

TEENAGE CRUISING AND HANGING OUT

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In researching teenage cruising and hanging out, I found multiple fascinating and original techniques used by the younger generations of today. To my surprise, the styles of cruising varied according to the size of the cities and areas within the cities. I did not grow up in Kentucky so all of this new information was completely unfamiliar, yet it was still relevant. I interviewed a miscellaneous group of individuals to complete my findings. Each person's story had a different and exciting twist that made their hometowns thoroughly unique.

The first young woman is named Melanie Hale. She spent most of her years as a teenager in Sarasota, Florida. She moved to Tompkinsville, Kentucky as a senior in high school and continues her education at Western Kentucky. The first thing concerning hanging out that took place in Sarasota was finding someone over 21 years of age for obvious reasons; they needed alcohol. They would also buy styrofoam cups to drink their beer out of in order to not give away what they were really drinking. In Melanie's town, cruising was not done in its conventional form. No one drove around in a circle or down a main road, they gathered at certain people's houses. The groups were stratified according to "coolness." Each separate group would meet at a person's house and just basically "hang out." The teenagers would socialize and talk about other people,

make fun of the drunk people that were making fools of themselves, and would try to meet others of the opposite sex. I must reiterate that meeting the opposite sex was their main goal. Some drugs were present at these parties, however, they were not as prevalent in Sarasota as they were in Tompkinsville. She attributed this to Tompkinsville being the smaller town. She stated that in the smaller town, there is less to do and drugs helped to not only occupy their time, but also satisfy their curiosities. The drinking also took place on the back roads because the police were less likely to patrol these back roads than the main streets. The people cruised up and down the streets, occasionally stopping and talking to people. She noticed a total difference in cruising techniques in the larger town as compared to the smaller town.

Kim Twidwell, a 19 year old freshman at Western Kentucky, grew up in Bowling Green. She stated that there was not one main road that was used for cruising, instead the teenagers drove around the entire town. There was always a designated driver within her clique because more often than not, everyone drank while they drove around looking for their friends. For the most part, each crew hung out and drove around together, but at the individual parties, all the cliques socialized with one another. Fast food places and houses were the predominant meeting places for the teenagers. Drugs also seemed to be extremely prevalent at these parties and she really couldn't ever remember being at a party where drugs were not heavily

accepted and practiced. The people that did not take part in doing drugs were pretty much looked down upon and thought of as "square."

Allana Maynard was raised in Glasgow, Kentucky. I found her town to be the most exciting and intriguing. The entire cruising process took place on a hill, more specifically, Hamburger Hill. It was named this because every fast food restaurant was located on top of this hill. Wendy's was the favorite spot to have fights. This was so because it was at the very top of the hill and everyone could see who was fighting and see who won. Drinking also took place at the top of the hill. The teenagers hid kegs at Wendy's and used their Wendy's drink cups to fill up with beer. These kegs were successfully hidden and kept out of sight from the police and Wendy's employees. Everyone drove very slow around this hill and there were always a lot of wrecks. These accidents occurred because the hill was extremely steep and most everyone had stick shift cars. While stopped on the hill, the cars would roll backwards and end up hitting the ones behind them. The police finally got tired of answering to all these accident reports and moved the cruising spot down to Bud's parking lot. The teenagers reacted by actually forming and signing a petition to keep the cruising spot at Hamburger Hill! However, this petition was not successful and the current spot is still at Bud's. During these cruising expeditions the teens talked about who had the nicest car, who was dating who, who was going to ride with who,

and of course, the main topic centered around the opposite sex. Taking off fast in your car and spinning the tires was considered to be cool. At Hamburger Hill, a lot of racial fights took place. The African Americans arrived at the top of the hill and played their music very loud. This caused the Rednecks and country boys to not be able to hear their own music. This was reason enough to start a fight. In addition to the music preference differences, these fights were also considered to be a way of gaining recognition and prestige. Over all, the cruising ended around 1 a.m. because of high school curfews. The teenagers usually ended up at the town lake to commense their drinking before going home. Unlike the larger towns, the cliques all hung out together and congregated at the same spots.

I grew up in Tampa, Florida, which is a rather large city. My high school consisted of over 2500 students with only three grades represented. Because of these large numbers, there was a definite presence of stratification according to "coolness." The cool crowd hung out at the local Mc Donald's and drank there. They talked about the "normal" things that the other groups did. It never failed that this group would get run out of there by the cops around one or two in the morning. Some other cliques hung out at people's houses and the hoodlums hung out at the movie theater, mainly because all the junior high schoolers hung out there too and it was considered to be very uncool to hang out with people that were younger than yourself. My group

of friends, along with my brother's friends were able to hang out at my house because my parents were the only ones that would let us drink at home. My parents allowed us to do so safely by taking everyone's keys and allowing no one to leave until the next morning. I thought this was pretty responsible of my parents because they knew that we were going to drink anyway, and they thought that by keeping us at home, we were better off there than out driving around like the other kids. Since my brother and I are only one year apart in age, we had the same groups of friends and were able to have fun together by playing card games, playing with a Ouija Board and making up new ways to play old games. In my town, there was really not one place to hang out. I had never even heard of the word "cruise" until I came up here to go to school. So, needless to say, cruising did not take place.

After comparing all these different forms of socialization by teenagers, I came up with one main finding. Alcohol was definitely a major factor in each of these forms of hanging out. Of course all of it was done under age. I also found that whatever cruising technique was used, each town formed its own identity and way of socializing through hanging out with their specific groups of friends. I found each group's eccentricities to be fascinating.