Tanja Joelsson

Space and Sensibility
Young Men’s Risk-Taking with Motor Vehicles

Linköping University

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To Kira and Olof;

and to Sonja, Frank and Hans
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And lastly, I need to tap myself on the shoulder. Thank you, Tanja, and well done, you have done a remarkable job.

Uppsala, March 2013
Tanja Joelsson
During the last phases of writing up this thesis there was a sudden upsurge of articles in the mainstream media about young men and their (mis)use of cars (see for instance Anderberg 2012, Lindström 2013). Nothing extraordinary, were it not for the relatively new focus on motorized young men in rural areas. The reason for the media attention arose from a particular accident in Northern Sweden: on the last Saturday in October 2012, a family is strolling down the snow-covered street in the small municipality of Malå in Lapland, Sweden, on their way to get their evening meal. The family does not make it to the restaurant, however, due to a young male driver in a drifting black BMW. The family’s thirteen-year-old son never returns to school after the autumn break. The other strollers, and the 20-year-old driver, are seriously injured.

The debate that follows in the mainstream written media is heated and worked up. Anderberg (2012) asks, referring to the Malå accident, why this kind of phenomenon is allowed to continue without political intervention, even though researchers and a few, mostly local, politicians have raised the issue at various points in time. The cynic answers by referring to where the accidents take place: somewhere other than or beyond the metropolis, out of sight of where the political and media power resides and hence where the power to decide what is of relevance and what matters can be found.

Another aspect relate to how the incidents are framed and analysed. Lindström (2013) reports from Norrtälje where young Volvo greasers exercise drifting and, what Lindström refers to as, "joyriding" [buskörning]. One of the young men, Erik, in the article states

You get an adrenaline rush when you drift. You can be out and drift the whole evening. It’s so damn fun. You stop for a talk and a cigarette with your friends. It is indeed something special with cars and guys.

Despite Lindström’s (2013) effort to let all parties speak – the young men, the angry locals, the compassionate locals, and the police – he concludes by
Preface

highlighting the Volvo greasers activities as a matter of young drivers who have lost respect for danger and risk. But is that really all there is to it?

Similar accidents as the one in Malå happen regularly, covered extensively by the media and debated from various angles – usually resulting in calls for curfews or raising the driving licence age. The media dramaturgy is well established and also took place in the Malå case. A few weeks after the incident, the urban-biased media landscape found other news to cover and Malå fell into oblivion.


Elsewhere, yet in the same universe: a special issue of the renowned Swedish popular scientific magazine Forskning & Framsteg [Research & Progress] in 2011 collected texts about research on the human brain. The cover
Preface

Illustration is a digitized image in contrasting colours lighting up the dark background. There is something truly scientific about this cover with its compartmentalizing colour effects: the blue skull containing different lobes of the brain in yellow, red, green, turquoise and lilac. Not to mention the fantastic achievement of actually seeing the brain there on the cover. We are expected to draw in our breath a little, as if gasping for air, over the fact that we know so little about the (medical, physiological and chemical) functioning of the human brain. Think about it for a moment. We can look at the brain! So visible, yet so unknown and mysterious. Pictures, we have learnt since we were kids, tell us more than a thousand words.

So, while glancing over the rubrics, I suddenly notice: the warning light-red heading of “The teenager: This is why young people take risks”. With an arrow from the red heading to the turquoise-coloured corpus callosum. So, is it there that the source of risk-taking is located then, I instinctively ponder.

I already know in advance, even before opening the magazine in my hands, that the research referred to between the covers is of a different kind than what I do. Frustration engulfs me. And anger. I already know what to expect. The picture, you know, gives it away. The anger does not diminish when I read the actual piece on the teenage brain. The teenage brain does [sic!] things because it is not yet fully developed. Okay. Needless to say, this kind of research is important, no doubt about it. What frustrates me is how the brain seems to be imagined to float around in a socio-cultural-material vacuum, with little or no input from other "brains", bodies or the social context in which it metaphorically floats. From the bodies we relate to, interact with, experience with. Nothing. There it is, the brain that just develops as it does, by itself. Humti-dumti-dum, kind of. Floating around and just developing, independent of any other body parts, separate from other bodies (of whatever matter) and isolated from an environment of any kind. The brain on the cover, nicely coloured and lit up for our inspection. A picture tells us more than a thousand words they say. We can actually see the brain, right there, on the cover!

I would have wanted to say a few things in that article on the teenage brain. Like: What is meant by risk? Who are the young people and how are they positioned socially? Why is the “why” so important? Who is asking? And a thousand other similar questions. But the editors did not ask me and I am obviously not the right kind of brain scientist, so I will have to settle for writing this book instead.
Preface

My thesis is in this sense published at a time when it is indeed needed. I also find that the ideas I propose and discuss have not previously been discussed in this manner when it comes to young men’s risk-taking with motor vehicles. Seldom are the suggested solutions based on critical ethnographic research where intersections of age, gender and place are highlighted. Seldom is the complexity of the phenomenon recognized, the different levels and layers of practice and meaning unfolded. Here and now, then, I will tell that other story. The social one. The cultural one. The spatial one. The messy, complex one. The story with at least a thousand words. In Cohen’s (1982: 2) words, in order to “display the artwork of its component organs, to see how they are articulated with and inform the nature of the whole (rather than being determined by it) and, thereby, to suggest its marvelous complexity.”

So, I want to tell you this story. Not exclusively about risk or brains, but about a thin slice of young social life in Sweden, with a teeny weeny dusting of smoke, burnt tyres and crash-damaged bonnets. I am inclined to agree with Erik above, there “is indeed something special with cars and guys”, but perhaps not in the ways it at first might appear.
Chapter One

Risk-taking young men

It is a lovely warm Friday evening in July. When I arrive in Jens’ car, the greasers are hanging around, talking and smoking by the outdoor seating of the local pizzeria located at the roadside. The young people present have planned for a regular weekend evening, I learn, which entails some hanging out at the local hot spots – the pizzeria, the baths and the store entrance car park. They are sorting out the details of the evening as I get seated next to Sam. The greasers’ vehicles – cars, EPAs, mopeds and bikes – are parked in front of the outdoor seating. From here they have a perfect view of the main road and the drivers who occupy the road space. At one moment Sune walks away to his EPA on the pizzeria’s car park and drives away so the tyres scream, the sound and speed of the motor giving it away as adjusted. Kim and I are watching Sune’s departure and when the sound of his EPA fades, I note the fact that his engine appears to have been tinkered with. Kim replies by smiling and telling me that they tested Sune’s EPA just the other night on a straight road and that it went 140 kilometres per hour.
Chapter One

This ethnographic thesis is about the above-mentioned young “greasers” or “Volvo greasers” [Volvoraggare] – predominantly young men but also a few young women aged 15 to 19 – in a small, peri-urban community that I will call Lillby, and the culture that they cultivate around their motor vehicles. My aim, through ethnographic means and with contextualization as the key analytical tool, is to specifically explore the greasers’ risk-taking practices with motor vehicles: drifting, speeding and the other kinds of driving practices that they engage in.

What binds the young people together, aside from kinship and friendship, is their mutual interest in motor vehicles of almost any sort. The cars and other vehicles are as important in “maintaining and developing social networks, friendships and relationships” (Carrabine & Longhurst 2002: 190) as they are for transport. Many of the young people who have turned 15 own and drive a moped or EPA – unless they have been caught in one of the many police controls that the urban police regularly carry out in the community, and banned from driving. Turning 18 and being eligible to drive a car marks a further important transition for many young people, but particularly so for the greasers due both to their intense vehicle orientation and their geographical location and disposition.

In my study, the emic term “greaser” refers to a member of a group interested in motor vehicles, usually specific kinds of cars such as Volvos, but al-

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1 The general term “greaser” [raggare] originates from the 1950s when young working-class men in Sweden bought cheap US American cars, modified and drove them, thus creating a culture around these cars (see Rosengren 2000, O’Dell 2001, Bjurström 1987, 1990). The “Volvo greasers” in my study are to be distinguished from the parent greaser culture in Sweden, not only because their style differs (clothes, music), but also because the signature artefact – the Volvo car – makes up and draws upon another lineage.

2 All the names of people and places (such as Lillby or Storköping) in this thesis are fictional, and efforts have been made on my part to anonymize Lillby community to the best of my ability. The term peri-urban refers to a different kind of urban – at the urban fringe – where the lifestyles and values do not differ substantially from the lifestyles and values in conventional urban settings (Qviström 2007, 2010). My choice to designate Lillby as peri-urban rather than rural concerns the problematic urban-rural dichotomy, hence making a point of destabilizing the relationship and the inherent hierarchy. There will be more on this topic later in this chapter and in Chapter Three. In addition, “community” when used in relation to Lillby denotes regional size and placement and is not intended to define internal relations in the sense of a cohesive social collective, whether real or imagined (cf. Panelli, Nairn & McCormack 2002, see also Tyner 2012: Chapter 5).
so mopeds, EPA tractors and quad bikes.\(^3\) Most importantly, when I henceforth use the term “greasers” or “Volvo greasers”, it is with reference to these young people and the particular manifestation of the culture in the community I have studied, unless otherwise stated.

Anders, Malte, Sune, Kim, Felix, Sam and Tom are all present at the pizzeria, as well as some young women I have not met before. Sune is one of my interlocutors. He is 15 and owns a Volvo EPA, which he enjoys taking out for a spin every once in a while. He does not live in Lillby, but drives out here in order to hang out with his friends – he is a proud self-proclaimed greaser. Jens is 18, a key informant; he earned his driver’s licence during my fieldwork and is one of the few greasers who owns a Volvo car. And then there is Tom, 18, who owns and drives a Volvo car – or in fact several Volvos, because he has a tendency to wreck them regularly. Felix, 15, and Frank, 16, also identify as greasers. The rest of this group of greasers, Anders, Malte and Kim, are all 17, but turning 18 in the near future.

The large greaser group also includes Måns, 15, Rolf, 17, Sven, 17, and Alf, 18. And Jon, 18, Isak, 17, Gurra, 17, Aron, 17, Frida, 15, Tina, 17, and Maja, 17, are also members of this wider group. Gurra and Maja are in a romantic relationship. Jens and Kajsa, 15, started dating during the autumn and later became an item. All of them live in Lillby, except Kajsa who lives in Vallinge, Malte who alternates between Storköping and Toryd (approximately 7 km southwest of Lillby), Tom who lives in Toryd, and Sven who lives in Vallinge (about 12 km from Lillby). At the time of my fieldwork only Tom, Jon, Alf and Jens drove cars, but many of the other 17-year-olds were about to take their driving tests as well.

Sam, 15, living in Lillby, was often at the youth centre and socialized with some of the members of the second clique. He was not often referred to when the greasers were asked to describe their social network, but he was

\(^3\) The EPA was created in Sweden during World War II. It is an older car, sometimes even a truck, which has been converted into an agricultural machine. The name originates from a low-price department store, EPA. Mechanically it has been modified not to exceed 30 km per hour, and has no rear suspension. In 1963, the A-tractor was introduced as an alternative to the EPA, although in vernacular Swedish the terms are interchangeable. The A-tractor is a converted car and is not supposed to be used for transporting goods or people. EPAs and A tractors need to have a sign at the rear end signalling low speed (under 45 kph, a so-called “LGF” sign [Långsamtgående Fordon, in Swedish]). The quad bike, on the other hand, is a four-wheeled open vehicle, developed for forestry and agricultural use but with an increased number of recreational users. The quad bike is smaller than a tractor and is used in places that are inaccessible to larger vehicles.
very frequently at the youth centre and also outside the storefront in the evenings. Other remote or past members, previously core members, are Harry, 16, and Tobias, 16. They are best friends and have had extensive experience of hanging out at the car park. Harry alternates between living in Lillby and in Pålso (25 km north of Lillby), while Tobias lives in Lillby but goes to senior high school in Storköping. Saga, 15, and Dina, 15, hang out with the members of the core cliques, but are not considered members. They both live in Lillby. In addition, in this thesis we will also meet Isa, Vera, Anna and Carro, whom I met only occasionally, and the voices of several other young people whom I have had the pleasure of meeting during my fieldwork (see Appendix 1).

Research aims, guiding questions and structure of the thesis

Following this brief introduction to the greaser group, the first aim of this study is both empirical and theoretical: to illustrate and critically analyze the different risk-taking practices that occur within this vehicle-centred culture. The second aim of the thesis is more empirical: to make visible a well-known yet rather under-studied area of contemporary youth culture in Sweden: the (Volvo) greasers. This culture is often perceived as being at odds with urban modernity, out of place as well as out of date, associated with rural backwaters. The greaser culture is hence often conceived of as “problematic”, due to the risk-taking practices that many of the greasers carry out and that are a vital part of being perceived as a greaser. The greasers in Lillby are thus used as a case study4 in order to gain an empirical understanding of how risk-taking with vehicles is manifested, motivated, talked about and practised. Within this theoretically informed ethnographic framework, I take an interest in the social relations that the young greasers maintain within their culture and with their vehicles, as well as aiming to situate their practices in a wider social context. As for the chronology of the thesis, for pragmatic and reader-friendly reasons, the latter empirical aim necessarily precedes the former. This means that the reader will make a thorough acquaintance with the greasers before I engage with their risk-taking practices.

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4 Case study refers to what Mitchell (2006: 26f) speaks of as “the documentation of some particular phenomenon or set of events which has been assembled with the explicit end view of drawing theoretical conclusions from it. (...) What is important is not the content of the case study as such but the use to which the data are put to support theoretical conclusions.” There will be more on my theoretical and methodological underpinnings in this chapter and in Chapter Two.
Risk-taking young men

In order to explore the risk-taking practices the greasers carry out with their vehicles, the following research questions have guided my work:

- In what ways do structural conditions and the cultural context shape the greasers' leisure time and everyday lives?

- How does the greasers' social context in Lillby community manifest and affect their social practices?

- How do the greasers negotiate their relation to their peri-urban community through talk and practice? How can this negotiation be analyzed with reference to various cultural norms and conceptions?

- How do the greasers talk about and practise risk-taking with their motor vehicles? What are the material and discursive implications of these risk-taking practices?

- What would an analytical shift to risk-taking practices as violations entail and enable in relation to theory and practice?

Each research question is discussed in the thesis, roughly in order of the chapters. In the present chapter, after introducing the aims and objectives of my study and the questions that have guided my work, I will address research related to young people's everyday lives. Of particular relevance is research relating to personhood and social practices, and the re-creation of social norms in local cultures such as that of the greasers. On a cultural level, I take an interest in how hegemonic notions and conceptions of age and youth influence and affect the local norms and practices in various ways. Furthermore, since the thesis revolves around risk-taking with motor vehicles, research related to risk and risk-taking is of crucial importance in order to create a theoretical framework and introduce the key analytical concepts that I use and develop in the thesis. In Chapter Two, entitled "Means of movement", I present and discuss my arrival in Lillby, the construction of my field, my research subjects and myself as a fieldworking researcher, ethical considerations and dilemmas in relation to the overall methodological underpinnings of my work and the analytical process.

Since contextualization is an important analytical tool, I have made a substantive effort to produce thick descriptions of the greasers' leisure time and everyday lives (cf. Geertz 1973). In Chapters Three and Four I introduce my research subjects – the greasers – and locate them in their social, cultural and spatial context. This means that I strive to capture their social
position in their peer group, within their community, Lillby, as well as in relation to the urban proximity and the wider society. Chapter Three, "Locating the greasers", deals mainly with the research question of how structural conditions and cultural conceptions of youth shape the greasers' leisure activities and everyday lives. I ask how structural conditions affect the greasers' local community and the greaser culture as well as how the greasers as a group and the local culture are positioned in relation to hegemonic notions of youth. Aside from presenting Lillby community and the places that the greasers appropriate and inhabit in the community to the reader, the aim of this chapter, drawing on a range of different literature, is also to understand how global, national, regional and local politics affect the housing situation, the local labour market and public transport, among other things, in peri-urban communities such as Lillby. Complex political processes are intertwined with social and cultural processes, determining how certain places are discursively conceptualized and how these conceptions tend to incorporate not only the places but also the people inhabiting these places and the practices they carry out.

In Chapter Four, "The greaser culture", I move on to describe and analyze in- and out-group relations and the social geography of Lillby. The aim is to provide the reader with a detailed and localized understanding of the greasers' everyday lives, mapping out in- and out-group relations in general, as well as elaborating upon the greasers' in-group relations with reference to membership, belonging and standing. The focus will hence be on social relations and how these are intertwined with social practices in the greaser group. Through the notion of "belonging-work", I discuss the importance of visibility in gaining a standing in the social geography of Lillby youth, as well as the practices that are crucial in relation to performing and practising a greaser. From there, I move on to a discussion of the greasers' accomplishments in gaining a standing in the greaser group, as well as what the effects are for those who fail to practice and perform the greaser successfully. In this context, I will also raise the question of exclusion in relation to non-greasers, that is, the young people who experience a "troubled belonging".

Chapters Five and Six go into more depth about two themes of great relevance for understanding risk-taking practices with motor vehicles. In Chapter Five, "Breaking Bored", I deal with a central element of the greasers' lives, which is vital for understanding their risk-taking practices with motor vehicles. The greasers negotiate their relation to (peri-urban) place through the experience of boredom and the creation of fun practices. By introducing "spatial boredom" as an analytical tool, the greasers' risk-taking practices
can be understood in a more nuanced way. In relation to this, I will elaborate on two different ways in which the greasers have and create fun: risk-taking with motor vehicles and partying. The term "fun" is broken down into the sub-categories of thrills, excitement, enjoyment and pleasure and discussed in relation to the larger framework of spatial boredom. I will round off this chapter by exploring some of the discursive gendered implications of the greasers’ negotiation with and practices related to spatial boredom.

In Chapter Six, "Managing Risk", on risk-taking practices with vehicles, the aim is to further explore the greasers' risk-related talk and practices through the notion of "control": how different activities, practices and recountings of particular situations together function to control vehicles, the borders of the social geography and the narrative around risk-taking and the emotions involved. I argue that the foregrounding of these controlling practices in the greaser culture legitimates a lack of care for oneself and others, which constructs the greasers as not only care-free, but also careless. Consequently, in the final section of the chapter I suggest that an approach to risk-taking practices as a kind of violation would be beneficial, due in part to their potentially harmful consequences and in part to the construction of careless men as a consequence of the controlling practices.

In the final chapter, Chapter Seven, entitled "Placeness, risk-taking and violations", my aim is to bring together the important themes and topics from the empirical and analytical chapters and discuss them in more depth. Special attention is hence given to place and "the politics of stability" (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006), as well as to the important concept of "situated risk-taking", which has been developed in the previous empirical and analytical chapters. From here I wish to engage in a dialogue whereby the idea of risk-taking as violations is elaborated – in relation to feminist theories on men's violence, geographical work on violence and fear and the ways in which risk-taking as violations also link to the regime of automobility (Böhm et al. 2001). The thesis ends with a short contemplation of the study's implications for theory and practice and some suggestions for future areas of study.

In all the chapters, the concepts of age, gender, class and place permeate the analysis. I relate to the aforementioned concepts both as cultural concep-

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5 In some chapters I engage in brief discussions on race and ethnicity and although I recognize the importance of the construction of whiteness in the greaser culture, it
tions and as constructed through social practice. The thesis is a study of young men and masculinity, in part due to the fact that the greasers are predominantly men and the greaser culture does not hold “any obvious or autonomous female positions” (Lalander & Johansson 2012: 155, cf. Lumsden 2010). Although the study focuses on young men, I find it important to address some aspects of how the few young women’s lives unfolded. I have therefore found it crucial to discuss the young greaser women where this has been possible, although their scarcity makes them less present than the young greaser men. Despite the numerical lack of women in the material, the notion of gender constitution and the doing of gender as an approach to the material necessarily entails an engagement with cultural conceptions and discursive formations of gender as relational that obviously also pertain to young people’s lives (cf. Kessler & MacKenna 1978, Lundgren 1993, 1995). I will return to a discussion of these concepts in the section on the cultural construction of age.

That being said, and given the interdisciplinary character of the study, my ambition has been to move beyond disciplinary boundaries in my theoretical, methodological and analytical approach (cf. Lykke 2009). One of the key metatheoretical arguments in the study pertains to the necessity of incorporating and integrating ways of seeing and understanding the phenomenon of risk-taking with motor vehicles, which does not know disciplinary boundaries, and the study is in this sense problem-oriented. However, my interests, theoretical framework and ethnographic methodology have shaped the study in such a manner that some trails have remained largely untrodden and some are only briefly indicated, whereas others have become topical.

After having introduced the aims and objectives of my study, I will now guide the reader through my theoretical framework and present key analytical concepts by engaging with research on young people’s everyday lives, personhood, social practices and social norms in local cultures, in relation to hegemonic notions and conceptions of age and youth. The chapter ends with a discussion of risk and risk-taking.

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is not made focal due to space and time constraints. The same can be said regarding sexuality.
Young people’s everyday lives

Given my ethnographic approach, the notion of everyday life is vital. As noted by many feminist researchers, the everyday and everyday life have been excluded from sociological analyses or any analyses of the social and society, grand or local (Gullestad 1989). Often associated with the feminine and the lives of women, but also with children, childhood and youth (Holloway & Valentine 2000), the place of reproduction and the reproductive sphere have been regarded as mundane, trivial and immanent – or simply insignificant. Tyner (2012: 1) holds that the everyday appears to be “those mundane, banal and even trivial activities that occupy our daily lives”, which often tend be conceived of as routine and associated with boredom. It is, however, precisely these seemingly mundane activities that can give interesting insights into the social fabric of society. Within this everyday context, the social practices of people come into focus, what Thrift (1996, cf. Bourdieu 1977), among others, has termed theories of practice.

Everyday life, personhood and social practices

Having an everyday-life perspective entails two dimensions according to Gullestad (1989): the day-to-day organization of activities and tasks and everyday life as experience and lifeworld. The first dimension relates to a conventional perspective “from above”, taken in most research and public administration, where everyday life is often considered (if at all) as a rest category in models of society. The second dimension is consequently a perspective “from underneath”, entailing a certain preoccupation with people’s everyday lives and practices in a particular (and often ethnographic) sense. This, in turn, enables the researcher to gain knowledge about people’s lives and practices in their social and cultural contexts, making it possible to identify connections between phenomena that are otherwise studied separately. People’s endeavours to create integration by relating to their life-world extend across different sectors of society. The everyday life concept is in this sense not tied to a specific sector, institution or locality, it is rather a cross-section of society, with individual people and their lives at the centre (Gullestad 1989).6

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6 The relationship between everyday life and society can be viewed through the two dimensions of organization and integration/experience. The connection between social structure and everyday life, perceived as the daily management of activities and tasks, is more easily discerned than between social structure and the experienced life world (Gullestad 1989).
Ethnography is particularly suited to studying everyday life, but in order to make everyday life understandable, a theoretical framework foregrounding practice, and the ways in which practices affect social relations, is needed. Paechter (2003: 70) sees the framework of a community of practice “as a way of thinking about the formation and perpetuation of localised” social positions, which are related to various power relations. Although I do not employ the concept of communities of practice myself, a focus on learning processes through participation in localized communities of practice is close to how I perceive the young people’s socialization process into a greaser and the greaser group. The key concept is necessarily practice, as Paechter (2003: 70) argues:

Apprentices are, thus, learning to be part of the community of practice, to be full participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991), with all the many and varied social practices that this implies.

The gradual learning process is highlighted in the concept of the apprentice, and echoes much anthropological work on how people come to acquire full membership in various groups and cultures. Full membership requires sharing the core meanings and norms of the group – which are negotiated collectively. Practices, in turn, are the shared actions that make up the local groups and cultures. In this thesis I understand practices as both bodily and verbal accomplishments (talk included) that have the potential effect of altering social relations or discourses. Furthermore, the practices I discuss are observable activities. Given that practices are usually not repeated in the same manner every time they are practised, there is also the possibility of change (Paechter 2003). Paechter (2003: 71) sees practices as:

not fixed, but fluid; the practices of a particular community are constantly being shifted, renegotiated and reinvented. It is what the learner learns as he or she moves from peripherality to full membership. In doing so, she or he additionally takes part in the practice of learning.

Closely linked to how the greasers learn to become full members of the group are questions about what Paechter (2003) refers to as “identity”. Taking part in a group, sharing its meanings, norms and practices, is linked with constructing an identity that is tied to the group, since identity is part

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7 Paechter (2003: 71) acknowledges the impact of power/knowledge relations on the processes in question, stating that “such relations are themselves gendered and clearly have an impact on which communities of practice are constructed, become established and achieve dominance, as well as on which communities of practice particular individuals want to and are permitted to participate in.”
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of our experience of being in the world. In this thesis, I have avoided using the term identity, mainly because it often signifies an individualistic approach to social beings. In other words, given my theoretical framework where social relations and group processes are fundamental for an understanding of the greaser culture, a concept like identity does not allow for enough analytical understanding as to how persons are constituted (Harris 1989). According to Harris (1989: 602):

[d]ealing with a concept of person entails conceptualizing the human or other being as an agent, the author of action purposively directed toward a goal. By "human person" I mean a human being publicly considered an agent. In this sense, to be a person means to have a certain standing (not "status") in a social order, as agent-in-society. Consequently, it is not sufficient to a discussion of personhood to talk about people as centers of experience, selves. To be a person means to be a "somebody" who authors conduct construed as action.

The concept of a person, and personhood, is related to the standing of the membership one has in a group and that standing affords different degrees of agency. In this way, practices can be regarded as part of enacting personhood related to specific groups, communities or cultures. A person is hence produced by the social relations they are involved in, and is in this sense a social being different from an experiencing being (a self). Strathern (1988: 173) clarifies:

Connections between social relations, like connections between persons, have to be experienced in terms of their changing effect upon another. Relations and persons become in effect homologous, the capabilities of persons revealing the social relations of which they are composed, and social relations revealing the persons they produce.

In effect, the greasers' culture is a peer culture where their shared practices make up the norms for how to behave and act. The practices they carry out take on meaning and significance, are negotiated, valued and appraised first and foremost within and in relation to their own group norms. This has been termed “informal socialisation” and is characterized by processes of learning through everyday practices (Pelissier 1991). In-group cohesion is reinforced through shared norms and ideas within the framework of what constitutes the greaser culture (Cohen 1982, Elias & Scotson 1994). The greaser culture is, however, part of larger cultures. The social practices carried out in local situations or cultures are affected by and relate to, for instance, mainstream cultural conceptions of youth, which either match or differ from the social norms that the greaser culture cultivates (see the next
section for a closer look at the cultural conceptions of relevance to this study).

The place of culture(s)
As an ethnographer, I should make the culture I study intelligible through the same means by which it becomes meaningful to its members. Culture becomes intelligible by means of its boundaries, boundaries that are produced and reproduced by people’s practices. I use the concept of culture when referring to the social organization of the greaser group. Marginalized people tend to have a clear idea of how a certain culture is organized, what norms and values are associated with that particular culture and how they are valued and positioned in relation to each other (Cohen 1982, see also Elias & Scotson 1994, Geertz 1973). Furthermore, Cohen (1982: 2) argues that “how people experience and express their difference from others, and how their sense of difference becomes incorporated into and informs the nature of their social organization and process” is what makes up culture. In this sense, cultures are often perceived as dichotomies or contrasts (Geertz 1973, cf. Eldén 2003), and when related to or compared with each other they appear to be contained entities with a defined content. How culture is defined within a theoretical framework affects whether or not individuals are seen to “oppose”, “resist” or form “sub-cultures” or “counter-cultures”. As I perceive it, these code words suggest a perspective on culture(s) that sees them as essentially not only contrasting, but also dichotomous. While looking for contrast is a useful tool for grasping difference at the local level of practice and in relation to social norms, it is also important not to overemphasize this difference on the analytical level and to remain sensitive to how the local norms and practices relate to cultural conceptions and norms.

The post-Marxist Birmingham School’s analytic capture of working-class youth’s relationship with and reaction to labour market fluctuations in the backwaters of late modern society resonates with an anthropological use of the concept of culture, and has appealed to many Swedish researchers.\(^8\) Cul-

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\(^8\) According to Bolin & Lövgren (1995), the early theoretical influences on researchers in the field of youth studies in Sweden were found in Western European, notably UK-based, research, such as the Birmingham School. Another research stream that has been influential in the Nordic countries is the German psychologically oriented effort proposed by Ziehe (1975). According to this approach, our socialization is dependent on material conditions such as work and family. Changes in the labour market and family constitution in the post-war period have resulted in a new personality type with less rigid boundaries of the self (Ziehe 1975). Some of the research on voluntary risk-taking draws on Ziehe (cf. Lyng 1990, 2005) and will be
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ture in the anthropological sense refers to a particular way of life rather than to its aesthetic dimensions. A name that frequently recurs when discussing the Birmingham School is Willis (1977) and his renowned study of young working-class men’s socialization into their parents’ class position – how they “learned to labour”. These early approaches to studying young people in the West were rightfully criticized by some for their lack of gender analysis (McRobbie 1991, cf. Griffin 2011), and by others for neglecting class or race and ethnicity (Bolin & Lövgren 1995). The focus on young people, class, race and style, has tended to highlight the more spectacular subcultures in public space – notably all-male formations (McRobbie 1991). Öhlund (1994) has pointed to two general tendencies in Swedish youth research that illuminate the influence of the Birmingham School: male researchers focusing on boys and young men and the emphasis on deviance (as understood in subculture theory or in relation to the perception of youth as a transition phase to adulthood and thus “normalcy”) or the problematic. Waara (1996) finds that a lot of more recent research has indeed rectified the first predisposition by focusing on girls and young women, but that the emphasis on deviance has prevailed. Bolin & Lövgren (1995) have a similar understanding of deviance and problematic behaviour as the central focus of Swedish youth research, with the underlying assumption that the young are in need of intervention – much in the sense of what Nayak & Kehily (2008: 23) refer to as the discourse on “at risk youth”. The focus on deviance has further led to a lack of interest in “non-deviant” young people. Boys have been studied as a separate entity from girls, not recognizing the

briefly discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Six. For a critical overview of the Birmingham approach, see Skelton & Valentine (1998).

9 In Sweden, Waara (1996) distinguishes the research on young people into four phases: evaluation research, social engineering, sector research and sociologically influenced research. The first phase of research was conducted after the Second World War and broke with previous research carried out in Sweden, which measured Swedish youth from international perspectives rather than focusing on how different living circumstances and the milieu the young live in affect the young people’s attitudes and values. The underlying approach of this research departed from the idea that growing up was primarily about conforming to the surrounding society’s demands and living conditions. The second phase, according to Waara (1996), perceived studies on young people as contributions to the social engineering of society. Here, the youth period is described as problematic due to the dangers posed by the emerging capitalist market rendering young people in need of protection, guidance and fosterage in order to become civilized and useful citizens. The third phase of research focuses on different sectors of the young life, often carried out in different disciplines. The main area of study has evolved around young people and the labour market. Waara (1996) in turn, positions himself in the fourth phase, stressing more sociologically oriented youth research.

Subculture studies have focused mainly on deviant and not on conventional young people; on working-class adolescents rather than on their contemporary middle-class peer; [they] have favored young men over young women, and the little world of “youth leisure” over the “broader world” of adult institutions.

Subculture theory’s focus on spectacular character, style and cultures analyzed these as symbolic resistance to societal (adult) norms (Hall & Jefferson 1977, Willis 1977, 1978), and this approach has since been accused of romanticizing subcultures in that they tended to regard all forms of opposition as forms of resistance (cf. Lesko & Talburt 2012).

