

# Street racing and the impact on the community



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Street racing is one of the popular subcultures among the youth and the not-so-young. It has proven that it is growing as a subculture and was effectively meshing itself with the contemporary and popular culture, at least when it comes to mass media and the entertainment world. The presence of street racing has spawned the success of many very nice street racing-themed movies like the trilogy Fast and the Furious.

But while these movies are entertaining, and the lifestyle presented in such movies very tempting (especially with the presence of gorgeous cars and equally gorgeous women, the laid back lifestyle that springs to adrenaline-pumped state of being awake at night and the control of life from the clutches of death and defeat through effective double clutching and wheel control), the present situation is not as entertaining. Many kids lose any chance of a good future after their street driving days turn to sour with an accident, bad debt or acts of vengeance from gangsters or fellow drivers or both. While some of the adults squander their stable jobs; their lives and their limbs just to be able to get a hit of this particular rush one more time. Lives of drivers, as well as onlookers, civilian onlookers and law enforcement agents are put in harm's way because of street racing, not to mention the threat to damage to personal, private and government property that results to street racing events gone bad.

There are legal ways to experience street racing events. But it seems that more and more racers prefer the environment and culture found in illegal street racing. Because of this, it cannot be helped but ask. What is the main impact of street racing in the community? This paper will try to investigate the impact and effect of street racing in the community and see if there are

indeed collective good found in street racing that can validate the morals held by street racers and those who support this particular sub-culture.

Street racing is a very interesting topic because of many reasons.

One of the reasons is that this avenue allows for the investigation of one of the most primitive instincts among humans – competitiveness. Despite the fact that illegal street racing events are not sanctioned by any official governing body and the rules of the race are inscribed in some rule book, it is amazing to know how high the competitive energy and level the drivers seem to exude especially during competition time. Is it the adrenaline rush? Is it the thought that street racing is akin to racing with and against death itself? Is it the prize money, the respect, the honor or the Kingship of the streets? Street racing drivers, it seems, are awarded the status of king-warlords. Take for example the character DK (for Drift King) in the movie Tokyo Drift and Vin Diesel's character in the movie Fast and the Furious. Everywhere they go, so long as they are surrounded by the followers of street racing, they are accorded the respect, that only the best driver and the winner of most competitions and races earns and keeps.

Is this motivation high and important enough that everyone is willing to risk their cars, their money, their future and their life just to be able to earn the same stature and be awarded of the same level of respect, even if it means breaking hundreds of traffic rules and endangering the lives of many people and risking damaging many properties in the name of the mantle of title and kingship in the fiefdom of street racing? These inquiries are very important and exciting and may provide a useful insight on how social welfare and law enforcement agencies should treat, perceive and assess those who are

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involved in street racing. These institutions actually hope to contribute firmly on the drive to curb street racing by arresting and rehabilitating street racing drivers and ultimately stopping the negative effects of street racing in the society; effects that this paper will try to collect, collate, discuss and analyse through credible references from traditional print materials as well as electronic files from the internet through credible websites and web pages.

**Review of Readings** There are several available readings that can help in the research about street racing and the impact of this particular sub culture in the society and the community. There are reference materials coming from traditional print sources like newspapers and books. The internet, a new form of mass media and information dissemination – the proverbial “ information highway” for street racing (pun not intended) – has proven capable and with substantive materials that can provide additional credible and usable information to synthesize collected and collated information about street racing, particularly the ill-effects of this sub culture on the community.

It includes the youth but not putting an exemption on grown ups and adults who are, nonetheless, involved and addicted in this particular illegal sport. Several books were consulted for this particular paper. The third edition of the book Harley-Davidson Sportster Performance Handbook, which was written by Buzz Buzzelli, was referenced by the paper particularly on its input on street racing culture, the role of cops in this particular problem and the overall nature of street racing, legal and illegal. The book “ Boys Adrift” by Leonard Sax was a book that talks about the deviant actions that boys do when they chose to not conform to the society. One of the avenues for non conformity is the participation in sub cultures like street racing, the similar

take of another book that was referenced by this paper, which was entitled “ Kids These Days,” authored by Karen Sternheimer. Robert C.

