It is well known that young men constitute a particularly high-risk group in terms of accidents involving both themselves and others. But rather little is known about the roles of gender, masculinity and automobility in sustaining or subverting such particularly risky performances of identity. Contributing with qualitative insights, this study explores the ways in which gendered individuals and cars co-constitute one another in a particular context, the community of Swedish car modifiers. By using an ethnographic approach, this thesis investigates the lives of young and middle-aged car enthusiasts who invest considerable time, money, skill and passion in rebuilding, showing off and driving their cars. Or, as the male car modifier Conny describes it: “Our cars make more noise, they are more visible and we are more dedicated drivers than others.” Such distinctions tell of the challenges in building cars and doing gender in the context of contemporary motor cultures, infused as they are with safety precautions as well as a desire for individual freedom, speed and recognition.

DAG BALKMAR is a researcher at Tema Genus, the Department of Thematic Studies – Gender Studies, Linköping University, Sweden. This is his doctoral thesis.