In my view, the notion of cultures as separable and contrasting has contributed to an understanding of some local cultures as specifically different from an imagined mainstream culture. Operationalization of the concept of culture appears somewhat difficult when different empirical and analytical levels are conflated; therefore, I have found it more useful to talk about social and cultural norms and how these relate to the greasers’ social practices. The greasers exercise agency within a socio-cultural order where they both negotiate with and are restricted by social formations, cultural conceptions and norms related to age, gender, class and place. My study of the greasers in some ways concurs with the subculture tradition, but in some ways I depart from it. I also relate to a collectivity of young working-class men and their vehicle-related practices during their leisure time. The research subjects in my study are in a sub-cultural framework most likely to be perceived as “deviant”, highly visible, “problematic” and “at risk”. The notion of being at risk or taking risks in general appears to have become at times almost synonymous with young people. Following this, and while I recognize my inspiration from subculture theory, I do not use the concept of subculture when I talk about the greaser culture. I understand subculture theory as associated with deviance, as stressing a demarcation between "culture" and "subculture" that does not apply and often overemphasizes labour market relations.¹⁰ I agree here with Canevacci (2000: 19, cited in Lesko & Talburt 2012: 43) that a "general unitary culture in front of which

¹⁰ Given the UK focus of much research on subcultures, the aspect of labour market relations is certainly appealing, and much research on vehicle-interested young people has also stressed this significance (see for instance Hatton 2007), but un-reflexively importing such an analysis into the Swedish context is both dubious and flawed.
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subculture is defined as sub" does not exist. Canevacci (2000: 19) argues that:

The Anglo-Saxon success in the term “subculture” is based on a biased and partial reading of Gramsci, which has led to the development of a type of Marxism that pays attention to the autonomy of culture.

Instead of framing the young greasers within an oppositional framework, I understand their culture in the light of informal socialization, where peer relations are of central importance (cf. Carrabine & Longhurst 2002). In addition, structural conditions and hegemonic notions of youth inform the social norms and practices within the greaser culture, making it difficult to distinguish the greasers as any kind of counterculture or subculture. The greasers’ practices and the social situations they are part of need to be analyzed in their local context alongside the ways in which they conform to or divert from overarching norms of gender, class, age and place. For instance, the subversive potential associated with particular male youth groupings inherent in the subculture framework can in my framework be perceived instead as part of a hegemonic position for some young men.

A concept affiliated to that of greaser culture is greaser space, since culture is always in some sense placed. Greaser space is part of and co-constitutive of greaser culture. The distinction I make between them is an analytical point that cultures are always spatial and that social relations are part of producing places (cf. Lefebvre 1991, Massey 1994). De Certeau’s (1984) spatialization of everyday knowledges has influenced my analyses of the greasers’ practices and everyday lives. According to de Certeau (1984), the different ways of knowing a place relate to what he terms strategic and tactical knowledge, where strategic knowledge is like a map or tool (knowledge from above), whereas tactical knowledge is not readily available (knowledge from below) and relates to “knowledges of embodied, embedded and temporal resistance” (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006: 149). Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 149) hold that:

Making one’s own place involves spatializing knowledge. It involves construction of readable spaces and one’s place in such spaces. The strategy then, is also concerned to establish a relationship between boundaries and belonging, insiders and outsiders. Indeed, strategies involve thinking in powerful packs. They involve pack knowledge – how to belong, differentiate, patrol.
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The analytical distinction between greaser space and greaser culture is therefore partly a pragmatic and pedagogical exercise.\footnote{This analytical separation between culture and place has also resulted in a separation of the discussion on, for instance, how the greasers are cast as problematic in Lilby in relation to place (Chapter Three) and to social practices (Chapter Four), although these matters obviously intersect.} I could have argued for the inclusion of the spatial dimensions within the concept of culture, which arguably lies closer to my perception of their entanglement, but I have instead chosen to distinguish between the two for two reasons. The first relates to how many studies on young people still tend not to take (particularly rural) place into account (cf. Holloway & Valentine 2000), although there has been a growing recognition of the topic and an upsurge of interest in it. The second is my desire to highlight the need in hegemonic feminist theory more generally to take both age and place more thoroughly into account when relating to cultures, the social and people’s practices.\footnote{To be discussed more fully in the final chapter.} This analytical knot between culture and place is one of the main arguments in this study for how to understand the greasers’ risk-taking practices and I will therefore dwell on how place, social practices, personhood and greaser culture are intertwined.

Place can be and mean many things and it has been the “proper object” of geography and related disciplines for some time. In his teasing out of the diverse meanings and uses of place in geography, other disciplines and everyday life, Cresswell (2004) notes how place is both a thing in the world and a way of seeing, knowing or understanding. Place in this latter sense is made meaningful by the experiences one has and the practices that are carried out, or in short – places are lived.\footnote{The influential work of Lefebvre (1991) and the distinction he proposes between ‘absolute space’ – exemplified by the quantitatively oriented perspectives in geography – and ‘social space’ is an important background to note here. Absolute space refers to “infinite, abstract, unchanging, geometrically definable” space that is “analytically independent of time and matter” (Bondi 2005: 139). Social space, on the other hand, is the lived and experienced space, something that is continuously produced. In other words, rather than asking what space is, the core question is what space does and how social relations shape places and vice versa. Social space comes very close to the definition of place with which I align myself in this study.} This entails that both the meaning and materiality of place are contingent on how individuals and the surrounding society experience and make up the very fabric of that place. Furthermore, place can be said to be constructed by people’s practices and are in this sense processes that are never finished (Pred 1984). Cresswell (2004: 39) holds that:

1. This analytical separation between culture and place has also resulted in a separation of the discussion on, for instance, how the greasers are cast as problematic in Lilby in relation to place (Chapter Three) and to social practices (Chapter Four), although these matters obviously intersect.
2. To be discussed more fully in the final chapter.
3. The influential work of Lefebvre (1991) and the distinction he proposes between ‘absolute space’ – exemplified by the quantitatively oriented perspectives in geography – and ‘social space’ is an important background to note here. Absolute space refers to “infinite, abstract, unchanging, geometrically definable” space that is “analytically independent of time and matter” (Bondi 2005: 139). Social space, on the other hand, is the lived and experienced space, something that is continuously produced. In other words, rather than asking what space is, the core question is what space does and how social relations shape places and vice versa. Social space comes very close to the definition of place with which I align myself in this study.
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Thinking of place as performed and practiced can help us think of place in radically open and non-essentialized ways where place is constantly struggled over and re-imagined in practical ways. Place is the raw material for the creative production of identity rather than an a priori label of identity. Place provides the conditions for creative social practice.

In line with this, the openness of how places are produced entails the possibility of change, resistance and contestation. It is precisely these aspects that Massey (1994: Chapter 6) point to in her paper "A Global Sense of Place", where she argues against the notion that time would annihilate space (termed time-space compression) due to the rapid changes in the contemporary internationalization of capital, and that capitalism should determine our understanding and experience of space. Place, it is argued in this approach, loses significance due to the fragmentation and disruption that occurs in the wake of the new mobile era. First of all, Massey (1994: 149) argues, analyses of power are absent in the time-space compression approach:

For different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn’t, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.14

Secondly, if place is imagined as fixed and stable whereas the global economy is fluid, the complexity of people’s movements and related experiences disappears. This forces us, she contends, to re-think what place stands for and how it can be conceptualized. Place, she proposes, can instead be thought of as “progressive”, that is, as a process; defined by the outside; as a site of multiple identities and histories; and defined by its interactions (Cresswell 2004: 74). Massey’s (1984, 1994) critique of conventional geographical thought and theory, where “absolute space” functions as a foundation, has resulted in conceptualizing place as relational: how social relations are stretched over space, whereby “the unique characteristics of spe-

14 See previous footnote. As several feminist geographers have highlighted, the conceptualization of space as stasis, and opposed to time, takes its meaning within a network of binaries, including objective/subjective, and (...) masculine/feminine” (Bondi 2005: 139f, cf. Massey 1994). The timeless stasis of space is figured as feminine and immanent while time is figured as masculine and transcendent (Bondi 2005: 141, cf. Massey, 1992, de Beauvoir 1949). See also my discussion in Chapter Five and in Chapter Seven.
cific places can be understood in terms of their particular and dynamic position within the complex of social relations that stretch far beyond any particular place” (Bondi 2005: 142, referring to Massey 1994). The re-conceptualization of space as relational foregrounds materiality and wider connections, as well as challenging the notion that places, people or cultures are bounded entities (Bondi 2005). In these processes, the co-constitution of places and persons become of particular interest in order to understand both place and personhood.

However, as Massey (1994) also points out, analyses of how power operates must accompany any approach to place. When I use the concept of place in this thesis, it should be taken to resonate with Massey’s (1994) concept of place as progressive and as an event, made up of people’s practices and experiences as well as the meanings that are attached to it, and ultimately related to power in different ways. The establishment of youth recreation centres is an illuminating case in point, which has affected how young people’s leisure time is conceptualized as well as its spatial organization. The emergence of youth recreation centres in Sweden can be traced historically to certain political and ideological strands, where Bildung is central.15 The youth recreation centres that were established during the 1960s reflect political tendencies with the purpose of creating a space for unorganized youth (some, but not all, youth centres had the explicit agenda of channelling unorganized young people into the voluntary organized sector).16 Thus, the youth centres can in some sense be said to exist in a grey zone and can be interpreted as a contested space with reference to Massey (1994, cf. Bjurström 2011). Despite the idea of creating places for young people, the foundational premise lies in a state initiative with policies and directives that shape the organization, an insitutionalization of young people’s leisure that in this sense can be said to be a continuation of adult-governed control over young people. Contemporary youth politics, and hence also the youth recreation centres, in Sweden bear the heavy legacy of in loco parentis, although disguised in more “youth-friendly” rhetoric. One version of the familiarization of the youth centre institutions is the homely interior design and architecture of the premises. The youth centres are thus

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15 The German concept Bildung lies close to the Swedish term bildning, referring to a Hegelian ideal of self-cultivation and Humbolt’s ideas of education, which both stress the importance of personal growth, development and maturation of the individual’s mind and body through active educational measures.

16 Accordingly, a plethora of new professions and occupations surrounding the youth centres have arisen, designed to assist, support, aid, discipline, surveil, steer, foster, educate or socialize the young people – depending on which view one has of the youth centres’ function and purpose.
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often built so as to resemble family homes, with living rooms, kitchens and
cosy furniture. Nevertheless, as I will illustrate in this thesis, the young
greasers use the youth centre in ways they find attractive as well as creat-
ing places of their own in the local neighbourhood that, at least to some ex-
tent, escape adult surveillance and control. The social practices that make
up the greaser culture relate to, negotiate with, and produce place.

To sum up this section, to have a practice-based ethnographic approach en-
tails:

- Focusing on local practices and their accomplishments, as well as their social effects and consequences in local situations
- Focusing on what kind of person these practices produce and the social standing that a person is awarded in local situations and cultures
- Explicitly relating to the placeness of these social practices

In addition, relating these local practices, as well as their accomplishments
and effects, not only to the social group norms but also to cultural concep-
tions is a necessary further step in the analytical process of contextualizing.
In my case, cultural norms around age, gender, class and place make up an
important nexus in order to comprehend the greasers' lives and practices.

The cultural construction of age

Kåks (2007) understands age primarily as a cultural construction. To be of
a particular age entails a certain frame, or a standardized narrative, that
each individual has to relate to, which in turn dictates which practices are
suitable at a certain age and which are not in order to be recognized as
"normal" (cf. Heggli 2004, Gubrium, Holstein & Buckholdt 1994). Age is in
this sense understood chronologically, but also as hierarchically organized,
where adulthood is perceived to be the normative, unmarked and primary
category (Kåks 2007). In relation to adulthood, childhood, youth and old
age appear to deviate from the norm. In line with this, the concepts of chil-
dren, young people and youth are related to other aged life positions and
the life course as a whole, marked by their relation to the normative mid-
life (cf. Sandberg 2011). Lee (2001/2005) argues that Western society has a
strong tendency to understand the categories of adults and children as con-
sisting of different, opposite, kinds of humans. Where adults are perceived
as beings, children are becomings; adults are complete, children incom-
plete. Embedded in this forceful age-related binary, a relation of depen-
dence emerges, where children are not only dependent but also subordinate.
Bolin & Lövgren (1995) hold that the concepts of youth or young people ap-
pear to get their meaning from *what they are not* – in this case neither children nor adults. These concepts share the notion of becoming rather than being with the concept of childhood. The research subjects in my study can be argued to occupy an in-between position – in what some scholars have argued to be an emerging adulthood (Best 2007). Young people are *liminal* in this sense, belonging to an *in-between* rather than to the marked category of child or the unmarked category of adult. Mitterauer’s (1991) concept of caesuras captures the liminality of youth, not in the mere sense of a stage of journeying towards accomplished adulthood, but as an autonomous phase worthy of independent study.

How the social category of youth has been understood has of course varied over time as well as depending on which part of the world we are discussing, as does what it *means* to be young and the experiences young people have. Age as an analytical concept, then, aside from being a cultural construction, is also a social construction: a process and a relation where meaning is negotiated through different kinds of practices. These two levels of meaning production obviously relate to each other and the cultural conceptions continue to be vital forces for the experiences and possibilities that individuals in particular life phases perceive themselves to have (Närvänen & Näsman 2004, Kåks 2007). Accordingly, I understand youth to be a life phase that needs to be analyzed in relation to the other life phases in order to become culturally and socially intelligible. The intention is not to contrast the lives of young people with those of adults from an adult ideological standpoint in any normative sense (Thorne 1993), but to place the young research subjects in relation to cultural conceptions of age and how these cultural conceptions in turn relate to social constructions of age.

*Hegemonic notions of youthfulness and youth as a life phase*

The youth phase is imbued with all sorts of conceptions and ideas about young people, depending on which arena one turns to. Within mainstream culture, the hegemonic position of ideas from the field of developmental psychology has had a powerful influence and still continues to influence common-sense views of young people. Within this field of research, youth is characterized as a transition phase, and a successful transition leads to the young person maturing into a healthy individual and a productive member of society.¹⁷

¹⁷ Compare footnote 9.
In contrast to children, young people are expected to free themselves from dependencies of various kinds. In this context, becoming independent is the goal, strongly associated with conceptions of adulthood. Adulthood as a social construction is a fragmentary, fluid and heterogeneous notion, as illustrated in Thomson et al.’s (2003) study on young people’s perceptions of adulthood. The young people related to two ideal types of adulthood: a relational and an individual understanding of adulthood. On one hand, the transition from youth to adulthood incorporates the idea of “settling down” and “becoming responsible”. In the autonomous understanding, on the other hand:

young people stressed individual and internal aspects of feeling and acting in a mature way. This position was also associated with the view that age as such is not important and that adulthood cannot be secured by reaching an arbitrary age point, as for example in legal markers of adulthood. Rather it is seen as something that evolves over time and is related primarily to a range of emotional and practical competences. Here adulthood is associated with a process of increasing choice and autonomy and decreasing dependence. Young people talked about adulthood understood in this way as “being out on your own”. This version could be consistent with a range of practices that young people associated with an extended youth, including socialising, drinking, clubbing, having sexual relationships, which could be enjoyed here and now, and incorporated into a continuous project of self. (Thomson et al. 2004: 224)

The youth phase is not only constructed as a time of preparation for adulthood. It is also recognized as a distinct phase, valued for its own sake, where young people are imagined to test limits and try things out, have fun and enjoy themselves, and “find themselves” as individuals. This corresponds roughly with what Thomson et al. (2004) term an autonomous understanding of adulthood, where work on the self is placed at the centre. While Thomson et al.’s (2004) research subjects appear to hold predominantly positive ideas in relation to adulthood, this picture might appear a bit simplified. Kåks (2007), for instance, points to the fact that adulthood is not only glorified and sought after, it also entails a certain element of lack of freedom. In this sense, young people certainly understand adulthood in complex and contradictory ways.

While young people as a social category and group are subordinated to adults as a social category, youthfulness is paradoxically embraced as an appealing and positive ideal for everyone to strive towards (Heggli 2004, Kåks 2007, cf. Wyn & White 1997). These associations relate to consumption patterns, leisure, entertainment and pleasure. A popular travel agency advertisement, aptly targeting young people in general but backpackers in par-
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ticular, with the slogan “Go before it’s too late” captures the significance of the youth phase as an exploratory and fun-loving life phase. In the same advertisement, the slogan is illustrated by a paraphrase of Darwin’s evolutionary ladder: instead of the familiar pictures of the origin of the human species, this image portrays only a man (in the literal sense). The stages are distinguished by a man’s life age from infancy to the age of 33. In this image, the peak age of a man (symbolized by a silhouette with upright posture and an erect penis) is somewhere between the ages of 21 and 27 – by the age of 30 the figure has taken on the form of an old man with a hunched back, at 33 the man is lying down due either to fatigue or death. The essence of the image and the slogan is that one should seize the day and take every opportunity to live out, explore and experience the world, before it is too late and adulthood kicks in with its obligations, responsibilities and restraints on one’s perceived freedom and autonomy. The fun life ends, in this conception, when you turn 33.

Some researchers have argued that the youth phase has become extended, which can mean several things. One aspect relates to the position of youthfulness in society, leading to pre-teenagers and post-teenagers adopting styles, symbols and practices that are associated with teenagers and young people, especially in metropolitan areas (Johansson 2007, Lalande & Johansson 2012, Thomson et al. 2004). Another aspect refers to a general tendency for young people in the West to struggle to become part of the labour market and society at large, despite being the most materially privileged generation in history (see for instance EGRIS 2001, Wallace & Kovacheva 1998, Mørch & Andersen 2006, Biggart & Walther 2006). Instead of perceiving the youth phase as extended or differentiated – or a single smooth transition for that matter – Biggart & Wather find it more appropriate to talk of “Yo-Yo Transitions” (cf. Vickerstaff 2003, Pollock 2002). The process of growing up can be perceived, in this sense, as something much more complex, open and dynamic and in fact entails several transitions in many arenas (such as work, family, education etc.)

18 I do not argue here, however, that an extended period of youth enables smoother transitions between, for example, school and apprenticeship/work (see Vickerstaff 2003). In addition, I also acknowledge that “[q]ueer subcultures produce alternative temporalities (...) by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of the conventional forward-moving narratives of birth, marriage, reproduction and death,” and that queer culture-makers hence tend to stretch out adolescence and destabilize the notions of life phases (Halberstam 2003: 314, 2005).
Most often, however, the differently aged phases are regarded as disconnected from and contrasting with each other, stressing the discontinuities rather than the continuities (cf. Dubas, Miller & Petersen 2003). Stretched over time and space, youth as a phase of life and as a social category has been subject to different views and perspectives. Bjurström (2011) talks of specific tropes or rhetorical figures that feature in the discourses around youth and young people: one trope that stresses historical continuity and invariability, another that points to differences, yet another that refers to the past as a golden age and a final one that perceives present-day society as the most superior. According to Bjurström (2011), while these tropes are all being employed in contemporary modern discourses of youth, priority is given to the second, where distinctions and differences are highlighted: between past and present society; between previous generations and the current one; between young and old. So, Bjurström (2011: 31) contends that:

it is the rule rather than the exception that “youth culture” in this way is perceived as a relatively new historical or significant modern phenomenon, although there is plenty of historical evidence that a wide range of youth cultures preceded those that occurred in the 1950s and 60s, both in Sweden and in other countries. But perceiving youth culture as something relatively new, modern or late modern, assumes a division between the past and present that also supports the notion that youth’s history is characterized by discontinuity (my translation).

Making and creating distinctions rather than attending to the linkages and similarities can have the effect of presenting phenomena ahistorically as “new” and often also in a “problematic” sense (compare Cohen’s [2002] study on moral panic, Kåks 2007). This has often been the case when young people and their cultures have been brought up for public (adultist) discussion: young people’s practices are read and understood in the light of newness and extraordinariness, distinct from the rest of the (adult) culture and in need of correction and intervention. In addition, young people are in many senses positioned as being “out of control” or generally lacking control and self-discipline. Such an approach to young people and young people’s lives and practices, by extension, not only upholds a historical discontinuity, but also has the effect of discursively disconnecting the young people from culture, tradition and heritage and almost making them into social

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19 According to Cohen (2002), the social measures taken to eliminate the problem (young people’s public presence) and the mobilization that accompanies the project are in fact creating young people in public as problematic. Cohen (2002) describes this discursive process as ‘moral panic’, a process that often also creates the problematic phenomenon as something new.
perverts. On the other hand, in this trope young people can also be regarded as seismographs for modernity (Lalander & Johansson 2012). Here, young people are associated with the future – both in a negative and positive sense (“children are our future”). They come to take on the meaning of a group that is at the forefront of society, intercepting the winds of social and cultural change as well as being the ones initiating change (Lindgren 2002).

Notions of young people and youth as a life phase are in other words ambivalent. Kåks (2007: 30, cf. Miegel 1994, Miles 2000) holds that:

On the discursive level, the concept of youth has become synonymous with, on one hand a set of aspirational ideals like health, beauty, pleasure, sexuality, freedom and fulfillment, and on the other hand, a problematic image including unemployment, violence, substance abuse and self-starvation.

Youth as a problematic phase has been extensively investigated, for instance, in critical youth studies. Despite more recent efforts in youth research to move away from the preconception of youth as a problematic category, much politics concerning youth is based on such assumptions. Whereas childhood is often viewed through a lens of innocence and joyful experimenting, the entry into adolescence, puberty or one’s teens is marked by the troubled looks and frowning eyebrows of adults and the authorities (Nayak & Kehily 2008). This connects again to the position of young people in most Western societies, a group of individuals who in general are perceived to be searching for their place and marked by incapacity, confusion and lack. As will become clear, hegemonic notions of youth also have a spatial dimension. If children are perceived to be in need of protection and thus restricted in their spatial freedom, the perception of teenagers and young people, who do inhabit and occupy public space, shifts to that of dangerous (potentially violent), intimidating and harassing. I align myself with this critical tradition where public space is conceptualized as adultist: it is imagined, planned for and executed with adults in mind (Valentine 2004). Within the adultist paradigm, young people who do not conform to adultist norms of how public space is imagined to be used, are often perceived as problematic and unwanted (Skelton & Valentine 1998, Matthews, Limb & Taylor 2000, Kintrea et al. 2008). Young people’s – usually meaning young men’s – use of public space often conflicts with an adult ideological standpoint. In an insightful essay on young men’s movement patterns in a city in Sweden, Lieberg (1999) concurs and writes that discourses on young people in public appears to be confined to (street) violence, drugs and criminality:
Ris -­‐kaking young men

When boys in their teens occupy the city and its public space it often happens in a conspicuous and loud way and causes anxiety, fear and demands for action. (Lieberg 1999: 163)

In addition, the institutionalization of young people’s leisure in Sweden also affects this view, by discursively defining and organizing the youth recreation centres as the only acceptable places for spending leisure time. Young people meeting each other in the streets are thus constructed as problematic (Ohlsson & Swärd 1994). Young people in general and young men in particular and their use of public space, then, become a conflict zone between different ideologies where young people – at least on a discursive level – lose out. The discourses on young people and public space emphasize not only “anxiety, fear and demands for action” (Lieberg 1999: 163), but also a connection to risk.

Partial conceptions of youth

Hegemonic notions of youth relate to masculine, urban and middle-class norms and values. These norms will be addressed and elaborated upon throughout the text, why I will only briefly point to some important aspects here.

The hegemonic norms of youth and the conceptions associated with them are gender blind, but not gender neutral. Youth as an idealized phase centres on ideals of freedom and autonomy, being carefree and irresponsible, of being able to do whatever one wishes whenever one wishes to do it. Here the discourse of fun and enjoyment is well integrated, as is the idea of not taking life too seriously. This discourse of fun and enjoyment, together with a strong focus on freedom and autonomy, can be linked to discourses of masculinity.

Moreover, the urban bias of the hegemonic notion of youth conveys norms and values that have the urban as their backdrop. For instance, the positive aspects of concepts of youth and of youthfulness are often conceptualized through an urban lens (Käks 2007, cf. Waara 1996). The metropolis is imagined as a youthful site, while at the same time, paradoxically, public space is viewed as a place where adults are perceived to be the norm. Being placed and labelled as a “hillbilly”, a farmer and a greaser, on the other hand, positions the young people in this study as the rural Other – hence also seen as backward, less modern and more traditional (cf. Waara 1996, Stenbacka 2011).
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On the note of class position, it can be argued that the hegemonic notion of youth rests on middle-class norms and values in the sense that the practices the young people are imagined to engage in when living out are of a certain kind. The notion of social position and class and how the greasers’ social position is entangled in other formations of power is critical in this thesis. My use of class aims to capture a concept that highlights the differences as well as the similarities, the changes as well as the more stable dimensions.

Research on class has identified the difficulties in establishing what can be regarded as working class, upper class, middle class and so on, not least in relation to gender and sexuality (Adkins & Skeggs 2004, cf. Bourdieu 1986) but also in relation to age, or children and young people (Griffin 2011). Given frameworks that are often economic and labour-market oriented, positioning young people has been particularly problematic. I have chosen to use the concepts of working class and middle class, although I perceive the term working class to reflect aspects of Swedish society that have changed in a direction that does not necessarily capture the lived realities of people. The concept refers to groups of people who are diversely positioned in relation to the labour market and the economy, and with differing economic, social, cultural and spatial capital. The common dimension is that the working class in some ways does not conform to the ideologies and norms of the middle class. The term middle class, on the other hand, refers to the norms and values that are hegemonic in Swedish society, and is obviously extremely diverse when it comes to the people who can be positioned as middle class. The middle class is privileged in relation to the working class when it comes to the interconnections between economic, social, cultural and spatial capital. As with notions of age and gender, I perceive class to be re-created in social practice, relations and processes.

It is crucial to remain reflexive about the complexity and ambivalence of the paradoxical notions related to youth as a life phase. Consequently, the view of young people constructs a progressive narrative, of incomplete beings, as adults-in-becoming. The youth phase is conceived of as a phase that precedes and is a prerequisite for its contingent contrasting phase – adulthood. One could say that the progressive narrative requires such a phase in order for young people to be ready and prepared to take on the responsibilities imagined to be linked to adulthood. Given the ambivalence in hegemonic notions of youth, it becomes difficult to distinguish some elements as “normal” and others as, for instance, “deviant”. The question of normalcy vs. deviancy is more complex than it first appears. In this thesis, I do not wish to establish or re-create such distinctions on any level, whether it is the lived local or the wider societal level. I do, however, operate from the perspective of social normalcy, meaning that I regard the young greasers as behaving in
ways that both correspond to and diverge from hegemonic notions of youth, sometimes at the same time. Throughout the thesis, and especially in the empirical chapters, Three to Six, I will relate to hegemonic notions of youth in relation to the greasers’ lives.

In sum, youth is constructed as both an idealized and a problematic phase. The idealized cultural conceptions of young people and youth cultures are imbued with associations to a temporary, yet necessary, phase where one should live out, be irresponsible and immature, test boundaries and try out various practices and activities, in order to mature into a successful phase of adulthood. Youth as a problematic phase, on the other hand, has already been extensively covered in research and has been addressed from various angles. These hegemonic notions of youth have masculine, middle-class and urban connotations, thus displacing and othering femininity, the working class and the rural, sub- or peri-urban. Next, in light of the previous sections, I will engage in a discussion of risk and risk-taking.

Towards a critical approach to risk

Aitchison (2004: 98) reminds us that the socio-cultural nexus of youth, risk and leisure “are not objective realities that exist independently of the gender and spatial relations at work (and play) in society.” Risk as a concept is, and has been, used in a myriad of ways and with differing senses and can be regarded as highly problematic to use at all due to the narrow sense in which is used (Hansson 2005, Morrissey 2008). Smith, Stainton Rogers and Tucker (2007: 219) contend that:

Risk is a much debated and highly contentious concept. It is also a very powerful one, since concerns about risk lead to calls “to do something about it”. What to do depends on your definition of what “risk” means.

Risk as a concept has, one can say, an unclear ontological status (Lupton 2004, cf. Rosa 2010). In this section I will propose a critical approach that highlights the social character of risk and risk-taking, suggesting, in es-
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sense, that risk-taking is a social practice. In relation to this, I will touch upon cultural conceptions related to risk as well as different ways of perceiving risk in research and how these approaches diverge from or correspond to my own study and the framework I propose. The aim is to argue for a situated concept of risk-taking, a central concept that I will develop and elaborate throughout the thesis.

Risk as a social, cultural and spatial phenomenon

What is and has been regarded as risky is a social and cultural construction (Lupton & Tulloch 2003). The tendency in much research, when risk is related to people of young age (most notably teenagers), has been a rather uncritical use of the concept. Young people (treated as a homogeneous category) are depicted as "problematic" or "at risk" in relation to drug or alcohol use, spatial use, sexual behaviour and so on, and can be linked to the problematic dimensions of the hegemonic notions of youth that I discussed in the previous section. Risk-taking is here understood as synonymous with being young and young people are:

defined by their lack: their lack of care in what they do, lack of concern for others and lack of self control and self discipline. (Smith, Stainton Rogers & Tucker 2007: 223)

This uncritical use, in turn, has been picked up by the media and politicians, as evidence for deviance or abnormality, and thus in need of interventions offering “treatment” or new regulations and laws (curfews being the most commonly used). Here again, it is rather easy to link to the previous discussion in relation to young people and the discourse of moral panic (Cohen 2002). The concept of risk, “at risk”, “risk group” and similar elaborations are often coupled with and can be interpreted in the light of such a discourse. Consequently, the concept of risk is also used to permit “different forms and levels of intervention”, where governments now play a decisive role in managing risk (Smith, Stainton Rogers & Tucker 2007: 235). Bunton, Green & Mitchell (2004) argue that risk has become central to how we understand childhood and youth, and that a shift has occurred from young people as “dangerous” or “causing trouble” to “risky”. According to these authors, this is part of a growing governmentalism, “intimately linked to social techniques for governing populations of young people” (Ibid: 1). The concept of risk is used as a resource for creating and maintaining social dis-

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[21] There is hence a general concern for young people’s well-being in relation to threats, which has been identified and treated by epidemiology, medicine, economics and engineering (Bunton, Green & Mitchell 2004).
Risk-taking young men

tinctions and is associated with certain groups within a community (Douglas 1992). Young people, for instance, can be constructed as “risky” and maintained as outsiders so that the “purity” of the insider community remains intact (Douglas 1992).

Although risk has previously been theorized in different disciplines, the stress has been either on risk prevention and reduction or on how risk and danger are (re)negotiated on a general cultural level (Giddens 1991, 1992, Beck 1992, cf. Lupton 1999b, Zinn 2006). The underlying notion of a rational subject with sufficient knowledge to be able to manoeuvre through life preventing, avoiding or mitigating hazardous situations and contexts permeates the former approaches. Common to risk research is still the perception that the concept of risk mediates something negative and dangerous: a threat, a hazard or an injury (Austen 2009). The counter discourse that simultaneously exists – to actively seek out and participate in dangerous activities – has in some instances been accorded less attention, which is particularly interesting in relation to young people (Lyng 1990, 2005, Lupton 1999b, Mitchell, Bunton & Green 2004 being some exceptions).22 My study is an illustration of risk-taking amongst young people as significant, and the stress on the social character of risk-taking is what I perceive to have been lacking in discussions about risk and risk-taking. Austen (2009) also finds that risk-taking centres on pleasure, the relief of boredom and fun activities. She argues that there ought to be a distinction between “being at risk”, which is related to uncertainty, as opposed to “risk-taking”, which is often a voluntary choice.23

Young people, including the greasers in my study, have a tendency to discard “objective” definitions of risk in favour of the construction of their own “risk hierarchies” (Lupton 2004) and the word risk is often not part of the young people’s everyday linguistic repertoire (Austen 2009). Austen (2009) holds that the influential grand theories on risk – most notably Beck’s (1992) risk society approach – have been critiqued for lack of empirical grounding.24 Austen’s (2009) survey research on young people’s percep-

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22 I do not refer here to the vast literature on risk-taking in relation to HIV/AIDS, which is an exception to the lack of research I point to (see Maticka-Tyndale 1992, Skidmore & Hayter 2000).

23 Rosa (2010: 242) stresses the importance of acknowledging the evolutionary position of risk, arguing that “risk has always been and always will be a central feature of human experience”, thus repudiating the idea that risk, and uncertainty, is a “new” phenomenon.

24 Zinn (2006: 2) points to another conceptual critique of Beck’s risk approach, namely that “risk” is narrowed to the responses of technical and environmental risks as un-
tions of risk set out to test the applicability of Beck’s risk society approach to young people: whether risk is perceived as a negative concept in relation to various activities; whether it is aligned with uncertainty and worry; and whether living in a risk society causes the young people to defer to expert knowledge. The respondents did not support the view of risk as socially constructed in a negative manner or that it was predominantly linked to worry. In addition, young people reported knowing/being aware of the risks involved in various activities and were not particularly skeptical of expert voices.

