

This article was downloaded by:[University of Toronto]
On: 21 November 2007
Access Details: [subscription number 785020432]
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Youth Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713393791>

Self-made Motormen: The Material Construction of Working-class Masculine Identities through Car Modification

Andrew Bengry-Howell; Christine Griffin

Online Publication Date: 01 September 2007

To cite this Article: Bengry-Howell, Andrew and Griffin, Christine (2007) 'Self-made Motormen: The Material Construction of Working-class Masculine Identities through Car Modification', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10:4, 439 - 458

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/13676260701360683

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13676260701360683>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Self-made Motormen: The Material Construction of Working-class Masculine Identities through Car Modification

Andrew Bengry-Howell & Christine Griffin

This paper explores how motorcars and car-based cultural practices operate in the construction of young working-class masculine identities. It draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2002 with young male car modifiers from the Midlands and North Wales who associated with the British cruising scene. Although this study is broadly framed by the youth cultural world of cruising, it does not approach car modification as a collective cultural phenomenon or draw on subcultural theory, but instead examines young men's relationships with their cars in terms of general theories of consumption and identity and theories of cultural production. The car modifiers participating in this study frequently resisted calls to collectivity and repeatedly endorsed a heavily individualised discourse of consumption. As consumers of the motorcar, they constituted themselves as absolutely individual on the basis of their ownership of modified cars that they constituted as culturally unique. Car modification operated as a set of identity practices organised around the active consumption and symbolic manipulation of standard motorcars and the cultural production of idiosyncratic signifiers of masculine identity. Through car modification, young working-class men discursively distanced themselves from the mass of standard car-owning subjects and constituted themselves as 'unique' car-owning individuals who were culturally privileged. This claim to privilege was predicated on their capacity to produce highly conspicuous motorcars, which they viewed as a source of considerable cultural capital.

The authors are at the University of Bath, Department of Psychology. Correspondence to: Dr Andrew Bengry-Howell, University of Bath, Department of Psychology, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY, UK. Email: abh20@bath.ac.uk

Introduction

This paper examines the cultural significance of the motorcar to young men who modify their cars and explores how the active process of *doing* car modification operates in the construction and maintenance of masculine identities. It draws on a study of 30 young white working-class car modifiers from the East and West Midlands and North Wales, who owned modified cars and were all associated with the British cruising scene. As a collective cultural practice, the cruising scene developed out of unauthorised gatherings of young people in modified cars, called cruises, that started occurring on car parks in retail parks and industrial estates late at night during the 1990s (Mills 2000; Bengry-Howell 2001). These gatherings provided a forum for young modified-car enthusiasts to meet and socialise, and for modified car owners to exhibit their symbolically and mechanically enhanced vehicles and engage in performative motorcar displays before an appreciative audience (Mills 2000; Bengry-Howell 2001).

Despite the efforts of the police to prevent them, the 'car cruise' phenomenon expanded faster than police forces could react to it (Avon and Somerset Constabulary 2002) and the size and frequency of cruises increased throughout the 1990s. The scene generated numerous cruising-related web sites [1] and a television documentary (*Cruising to the Max*, Channel 5); cruises were also regularly featured in car magazines such as *Max Power*, *Fast Car* and *Redline*, and a cruise provided the setting for a chapter entitled 'get your kicks on the B156' in Miranda Sawyer's journalistic account of growing up in suburban Wilmslow: *Park and Ride* (Sawyer 1999). In 2001, Universal Pictures released the action movie *The Fast and the Furious*, which had a plot based around the underground world of car modifying and street racing in Los Angeles, and grossed £1,763,020 at UK box offices on its opening weekend [2]. The film sired two sequels—*2 Fast 2 Furious* (2003) and *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006)—both of which were extremely popular among young British audiences.

In the British national and local press, cruises and the practices associated with them came under media scrutiny (see Mills 2000; Spinney 2000), and the scene and young car modifiers were mostly constructed as a social problem. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, young car modifiers were represented in media discourses through the image of the 'boy racer': a 'strutting adolescent driving an Escort XR3i, with spoilers, yellow fog lights and extra bass speakers, who practices handbrake turns in the local car park' (Spinney 2000, p. 8), who was said to epitomise a wider problem with young male motorists (see Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs 1998/99).

Despite the intense media interest in this phenomenon, it has largely escaped the attention of academic researchers, with the exception of a few studies (see Hatton 1999; Bengry-Howell 2001, 2005; O'Dell 2001; Vaaranen & Wieloch 2002; Brownlie *et al.* 2005). This oversight is surprising considering the extensive literature that has

been generated by British researchers on how young people appropriate clothes-based fashions and styles to signify their association with youth subcultural and other youth cultural forms (see Hebdige 1979; Willis *et al.* 1990; Miles *et al.* 1998; Miles 2000; Muggleton 2000). More generally there is a paucity of studies exploring the cultural significance of the motorcar, which, in relation to the voluminous literature that has been generated on other forms of material culture, is extraordinary (Miller 2001, p. 6).

Youth research, particularly that which draws on subcultural theory, often aggregates the identity work and cultural practices of individual young people and considers them in terms of their collective significance (Hebdige 1979; Brake 1995; Thornton 1995; Muggleton 2000). The car modifiers interviewed for this study frequently resisted calls to collectivity, and repeatedly endorsed a heavily individualised discourse of consumption. As consumers of the motorcar, they constituted themselves as absolutely individual on the basis of their ownership of cars that they recurrently described as culturally unique. Although the car-modifying scene did involve a number of collective cultural practices (such as sharing technical knowledge, mechanical expertise and, on occasions, physical labour), this was subordinate to the strongly individualistic activities involved in modifying one's own car, and the force of the individualised discourse of consumption through which these practices were understood.

Youth and Consumption

In the 1970s, researchers at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies argued that the distinctive styles of dress and cultural practices that many working-class young people were embracing signified a symbolic form of resistance to their subordinate class position and the values of the dominant culture that determined their lives (Hall & Jefferson 1976). Youth subcultures were viewed as a cultural site in which young people negotiated with and attempted to resolve the structural problematic of a subordinate class experience (Clarke 1975), and were said to provide subcultural insiders with a distinctive cultural frame of reference from which to develop individual identities (Brake 1995, p. 191). Key to this process of identity construction was the adoption of a distinctive cultural style and the appropriation of that style as an intentional form of signifying practice (Hebdige 1979).

