequences, these messages must enable them to experience, to the extent possible, the effects a crash might have. Ideally, these messages should be delivered by real crash victims, family members, and friends.
- ◆ Additionally, focus groups indicate that message designers need to recognize what a significant role a car plays in the life of a young man, and to some extent a young woman. A car represents freedom, excitement, socialization, companionship, and all-around entertainment. It is not likely that any message campaign will succeed in altering that relationship. At best, a message campaign can probably only hope to instill some awareness of the more severe risks and of the importance of responsible behavior in certain circumstances.

Delivery Mechanisms

- ◆ In this study, focus groups suggest that teens seem to equate importance with production values and saturation. If a message is important they expect it to show up everywhere, on TV, on the radio, in billboards, in the movies, in posters and in news stories. Currently traffic safety messages are not showing up anywhere, implying that traffic crashes are less important than smoking deaths or drug use.
- ◆ Teen participants indicated that messages delivered on the radio should not involve prerecorded commercials, (unless they are as powerful as the Truth messages. Rather, the local DJs should talk about traffic safety, giving specific facts that will help teens make up their minds about their own driving behavior.
- ◆ Of the various delivery mechanisms explored in the focus groups, radio, TV, movies, and billboards appear to be the most popular among teen participants. These are the traditional delivery mechanisms, which seems surprising considering teenagers’ devotion to new technology. However, the teen participants were vehemently opposed to interrupting their access to their cell phones or the Internet to deliver traffic safety messages. It is not clear if teens would ignore messages delivered through the Internet or if they would pay attention even while they were complaining.
- ◆ The focus groups suggest that small group discussions offer promise as a means of allowing teens to explore their beliefs and anxieties about driving and to hear how their peers feel about critical issues. Schools and youth organizations should explore options for stimulating these types of discussions. To the extent possible, victims of crashes should be included in

these discussions so that teens can learn first-hand what the consequences of a crash really are.

- ◆ In the focus groups, the teen participants indicated that the only local official who should be considered as a delivery mechanism is the coroner or paramedic who can discuss what happens to teenagers when they are involved in serious or fatal crashes. Teen participants report that they are very curious about what happens in a crash but they seem to believe that adults do not trust them with the facts.
- ◆ Parents can have a powerful impact on their children yet many teen participants reported that their parents did not care about their driving experience. To the extent possible, parents should be mobilized to communicate their concerns about their children's driving behavior. It seemed that the teen participants who reported the most extreme, reckless behavior were the same teens who said their parents did not care where they were, paid all their bills including repairing damages to car the teens wrecked, and would be unwilling to withdraw driving privileges because it would be inconvenient. One of the quietest but most telling comments came from one of the most outspoken "bad boys" in the group, who said it would help if parents kept telling their kids how much they loved them.

Additional Thoughts on the Teenage Brain

The May 10, 2004, issue of *Time* magazine ran a cover story on the “Secrets of the Teen Brain.” The main premise of this article is that new research suggests that teens have less control over their actions and are less capable of fully rationale behavior than originally thought. Rather than reaching maturity at 12 or 13, scientists now believe that the human brain is not fully developed until age 25.

The area of the brain that is the last to develop is the prefrontal cortex, home of the executive functions of planning, setting priorities, suppressing impulses, and weighing the consequences of one’s actions. This is the part of the brain that eventually will make the teenager more responsible, but it is a long way from being developed when teens first get their driver’s licenses.

Hormones also play a part in teen behavior. Sex hormones are most active in the limbic center, which controls emotions. Teens tend to seek out experiences that cause their passions to run wild. It contributes to the adolescent tendency to thrill-seek. The immaturity of the nucleus accumbens may cause teens to be poorly motivated to seek rewards. They tend to seek situations with high excitement that involve minimal effort. Street racing clearly meets this desire while buckling up and driving conservatively because it may save your life just does not sell.

The significance of this research for traffic safety has yet to be defined. As one scientist pointed out, rental car companies will not let you rent a car until you are 25 years old, yet most States give 16-year-olds licenses to drive. It is not likely that the driving age will be raised to 25, but a case could be made for more extensive research into what is reasonable to expect from teenagers and how the system can be modified to better protect them from themselves.

Appendix A: Focus Group Screeners

Seattle, Washington, and Fort Lee, New Jersey - Generic Male and Females

Focus Group Screener

Parent Introduction: May I speak to the head of the household, please? We are conducting focus groups with teenage drivers to identify strategies for reducing unsafe driving behaviors in this age group. Is there a teenager aged 15 to 18 in your household? If Yes, Continue If No, TERMINATE

May I have your permission to ask your child some questions to see if he/she would be a candidate for this focus group?

Is your child a boy or a girl?

Boy _____ Proceed to Male Screener

Girl _____ Proceed to Female Screener

Generic Male Focus Group Screener

Teen Introduction

We are conducting focus groups on teenage driving. We are interested in finding out what younger drivers think about typical actions that all drivers do and also about what you think might be good ways to get teen drivers to change these behaviors. Would you be interested in participating in this focus group scheduled for Monday, April 19th at _____ o'clock? If Yes, continue.

Primary Screening Questions

1) How old are you? _____

If aged between 15-18 – Continue to # 2 (see quotas below)

If older or younger: TERMINATE

- Age 15- (2-3 per group max.)
• Age 16-(2-3 per group max.)
• Age 17-(2-3 per group max.)
• Age 18-(2-3 per group max.)

2) Do you currently have your driver’s license?

Yes _____ Continue to # 3 **(8 (out of 12) participants must have driver’s license)**

No _____ Continue to 2a)

2A) If No, Do you have a learner’s permit?

Yes _____ **Continue to 2B**

No _____ **Terminate**

2B) If Yes, Have you any “behind-the-wheel” experience?

Yes _____ **Continue (3 per group max.)**

No _____ **Terminate**

Secondary Screening Questions:

From here on, the goal is to get even distribution of the following:

4) What is your race?