As I understand risk, it is a situated social construction, context dependent and subject to sociocultural negotiation and management in everyday life. I lean heavily towards Douglas’ (1992) approach to risk mentioned briefly above, because of its empirical attention to sociocultural processes and social dynamics, but also align myself with a more elaborated sociocultural approach to risk that partly builds on Douglas’ (1992) work (cf. Zinn 2006, Tulloch & Lupton 2003). According to Zinn (2006), the benefits of a sociocultural approach to risk are that:

- much effort is focused on producing thick descriptions of risk-taking in specific contexts
- identity-formation processes and group constitution processes are linked to risk and risk-taking
- emotions, habituations and aesthetics are emphasized
- individuals’ risk perception and management is highlighted
- the notion of context is crucial for understanding risk and risk-taking

My study is very much in line with a socio-cultural approach, with the exception that I wish to explicitly stress that risk-taking needs to be regarded as a spatial and place-based practice as well – which will become evident in Chapter Five.

*Risk-taking as a social and spatial practice*

As much as there is a need to remain critical of the concepts of risk and risk-taking, young men are the group most likely to engage in and practise activities that are considered “risky”:

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foreseen consequences of industrialization. The narrowed view on technical and statistical risk management seems to be insufficient for the given complexity concerning, for example, governmental risk-strategies and rationalities (Dean 1999), emotional and aesthetic (Lash 2000) or socio-cultural (Tulloch & Lupton 2003) perceptions and responses to risk.
**Risk-taking young men**

Of all social groups, it is probably young people, and particularly young men, who most often take risks as part of their everyday lives. (Lupton 1999b: 157, cf. Finucane et al. 2000)

Voluntary risk-taking is undertaken “without coercion in the full acknowledgement that risks are being confronted” (Lupton & Tulloch 2003: 113), and uncertainty of the outcome exists but is often not emphasized as central by the people carrying out the risk-taking practices (cf. Rosa 2010, see also Chapter Six). These practices need to be addressed within a social, cultural and spatial context where they are interpreted as being both meaningful and rewarding for the practitioners. The cultural conceptions and norms around place, gender and age are part of this context. Many young men are drawn to and engage in risky activities but can we say that dominant forms of masculinity necessitate them? Is there a trend towards putting oneself – and possibly also others – at risk? Exploring the everyday character of sought-after risk by young people is central in this thesis, particularly in relation to driving technologies (cf. Aitchison 2004).

When it comes to risk-taking with vehicles, social and cultural conceptions of speed, speeding and risk-taking are part of shaping the foundations of who takes risks and who does not, where the risk-taking takes place, who the speedy driver is and why this driver takes risks or drives in a risky manner (cf. Redshaw 2007, 2008). In discussions around traffic safety, the young speeder is a prominent figure (Best 2008, cf. Redshaw 2006). The young speeder is identified as male and has been constructed with the help of statistics on vehicle use as well as traffic accidents and promoted by the media and part of the research community as solid evidence for the core, and hence cause, of traffic un-safety. The framework of risk assessment is often the foundation for how to deal with risky driving; in such approaches, clear-cut answers are chiselled out of quantitative measures, indicators and predictors. This quantitative framework has contributed to the notion of the young reckless male driver as the isolated cause of accidents. Or, as Best (2008: 651) frames it, teen driving is constructed as a *public drama*:

> Teen driving accidents are regarded as though they are part of an objective reality external to a set of ideational or discursive processes and social organ-

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25 I am thinking here of successful TV shows and movies such as *Jackass*, *Wildboyz* or the Finnish equivalent *Duudsonit* [The Dudesons], shows that have been reported as influencing children and young people to try to imitate the “professionals” with more or less successful results. Both Stranger (1999) and Robinson (2008) discuss a growing trend towards what have been termed “extreme sports”, such as rock climbing, base jumping and so on, where the vast majority of the practitioners are men (cf. Brymer 2005).
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Despite studies aiming at diversifying the picture of the young speeder, this image is affirmed and reinstated in public discourses on problematic drivers. The effect of constructing a cultural scapegoat effectively produces boundaries between the problematic and the non-problematic, giving rise to debates about whom various operations should be directed at (cf. Cohen 2002). For the most part, interventions are either directed at spreading information and teaching traffic sense or at restricting and prohibiting vehicle use by young people as a group. The cultural scapegoat is a production of an adult ideological standpoint, where the young men become stereotypes of a much more complex world. They are often portrayed in patronizing ways: they do not know any better, are ill-behaved or immature, or “are” just like that. The conception of the young speeder also contributes to a polarization between generations or ages, where the young account for insane driving and grownups drive within the realm of the law. The idea that it is only young people who are driving too fast can be critiqued with the help of the Swedish traffic safety survey, carried out annually, which shows that 60% of drivers find it more important to follow the traffic rhythm than the speed limits. Redshaw (2007) holds it more true to talk of a speed dilemma, where speed is ambivalently encouraged and prohibited in society. The car and vehicle industry's quest for enhanced motors and empowered machines – i.e. higher speeds – predicates a promise of speed (cf. Michael 2001). To balance this potential speed, vehicles are equipped with built-in technical controls ensuring this potential will only be used according to traffic laws and regulations prescribing how certain vehicles are to be used in certain places at certain times. However, these kinds of technologies are seldom cheap or aimed at or marketed to less affluent segments of the population, such as young people. As I will show in the next chapter, the vehicle

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26 In some countries, curfews have been passed, restricting particularly young men from driving between certain hours (usually Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings) due to their assumed problematic driving behaviour. In Norway and Sweden, similar discussions have emerged and propositions made by traffic safety organizations and the police. Another suggestion has been to raise the age for getting a driver’s licence (see Anderberg 2012). In the US, many cities have banned cruising in the inner city cores (Best 2008).

27 The respondents in the 2009 survey were between the ages of 15 and 84 years (N=11 000, response rate 60.4%). The survey is carried out by the Swedish Road Administration [Vägverket], from 2010 the Swedish Transport Administration [Trafikverket].
that the greasers use is often an old Volvo, a car that is relatively cheap to obtain.

Part and parcel of this context is acknowledging and identifying how gender and age intersect in the construction of places, identities and vehicle-oriented practices. As Walker, Butland & Connell (2000: 159) contend:

Motor vehicles and their use offer boys and youth engaged in the construction of masculinity a number of experiences that many of them very much want: a sense of technical mastery, a realm that is symbolically masculine, a forum for friendship and peer recognition, thrills, laughter; and a certain amount of danger.

Dangerous driving is hence part of a perceived quest for freedom and masculine prowess (cf. Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006). The achievements of risk-taking are the demonstration of courage, an enhanced capacity for self-control and bodily containment and relaxing from the tight control expected of us. Men release this pressure by “placing oneself in situations courting injury or death” while, according to Lupton, many “women see risk-taking as related to expressing their sexuality” (1999b: 161, cf. Lightfoot 1997, Best 2005). Lupton (1999b) agrees about the gendered nature of risk-taking, but also points to the fact that shifts may be occurring, due to challenges from women “who have sought to perform alternative femininities” through risk-taking activities (cf. Lumsden 2010). Risk-taking is hence tied to individual and social achievements – whether it is displaying courage, seeking excitement or self-actualization – but can also be regarded as a means to conform to or challenge gendered conceptions and stereotypes. In general, boys are perceived to be less “mature”, less responsible and less interested in the wellbeing of others, i.e. less empathic (Lupton 1999b). Girls, on the other hand:

are expected from an early age to be “more adult” than boys – to act responsibly, to conform to adult rules and to be responsible for the wellbeing of others. Such behaviour is a taken-for-granted part of dominant femininity. In contrast, boys are almost expected to transgress, to misbehave and break rules and to endure punishment bravely for these transgressions: it is part of their construction and performance of masculinity. (Lupton 1999b: 159)

These gendered conceptions can be fruitfully connected to the hegemonic notions of youth discussed in the previous section. But even if risk-taking in general conforms in one sense to hegemonic notions of youth and masculinity, certain risk-taking practices are regarded as uncool in local cultures, which again point to the importance of peer evaluation and social process-
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es. Morrissey (2008: 423) discusses young people’s ways of performing distinction, through choosing between “mimetic” (Elias & Dunning 1986) and “carnivalesque” (Bahktin 1941) activities:

Those mimetic acts of risk-taking were highly valued by a group of sixth-year pupils at a school in Stirling, who were identified as possessing significant levels of economic, cultural and social capital and described skydiving, scuba-diving and white-water rafting in very positive terms like “cool” and “exciting” based either on experiences of these activities or the desire to experience them in the future. However, the group described carnivalesque acts of risk-taking, like roof-jumping and games of motorway chicken, as “stupid”, “reckless” and “unnecessarily risky”. On the other hand, a group of young people in Glasgow consisting of young people who possessed low levels of economic capital and socio-cultural resources constructed accounts of stealing and riding shopping trolleys, jumping from roofs and “getting chased off the police” as legitimate, authentic and high-status; “it was so cool man!”

Clearly then, there are differences in the kinds of risk-taking that are valued and those that are perceived as problematic in local contexts. The activities that are afforded cultural capital in many ways also demand economic capital, seen for instance in the travel advertisement I mentioned earlier, which targets affluent middle-class young people with backpacker ambitions. However, as we will see in Chapter Three, entertaining a vehicle interest and orientation is not particularly cheap. Nevertheless, risk-taking activities that accumulate and produce cultural capital might very well be the ones that develop into extreme or alternative sports, or even become mainstream sports (cf. Robinson 2008, Thorpe 2009), whereas others are devalued, perceived insignificant and marginal. The social position that young people hold is related to whether or not their practices will accumulate cultural capital, which in turn aids in re-creating their social position. It is much more likely that many of the leisure practices of working-class young men do not afford them cultural capital and are hence considered problematic. I will elaborate on this point in relation to the greasers’ risk-taking practices with motor vehicles in Chapter Six and in the final discussion.

While shedding some light on the phenomenon of risk-taking, however critical, the studies that begin with an individualistic perspective and/or merely relate to the cultural conceptions that flourish in the discussion of voluntary risk-taking, miss the important social dimensions. Taking a practice-based approach to risk-taking provides rich and complex empirical material that also allows for contradictions between the cultural and the social levels. The analytical focus is on the social accomplishments of people practising voluntary risk-taking and on the discursive effects. One consequence
of risk-taking with motor vehicles is that the activity is potentially lethal for the people directly involved and might also be so for others nearby.

Risk-taking as violation

Voluntary risk-taking is primarily associated in the literature with danger or harm to oneself, not with the direct or indirect effects on others. Therefore, what needs to be added in analyses concerned with voluntary risk-taking are the possible harmful effects of such practices. Accordingly, I have also taken up the task of seeing violence (Lundgren 2004, Westerstrand 2010), as in recognizing practices and phenomena as violent or violating. In my project, this task is analytical, since none of my research subjects perceived their actions or practices as risky, nonetheless as violations. My perception of risk-taking hence diverges from that of my interlocutors. I did not ask direct questions about what they would perceive to be risky or dangerous in relation to driving or in relation to motor vehicles – my analysis relies solely on my interpretation of practices that are considered risky in their narrative constructs or through my observations.

I take violations and violence to mean acts and practices that have the effect of harming oneself or others (Hearn 1998). In line with Hearn & Parkin (2003: 138), “to adopt a broad, socially contextualised understanding of violence as violation” entails defining “violence as those structures, actions, events and experiences that violate or cause violation or are considered as violating.” Defining violence as violation, and as social phenomena very much entrenched in social relations, makes it possible to talk of the micro-practices as well as the wider social context in which these violations occur. It also refers to what Hearn & Parkin (2003) describe as “a process of damaging”, rather than a fixed entity or set of acts. The practices that within a transport realm are termed “traffic violations” and some of the risk-taking acts that are central for the young people in my study are here reframed within this framework of violations and violence. Rather than perceiving the practices and activities as traffic violations, my ambition is to understand these violating practices in a framework that is influenced by critical youth studies, critical geography and feminist work on violence. My aim is to discuss the theoretical repercussions entailed by such a conceptual shift on a methodological, ethical, theoretical and analytical level. The intention within the thesis is to discuss, evaluate, problematize and thus also reformulate what risk-taking as violation would entail.

This shift in analytical perspective entails a questioning of the concept of risk-taking, because risk-taking is often conceptualized from the perspective of the individual practitioner(s), focusing on the dimensions of antici-
pating the act or the emotional social effects. Although problematized and scrutinized, risk-taking is seldom linked to violence or the violation of others present or non-present. I want to propose that the violating/violent practices and acts the young people engage in are better understood as part of a “social normality” (Lundgren 1996), where violence is recognized and defined as socially all-pervasive and perceived as part of young men’s everyday lives (cf. Nordberg 2008). It cannot, then, be separated from the collective socializing aspects young men engage in at school and in their leisure time. Following Hearn (2012)\(^28\), the analysis of these and other kinds of men’s violence need to be subject to a multifaceted analysis of power. Hearn argues that the theoretical framework of “hegemonic masculinities” (see for instance Connell 1995, 2002) is not particularly apt for analyses of men’s violence and he proposes a “hegemony of men framework” (cf. Hearn 2004), where the focus is on men rather than the vaguer masculinity:

Combining materialist and discursive perspectives, across micro and macro levels, means addressing individual and collective, including violent, men’s practices – rather than the gloss “masculinities”. (Hearn 2012: 598)\(^29\)

Lundgren (1993, 1995) and Hearn (1998) hold men’s violence to be constitutive of the construction of masculinity. It can be perceived as a resource for doing masculinity and is an acceptable way of being a man (Hearn 1998, 2012a). Although men’s accounts of their use of violence often deploy a rhetoric of powerlessness, reciprocity and mitigation, violence is socially, culturally and individually meaningful, and upholds and manifests control (Lundgren 1993, 1995, Hearn 1998, Messerschmidt 2004). It is therefore more interesting to ask questions about the intentions that violence serves, rather than seeking to confirm which (types of) men are doing the violence. In the hegemonic furrow of contemporary research on men and masculinities, however, men’s violence has not been central to the analysis. As Hearn (2012) suggests, making men’s violence central rather than peripheral (constitutive of rather than an effect of; cf. Lundgren 1995) in analyses of men’s practices may be one way of testing the validity of the theories developed within the field of (critical) research on men and masculinities.

\(^{28}\)Hearn’s (2012) focus is particularly men’s violence against known women.

\(^{29}\)Feminist accounts and analyses of men’s violence have rarely been excited by what Hearn (2012) calls “the masculinities approach”. The “approach” appears, in my view, to be in the danger zone for reiterating “old truths” delivered by criminological and other conventional approaches to men’s violence that violence is conducted by particular (socially or psychologically deviant) men in particular (often private) places.
Consequently, the focus of such critical studies is on men, not particular masculinities:

An explicit focus on men may therefore engage with the variety of ways in which men, masculinities and violences interrelate with each other – for men in general, for particular groups of men, and for individual men. (Hearn 1998: 35, cf. 2004)

Another guiding stream of research for my thinking on violations is critical feminist geography, where the concept of social space (Rose 1993, Longhurst 2005) and the negotiations, conflicts and "battles" over space would necessarily have to effectuate a discussion of (among other things gendered) power (cf. Listerborn, Molina & Mulinari 2011). Violence is both spatially regulated and bound to space, and tied to more or less hegemonic discourses that construct certain violent practices as legitimate and others as illegitimate (cf. Tyner 2012). Furthermore, the process of the legitimation of violence is tied up with notions and conceptions of places and bodies: bodies out of place; bodies in place; illegitimate and legitimate bodies. In line with the research in critical feminist geography on children and young people, the greasers are claiming and occupying adult-defined public space and using it for their own ends (cf. Valentine 2004, Skelton and Valentine 1998, Foley & Leverett 2011). The activities and practices that they engage in can be interpreted using the young people's marginal position as the foregrounded "explanation". The greasers are in some sense illegitimate in public space if age-related asymmetry is put forward as central, and they use this position to claim and occupy space. Their practices are, in this framework, perceived as part of the negotiations, conflicts and "battles" for social space (Rose 1993, Longhurst 2005), and are hence bound up with contestations of social power (cf. Listerborn, Molina & Mulinari 2011). On the other hand, the greasers' are legitimate, if relating to how public space is conceptualized as masculine. Viewed from this angle, to re-formulate risk-taking as violations is a way of also perceiving the young greasers as agents, involved in struggles over particular places as well as over discursive space where gendered, aged and classed conceptions intersect with and affect young people's use of public space, a discussion I will have reason to return to at several occasions in the thesis.

Given my theoretical framework, risk is not interpreted as an innate characteristic of certain practices or activities, but is constructed in relation to them. Key signifiers are both the social accomplishments these activities generate and the violating effects for which they bear the potential. Furthermore, sociocultural forces stand out as worth noting and highlighting. My contribution to the discussion on risk-taking and violations/violence in
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this context is therefore to identify these situated forces that are felt by motor vehicle users to provide some kind of social dividend (cf. Connell 2002). In addition, I see this as one vital key to understanding the prevailing character of automobility in general and its detrimental effects in particular, which relate to a discussion I will leave for now and pick up again in the final chapter.

Concluding remarks

It is not a coincidence that I have taken an interest in the greaser culture. It is not because I perceive them as more prone to risk-taking with motor vehicles or as more dangerous drivers per se – and hence deviant, problematic or risky. As I have attempted to clarify, the concepts of “deviance”, “problematic”, “risky” and “at risk youth” depend on the theoretical and methodological context in which they are used. My understanding of youth cultures derives from acknowledging the different cultures of young people without evaluating them as either normatively mainstream or deviant. Part of attempting to capture the realities and experiences of young people involves taking a view from below: understanding their lives from the perspectives of those who are living them. In that sense, the young people I have studied are always positioned somewhere (geographically, socially, in relation to gender, age and race/ethnicity) and must therefore be understood from that particular place. Understanding and approaching the young people from this angle means that my efforts to understand their social, cultural and spatial disposition necessarily affect how I perceive their practices and actions. They are, in other words, part of the larger cultures that surround them, and are in this sense using the means available in the most pragmatic way to meet their own social purposes. My ambition in this study, then, is to remain reflective and critical of my own historiography of the culture I am studying by remaining sensitive to the context where the practices and phenomena take place in order to intercept both stability and change, without positioning the young as somehow “outside” or in some kind of opposition to “culture” (cf. Waara 1996). Consequently, I have also striven to capture the “broader world” in this ethnography, in order to get a glimpse of how adultist institutions affect the greasers’ lives.

However, it will become apparent throughout the thesis that I place my study within a critical feminist scholarly tradition. My analysis of the greasers’ risk-taking practices as violations is perhaps most clearly reminiscent of a critical feminist perspective on men’s violence and it has not been easy to conjoin this with my approach to letting the voices of the greasers
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emerge in their own right. This tension has been a struggle throughout the whole research process and the reader will catch glimpses of the dilemmas and conflicts that have arisen as a consequence – in relation to theory, methodology and analysis. In the next chapter I will address some of these practical, theoretical and ethical dilemmas, as well as discussing the methodological construction of a field and my position as a fieldworking researcher in the greaser group.
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Means of movement

In this chapter I will discuss my research design as my means of movement towards grasping the lives of the group of young greasers. In this vein, I address my road to a field and how I carried out the research, discuss ethical considerations and dilemmas and explain the analytical process. In highlighting the importance of reflexivity throughout the research process, I wish to acknowledge my role as a researcher in the field and discuss it in relation to how the fieldwork developed. Not only do I illustrate how methodological aspects of my study diverge from previous research, but my aim is also to argue that ethnographic methods contribute to a better understanding of young men’s risk-taking with motor vehicles.

The road to a field

The activity I refer to as my fieldwork was carried out in the autumn and winter of 2010, early 2011 and summer of 2011, and consisted of (participant) observation of a group of greasers in a peri-urban community,
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Lillby. The greasers in my study are aged between 15 and 19.\textsuperscript{30} I socialized with the greasers at the local youth centre as well as in other places in their neighbourhood, including riding along in their cars.\textsuperscript{31} Ethnographic observations have enabled me to access the doings, activities and practices of the young people, whereas interviews gave me insight into how they produce meaning around being young, the benefits and joys of having a car, moped or other vehicle and moving around. Although I conducted interviews, they were carried out within my ethnographically informed methodological framework and as such are part of my constructed field. In addition, contextualizing secondary materials provided important information about understandings of young motorized mobility: reports, studies and information about young vehicle users, interviews with police about mopeds and with lay people on the history of mopeds in Sweden. Information from the community’s semi-official website and the discussions taking place on the website’s forum also proved important for getting a sense of the public perception of the greasers. I also made use of social network media, since the youth centre had a profile there and posted news and happenings on it.\textsuperscript{32}

In addition, seventeen pupils from grade nine in the local high school – not regular visitors of the youth centre – were interviewed, in groups of two or three (six interviews) or individually (four interviews). In total, twenty-seven formal interviews were conducted in total with the greasers (fifteen young men and eight young women) and the pupils (eleven young men and six young women). Three interviews with the youth centre staff (two men and one woman) were also carried out. My methodological framework can

\textsuperscript{30} I have chosen to follow the UN Declaration of Children’s Rights as well as Swedish legislation on when individuals come of age (18 years). In my study, the coming of age also pertains to another issue, namely that of being eligible for a car driver’s licence. The lower limit is set due to ethical reasons; people under the age of fifteen are required to have parental consent in order to participate in research (SFS 2003: 460).

\textsuperscript{31} In ethnographic traditions, different methods have been tried out depending on the diverse needs that researchers have felt come up during fieldwork. Researchers interested in understanding the meanings people attach to different places and to mobility have employed “walkabouts”, “accompanied observations”, joint walking, go-alongs (cf. Kusenbach 2008) or ride-alongs (Balkmar 2012, Collin-Lange 2011), what Larsen, Urry & Axhausen (2006) term mobile methods (cf. Collin-Lange 2011).

\textsuperscript{32} My very limited use of the social network site was restricted to one post, by me, on the youth centre’s page, where I presented myself briefly at the beginning of the fieldwork. For ethical reasons, I decided early on not to use any communication between the young people that developed on their personal pages, nor did I read or comment on their personal pages. Hence, nothing from the site is included in the material for this thesis.
hence be said to be a multi-method approach crystallizing ethnographic observations with individual and group in-depth interviews, as well as the use of contextualizing material, where both discursive and material practices are studied and related to local as well as wider societal contexts (cf. Richardson 2000, Lykke 2009).

The road to the primary field was winding and uncertain. My preliminary interest was to study young people and their use of mopeds. I had planned to conduct both individual and group in-depth interviews with the young men drawn from the same sample, which would hopefully be followed and accompanied by the ethnographic work. This proved to be easier said than done. After starting off at two moped driving schools in the city of Storköping that resulted in “failure”, I revised my access strategy and changed the recruiting arena to the local high schools (resulting in initial success in spring 2010, followed by another “failure” when I returned in the autumn of the same year). It is of course vital to problematize the notion of “failure” (see Visweswaran 2008) and in hindsight my lack of success can instead be regarded as productive. It forced me, together with my supervisors, to reflect on the different kinds of methodological options that were available to me as well as to re-evaluate what I really was interested in investigating. Choosing to do ethnography made it possible to explore some peri-urban young people’s lives, thoughts and practices in their leisure time and specifically in relation to motor vehicles, while excluding other parts of their lives and other practices that were not leisure or vehicle related.

After these fieldwork setbacks, I decided to try accessing the young men via the high schools in Storköping. Out of thirteen schools, four welcomed me to do preliminary observations in the schoolyards. Of these schools only two had enough moped riders to continue with and only one of these had moped riders who seemed moped oriented. I decided to proceed with this particular school and asked permission from the headteacher to present myself to the pupils in Year Nine, continue observations and start recruiting pupils for my project. Two weeks before graduation I presented myself and my project to the eight classes in grade nine: as a researcher interested in young people and mopeds who therefore would like to speak to those who had or planned to get a moped. This term, the school had a group of about

\footnote{The Swedish government introduced a bill on a new category of driving licences: the AM eligibility. The law was passed on October 1st 2009 and was put into immediate effect. Every person under 15 years of age striving to become a moped rider needs to undergo basic training in traffic sense. The institutions responsible for this training are the private driving schools offering courses for car driver’s licences.}
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20 individuals oriented towards moped use in various ways (for transport or leisure use or a combination of both). Three group interviews with three boys each and an individual interview were conducted with pupils from three different classes (see Appendix 1 on Vexby High School in Storköping). My thought was to try to stay in contact with the young men I interviewed during the summer in order to make observations. This did not work out, for several reasons: a) logistically – many of them went abroad or to summer cottages; b) interpersonally – I perceived that I had not been building relations with them for long enough so that they would accept my presence (although I never asked them about it); and c) psychologically – due to the above reasons, I had troubles convincing myself that they would allow me to follow them around. When autumn arrived I returned to the same school, only to find after a week of observations and two group interviews that there were not enough mopedists for me to proceed.

Thus, I was yet again forced to change strategy. After contacting the neighbourhood police in Storköping for information about which local districts generate the most complaints about moped riders, I set out to make day- and night-time observations in two of these districts in Storköping. Here I collected information from shopkeepers, store clerks and local pizzerias around squares or marketplaces in district centres. And in the evenings I biked around the same (now empty) marketplaces, local schoolyards or parks. During these explorations I rarely encountered any young people. The third area the police mentioned, some 20 kilometres outside Storköping, was where I hit the jackpot. In early autumn, I accompanied the local group of parents who circulate in the community, involved in keeping the neighbourhood calm, “safe” and “secure” during weekend evenings. My aim was to walk with them at night in order to gain local knowledge of the mopedists. When I arrive by bus around 9 pm, I immediately spot two mopeds scooting down the slope towards the underpass, and a bunch of young people (probably around 20 individuals), walking or cycling. Excited about what I see, I speed up the steps and follow them through the tunnel. By the time I come out the other side, the two mopeds and the group of young people are almost out of sight; then I hear two additional vehicles coming up behind me. I watch as a scooter moped and a quad bike drive, quite fast, into the nearby open-air activities area instead of taking the pavement I am walking on. They join up with the larger group a bit further ahead. These young people in Lillby seem to be everything I have looked for in my research participants. Encouraged by this promising glimpse of a field, I proceed with the process of gaining formal access through the local high school. Surprisingly, my request is turned down by the school’s headteacher for reasons still unknown to me.
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Luckily, the community hosts a youth recreation centre, which I approach and where I am warmly welcomed to begin my fieldwork. Later on in the same term and after another, more formal, request, the headteacher of the local high school surprisingly grants permission to do complementary interviews in the school with pupils in Year Nine, which I also did (see Appendix 1, Lillby High School).

An adult among teens

After some time socializing with and observing the youth centre visitors, I started to formally interview them one by one. I conducted all the interviews with the young people, except one, in the youth centre. I seldom made plans with any of the individuals, but showed up in the evenings and asked them in situ if they had time to do it right away. This was a lesson I had learnt from the pilot study, when I realized that my continuous and regular presence was much more important than trying to set a date for an interview before I knew the research subjects. This way of approaching the young people made the situation much less formal and much less intimidating. Some of them, mainly from the group that was not present every night, were interviewed in pairs, at their own request. By the time I started interviewing, I had gathered enough information about who belonged to which clique (Adler & Adler 2003), what they usually did during their spare time and whether they had any particular motor vehicle, so that I could personalize the interviews as much as possible. This meant in part placing them at the centre of attention during the interviews, and in part making it easier for them to relate the more general questions to their lives. Besides deepening my understanding of their lives and social networks, the interviews functioned as a way to build relationships. At the end of each interview I asked if they knew of anyone else in their friendship network whom I could talk to. Using this snowball method, I received contact information for two individuals who did not at that time visit the centre at all, but who were very familiar with the neighbourhood life in Lillby.

\[34\] When asked face to face, no-one declined. Two young men turned me down, one whom I had not met face to face before when asking him on the phone and the other very early on. However, I did an interview with the latter in the school later during the fieldwork.

\[35\] I soon arranged an interview with Tobias in Storköping where he attended senior high school. Roy, on the other hand, declined to participate over the phone (see previous note).
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The interviews were semi-structured, thus allowing the participants to be moderately free to drift away from the main topic and be associative within certain limits. My interview guide template (see Appendix 2) revolved around five themes:

- what their day looks like;
- places they go to and places young people in general visit in Lillby;
- how they move around to the places they go to;
- groups of people and peer power dynamics in their school and among the outdoor oriented;
- how young people in Lillby are perceived by others.

For the first and second themes, I gradually came to make use of a map (or several maps if the interviewee resided outside Lillby) and for the last theme I used pictures of local traffic accidents with young people, as well as examples from the discussion board on the community’s website. For the few ones who did not want their interview to be recorded, I used a schedule for them to fill in what their day looked like. Many of the things that came up in the interviews I was also able to ask about and discuss with other youth centre attendees and the youth centre staff, particularly the two car incidents that happened during the autumn (which will be discussed in Chapter Six). Using concrete examples of events that had happened recently generated a lot of discussion, both in individual interviews and in interviews with pairs.

Obviously, part of talking about what the greasers or other young people are like and what they do involves self presentation and positioning as much as describing and positioning the other young groups and individuals. Interview material is mediated presentations and a mutual construction of the research subject’s realities between me, as a researcher, and the interview subjects. The correspondence between some kind of factual event (past, present or future) and how it is presented by the young people is hence always an interpretation of that event. In addition, there is no causal or direct link between how the young people are talked of and what they actually do, how they act, and which kind of practices they are engaged in, although some of the practices they talk about have been observed by me.

Building relationships was an important part of the fieldwork, but where these relationships should and could be built was a challenge. The schools provided an excellent setting for me to train to observe, approach and recruit young people during the pilot phase in the spring, although I was hesitant about gaining access to young people through schools due to a
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possible conflation of me with the teacher position, i.e. with adult authority. Being denied access to the local high school in Lillby in the autumn made me return to my initial plan in the sense that I now needed to engage with the young men during their leisure time, something that entailed a different kind of relationship building than the school setting. In hindsight, the path I trod during the autumn by having the youth centre as my base proved to make it easier when I recruited interviewees from the high school later that same term. When I came to school to do my additional interviews I realized that it had been of benefit to spend time at the youth centre first, since I was known to the greasers in Year Nine who attended the youth centre and hung out in the car park.36 Being in school also made it possible for me to view the greasers in another light: I could observe how they interacted with the rest of the class or the other classes and got a sense of their position in the youth social geography of the community as a whole.

Nevertheless, although the youth centre is in one sense less institutionalized than the school, it is still a trademark of Swedish youth politics, where one of the outcomes of these facilities is the institutionalization of young people’s leisure time and space (see the introductory chapter). I am aware that it would have been an even greater effort for me to have approached and gained access to the young people, for instance, at the car park and I am not sure that I would have been accepted (at all) had I chosen this strategy. On the first evening that I met some of the greasers, when I accompanied the parent walkers on their nightly round in the community, the organizer Lotta seems keen to help me establish contact with the youths in the car park. Unprepared for Lotta’s pressure (she almost push me in front of her towards three young men, two on mopeds and one on a quad bike, standing at the side of the highway) I present myself hastily and stammer out a nervous question about whether I can ask them some things about their mopeds and quad bikes. At this moment my head is totally blank and I blurt out the first thing that comes into my head. “Isn’t it cold to drive?” I ask and

36 Since I did the main bulk of my fieldwork during the autumn and winter, it was the greasers who were most strongly oriented towards the neighbourhood among the young people in Lillby that I met. These greasers also enjoyed high status and were regarded as cool and popular in school, which also had a positive effect on my position as a researcher. Had I decided to do my fieldwork during the other seasons, the youth centre would not have been a viable recruiting place for getting in touch with the greasers. Jonas, one of the staff, indicated how recesses and holidays affect the attendance at the youth centre. The youth centre had attempted to organize activities before in both summer and spring, in and at the places they knew the young people hang out (for instance, the public baths) but no one showed up at these, which reflects how the young greasers were both selective in where they chose to hang out, and restricted to certain places depending on the season.
feel out of my depth. They shake their heads and answer politely no, and I continue by complimenting their vehicles, followed by asking if they would consider talking to me about them some time. They all decline and I do not know what to say except okay and bye. They start their vehicles and drive away and I feel very stupid standing there at the side of the road. This was one of the situations that convinced me of the importance of the venue for establishing contact for a researcher with no previous personal relations to the greasers. Given my tight time plan, the youth centre provided me with a rather contained physical space to get to know the young people, where I could shift between closeness and distance, participation and observation (cf. Lalander & Johansson 2012).