During the 1990s the concept of subculture came under considerable scrutiny as theorists of postmodernity argued that much more complex and diverse forms of signifying practice were embodied in the self-conscious acts of stylistic bricolage that contemporary youth were engaging in (Bennett 1999). Some academics proffered concepts such as 'Neo-Tribes' (Maffesoli 1996) and 'Lifestyles' (Miles 1995) as more appropriately encapsulating the diverse shifting cultural forms and 'loose' social networks that defined many young people's lives. Paul Willis, whose work has played an important role in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies tradition, also

questioned whether distinct youth subcultures still endured, but argued that the grounds for emergent 'proto-communities' were inherent in the communicative potential of cultural commodities (Willis *et al.* 1990). Communities, he argued, could arise out of a common 'consuming interest' among young people or a sense of ephemeral solidarity that might be experienced at 'one-off' celebrations or mass events (Willis *et al.* 1990, p. 142).

How young people creatively appropriate cultural commodities in their identity work has been a common theme in Willis's research, and young people's symbolic creativity, he argues, takes place within a context where opportunities for symbolic creativity that have traditionally been found through paid employment are limited. Young people's symbolic creativity is now explored through leisure and processes of symbolic production, in a 'social condition' characterised by economic dependence on parents, an uncertain future, lack of power over immediate circumstances, and feelings of symbolic and material marginality (Willis *et al.* 1990, p. 12). Under these conditions, leisure and the opportunities that it provides for 'symbolic work as identity making' is extremely important (Willis *et al.* 1990, p. 14).

The bulk of Willis' research focuses on commercialised leisure, where the main cultural materials and resources used in symbolic work are cultural commodities (Willis *et al.* 1990, p. 17). Young people's consumption of cultural commodities is a highly active and creative process, wherein consumers symbolically work to make sense of commodities and actively utilise them as symbolic resources in their lives (Willis *et al.* 1990, p. 21). Cultural commodities may be transformed through young people's appropriation of them, as in the case of sound-system building by groups of young black men (Willis *et al.* 1990, p. 72) and 'sewing, altering and making clothes' by young working-class women (p. 94). In such cases, Willis argues, consumption is transformed through cultural practice into production. Practices such as car modification (Hatton 1999; Vaaranen & Wieloch 2002; Bengry-Howell 2005; Brownlie *et al.* 2005) and car customisation (Marsh & Collett 1986; Bailey 1986; O'Dell 2001; Mellström 2004) provide compelling examples of how young people's consumption of mass-produced standard cars is transformed by their symbolic labour into the production of culturally 'unique' vehicles.

Consumption and Identity

Postmodern and post-structural accounts of consumption constitute it as a cultural 'mode of being, a way of gaining identity' (Sarup 1996, p. 105), in which commodities operate as 'tools of identity making' (p. 125). Commodities provide the symbolic means to construct and perform particular identity formations (Storey 1999, p. 136) where human subjectivity is constituted in terms such as 'you are what you possess' (Belk 1988, p. 65). Possessing and retaining a commodity are fundamental to its role in processes of identity construction, and possessed commodities can operate as extensions of the self. The extended self that is constituted through one's personal

possessions transcends the physicality of the human body and is psychologically reified through the notion that by 'claiming that something is "mine" we also come to believe that the object is "me"' (Belk 1988, p. 141).

Motorcars may be deliberately 'acquired as a "second skin" in which others may see us' (Belk 1988, p. 151), and routine practices associated with their retention and care, such as cleaning and general maintenance, serve to nurture and consolidate their status as objects of self-extension (p. 158). More intensive practices wherein motorcars are modified and crafted to an individual's specification embody more deliberate attempts at self-extension and identity construction (Belk 1988, p. 143).

Consumer and marketing researchers argue that consumers generally seek out commodities with a product image that corresponds with the self-image that they want to project, and avoid commodities that they perceive to have a negative product image (Hogg & Bannister 2001). This is particularly apparent with commodities that carry gendered meanings, and gendered forms of consumption and marketing practices, particularly in contemporary western societies, are acknowledged to play a significant role in the social construction of gender categories and gendered identities (Joy & Venkatesh 1994).

The Social and Cultural Meaning of the Car

Throughout its history the motorcar has been a highly gendered commodity, with a strong discursive association with men and masculinity (Flink 1988). Although a small number of women purchased and drove motorcars from the earliest days of their manufacture (Scharff 1991), the cultural meaning of the motorcar has been historically constituted in terms of a symbolically powerful and normalised relationship between masculinity and technology (Wajcman 1991; Mellström 2004). Although this changed somewhat in the 1950s with the arrival of the family car, which was marketed for mixed use by the whole family (Wernick 1991, p. 72), the symbolic power of men was reproduced through the seating grid, in which the husband/father was positioned as the driver, with his wife sat by his side as a passenger and their children sat behind them in a row in the back (Wernick 1991, p.72).

Since the 1960s, shifting gender relations have seen a dramatic increase in the number of female car owners and female drivers; by the end of the twentieth century 42 per cent of new cars sold in Britain were being bought by women (Coward 1999), and female drivers are projected to outnumber male drivers during the early part of the twenty-first century (Silverton 1999). This has corresponded with motorcars becoming increasingly gendered, with certain makes and models specifically marketed at women, whilst others are marketed at men (Coward 1999; Silverton 1999). For women, the motorcar is constituted as a safe means of independent transportation (Hubak 1996) that is associated with fun, freedom and individualism

(Silverton 1999). For men, the motorcar continues to be constituted as a symbol of status and masculine power (Wajcman 1991).

Youth and Motorcars

Since the 1950s the motorcar has been central to the cultural identities of many teenagers in western industrialised societies, where it has represented a means of escaping parental control (Pickett 1998, p. 27) and realising personal freedom (Bayley 1986). For young people who could afford it, acquiring a motorcar heralds the arrival of an important stage of transition, from dependency on public transport and private transport controlled by parents to individual car-based autonomy and independent automobility (Carribine & Longhurst 2002). For young men, motorcar ownership holds particular cultural resonance in that it reproduces a traditional association between masculinity and technology (Wajcman 1991), and marks a cultural rite of passage into manhood.