Caucasian _____ (7 per group)

African American _____ (3-4 per group)

Hispanic and other minority _____ (2 to 3 per group)

5) Which of the following describes your home?

Single family detached house _____ (3 to 4 per group)

Apartment _____ (3 to 4 per group)

Duplex or townhouse _____ (3 to 4 per group)

6) Do you own a cell phone?

Yes _____ (At least 6)

No _____ (No more than 6)

Confirm date and time of focus group. Remind participants that they must bring their driver’s licenses or learner’s permits with them to the focus group.

Generic Female Focus Group Screener

Teen Introduction

We are conducting focus groups on teenage driving. We are interested in finding out what younger drivers think about typical actions that all drivers do and also about what you think might be good ways to get teen drivers to change these behaviors. Would you be interested in participating in this focus group scheduled for Tuesday, April 20th at _____ o'clock? If Yes, continue.

Primary Screening Questions

1) How old are you? _____

If aged between 15-18 – **Continue to # 2 (see quotas below)**

- **Age 15- (2-3 per group max.)**
- **Age 16-(2-3 per group max.)**
- **Age 17-(2-3 per group max.)**
- **Age 18-(2-3 per group max.)**

If older or younger: **TERMINATE**

2) Do you currently have your driver’s license?

Yes _____ **Continue to # 3 (8 of 12 participants must have driver license)**

No _____ **Continue to 2a)**

2A) If No, Do you have a learner’s permit?

Yes _____ **Continue to 2B**

No _____ **Terminate**

2B) If Yes, Have you any “behind-the-wheel” experience?

Yes _____ **Continue (3 per group max.)**

No _____ **Terminate**

|

Secondary Screening Questions:

From here on, the goal is to get even distribution of the following:

4) What is your race?

- Caucasian _____ (7 per group)
- African American _____ (3-4 per group)
- Hispanic and other minority _____ (2 to 3 per group)

5) Which of the following describes your home?

- Single family detached house _____ (3 to 4 per group)
- Apartment _____ (3 to 4 per group)
- Duplex or townhouse _____ (3 to 4 per group)

6) Do you own a cell phone?

- Yes _____ (At least 6)
- No _____ (No more than 6)

Confirm date and time of focus group. Remind participants that they must bring their driver's licenses or learner's permits with them to the focus group.

Generic Male and Female Affinity Group Screeners

Parent Introduction: May I speak to the head of the household, please? We are conducting focus groups with teenage drivers to identify strategies for reducing unsafe driving behaviors in this age group. Is there a teenager aged 15 to 18 in your household? **If Yes, Continue**
If No, TERMINATE

May I have your permission to ask your child some questions to see if he/she would be a candidate for this focus group?

Is your child a boy or a girl?

If female, use the screener below; If male, jump to Male Affinity Group Screener

Female Affinity Group Screener

Teen Introduction

We are conducting focus groups on teenage driving. We are interested in finding out what younger drivers think about typical actions that all drivers do and also about what you think might be good ways to get teen drivers to change these behaviors. We are specifically looking for someone who has four or five friends (of the same sex) who would be willing to participate in a discussion with us. Would you be interested in recruiting some of your girl friends for a discussion to be held on Tuesday April 20^h at _____ o'clock? If yes, continue.

1) How old are you? _____

If aged between 15-18 – **Continue to # 2**

If older or younger: **TERMINATE**

2) Do you currently have your driver’s license?

Yes _____ **Continue**
 No _____ **Terminate**

3) How long have you had your driver’s license?

Less than 6 months _____ **Terminate**
 For 6 months or longer _____ **Continue**

4) What is your race?

Caucasian _____ Continue
African American _____ Terminate
Hispanic and other minority _____ Terminate

5) Which of the following describes your home?

Single family detached house _____ Continue
Apartment _____ Terminate
Duplex or townhouse _____ Terminate

6) Do you own a cell phone?

Yes _____ Continue
No _____ Terminate

All of the friends you bring with you to the focus group must also have driver's licenses and they must bring them with them to the focus group.

Can you give me the names of the friends you will be inviting to the focus group?

Confirm date and time of affinity group discussion.

It will be necessary to follow up with the individual who is bringing the friends before the affinity group to confirm that she can bring four or five female friends.

Generic Male Affinity Group Screener**Teen Introduction**

We are conducting focus groups on teenage driving. We are interested in finding out what younger drivers think about typical actions that all drivers do and also about what you think might be good ways to get teen drivers to change these behaviors. We are specifically looking for someone who has four or five friends (of the same sex) who would be willing to participate in a discussion with us. Would you be interested in recruiting some of your male friends for a discussion to be held on Monday, April 19th at _____ o'clock? If yes continue.

1) How old are you? _____

If aged between 15-18 – **Continue to # 2**

If older or younger: **TERMINATE**

2) Do you currently have your driver's license?

Yes _____ Continue
No _____ Terminate

3) How long have you had your driver's license?

Less than 6 months _____ Terminate
For 6 months or longer _____ Continue

4) What is your race?

Caucasian _____ Continue
African American _____ Terminate
Hispanic and other minority _____ Terminate

5) Which of the following describes your home?

Single family detached house _____ Continue
Apartment _____ Terminate
Duplex or townhouse _____ Terminate

6) Do you own a cell phone?

Yes _____ Continue
No _____ Terminate

All of the friends you bring with you to the focus group must also have driver's licenses and they must bring them with them to the focus group.

Can you give me the names of the friends you will be inviting to the focus group?

Confirm the date and time of the affinity group discussion.

It will be necessary to follow up with the individual who is bringing the friends before the affinity group to confirm that he can bring four or five male friends

Risky and Safer Driver Screeners

FOCUS GROUP SCREENERS

Parent Introduction: May I speak to the head of the household, please? We are conducting focus groups with teenage drivers to identify strategies for reducing unsafe driving behaviors in this age group. Is there a boy aged 15 to 18 in your household?