When talking to the youth centre head, Karl, at the end of my fieldwork, about my presence there, he revealed that the young men had initially felt hesitant about me, wondering who I was and what I was doing there. Early on after my arrival, I was informed by one of the staff members at the youth centre that there was a rumour circulating that I was affiliated with the police. Only two young men did not feel comfortable in having their interview tape recorded. These were two of the early interviewees. I did talk to both of them on several occasions afterwards about the tape recording issue, and they both said that they would do otherwise if I interviewed them again. The most likely explanation for them not wanting to be caught on tape was the rumour of me being an undercover police officer, there to catch the young people who rode illegally tuned mopeds or EPAs. I did not take any particular measures against this rumour, other than showing up day after day, evening after evening and spending time with the young people. I am still not sure if that rumour completely vanished or not, or if it had any real effect on who dared to talk to me. The rumour might also have had the opposite effect, invigorating and encouraging some of the young people to talk to me despite the potential risk of being turned in to the police, just for the thrill of it. In the light of this, I was perceived as an adult and would also retreat to the company of the youth centre staff when not engaged in discussions with the young visitors. I did not consciously work from any “least adult” methodology (Raby 2007), but my youthful appearance did certainly affect how I was perceived. Harry, one of my research subjects, jokingly responded that I did not look like a thirty-year-old when I declared my age one day at the youth centre.

Relations between researcher and researched are not exempt from the social aspects of relationship building; I am a social person aside from my professional role as a researcher and hence positioned by the research participants in various ways in different situations (Aretun 2007). Although I am
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an adult and hence positioned hierarchically above my research subjects in a structural sense, the micro-sociological negotiations of power in the field situation did not always match my presumed powerfulness. This was ultimately illustrated, for instance, in the access process: getting access to my research subjects’ lives was a decision for them to take, whether or not I had received formal permission from the school or the youth centre staff. When I met my research subjects in Lillby for the first time, I had no idea that the visitors at the youth centre were assigned the label of “problematic youth” in line with an adult ideological discourse. All of the research subjects were conscious of this label, but refuted it or embraced it depending on the situation (see Chapter Four). How they were perceived by the adult community and by other young people influenced my encounters with them and how I presented and framed my study in order to get access. Due to this group’s marginality, I did not present my study as a critical and feminist one to the research subjects. This sometimes made me feel like a traitor, violating the transparency principle and not being totally honest about why I was there. When introducing myself I presented my study as dealing with young people’s motor interests, leisure activities and movement patterns.

I was gendered and heterosexualized in some instances, especially at the beginning of the fieldwork. One of the first evenings when the greasers are present at the youth centre, Gurra approaches the table and puts his hand on Sven’s breast and asks if his heart rate is up now, while raising his eyebrows up and down rapidly as he casts an eye over me. I avoid looking at Sven so that neither he nor I get embarrassed; instead, I pretend that I do not hear or understand what Gurra says and change the subject by asking him about his moped. As Pascoe (2007) opted for “a least gendered” position in relation to dress and posture, I too was conscious of the impression my clothing would have on my research subjects. For my first meeting with them I wore jeans, a t-shirt or long-sleeved shirt and a cardigan. This kind of outfit was consistent throughout the fieldwork. I always wore my hair in a ponytail and had no makeup or nail polish. My aim to be “plain” can be read as an effort on my part to be non-sexualized in an environment where, on occasion, I was heterosexualized by the young greaser men (cf. Sandberg 2011, Wolf 1996, Huff 1997). In one sense, to be “plain” corresponds with one of the two positions girls and young women were assigned within the youth community: when asked about particular groupings among the girls in school and young people in general in Lillby, most pupils and greasers placed girls in the category of either “plain” girls or “excessive” girls (see more on this issue in Chapter Four). This does not mean that I tried to make myself invisible (Ambjörnsson 2005), but that I disclosed certain things strategically (most often aspects associated with my knowledge of vehicles.
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and the greaser men’s interests) while concealing others (most often aspects that were coded feminine and linked to appearance). What I did was to enhance the aspects and dimensions of myself that would give me credibility in the greaser culture, which related to (in my case, only theoretical) knowledge of vehicles and motor cultures. It could also be seen as an effort on my part to become respectable and to stress my professional role as a researcher, a role that in some senses was undermined by my feminine gender and relatively young age.

Another issue I came across during the pilot study concerned economic compensation, which can be seen as a form of reward for participating in research, or some research subjects’ way of identifying me as a middle-class person. None of the research participants in either the pilot study or the fieldwork received monetary compensation, although I did offer two interviewees in the pilot study pizza in exchange for being interviewed. The fieldwork setting, especially riding along with someone, gave rise to the question of whether or not I could and should offer to pay for gas, but none of the greasers wanted economic compensation. Besides seeing the issue as simply a way of rewarding the young people economically for their time and effort, in the pilot study case it was also a matter of being positioned as middle class and identified as having the means to afford things that they could not.

There is a tension, then, between the different dimensions in the networks of power that position the research subjects and the researcher differently in a given situation, whether it be the fieldwork setting (including the “arrival” and the “withdrawal” from the fieldwork) or at the stage of writing up. By presenting three different, but not distinct, analytical research subjects – the adult-oriented, the indifferent and the challenging – I show how power is negotiated and shifting in micro-sociological processes, which also has implications for anyone who wants to become involved in research. The adult-oriented did not seem to care what the study was about, they engaged in dialogue with me despite the reason for my presence. The indifferent did not care why I was there, but because they were not interested in me at all. The challenging young actively challenged the benefits of my study and/or me as a researcher (asking, for instance, if one can become a professor of moped studies). These different types of research subjects were not always

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37 When I withdrew from the field, I bought chocolate and flowers, which I took to the youth centre for all the visitors there. I also sent a personal thank-you card to everyone I interviewed. The immediate reward for many of them was probably of a more psychological kind: being seen and listened to, written about and thus noticed. Compare my discussion on visibility in Chapter Four.
Means of movement

distinct from each other and related both to field presence and strategy, and to time. It was much more common to meet the obviously indifferent and the challenging in the more anonymous school setting during the pilot study where there were four times as many pupils, than young people at the youth centre in the fieldwork carried out in Lillby. Nevertheless, the research subjects in Lillby were not “easier” to engage with and used other types of more subtle strategies to avoid or decline participation than a plain “no”. This continuous negotiation is part of what Renold et al. (2008) have termed “micro-ethics” and "becoming participant". I was very conscious of the subtle nuances in our encounters and did not conform to pressure of any kind. It was a very common conception that I was a journalist (or affiliated with the police) and I soon learnt to manage this by a disclaimer at the end of my presentation about myself. Some of them had negative experiences of journalists, while others saw them as a means to gain or ensure visibility. Despite the sometimes tedious and lengthy explanations that I was a researcher, it paid off in the end and made me less intimidating (and perhaps also less interesting).  

The people who came to the centre more often also became more familiar with me, thus affecting the communication in a positive manner. However, being frequently present did not automatically improve the relationship or the communication. Obviously, a lot of communicative work had to be accomplished on my part. Another aspect of the regular presence of some young people is of course that they are also more present in my material. Being regularly present offered the more courageous of them, or just the curious ones, several possibilities to ask me about my project. I explained the product of my work in the most easily accessible manner – without positioning them as intellectually incapable of comprehending what I was doing – saying that I was writing a book on them. In relation to this, a dilemma that this study generated is related to language. All my research subjects have Swedish as their mother tongue and several expressed interest in wanting to read the things I would write. Part of being an accountable researcher obviously entails making the research available to the research subjects, which in my case means making it more easily accessible in Swedish. However, since research in general takes time and this research in particular deals with young people, many of my subjects may have left

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38 It is likely that the young people who were aware of or recognized what a researcher is and does were the ones who were more familiar with the profession, for instance due to having siblings, parents, relatives or acquaintances who work as researchers. It is highly likely that these young people are also middle class.
home and moved elsewhere, making it difficult to fulfil all the possible requirements of accountability in this respect.

A theoretically informed and embodied ethnographic product(ion)

My decision to conduct ethnographic research had everything to do with the subjects I set out to study: young men and motor vehicles. Many ethnographers maintain the importance of the corporeal character of the methodology. The relation between the ethnographer and the field is embodied; it is through the interaction of bodies that social life emerges and becomes possible to study. Øygarden (2000: 50) frames the production of knowledge in two stages: “taking a step forward to live the culture, then taking a step back to write the culture”. In his thesis on boxing, he uses the term full-contact sociology to describe the embodied nature of his research process. Øygarden (2000, see also Wacquant 2004) writes about his belief that the way to a bodily centred culture goes through the body, so part of his fieldwork entailed regular and hard exercise, dieting/eating and living as a boxer. He holds that his (gradually improved) physical shape played a decisive role in the data production and that talking had little to do with accessing the field. According to Øygarden (2000), the body hence played a crucial role in both accessing the field and producing data.

Another researcher engaged in studying similar bodily phenomena, tango tourism in South America, terms her ethnographic approach as carnal (Törnqvist 2008). Participating in the dance and in the global tourist industry centred on tango, Törnqvist argues that the “body is not only the object of study but also a methodological tool that can be used in grasping the incarnate understandings of this phenomenon” (2008: 82). The researcher’s body and the lived experiences created in the sphere of the primarily corporal tango tourism are perceived as “a basis for discovering and articulating what often goes unsaid” (Ibid.). In both Øygarden’s (2000) and Törnqvist’s (2008) studies, the body is perceived as the enabling factor in establishing a field (at all). Both Törnqvist (2006) and Øygarden (2000) suggest that a researcher may develop a different – or altogether better? – understanding of the field and people under study, if participating in the culture being studied.39

39 Being/becoming an “insider”/“outsider” in the culture you study and what that entails has been a central and much-discussed notion in anthropological as well as feminist research for a long time (Davies 2008).
Inspired by this approach to ethnography, I originally designed a fieldwork strategy that entailed a more embodied approach. In the initial phase of fieldwork design I purchased a veteran moped and learnt to drive it with the idea of using it in my prospective research as part of the fieldwork. When the field, and hence also the focus of study, shifted toward the greasers and their engagement with a range of motor vehicles, my own nonexistent car driving skills were not possible to overcome. Although my study did not develop into a physical one in the sense of Øygarden’s (2000) and Törnqvist’s (2008), the approach of thinking about ethnography as embodied resonates with my study in several ways. Øygarden’s (2000) experiences partly resonate with mine in that my research subjects have an emotional and embodied relation to their cars and other vehicles, and the importance of their cars and the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired when living with vehicles, demand full-time contact. Furthermore, as demonstrated later, talking about one’s skills or knowledge is cheap (but nevertheless socially crucial), unless you have the know-how to back it up. Furthermore, it is also my body and the relations and emotions that are produced between me, the field and the research subjects, that make up the material – it is I who produce the ethnography and the interpretations of the field situations. The embodied nature of ethnographic production, in this sense, necessarily has ethical implications. My body was a research tool in the field: I experienced the field and the subjects, they related to me, and how I acted and behaved (cf. Davies 2008).

Having no previous interest in cars or other vehicles, I had to rely on an outsider perspective of driving four-wheelers, which can be perceived as a disadvantage (cf. Collin-Lange 2011). Collin-Lange (2011: 2), researching car cruising or the rúntur in Iceland, argues that “researchers have to experience themselves the mobility of their subject of study” in order to fully grasp the meanings attached. For Collin-Lange (2011) this meant obtaining a driver’s licence during his study, which afforded him a social and spatial status by becoming, in his terms, automobile. However, I would argue that not having the sufficiently embodied knowledge or skills of driving, tinkering or relating to cars and other vehicles, made me more attentive to really understanding the greasers’ discussions and practices and forced me to work harder to grasp their lives. Part of coming to understand the research subjects’ worlds, is, as Bäckman (2009: 131) describes it, to see with someone else’s eyes:

40 Gaining a driver’s licence during the fieldwork was not feasible for economic reasons and due to lack of time, but also relates to my personal ethical convictions about living an ecologically and socially sustainable life.
To approach a local context as an outsider, to come from outside, for the most part means that you view the local with your own eyes. Naturally the outsider is able to make important observations; sometimes it is even an analytical advantage to not understand the things others take for granted. But the outsider runs the risk of having knowledge production end at the surface level. The surrounding environment does not open itself up in the same way for someone with access solely to their own eyes. It is this lack of depth that is described by the distinction between seeing and looking, by differentiating between seeing and the undemanding looking. To see requires you to know what you are looking at; to look does not demand any previous knowledge (my translation).

In my reading, the distinction between seeing and looking captures several dimensions of the extensively discussed insider/outsider issue: not only the importance of theoretical knowledge, but also knowledge of the culture or culture under study. Although I shared the same language and overall cultural context, the greaser culture was initially to a large extent unknown territory, as was the embodied relation they had with their motor vehicles. I could not experience driving. However, as I gradually learnt more and became more familiar with the research subjects and their lives, my position also shifted, rendering the issue of insider/outsider a complex and extremely dynamic one, and the issue of gaining some kind of insider experience/knowledge through driving became less important.

A view from somewhere

The carnal approach to ethnography precedes the fact that ethnographies can never be an objective reflection of a reality that is waiting to be laid out and exposed by a researcher, they are always situated. As Visweswaran (1994: 12) notes, "ethnographic accounts are constructed, and tell particular stories" (Davies 2008, cf. Haraway 1990). The process of gathering material is also a reflection of this particularity, as shown by the difficult and strenuous work that must take place in order to even "have a field". Working with the field in this sense gave rise to many emotions, some of which I felt I needed to conceal at the time. Engaging in ethnographic work is always socially messy: emotional, tiresome, sometimes frightening and certainly confusing (Bondi 2005). It is not only my body in the field that has consequences for how research is carried out. The social context of the researcher is just as important for understanding the research process and the decisions made. Having a small child, for instance, posed some specific emotional and physical challenges when researching young people. Due to the sleep deprivation characteristic of parents with small children, working in the evenings was demanding, as was the thought of being away from my child several evenings in the week. The distressing character of my field-
work highlighted the importance of having a social network close to me. All of these components, often viewed as “external” – or irrelevant – to the research process, were involved in my strategic decisions about how to proceed with the project in order to make the fieldwork effective without over-extending my physical and psychological resources.\footnote{Given the very stressful contingencies in my efforts to construct a field, some less possible to foresee than others, one could argue that there are some obvious methodological limitations to my study. Had I been a more experienced ethnographer, some of the trials and errors I encountered and created could have been avoided. I also acknowledge the relative brevity of my time in the field as a limitation. However, long periods of fieldwork do not necessarily entail better quality: the limitation concerning time in the field can in some sense be rectified by strategic methodological moves that aim to produce both richness and depth in the material (such as changing direction when a strategy is not working, taking analytical breaks and re-focusing or targeting specific issues in the fieldwork; cf. Lalander & Johansson 2012). In addition, in ethnographic frameworks, the matter of context is crucial for gaining an understanding of young people’s, in this case the greasers’, lives. That is, pluralism in secondary material and in methods (collecting newspaper articles, viewing websites, interviews with people other than the greasers, knowledge about the physical environment and so on) as well as a wider theoretical understanding of the greasers’ position, has been my way of working through the possible limitations.} Having to deal with all the emotions arising in the field was a bit surprising to me. Some reactions were of course part of what I had experienced in my life, how my memories of my own teen years became intertwined when I now in some sense “returned” to the world of teenagers – reactions that I needed to understand and engage with critically (cf. Knopp Biklen 2007, Waara 1996). The rationalizing process I often found myself engaged in (that I should not take it personally if they declined participation, etc.) when feeling distressed had a calming effect at the time, but it left me with a void inside and a sense that there was something more that could be explored here that I had not come across before to any great extent in the scholarly literature on ethnography (although see Wolf 1996, Kleinman & Copp 1993). Aside from my theoretical interests, then, my own experiences and how I am as a person often directed my attention to situations and practices that highlight or illustrate processes of domination, subordination, assimilation or marginalization. I have striven to balance this disposition by offering a thorough and comprehensive contextualization of the lives of the greasers.

Despite being a rookie when it came to driving motor vehicles and to car cultures in general, my starting point when constructing a field was not one of not knowing anything or having no theoretical ideas informing me. Ethnographic data does not tell us much in itself, but needs to be framed in a
theoretically useful context. I concur with the ethnographic methodologies
that stress the importance of being theoretically informed (Willis & Trond-
aman 2000, cf. Lalander & Johansson 2012). Theoretically informed ethnog-
raphy entails a productive relation between theory and data, informing
each other and illuminating cultural practices, yielding “ah-ha effects” for
the reader (Willis 2000: 117, cf. Arvastson & Ehn 2009). In that sense, the
research has been directed towards certain groups of young people, certain
practices and behaviours. The focus on these individuals, groups and prac-
tices was strengthened during the course of the fieldwork as the continuous
interpellation between my research questions, the events and my research
subjects’ doings reframed and reshaped the study. To be theoretically infor-
does not entail that theory necessarily steers the research in a caus-
ally linear manner; rather, both theory and data are continuously reshaped
and rethought during different stages of the research and in the process of
analysis. The key to their relationship is their productiveness and the mu-
tual dependency on each other for illuminating plausible interpretations of
social activities – and culture at large. Burawoy (1998: 5) terms this ap-
proach ‘a reflexive model of science’, and explains that reflexive science:

starts out from dialogue, virtual or real, between observer and participants,
embeds such dialogue within a second dialogue between local processes and
extralocal forces that in turn can only be comprehended through a third, ex-
panding dialogue of theory itself.

Given the particular nature of ethnographic research, its relation to a wider
social and cultural context is vital for understanding the particular case, as
is perceiving the case as unitary, as a whole (Cohen 1982, Gullestad 1989,
Mitchell 2006, Burawoy 1998). In my framework, a case study can be ex-
tended in the manner both Mitchell (2006) and Burawoy (1998) argue for,
where the intent is to illuminate and analyze social processes – derived
from a series of social situations (Gluckman 1961). The context as an an-
alytical tool becomes not only necessary, but vital in order to grasp the ever-
day lives of people and how these lives are related to larger social struc-
tures (Aretun 2007). Inspired by the extended case method, then, cases
are not to be seen as particular in the sense of opposed to the general, but

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42 Aretun (2007: 31, my translation) argues that “[t]here is a difference in a research
strategy that to a large extent uses general/abstract [generell] theory to explain lo-
cal phenomena and to use contextualization. In an analytical sense, they can be con-
sidered contrasts. To put it simply, the application of general/abstract theory often
entails that the local and particular is peeled off in order to ‘fit’ the standardized
categories of the theory.”

we should seek to learn about the whole by acquiring knowledge of its parts, rather than by ignoring them. (...) They have a character of their own which is intelligible apart from the fact their also being constituents of some larger entity. [These] segments are part of a segmentary structure – again, not merely parts, but incidentally parts – and the level of generality at which we halt our conceptualization of that structure is a matter of fundamental importance.

Accordingly, my study aims to have explanatory value outside the “particular” context of the greasers, thus geographically de-scaling and destabilizing the dichotomy between what is conceived of as the centre vis-à-vis the periphery, which also has implications for knowledge production (Berg & Longhurst 2003). Incidentally, the periphery – or the particular – teaches us about the centre and provides the abstract theories’ complexity and contextuality in its most elementary and fullest sense.

Ethnography is about systematic observation of human action (or the material world). "The ethnologic gaze" has been forefronted as crucial and unique when making observations (Arvastson & Ehn 2009). As an observer, all the senses are participating, but despite this acknowledgement there has been a particular foregrounding of vision at the expense of the other senses (smell, hearing, taste and feeling). Even though the ethnographic observer strives to capture impressions from all the human senses, the task of hauling everything together is understandably too large. The eyes of one observer capture different and fewer activities than would those of three. Despite restricting the observation to a single place, artefact or person, the impossibility of writing down everything that happens is clear. One cannot become more than an incomplete observer. What you focus on is of course dependent not only on your scholarly interests and aims, but, as mentioned before, on your own experiences and even your mood and feelings at particular moments. Lalander & Johansson (2012) describe the ethnographer’s different levels of attention as “detached involvement”. The importance of descriptions being thick (Geertz 1973) is not, however, equivalent to “having got it all down” (or to “getting it right”). Ehn (2009) points out that the descriptions ethnologists aim for rather create a sense of presence so that the

43 According to Berg & Longhurst (2003: 356), work "produced in the non-metropolitan ‘peripheries’ [of Anglo-America] is scaled as local (read: ‘case study’)” and particular, while the metropolitan Anglo-America is perceived as producing universal theory. See also footnote 4, and a more elaborate related discussion in Chapter Seven.
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readers can see [sic] or create an image of what the observer saw at the time of the description (cf. Högdahl 2009). The ability to describe human action in writing as vividly as possible, as well as recognizing one's necessary limitations, is of course also helpful in making claims about intersubjective validity.

Observations are not merely a matter of seeing and understanding, but also of establishing relations between the observer and the subjects of study. My observations were made through a continuous and regular presence at the youth centre, both in the evenings and during mornings and afternoons, as well as observations outside the store car park and at other places in the local community. During the initial observations, my focus was entirely on the social geography of the youth centre visitors: who were friends with whom, who was present and who was not, how they socialized with each other, and so on. When I became more familiar with the young people, I started asking questions about their motor-related interests and neighbourhood-oriented leisure activities, as well as listening to many discussions around these topics.

I never made any notes in front of the young people; instead, I saved the writing for when I withdrew from the youth centre for the evening. At the beginning I rationalized this way of writing field notes as a matter of not knowing them well enough and hence intruding on their privacy and integrity by displaying so visibly that I was there to study them. Later on, when I felt more comfortable, I contemplated making my notebook visible, but decided not to. I rode the bus to the field, and the bus I usually took home departed some half an hour after the youth centre closed. I made it a habit of writing down important incidents in my notebook, usually in chronological order, while I was waiting for the bus. When it became too cold to do this outside, I stayed a bit longer at the youth centre and wrote down the field notes there. The bus ride took half an hour, making it a perfect time for fleshing out the field notes as well as making comments for myself. The field notes were then typed up on the computer the next day or as soon as possible.

I have found it useful to bear in mind Spradley’s (1980) checklist for what to think of when observing: Space, Objects, Actors, Acts, Activities, Events, Time, Goals and Feelings. Another useful list, much shorter than Spradley’s and focusing on slightly different themes, is Sotiriou’s (1999) checklist where Territory, Stuff, People and Talk are helpful to attach one’s thoughts to during the observation.
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Reflexive ethics in the making

The connection between what one is investigating is close to one’s political and social position, and to the interests associated with that position. In particular, ethnographic research is answerable to both the scientific community and the research subjects. A reflective practice on the researcher’s part is hence crucial (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002), both from an ethical and a social perspective. A way to develop an ethical framework that surrounds the research project is needed in order to continuously reflect upon the ethical premises, inclinations and implications of my research ideas – in short, for the sake of being accountable for the research undertaken and thus the knowledge produced. In this sense, reflexivity is one of the most vital ingredients of feminist research, since it involves fine-tuned contemplations that relate to research design, methodology and methods. How the term is defined and deployed varies of course, but Ramazanoğlu & Holland (2002) hold that the need and willingness on the researcher’s part to consider and discuss the effects of power relations on the research process, the ethical judgements made and the researcher’s accountability for the knowledge produced, are three key elements.

Reflexivity, as I see it, consists of two interrelated dimensions: the conscious activity of reflecting upon the process of knowledge production and the knowledge repercussions before, during and after a research project; and “a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference” (Davies 2008: 4). Being reflexive is not the final purpose of research, instead it is a means for us to move beyond ourselves and gain knowledge about social reality. However, as Bola et al. (1998) rightly point out, reflexivity needs to be both a collective and an individual process due to the necessary limitations of individual researchers’ visions and experiences (cf. Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002). Reflexivity, then, is not necessarily confined to intra-academic discussions and practices, but can and should involve the broader society. Accordingly, reflexivity is not only part of conducting

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45 The Swedish Research Council (2005) distinguishes between research ethics and researcher ethics: the former relates to methodological aspects such as sampling, ethical concerns about research participants etc., whereas the latter pertains to the researcher’s relation to the research assignment and research task.

46 The repercussive effect of knowledge refers both to an unconscious or unintentional effect of one’s knowledge production and a more aware and intentional effect. On the one hand, the researcher can control and foresee the effects of the knowledge she produces; on the other hand, there is always an element of lack of control when knowledge enters other arenas in society.
responsible research, but it is also a conditional criterion for what I would term “good science”. Rather than argue from a positivist tradition emphasizing the representativeness, objectivity and validity of my study, I believe that transparency in the research process and the underpinning methodology is part of being able to make intersubjective claims (Richardson 2000, Davies 2008).

As a field-working researcher, my basic principle has been to always treat my young research subjects with respect, to listen to their thoughts and stories and be attentive to their views and perspectives. Many scholars studying young people have argued that much research concerning young people has been conducted from the adult’s viewpoint (Adler & Adler 2003, James & James 2004, Nayak & Kehily 2008, Best 2007, Seidler 2008). This has resulted in the research being eschewed in that it has stemmed from the underlying belief that young people know less of life and, paradoxically, also of themselves. They have not been the centre-piece of their own story-telling. Seidler (2008) finds the cumulative effect of this to be researchers (and thus research) unaware, afraid or simply ignorant of asking questions that entail answers relating to ourselves. In addition, placing young people at the centre does not necessarily or automatically entail that they will feel “empowered”. This is particularly tricky when one is studying a group of people who are positioned differently in different contexts: sometimes marginalized, sometimes not so marginalized. Studying young people, then, is usually framed as being in need of a more sensitive research approach than that of studying relatively more powerful adults. This approach has several methodological (and ethical) consequences due to the paradigmatic epistemological shift from a view from “nowhere” (Haraway 1990) or “above” to a view from “below”, reconciling with feminist epistemologies where the identification of the exclusion of Other(ed) experiences have formed a varied critique of how conventional (often positivist influenced) epistemologies are partial without acknowledging this partiality. The aim is to let the children’s own voices and perspectives (in)form the theoretical and methodological framework, analyzing the cultures of childhood and youth from the standpoint of the child and the young people themselves.

How I would produce accountable knowledge of/with the greasers has thus been both a chafing and nagging question that has remained a faithful companion throughout the fieldwork. As I touched upon the above, the micro-ethics of the fieldwork entailed an "opting out" rather than an "opting in" to the research (Hatton 2007). When I did my more formal interviews, the research subjects were once again informed about the study and their rights to withdraw or not participate, that the things discussed with me
would remain confidential and they would be anonymous, and they were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 3). All the names I use in the thesis are hence fictional. Furthermore, I have also chosen to anonymize the community to the best of my ability, without compromising the richness of the contextualizing material. Aside from these ethical measures, other dilemmas have arisen both during and after the fieldwork that relate to aspects of power in various ways.

A recurring dilemma for me throughout the research process has been how to avoid or mitigate the potential reiteration of the young greasers as "problematic youth" (discussed more extensively in Chapter Four). Although I was not fully aware beforehand of the greasers' negative discursive position in the community, I was certainly (made) aware that some of their driving practices were considered problematic and troublesome. Indeed, it was exactly these practices that drew my interest in the first place. I was often faced with how to respond to acts and practices that could harm themselves or others (precisely the phenomena I was interested in) and that could be against the law. Many of the accidents that took place were recounted differently by the young people, especially if they had been involved themselves, than in the official versions (in newspapers, on the site for the emergency services) or the versions given by the youth centre staff or other adults. How something was talked about also had a gendered dimension, with the young greaser women commenting more on the kind of traffic safety issues that can be recognized as part of an official discourse around traffic safety enhancement (more on this in Chapter Six). I often found myself angered by what I perceived to be young greaser men placing not only themselves, but also others, often girlfriends, in danger. What made me even angrier was the greaser men's joking that accompanied the recounting of these accidents, while their girlfriends would sit and look down at the table and remain silent. This placed me in a somewhat precarious situation, since I knew that the greasers' risk-taking practices could lead to serious harm or even death, yet I did nothing to try to stop them. Morally, these kinds of decisions were hard to make, and often resulted in priority being given to my project and a continuation of the gathering of material rather than caring for the young people's health. I had to rely on society's services if something happened.

The occasions where I accompanied the young greasers in their cars can also be scrutinized for several reasons. Firstly, I am not in a position to say whether or not the dangerous driving that was carried out while I was in their cars would have happened at all or in the same way if I had not been present. Probably it would have. I cannot exclude the possibility, however,
that some of the practices were part of their performance for my benefit, since I was part of their audience. During the daring practices with and around their vehicles, I seldom intervened, for the same reasons I did not stop their vehicle-oriented practices when I was not present.

My focus on risk-taking practices has also had other implications that relate to the interpretations and the choices I have made, both during and after the fieldwork. Best (2007: 17) finds that “[m]uch research has tended to rehearse, or even amplify, constructs of youth that are present in other cultural spheres such as politics and media” and that:

research questions, the focus of inquiry and channels of dissemination are often shaped by dominant cultural representations of youth. These representations have tended to frame young people as, for instance, “troubled”, “in trouble”, “at risk”, “less rational” or “delinquent”.

Viewing certain practices as risky, dangerous or violating and violent, can in some sense be perceived as part of an “adultist” framework. In addition, as Ramazanoğlu & Holland (2002: 116) note, “[i]nterpretation is a key process in the exercise of power.” In this study, I do not consider my research subjects to be co-producers of the final analysis, although they are co-producers of the material. The greasers have neither been part of formulating the research agenda or the research questions, nor had a say in deciding the focus of the study. In that sense, the written ethnography will probably give me a structurally more powerful position and perhaps place my research subjects in a less advantageous light. These decisions were partly made for pragmatic reasons – the difficulties in constructing a field and issues related to my inexperience with ethnographic methods, time, energy and so forth. Partly they relate to my experience and feminist scholarly knowledge of how men’s violating practices are commonly perceived in both public and academic discourses.

Focusing and formulating research questions influenced by media and politics is not a problem in itself, I would argue, the issue is rather the fact that research concerning young people has tended not to include the young people’s voices, views or perspectives. Recognizing the complexity of all social life does not mean doing away with aspects and practices that have problematic effects (Carrabine & Longhurst 2002). The key to good research (conduct) therefore lies in capturing the complexity as well as stressing the cultural and social circumstances that surround actions and practices. In this vein, we must research problematic, violent and violating practices, but do so without reifying the crude conceptualizations of particular groups – especially if these groups are marginalized in some way. A
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tension between research participants’ statements and practices, and my feminist analysis of them (which may be understood as a tension between the empirical/data level and the analytical level) arose during the different stages of the research process – most notably with reference to their risk-taking practices. My effort to give a voice to the young greasers and their perspectives on their lives and practices lies within the borders of my own interest in risk-taking and violence, thus recognizing the partiality of my perspective (Haraway 1990). Being aware of and making efforts to decrease and minimize the effects of an aged, gendered and classed power asymmetry does not entail producing uncritical analyses. On this note, to refuse to be what Lundgren (1996: 78) calls a “microphone-stand for the participants” is another responsibility of the researcher.47 Hence, she argues for the necessity to develop “a researcher’s grip” sensitive to both the changing and stable contexts in research practice. I have been influenced by Lundgren (1996: 80), who succinctly elaborates on her hermeneutically informed research politics/process as follows:

My road lies – again – close to that of “the double hermeneutics”. I do not disregard the informants’ descriptions, but relate to them and try to understand their interpretations. I also try to understand the meaning/intention of what, for example, they do or say they do, think and experience. As a next step I try to deconstruct or reconstruct their interpretation with the help of theoretical concepts within a scientific language. Here I can, in both language and understanding, come to move beyond and in other directions than the informants’ own interpretations, and occasionally even depart from them. This is a responsibility I need to take as a researcher. (My translation and emphasis)

Lundgren’s views on the research process and knowledge production relate to her field of research on men’s violence against women, especially when “studying up” in interviewing men using violence (cf. Hearn 1998). Naming certain practices as violations or violence is an important part of illuminating and talking about violence and violations committed by men in general (Lundgren et al. 2001, Lundgren 1995, cf. Hearn 2012). I argue that the same analytical exercise is necessary when the violations and violence are carried out in public, by young men, and with vehicles (that is, not necessarily in a heterosexual intimate relationship). Perceiving these kinds of risk-taking practices as violations is part of a wider framework where automobility as a powerful regime enables these kinds of practices, but it also

47 The question of whether it is “necessary or indeed possible always to match researcher to researched” (Skinner, Hester & Malos 2005: 13) is especially questionable in research on men’s violence, since such a “matching” may contribute towards legitimating violence (Hearn 1998b, Harne 2005).
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opens up a discussion of whether it is feasible to understand these risk-taking practices as a kind of gendered violation (more on this in the final discussion in Chapter Seven). Again, I find that suggesting and making analytical connections, as well as being transparent and clear about how the scientific craftsmanship has been carried out, is part of my responsibility and profession as a researcher.