The limited research literature on youth and cars falls broadly into two distinct strands: one that examines young people's appropriation of the motorcar in terms of its 'subcultural' significance, and the other that constitutes young people's relationship with the motorcar in terms of a social problem (Carrabine & Longhurst 2002). Research in Britain mostly falls into the second category, and in this area the literature relating to 'joyriders' [3] has been particularly influential (see Bengry-Howell 1999). Outside Britain a number of car-based youth cultural forms have been documented, and in the US context the Chicano Lowriders feature most prominently in the research literature (see Allard-Holtz 1975; Beck 1980; Grandante 1982; Plascencia 1983; Marsh & Collett 1986; Vigil 1991; Bright 1994; Ramirez 1996; Chappell 2000, 2001). Studies have also focused on the Raggare in Sweden (Marsh & Collett 1986, p. 100; O'Dell 2001) and Norway (Lamvik 1996), the 'motor-orientated subcultures' associated with the kortteliralli street racing scene in Finland (Vaaranen & Wieloch 2002), and the Boso-zuko in Japan (Marsh & Collett 1986; Kersten 1993).

The Study

The fieldwork for this study was conducted over the summer of 2002 at car parks where young car modifiers gathered in the East Midlands, West Midlands and North Wales. The study employed a qualitative ethnographic methodology and a range of research methods, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, photography and the use of field notes. An ethnographic approach enabled the field worker (ABH) to study car modifiers in their 'natural' setting, rather than in an artificially controlled context, and to explore the cultural significance of modified cars and car modification practices within the settings in which they were culturally situated (O'Connell Davidson & Layder 1994, p. 164). More generally, we were able to circumvent epistemological and methodological limitations that more orthodox

approaches would have imposed on our research design, and to undertake a more exploratory study.

As a researcher, ABH had been interested in the cruising scene for a number of years, although prior to this particular study his knowledge in this area had been largely gleaned from cruising web sites and articles in car magazines. He had never mixed with car modifiers on a regular basis nor attended cruises, and was surprised when he first arranged to meet a small group of car modifiers to find that, with the exception of one girlfriend, the group entirely consisted of men. As he made contact with other car modifiers it became apparent that most were male, and although he did encounter a small number of women at meets and cruises he attended in the course of the study, they were almost always girlfriends of young men who owned modified cars rather than owners of modified cars themselves. As such we have constituted car modifying and cruising as predominantly masculine practices and our analysis foregrounds the significance of the motorcar to the identity work of young men.

Participants for this study were recruited through a flyer that was circulated to email addresses that ABH compiled from a number of regionally focused cruising web sites, Internet forums and news groups. Hard copies of this flyer were also distributed around a number of public car parks, where they were placed under the windscreen wipers of modified cars. With the exception of one challenging encounter with a suspicious gatekeeper in the early stages of the project, most of the potential participants were happy to talk about their cars (see Griffin & Bengry-Howell forthcoming 2008). In the early stages of the project, photographing the participants' cars provided a useful means of facilitating access into the field, initiating conversation and maintaining contact over time.

Over 30 car modifiers were interviewed over the duration of the project, with 19 interviewed on several subsequent occasions over a period of nine months. Our research participants were all white young men aged between 17 and 25, who identified themselves as 'cruisers' or 'car modifiers' and owned cars that they had substantially modified. All came from working-class backgrounds (i.e., their fathers worked, or had worked, in a range of manual jobs), and lived with their parents in urban areas with a high density of local authority or ex-local authority housing. Although two were students and planned to go to local universities, most had left school at 16 to enter the local job market. With the exception of one postman and one young man who worked in a garden centre, most held jobs that were in some way connected with motorcars. Six were car mechanics, three worked for the car accessory store Halfords, four worked in car-body shops and one worked for Lotus engineering.

Over the course of the study ABH attended two cruises (one in the East Midlands and one in North Wales), nine meets and a 'sound-off'. The cruises attracted in excess of 100 modified cars, whereas the meets generally attracted anything between five and 30 modified vehicles. The 'sound-off' was held on a staff car park behind a Halfords outlet on a retail park in the West Midlands. This event, which was sponsored by

'Ripspeed'—the main suppliers of Halfords' in-car entertainment systems—was a competitive event in which young car modifiers competed against each other to see who had the loudest stereo system. Decibel readings were taken for each system and trophies were awarded to those who achieved the highest decibel readings.

The study generated a large body of ethnographic fieldnotes and over 17 hours of tape-recorded interview data, which, once transcribed, amounted to over 171,000 words of text. The transcription process served as the primary stage of our analysis and enabled us to identify a number of themes in how our research participants constituted their modified cars, car modification, car-based cultural practices and performative motorcar displays as significant to their identity work. This provided for the second stage of our analysis in which we undertook a closer more in-depth reading of the interview transcripts and organised sections of the data around key themes and interesting points of contradiction that emerged across *all* of the interviews.

Epistemologically our analysis was aligned with Social Constructionist Grounded Theory (Willott & Griffin 1997) and Critical Realist approaches (Willis 2000) to qualitative research. This meant that we took our participants' accounts of themselves and their cultural practices seriously, but not necessarily at face value (Griffin 1986). As such we organised our data around themes that emerged within our participants' talk and accounts of cultural practices that they identified as significant, rather than interpreting our data through conceptual and theoretical frameworks drawn from the research literature. Methodologically, this also required us to distance ourselves to some degree from the cultural world of our participants, which we had become familiar with over the course of the project. This interpretive distance enabled us to critically examine how our participants constituted and differentiated themselves from others through their use of modified cars (Parker 2005). We drew on Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) work on Positioning Theory as a means of exploring and understanding our participants' negotiation with and strategies for discursively distancing themselves from the media's construction of them as 'boy racers'.

'It's my car and no one else has got it': The Car as Unique Possession

ABH: If for some reason (1) say you won the lottery or something like that [...] do you think you would still want to modify your car [...] or would you go out and buy something off-the-peg?

Liam: I wouldn't buy a brand new car (no) [...] I'd want to do it so that it was my car

ABH: Right (1) so you'd still want an individual car?

Liam: Yeah [...] it's my car and no one else has got it (right) (1) that's mainly what it is really

ABH: Yeah (1) so you wouldn't in an ideal world rather have a Ferrari or something?