If Yes, Continue If No TERMINATE

May I have your permission to ask your child some questions to see if he would be a candidate for this focus group? **If yes Continue, If no Terminate**

Teen Introduction

We are conducting focus groups on teenage driving. We are interested in finding out what younger drivers think about typical actions that all drivers do and also about what you think might be good ways to get teen drivers to change these behaviors. Would you be interested in participating in this focus group scheduled for Wednesday or Thursday, April 21st or 22nd? If Yes, continue.

Primary Screening Questions

1) How old are you? _____

If aged between 15-18 – **Continue to # 2 (see quotas below)**

- **Age 15- (2-3 per group max.)**
- **Age 16-(2-3 per group max.)**
- **Age 17-(2-3 per group max.)**
- **Age 18-(2-3 per group max.)**

If older or younger: **TERMINATE**

2) Do you currently have your driver’s license?

Yes _____ **Continue to # 3 (8 of 12 participants must have driver’s license)**

No _____ Continue to 2a)

2A) If No, Do you have a learner’s permit?
Yes _____ **Continue to 2B**

No _____ **Terminate**

2B) If Yes, Have you any “behind-the-wheel” experience?

Yes _____ **Continue (3 per group max.)**

No _____ **Terminate**

If yes, Continue to Risk-Taking Screening Questions

Risk-Taking Screening Questions

The next group of questions is deigned to assign males to either Risk-Taking Group or Safer Group.

Please note that these questions must be asked of the teenager himself, not of the parent or guardian.

Assign to Risk-Taking Group if respondent has four or more risk factors from the following questions

3) When you drive, do you always, sometimes, or never wear your safety belt?

Always _____

Sometimes _____ (Count as 1 Risk factor)

Never _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

4) In the past twelve months, since March of last year, have you been stopped by police for ANY traffic-related reason while driving?

Yes _____ (Count as 2 Risk Factors)

No _____

5) In general, do you think most highway speed limits are too low, too high, or about right?

Too Low _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

Too High _____

About Right _____

6) Would you say the driving of most other drivers is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

- Excellent _____
- Very Good _____
- Good _____
- Fair _____
- Poor _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

7) Which statement best describes your highway driving?

"I tend to pass other cars more often than other cars pass me." _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

"Other cars tend to pass me more often than I pass them." _____

8) In the past 30 days, have you driven a vehicle when you thought you might have consumed too much alcohol to drive safely?

- Yes _____ (Count as 2 Risk Factors)
- No _____

9) In the past 30 days, have you ridden in vehicle when you thought the driver might have consumed too much alcohol to drive safely?

- Yes _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)
- No _____

Count the number of risk factors:

_____ **If 4 or more risk factors present, assign to Risky Male Focus Group and proceed with Risky Male Secondary Screening Questions.**

_____ **If fewer than 4 risk factors present, assign to Safer Male Focus Group and jump to Safer Male Secondary Screening Questions.**

|

Risky Male Secondary Screening Questions

(From here on, the goal is to get a balanced distribution for the group based on the responses to the following questions.)

10) What is your race?

- Caucasian _____ (7 per group)
- African American _____ (3-4 per group)
- Hispanic and other minority _____ (2 to 3 per group)

11) Which of the following describes your home?

- Single family detached house _____ (3 to 4 per group)
- Apartment _____ (3 to 4 per group)
- Duplex or townhouse _____ (3 to 4 per group)

12) Do you own a cell phone?

- Yes _____ (At least 6)
- No _____ (No more than 6)

**The focus group will be held on Wednesday April 21st at _____ o'clock.
Can you attend at that time?**

Remind participants that they must bring their driver's licenses or learner's permits with them to the focus group.

Safer Male Secondary Screening Question

(From here on, the goal is to get a balanced distribution for the group based on the responses to the following questions.)

10) What is your race?

- Caucasian _____(7 per group)
- African American _____(3-4 per group)
- Hispanic and other minority _____(2 to 3 per group)

11) Which of the following describes your home?

- Single family detached house _____(3 to 4 per group)
- Apartment _____(3 to 4 per group)
- Duplex or townhouse _____(3 to 4 per group)

12) Do you own a cell phone?

- Yes _____(At least 6)
- No _____(No more than 6)

**The focus group will be held on Thursday April 22nd at _____ o'clock.
Can you attend on that date and time?**

Remind participants that they must bring their driver's licenses or learner's permits with them to the focus group.

AFFINITY GROUP SCREENERS

Parent Introduction: May I speak to the head of the household, please? We are conducting focus groups with teenage drivers to identify strategies for reducing unsafe driving behaviors in this age group. Is there a boy aged 15 to 18 in your household? **If Yes, Continue**
If No, TERMINATE

May I have your permission to ask your child some questions to see if he would be a candidate for this focus group?

Teen Introduction

We are conducting focus groups on teenage driving. We are interested in finding out what younger drivers think about typical actions that all drivers do and also about what you think might be good ways to get teen drivers to change these behaviors. We are specifically looking for someone who has four or five friends (of the same sex) who would be willing to participate in a discussion with us. Would you be interested in recruiting some of your male friends for a discussion to be held on Wednesday, April 21st or Thursday April 22nd? If yes, continue.

1) How old are you? _____

If aged between 15-18: **Continue to # 2**

If older or younger: **TERMINATE**

2) Do you currently have your driver’s license?

Yes _____ Continue
 No _____ Terminate

3) How long have you had your driver’s license?

Less than 6 months _____ Terminate
 For 6 months or longer _____ Continue

4) What is your race?

Caucasian _____ Continue
 African American _____ Terminate
 Hispanic and other minority _____ Terminate

5) Which of the following describes your home?

Single family detached house _____ Continue
 Apartment _____ Terminate
 Duplex or townhouse _____ Terminate

6) Do you own a cell phone?

Yes _____ Continue
 No _____ Terminate

Risk-Taking Screening Questions

The next group of questions is designed to assign males to either Risk-Taking Group or Safer Group.

Please note that these questions must be asked of the teenager himself, not of the parent or guardian.

7) When you drive, do you always, sometimes, or never wear your safety belt?