The analytical process

All social interaction is already interpreted and mediated. To point out exactly where an analysis has commenced in ethnographic research is therefore an impossible task – as impossible as not interpreting or analyzing social encounters at all (Ramazanoğlu & Holland 2002). To move beyond the descriptive towards an interpretation of a particular culture demands dialogue between the “material” and the “theory”, as well as distance in time and space. Given that I have worked within a theoretically informed ethnographic framework, a distinction between what is crudely termed “material” and “theory” would be difficult, and indeed unnecessary, to uphold. My aim is therefore to show how they have mutually constituted each other and how in the ethnographic production they are always tightly connected to the interpreter.

During the fieldwork, I wrote field notes, which I accompanied with analytical commentaries and memos (Emerson 1995). This was done right afterwards or when I returned to read my notes. After some weeks in the field, I took an analytical break in order to distance myself a bit from it and rethink my direction. Here I formulated working hypotheses, i.e. questions I found interesting and wanted to receive answers to. After this weeklong break, I returned to the field, and made more specific observations targeting practices, behaviours and discussions that centred on the issues brought up in my refined fieldwork questions. Some questions were of a clarifying character, whereas others were of an analytical sort. During this phase I also revised my interview guide from the pilot study and incorporated the questions that had arisen during this initial phase. This back and forth movement, the dialogue between the field and the rethinking of the aims and purpose of the study, made my interests clearer and, given my time frame, made the fieldwork more efficient.\footnote{The seasonal holidays provided another break and after that I returned to the youth centre only for complementary interviews. However, I returned again in the sum-}

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When I withdrew from the field, I started transcribing the interviews with the greasers as well as with the pupils and staff. I then read through them individually, highlighted sections of interest and made notes on themes and ideas that emerged from each particular interview. During this phase I often also consulted my field notes in order to remember the particular circumstances of the interview in question. Due to my interest in risk-taking practices, certain social situations and conversations presented themselves more easily – the link between the material and the analysis was more straightforward. The other themes that make up the empirical chapters relate to social and cultural position, which can be perceived more as a background for understanding the greasers’ lives and practices, or to links that I found interesting to explore further. One such theme developed gradually when I explored what the greasers thought or I perceived to constitute the greaser position. The importance of creating a fun person in talk and practices was a link I took notice of when I analyzed the risk-taking practices and how the greasers recounted them. This again led me to ask myself why being fun was important and how the social distinctions between the different groups of young people in Lillby were elaborated. What were the associations attached to other young people from whom the greasers wanted to distinguish themselves? A theme that stood out, to which almost every young person referred, was the opposite of a fun person – the boring person (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). In a similar vein, I became attentive to how place appeared central in various ways and how the greasers’ practices were contingent on where they lived.

All of the links I propose (between the construction of a greaser, the greaser culture, their risk-taking practices, perceived boredom and the fun greaser in control) are analytically connected but have also arisen from the analytical work process. This is one of the great benefits of ethnographic studies, I would argue: the possibility of becoming immersed in the lives of a group of people, joining in with their practices as well as their talk, from different angles, allows for a thickness that can take the analyst in directions impossible to reach otherwise.

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49 The transcription conventions are given in Appendix 4. In relation to the transcription process, but also in relation to the writing up of the fieldnotes and interviews and the quotes I have used in the thesis, it is worth noting that most of them are verbatim. However, I have edited the quotes by erasing slang and sociolectical expressions for ethical reasons (so that the young people remain anonymous, and I have also made an effort to reduce the potential that the greasers are portrayed and re-created in an overtly stereotypical way).
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sible to foresee. It is the dialogical character between previous and present research, and between different kinds of material produced by the researcher and the research subjects over time and space, that can bring out aspects, relations and interconnections of social life in an illuminating manner – again, to perceive and make use of contextualization as an essential analytical tool (Aretun 2007).

The analytical process has to a large extent been enmeshed in the writing and reading process – be it the writing of memos, field notes, commentaries, field reports or the writing that has become the chapter that the reader is now reading, or the various scholarly and non-scholarly readings I have stumbled upon, been presented with or found for myself throughout the project (Lykke 2009, Richardson 2000). For my own part, writing is a highly disciplined project, an act of routine – far from the image of the author awaiting inspiration in order to produce. Writing is often conceived of as the tedious work of editing and re-writing, but for me, this routine and discipline has been highly intertwined with the creative thinking and analyzing process. Although the interpretative mode is always on, ethnographic work also needs distance in order to become something more than mere descriptions (Gullestad 1989, Davies 2008, Emerson 1995). As Gullestad (1989: 19) points out:

The fallacies of many analyses are either an unreflexive reproduction of people’s categories or that there is too weak a link between analytical concepts and the populations’ categories. (...) The goal is not only to report but also to analyze.

Here, Gullestad is in line with Lundgren’s (1996) notion of what she terms “a researcher’s grip”, the responsibility the researcher has to not merely describe but also analyze (indeed, that is the core of a researcher’s profession). Davies (2008) talks of an approach based on realist ontology, where research aims not only to describe, but also to explain, and I would add, see, certain phenomena in social reality (cf. Westerstrand 2010). In my view, the analytical process is greatly helped by thorough background work whereby the social and cultural context is investigated, in order to be able to better understand the research subjects’ position, practices and talk. I hope that

50 Richardson (2000) talks of “writing as a method of inquiry”, which highlights the intertwinement of writing, thinking and analysing. Moreover, to risk stating the obvious, the task of analysis and writing is never a solitary task. As I hope to have shown already in the acknowledgements, research is a collaborative project in all its stages and, as important as my own work has been, so have the ideas, thoughts, queries, comments and discussions of others in various arenas.
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my efforts to present a thick contextualization will provide the reader with enough guidance to the greasers’ lives – particularly in Chapters Three and Four, but also in the other empirical chapters, Five and Six.

To sum up, in the process of writing down and writing up, the distance to the field has in some sense both grown and diminished. The physical distance has increased, while my understanding of the young greasers has deepened and developed as time has passed, leaving me with a very different sense of relation to the young greasers than that nervous evening when I met them for the first time in the car park. I have lived with their words, thoughts, laughter, and I still have the smell of fuel from their clothes at the back of my mind. In my heart I am compassionate, even though my analysis is critical.
Chapter Three

Locating the greasers

In this chapter, I will locate the greasers within a wider context of social formations that shape their leisure space and everyday lives. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the greasers are positioned in relation to normative yet ambivalent notions of youth as a life phase, associated with masculinity, middle-class norms and the urban. Aside from presenting the Lillby community to the reader, along with the places that the greasers appropriate and inhabit within the community, the aim of this chapter, drawing on a range of different literature, is also to understand how global, national, regional and local politics affect, among other things, the housing situation, the local labour market and public transport in peri-urban communities such as Lillby. Political decisions and strategies at all the aforementioned levels affect and shape the young greasers’ leisure time and space. These complex political processes are intertwined with social and cultural processes of how certain places are discursively conceptualized and how these conceptions tend to incorporate not only the places but also the people inhabiting them and the practices people carry out.\(^{51}\) Before I delve into these

\(^{51}\) This theme is picked up in Chapter Five, where I discuss how the greasers negotiate what I call ’spatial boredom’. 83
matters, the reader will benefit from a presentation of the geographic locus and demographic status of Lillby community.

Lillby community

A small peri-urban community, Lillby lies between a lake, a former national highway that divides the community, and expansive open fields. Lillby is an old parish, with ancestry dating back to the 12th century AD. Several Viking-age and older graves are found in the area. The local church was probably built in the 14th century and in its present refurbished condition it is a remarkable eye catcher when approaching the community from the south. Today, around 5000 residents have Lillby as their home address, of whom approximately 900 are between the ages of 13 and 24 (around 18% of the total population).52

A ridge follows the highway from Lillby all the way to the city of Storköping in the south, and also continues north of Lillby. When coming by car or bus from the south, a roundabout marks the entry into the small community. From the north, the indication that you have arrived is the same as when entering from the south: open fields are replaced by single family houses on both sides, followed by small businesses and community services as you approach the centre. A church looms opposite a construction shop, the local secondary school, the local branch of the public library and a water tower.

On the church side, you see a small fire station. You can walk through a pedestrian tunnel and watchfully cross the entry to the car park to the small town centre consisting of a supermarket, a kiosk and an ATM, with a closed down public house and a pet clinic close by. Outside the grocery store is a large car park. On weekend evenings, the greasers hang out at this car park. The ones who have a driving licence and a car pick up their friends, ride around Lillby and meet with others at the car park. They gather to socialize: to talk about the week, to watch the cars, to burn or drift with the cars, EPAs or mopeds, to perform tricks with the mopeds, or to drink.

Further north along the highway you find two pizzerias and a petrol station, and mainly residential areas on both sides of the highway. Had you instead taken the left turn at the crossing when entering the community from the south side, you would see the local sawmill towering to your left. The parish and folk museums are situated closer to the road behind some trees and

52 In Storköping the equivalent is around 19%.
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bushes, followed by one of the kindergartens. Behind the kindergarten lies the high school, with its main building farther back and the fore fronted building where the school canteen and the youth centre are accommodated. Some fifty metres from the food court/youth centre you find a sports hall – used by the school, the youth centre and several of the local sports associations.

Lillby is in this sense a rather typical community on the urban fringe, infused by its history and, as I will describe next, also accommodating the societal changes constantly taking place.

Image 2. A schematic overview (not to scale) of Lillby community in relation to Storköping and other nearby communities mentioned in the text.
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Regional politics

On a structural level, global economic changes affect the flows of migration and immigration within and between regions, thus effectively stratifying the population so that the affluent segments concentrate around the city’s core, while the less affluent segments are referred to areas farther from the city. The head of the youth centre, Karl, elaborates on this issue when he discusses the differences between the young population of the youth centre in Vallinge (closer to Storköping) and in Lillby (farther from Storköping):

According to Karl, who has spent almost 30 years working in Lillby, the differences between the inhabitants of Lillby and Vallinge stem from economic circumstances (i.e. the population of Lillby in general is working class and the population of Vallinge is middle class). The majority of the adult population’s education in Lillby is senior high school level. Women in the area are almost equally occupied in the public and private sector, whereas men’s occupations are largely in the private sector. The average income is slightly higher for both men and women compared to the closest city, Storköping, and to the national average. The only large company in the community is a sawmill, owned by a large corporation and producing wooden construction products. Livestock farming, agriculture and forestry have been the resi-

53 For transcription conventions, see Appendix 4.
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dents’ primary industries but due to community growth a majority of today’s labour force commutes to the nearby city Storköping or elsewhere.

Karl later corrects himself in the quote above, and states that perhaps the material difference may not be significant, but the types of trade the young people’s parents have are manifest in the knowledge and values that are passed on to their children. Most of the greasers who attend upper secondary school are enrolled in vocational training of some sort – aiming either for trades in plumbing, electricity, construction or vehicle technology and mechanics, or in the food, hotel or tourism sector (see Appendix 1). In addition, Karl also thinks that the different living circumstances in Vallinge help to create and develop a more critical stance from the parents towards the youth centre and what they do than in Lillby. What he tries to capture and express, I presume, is how different social positions are involved in the knowledge, values, conditions and possibilities the young people have and understand themselves to have (cf. Bourdieu 1986). Moreover, these social positions are intertwined with how places are constructed and how place constructs social positions. On a statistical level, the greasers can be perceived as part of the white, working-class segment in Sweden.

To fully grasp the lives of the greasers, living in a peri-urban community close to a larger city in Sweden, it is necessary to say something about how regional expansion, spatial planning and the housing situation correlate with shifts in the labour market. The perspective on Lillby is clearly that of Storköping: Storköping is perceived to be the centre and Lillby the periphery, a co-dependent but not equal relationship that affects the inhabitants’ lives and practices. Regional expansion and other regional changes in Sweden affect the spatial relations in the regional geography. The local geography becomes important because spatial planning of residential areas concentrates public services within a certain radius of the village core. Schools, libraries, healthcare services, shops and businesses are kept centralized and are often planned in relation to each other. In smaller communities, such as Lillby in my study, it becomes particularly clear. In addition, or perhaps in conjunction, shifts in the labour market towards what has been termed a service economy give rise to new challenges for peri-urban and sub-urban communities (Ileris 1996, Wöfl 2005). The most common housing arrangement in Lillby is detached houses, and house prices are moderate compared to those of the closest city, Storköping. This has made Lillby attractive to families who want to live in houses but cannot afford the prices in the inner city areas. As (larger) cities cater for the bulk of employment opportunities within the service economy and thus absorb increases in labour migration, the outskirts tend to become residential areas due to the
relatively cheaper housing market. It is worth noting that since the early 2000s regional enlargement has become an important objective in Swedish regional policy, built on the idea that increased commuting contributes to regional development (Amcoff 2007, cf. Friberg 2008). However, when most of the adult population of Lillby commute to nearby larger cities and predominantly use services there, the effect might be that some local services, such as grocery shops, close down due to being perceived as economically unviable.

How the infrastructure of public transport is arranged is another apt illustration of the unequal relationship between the urban and the rural or peri-urban, in that it affects both movement patterns and the household economy. In Swedish politics surrounding regional enlargement, one incentive for increasing commuting is its supposed correlation with regional development. Regional buses go to and from Storköping at least twice an hour, but many of the residents are dependent on cars. Over 74% of the families had a registered car in 2009. The city buses travel to Vallinge, but that is as far north as they go. In order to come to Lillby, you need to take the regional buses – unless you own a motor vehicle. There is no bicycle or pedestrian lane from Storköping to Lillby, since the road network is built on the premise of the car. The former national highway dividing Lillby is still a heavily used road where cars and trucks share the road space. The young people of Lillby are very dependent on making their own way around, either by catching buses, or hitching a ride with their parents or friends by EPA, car or moped. This is particularly the case when they move outside of Lillby. Not only does the dependence on a solid infrastructure of public transport affect young people in general, it also affects young women differently from young men. In general, young women ride mopeds and drive EPAs to a lesser extent than young men, and none of the young girls in my study that do ride mopeds reported riding them during the cold season, which also brings out how the weather affects different places differently.

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54 And obviously also the (global) climate. In countries with extended thinly populated areas, car dependency is often not a choice but a necessity. The political strategies adopted and solutions suggested to move beyond car dependency are often based on an urban framework, leaving the specificities of the rural and peri-urban out of sight. In my view, securing a well-functioning and cost-attractive public transport system is even more vital if thinly populated areas are to remain viable living options for the local population as well as future residents, especially given the shift to service and information economies. See also Chapter Seven.

55 The number of registered cars in Lillby shows that some households have several registered cars. There are unfortunately no statistics available for other types of vehicle.
Although the way in which spatial planning is executed within a community may influence young people's sense of locality, their relationship with the surrounding communities and cities is equally vital. For example, the school system in Sweden gives young people the ability to choose where they wish to attend secondary and upper secondary school, resulting in an increase in relative social and geographical mobility. Some argue that the system of freer choice has resulted in social, ethnic and geographical segregation, clustering middle-class young people in high-profile, academically oriented schools (usually private schools in the inner cities) whilst young people with lower social positions are placed in schools with worse reputations on the outskirts of the cities, which are directed primarily at vocational education (Dahlstedt 2007, Trumberg 2011). Also, some research shows that young people from socio-economically disadvantaged areas (which also tend to be racially segregated) tend not to exercise their right to choose, but instead end up at the nearest schools (Skawonius 2005). In communities where young people commute to and from high school or upper secondary school, like many of the greasers in Lillby, this may at first appear to give the young people an opportunity for social mobility, but this is often not the case. The greasers in my study commute to upper secondary school in Storköping, but tend to choose the same vocational schools as their friends from Lillby and do not, in this sense, move beyond their social position and segment. It is safe to contend that social position (aside from more obvious social stratification processes that relate to education) influences both mobility patterns and leisure activities, hence affecting the use of places in the local neighbourhood as well as places outside the community (Morse Dunkley 2004, van der Burgt 2006). In this sense, the greasers' mobility remains local in both the geographical and social sense.

The greasers in contemporary youth culture

In the introduction, I outlined how hegemonic norms of youth permeate society. The urban dimension I briefly touched upon needs to be further elaborated. The point is to discuss not only the ways in which place and personhood are interrelated, but also how notions of place – in this case the conception of the urban-rural divide – are crucial for understanding the greasers' lives. What I hope to illuminate in this process is how the urban-rural conception affects young people's relationship to Lillby as a community: how some young people come to feel a strong sense of belonging while others do not and how this sense of belonging in turn mediates the social investments that individuals make.
Chapter Three

The urban bias and spatial stigmatization

When discussing how particular places are understood and experienced, and how these perceptions are shared, by and among people, there are several processes that need to be kept in mind. How one experiences a place oneself and how others experience it might be two different things; whether or not people have direct or indirect experience of the place also affects their understanding of it. It is therefore of vital importance to recognize and analyze the significance of the rural-urban imaginary, while keeping in mind the internal diversity and complexity of notions such as the urban and the rural (Vanderbeck & Morse Dunkley 2003). Rather than perceiving the urban and the rural as a dichotomy, some have argued for viewing them on a “rural–urban continuum” (Bell 1992) or as parts of “the rural/urban axis” (Creed and Ching 1997). Categorizing Lillby as peri-urban56 follows this line of thought and aims to destabilize the urban-rural division while at the same time recognizing the forceful impact it has on young people’s understandings of their community and themselves, as well as on their everyday lives.

The urban bias of the youth notion has been a blind spot in research on young people, although the importance of place has received increasing attention (Valentine 1997, Matthews et al. 2000, Panelli, Punsch & Robson 2007, Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, cf. Nairn, Panelli & McCormack 2003, Vanderbeck & Morse Dunkley 2003). Scholars invested in youth and the rural stress the significance of the urban bias and point to the diverse understandings, experiences and materializations of place for young people living outside the metropolis (cf. Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006). Vanderbeck & Morse Dunkley (2003: 256) hold that young people’s:

place-based narratives continue to be imbued with social power, and have implications for, among other things, young people’s senses of self, their thoughts about the future, and the constitution of youth cultures.

The close connection between identity and place gives rise to particular dilemmas if the place in question is stigmatized. To state the location of your home is not only a statement of where you come from but of who you are and is therefore meaningful (Hall, Coffey & Williamson 1999). In relation to my research setting, Vallinge is considered “less hillbilly”, as one of my research subjects framed it, whereas Lillby is “hillbilly”. Lillby’s geographical position mythologizes it and creates and upholds a dichotomous character between the city and the countryside, the urban and the peri-urban or rural,

56 See footnote 2.
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linking respectively with modernity or tradition, progress or stagnation (Waara 1996, Stenbacka 2011). In other words, Lillby is a stigmatized area, a fate it shares with other non-urban places (Vanderbeck & Morse Dunkley 2003). Spatial stigmatization is an exclusionary process that incorporates both distinction – creating distance more often by essence than degree – and hierarchization – attaching certain negative and derogatory characteristics. When Maja, 17, is asked why she likes living in Lillby, she brings up some of the contradictions and tensions that relate to place:

there are both negative and positive sides to it / I like it very much to live in the countryside / because then you can look forward to going downtown to shop and stuff like that rather than to do it every day perhaps / and I think it’s great with the lake and I like it when it’s small and you get to know everyone and the rumours spread and like that (TANJA LAUGHS) / I think that’s fun/ although the negative is of course that when you start senior high school you are called farmer or greaser / because you ride the white bus [the regional bus] and not the red bus [the city bus] / (Tanja: so you are called a farmer?) / no like/ it’s mostly people teasing / although there are some who think they are a bit better than everyone else/ that say so just because you ride a white bus and not a red (...) but that’s just because we don’t have it like in the city/ it’s not like everyone has their own tractor and cow here / that’s more the ones living outside [Lillby] / like farms and that sort of thing / I don’t even have a rideable lawnmower.57

Maja appears to position the young people of Lillby as being more like the young people of Storköping, although she acknowledges that there are differences too, differences that she would like to sustain. Instead, it is the places and communities outside Lillby that are the really rural ones, the ones making their living as farmers or foresters. The demarcation line for Maja of whether you are a farmer or a non-farmer is, interestingly enough, if you have a lawnmower you can ride on. She is aware of the differences between her local community and the city, as well as the processes of differentiation that take place and attach the urban with positive, progressive

57 Maja: de finns både negativa och positiva sidor med det/ jag tycker jättemycket om att bo på landet / för då ser man fram emot att åka till stan och handla och sånt där än att gå på stan varje dag kanske / och tycker det är jättebra med sjön och / jag trivs när det är litet och man lär känna alla och det går massa rykten och sånt där (TANJA SKRATTAR) / det tycker jag är kul / fast det negativa är ju att när man börjar gymnasiet så blir man kallad för bonde eller raggare / för att man åker den vita bussen ut och inte den röda bussen / (Tanja: så du blir kallad för bonde alltså) / nej alltså / det är mest folk som retas/ fast det är en del som tror att dom är lite mer / bättre än alla andra / som säger typ det bara för att man åker en vit buss och inte en röd (...) men de är bara för att vi inte har som i stan typ/ det är inte precis som att alla har varsin traktor och en ko här/ det är mer dom som bor utanför som har det/ liksom bondgårdar och sånt där/ jag har inte ens en åkgräsklippare
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and modern values, and her community with more negative characteristics. The spillover effect from how a place is perceived to the people inhabiting that particular place appears to be tight and close or, as Elias & Scotson (1994) argue, the social stigma is often also transformed into a material stigma (reification). The consequences for people living in stigmatized places have been the focus of several studies. In Elias & Scotson’s (1994: 18) influential study of the residents of the working-class area of Winston Parva, the authors note how the more established residents treated outsiders:

They closed their ranks against the newcomers. They cold-shouldered them. They excluded them from all posts of social power whether in local politics, in voluntary associations or in any other local organisation where their own influence dominated. Above all, they developed as weapons an “ideology”, a system of attitudes and beliefs which stressed and justified their own superiority and which stamped the people on the Estate as people of an inferior kind. Built around certain stereotyped themes their status ideology was spread and maintained by a constant stream of gossip (…).

Tobias, 17, points to the conception of small communities as gossip-ridden and connects this with prejudice – an aspect many of the young people mentioned in relation to the downsides of living in a smaller community (although recall Maja earlier, who mentioned this aspect of travelling rumours as one of the positive sides of living in Lillby, cf. Elias & Scotson 1994).58 Melissa, a ninth-grade pupil, concurs with Tobias that gossip is problematic: “the worst thing is all the talk / it spreads everywhere”.59 The notion of flowing gossip, as Elias & Scotson (1994) point out, is not an independent or innocent phenomenon, but relates to a community’s norms and the relations within that community. The function of gossip is not to establish what is true or false of a person or group of people in any objective

58 The number of people living in a particular place obviously affects the opportunity both to feel a positive closeness to other people, and to surveil and keep track of the whereabouts, movements and doings of those same people. How the “Lillby community” is produced is beyond the scope of this study, but the notion of flowing gossip and a large amount of prejudice arose in several interviews, particularly amongst the pupils and other people who did not position themselves as greasers. For some of them, rumours and gossip had had severe consequences – “choosing” to attend high school in Storköping or even changing schools altogether. See Elias & Scotson (1994) for an illuminating analysis of how gossip is part of creating and upholding geographical and social differentiation in the small working-class community of Winston Parva. They argue that social categories such as class or ethnicity cannot account for the differentiation processes taking place, noting instead that community cohesion in the oldest of the three zones stemmed from residence time, i.e. how long the families had been living there.

59 Melissa: men det som är värst här är ju typ allt snack / det sprids överallt
manner, but rather to create in-group cohesion (or build “group charisma” as Elias & Scotson term it) and impose guilt and shame on the target group. Elias & Scotson (1994) further notes how the residents of the outsider zones tended, to some extent, to accept the negative and derogatory views that the established residents cultivated.

The white rural
I would argue that Lillby shares the notion of stigma to a certain extent, but remains a privileged community if we expand the picture to incorporate issues of whiteness and race. Analyses of “the urban fringe” or the peri-urban have some similarities with how the suburban in Sweden has been conceptualized in the Swedish mass media. Molina (2007) shows how the suburban is associated with racialized difference in relation to what is perceived to be “Swedish” or “Swedishness”, and how the places are identified as “problem areas”, “exposed/vulnerable” or “segregated” through a colonial exercise. The places are linked to a racialized stigma, as are the people who are associated with these places (cf. Listerborn, Molina & Mulinari 2011).

In a study by Andersson (2003), young girls aged between 14 and 17, living in a stigmatized suburb in Sweden, associated areas with a dense “Swedish” population with high status and areas with a more sparse “Swedish” population with lower status. The place you live in, if you live in a house/townhouse or apartment, the school you attend and the style you have are all relevant to your status, according to the young girls in the study. Wacquant’s (1996) study of the French suburb of Quatre mille shows similar tendencies. The young people in particular share a feeling of exclusion and marginalization, of being associated with criminality, poverty and immorality. Many of the young people concealed the fact that they lived in or came from Quatre mille or employed other coping strategies to avoid being stigmatized: avoiding and distancing oneself from neighbours, creating micro-hierarchies within the neighbourhood or creating scapegoats (and thus re-creating social differentiation). The effect of this vicious cycle, according to Wacquant (1996), is that the stigmatization produces that which it originally claimed to reflect – that is, an “impossible community” where social relations are dissolved and cultural and social detachment rules.

60 Consider also how rumours and gossip are employed and made meaningful by the powerful social categories (often men) to regulate women’s lives and practices within some so-called honour-related contexts in Sweden, where what actually happened is of secondary or even no importance, but action is taken upon the rumour alone in order to preserve the honour of the families (Eldén 2003).
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Hence, Wacquant (1996) sees spatial stigmatization as an effect of “discourses of demonization”, where places become associated with social problems, criminality and frequent experiences of insecurity.

A similar process of disconnection from the urban centre is performed in the production of an urban-rural imaginary, where the urban is normative and unmarked and the rural created as its binary opposite. The difference from Molina’s (2007) analysis lies within the presupposition of the urban in general and the rural in particular as ethnically/racially homogeneous spaces. Lilby is an all-white community and is not racially marked as a “problem area” in the sense Molina (2007, cf. Magnusson 2001) argues. Nevertheless, the image of the rural or peri-urban as white remains significant and feeds into discourses on tradition and cultural heritage in a less direct way. For instance, when I talk about motor vehicles with Jens, who is very knowledgeable about them, he mentions in passing that his father was interested in mopeds when he was younger and that he trained and now works as a mechanic:

I have had a moped since I was 13. My first was a label, a stunt scooter. I did tricks and stunts with it. Then I bought a cross moped label. It was regular, but when I got it, I trimmed it and then I removed the trim again. My third moped was a stunt scooter again. (Tanja: Do you have a dad who is also interested in mechanics or something?) Yes, he was into mopeds when he was younger. He is a mechanic. I tinker a lot now, for everyone. If there are friends who need help they will call me.61

In all talk among the greasers surrounding motor vehicles, but also music production or playing, the idea of craftsmanship emerges. One evening when Måns is practising guitar playing, I get a harsh lecture from Gurra. After playing the first few chords of “Smells like teen spirit”, Måns switches over to the preamble of Johnny Cash’s “Ring of Fire”, a favourite among the greasers. While playing, he simultaneously talks about how hard it is to know where to strum the strings. Gurra, apparently knowledgeable about

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61 (NB, since the formal interview with Jens was not recorded, this is not a verbatim quote. I have therefore not used the same transcription conventions as in the interview quotes elsewhere in the text.)


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the guitar, moves closer and instructs him. I listen to his playing for a while before I state that it's impressive to play by ear and not follow the chords. Gurra is quick to respond that you cannot simply sit and play from a paper, insinuating that it takes practice and a hands-on approach if you want to learn something. Using your body in order to learn to play the guitar is vital in order to get the right feeling for it; to have a direct, unmediated link between the body and the object of practice.

Jens, one of the young men with extensive mechanical knowledge and skills, hints at the same kinaesthetic embodiedness when he talks about everyone turning to him for advice or suggestions when something needs to be fixed on a vehicle. Interestingly, at the same time he mentions the unfortunate matter that not many of the greasers are actually interested in or have tactile know-how about the mechanical aspect of vehicles, motors or machines. There appears to be a continuum of actual mechanical skills, ranging from the ones who know how to fix, improve and tinker with machines, to those who have more superficial knowledge. Nevertheless, to show an interest in vehicles, machines and performance and at least have a basic knowledge of how things work, is a necessary condition in order to qualify as a greaser (see also Chapter Six).

It might very well be that the continuity of certain practices or phenomena – interpreted as a form of "tradition" – come to carry particular importance for Jens, Måns, Gurra and the other greasers. For instance, given that the greasers have pride in their identity and position as greasers, they can be said to maintain and cherish the tradition and cultural heritage of not only their fathers' work, but also the image of Lillby as a community with a strong vehicle-oriented culture. The strong connection with a masculine ideal of craftsmanship is central in this production of the greaser culture as traditional heritage, which is sometimes regarded as a vanishing phenomenon (Eldh 2001) and in need of protection and perhaps also proliferation. Tinkering alongside fathers or male relatives can be perceived as training in mechanical skills and knowledge, and in how to be a particular kind of man (cf. Hatton 2007). As Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 177) hold, a "shared passion for machines is sometimes a key point of interaction between males within and across generations", which stress not only the social significance but also point to the intergenerational dimension.

The notion of 'authenticity', and its relation to craftsmanship, has been noted by many researchers studying vehicle-oriented cultures (Balkmar 2012, Eldh 2001, Lagergren 1999, Grundvall 2005, see also Mellström 1999, 2004). In the context of car modifiers in Sweden, Balkmar (2012) talks of
craftsmanship as a form of capital, which relates to the kind of car that is being modified, how the modifying is done, what materials are used and who is doing the modifying. While the research subjects in Balkmar’s (2012) study appear to combine what he, referring to Wajcman (1991:123), calls “two variants of masculinity” separated by class position: “a theoretical, engineering kind of knowledge, and a more embodied, craft-oriented approach”, my interlocutors further cultivate the position associated with a working-class masculinity. Although several of the greasers drove modern cars with advanced electrical systems, the cars that were tinkered with were older Volvos. Also in this greaser culture, the work done with one’s own hands was highly valued and seen as important, echoing the well-established and direct relation between “real” masculinity and embodied practical skills (Lohan & Faulkner 2004, Mellström 2004). All these aspects contribute to the continuation of a masculine ideal of craftsmanship, which in turn can be connected to ideas and notions of “tradition” or cultural heritage. Maintaining tradition does not imply a simple reiteration of practices or phenomena, or that these take on exactly the same structure or content, but that the relationship towards them remains significantly similar. Most importantly, this implies neither that what is considered “tradition” is somehow static or uncontested (Waara 1996), nor that it is a conscious practice:

They do not necessarily value it simply because it is traditional, but because it suits them. It developed, after all, to meet their own requirements and conditions, and, if those requirements and conditions remain, theirs is the most practical means of doing whatever is required – until they can be convinced by means other than those of mere proof that it is not so. In this regard, tradition can be seen to have a pragmatic rather than intrinsic value. (Cohen 1982: 5)

For Cohen (1982), tradition is pragmatic. Basically, the end value of the greasers’ tinkering practices, and their talk of mechanics and machines, might be better viewed in light of where they are placed and whom they relate to in a pragmatic sense. I would suggest that for many people, particularly young men, place may come to hold a different meaning if they are brought up and live their whole lives in variously disadvantaged areas (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, cf. Elias & Scotson 1994). For instance, sharing a common experience of spatial stigmatization can be one driving force for (young) people to re-create a common identity based on place, the valuing of certain practices and phenomena such as craftsmanship yet another. The greaser culture can appear as a form of protection of the community in terms of neighbourhood nationalism, or even “territoriality”, that touches upon constructions of whiteness and the nation. The rural
is associated not only with stagnation and backwardness when compared to the urban, but also with a certain mode of tradition worthy of preservation – often brought forward as some kind of "essential" or "core" element of Swedishness and referred to as idyllic (cf. Vanderbeck & Morse Dunkley 2003, Stenbacka 2011). The valuing of mechanical craftsmanship and use of the Volvo car certainly feeds into this embracing of cultural heritage, of "Swedishness" and nationalism (see the next chapter).