Post’s book entitled “ High Performance” was consulted because this book is an authority in drag racing, with some sections of the book devoted in the discussion of street racing. For reliable internet sites, there are news and police agency websites that provide additional information about street racing. There are news agency websites that featured street racing. Some of these websites are featured in this paper and were used as credible information source and reference, including the website of CTV (www. CTV. com) which featured the news about the death of a cab driver because of street racing; Guardian (www.

guardian. co. k) which featured the news about the entry of women in street racing culture, especially young girls; and Local 6 (www. local6. com), which featured the news about a bus driver who was arrested for street racing and was placed under a different assignment after this particular traffic infraction and act of misdemeanor. There are other websites which features syndicated news and feature article about street racing and the evils of illegal street racing.

Analysis The dangers of illegal street racing There is no doubt street racing is dangerous. If legalized and legitimate street racing – with its standard procedures for safety – still has injuries and deaths, imagine the extent of threat to life, to the body and to property of illegal street races. According to Sternheimer (2000), street racing is an activity that is not only limited to the rebellious teenager but to other types of individuals as well so long as he or

she has the high for speed racing (Sternheimer, 2006, p. 132). Illegal street racing was considered as “ playing with fire” (Valenti, 2005) by the Suffolk County’s County Executive Steve Levy during an anti-illegal street racing press conference in Suffolk. Detective Paul Lobsinger agreed, noting that there are no ‘ reset buttons’ for this kind of dangerous games and no “ new car” and “ new life” maybe available for those who loses in this game (Surette, 2006).

The most immediate and worse thing to happen is death – for the driver who is racing, for the drivers who are innocent and caught in the middle, and for other civilians in close proximity with the accident who are in mortal danger because of the threat of flying debris which can also kill them. Those who are fortunate enough to survive an accident from illegal street racing may carry wounds and injuries for the rest of their lives. While others may experience the repercussions of their action in different ways, like losing a job, losing the car, losing the right to legally drive an automobile or being imprisoned for a long time, especially for cases of reckless imprudence resulting to homicide, wherein another person was killed because of the illegal street racing. Death rate Many different news and books published reflect not just the number of deaths of those who are involved in illegal street racing, but also the consciousness of the people about illegal street racing and how this is killing many individuals annually. “ In 2002, San Diego was experiencing a surge of deaths and injuries due to teenage boys racing their cars on city streets.

That year, fourteen teenagers were killed and thirty-one were seriously injured in street racing accidents (Sax, 2007, p. 190). Valenti (2005) wrote that in 2005 there were three deaths in Long Island alone, as a result of

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illegal street racing, which prompted police action and the creation of a stiffer penalty for those caught illegally racing in this area (Valenti, 2005). There are even some identified hotspots when it comes not just in illegal street racing, but notorious places where there are a lot of street racing related deaths. One of these places is San Diego, where street racing-related deaths comprise a very significant number in the overall death toll of the country. The problem was particularly bad in San Diego, where nearly 12 percent of the nation's racing deaths occurred (Sternheimer, 2006, p.

132)" in 2001 alone. The same article found in the book *The Kids These Days* noted that " NHTSA estimated that 135 people were killed in racing accidents in 2001, compared with 12, 850 for all speeding-related deaths (Sternheimer, 2006, p 132). " Peak and Glensor (2004) cited the deaths of one person in Los Angeles and 15 individuals in San Diego County – deaths which are somewhat connected to the movie *Fast and the Furious* which authorities believed inspired these people to step on the gas harder and longer. The San Diego County case showed an increase in deaths in street racing after the movie *Fast and the Furious* was shown, while the 78-year old male was killed by driver who just came out of the theater after watching *Fast and the Furious*.

Newark police agents this year are more rigid in stopping street racing because of the 2007 incident that killed Chinsu Park Un (Spina, 2007). This year, the law enforcement agency stationed there has been doling out more and more resources so that street racing is stopped and street racers apprehended so that there would be no more cases similar to the death of Un. Even in other countries, illegal street racing is a problem and a constant

death threat to racers and to civilians as well. A CBC news article published in June 2006 online noted that the usual victims are those who are not actually participating in racing – innocent civilians who are caught in a very dangerous game that people play in the name of money, honor, vengeance or just pure fun – pure lethal fun. The list of victims includes the 31 year old Jimmy Ng who died in 2002 and Rob and Lisa Manchester who died in 2006 after a street racing accident (CBC News Online, 2006). The website article carried follow up and related news stories about recent deaths and injuries involving street racing, which included a May 2006 case in Burnaby wherein a male victim died and two January 2006 cases where four people were killed, including a taxi driver who was also victimized by a racing driver.