Always _____
 Sometimes _____ (Count as 1 Risk factor)
 Never _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

8) In the past twelve months, since March of last year, have you been stopped by police for ANY traffic-related reason while driving?

Yes _____ (Count as 2 Risk Factors)
 No _____

9) In general, do you think most highway speed limits are too low, too high, or about right?

Too Low _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)
 Too High _____
 About Right _____

10) Would you say the driving of most other drivers is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Excellent _____
 Very Good _____
 Good _____
 Fair _____
 Poor _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

11) Which statement best describes your highway driving?

"I tend to pass other cars more often than other cars pass me." _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

"Other cars tend to pass me more often than I pass them." _____

12) In the past 30 days, have you driven a vehicle when you thought you might have consumed too much alcohol to drive safely?

Yes _____ (Count as 2 Risk Factors)

No _____

13) In the past 30 days, have you ridden in vehicle when you thought the driver might have consumed too much alcohol to drive safely?

Yes _____ (Count as 1 Risk Factor)

No _____

Count the number of risk factors:

_____ **If 4 or more risk factors present, assign to Risky Male Affinity Group and proceed with Risky Male Affinity Group Member Questions.**

_____ **If fewer than 4 risk factors present, assign to Safer Male Affinity Group and jump to Safer Male Affinity Group Member Questions.**

Safer Male Affinity Group Member Questions

All of the friends you bring with you to the focus group must also have driver’s licenses and they must bring them with them to the focus group.

Can you give me the names of the friends you will be inviting to the focus group?

Confirm date and time of affinity group discussion.

It will be necessary to follow up with the individual who is bringing the friends before the affinity group to confirm that he can bring four or five male friends.

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

◆ Introduction of Focus Group

- ◆ Purpose
- ◆ Confidentiality of responses
- ◆ Participant driving experience (# of months/years)
- ◆ Participant traffic safety experience (citations or crash involvement)

Questions:

- ◆ *How long have each of you been driving? (screening questions will limit participation to teens with either a driver's license or a learner's permit)*
- ◆ *How would you rate your driving ability?*
- ◆ *Has anyone been involved in a traffic crash (as a driver or as a passenger)?*
- ◆ *If yes, please describe the circumstances.*
- ◆ *If no, have any of your friends or family been involved in a crash?*
- ◆ *Has anyone been issued a traffic citation? If yes, what was it for?*

◆ Unsafe Driving Behaviors

General Questions:

- ◆ *What do you consider to be the most dangerous driving behavior? (Ask individuals to make a list in order of riskiness.)*
- ◆ *Why do you believe it to be so dangerous?*
- ◆ *Why do you think people practice this behavior?*
- ◆ *How often have you practiced this behavior?*
- ◆ *What other behaviors do you think are very dangerous?*
- ◆ *Why are they dangerous?*
- ◆ *Why do you think people practice this behavior?*

Specific Behavior Questions

- ◆ *If not already mentioned, how dangerous is driving with someone who has been drinking?*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever found themselves in that situation?*
- ◆ *How did you feel? (Normal? Scared about having a crash? Scared about getting stopped?)*
- ◆ *If not already mentioned, how dangerous is not wearing a safety belt?*
- ◆ *Being completely honest, how many wear safety belts every time you are in a car?*
- ◆ *How many wear safety belts sometimes? What prompts you to buckle up?*
- ◆ *If not already mentioned, what do you think about exceeding the speed limit?*
- ◆ *How fast do you usually drive in relation to the speed limit?*
- ◆ *When does speeding become dangerous?*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever been really sleepy when you were driving?*
- ◆ *Please describe the circumstances (Time of day, Why sleepy? What did it feel like? Did you do anything to wake up?)*
- ◆ *Who has driven a car with a group of friends?*
- ◆ *Does this affect your ability to concentrate on driving?*
- ◆ *Has anyone had any bad experiences driving with a group of friends?*
- ◆ *Has anyone had any close calls talking on a cell phone or changing CDs while driving? Please describe.*
- ◆ *What is meant by the term “tailgating?”*
- ◆ *What do you consider to be a safe following distance? (Not the answer in the Driver’s Manual?)*
- ◆ *Have any of you been involved in drag racing? Any of your friends?*
- ◆ *Would you classify drag racing as relatively dangerous or relatively safe?*

◆ Motivations for Changing Behavior Questions

- ◆ *When you think about being involved in a car crash, what emotions are triggered?*
- ◆ *Let's talk about fear – what scares you most about being involved in a car crash? (death, injury, disfigurement, hurting friends, hurting family, increased insurance cost, loss of driving privilege etc.)*
- ◆ *What impact do you think a serious crash would have on your life – if you were the driver?*
- ◆ *Let's think about the behaviors we were talking about – which of these do you think are the most likely to lead to a crash eventually? Why? (review behaviors if needed)*
- ◆ *Does this affect your likelihood of continuing this behavior?*
- ◆ *What else might cause you to change your driving behavior?*

◆ Message Concepts

- ◆ *Let's pretend that you were responsible for making your friends better drivers -- what would you do to get them to stop (insert the most dangerous behaviors the group identified).*
- ◆ *Let's focus on the things you would say to your friend*
 - *For riding with someone who had been drinking*
 - *For speeding*
 - *For drowsy driving*
 - *For driving with a group of friends*
 - *For following too closely*
- ◆ *What safe driving messages have you heard? (Generate a list)*
- ◆ *Be honest – What do you think of them?*
- ◆ *If you had the opportunity to design a campaign to get teen drivers in your community to stop (insert most dangerous behavior group identified) what should the message be? (concept not exact words)*

◆ Delivery Mechanism Questions

- ◆ *Please write down your three favorite Web sites.*
- ◆ *How many of you use Instant Messaging to talk with your friends?*
- ◆ *Show slide of Instant Messaging Info page - ask if anyone recognizes it.*
- ◆ *Has anyone ever clicked on a link on this page? What types of links are you likely to follow?*
- ◆ *Distribute a list of possible delivery mechanism categories (magazines, radio stations, celebrity, sports figure, Web site ,technology provider (cell phone provider) local official (e.g. Police, school teacher, politician) and ask participant to identify any they think would be a good source of traffic safety information.*
- ◆ *Think about the campaign you could design to change the driving behavior of teens in your community. How should the message be delivered?*
- ◆ *What could you do to make the whole idea more exciting, more convincing, more effective?*

◆ Summary Question

- ◆ *Given everything we have talked about tonight, is there anything that would convince you to be a more careful driver?*

**Appendix C:
Summary of Final Working Group Meeting**

Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors Summary of Working Group Meeting –

August 5, 2004

Following the completion of the focus groups, the project Working Group met one final time to review the findings and to strategize next steps. The results of that meeting are summarized below in the hope that some interest will be generated to pursue the recommendations made.