Also, if we for a moment return to the deviance-normalcy discussion from the introduction, one fallacy in foregrounding the deviant and problematic (often youth cultures that are highly visible) is to disconnect the young from culture, tradition and heritage and position them as socially dispossessed. The social existences of young people are thus atomized from other life phases and youth, and young people are automatically understood as more modern and non-traditional (Waara 1996). This also holds true here. The greasers are not socially or culturally disintegrated, but are instead affected by spatial, social and cultural conditions, which also inform their opportunities for agency in various ways. The urban biased conceptions of youth cast young people per se as non-traditional, but on a local level, in certain places and under certain circumstances, "tradition" is negotiated and re-evaluated. Most importantly, I would not wish to establish any causal connection between non-metropolitan place and tradition, or between all young people living in non-urban surroundings and practices that reify nationalism.62

Lillby is, however, an area where social and racial segregation is reinforced. "The power to exclude" is in this sense exercised by urban planning, consumerism/capitalism (by increasingly privatized public spaces), and by politics that create and uphold social and ethnic/racial segregation (Fenster 2005: 253, see also Magnusson 2001) as well as a result of the everyday practices of people living in different places (Elias & Scotson 1994). It is worth pointing out here that the relationship between stigmatized and non-stigmatized areas is in no way given, predetermined or stable: the young people in my study contest and renegotiate it constantly – Maja's utterance in the previous section being one vivid example and the greaser men's valuing of craftsmanship and a kinaesthetic learning process yet another.

62 Focusing on young men and masculinity, for instance, and not relating to young women and femininity, at least in a reflexive exercise, runs the risk of reinforcing the perception of young men as the only active agents – whether it is for social change or social and cultural preservation. This thesis is not the place to develop this topic further, however, but as I suggest in the final chapter, is well worth future inspection.
To sum up, before we move on to engage with the places in the local neighbourhood where the greasers hang out, in this section I have discussed the demographics of the Lillby community as well as the community’s position in relation to politics around regional enlargement and other structural factors that affect a peri-urban community of Lillby’s size. Furthermore, in general, I have illustrated ways in which place and personhood can be regarded as intertwined and, in particular, how stigmatized places affect the greasers’ lives and their understanding of themselves. An adjacent dimension has been to argue that the ways in which the same place – Lillby community – can come to be important to the greasers is precisely because it is stigmatized. I will now focus on the places within the neighbourhood that the greasers use as I discuss what they do there and how these places are important for understanding the greasers as a local youth culture.

Greaser space

The particular conditions described so far are part of shaping the greaser culture in Lillby. Place is obviously significant in understanding young people, as “children’s spatial mobility is influenced by location, including the social and physical characteristics of the neighbourhood” (Barker et al. 2009: 3, see also van der Burgt 2009, Aretun 2009). The ways in which young people appropriate, use and redefine space have been increasingly researched (Skelton & Valentine 1998). The ways in which places are used and produced by people relate to structural features of how age, gender, class and race organize our society, as well as the young people’s redefinition of these features by way of usage. Barker et al. (2009: 3), for instance, hold that “[r]esearch in Western industrialized countries has highlighted that children from lower social class families are less likely to have space to play at home, and are often more likely to spend time unsupervised outdoors” (Barker et al. 2009: 3, cf. Valentine 1997, 2004). Some young people, on the other hand, tend to orient themselves to realms and arenas outside the home for other, more social, reasons.

The greasers claim and occupy, create and uphold local “hot spots” that mark their “territory” during certain hours of the day. The neighbourhood consists of the local places where they meet up with friends, hang around and socialize: the car park outside the local grocery store, the pizzeria, the youth centre and, during summer season, the public baths. All in all, what I refer to as “greaser space” consists of all the places where the greasers hang out: from the home address, the youth centre, the car park, the public baths
and the local pizzeria to the virtual meeting places online.\(^{63}\) What happens and who hangs out at the public baths and the local pizzeria is similar to what takes place at and who attends the car park and the youth centre, and this is why I choose to limit my analysis to the youth centre and the car park.

**The car park and the youth centre**

The car park can be found some hundred metres from the youth centre, in the middle of the community, part of a small town centre consisting of one service building with a grocery store, a hairdresser, a public health centre and an ATM. During the evenings, particularly at weekends, the car park transforms into a meeting place for the young greasers. Were it not for them, this space would be both silent and empty after closing time. The greasers who have a driving licence and a car pick up their friends, ride around Lillby and meet with others at the car park. They gather to socialize: to talk about the week, to watch the cars, to burn or drift with the cars, EPAs or mopeds, to do tricks with the mopeds, or to drink. To use the neighbourhood space as the greasers do is framed as the only way to hang out with friends when being at someone’s place is not an option, as well as about not wanting to stay in and become restless. One of the main aspects the greasers point to in their talk or their practices is the freedom they experience and enjoy in the neighbourhood space. Some relate this to the absence of adults, but most mention peer socializing and use of vehicles as the most important reasons for hanging out in the car park. The spatial openness of the car park feeds into their experience of freedom: being able to decide what to do and where to go as well as the unrestricted use and display of motor vehicles (regardless of social, moral or traffic rules). The car park is thus constructed as a democratic space by and for the greasers.

The youth centre in Lillby is merged with the youth centre in Vallinge about 8 km away, but considered to be one establishment. The staff commutes between the two centres, and divides the time and opening hours between them. During my fieldwork the youth centre was undergoing operational changes initiated by Storköping municipality, to which it organizationally belongs. At the time, the centre was headed by Karl, with Betty as vice head. Johanna, Jonas, Hans, Sandra and Mia are employed by the centre (Mia being the most recent addition) and they all have slightly different responsibilities and are in charge of different activities. The youth centre had be-

\(^{63}\) Although I recognize and mention the virtual meeting places that the greasers employed, these are not included in my material due to ethical reasons and I have therefore not analyzed them. Compare footnote 32.
tween zero and thirty visitors on the evenings they were open, from 6 pm to 9 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and from 7 pm to 11 pm on occasional Fridays. The evenings, most of the visitors were between the ages of 13 and 18, and most were male. During these hours, the youth centre was primarily a hang-out for greaser men. Some of the young people, who spend a lot of time sitting on the benches talking or watching the cars and mopeds in the car park, also visit the youth centre regularly. The head of the centre, Karl, describes their typical current visitor in the following manner:

a visitor today has attended for quite a long time / is in grade nine or even in the first, second year [of upper secondary school] / one is very likely to be a boy / or almost more than very likely a boy/ here in Lillby one is probably a bit interested in vehicles / one probably doesn't have such good grades / and one sees this [the youth centre] as a place to hang out

The most frequent visitors were present almost every night the youth centre was open during the autumn and winter season. However, not all of the greasers attended the centre. People described by Anders as "the even older guys" and subsequently by Malte as "those who ride cars together and rampage" were accorded greaser status, but did not come to the centre.

64 I also attended the youth centre during the daytime. Then the atmosphere was quite different, since it provided another space for high school pupils to hang out during school hours. The centre offered breakfast for a small fee in the early hours of the day. It also provided rooms for Lillby High School, especially for music lessons. Affiliated to the regular four ninth-grade classes at Lillby High School, a fifth class got their education in collaboration with the youth centre. Pupils in this class were perceived as needing special attention for various reasons. One of the staff members, Jonas, had the responsibility of teaching this class.

65 Other young people attended the youth centre as well who were not part of this large group, but they were either younger newcomers or sporadic visitors. The younger newcomers were usually from 6th or 7th grade, all boys, and engaged in indoor skating or cycling. They participated in the spontaneously arranged evening activities but otherwise did not make much noise for themselves, they kept mostly to themselves in the skate or table tennis room. Sporadic visitors attended the youth centre due to employment or because they were involved in some of the groups or courses the centre hosted (DJ courses, a discussion group for young boys, the activity sport group).

66 Karl: en besökare idag har gått här relativt länge / man går i årskurs nio eller till och med i första andra ring / man är företrädesvis pojke / eller nästan ännu mer än företrädesvis pojke / här i Lillby så är man nog lite intresserad av motor / man har nog inte så bra betyg / och man ser det här som ett hängställe

67 Anders: sen är det de ännu äldre killarna / som också är ett gang; Malte: de som åker bil tillsammans och härjar

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The staff makes considerable efforts to ensure that the youth centre is a place where young people feel comfortable and safe, a place where their voices are heard and where they can engage in activities of their own choosing. When entering the youth centre’s living room it is like walking into someone’s home. Potted plants and flowers in the large window invigorate the room, the curtains are homemade and changed every season and the lighting is not halogen-based but stems from common room lamps. The first thing catching my eye as I walk in is the large table close to the counter. To my left there is a beige corner sofa placed facing a large screen. At the other end of the corner, diagonally across from the beige sofa, two black leather sofas are placed opposite each other. To my right from the entrance, a graffiti-painted wall gives away the pool-room. Other rooms for DJ-ing, playing drums and guitar, skating and rollerblading or playing table tennis can be found at the centre too, but the living room is both the heart and soul of the social life for the attendees. The “homely” interior design of the youth centre is in line with official government policies on youth recreation centres. The youth centre’s mixture of “feminine homeliness” and “masculine activities” gives a certain atmosphere to the localities. The “homeliness” is produced through an invisible touch – a hand that places potted plants in the window, hangs curtains and changes table cloths – without anyone else taking much notice of the subtle changes. Despite the centre’s “homeliness”, the activities that are imagined to take place in the different rooms reflect conventional male interests: playing or making (rock or techno) music, skateboarding, rollerblading, table tennis and pool. All the rooms are well-used, except for the sewing room, which is a locked room with a small window facing the inner schoolyard containing two sewing machines, a large table and lots of stuff placed on the floor for storage. Not really inviting or user friendly and very seldom used.

The table below is an overview of some of the important differences between the youth centre and the car park when it comes to: degree of institutionalization; the freedom the greasers report experiencing when using the venue; the incentives they say they have for being at the places; and the effect their attendance has.
Chapter Three

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<tr>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Youth centre</th>
<th>Car park</th>
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<tr>
<td>Greasers</td>
<td>Greasers</td>
<td>Greasers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-greasers</td>
<td>Male majority</td>
<td>Gender mixed, male majority</td>
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<th>Degree of institutionalization</th>
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<th>Car park</th>
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<td>Adult powered, elements of co-decision making with the young people</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Low Powered by the young Disciplining &amp; surveillance elements (by police, non-greasers, online and offline)</td>
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<th>Experienced freedom*</th>
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<td>Relative</td>
<td>Relative – Exhaustive</td>
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<tr>
<th>Attendance incentives*</th>
<th>Youth centre</th>
<th>Car park</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peer socializing: Relation maintenance (homsocial)</td>
<td>Peer socializing: Establishing, building and maintaining relations (homsocial and heterosexual)</td>
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<th>Attendance &quot;effect&quot;</th>
<th>Youth centre</th>
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<td>In-group cohesion</td>
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<td>Border control</td>
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<td>Gender asymmetry</td>
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<td>Age asymmetry</td>
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Table 1. Two of the social places the greasers use during their leisure time. The categories marked with * refer to the greasers’ answers, the rest of the categories are my analysis of conversations and observations during my fieldwork.

The young greasers do not perceive the youth centre as their (second) “home”. Mia and Jonas from the staff mention how recesses and holidays affect the attendance at the centre, making the young people’s presence more arbitrary during seasons when you can hang out outside instead. The centre has attempted to organize activities in spring and summer at the places they know the young people hang out, for instance the public baths, but no-one showed up at these, not least because the greasers appropriate places in public when possible, and choose when they wish to take part in the semi-organized, formal and institutional activities arranged by the youth.
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centre. This links with a discussion on institutionalized leisure time and young people, where the youth centres manifest and represent a politics underpinned by a discourse on problematic youth. The degree of institutionalization is one of the decisive factors for how the different places are organized in terms of decision-making and whether official policies on the physical and operational shaping of the place exist or not. As I discussed in the introductory chapter, the establishment of youth recreation centres in Sweden was one measure to create (institutionalized) “homelike” places for, especially, working-class children and young people to play and socialize beyond their home address. However, the significance of the local neighbourhood for some young people has not decreased.

The car park, on the other hand, is a place where to a larger extent the greasers choose their own practices and activities, although here too they are monitored and disciplined indirectly through police raids, and other young non-greasers as well as adults who complain about the greasers’ presence. The youth centre and the car park differ compared to, for instance, their homes due to being places the greasers “choose” to inhabit; however, they choose the youth centre more infrequently and irregularly than the car park. Their incentives for hanging out at the youth centre and the car park relate to socializing. For the moment, I am content to note the attendance effects; these will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

For some young people, like the greasers, places in the local geography become crucial spots to hang out, where socializing in its entire spectrum is the primary activity. For the greasers in my study, the local neighbourhood offers them public places to socialize and engage with peers, at some distance from their homes and parents. Although many of them had hobbies, they gave priority to hanging out with friends and other peers. Given the fact that many of them live in houses, the size of their homes is probably not the main reason to go out to socialize, although some research subjects mentioned that the group was too large to all be at someone’s house at one time. The only option, then, is to meet outdoors. Kintrea et al. (2008: 12) frame it thus:

Even though many people are increasingly mobile across urban space, immediate neighbourhoods remain a significant factor in people’s lives (…) and residential choices often still focus on living next to people with similar values (…). For those who are less mobile, and in poorer places, the immediate neighbourhood may take even greater significance.
Analyses concerning young men (in subcultural, urban contexts) revolve around making sense of the research subjects when they say that they are hanging around and “doing nothing” (Corrigan 1977). "Doing nothing” is an important social activity and often carried out in the streets (ibid., Matthews, Limb & Taylor 2000, Skelton 2000). As Bjurström (2011) indicates, hanging around doing nothing is part of a non-institutional leisure time, governed by the young themselves as regards content, place of practice and when it is exercised:

In parallel with the institutionalisation of leisure, young people have always had access to or created a space of their own for a kind of non-institutional, unbounded, open and free time that research on youth has termed “doing nothing”. Interpreted as spare time without a specific or given content, this type of time also emerges as unplaced, in the sense that it can be said to be spatialised when the opportunity arises (Bjurström 2011: 21, my translation and emphasis).

In some sense, I concur with Bjurström on the unsituated character of the activity – it can be carried out wherever. On the other hand, if you take the perspective of particular youth cultures, like the greasers in my study, this kind of activity is very situated, local and bounded in that socializing is confined to certain places in the neighbourhood (the car park, public baths, the youth centre) and inside the cars. The vehicle centredness in the greasers' case hence demands particular conditions. Many studies have found that place attachment, local affinity towards and “feeling at home” in the local neighbourhood, are linked with experiences, memories and knowledge of the place, and the social relations that one has cultivated there (van der Burgt 2006). The phase of growing up is particularly important for establishing strong emotional bonds towards the local geography (Altman & Low 1992). Feeling attached to a place is also heavily connected to feeling safe and sound, through intensive use, long-term living and secure social relations. Van der Burgt (2006: 47) holds that “feelings of attachment in relation to places can also be seen as a manifestation of individuals' identification with places” (my translation, italics in original). This could mean that people invest heavily in creating and upholding a close physical connection with the local neighbourhood. However, it could also mean the opposite, for people who do not feel attached to the place seek out other places that more rightfully (in their view) mirror their perception of themselves. For instance, in Watt & Stenson's (1998) study on young people in Thamestown, some of them did not experience an affinity for their residential area because they found it boring. Instead, the city, with its range of more exciting meeting places, was contrasted as the place they wanted to attach to.
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Given the discussion above and in the previous section on stigmatization, it is of course necessary to discuss what kind of agency individuals (can) exercise within this complex context. Not all stigmatized places are stigmatized in the same way or as gravely as others, and not all inhabitants react the same way in response to this stigmatization. In contrast to Wacquant’s (1996) research subjects in Quatre mille, Back’s (1996) young interlocutors of a variety of races and ethnicities in two London neighbourhoods created what he terms “neighbourhood nationalism”. Instead of dissolving culture, the young people in his study shared a feeling of community and solidarity towards their neighbourhood. Sernhede’s (2002) study of young people in a stigmatized suburb in Sweden also points to how marginalization and exclusion lead to some young people feeling a need to defend their neighbourhood in various ways. This phenomenon is often referred to as “territoriality”. Territoriality refers to young people’s claiming and appropriation of space, usually in disadvantaged (sub)urban areas. Territoriality must however be preceded by a sense of affinity or attachment to the particular place where it is exercised. Place attachment and territoriality are argued to mutually reinforce each other, where the former is identified as a “communal sense of identity, particularly through shared experiences or a common culture or lifestyle” (Kintrea et al. 2008: 12).

Given the negative connotations of the term territoriality and the theoretical framework to which it is often attached, I have chosen to use other concepts that highlight the same or similar kinds of practices and feelings that in my view capture the complexity of the character in a less adultist manner. To know a place gives rise not only to knowledge, but also to feelings of safety and control. Young people use certain places in order to take control of their own surroundings, but also, as noted earlier, to avoid adult control. Place and spatial knowledge become important tools for not feeling powerless in a situation of social marginalization and exclusion, for (re)establishing control over one’s life (cf. Vaaranen 1999). For instance, in Vaaranen’s (1999) study of young street racers in Helsinki, Finland, their social position restricts and directs their leisure activities (see also Hatton 2007). The street racers’ perceptions of their future did not deviate from the path of their social position: blue-collar jobs ensured the continua-

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68 I will not delve deeper into the research on young people and territoriality since it is often coupled together with youth delinquency, criminality and gangs, which are not of primary interest here (see Anderson 1999, Wallace & Coburn 2002, Watt & Stenson 1998).
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tion of their street-oriented leisure activities (cf. Willis 1978). The street is the place where they meet, compete and test their masculinity with the help of cars. Due to their social marginalization, the street becomes the only site in society where they can earn respect according to Vaaranen (1999, Best 2005; see also the Introduction and Chapter Seven for a critical discussion of this kind of analysis). In this sense, it is not only about territoriality (as territory refers to spatiality in a restrictive sense) but also about social and emotional attachments towards a place and how place, emotions and social practices mutually reinforce each other.

Seasonal changes, places and vehicle use

The particular places where the young greasers gather and socialize are not constant throughout the year. An understanding of the social ecology is intertwined with understanding the geographical location, the climate and the seasons that restrict some practices while making others possible. In a country like Sweden, with four distinct seasons, the weather gives rise to conditions that affect vehicle use. Many of my research subjects’ stories revolved around the weather and the seasons: during late spring and warm summer they hang out outside the store front and at the public baths, during the winter and cold autumn the youth centre increases in popularity. The seasonal cycle also has consequences for the number of young people who go out in order to socialize, with a peak in the summertime and a steep decrease towards midwinter. The young people who have a moped licence drive more with it during the spring and summer seasons. It is considered much less fun to receive your driver’s licence or permit during the autumn. When autumn and winter arrive, moped use decreases. Many give the cold as the main reason for placing their moped in winter storage, while others cite unsafe road conditions. Even in a community such as Lillby, the moped transforms into a pure transport vehicle during the winter season. Young people with few other options are the only ones driving throughout the winter (usually due to the lack of public transport). The function of the moped changes again during the summer. It is used more often and for different reasons – for transport (yourself and your friends), for leisure (stunting, burning, racing etc.) and for speeding. It is also during late spring that most complaints to the police are rung in – from, among other places, Lillby. The vehicles preferred by the young during cold autumns and winters are cars or EPA-tractors (the official name is A-tractors), because they are covered vehicles. EPA-tractors appear to be a regional

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69 The street is often used to depict and describe urban environments appropriated by people who have criminal tendencies, usually gang-related young men (see Anderson 1999). Women in prostitution are also referred to in relation to this concept.
Locating the greasers

phenomenon; I never encountered anyone residing in the nearby city of Storköping who admitted to having such a vehicle. In Lillby, on the other hand, EPA-tractors are quite common.70

Mopeds, EPAs and cars are the most common vehicles used by the young greasers. In recent years, the four-wheeled, non-covered quad bike has gained in popularity among young people in smaller communities such as Lillby. The people driving such a vehicle hold that it is even cheaper to maintain than a moped – although it is much more expensive to buy in the first place. During winter, some drive snowmobiles. Others train and compete on cross or dirt bikes, although these vehicles are not used on public roads. Both mopeds and EPAs are vehicles that transfer the greasers to a motorized world. They become vehicles that facilitate training and practising, at least for the young men, to become competent and skilled drivers. The competent and skilled driver is a central component in the construction of a greaser, a theme I will explore more fully in Chapter Six. All in all, the different types of vehicles used by a large proportion of the young population paints a telling picture. The greasers were not the only young people interested in or engaged with motor vehicles, but their use was pictured differently. To be a greaser, cars or EPAs are considered central, used for drifting71, speeding and cruising72 and put on display at the car park outside the store entrance.

The kind of vehicle one drives is important for how one is perceived and positioned, as is the brand and model of the vehicle (see Balkmar 2012). The first car they buy, borrow or inherit is usually an older used Volvo, and they prefer a particular model of Volvo (although many of them also drove other cars) – models 240 or 740. The EPAs are mostly worn down Volvos

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70 This is perhaps because there is a stronger connection with agriculture and farming (where these vehicles are most commonly used) and a strong motorized tradition. They are also convenient for transport where public transport is unavailable or insufficient.

71 Technically, in drifting, the driver speeds while over-steering so that the car body eases off the road and causes loss of traction in the rear wheels. The front wheels are then pointing in the opposite direction from the direction of turn. The skilful and competitive dimension of this driving technique relates to the driver’s ability to control the car. Drifting in this context should not be confused with the (illegal) urban sport developed by street racers in Japan, grown popular with the help of movies such as Tokyo drift. In Sweden, organized drifting competitions are arranged, which are not the same as the kind of leisure drifting the greasers engage in.

72 Car cruising is to be distinguished here from the American equivalent (see Best 2005) where a whole culture and scene has grown up around cruising. It is also not about gay cruising, i.e. seeking sexual partners, often in public places.
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and, as with the cars, rebuilt or painted a number of times (not to be confused with professional car styling, see Balkmar 2012). The phrase: “Fuck you, I drive a Volvo” was printed on the back of a hoodie one of my research subjects often wore, signalling a proud Volvo driver.73

The reason that the greasers often choose Volvo cars can be linked both to material conditions (they are cheaper to get hold of), and to craftsmanship possibilities (they are known to be easy to tinker with; see Rosengren 2007), but also, I would add, to the fact that they are associated with Swedishness in a nationalist sense and are associated with safety and dullness (see Chapter Five). Volvos are symbolically loaded cars, connoting Swedish nationality and “Swedish values” (see O’Dell 2001, Tengblad 2010, Wickelgren 2010). Wickelgren (2010) holds that Volvos were originally launched as the Swedish car and Swedishness came to be foregrounded as one (or even the) reason for Volvo’s entire existence. Moreover, since the founding of Volvo, the company built its brand around societal responsibility, in close connection to projects aimed to develop Sweden (Tengblad 2010). Volvo cars are hence part of establishing a connection with a cultural heritage, paying homage to Swedish industrial handicraft and engineering. In a recent TV advertisement for Volvo, it is proclaimed that Volvo is the “car that makes Sweden roll” [”Bilen som får Sverige att rulla”]. The double meaning of the slogan refers both to the actual fact of Volvo being one of the most sold cars in Sweden and hence literally making Swedish people move, and figuratively to the fact that the Swedish automobile industry, and specifically the Volvo Group and Volvo PV, has had a substantial impact on Swedish industry for almost a century (Jönsson & Wickelgren 2010).74

73 This kind of merchandise is often sold at various car shows and this particular one appears to be targeted at Volvo greasers. Such proclamations printed on clothes etc. are often regarded as a bit immature in other car enthusiast communities.
74 The car manufacturing industry, however, internationally as well as in Sweden, has faced serious challenges for several years due to economic fluctuations, leading to, among other things, reduced sales. As a comparison, Saab Automobiles, Sweden’s other landmark car manufacturer, has been in crisis during the last five years and struggled with even greater financial losses than Volvo PV. Massive lay-offs and cuts have been commonplace since then. While the car manufacturing industry is sensitive to economic fluctuations, the line of business focusing on car servicing is not. Car servicing, in contrast to the manufacturing industry, is in continuous need of a labour force, while there has been a decline in the application rate to vocational training programmes on vehicle mechanics (ABC Regional News 2013-02-01). In this sense, many of the greasers who were enrolled in programmes related to vehicle mechanics can be seen to have a relatively bright future in the labour market.
Locating the greasers

Material conditions, i.e. the lack of a disposable income, make it hard to buy expensive cars or car parts, attend fancy car shows or car tours (cf. Balkmar 2012). On the other hand, having a cheap car does not make driving less expensive. Fuel costs, insurance, maintenance, spare parts for modifications and renovation of the car account for a huge part of the greasers’ income, if they have one. Many of the young people hold jobs, usually through the mandatory training phases of their education or other additional jobs through the school or their parents’ companies. Many greasers solved the car issue by driving their parents’ cars instead. Alf, who drives his parents’ car, sums up the cost for driving per week as “at least seven hundred [SEK]/six hundred kilometres in a week maybe.”

The unruly localized
Although I am getting a bit ahead of myself by beginning a discussion about part of the surrounding community’s view of the greasers, which I will delve into more deeply in the next chapter, I need to address one aspect of the issue here that relates to place. In light of the powerful notion of public space as a place designed by and for adults, the greasers are perceived as troublesome. This “problem” of loud greasers has also generated suggestions and possible “solutions” from the adults who can be perceived as conciliators (cf. Lagergren 1999). On the semi-official community website forum, someone suggests creating a place where the young people can tinker and tune their vehicles, something that Saga and Dina’s fathers have worked on for some time. When I asked the greasers whether they would attend such a facility, opinion was divided. Some noted that Storköping already had such a place, which some greasers over 18 attended (as I understood this venue, it was more of a pub than a place to tinker or hang out for younger people, since they served alcohol). Others felt that the store front and the car park would never cease to be important meeting places for young people interested in vehicles and the rest thought that it might be a good idea to work towards having other places to hang out than the car park or the youth centre. A motor courtyard should not be placed too far

75 Lagergren (1999), in his thesis on the history of motorcycles in Sweden, discusses how the young men in Stockholm who started using motorcycles in the 1950s – referred to as “leather boys” ["skinnknutter"] – came to be perceived as problems in inner-city areas. A long-drawn-out and heated debate over where they should be allowed to hang out resulted in a motor courtyard out of town, where the “leather boys” spent their leisure time far away from adult surveillance until the venue was closed down some years later. Although apparently popular and used extensively by the “leather boys”, this is one historical example of how young, working-class men with motor vehicles are framed as conspicuous and disturbing and therefore relegated to the outskirts of the city.
away, though, since getting there might be a problem for some. On the other hand, it could not be placed too close to the car park either, since the most pressing problem pertained to loudness. Tom, 18, thinks that:

> it depends on how far / where you place it / you cannot place it too far away either / because then it's just those with a car who can go there / they do not want to sit there/ four five [of them]/ while the others remain in Lillby/ then they most surely will go up to the car park76

Tom makes a good point when he says that the store functions as a social meeting place. Even though you cultivate an interest in vehicles and tinkering, the most important aspect of having a specific place for tinkering would still be nurturing the social dimensions. Also Alf, quoted earlier as saying that he would never attend a motor courtyard, is reluctant to be categorized as a "real" greaser, hence implying that establishing a place specifically for tinkering with cars may feel exclusionary for some.

Viewed from an affirmative perspective, a motor courtyard could potentially become a valued place for some of the young greasers, who would want to combine hanging out with tinkering. According to the greasers, some preconditions would have to be met in order for this to happen. One such precondition relates to the proximity of the venue. Seen from a more pessimistic perspective, it is likely that a tinkering place would be located farther away from the community centre, making it more difficult to get to for the young people who already struggle with transportation. Deciding to locate a tinkering place outside the community would also reinforce the notion of public space as adultist, that is, not equally available to everyone, by literally placing young people out of sight. These kinds of ventures can be perceived as part of the institutionalization of young people’s leisure brought up earlier, and thus only a continuation of the youth centre tradition. Basing "youth politics" on discourses that are associated with surveillance, monitoring, social engineering or the like, is a flawed approach that does not consider young people's voices, ideas (self-)knowledges, or agency. As I pointed out before, the young greasers found it crucial to have places of their own, created by themselves for their own purposes, in the local community where they were free to engage in whatever activities they wished. The point being that the young people create the places they wish to have for themselves.

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76 Tom: det beror på hur långt / vart man placerar den / man kan inte placera den för långt heller / för då är det bara de med bil som kan komma dit / de vill inte sitta där / fyra fem stycken / medan de andra är kvar i Lillby / då går väl de säkert upp till affären [parkeringsplatsen]
Locating the greasers

Summary and concluding remarks

To get a sense of the community, this chapter began with a brief tour of Lillby community in order to highlight the geographical location and the specific demographic factors of importance. Lillby community is a socioeconomically disadvantaged area with a majority of working-class inhabitants. Some important points on the effect of regional enlargement on the community’s infrastructure have also been discussed, in order to pinpoint the consequences for the labour market and the housing situation. What is most striking is of course how the public transport system is arranged in areas such as Lillby, far outside the metropolis, which is essential for young people who have not reached the ages of either 15 or 18 and are still ineligible to drive a moped, EPA or car. Furthermore, the planning of roads feeds into the community’s car dependency, when it is, if not impossible, then at least not encouraged to ride bicycles or walk, due to the lack of pathways to the community.

In conjunction with the political processes, cultural conceptions of a place make up the canvas for people’s social practices. The most important topic in the chapter has therefore concerned the issue of how place and personhood are entangled within the framework of hegemonic notions of youth, and especially the urban bias inherent in these notions. I have discussed how certain places become stigmatized and how the stigmatization process in this case relates to the urban-rural divide and is further associated with socioeconomic and ethnic segregation. The greasers do, however, navigate within this context, making and producing places where they feel “empowered” and are agents in their own right – often at the expense of other young people in the community. These social divisions are consolidated not only by social activities, but also by use of space and movement patterns. The young greasers who take over the youth centre and the shop’s entrance courtyard are using these places as venues for the maintenance of social hierarchies within their own group and in relation to other, both present and absent, youth. By physically selecting who belongs to the place and to whom the site belongs, they create exclusive (neighbourhood) sites where in-group status is negotiated. In this sense, they build a kind of spatial capital. Moreover, the greasers’ use and appropriation of local places is not only linked to sociogeographic dominance and the building up of spatial capital, but also to a kind of nationalism, by cherishing the tradition of craftsmanship and the strong orientation towards motor vehicles, and particularly Volvo cars.
In this chapter I have located the greasers within a wider context of social formations that shape their leisure space and everyday lives. These processes can of course be interpreted differently depending on the perspective adopted. Some researchers have highlighted children’s and young people’s creative use of the neighbourhood as important and vital, yet recognizing the complexity of how social stratification, ethnic and racial segregation as well as gendered and aged expectations influence children’s and young people’s spatial use and movement patterns. By positioning them within wider power orders, a better understanding of their disposition occurs, making their practices and activities culturally intelligible. In the next chapter, I will focus on the social relations among the young people of Lillby, as well as within the greaser group, in order to retrieve a more localized understanding of the greasers and their position within Lillby community.
Chapter Four

The greaser culture

Because greaser space is closely related to the greasers’ social practices and accomplishments that help produce greaser culture, I have reason to touch upon intra-community relations in Lillby in this chapter. The aim is to provide the reader with a detailed and localized understanding of the greasers’ everyday lives, mapping in- and out-group relations in general, as well as elaborating upon the greasers’ in-group relations with reference to membership, belonging and standing. The focus will hence be on social relations and how these are intertwined with social practices in greaser culture.