- Liam:** No (1) if I had two hundred grand I'd still be doing what I'm doing now
- ABH:** So there isn't some perfect car coming out of some factory somewhere which you'd think couldn't be improved upon?
- Liam:** No not really

For our participants, car modification was an inherently practical activity, which was realised through the material process of changing aspects of a motor vehicle's original design (Bengry-Howell 2005). Although our research participants generally enjoyed talking about their cars and the modifications that they had made, most ascribed greater significance to the practice of *doing* car modifications. The significance of car modifying was constituted in terms of the physical labour invested in practices like lowering a car's suspension, fitting oversized alloy wheels, replacing a car's original panels with those from a body kit, tinting windows, enhancing an exhaust system to produce a desired sound and improve performance, and a whole range of alterations that serve to personalise a car and make it truly theirs. The process of car modification was one in which our participants deliberately attempted to extricate their cars from 'the style boundaries imposed by the manufacturer's production design' (Brownlie *et al.* 2005, p. 105) and culturally produce a car to individual specifications.

'Liam' [4] echoed many of our participants when he claimed that even if he could afford to buy a culturally prestigious, but standard, car (such as a Ferrari), he would prefer to buy a car that he could reconfigure and produce in a form that was unique. Liam was not alone in ascribing tremendous value to owning a modified car that *he* could claim was unique and uniquely owned by him. His rejection of the notion that manufacturers could ever produce a standard car that was so well designed that he would not want to modify it reinforced the point that, for car modifiers, modification was not simply about mechanically or symbolically enhancing a car, but involved the production of a unique commodity of which the owner was the sole possessor.

To some degree the car modifiers in this study engaged in similar practices to standard car owners (i.e., they washed and polished their cars regularly, maintained and serviced them, and were careful to secure their vehicles when they were left unattended). Whereas such practices generally embody an owner's attempts to preserve a vehicle in its original condition, car modifying precipitated a very different relationship between owner and commodity. The practice of modifying a car generated a much more fixed and intimate form of ownership wherein motorcars were produced as commodities that were symbolically and uniquely associated with those who owned and modified them (Bengry-Howell 2005). Car modification transformed the act of consumption into a set of practices (Willis *et al.* 1990) through which car modifiers produced their cars as symbolic extensions of themselves (Belk 1988).

'It's something to be proud of': Modified Cars as Tangible Achievements

- ABH:** So what are your reasons for doing this (1) I mean [...] what's made you want to do this to your car?
- Liam:** You can stand back and you can look at it and you can say [...] oh well I've built that [...] cos you have really because (2) to stick a body kit on it you've gotta do work and work and work and work for weeks (1) you've probably gotta take all the front end off [...] bumpers [...] bonnet [...] there's a lot to it [...] and like you've gotta put it all back together (right) [...] and if it fits nice and everything [...] you're actually building the car
- ABH:** So you get a sense of pride from that?
- Liam:** It's like achievement init (1) well you go down the street [...] cruising down the street and everyone's looking at yer (right) [...] and you know they're looking at you because of the car and like (3) it's just lots of people looking at it [...] because they like it really (1) and you get like er [...] achievement from that (yeah) (2) that's it basically
- Nick:** The best way of looking at a car is if (1) you've built it (yeah) [...] you've taken the time and effort to do it (1) not mummy and daddy have funded it
- Siobhan:** You do admire people more who've like saved up [Nick: yeah] and like really [...] worked hard to get their cars
- ABH:** So you think it's better to have done things like that
- Siobhan:** If you've done it yourself (right) and it's something really special [...] it's something to be proud of (right)

A car modifier who modified and continued to modify their car themselves, out of choice rather than necessity, was constituted as the 'ideal' type of modified car owner. Tremendous value was placed on the process of doing whatever work was required to modify a car yourself, and, for many, the fact that a car's owner was the chief orchestrator of this project was integral to the construction of the car as the product of one individual (Bengry-Howell 2005). A car's 'individuality' was engendered through the material process of car modification and became embodied in the vehicle as the modification project progressed. By modifying their cars themselves, car modifiers not only inscribed their ownership on their cars, they culturally produced and symbolically branded them as unique commodities which they alone could claim to possess. Car modification operated a site of active consumption (Willis *et al.* 1990) that utilised a standard car as the substructure for producing a 'unique' modified car.

The importance that was placed on an owner modifying their car themselves can be understood as a reflection of traditional working-class values. The sense of 'achievement' cultivated through being able to 'say' that 'you're actually building the car', and others' appreciation of the products of your labour, resonated with a working-class masculine tradition in which physical work was a source of pride (Willis 1977) and personal achievement was measured in terms of doing a good job. Traditionally, working-class pride has been located within work-based settings, where it was realised through occupational roles like craftsman and other skilled workers

(Willis 1977). For car modifiers, however, a sense of 'pride' and 'achievement' in manual work and its output was aligned with practices that assumed meaning though leisure and consumption within non-work-based contexts of everyday life (Bengry-Howell 2005).

Car modification practices were set in a socio-cultural context where individual modified car owners had different financial resources at their disposal. This was highlighted in Nick's distinction between car modifiers, like him, who had invested 'time and effort' in building their cars and those who owned modified cars that 'mummy and daddy had funded'. Nick's emphasis on the significance of who paid for a car and financed its modification marked a shift from most participants' lauding of the importance of modifying a car yourself. Nick appeared to acknowledge that whilst not everyone possessed the mechanical skills and knowledge required to modify a car themselves, disparities in economic capital had even greater implications. As such, for those young men whose 'mummy and daddy' could not afford to buy a car and fund its modification, acquiring and producing a modified car through one's own hard work was an achievement that was deemed worthy of others' recognition.

In fact most of the young men who participated in this study lived in the parental home virtually rent-free, so their parents could be viewed as subsidising their car-modifying activities in an indirect way. This apparent contradiction, however, was never mentioned in disparaging references to car modifiers whose parents bought their cars directly. The point was that some participants saved up to buy cars and car parts and worked on their cars themselves, and this was something that young people like Siobhan admired. This admiration appeared to acknowledge just how hard a car modifier who was doing it themselves had to work to accrue sufficient capital to buy and insure a car, let alone finance the cost of modifying it. Producing an exceptional modified car through hard work, skill and determination despite adversity was, as Siobhan indicated, 'something really special . . . something to be proud of'.

Car Modification as an Act of Creation

Car modification was regularly constituted in terms of an ongoing production process that involved a range of complex skills as well as considerable time, effort and dedication. The young men were not passive consumers of standard commodities but actively producing unique commodities, in a process that, for Spoiler, was inherently creative.