The meeting was held at PerformTech headquarters at 810 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia.

The following were in attendance:

- Lori Millen, NHTSA Office of Communications and Consumer Information
- Faithia Robertson, NHTSA Office of Communications and Consumer Information
- Joan Harris, NHTSA Office of Communications and Consumer Information
- Jennifer Beery, NHTSA Office of Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection
- Pamela Chapman, NHTSA Office of Safety Programs
- Jesse Blatt, NHTSA Office of Research and Technology
- Kevin Miller, ABC Radio Networks
- Gabriela Schwarz, Street Law Inc. and NOYS
- Maria Rockwell, Youth leader from Aspira
- Thom Bittner, PerformTech
- Katie Moran, PerformTech

The meeting began with a review of the results of the 16 focus groups conducted in Fort Lee, New Jersey; Seattle, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Atlanta, Georgia. Katie Moran reviewed the findings by program area and responded to questions from the group. During this discussion a variety of ideas for messages and program initiatives were raised. They are included in the summary notes below.

Following this discussion, the group focused on what the next steps for this project should be.

The consensus of the group was that a new national campaign should be developed focused on teen driving. The audiences, elements, and sponsors for this program are discussed below.

Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors Summary of Working Group Meeting –

August 5, 2004

Campaign Overview

Target Audiences

The primary audience for the campaign is teen drivers, within the first six months of starting their driving experience. This means that the primary focus will be on 16-year-olds with the age range being 15 to 18 years old.

There are two critical secondary audiences: friends of teen drivers (who are likely to be teen drivers themselves), and parents of teen drivers.

A third audience category would be the institutions that deal with teen drivers: motor vehicle administrations, police departments, Driver's Ed instructors, insurance companies, and health care providers (pediatricians and adolescent health specialists).

Message Characteristics

It was clear from the focus groups that teens are relatively sophisticated in terms of what types of messages they will accept. The following characteristics were strongly recommended:

- Messages should be fact-based and encourage teens to use the information presented to make their own decisions.
- Messages telling teens to do or not do something should be avoided – let the teens draw their own conclusions about what should be done.
- Personal messages (delivered face-to-face by a trusted source) will be more effective than public service messages. Peers are likely to be the most effective agent to use to deliver these messages.
- Messages and images should be powerful – teens like to be shocked and surprised.
- Humor can be used but carefully – the topic is a serious one. Teens seem to like irony.

Message and Program Concepts for Teen Drivers

A variety of concepts were discussed during the meeting, not with the goal of choosing final one but rather to illustrate the types of concepts that should be explored.

Examples include:

DWI:

- This is your car (photo of "tricked-out" car) – This is your car on booze (photo of totally smashed car).
- Message that gives facts on the effects of alcohol on ability to drive.
- Message on how to tell if someone has had too much to drink.

Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors Summary of Working Group Meeting –

August 5, 2004

- Key chain give-away with signs of impairment or phone numbers to call.
- Parody of MasterCard Ad – Cost of various things you might buy during an evening out partying with friends (new outfit, tickets to a hot concert) and image of person taking keys from a teen driver who has been drinking – with tag line – saving a friend’s life – priceless.
- Dial-a-Ride program for teens that their parents can enroll them in – teens can call if they have been drinking and should not drive or if their companion has been drinking and they do not want to ride with them. Could be commercially sponsored or organized by committed parents.

Distracted Driving:

- Visual image about what can happen in the time it takes to load a CD
- Message empowering youth to tell their friends to “Shut Up and Let Me Drive”
- Visual image of friends in a car with an on/off switch superimposed and audio saying it is “OK to Shut Off the Noise”
- Facts delivered to kids about the risk of a crash increasing with each added passenger
- Program geared at parents that explains the passenger restrictions of Graduated Licensing
- Campaign geared at “friends” empowering them to speak up if they think their friends are behaving recklessly

Speeding and Street Racing

- Messages from celebrities involved in street racing films that present facts about racing versus what they see in movies.
- Message that documents the amount of damage done to a car at different speeds. (Similar to Liberty Mutual ads but targeting teen drivers, not the parents buying the insurance.)
- Message that documents the cost associated with a crash (car repair, traffic ticket, insurance costs).

Drowsy Driving

- Sample policies that could be distributed to State and local school administrations concerning shifting start times for high school students.
- Campaign to publicize the results of research on sunflower seeds if proven effective in reducing drowsiness.

Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors Summary of Working Group Meeting –

August 5, 2004

General Driving Skill and Responsibility

- Program similar to “How’s My Driving?” for trucks in which parents register their teen driver and post a bumper sticker on car for people to “Call My Mom” to report flagrantly unsafe driving.
- Messages to parents from pediatricians about how to talk to their kids about driving.
- A packet of material for a new driver, distributed by the insurance company, a car dealer, or the licensing agency that is more than just the driver’s manual.
- Visual image comparing playing a street racing video game to driving on the highway. “This is a game – this is your life.”
- Image of a kid in jail saying that “Jail time is not the worst punishment for what I did – knowing that I killed my best friend in a car crash – I will be paying that price for the rest of my life.”
- Concept that reflects So Much of Your Life Happens in Your Car.
- Message to parents to encourage them to hold their teen driver accountable, and to tell them that they love them.