I will begin with a presentation of the social geography of the young people of Lillby and move on to discuss the importance of visibility in gaining a standing in this youth geography, before I discuss the practices that are crucial in relation to performing and practising the greaser – or what I term their ‘belonging-work’. From there, I discuss the greasers’ accomplishments in gaining a standing in the group, as well as what the consequences are for greasers who fail to practise and perform the greaser successfully. In this context, I will also raise the question of exclusion in relation to non-greasers, that is, the young people who either want to belong to the greaser group or those who do not, are not allowed to or have chosen not to.
The social geography of the young people of Lillby

In order to understand the greasers’ practices, understanding the social geography – the social relations that constitute the greaser group as well as its relation to other groups and the community as a whole – is central. The young people of Lillby self-reportedly divide into three groups: greasers, "hockey fags" and "nerds". The gendered homosocial division organizes the community’s young men and women on the precondition of male-centred and male-identified activities, such as organized sports\(^\text{77}\) (the hockey fags), vehicle interest and neighbourhood orientation (the greasers) or computer-based activities (the nerds). Sam gives a description of the groupings among Lillby youth:

Tanja: if you think about school, your class or grade, do you think there are some special groupings in school?

Sam: yes / it depends on like / what you’re doing outside of school / if you do sports you can say matters / or if you’re knowledgeable in the moped or cross moped / those who know about vehicles they’re like a gang / that is like a fixed gang / the largest group / then there’s football and ice hockey gangs and floorball is included there / and then those who are not involved in any sports like that / who are never out\(^\text{78}\)

Although my question is quite specific and directed towards the high-school setting, Sam’s answer does not deal with the school setting alone. He maintains that the important thing for which group you belong to is what you do outside school. In Lillby you can engage in/with three things according to Sam: sports, motor vehicles and computers. Quite an extensive number of the greasers engage in sports, but sport does not become a defining aspect of their lives, since the interest in and orientation towards motor vehicles and street life makes the greaser a more heavily marked category. Maja, 17,

\(^{77}\) Football, ice hockey and floorball are the most common sports, engaging many of the young men but also some young women. Many of the young women were interested in horses and horse riding, but this was not perceived as significant for the portrayal of the divisions among the young people.

\(^{78}\) Tanja: om du tänker på skolan då med din klass eller årskurs tycker du att de finns några speciella grupperingar i skolan?
Sam: ja / det beror ju på liksom / vad man håller på med utanför skolan / håller man på med sport liksom kan man säga speler roll / eller är kunnig i moppe eller crossmoppe / så det är ju de som är sådär motorkunniga de är liksom ett gång / de är liksom ett fixerat gång / den är största gruppen / sen är de här fotbolls- och hockeygången och innebandy ingår i det / och sen de som inte håller på med nån sport sådär / som aldrig är ute
The greaser culture

states, “if you are up there [at the car park] you are [considered] a greaser (...) even if you are not one.”

Being visible – being someone

Among the non-greaser young, most use the term greaser to refer to the vehicle-orientated young people hanging out at the car park. Some of the young non-greasers hold that the greasers even wear particular clothes, but I could not distinguish any specific clothing style that was exclusive to the greasers. Tobias, a young man with experience of the car park life, even though he does not frequent the place any longer, points to the distinction between the parent culture and the Lillby greaser culture, by stating that:

they’re not real greasers / they don’t have these kinds of US [cars] / they are more like to think that they’re greasers / it’s fun [that] they’re listening to like hiphop and stuff / my dad he’s a real greaser his car’s from fifty-five I think / he listens to Johnny Cash / then you’re a real greaser

Tobias makes use of the distinction between what I see as the parent culture of greasers and the greaser culture as it manifests and is carried out in Lillby. According to Tobias, the only visual thing that could give away a Volvo greaser would be a cap. He continues focusing on the codes of style that the greasers lack – namely the US American car from the 50s or 60s, and the music associated with that time period. In the parent greaser culture, the nostalgic reference to the 50s is embedded and extrapolated in clothes, music and the cars (Rosengren 2000, O’Dell 2001). For the Volvo greasers, music, clothes and kind of car is equally important, but the reference point is not the 1950s music, clothes or cars. Instead a mixture of “(conceived) past” and contemporary culture make up the elements of the greaser culture in my study. The greaser culture in Lillby has strong working-class connotations and bears resemblance to the 50s greasers: a young male-dominated and peer-oriented culture that centres on motor vehicles and on socializing in public space. I would also argue that in appreciating the craftsmanship of and cultivating knowledge around cars and other vehicles – something that has been strongly associated with Swedish car enthusiasts in general (Balkmar 2012) – the Lillby greasers have an apparent cultural connection with the parent greaser culture. But the resemblance ends there. The greasers in Lillby prefer the Volvo as we saw in Chapter Three, listens to Johnny

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79 Maja: om du är däruppe så är du en raggare (...) även om du inte är det
80 Tobias: de är inte riktiga raggare / de har inga såna här amerikanska [bilar] / utan det är mer såna där som tror att de är raggare / det är roligt [att] de lyssnar på typ hiphop och annat / farsan han är ju riktig raggare han har sin bil från femtio fem tror jag / han lyssnar på Johnny Cash / då är man riktig raggare

115
Cash as well as mainstream pop music and does not wear a particular distinguishable clothing style.

Very few of the non-greasers were, however, as forthright as Tobias in discussing the different characteristics of the Volvo greasers vis-à-vis their parent culture. The greasers in Lilby are distinct from their ancestors as well as their contemporary counterparts. Their age, material conditions and their location shape which elements they embrace and which they discard.\textsuperscript{81} It is naturally neither a matter of picking and choosing, nor necessarily a conscious process, rather using the means available to them with regard to their position and their conditions and adjusting them for their purpose.

When I have been out talking about my study to various random people on my use of the emic term “greaser”, I have had similar reactions from them to those described by Tobias. Most people seem to associate the term with the parent culture of the 50s. A common label the young greasers were awarded by other non-greaser youth was hence “diaper greaser”, which succinctly captures how they were seen as immature and therefore less developed, or as pale imitations of their parent greaser culture. However, the Volvo greasers never expressed any desire to be considered as parent culture greasers. Some perceived such links as ridiculous or even, like Alf below, as simply unwanted. When Alf and I are talking about whether he would attend a motor courtyard if there was one in Lilby, he succinctly proclaims: “I would not be there / it would be more like those real greasers who go there” (my emphasis).\textsuperscript{82} To my question of whether he has been to the existing motor courtyard in Storköping, Alf swiftly responds with a sarcastic tone that he has “never been there” and that he “will not go there either”. I use the greaser concept for the young people who overtly identify as greasers, but also for the young people who were more hesitant in terming themselves greasers although they shared the customs and practices of the group. In addition, the concept also refers to the standing they have in relation to other young people in the community.

\textsuperscript{81} The most notable difference is perhaps the price inflation of the US American cars that have come to signify the parent culture greasers, which affects the consumption pattern. In other words, it has become more expensive to obtain these particular cars due to their increase in value over time. All sociocultural aspects aside, it is therefore more likely that the greasers get a cheaper car.

\textsuperscript{82} Alf: jag skulle inte vara där / då skulle det bli mer såna där riktiga raggare som går dit
The greaser culture

The greasers are portrayed as highly visible on the neighbourhood evening scene, they are loud and they are numerous. And they are not perceived as an unproblematic category of youth by other young people or by the surrounding community. The yellow-beige tiles of the service building at the car park have offered a convenient surface for tags and graffiti debates such as the acronyms “AMR” denoting “Alla mot raggarna” [Everyone Against Greasers] and “AMO” or “Alla mot oss” [Everyone Against Us]83, illustrating an etched-in conflict between the greasers and “the others”. Also Maja, 17, points to the conflict when she laconically states that: “it’s like us greasers against the others, like”. The greasers’ presence and practices at the car park generate a heated debate on the discussion board of the community’s semi-official website, especially when accidents happen or when it has been particularly lively during the evenings and nights. Anders and Malte, both 17, talk about this with both self-criticism and justification when they say that:

Anders: they complain

Tanja: what do you think about it or what does it feel like to be accused?

Anders: well if I’m perfectly honest I can understand it at certain times / sometimes it’s really lively up there and then I understand those living behind / but usually it’s pretty quiet up there and then they usually complain anyway

Malte: but then they position us in a less advantageous light a bit and only blame us who hang out there / it can be people / it can be anyone really who is loud / then we get the blame

Anders: we normally sit there and then we see someone we have never seen who comes in [to the car park] and drifts and / and then they drive off again85

83 These tags/messages can be seen on shop walls and electrical cabinets all over Lillby.
84 Maja: det är ju vi raggare / mot dom andra typ
85 Anders: de klagar (Tanja: vad tycker ni om det eller hur känns de liksom att bli utmålad) / ska jag vara helt ärlig kan jag ju förstå det med / vissa gånger/ för ibland är det riktigt livat däruppe / då förstår jag dem bakom / men oftast är det ju ganska lugnt däruppe och då brukar de kлага ändå
Malte: men sen de svartmålar ju det där litegrann och skyller ju bara på oss som hänger däruppe / det kan ju vara folk som / det kan ju vara vemsomhelst som håller på och livar / och sen får vi skulden
Anders: vi brukar ju sitta där och sen brukar vi se någon man aldrig har sett komma in och sladda [på parkeringsplatsen] / och sen drar de igen
They know that some of the things they do (most notably burning tyres, drifting, playing loud music from their cars and such) create unpleasant noise for the residents living behind the store. Particularly during late evenings and nights (and especially if it happens on weekdays) some people, presumed to be adults, have complained to the police, who occasionally pay a visit. The relationship between the police and the young people is mostly depicted as friendly and mutual. According to the greasers, the police come and say hello, talk to them (but seldom about the noise they are said to make) and then drive off again. The police presence probably does have a calming effect, even though being loud is not a crime. Felix, 15, makes a distinction between the times the police come out due to a specific complaint, which usually takes place in the middle of the night:

I don’t know, it’s usually just maybe 3-4 mopeds that sound bad, because they’ve removed the silencer [luftburka]. (Tanja: Will the adults who complain come and speak with you directly when it happens?) No, they call the police and sometimes they come out. It’s usually late at night that complaints are made, but it’s not often the police come out here due to complaints.

and the more organized police raids that take place during daytime:

Now recently there have been quite a number of speed checks, two days in a row. They didn’t come out here to chase mopeds specifically but on Friday they still took in four mopeds. But it was not just mopeds, a friend of mine got a 1000 SEK fine for not crossing the road at the pedestrian crossing. He was maybe 2-3 metres away from it and was about to go over and he looked carefully to both sides in order to make sure no cars were coming and he told the police that “I checked both sides” but he still got fined. There were relatively many police officers here the last time. Four painted cars, a motorcycle and a civilian. So there were many policemen.

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86 The interview was not recorded.
Felix: Jag vet inte, det är ju oftast bara kanske 3-4 moppar som låter illa, för att de tagit bort luftburkan. (Tanja: Kommer de vuxna som klagar ut och pratar med er?) Nej, de ringer polisen och ibland kommer de ut. Det är oftast sent på natten som klagomål kan komma, men det är inte ofta polisen kommer ut hit på grund av klagomål.

87 Felix: Nu på senaste tiden har det varit ganska många fartkontroller, två dagar i rad. De åkte inte ut hit för att jaga mopeder men på fredagen så tog de in fyra mopeder. Men det var inte bara mopeder, en kompis till mig fick 1000 kr i böter för att han inte gick över övergångsstället. Han stod kanske 2-3 meter ifrån och skulle cykla över och han kollade verkligten åt alla sidor och det sa han sen till polisen att ”jag kollade ju åt båda sidorna” men han fick ändå böter. Det var ganska många poliser ute här senast. Fyra målade bilar, en motorcykel och en civil.
The greaser culture

When telling about their assumed reputation and their perspective on themselves, the greasers felt that they were wrongly accused of being the only ones who make noise and they also resisted the accusations of being criminals and vandals. For them, being outside the store front in the car park, or moving around to the baths, the elementary and high school yards or other hang-out places, was primarily a way of socializing, spending time with friends and meeting new people, not harassing the young or adult population living in Lillby (although some mentioned enjoying that too). It is furthermore highly likely, as Hatton (2007: 215) suggests in relation to her study of boy racers in the UK, that:

the notoriety gained at local level through media and local authority attention and the publicised punitive rewards for any ensuing transgression of the law, seemingly reinforces the iconic allure of being a boy racer, and has given them a visibility which they lacked in other dimensions of their lives.

In line with such an interpretation, the greasers can be regarded as “community celebrities”. Many of the young greasers spoke proudly and willingly about the police visits and raids in a manner that obviously fed into the important notion of being visible – and therefore someone. Some years ago, Storköping Newspaper paid attention to the activities happening at the car park with an article. It was written from the young people’s angle, and I learned that some adults think this glorifies the phenomenon and renders it too harmless. The reporter’s aim of letting the greasers have their say about their leisure activities presumably did not match public opinion of them as unruly. No nuances of the phenomenon were perceived necessary.

In other words, visibility has several facets. One facet relates to the immediate visibility at the car park, creating in-group cohesion and social distance from other youth groups in the community. Another kind is the visibility the greasers gain by having and using motor vehicles, which also attract (negative) attention, not only from law enforcement officers but also from the surrounding community. This negative attention is, however, reputation building and, as Hatton suggests, “reinforces the iconic allure” of being a greaser. Visibility therefore links to being social, cool and fun (see Chapters Five and Six).

It should be noted, though, that the article and website, as well as statements from my research subjects, make it clear that the store front or the car park has served as a meeting place for the local youth – including young people from communities nearby – for decades. According to the staff at the youth centre and other adults that I made acquaintance with, the phenomenon of greasers in Lillby is not a new one. Many of the young greasers also
find it different now from previous years, usually presenting it as much calmer now than when the newspaper article was published and that the complaints should follow that decreasing curve (which they think has not been the case). When I accompanied the parent's group for their nightly walks around Lillby, one of the founders, Lotta, mentioned that the establishment of the group eight years ago (of parents who circulate and socialize with the young people), has had a "calming" effect on the neighborhood. The police have even verified this, she adds, in order to validate her statement. Although the group's aim was not overtly to keep an eye on the greasers, Lotta's remark is still illustrative. The fact that the young people who predominantly frequent public space in Lillby are greasers makes it hard to draw any other conclusion than that the greasers are the cause of adults taking this action in the first place.

Who "the others" referred to by the graffiti tags and Maja are, is hard to establish. The phrase probably refers to specific groups of young people as well as to a general group of everyone who is not a greaser. It also appears that the messages on the service building are spray-painted by both the greasers, and "the others". Among the non-greaser pupils at the local high school whom I interviewed, the picture of the greasers was quite different from that of the greasers' self image: most often they were either perceived as a bit immature and childish, or as plain foolish and dangerous. Furthermore, an occasionally harsh tone and exaggerated mood characterized the debate forum on the community website. The atmosphere around the issue of the greasers' doings on the website was tinged with annoyance and irritation, but also anger and rage. Although the forum is dedicated to any issues concerning the community that the residents wish to raise, the single most discussed issue related to the greasers' movements, practices and whereabouts. An example:

Behave yourselves and drive like normal people then, show respect for others and yourself! Those who behave well should openly show that you disapprove of your friends' rampages; it's you who suffer from such actions. Then you'll experience that the writings here on the site end. It's the insane driving [vansinnesköningar] that makes people annoyed, not this forum – it just brings out the problem.\(^88\)

Although not everyone shared this view of the greasers, and some even tried to nuance the image, the predominant conception was of the greasers

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\(^88\) This field note is slightly modified from the original quote to ensure the anonymity of the community studied. The original Swedish version will not be provided here for the same reason. The essence and the spirit of the field excerpt are preserved.
The greaser culture

being “problematic”. By far the most common complaints about the greasers related to noise levels (from music and from the vehicles) and to the numerous vehicle accidents. As we saw in Chapter Three, the notion of “problematic greasers” also has clear connections with their use of space – their presence in public places, foremost the car park in the midst of the community, is regarded as problematic. The suggestion of creating a tinkering place outside Lillby community – that is, of creating physical distance – is imagined to patch up the wound that the greasers are creating and maintaining. Were it not for the greasers, Lillby would be able to uphold the image of an idyllic place in the countryside, the message conveys.

In sum, greaser is a contested term – and a contested position. Some of the young people who are part of the greaser culture were uneasy or hesitant about naming themselves as greasers, others took on the label proudly. The same people could on one occasion present themselves as greasers, while at some other time disavow the term. The word greaser is defined in negative terms and is associated with an ambivalent position of differing status within the youth community. It is also, as illustrated above, linked to a label of “problematic youth” with various negative connotations. For the greasers who want to reclaim the term and fill it with positive content, ongoing work is required.

So far, I have presented the reader to the social geography of the youth in Lillby in that I have distinguished between the different social groupings and how they relate to each other. I have also indicated how the greasers in particular are perceived by other young people and the surrounding community, and have mentioned some aspects of how the greasers negotiate this conception. In the following, I will develop these aspects in terms of how they achieve a standing in the greaser group through performing and practising the greaser.

Performing and practising the greaser

It is peak season in Lillby for the greasers. School is out, with the time surplus the summer recess brings with it. The weather gives rise to a particular blend of promises, expectations, emotions and practices. For this group of young people, the summer is what you live for. Kalle, Jens, Jocke, Carro and I are standing and talking about Kalle’s car on the car park. Kalle’s car is a dark combi, 90s model, from one of the larger car manufacturers in the world (not a Volvo). He has decorated the car body with satirical graffiti text: a word denoting it to be environmentally friendly on the side and a
compound word linking “diesel” (fuel) with “whore” is taped to the front window. I take it that he is alluding to the fact that he is dependent on diesel for driving, something which of course becomes a bit paradoxical when reading it together with “green car”.

Kalle is excited and eager to explode the tyres of his car because they are so worn out, he explains, and he would rather put on new ones. The others find his idea worth exploring and encourage him to do this, whereby Kalle slides his slender body into the driver’s seat of his shabby chic car. The window on the driver’s side is rolled down and he calls out little comments as he starts the engine and hits the gas pedal while simultaneously braking with the hand brake. The car body is slung around and around in the car park until sparks hit the rear wheels, smoke starts to develop and the smell of burning rubber finds its way to the nostrils of the audience standing only a few metres from the action. Jens shouts to Kalle that there seems to be a lot of smoke in the car body and Kalle wonders out loud where the hell the smoke is coming from. He stops the car but leaves the engine running while he jumps out and joins Jens and Jocke, who have approached the side of the car in order to find the source of the smoke. Kalle opens the boot, continuing to converse with the others about the possible sources of the smoke. The communication is fast at this point and I do not catch what Kalle and the others decide the source to be – according to Kalle the smoke does not signal danger. Before I know it, he has slammed the boot closed and got back into the car, while the others laughingly talk about how bad it must smell inside. The smell does not bother Kalle, who again steps on the gas pedal while braking. Sparks from the back wheels and small pieces of rubber fly up into the summer air. His performance is appreciated by the spectators, who erupt into whistles and shouts every once in a while. Kalle eases the brake and starts making circles, brakes again, repeating the tyre-burning procedure. I try to conceal my fear that something will happen when he eases the brake and slows the pace down somewhat as he drives towards the crowd – just in order to stop a few inches in front of Jens’ legs. The air is infused by the smell of smoke and burnt rubber. Kalle jumps out, the car engine still running, finds the tyre tracks on the asphalt and bends over to take up a slim rubber loop that works as a proof of his exercise. He holds it in front of him and the crowd becomes exhilarated. A swirl of excited voices discussing Kalle’s endeavour blend in with the fading smoke.

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89 In Swedish, this reads "miljöbil", which is used for cars that are classified as “green” or “environmentally friendly” cars.
The greaser culture

Kalle is and acts the typical greaser: a young man who performs the skilled driver by practising dangerous and spectacular manoeuvres in front of an audience on the car park or on the local roads, and preferably drives a particular kind of cheap older car (usually a Volvo 740, but it need not be). He places high value on peer relations and socializing with other greasers. This particular situation was for me revealing in many senses. I came to realize the importance of the collective and social accomplishment of the activity: how burning the car tyres is an idea jointly negotiated and collectively cheered, although it is Kalle and his car body that carry it out. The activity of tyre burning, of doing a “doughnut”\(^90\), and of driving towards the crowd, takes on its meaning in the small crowd of greasers at the symbolically laden car park.

As I explained in the introductory chapter, the greasers can be perceived as a local community of practice, engaging in and performing shared local practices, through which they learn to become a greaser. These local practices are collectively negotiated and aim to accomplish in-group belonging and social cohesion, while simultaneously working to establish boundaries against out-groups. The belonging-work undertaken by the greasers is also important in relation to their social person. So, with reference to how they manage their personhood, it is not sufficient simply to claim to be a greaser – you have to be recognized by other group members as one, “which in turn reflects back on one’s understanding of oneself” (Paechter 2003: 74). The local practices to which the greasers devote themselves have the effect of creating belonging, accomplished through belonging-work, and this needs to be further distinguished and developed. The belonging-work the greasers carry out is complicated and rests partly on distinguishing their own group from that of others, and partly on distinguishing practices and performances that reinforce in-group cohesion and their counterparts. One parameter is the social distinction between the group of greasers and other young people in the community, most notably the nerds and the hockey-fags. Another parameter is how the greasers negotiate and manage their relationships within the greaser group.

Following Cohen (1982), I see ‘belonging’ as something produced and accomplished through everyday interaction. I use the concept to illustrate what makes up a greaser: what practices and performances are seen as cen-

\(^90\) A doughnut is a manoeuvre performed while driving a motor vehicle which entails rotating the rear or front of the vehicle around the opposite set of wheels in a continuous motion, ideally creating a circular skid-mark pattern of rubber, if performed on asphalt, and possibly even causing the tyres to emit smoke.
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tral for group membership. Cohen holds that “[b]elonging is the almost inexpressibly complex experience of culture” (1982: 16) and helps in “mediating the association between the individual and the community.” People’s recognition of their culture as that which is distinct from others and that a valuing of this distinction or these distinctions is a condition for the survival of one’s culture, are key elements for how culture is re-produced. Most importantly, these processes are part of “the everyday experience of life, rather than through rare, formalized procedures” (Cohen 1982: 6, emphasis in original). Cohen (1982: 6) holds that:

> to remain in these communities is itself an expression of commitment, and commitment is sustained by a continuous elaboration of the culture. The sense of belonging, of what it means to belong, is constantly evoked by whatever means come to hand: the use of language, the shared knowledge of genealogy or ecology, joking, the solidarity of sect, the aesthetics of subsistence skills.

As Tobias and several of the other non-greaser young people pointed out, belonging concerns issues of inclusion and exclusion. When it comes to establishing and defining who has a particular standing or is a member of a particular group, belonging rests on a collective, social negotiation of making distinctions between the one who belongs and the one who does not. To be or become a greaser is naturally not only (or at all) about the way you dress, what style you have or what car you drive. A continuous labour is carried out in order to be(come) a greaser. What are the greasers doing at

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91 The concept of belonging has been analyzed extensively in more abstract ways. For instance, Yuval-Davis (2006) and Anthias (2006) both perceive it as adding an emotional dimension to discussions on citizenship and identity – or the politics of belonging. For Yuval-Davis, the notion of belonging “refers to patterns of trust and confidence and raises fundamental concerns about the relation of Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society)” (2006: 4) and is ultimately a process of inclusion and exclusion. The politics of belonging is situated temporally, spatially and intersectionally and the work of boundary maintenance is therefore differentiated depending on time, space and intersectional power grids. Belonging is therefore relational in the sense that it is about experiences of belonging (Anthias 2006:21). What Yuval-Davis (2006) and Anthias (2006) propose then, is to see belonging not only as a process of identification, but also as a more complex and perhaps also contradictory experience of attachment to what they term social place. In line with this, I would propose to include a spatial dimension in their notion of belonging, arguing that embodiment necessarily informs a politics of belonging in a much more tangible way than their conceptualization allows. Nevertheless, I have found the theorizing in relation to nationalism to be crucial, if not as an analytical tool then at least on an inspirational level, due to the fact that my conceptualization of belonging and belonging-work can also be said to relate to discourses of nationalism (which I discussed briefly in Chapter Three).
the youth centre and the car park? What kinds of “work” do their practices and activities involve? What kind of places and relations are produced? In the next section, I will focus on the distinctions the greasers uphold by performing their social and physical skills at the car park and the youth centre, and I will illustrate how an everyday activity like a music quiz, framed as fun and games, works to maintain an age hierarchy at the youth centre. In this context, the notion of a fun person is necessarily brought up, but I will turn to and develop this theme further in Chapters Five and Six. In addition, risk-taking practices, also framed as fun, are crucial belonging-work, but these will only be mentioned briefly here; I will elaborate upon this topic more extensively in Chapter Six.

Social and physical skills
It is not only the greasers’ interest in cars and motors that apparently differentiates them from other young people in Lillby; they are also perceived as much more social than other young people who do not spend their time at the car park. To be “social” and “open” was a desirable characteristic that was given a highly positive value by all the young people I talked to. Dina and Saga, both 15, explain why they like hanging out with the greasers:

Dina: they are more open and so / you notice that / and a bit more social and / like they can come up and talk to you / while one would have to be / like start talking to some ordinary person / in there [at the youth centre] then
Saga: when you go out you bring people like that and it will be fun / the more you are the merrier.

Being open and social is linked to the ability to have fun and create a fun atmosphere around you. Saga and Dina mention that these are the people you want to be surrounded by, in order to make sure that you have a good time. To be social in the ways the greasers are is not to be confused with being automatically popular or having high status (Nordberg 2010). The greasers were given high status by the young people who found their way of life, and what they represented, attractive and cool (Adler & Adler 2003; see also Cillesen & Rose 2005, Rodkin et al. 2006). Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 162) hold that:

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92 Dina: de är ju mer öppna och så / det märker man / och lite mer sociala och / alltså de kan komma fram och snacka med en typ / medan man själv skulle måste vara / börja prata med någon vanlig människa / därinne då [på gården]
Saga: ska man ut så tar man med lite folk som är så / då blir det roligare / ju fler man är desto roligare blir det
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Determining what is, and is not, "cool" is a sociocultural politics of corporeal inscription and gendered performativity. Coolness is embodied and spatialized. It's a style of walking, talking, wearing clothes. It's the places where young people do or don't hang out.

The greasers were popular among the like-minded young people who valued the same things as they did: hanging out with friends in the local neighbourhood, being visible, having fun by partying, being social and engaging in risk-taking practices. These things conform to hegemonic notions of youth and are also regarded cool in the greaser culture. Being social and, by extension, being fun, is, however, contrasted with being boring. Being boring meant doing things that do not generate the desired social capital within the greaser culture – most notably sitting inside, isolated from human contact, engaging with a computer (see Chapter Five, cf. Nordberg 2010). Although computers, and specifically social media, are used by the greasers as well, they use them as an extension to the social networking they engage in at the car park and the youth centre. Nerds are depicted as the greasers' opposites because their use of the computer was not regarded as used for social purposes.93

Aside from the social skills that the greasers valued and were associated with, they were also perceived to possess certain physical abilities. According to Sam, the greasers were also "tougher" and "harder" ["hårdare"] than other young people – the opposite of being "nice" or "a coward". He further implied that part of this toughness manifests in fights. Whether or not a lot of fights take place, I cannot say, since I did not witness any, but many stories about the greasers revolved around the ability to fight or pick a fight. Both Sam above and Bella below latch onto the figuration of the tough greaser. Bella is in Year Nine at the local high school and was one of the pupils I interviewed. She recounts an incident she and some friends of hers experienced one summer in Lillby:

Bella: this summer there were the greasers and a few others and it was supposed to be the largest dust-up / like the worst thing for something that had happened at the bus stop/ and I was there then / and they [the greasers] started arguing about something like really weird / like someone had looked at someone as if it was the worst thing that had ever happened / you know guys (...) 

93 I will return to the stress the young people place on having fun in Chapter Six and with the quest for fun and avoiding boredom in Chapter Five, because I perceive these aspects as crucial for understanding the social and cultural context of the greasers' lives and hence for making their practices intelligible.
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Tanja: this quarrel between your friends and the greasers / were they from the city your friends?

Bella: yeah they were here to meet me and my friend / and we were with them all night and then they were going home / taking the bus / then there was this girl or guy who did not look like a girl or guy / you get it? / and then like they [my friends] started laughing or something and like looked at her / or him / and then they like laughed a little but it was nothing more to it / and then like Melissa said a funny thing

Tanja: about this person or?

Bella: no about something completely different / then we all started to guffaw and they like came / they were four I think / they came over and just like / (WITH COARSE VOICE) "uh what’s your problem?" and started to pick a fight with these two guys we were with / and then they started pushing at each other and yell at each other / like Melissa’s cousin was there too / she resolved like everything but it was really hard because she had to kind of pull them apart and things like that / and those guys were there with / they are a bit shorter and smaller than the guy who started fighting / he was really big and beefy and so / I was scared shitless I certainly did not know what to do like / I was walking around there just “huh?”

This short narrative about the greasers obviously creates meaning about the narrators as well as the greasers themselves. The greasers are por-

94 Bella: nu i somras så då var det ju typ raggare och så några andra och det skulle bli största bråket och det skulle bli värsta grejen för nånting som hade hänt vid bussen / och jag var med då / och de börja bråka om nåt typ jättekonstigt / att typ nån hade stått och kollat på en som att det var det värsta grej som hade hänt / alltså grabbar (...) Tanja: det här bråket mellan era kompisar och raggarna / var de från stan era kompisar då?
Bella: ja alltså de var här för att träffa mig och min kompis / och vi var med dem hela kvällen och sen skulle de hem / ta bussen / sen typ var det nån tjej eller kille som inte såg ut som nån tjej eller kille / fattar du? / och så typ började de skratta eller nånting och typ kollade de på henne / eller honom / och sen så typ skratta de lite men så var det inget mer med det / och så sa typ Melissa en rolig grej
Tanja: om den här personen eller?
Bella: nej / om nät helt annat / vi börja alla asgarva och så typ kom / de va fyra stycken tror jag / då kom de fram och bara / (GRÖVRE RÖST) ’öh vad är erat problem?’ och börja kaxa med de här två killarna som vi var med / och så börja de putta på varann och skrika åt varann / typ Melissas kusin var där också / hon löste typ allting men det var jättevärt för hon fick typ dra isär dem och sånt där / och de killarna vi var där med / de är lite kortare och mindre / än den där killen som började bråka / han var ju ganska stor och bifig och så / jag var skiträdd jag visste inte vad jag skulle göra liksom / jag gick runt där ’ba ’va?’
trayed as physically superior to the other young men, confrontational and aggressive. Canaan (1991) argues that young working-class men's bodies are their main source of power and self esteem, due to manual labour and blue-collar jobs (cf. Vaaranen 1999). In Hatton's (2007) UK-based study, the young boy racers have turned to car-related activities (modifying etc.) due to being denied access to the labour market, hence constructing another arena where they can become "real" men. The close link between working-class men, masculinity and car-related practices is foregrounded as crucial in her analysis. She further argues that

Taking risks or [being] willing to take risks, affected the status of the young men within the group and to appear 'hard' or a 'real' man gaining the reputation through hard living, risk-taking, fighting, and so on was thought to be preferable than being regarded as 'gay', 'girly', a 'wimp', or 'wanke' being the terms usually levelled at someone who did not demonstrate desirable qualities of masculinity. (Hatton 2007: 172)

The connection between working-class masculinity, toughness and living a risk-taking lifestyle appears to have some explanatory value with reference to the greasers as well. For now, I am content to link the greaser men with a certain kind of masculine position that values and amplifies physical strength, toughness and offensiveness, but I will return to the topic of class in Chapter Six when I discuss the greasers' risk-taking practices.