- ABH:** So, for you is it about the car or the fact that it's your car?
Spoiler: The fact that it's my car
ABH: So it's your car it's individual (1) when people admire the car you want them to know that it's your car?
Spoiler: It's good to get people thinking cos some people have no idea what car it is (hmm) cos [
Jane: [You do get proud cos you've done loads of work on it
 [you've worked hard on that

Spoiler: [It's a sense of appreciation (1) they look at it and say (2) I guess it's more you know you get artists they work on canvas painting it's all like the same sort of thing (1) you start on a car (1) you see a lot of people say they go out looking for a [inaudible] they'll like have so much money for a project they want to do with a car. They go out looking through Auto Trader [magazine] and find a car and they go oh I could do that to it, like so they buy it and it's like a canvas kind of thing (1) they start adding to it (hmm). Once (1) they've done the main parts to it they start like adding final touches and all that (hmm) changing it as they go along

ABH: So you do see it as a creative process?

Spoiler: It is a creative process. I mean I've always liked taking stuff apart finding out how it works since I was a kid (1) So I think (1) you get to the engine side of it (1) a lot of people (1) they get the exhaust put on and they get an air filter put on, but they don't actually think about how different parts work (2) Jane will tell you I've looked at the Haynes manual, how that works and I go on the Internet to see how it works (2) I just want to know how something works so I change different parts of it

The branded identities of standard cars and the ascribed cultural meanings cultivated by car manufacturers rarely, if ever, influenced the type of standard car that car modifiers chose to purchase and modify. Instead, factors such as the cost of a car, the cost and availability of parts and accessories, and how much a car would cost to insure were more likely to determine whether one make and model was selected over another (Bengry-Howell 2005). The disproportionately high cost of car insurance for male drivers under 25 (Jones 1999) and the fact that rates were determined by engine capacity, meant that most of the young men in our study were restricted to buying and modifying smaller cars with low-capacity engines.

A common practice in the early stages of a car modification project was 'Debadging', which entailed removing all indication of a standard car's make, model and engine capacity. By debadging a car, car modifiers deliberately deconstructed 'the accoutrements of brand recognition that many other consumers seem keen to cherish and display' (Brownlie *et al.* 2005), in preparation for the cultural construction of 'new' and desired meanings. Spoiler's account of his debadging of a once standard Ford Mondeo was constituted as a deliberate attempt to debrand and create a 'decommodified' car, which symbolically eschewed classification and public recognition. By debadging his car he attempted to disidentify it as a standard Mondeo and reposition it in an equivocal 'brand-free' state, where 'some people have no idea what car it is'. By removing the insignia that identified his car as a particular make and model, Spoiler symbolically produced his car as a 'tabula rasa' that he was able to utilise 'like a canvas' and inscribe with idiosyncratic meaning.

Building on a notion of a 'debadged' car as a 'canvas', Spoiler constituted the car modifier as an 'artist' who creatively expressed himself through the modifications that he produced. The 'creative process' of car modification, Spoiler suggested, encompassed not only the symbolic transformation of the visual appearance of a car, but also the material labour invested in 'taking stuff apart and finding out how it

works'. For Spoiler, unravelling the mechanical workings of a car was in itself a creative practice that surpassed the physical act of just doing things to a car. It transcended the corporeal act of manipulating tools to include the creative process of lateral thinking involved in discerning 'how different parts work' and how particular components interrelate. The gradual acquisition of skills, the accumulation of car-based knowledge and the expressive process of doing car modification was, for Spoiler, a site of creativity that warranted the constitution of the car modifier as an artist. This construction of the physical work involved in car modification as an intensely creative process differs significantly from the traditional distinction between artistic creativity and technical skills.

'It was a bit of a chick car': Transgendered Cars and the Practice of 'Debadging'

- ABH:** I think it's interesting that when you chose a car you picked the Mondeo as it's not a car that is usually associated with young people
- Jane:** I think that people who modify cars don't really go by the adverts if you look Novas and Corsas are advertised like a woman's car, but there are so many people that have modified them now
- ABH:** Presumably the things that people do to them change their meaning so that they are no longer a woman's car?
- Spoiler:** Make them more aggressive and all that.
- ABH:** So what made you want to start modifying it, was it something that you wanted to do as soon as you got the car?
- Dale:** I didn't think about making it a project really (right) but then (2) I had it I come to the point my sister's had about three cars (1) and she's twenty one now (right) and like my dad helped me out buying this (1) and it came to the point and I was thinking about getting rid of it (right) (1) and I said well (1) if we can make it better and we go halves on whatever I do to it then I'll keep it for (1) till it stops basically
- ABH:** Why did you want to get rid of it?
- Dale:** Don't know cos (2) it's only a 1.3 (right) cos it's a Fiesta (right) and I had some comments that it was a bit of a chick car (right) one of my ex girlfriends (1) her friends said that's a chick car that is
- ABH:** It's a what car?
- Dale:** Chick car (right) (1) a girl's car

The modified Novas, Corsas and Fiestas that most of our participants owned were cars that in their standard form manufacturers have primarily targeted at a female market, or at families where they have been marketed as a second car. It was within this context that the other main reason for debadging a car carried significance, as it marked the beginning of a transgendering process in which standard production-line cars that were culturally associated with women were reconfigured as cars that were associated with men. Dale explicitly constituted his incentive to modify his car in terms of a resolution to a problem that had arisen for him when a friend of his girlfriend had publicly identified his Ford Fiesta as a 'chick car'. The label 'chick car' positioned Dale as the owner of a type of car that was symbolically associated with

women, and thus served to discursively undermine the cultural legitimacy of his masculinity. In response, Dale had attempted to reconcile the incongruity of being a man in possession of a woman's car by removing all the insignia from his car that identified it as being a Fiesta, and modifying the overall shape of the car with a body kit that he had seen advertised in *Max Power*. The symbolic work that Dale invested in modifying the physical appearance of his car amounted to a deliberate attempt to de-feminise his standard car and culturally produce it in a form more befitting for a man. This symbolic process of masculinising a car through modification was one that, for Spoiler, was represented as making a car 'more aggressive', which in Dale's case was contingent on him degendering the existing meaning of his car and deconstructing its 'chick car' status.

Discussion

Modifying a car operates at both a personal and a cultural level as a site of active identity construction and active consumption. It is a material process that enables individuals to symbolically differentiate themselves from the mass of others and culturally constitute themselves as 'unique' individuals through their ownership of 'unique' cars. The significance of this process does not rest on whether or not a modified car is in actuality the only one of its kind in the entire world. Rather, possessing a modified car served to materially validate individual claims to uniqueness and the constitution of oneself as different from everyone else.