Delivery Mechanisms

The most often recommended delivery mechanisms mentioned by the focus group teens include, in order of significance to them:

- Radio, particularly a.m. drive time;
- Movie trailers;
- TV spots on cable stations viewed by teens (Comedy Central, WB, Cartoon Network, ESPN); and
- Internet sites (recommended with lots of cautions about use of pop-ups).

To reach these audiences with these messages through these delivery channels, the group defined a three-tiered program which is described below:

- A **National Teen Driving Campaign**, sponsored by DOT and ABC Radio Networks with sponsorship opportunities for car manufacturers, the movie industry (studios and theater chains) the music industry, insurance companies, etc. Sponsorship opportunities would be available for individual components of the campaign which are described in greater detail below. The national campaign could sponsor the development of radio PSAs which could be broadcast over all the national radio networks and by local affiliate stations. The campaign could also develop and distribute scripts for live read announcements by local radio personalities. Other corporate sponsors could buy air time for and produce spots for cable TV advertising and movie trailers. The corporate sponsors could also create promotions with local tie-ins. For example, if the Toyota Scion, which is targeting young drivers, became a corporate partner, there could be tie-ins with local car dealerships that could distribute

Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors Summary of Working Group Meeting –

August 5, 2004

information to parents and teen drivers. Similarly, it may be possible to involve the music industry that could provide a tie-in with concert tours in major cities. The possibilities for corporate involvement are limitless, especially considering the value of the teen market.

- A **Teen Driving Idea Sampler** for distribution to community groups who want to implement local versions of the national campaign. To expand the reach of the campaign, NHTSA could produce an “idea sampler” with radio scripts, sample school policies, event concepts, art work, and other tools that could be distributed through the highway safety, adolescent health, and education communities. The sampler would focus on how the local groups can plug into the national campaign.
- **Demonstration Projects** – in which NHTSA can join with communities to implement individual components and document their effectiveness. Innovative program concepts like the Dial-a-Ride program and the Call-My-Mom program could benefit from evaluation data to indicate both how they work and what impact they might have on teen driving behavior and safety. NHTSA would sponsor demonstration/evaluation research to support implementation of these concepts in selected communities and collection of process and impact evaluation data.

All three campaign components would operate under a common identity umbrella so that they can reinforce the central theme of the campaign. This theme would need to be developed and focus tested, but likely elements include the concept of friendship and making good choices for ourselves and our friends.


Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors Summary of Working Group Meeting –

August 5, 2004



NEXT STEPS

- To move forward on the national campaign element, ABC Radio Networks needs to be able to approach the Secretary of Transportation with a partnership concept that can be approved and implemented. To accomplish this, NHTSA and ABC need to meet to define strategies. Once these strategies are defined, a campaign proposal can be developed and circulated to whatever levels deemed appropriate.
- To continue to use the OPM TMA vehicle as a means to further define concepts, and to build program elements such as the idea sampler, the current management plan needs to be revised. Tasks that could be added include:
 - Facilitate brainstorming sessions to develop detailed lists of campaign elements and campaign identity;
 - Develop scripts and treatments for radio and cable TV spots that could be shared with potential sponsors;
 - Conduct focus groups to test these concepts;
 - Develop the contents and packaging for an idea sampler;
 - Develop concepts and mock-ups for products that could be distributed to teens and their parents through national campaign; and
 - Develop Statements of Work for Demonstration Projects (these demonstration projects would likely be awarded through NHTSA's traditional procurement processes).
- To involve the NHTSA program staff, briefings should be held to bring the staff up to date on the results of the focus group and to obtain buy-in for the proposed national campaign. Two separate briefings should be held.
 - Presentation to the NHTSA Youth Committee to review the research to date and to jointly strategize how to move forward to get approval for the national campaign concept.
 - PowerPoint presentation to the program staff within the Traffic Injury Control office to provide more-detailed information about the findings of the focus groups with regard to NHTSA program areas. This presentation is included in the current OPM management plan

Teen Driving Behaviors




**Focus Group Discussions
Findings & Suggestions
June 2006**
PerformTech Inc


Teen Driving Behaviors – Project Facts

- 16 Discussions Held in 4 Cities
 - Fort Lee, NJ
 - Seattle, WA
 - Minneapolis, MN
 - Atlanta, GA
- Fort Lee and Seattle
 - Groups of Boys & Girls (15-18 yrs)
- Minneapolis & Atlanta
 - Groups of Risk-taking & Safer Males (15-18 yrs)
- Focus Groups and Affinity Groups




Teen Driving Behaviors – Screening

- Mix of Caucasian, African-American, and Other Minorities
- Mix of Single-family home, townhouse, and apartment dwellers
- Risk-Taking Males identified by screening questions
 - Safety belt use
 - Perceptions of speed
 - Perceptions of driving ability
 - Passing frequency
 - Impaired driving




Teen Driving Behaviors – Screening

- Screening Issues
 - Hard to get urban residents
 - Ethnic mix
 - 112 Caucasians
 - 18 African-Americans
 - 9 Minorities
 - Risky drivers not totally honest about dangerous activities
 - Participants skewed toward 17-18 year olds




Teen Driving Behaviors – Discussion Questions

- What behaviors do teens think are dangerous?
- Why do they do what they do?
- What messages or themes would convince them to change?
- How should these messages be delivered?