Tahir Khan would have realized his dream of becoming a full fledged Canadian citizen if only he was not killed a day before his naturalization by two young individuals who are street racing in Canada in 2006. In Essex in UK six people were reported to have died in this place alone, along with more than one hundred cases of serious injuries because of the rampant street racing that happens in this part of the UK (Thompson, 2004). " Other effects While death is the most tragic negative impact illegal street racing can bring, there are also other negative impact and effect that street racing brings that is also a very serious threat to anyone who is vulnerable and exposed. Peak and Glensor (2004) identified these threats, and lists many items including vehicle crashes, the noise coming from the cars and the shouts of the audience which worsens noise pollution and the vandalism and the presence of excessive and uncontrolled trash and litter from people who are on the location (Peak and Glensor, 2004). The two writers also believe



that illegal street racing creates loss of commercial revenue, and negatively affects the government as well because they need to repair the roads more often.

Illegal street races place the streets on excessive wear and tear situation, the roads and streets used more often and not in the manner that it was expecting to handle from cars passing on it. Action versus illegal street racing Because of the threat to the lives and property caused by illegal street racing, many government agencies led by law enforcement units have made efforts to stop illegal street racing. One of the options was to make the extent of the penalty deterrent enough for street racers to think twice about racing since they can lose their precious automobile and serve time in jail too. Valenti (2005) reminded those who want to illegally race in Suffolk County that the penalty for such action includes arrest and confiscation of the car the driver is driving, the message that according to Valenti's news article the county's police commissioner wants to send out especially to those who regularly undertake illegal street racing activities in this part of the country, especially along Route 231 in Deer Park Avenue (Valenti, 2005).

Battling and curbing illegal street racing through severe action was something that most law enforcement units utilized, in the hope that the racer would be deterred from illegal racing because of the possible consequence if and when the driver/racer is caught, which meant stiff fines and penalties, jail time, confiscation of the car and a huge amount to get it back from the hands of the authorities. Undercover cops began videotaping the races; then they would show up at racers' homes with tow truck. ' We handcuff them, put them in jail, impound the car for thirty days for \$1, 000, <https://assignbuster.com/street-racing-and-the-impact-on-the-community/>

suspend their licenses for one year, fine them \$1, 500 and put two points on their license' (Sax, 2007, p. 190).

” Efforts to legalize street racing events Evidently, the ethos of racing is something that is socially accepted. Throughout mankind's history, man and woman alike are very fond of the concept of racing for different reasons; the financial gains of winning bets, the high and adrenaline rush in the presence of competition that features speed, skill, strength and mental toughness or the pure, simple entertainment of watching an event unfold, anticipating who would win and who would lose this time. Man has always raced – against themselves – unaided, through Olympic marathon and running events, or with a mechanical or animal partner – from bicycles to horses, go-karts to Formula 1 cars. There is something in racing that captures the fancy of the onlookers and kibitzers, regardless of social class.

Because of the undeniable fact that humans have a penchant for racing, street racing is approached by some law enforcement agencies in the United States as something that they should not stop altogether. On the contrary, it is something that they should help nurture positively, through the presence of legal street racing and the providing of assistance and amenities that can make the event safer for everyone involved. Through the efforts to legitimize street racing, the government and the responsible agencies not only give the drivers a safer venue; they also allow more people to enjoy this spectacle and allow a more systematic and safe undertaking of this particular event. It seems that battling illegal street racing has a solution. It is not the pursuit of drivers running away using cars that are definitely faster than the stock model of the squad cars that cops use in pursuit. But, rather, an anticipation

of what they will do next so that the government agencies and the street racers can meet in the middle and legitimize street racing.

In fact, in some communities, police and city officials have teamed together to sponsor race tracks or legal street races with a safer competitive environment (Buzzelli, 2006, p. 65). " Valenti (2005) reported in 2005 that the police leaders and the political leaders of Suffolk has pledged that alongside the strict and rigorous efforts to catch, apprehend and penalize illegal street racers are efforts by the local government as well to provide racers with a legitimate and legal avenue where they can race so that racing is removed from the streets and transferred in a safer, secure environment. But sadly, not every effort to legalize or legitimize street racing was embraced with open arms.