Car-based claims to individuality emerged frequently in our participants' talk about their cars, car modification and performative motorcar displays. Although some of our participants identified themselves collectively as 'cruisers', the term 'cruiser' was used generically to differentiate car modifiers, whose 'individual' identities were materially embodied in their 'unique' cars, from a mass of standard car drivers. To call oneself a cruiser did not signify any affinity with a distinct cultural identity or set of cultural values. While most of the car modifiers involved in this study regularly socialised with other car modifiers and claimed to regularly attend cruises, these 'collective' contexts were represented as just one of many contexts that they passed through in their cars during the course of their everyday life and not as central to a collective cultural or subcultural identity.

We acknowledge that our research participants' constitution of themselves as 'unique' and 'individual' does not invalidate their collective classification as a contemporary subculture. However, youth subcultural theory emphasises (and debates) the role of specific cultural practices as resistant, frequently in relation to leisure-based contexts. In our view this perspective limited the wider resonance of our participants' accounts and activities with respect to the relationship between consumption and identity (e.g. Belk 1995; Campbell 1995) and notions of 'symbolic creativity' and 'cultural production' (Willis *et al.* 1990). This theoretical shift has something in common with Paul Willis' (1977) move in *Learning to Labour*, when he eschewed the then prevailing focus on working-class youth subcultural practices (see

Hall & Jefferson 1976) in favour of exploring the wider significance of the cultural forms adopted by 'the lads' and 'earoles' in shaping their entry to the labour market.

In line with Willis' argument that young people creatively appropriate commodities in the cultural production of distinct forms of personal and cultural identity, the young car modifiers in our study attempted to constitute themselves in desirable identity positions through the symbolic labour that they invested in modifying their cars. Their practices accorded with postmodern theories of consumption, wherein cultural commodities operate as 'tools of identity making' (Sarup 1966, p. 125), which symbolise key aspects of identity and carry meanings of personal significance (Belk 1988; Kamptner 1989). What is particularly interesting about car modifiers are the ways in which they engage with standard production line motorcars as commodities. All of our research participants had purchased standard cars as the basis for their modification projects and utilised standard car parts and accessories, but their appropriation of these commodities embodied a conscious and deliberate attempt to produce a totally exclusive commodity that eluded association with any extant brand.

Within this context, the significance of practices like debadging go beyond symbolic concealment, to mark the commencement of a transformative process in which a car modifier deliberately deconstructs the material signs that define and differentiate his standard car within dominant discourse and attempts to relocate it in a non-branded symbolic world or reinvent it as their *own* brand. Although this play with brands and radical transformation of a common cultural commodity challenges dominant discourses of consumption, the fervent desire of car modifiers to have a unique car leads them to purchase increasingly expensive equipment and accessories, and thus serves to reinforce dominant consumption practices. As such, car modifiers' consumption practices are both conventional and unconventional, and their consumption of the motorcar serves to position them as both active consumers and producers of cultural commodities.

Studies on young people's consumption of clothes have identified the important role that brands play in identity work, with brands that carry kudos being actively sought out and those that are deemed less worthy actively avoided (Miles *et al.* 1998; Frosh *et al.* 2002). Within the context of current understandings of how brand associations and brand loyalties influence young people's consumption practices, young car modifiers' consumption of branded motorcars is particularly interesting. Young people's consumption practices are often said to be influenced by the symbolic, rather than intrinsic, qualities of commodities and their relative meaning within the context of their peers (Miles *et al.* 1998). In the case of our participants' consumption of standard motorcars, a range of external factors restricted them to types of motorcar that are marketed at and discursively associated with women, which carried negative associations among their peer group since they were classed as 'chick' cars.

It runs somewhat contrary to prevailing understandings of young people's consumption to suggest that young car modifiers would actively select a commodity

that they and their peers viewed in negative terms, and it was within this context that debadging a car was a particularly important practice. Debadging a car served to deconstruct a car's standard feminine identity and symbolically distance it from gendered meanings that were undesirable, and to constitute it as a 'blank canvas' that could then be inscribed with idiosyncratic meanings and desired masculine cultural associations. This degendering practice embodied a symbolic attempt at resolving the contradiction of being a man in possession of a woman's car, and configuring a standard feminised motorcar as an object of masculine identity construction. Masculine identities constructed through modified cars were produced and reproduced as gendered 'configurations of practice', in which meaning was socially defined in relation to and contradistinction from models of femininity (Connell 2005, p. 848).

The cultural production of meaning through car modification is an intensely creative process through which young white working-class male car modifiers discursively mark themselves out from the mass of standard-car owning subjects and materially constitute themselves as 'unique' car owning individuals. Car modification is an inherently physical practice that is creatively constituted in the 'hand-made space' (Law 2001) where the human body, tools and material objects engage. This 'space' holds particular historic significance for working-class men, whose pride and achievements have been traditionally organised around the skilful manipulation of tools, and the 'machinic pleasure' (Law 2001), sensual delight and powerful emotions derived from embodying technologies (Mellström 2004). Economic change has displaced men's 'machinic pleasure' and the craft ideal from its traditional occupational setting into free time (Moorhouse 1988, p. 421), and car modification projects provide an important leisure-based opportunity for young working-class men to reconnect with a set of associations and values that have traditionally defined working-class men's lives (Willis 1977). Although most of our research participants were in paid work, they attributed relatively little importance to their occupations. Paid work was constituted as necessary in order to finance the car modification projects they undertook in their leisure time, which were the principal site of their identity construction.

The consumption-based opportunities that car modification projects offered for identity construction were predicated on young men being financially supported by their parents, and thus able to afford to invest a high percentage of their modest incomes on modifying their cars. In a British social context where protracted youth transitions (Furlong *et al.* 2003) are said to constrain young people's opportunities for independent living by making them financially dependent on their parents (France & Wiles 1997), the young men in our study utilised a situation that is often presented as problematic in order to construct masculine identities grounded in their consumption practices. During their protracted transition to adulthood they had relatively few financial responsibilities that might restrict their consumption. Since

they were financially dependent on their parents, these young working-class men were 'free' to constitute themselves as independent, unique and individual consumers through the material construction of modified cars.

Studies of young working-class men often represent them as victims of the socio-economic changes that have transformed Britain over the past 20 years (McDowell 2003). Faced with the erosion of many occupations that were traditionally associated with working-class men, young working-class masculinity has been said to be in crisis (Horrocks 1996). It would be tempting within this context to constitute car modification in terms of a compensatory practice and represent our participants as socially disadvantaged on the basis of their age, social class, modest academic achievements, occupational status, limited financial resources and the localities that they reside in, or as subordinate to hegemonic masculinities (Connell 1995). This, however, would be imposing an interpretation of the meaning of car modifying for our research participants that was not supported by our data.