Findings – Generic Males

- Driving Skills – 8 on 10 point scale
- Driving Responsibility – 6 (with some as low as 0)
- Almost all have some crash experience
 - Most are fender benders but at least two in each group had more serious crashes
- All but three received citations
 - Speeding and reckless driving
 - 1 received 21 tickets (and four wrecked cars)





Findings – Generic Males

- Unsafe Behaviors (mentioned without prompting)
 - Drunk Driving
 - Cell Phones
 - Fooling with radio
 - Road Rage
 - Drowsy Driving
 - Friends in back seat
 - Driving Old
 - Putting on make-up



Findings – Generic Males

- Drunk Driving
 - Seattle Males report DWI more often than NJ
 - As driver
 - Afraid to ask parents for ride
 - No other way to get home
 - Not thinking
 - As passenger
 - He didn't seem drunk
 - He knows his limits
 - I had no choice



Findings – Generic Males

- Drunk Driving (continued)
 - Most everyone thinks they can tell if someone is too drunk to drive
 - One or two beers is not a problem
 - New Jersey Males report parents play a major role in decision to avoid DWI
- Cell Phones
 - Only a hazard when someone else does it
 - Hard to control car with cell phone in one hand and cigarette in other



Findings – Generic Males

- Friends
 - Everyone sees risk of distraction
 - They show off in front of friends
 - Friends do stupid things in car
 - Friends encourage risky behaviors
 - Shout out commands that drivers follow without thinking
 - Overcrowding car makes it hard to see and drive
 - All hate restrictions on # of passengers
 - Not enforceable



Findings – Generic Males

- Friends (continued)
 - Only a problem for inexperienced drivers (i.e. in first two weeks of driving)
- Fooling around with radio
 - Almost all rear end crashes reported occurred when driver looked away to change stations or CD



Findings – Generic Males

- Speeding
 - "Driving 70 mph is not speeding"
 - Reasons:
 - Always late
 - Keeping up with traffic
 - Gives them a rush
 - Speed limits are too low
 - Only when alone on the road
 - They are skilled enough to handle
 - Drive slower in neighborhood streets



Findings – Generic Males

- Street Racing
 - Big problem in Seattle, Minneapolis, and Atlanta
 - Emulating *Fast and Furious* Films
 - Organized events and drag racing at lights
 - Even “safe” drivers admit to driving over 100 MPH late at night
 - Generates two very different reactions
 - “Risky” males love the rush
 - “Safer” males feel fear



Findings – Generic Males

- Drowsy Driving
 - Problem times:
 - Coming home late at night
 - Driving to school very early in AM
 - After school
 - No idea how to deal with it
- Behaviors Mentioned After Prompting
 - Safety Belt Use – Never in back seat
 - Following too closely – Only dangerous when others do it



Findings – Generic Females

- Driving Skills – 8 on 10 point scale
- Driving Responsibility – 6 (with some as low as 3)
- Do not recognize “backing into a fence” as having a crash
- Most common crashes are rear-ending vehicle or backing into fixed object
- While all have been pulled over, most have talked their way out of receiving a ticket



Findings – Generic Females

- Unsafe Behaviors (mentioned without prompting)
 - Drunk Driving
 - Eating (with forks)
 - Running Red Lights
 - Cell Phones
 - Singing, Dancing, and Fooling with Radio
 - Friends in back seat
 - Street Racing
 - Tailgating



Findings – Generic Females

- Impaired Driving
 - Less of an issue than with males
 - No NJ females and only 4 Seattle girls
 - Total faith in friends not to drive impaired
 - Expressed concerns about driving with parents
- Eating With Forks
 - Trying to eat pasta while driving
 - Not willing to change menu choices even though they acknowledge it is a problem



Findings – Generic Females

- Red Light Running
 - Usually caused by distractions in car
- Cell Phones
 - Only one has a hands-free set but never uses it
- Music
 - They don't just listen – they dance and sing
 - They recognize it is a problem but it is a major aspect of their social life



Findings – Generic Females

- Friends
 - Less likely to horse around – more likely to be arguing
 - Restrictions on passengers should be limited to first few months of driving
- Speeding
 - Modify speed for conditions
 - Harder to see police at night
 - Slower in neighborhoods to avoid hitting child
 - More likely to speed while alone while boys speed with passengers
- Street Racing
 - Only an issue in Seattle
 - Participate with their boyfriends



Findings – Generic Females

- Tailgating
 - Less common in girls than in boys
 - Impatient with slow drivers
 - Speeders in Seattle tailgate routinely
- Seat belt use
 - Not seen as unsafe because most wear them routinely – even in back seat
 - There is not good reason not to



Findings – Risky and Safer Males

- Driving Experience
 - Risky Males – Driving longer – from age 12 to 13
 - Safer males – only driving for 6 months to 3 years
- Driving Skills
 - Risky – 8.5
 - Safer – 6.5
- Crash Experience
 - Similar crash experience to generic males
- Citation Experience
 - Twice as many risky drivers received tickets or were pulled over



Findings – Risky and Safer Males

- Unsafe Driving Behaviors
 - Risky Drivers justify their own behaviors as not being unsafe because of their driving skills
 - Safer drivers complain about dangerous things everyone else does
- Drunk Driving
 - As a group, risky drivers more anti-DWI than any other group
 - 4 of 30 risky drivers reported driving after drinking as routine behavior
 - 4 Safer drivers also drank and drove but only one time
 - Safer drivers react differently to hazardous situations



Findings – Risky and Safer Males

- Cell Phones
 - Both groups think it is hard to talk, smoke and drive but they routinely do it
 - Also hard to send text messages but they do that too
 - Safer drivers tend to limit time on phone
- Friends
 - Risky drivers have the skills to handle commotion in the car
 - Safer drivers do not tolerate their friends causing any commotion in their cars



Findings – Risky and Safer Males

- Tailgating
 - Both groups see it as dangerous but risky drivers do it anyway because they cannot tolerate slow drivers
 - Safer drivers make a point of leaving enough space to react
- Seat Belt Use
 - Not mentioned by either group
 - Equal levels of use
 - Regular users credit their parents
 - Part-time users focus on conditions or who is driving



Findings – Risky and Safer Males

- Risky drivers are motivated more by money and the fear of losing their license
- Safer drivers are driven more by relationships and how a crash would devastate their parents



Findings/Suggestions – Graduated Licensing

- While they hate the restrictions, most teens think they are good for new drivers
- They (and their parents) are not aware of the reasons behind the restrictions
- Teens see very little enforcement – they think that police don't believe in laws – if they did there would be more enforcement
- Teens have significant problems in basic vehicle control – this is not covered adequately in drivers ed or licensing exams