Many were reluctant to the offered options and most shy away, keeping themselves in the streets where they prefer to race better. There is no payment for racing, and if one is good enough behind the wheel, they can even take home additional money, which they'd gamble again in another round of street racing. To think that efforts to legalize street racing are not meant with acceptance among racers is a sad note indeed, like the case of RaceLegal where " any teenager could race; all they needed was a valid driver's license and proof that they had the owner's permission to race the car. Initially, nobody showed up. Boys didn't see the point of paying to race at the stadium when they could race for free on city streets (Sax, 2007, p.

190). " Change of scene, change of paceA very positive development in the illegal street racing is the shift of the attitude of racers from constantly

racing to using these conventions as a way to improve their personal networks and social contacts and meet and hang out with friends. Since not everyone who are involved in illegal street racing are focused on racing and driving (since there are those who are involved in these groups and in these events because of their penchant for tinkering automobile motors or creating car designs and other car accessories and amenities), it is very likely that when the urge to race has tempered off. Most of the gathering becomes informal car-themed parties and gatherings.

People go there to talk about cars and to compare car settings, to exchange ideas and technologies and how this affects the cars and their performance on the road. Some people simply want to hang out with a group of people who share the same interests as he/she. Interest in cars is not something innate in everyone, and a person can feel very alienated if he or she has no friends to talk with, especially about cars. These gatherings that feature less races and more socializing and partying is somehow a positive development. Lieberman says that today's illegal street races are ' more like street raves than races. They are gathering spots for people, most of whom just want to hang out with friends' (Buzzelli, 2006, p.

65). " If the law enforcement should still be very wary about this one, maybe the cause of concern may come from the danger of drunk driving or worse, drugged driving, a problem which is as lethal as illegal street racing because the death toll in drunk and drugged driving is still very alarming, especially among kids. Illegal street racing and popular mediaStreet racing, including illegal street racing, is one of the newest topics in popular media like the movies, music and even in video games, like Need for Speed. The start of <https://assignbuster.com/street-racing-and-the-impact-on-the-community/>

twenty-first century saw the outpouring of films featuring cars and motorcycles illegally racing in streets and talking about their lifestyle and other important aspects of the street racing culture. Indeed, the illegal street racing scene is getting a very big support from popular media. Popular music icons, like rappers Ludacris and Ja Rule, appear in street racing movies.

Many rap songs allude to or is being used as soundtrack of the street racing culture. But the most significant effort to immortalize street racing and bring it closer to the consciousness of the masses is by featuring it in several movies, like Fast and the Furious. With the influx of many movies, as well as television shows and music videos that feature street racing, it should not be confused that popular media was responsible for the popularity of illegal street racing. On the contrary, even before the entry of popular media in this particular sub culture, the illegal street racing is already a very solid and stable sub culture attended by rich, talented and competitive drivers and wagers.

These movies, as well as the proliferation of illegal street racing themes in popular media, however, propelled the further increase in the followers of this sub culture. More and more people become interested. Those who do not know that there is avenue for them where they can be of much use suddenly saw opportunities in the illegal street racing world, like tuners, decal makers, car designers, grease monkeys, speed demons and everything else in between. “ While the films didn’t spawn street racing culture, they did have an impact on the young men and women who love it.

Lieberman notes that while some serious tuners found the cars a bit overdone and dismissed the criminal-activities angle (Buzzelli, 2006, p. 65). " But Peak and Glensor (2004), in their article about street racing, believes that the influence of movies like Fast and the Furious may include inspiring street racers (Peak and Glensor, 2004) to race again while making a myth out of the experience of street racing, making it a sought after drug by those who have the itch to drive fast. The two also believed that street racing is a key precursor to further violence and criminal acts among racers, drivers and those involved in this subculture, listing the possible criminal actions that street racers are often involved with, from auto theft to insurance fraud.

If there was any negative impact that these movies and the entry of street racing in popular media, it is the inclusion of the image that illegal street racing is also a touch point towards other different criminal activities like theft, highway robbery, drugs and carnapping, which is not always true and is very difficult to prove. There are no strong evidences linking street racing to other forms of illegal activities (save for illegal betting which happens every race). The attachment of the criminal image to street racing maybe one of the reason why both sides are finding it hard for street racing to surface from its sub culture status and become legitimized.