Whilst it could be argued that car modification is in some way compensatory, this notion along with the idea that car modifiers were in anyway disadvantaged was completely absent from our research participants' talk. On the contrary, most positioned themselves as culturally privileged on the basis of their ownership of, and ability to produce, highly conspicuous motorcars, to which they and others ascribed cultural value. Within the context of their peers and significant others who appreciated the aesthetics of a modified car, the products of a car modifier's symbolic labour were a source of considerable cultural capital (Bourdieu 1979). Car modification enabled the participants in our study to differentiate themselves from consumers of standard cars, however prestigious, and those for whom motorcars primarily functioned as a means of transport, who were disparagingly referred to as 'A to B drivers'. Modified cars were performatively displayed as the ultimate conspicuous commodity, which embodied and culturally celebrated the practical skills and personal achievements of the individuals who had physically and symbolically laboured to produce them.

Notes

- [1] See www.speedcentral.co.uk, www.cruisecentral.co.uk and www.keepcruizin.co.uk
- [2] Source: www.imdb.com/title/tt0232500/business
- [3] Joyriding is a common term for the offence of taking-a-car-without-the-owner's-consent (twoc); usually for 'expressive' rather than 'instrumental' purposes (Briggs 1991). The term 'joyrider' refers to someone who is represented as committing this offence on a regular basis (see Bengry-Howell 1999).
- [4] The names of participants have been replaced with pseudonyms.

References

- Allard-Holtz, J. (1975) 'The "Lowriders": portrait of an urban youth subculture', *Youth & Society*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 495–512.

- Avon and Somerset Constabulary (2002) *Car Cruisers: A Partnership Bridging the Gap between 'Car Cruisers' and the Authorities*, Online Report, [Online] Available at: [http://www.popcenter.org/Library/Tilley/2002/02-02\(W-p\).pdf](http://www.popcenter.org/Library/Tilley/2002/02-02(W-p).pdf) (2 August 2007).
- Bayley, S. (1986) *Sex, Drink and Fast Cars: The Creation and Consumption of Images*, Faber and Faber, London & Boston, MA.
- Beck, P. V. (1980) 'The low riders: folk art and emergent nationalism', *Native Arts/West*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 25–27.
- Belk, R. W. (1988) 'Possessions and the extended self', *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 15, pp. 139–168.
- Belk, R. W. (1995) 'Studies in the new consumer behaviour', in *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, ed. D. Miller, Routledge, London, pp. 58–95.
- Bengry-Howell, A. (1999) *Background Factors in Twoc: 'Joyriding' and Masculinity*, Unpublished BA Thesis, University of Wolverhampton, UK.
- Bengry-Howell, A. (2001) *Bigging it Up: Young Masculinities and the Symbolic Appropriation of the Car*, Unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of Birmingham, UK.
- Bengry-Howell, A. (2005) *Performative Motorcar Display: The Cultural Construction of Young Working Class Masculine Identities*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, UK.
- Bennett, A. (1999) 'Subcultures or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste', *Sociology*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 599–617.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge & Kegan Paule, London.
- Brake, M. (1995) *Comparative Youth Culture: The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures in America, Britain and Canada*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Briggs, J. (1991) *A Profile of the Juvenile Joyrider and a Consideration of the Efficacy of Motor Vehicle Projects as a Diversionary Strategy*, MA Thesis, University of Durham, UK.
- Bright, B. J. (1994) *Mexican American Low Riders: An Anthropological Approach to Popular Culture*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Rice University Department of Anthropology, Houston, TX.
- Brownlie, D., Hewer, P. & Treanor, S. (2005) 'Identity in motion: an exploratory study of conspicuous consumption among car cruisers', *Finanza Marketing e Produzione*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 99–107.
- Campbell, C. (1995) 'The sociology of consumption', in *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of the New Studies*, ed. D. Miller, Routledge, London, pp. 96–126.
- Carrabine, E. & Longhurst, B. (2002) 'Consuming the car: anticipation, use and meaning in contemporary youth culture', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 181–196.
- Chappell, B. (2000) *Rolling Hard and Hybrid: Contests of Identity and Poetics of Scale in Lowrider Performance*, [Online] Available at: <http://www.bridgewater.edu/~bchappel/downloads/ra centech.pdf> (2 August 2007).
- Chappell, B. (2001) 'Take a little trip with me: Lowriding and the poetics of scale', in *Technicolor: Race, Technology and Daily Life*, eds A. Nelson, T. Tu & A. Headlam-Hines, New York University Press, New York, pp. 100–120.
- Clarke, J. (1975) 'Style', in *Resistance Through Rituals*, eds S. Hall & T. Jefferson, Routledge, London, pp. 175–191.
- Connell, R. (1995) *Masculinities*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Connell, R. (2005) 'Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept', *Gender & Society*, vol. 9, no. 6, pp. 829–859.
- Coward, R. (1999) 'Into the driving seat', *The Guardian*, 16 November, [Online] Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Columnists/Column/0,,247913,00.html> (2 August 2007).
- Flink, J. (1988) *The Automobile Age*, MIT Press, London.
- France, A. & Wiles, P. (1997) 'Dangerous futures: social exclusion and youth work in late modernity', *Social Policy & Administration*, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 59–78.