Findings/Suggestions – Impaired Driving

- No teens in the 4 cities have any memory of seeing or hearing anti-drunk driving messages on radio or TV
- They do not see any problem with underage drinking and very little problem with driving after 1 or 2 beers
- Most teens think they can tell when someone has had too much to drink – yet they do not know what to look for
- Most believe that marijuana enhances driving ability
- Program events (Dead-Outs) are memorable but they only see them once a year



Findings/Suggestions – Enforcement

- Teens believe it is very easy to talk their way out of tickets – one reported being in car when teen driver blew .08 – and the police officer just drove them home – no ticket
- Teens hold police in low esteem. They believe enforcement is totally arbitrary- driven by quotas rather than concerns for safety
- Risky drivers are most afraid of getting ticket and they believe that stepping up enforcement is only thing to change behavior
- Teens do not know what to do when pulled over or involved in a crash. Include this information in drivers ed



Findings/Suggestions – Safety Belts

- Every teen is aware of *Click It or Ticket* and fear of enforcement is a major influence on seat belt use. Many report they only put their belts on whenever they see a police car. May be necessary to create perception of stepped up enforcement
- Teens believe urban legends – we need to create urban legends about dangers of not wearing belts rather than of wearing them
- Teens believe that if it was important to wear a belt in the back seat it would be required by law. No back seat law – no back seat belt use
- Full-time users credit parents with instilling habit





Findings /Suggestions– Speeding & Aggressive Driving


- Teens feel the “need for speed”
- Driving 10 miles over limit is not dangerous – it is just keeping up with traffic, which their drivers ed teachers recommended
- They need targeted information about the physics of extreme speeding because they do not understand the risks
- Males drivers have an inflated view of their driving ability and no tolerance for any shortcomings of other drivers. They do not consider their driving aggressive – it is highly skilled.
- Need to counter the influence of *Fast and Furious* mystique


Findings/Suggestions – Distracted Driving




- Teens do not see connections between distractions and their numerous fender benders
- If they cannot talk out of multi-tasking, they should be encouraged not to tailgate to avoid frequent rear-end collisions
- Teens need to be empowered to impose rules on their passengers. They recognize dangers but lack skills for dealing with their friends




Findings/Suggestions – Distracted Driving




- Teens do not see risk of their own cell phone use – cannot make judgments on when not to answer phone.
- Consideration should be given to free distribution of hands-free sets like bicycle helmet give-aways
- Teens need ideas on how to handle music without taking eyes off road. Not listening is not an option




Findings/Suggestions – Distracted Driving




- Teens cannot visualize what can happen in the few seconds it takes to change a radio station. They need demonstrations on how far they travel in that time, and how quickly a crash can occur




Findings/Suggestions – Drowsy Driving




- Teens are perpetually tired. Their schedules keep them on the go from early morning to late at night. But they have no strategies for dealing with drowsiness and they will not limit their driving. They need help!




Findings/Suggestions – Motivating Factors




- Teens believe that they are skillful drivers and do not need to change behavior – even if they have been in crashes and gotten tickets
- Believe their friends accept the risk when they drive with them
- What scares them
 - Going to jail
 - Killing someone in a crash
 - Losing parents trust
 - Breaking parent's heart
 - Wrecking car
 - Getting a ticket – losing license
 - Dying




Findings/Suggestions – Motivating Factors




- What might motivate them to change
 - Friends telling them they were doing something stupid
 - Fear of hurting a friend or younger sibling
 - Personal experience of serious crash
 - Hearing from another teen involved in a serious crash
 - Gory images
 - Increased enforcement – for males who are afraid of losing license




Findings/Suggestions – Message Concepts




- Every teen had seen and was impressed by Truth Anti-Smoking Campaign
 - Presents facts but leaves decision to teen
 - Makes them think for themselves
 - Presents facts in visually shocking ways
 - High production values
- While no one saw drunk driving ad, all had seen marijuana ads and thought they were laughable




Findings/Suggestions – Message Concepts




- Parents have incredible influence on their kids – even on the risky drivers
 - Teens who knew their parents would punish them or make them pay for their crashes, tended to modify their behavior
 - Teens whose parents keep paying their bills see no reason to change their behavior
- If teens do not see or hear a message about a traffic safety behavior, it must not be dangerous




Findings/Suggestions – Message Concepts




- Teens want to be shocked by visual images rather than bored by lengthy narratives
- They crave facts so they can make their own decisions. They hate being told what to think
- Messages must be “real” -- true stories about their peers involved in serious crashes
 - Teens cannot predict consequences so these messages must enable them to experience the crash and its aftermath vicariously
- Teens live their lives in their cars – Messages must acknowledge this while showing how to incorporate safer behaviors without compromising this relationship




Findings/Suggestions – Delivery Channels




- Teens equate importance with saturation. If it is important they should see it everywhere. They are not seeing traffic safety messages anywhere
- Radio is the preferred delivery medium followed by cable TV, movie trailers, and billboards
- Morning drive time is preferred time slot for radio, and messages should be delivered live by announcers, not pre-recorded




Findings/Suggestions – Delivery Channels




- Magazines could work for girls but boys did not admit to much reading
- Despite their addiction to technology they were vehemently opposed to getting messages on their phones or the Internet
- Teens liked the idea of having small group discussions like the focus groups because it was a safe environment for exploring what concerned them
- The only adult figure who could deliver a message effectively, (besides parent and radio announcer) were paramedics who can report on what they have seen



Findings/Suggestions – Delivery Channels



- Parents have the greatest potential impact yet many parents have stepped out of their children’s lives just when they are needed the most
- Parents need to be mobilized to speak to their children every day about how much they are loved, how their death would leave a void, and that the parent will hold them accountable
- The most touching moment came when a “bad boy” commented that it would help if parents told their children they loved them whenever they left the house



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