- Frosh, S., Phoenix, A. & Pattman, R. (2002) *Young Masculinities: Understanding Boys in Contemporary Society*, Palgrave, London.
- Furlong, A., Cartmel, F., Biggart, A., Sweeting, H. & West, P. (2003) *Youth Transitions: Patterns of Vulnerability and Processes of Social Inclusion*, Central Research Unit, Scottish Executive, Edinburgh.
- Grandante, W. (1982) 'Low and slow, mean and clean', *Natural History*, vol. 91, no. 4, pp. 28–39.
- Griffin, C. (1986) 'Qualitative methods and female experience: a study of young women from school to the job market', in *Feminist Social Psychology: Developing Theory and Practice*, ed. S. Wilkinson, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
- Griffin, C. & Bengry-Howell, A. (forthcoming 2008) 'Ethnography', in *The Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Psychology*, eds C. Willig & W. Stainton Rogers, Sage, London, pp. 15–31.
- Hall, S. & Jefferson, T. (1976) *Resistance Through Rituals*, Hutchinson, London.
- Harré, R. & van Langenhove, L. (1999) *Positioning Theory: Moral Contexts of Intentional Action*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford.
- Hatton, Z. (1999) *Do Young Men between the Ages of Seventeen and Twenty, Use Consumption of the Motorcar, as an Important Means of Creating and Expressing Personal and Social Aspects of Identity?* Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Plymouth, UK.
- Hebdige, D. (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Methuen, London.
- Hogg, M. K. & Bannister, E. N. (2001) 'Dislikes, distastes and the undesired self: conceptualising and exploring the role of the undesired end state in consumer experience', *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 17, pp. 73–104.
- Horrocks, R. (1996) *Masculinity in Crisis*, Macmillan, London.
- Hubak, M. (1996) 'The car as a cultural statement: car advertising as gendered socio-technical scripts', in *Making Technology Our Own? Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life*, eds M. Lie & K. Sorensen, Scandinavian University Press, Oslo, pp. 171–200.
- Jones, R. (1999) 'Two groups hit by rising costs', *The Guardian*, 3 April, [online] Available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardian_jobs_and_money/story/0,,307349,00.html (2 August 2007).
- Joy, A. & Venkatesh, A. (1994) 'Postmodernism, feminism and the body: The visible and the invisible in consumer research', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, vol. 11, pp. 333–357.
- Kamptner, N. L. (1989) 'Personal possessions and the meanings in old age', in *The Social Psychology of Aging*, eds S. Spacapan & S. Oskamp, Sage, Newbury Park, CA, pp. 165–196.
- Kersten, J. (1993) 'Street youths, Boso-zoku, and Yakuza: subculture formation and societal reactions in Japan', *Crime & Delinquency*, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 277–295.
- Lamvik, G. M. (1996) A fairy tale on wheels: the car as a vehicle for meaning within a Norwegian subculture, in *Making Technology Our Own? Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life*, eds M. Lie & K. Sorensen, Scandinavian University Press, Oslo, pp. 151–169.
- Law, J. (2001) *Machinic Pleasures and Interpellations*, Centre for Science Studies, Lancaster University, [Online] Available at: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/sociology/papers/Law-Machinic-Pleasures-and-Interpellations.pdf> (2 August 2007).
- Maffesoli, M. (1996) *The Time of the Tribes*, Sage Publications, London.
- Marsh, P. & Collett, P. (1986) *Driving Passion: The Psychology of the Car*, Jonathan Cape, London.
- McDowell, L. (2003) *Redundant Masculinities? Employment Change and White Working Class Youth*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.
- Mellström, U. (2004) 'Machines and masculine subjectivity: technology as an integral part of men's life experiences', Special issue: Masculinities and Technology, *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 368–382.
- Miles, S. (1995) 'Towards an understanding of the relationship between youth identities and consumer culture', *Youth & Policy*, vol. 51, pp. 35–45.
- Miles, S. (2000) *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World*, Open University Press, Buckingham & Philadelphia, PA.

- Miles, S., Cliff, D. & Burr, V. (1998) "Fitting in and sticking out": consumption, consumer meanings and the construction of young people's identities', *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 81–96.
- Miller, D., ed. (2001) *Car Cultures*, Berg, Oxford & New York.
- Mills, M. (2000) 'All the people I know, drive like idiots', *The Guardian*, 28 April, pp. 4–5.
- Moorhouse, H. F. (1988) 'American automobiles and worker's dreams', *Sociological Review*, vol. 31, pp. 403–426.
- Muggleton, D. (2000) *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style*, Berg, Oxford & New York.
- O'Connell Davidson, J. & Layder, D. (1994) 'Ethnography and qualitative analysis', In *Methods, Sex and Madness*, Routledge, London, pp. 164–185.
- O'Dell, T. (2001) 'Raggare and the panic of mobility: modernity and everyday life in Sweden', in *Car Cultures*, ed. D. Miller, Berg, Oxford & New York, pp. 105–132.
- Parker, I. (2005) *Qualitative Psychology: Introducing Radical Research*, Open University Press, Maidenhead.
- Pickett, C. (1998) 'Car fetish', in *Cars and Culture: Our Driving Passions*, ed. C. Pickett, Powerhouse Publishing and HarperCollins, Sydney.
- Plascencia, L. F. B. (1983) 'Lowriding in the southwest: cultural symbols in the Mexican community', in *History, Culture and Society: Chicano Studies in the 1980s*, eds M. T. García, F. Lomeli, M. Barrera, E. Escobar & J. García, National Association for Chicano Studies, Bilingual Review Press, Ypsilanti, MI, pp. 141–175.
- Ramirez, E. (1996) 'Chicano lowrider, low ride as much as you want', *RazaTeca*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 9.
- Sarup, M. (1996) *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Sawyer, M. (1999) 'Get your kicks on the B156', In *Park and Ride: Adventures in Suburbia*, Abacus, London, pp. 21–43.
- Scharff, V. (1991) *Taking the Wheel: Women and the Coming of the Motor Age*, Free Press, New York.
- Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs (1998/99) *Nineteenth Report*, [Online] Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/199899/cmselect/cmenvtra/515/51505.htm> (2 August 2007).
- Silverton, P. (1999) 'Allo, Jane, gotta new motor?', *Red*, December, pp. 113–116.
- Spinney, L. (2000) 'Once a boy racer ...', *The Guardian*, G2, 14 February, pp. 8–9.
- Storey, J. (1999) *Cultural Consumption and Everyday Life*, Arnold, London.
- Thornton, S. (1995) *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Vaaranen, H. & Wieloch, N. (2002) 'Car crashes and dead end careers: leisure pursuits of the Finnish subculture of the kortteliralli street racing', *YOUNG: Nordic Journal of Youth Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 42–58.
- Vigil, J. D. (1991) 'Car Charros: cruising and lowriding in the Barrios of East Los Angeles', *Latino Studies Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 71–79.
- Wajcman, J. (1991) *Feminism Confronts Technology*, Polity, Cambridge.
- Wernick, A. (1991) *Promotional Culture*, Sage, London.
- Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour*, Saxon House, Farnborough.
- Willis, P. (2000) *The Ethnographic Imagination*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Willis, P., Jones, S., Canaan, J. & Hurd, G. (1990) *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
- Willott, S. & Griffin, C. (1997) "Wham, bam, am I a man?": unemployed men talk about masculinities', *Feminism and Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 107–128.