The incident recounted above not only paints the greasers as willing to fight in order to stand up for their friend<sup>95</sup>, but also, which does not come across in the excerpt, as racist. Bella refers to herself and her friends as "blattar" during the conversation, denoting "darkie or immigrant".<sup>96</sup> It is not only Bella who insinuates that the greasers in particular, and the population of Lillby in general, hold racist views. For Tobias, Lillby is a "white Trulböle [referring to a racially segregated residential area in Storköping], many people are racists out there." This was a quite commonly held view amongst

<sup>95</sup> As the observant reader will have noticed, Bella creates the difficulty of gendering a person as the source of the quarrel. Due to ethical reasons and because this study does not focus particularly on this topic, I have chosen not to disclose a lot of information about the person in question.

<sup>96</sup> Blatte has been and is commonly perceived as a derogatory term for a person living in Sweden who is not of Western European descent, although many young people of various ethnicities in Sweden use the term affirmatively as well (see Jonsson 2007). Jonsson (2007: in the English abstract) argues in his study of young teenage boys' language use at a middle school in a Stockholm suburb, that "there are no fixed meanings of words such as 'immigrant' or 'blatte' (darkie/immigrant). The labels may be used in processes of exclusion, but they are also in order to establish social relations and friendships among boys."
non-greaser young people, although the greasers did not express overtly racist ideas during my fieldwork. The group of greasers was, however, an all-white group. In the previous chapter I briefly discussed how they are upholding tradition, cultural heritage and a form of nationalism through their car-related practices, which also entailed a valuing of kinaesthetic craftsmanship. The close link that has been proposed between a working-class position and embodiment (tinkering, fighting) appears to be reinforced also in relation to the greaser culture, and also tap into discourses of nationalism.

Playing (out) social hierarchies

One evening at the youth centre, Måns has put together a game, as he often does. It is called “draw and run”. Jens, Rolf, Jon and Felix are talking vividly about the upcoming game; I notice that they are excited and eager to start competing. A smaller group of three of the younger boys, who usually occupy the indoor skate ramp, are standing together and waiting to participate. Måns is in the process of placing a large flip chart in front of the counter while Betty takes the floor and asks the young people present to form two groups. I sit down at the café tables, back against the entrance, with a young girl next to me, who attends the after-school club that the youth centre hosts for pupils in elementary school. I turn to her and ask if she is going to participate, but she shyly responds “no” and shakes her head, whereupon we both direct our attention to the preparations for the upcoming game. Raising her voice slightly, Betty repeats that the boys must form teams. Jens replies swiftly by proposing that the “small ones” can compete against the “big ones” (that is the usual team formation). The team of “small ones” is made up of Betty and three of the younger guys, and the team of “big ones” is made up of Rolf, Jens and Jon. Måns and Felix are game hosts, giving new words to the team that has successfully drawn and guessed the previous one. The game begins and a member of each team gets their first words, runs to the flip chart and starts drawing. The rest of the team is now heavily

97 The fact that I did not “observe” or hear any overt racism when I was present, such as for instance jokes or comments, does not exclude the possibility that (some of) the greasers expressed or held racist views. My presence might have affected this. On the other hand, the greasers often joked about gay men in particular in my presence, which points either to a disregard of my presence or, more likely, to the fact that the topics of the jokes were seen as important part of their socializing routines and hence normalized. See also Chapter Six.

98 How the greasers construct whiteness is important and worthy of further investigation but, due to lack of time, it is a theme that I have not been able to explore further within the scope of this study. See the discussion on nationalism in Chapter Three, cf. Chapter Seven.
engaged in shouting diverse words, trying to guess what their team member is drawing. The next twenty minutes are spent in running, drawing and guessing; occasional outbursts of pretended anger or accusations of cheating are thrown by the big team, although they are clearly in the lead. The game ends with the small team defeated by the big team. The big team members use the occasion to jump and shout, celebrating their victory over the younger boys (who silently watch the older ones). When the victory frenzy has subsided, the older boys retreat to the doorway for a smoke and a chat, while the young ones resume their skating in the skating room.

In the above game/play situation at the youth centre, the process of inclusion and exclusion becomes more apparent and overt. Competitive game situations were common at the youth centre and played out in almost identical scenes each time. There is never any up-front discussion or talk about how the teams are formed, seldom any protests or objections. On another occasion, when there was a music quiz, I reacted to the fact that the pieces that were played were so obviously reflecting the musical taste of the greasers, leaving the younger ones with no chance of scoring any points. A policy of appeasement and compliance towards the greasers, not only on the part of the younger boys, but also by the youth centre staff, became apparent. The arrangements when competitions or games are planned usually follow the lines of the “big ones” against the “small ones”. There is seldom any effort from the youth centre staff to break up such age-differentiated arrangements, perhaps due to not acknowledging or recognizing age asymmetry as a problem. Part of it was perhaps also due to the official policy of the youth centre of tolerance and openness in encounters with the young. Not being willing to confront the greasers could affect the relationship in a negative manner, driving the greasers away from the centre and forfeiting the trust that had developed between them and the staff/the youth centre.\(^{99}\) The effect is nonetheless the same: The younger skater boys learnt their place in the youth centre hierarchy through these game situations. Their physical space was confined to the skate room, from where they emerged in order to participate in the games in the youth centre living room, and to which they retreated after the game ended.

The importance of these games is, as I see it, not about who is winning or losing or who has the most skill or knowledge of something. These game and quiz situations have a very social function – to re-establish social

\(^{99}\) In addition, to bring up problematic practices and behaviour could affect the attendance rate at the youth centre in such a manner that it has consequences for how the centre stands in comparison with other centres in the municipality and region.
boundaries that also have spatial dimensions. The point, to put it bluntly, is to enact and display who is a greaser and who “owns” the youth centre. The age hierarchy at the youth centre manifests physically in which rooms belong to whom. The large living room is the room for socializing and it is the most attractive and most used. The entrance space is also a space for greasers and their socializing (at some distance from the staff, who seldom go outside) and for smoking and looking at cars. The skate room, some doors from the living room, on the other hand, is a room for the younger boys, who mostly come to the centre to skate.

These games are in one sense exclusive to the youth centre, given that the youth centre and the car park differ in social composition. The youth centre is an official institution that in principal welcomes everyone, whereas the car park is a place chosen and exclusively occupied by the greasers. The need to re-create boundaries against other, non-greaser, young people, to negotiate exclusion and inclusion at the group level, is not as pertinent at the car park. Here, there is seldom anyone to challenge the greasers’ presence or their claim to the space.

The process of inclusion and exclusion – or, framed another way, of belonging – has a complex dynamic. One way of reading the game situations would be to point out that the smaller boys are younger and that age therefore makes up an important nexus of power. To single out age in this way, however, would be to disregard or diminish the importance of the way in which several aspects need to be considered and work together towards group cohesion, membership and belonging. As I will develop in the following section, there are obvious absences from the youth centre that also need to be taken into account when we discuss exclusion and inclusion and belonging (most notably young women and young men who fail to conform or adhere to the greaser norms, but also, for instance, people of other ethnicities and races). The game situations are vital, I argue, for the belonging-work the greasers carry out: they are arenas for trying out, establishing and maintaining social hierarchies in a playful manner. Framing them as fun and games renders the situations less harmful and harder to challenge as serious attempts to harm or harass, or to be considered an unpleasant person. Having fun and not taking things too seriously (at least not so it shows) is a theme I will develop in Chapter Six in relation to the risk-taking practices with vehicles that the greasers engage in.

So far I have discussed the ways in which the greasers perform and practice inclusion and exclusion through belonging-work. As hinted at, the greasers’ belonging-work that aims for in-group cohesion is simultaneously re-
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creating social hierarchies, in the instance above in relation to age. In the next section I shall focus on other kinds of “troubled belonging” within the group of greasers: the exclusion of young women and some young men. Here I understand the troubled belonging to be heavily linked to gendered norms and conceptions (cf. Lumsden 2010).

Troubled belonging?

The young greaser men are at the top of a particular peer hierarchy within greaser culture. Their creation of the youth centre and the car park as places of their own is thus heavily linked to their appropriation of them, and in order to appropriate a place one must enjoy and reproduce a particular social position as well as feel a sense of belonging to the place and the relations produced and maintained there. From one angle, the greaser men’s appropriation of the youth centre rests on a principle of gendered segregation: exclusion of what is perceived as embodied femininity – or more bluntly, peer girls. In order for the “appropriation” process to be successful, the symbolic instilling of the youth centre as “masculine” is continuously re-enacted. Here, the architecture and interior design play a part, but the presence of and practices carried out by the greasers is equally important.

Belonging in greaser culture rests heavily on the acquisition and accumulation of socio-spatial capital, which is achieved through belonging-work at the car park and at the youth centre. The belonging-work carried out by the greasers at the youth centre appears to posit even greater barriers to young women’s participation than at the car park. Although some young women spent time at the car park and the other hang-out places, only a few of them found their way to the youth centre. The question of why the youth centre did not appeal to young (greaser) women was often expressed by the staff (a common question in all organizations working with gender equality) and also resulted in several measures being taken. Given that the youth centre was home-like and that the staff tried to offer a range of different activities, their surprise over the scarcity of young women during the evenings was a frequent topic of discussion. Since most of the rooms reflect masculine activities, the sewing room was an attempt on the staff’s part to incorporate “female interests”. Betty tells me how they have struggled throughout more recent years to recruit young women and integrate them into the youth centre’s activities. The sewing machine becomes almost a parodic example of how femininity is perceived as distinct, problematic and difficult to articulate and assimilate in comparison to the masculinity embodied by the greaser men. Despite the apparent masculinist interior design of the differ-
ent rooms at the youth centre, many of the social activities that take place reflect traditional feminine activities, such as baking, making homemade cosmetics, beading and pottery (although card playing, quizzes, watching TV and playing video games were just as frequent activities). The kinds of activities that take place are strongly associated with the staff on duty and the interests they have, which are in many senses organized along conventional gender lines.

A way of understanding this difference relates to the institutionalization of the youth centre. The young women might feel judged and monitored by the adult staff to a greater extent than the young men do, thus experiencing a greater level of freedom at the car park. On the other hand, the symbolic associations between masculinity and the public, as well as between masculinity and the outdoors, do not offer any straightforward belonging for the young greaser women either (see Chapter Seven). The presence or absence of girls was not seen as a problem in need of much attention by the greaser men who attended the youth centre, although the staff underlined the problems associated with gender asymmetry. In this sense, the greaser men have established the youth centre and the car park as ‘masculinist’ (cf. Rose 1993) as well as ‘homosocial’ places, where they are free to cultivate and maintain their existing relations with each other. Both places are (re-)produced as homogeneous when it comes to gendered presence and gendered associations – the architecture, spatial organization, activities, practices and bodies that interpellate in the environment breathe masculinism. The associations invoked by addressing this gender-homogeneity and the “masculinism” of the youth centre are bounded and confined to whatever is constituted as masculine or male. Therefore, the greaser women who do attend the youth centre and the car park encounter a space where “masculinism” is partially inscribed in the walls and the furniture, in the tiles and the asphalt, as well as in the activities and practices that take place. I say “partially” for two reasons: 1) the places come into being through the social relations that are practised there; 2) although the ‘masculinism’ is in one sense reinforced, it can also be challenged precisely by re-ordering or practising the place differently. Obviously, the greaser position is under continuous negotiation as to who can qualify and who cannot. Some of the norms associated with the practices of the greasers can be re-evaluated and changed due to particular experiences or events, as with the rule of not drinking and driving that will be discussed in Chapter Six. However, some norms appear more stable: many of the gendered norms appear to be of that kind.
It was not only the greaser women who experienced a troubled belonging to the greaser culture and to greaser space. An especially poignant matter where culture and place converge and become apparent is in the talk of insecurity or unsafety. Harry, a young man who had recently cut down hanging out in the car park, maintained that “some people make me feel unsafe and I just don’t want to be with them / I’ve grown tired of them.” He refers to an incident where his best friend became a victim of rumours, resulting in a confrontation with the young men responsible, but also in a decrease in hanging out at the car park for both of them. When I bring up the rumour about Harry’s friend, he is very hesitant to discuss it and refers to the whole situation as “there is so much bullshit in Lillby / rumours and stuff” and to the rumour as a “sensitive” issue. Both Harry and his friend have been part of the greaser culture in the past, but have chosen (due to the rumours) not to socialize with particular greasers after the incident. Although neither Harry nor his friend mentioned why they stopped hanging out with the greasers, a possible interpretation relates to breaking or not complying with greaser norms. Another possible interpretation is what Lumsden (2010) notes with regards to the boy racer culture. The boy racers “subordinated male participants who were not working class and were conceived of as effeminate” in order to reinstate their own version of hegemonic masculinity (Lumsden 2010: 4.2). Here the intersections of class and gender and how they relate to the social norms of toughness, social and physical skills in the greaser group become apparent.

Daniel, a 15-year-old pupil who sometimes attends the youth centre but never hangs out in the car park, concurs that he does not feel unsafe in Lillby in general and that avoiding certain places in the community relate to the people occupying these places rather than any inherent characteristic of the architecture of the place. Many of the non-greaser young people responded to the question of feelings of lack of safety as a matter of who occupied a place, not that the place is unsafe in itself. Feeling safe and secure is hence tied to spatial and social belonging (cf. Deakin 2006), whether or not one experiences foremost social affinity.

*Girls in the boys’ room*

The young greasers are almost exclusively men. The few young women who were present at the youth centre or hanging out at the car park were either in a romantic relationship with a young greaser man or aspiring to be in

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100 Harry: vissa får mig att känna mig otrygg och jag vill inte hänga med dem bara / jag har tröttnat på dem

101 Harrys kompis: Det är så mycket skitsnack i Lillby / rykten och sånt
The greaser culture

one. Dina and Saga give a telling answer on the gendered nature of the social geography of the greasers in Lillby when I ask about a potential tinkering place for the vehicle-interested greasers:

Tanja: do you think people would be there [at the tinkering place]
Saga: I would probably
Dina: I would be there /the guys are there after all / and then we’re there too.

Many of the young women who came to the youth centre were not perceived as belonging to the core cliques, by the young women themselves, the young men or the staff. The peripheral roles assigned to the girls were not reflected upon as problems, and when I noticed that my research subjects (boys as well as girls) defined the social geography of Lillby youth from the perspective of the boys, I asked follow-up questions about groupings among the girls. Even then the answers revolved around roles and positions dependent on relationships (sexual or not) with the greasers or the hockey fags (but never with the nerds; they were not perceived to be on the heterosexual market). The most common answer I got regarding groupings among girls in general related to the conception of a (disturbing) girl: the “teen babe” [fjortsibrud]. This was used as a derogatory concept for young women using too much make-up and wearing revealing clothes who cried out for too much attention by being too loud (see Best 2005, Chapter 3). Besides being a teen babe, it seems, the young women could be positioned as a “plain” girl – as in “common” or “anonymous”. Within the greaser culture, the passenger or girlfriend role was the most common for young greaser women. In this sense, my study does not diverge from other similar studies of male-dominated motor vehicle cultures, where women are assigned marginal, peripheral or supporting roles, even though they sometimes actively participate in the culture as drivers and car modifiers (Vaaranen 1999, Best 2005, Hatton 2007, Lumsden 2010, Balkmar 2012).

Interestingly, I did both encounter and talk to a few young women who were interested in vehicles and machines among the young people. They were seldom perceived to be or identified as greasers (cf. Lumsden 2010). Their motor interest alone was not enough for them to be included in the category of greasers; it had to be accompanied with other aspects such as

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102 Even though there were slightly more female visitors during school hours, they bought something from the kiosk but rarely stayed to watch TV or play pool.
103 Tanja: tror ni att folk skulle vara där [på motorgården]
Saga: jag kunde nog
Dina: jag skulle nog vara där / grabbarna är ju ändå där / och då är vi också där
connections to particular people and groups of friends as well. Aside from the two discursive positions mentioned above – teen babe or plain girl – or the role of the passenger or girlfriend to a greaser, there were obviously other options available for individual young women invested in the greaser culture or interested in vehicles. Jenny, 15, was one of the few young women who was explicitly into cars and also had plans to work with vehicles in the future:

Jenny: I’m a hillbilly basically if you say so / it shows on me (...) then I had internships at this garage and got a sense of cars and spare parts and stuff like that / so I started to like it / my friends and I go to Power Meet [a big national car meet] to check out cars and to Rättvik [another big car meet] / and Skogvall market [local car meet/market] / and some greaser meets**104**

Tanja: but do you tinker too?

Jenny: I help my father sometimes to change the tyres / and wash the car / sometimes I drive / or not drive but help my father to switch the gears and so on**105**

Jenny had a history of hanging out at the car park but did not identify as a greaser either then or now (she mentions not spending time at the car park any longer). She likes to help her father with the manual work at their house in Pålsbo, like chopping firewood and doing chores. Like many of the greaser men’s fathers, her father has an interest in vehicles and she takes part in the routines of car maintenance and has even been allowed to try out driving a car.

Kim, 18, a central figure in the greaser culture who passed socially as a young greaser man with reference to appearance and behaviour, was interested in and knowledgeable about vehicles as well as fully integrated into the homosocial networking and bonding that was demanded of the greaser culture. In other words, Kim’s practices conformed to the norms of the greaser position, which in turn are associated with masculinity in various respects. Kim was also regarded by others as a greaser and identified as

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**104** Here Jenny is referring to the meets that the parent greaser community organizes around Sweden during the summer months, not the greasers in Lillby.

The greaser culture

one. Both Jenny and Kim, however, manage and negotiate what Lumsden (2010: 4.16), referring to Connell (1987), calls “complex strategies of compliance, resistance and cooperation.” Either they conform to the masculine norms of the greaser culture and “uphold the masculine doctrine of the culture” (Lumsden 2010: 1.3), as Kim does, or they cultivate their interest in motor vehicles in solitude, outside the borders of the greaser culture, like Jenny.

Friends with cars
Another pivotal element of greaser culture is cruising with their cars. Cruising mostly entails picking up and dropping off passengers from the hang-out places or driving between these places just to check out what is happening. If the greasers are not at home, at the car park or drifting somewhere, they are literally on the road, heading somewhere:

Alf: there tend to be more people who go out in the summer / if you are not at home you go drifting (LAUGHS) / around here in Lillby or in the city or / a little everywhere

(...)

Sven: you drive around / drive to town / eat at McDonald’s / then like go into town or go back to Lillby

If the greasers are not creating cruising missions for themselves, like Sven and Alf above, reasons for cruising came up due to the need of others. During weekend or party evenings, word of who was performing the role of designated driver that evening travelled rapidly, often resulting in non-stop ringing of the driver’s phone from people requesting a ride.

Being either a passenger or a driver was often, though not always, linked to conceptions of heterosexual enactment. As mentioned before, the young women who are present at the youth centre or hanging out at the car park are often in a romantic relationship with a young greaser man or aspiring to be in one. The youth centre staff often made comments about the young women’s incentives for hanging out with the greaser men. According to the

106 Alf: på sommarm är det mer att man är ute / om man inte är hemma eller så åker man runt och sladdar (SKRATTAR) / här runt i Lillby eller i stan eller / lite överallt

(...)

Sven: åker runt / åker in till stan / käkar på McDonald’s / sen typ åker in till stan eller åker tillbaka till Lillby
Chapter Four

staff, the main reason for women to attend the youth centre, or the car park, is because of their heterosexual interest in the greaser men – not because the centre arranges candle lantern painting. This view is both shared and embraced by most of the young greaser women. As Dina stated previously: “the guys are there after all / and then we’re there too.” When the young greaser women are present at the youth centre or at the car park, they embody and represent the heterosexual game. It can be argued, then, that one of the few viable positions for young women to be present in the greaser culture is through the discursive space that a heterosexual relationship offers. As Tina, 17, hints at below, being in a relationship or aiming for a relationship with a greaser man with a car is regarded as a benefit:

Tina: like those who don’t have friends with cars or like that / when I was there more often it was because I had much older friends too / so we used to sit in the car and so / (...) because it’s more often if you are a group of friends who hang around there / everyone goes up to the store to check out if anyone’s there so then there are many more (...) we spend time with friend with cars / then we’re usually in several cars / we usually hang out with several people at the store / several cars when we go out /when we go there [to the store] / we’re usually quite a lot of people and we also ask others to come there too.  

Although Tina is not explicit about it, the phrase “friends with cars” is to be interpreted as a reference to male friends since most of the drivers were greaser men. The importance of having a friend with a car cannot be underestimated, especially during the weekend evenings. On one occasion, when Jens receives a call from someone who wants to be picked up and be driven somewhere, he informs me that we must go and pick them up. Jens, Johan and I jump into the car, and Jens steers out of the car park in front of the local grocery store and drives very fast along the old highway, at this time virtually empty of other traffic. We are going “north of the baths” where the waiting passengers are. Jens drives towards the roundabout, turns left and comes out on a lonely road. He turns off at the next exit; we are now south of Lillby, and drive onto a small, unlit sand road, surrounded by dark woods. The car’s headlights light up the road, which has no street lighting,

107 Dina: grabbarna är ju ändå där / och då är vi också där
108 Tina: de som inte har kompisar med bil eller vad man ska säja / på min tid var det så eftersom jag hade ganska mycke äldre kompisar också / så brukade vi sitta i bilen och så / (...) för det är oftast att man är ett kompisgäng som är där / alla glider upp till affären och kollar om det är nån där då är det ju fler (...) vi umgås ju med kompisar / som åker bil / och då brukar vi oftast vara i flera bilar / vi brukar ju liksom umgås med flera stycken vid affären / flera bilar när vi åker ut / när vi åker dit är vi oftast rätt så mycket folk och brukar be nån annan komma dit också
The greaser culture

and a good way into the dreary road two figures are standing at the roadside. Jens stops the car and Vera and Anna jump in next to Johan, who is sitting in the back seat. Vera and Anna are in a good mood; they laugh and express their gratitude that Jens has finally arrived. Jens ask where they want to go. "To the baths," the girls reply in stereo. The baths are located about 200 metres away along the same road. Jens pretends to be angry and yells at them for calling for a ride when the distance is that short. "I'm not going to walk when two ferrets ran across the road just in front of us. Holy shit!" Vera defends herself. Jens and Johan snort in a way that signals they think the girls are cowards. The girls defend themselves and begin to shower Jens with affection: how they love him dearly and that he should know that. He waves it off and teasingly says "yeah yeah" while Vera and Anna continue their overwhelming affection process until he stops the car at the entrance to the baths. The girls get out of the car, still exclaiming how much they love him. Jens reciprocates then, saying that he loves them too, but just before the car door closes he shouts that he still does not run a taxi service.

Neither Vera nor Anna were involved in a relationship with Jens or Johan. As one of the designated drivers for this evening, Jens was in some sense assigned the role of public driver. But he did not drive everyone around, he was picky as to who could have a place in his car and when this could be done. Despite the fact that Vera, Anna, Jens and Johan did not share any mutual interest in each other that would materialize at that particular moment, the potential for heterosexual interest needs to be maintained. The parties enact the heterosexual game, by performing heterosexual affection. In this process, Vera and Anna also perform a specific kind of femininity, in need of male protection (from the ferrets), while Jens willingly enacts the protective man. The fact that Jens drives a car amplifies the notion of a shield between the girls and the animosity of the surrounding landscape with its lurking dangers. In addition, as also noted by Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 181), "young women are important machine accessories" for young men invested in car cultures in that a car full of girls draws attention to the male driver and affords him a particular status among his peers.

Nevertheless, the symbolic and cultural connection between men, masculinity, technology and motor vehicles embed the practices of the greasers. The negotiation between individuals as to which practices increase or decrease their social status and social capital is very contingent on the symbolic and cultural ideas, norms and conceptions that are reinforced in the everyday practices of the greasers. The greaser position is not as readily available to greaser women as it is to young men with a firm interest in vehicles, machines and mechanics (cf. Hatton 2007). Consequently, the greaser culture
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in Lilby resembles the car cruising scene in Santa Cruz, USA, as portrayed and analyzed in Best’s (2006) ethnographic study, as well as other similar ethnographic studies of car cultures (see Hatton 2007, Lumsden 2010). Best (2006) defines the car cruising scene in Santa Cruz, USA, as a heterosexual stage where young people ritually enact the everyday world. Schipper (2002, quoted in Best 2005: 71) terms this negotiation for gender manoeuvring: “an interactive process central to identity formation that involves reworking the interactional patterns that preserve hierarchical relations between and among masculinities and femininities.” Passenger is the most common role for the greaser women to have, and as many scholars have noted, this role is tightly entangled with the enactment of heterosexuality (cf. Hatton 2007, Lumsden 2010). 109

Given that the greaser group predominantly consists of young men and there are few young women, and because I have not conducted a longitudinal study, it is hard to be conclusive about whether change or stability is the pervasive trend. What can be concluded, however, is that the associations between men, masculinity and speed technologies are strong and the socialization processes many young men undergo from an early age certainly make it easier for men to take up and cultivate an interest in vehicles (Mellström 1999, 2004, Hatton 2007). The masculine norms associated with the greaser culture and the greaser position are in this sense relatively stable, and build largely on conventional conceptions of working-class masculinity in rural areas. In Lumsden’s (2010: 4.2) study of the boy race scene in New Zealand, the characteristics that constitute hegemonic masculinity related to “toughness, bravado, competitiveness, aggression, the use of crude language, a particular style of dress, driving abilities and knowledge of car modification.” While the girl racers – young women who are actively involved in the culture, usually as drivers – resisted the sexist treatment, they conformed to other aspects of the culture and worked especially hard to be regarded as skillful drivers and knowledgeable car modifiers (Lumsden 2010, cf. Balkmar 2012). Lumsden (2010) further argues that the girl racers pose a threat to hegemonic boy racer masculinity. The negative connotations and associations with the boy racer label in public discourse, which the greaser label also suffers from, are, according to Lumsden (2010), heavily marked by masculinity and this is a potential reason for many young women to resist the use of the term. This does not mean that women, individually or as a group, are automatically excluded from or shunned by this male-dominated and masculine arena, merely that they have a greater dis-

109 Furthermore, the heterosexualized passenger role is associated with the enhancement of traffic safety within a traffic safety discourse (see Chapter Six).
tance to travel in order to receive the same or similar treatment, acceptance and respect for what they do (see Lumsden 2010, cf. Best 2005).

Summary and concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented the reader to the social geography of Lillby youth. The aim has been to provide the reader with a detailed and localized understanding of the greasers’ everyday lives, by mapping in- and out-group relations in general, as well as elaborating upon the greasers’ in-group relations with reference to membership, belonging and standing. In this context, I have discussed the importance of visibility in gaining a standing in the youth geography and further introduced the concept of belonging-work to illuminate the practices that are crucial in relation to performing and practising a greaser. The objects the greasers use (cars, clothes etc.), and their musical taste, all take on meaning in the overall context of the greasers’ lives. Rather than counting and addressing particular characteristics, objects or a specific style that the greasers “have”, the objects that are employed are a means to attain or uphold the greaser position. These social and physical skills work to construct the greaser as fun and tough. The accomplishment of the belonging-work is to belong to the greaser group and to be someone within the greaser culture and the youth social geography. The belonging-work and the accomplishments that follow are hence fundamental to becoming an agent.

While creating in-group cohesion for the greasers, the belonging-work they carry out simultaneously has the effect of excluding non-greasers – both young people who want to belong to the greaser group and those who do not or have chosen not to. I have demonstrated how the greasers’ practices in game situations at the youth centre not only create distinctions between the younger skater boys and the greasers, but also underpin an age hierarchy that largely goes uncontested by all present. The scarcity of young women at the youth centre is further an effect that relates partly to who attends the facility, and partly to other complex factors. All in all, belonging relies on the acquisition and accumulation of spatial capital carried out through the greasers’ belonging-work at the car park and the youth centre. In effect, the youth centre and the car park are re-created as ageist, masculinist and homosocial places.

Greaser women are positioned and navigate the greaser landscape in a different, more marginalized, way than the greaser men. The greaser position is heavily marked by masculinity, and most of the young women are not
considered greasers in the same sense as the young men. One of the few positions conferred upon young women in the greaser culture is via the discursive space offered by a heterosexual relationship. Another available position, embraced by very few, requires the young women to socially pass as greaser men – through adopting a clothing style similar to the men, appropriating their behaviour and bodily posture, and engaging in practices that resemble and are equal to those of young greaser men. Moreover, young women like Jenny, who cultivated an interest in motor vehicles, tended to exercise this interest in solitude, outside the greaser group and culture.

In the next chapter I will analyze a central component – that of the experience of boredom – in order to further contextualize and make the greasers’ culture and risk-taking practices intelligible. Furthermore, building upon the notion of the greasers’ social skills from this chapter, I will provide a deeper understanding of the centrality of being a fun person within the framework of experienced boredom.
Chapter Five

Breaking bored

During my fieldwork, several of my research subjects returned to notions of being bored and the necessity of having and creating fun in their lives. It took me a while to grasp the centrality of the rather mundane and commonplace utterances and practices that related to being bored and having fun, but once I did, I found that the topic is somewhat underexplored in the literature, especially in relation to place. A very common way for the greasers to talk about why hanging out at the car park and engaging in risk-taking with their vehicles is attractive relates to experienced boredom: having “nothing to do” or “nowhere (else) to go”. It is further framed as a strategy to cope with and avoid what they refer to as “restlessness”. This chapter deals with this central element of the greasers’ lives, which, I argue, is vital for understanding their risk-taking practices with motor vehicles.

Following an influential strand of research within studies on youth, where “doing nothing” (Corrigan 1977) and just hanging out are perceived as activities in their own right, in this chapter I will first describe how the experience of boredom becomes a vital part of the narratives and practices of the greasers, and how they link boredom to place and to out-group individ-
uals. In relation to the first of these, I introduce the concept of spatial boredom in order to understand the greasers’ relation to and negotiation with the peri-urban character of Lillby. I argue that the greasers’ risk-taking practices (which I will deal with more extensively in Chapter Six) can be understood in a more nuanced way by introducing spatial boredom as an analytical tool, intersected with an analysis of dominant conceptions and norms around gender, class, age and place. In relation to their second category, the greasers create a distinction between themselves and other young people by describing the others as boring. These two uses are both of interest when I elaborate upon the central significance for the greasers of creating a fun persona and fun practices.

One pervasive hegemonic norm is the previously-discussed conception of youth as a life phase for living out, having fun and enjoying life – before it's too late. I will therefore tease out and elaborate upon the different ways of having fun that the greasers devote themselves to – risk-taking with motor vehicles and partying – and then discuss how different ways of creating fun are given different meanings depending on who is creating it and where this is done. The term “fun” can be broken down into sub-categories, such as thrill-seeking, excitement, enjoyment and pleasure, within the larger framework of spatial boredom. Lastly, I will conclude the chapter by discussing some of the discursive implications, in terms of gender, of the greasers’ negotiation with and practices related to an experienced boredom and with boring people.

Preconceived boredom?

What do the greasers find boring and why? When they relate to boredom, the meaning attached to it concerns place or the individual characteristics of certain young people. Spatial as well as social divisions are thus created, both within the local community and between the local community and the wider world. Isa, 15, and I are talking about hanging out at the car park:

Tanja: if you would describe a little bit what you do there [at the car park outside the grocery store] on a Friday night

Isa: meeting people who go there / that’s like what we do

Tanja: but are you there all the time or do you go somewhere else?

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For Isa, the car park is the place to go to and where the action is. As long as something is happening, you stay; when the action peters out, you move on to some other place. The chain of events is what drives you to move, the action is the force that pulls you to another place, according to Isa. The intriguing question pertaining to what is considered boring relates to what the greasers apprehend as action – what the “something happening” entails. The young men studied by Lieberg (1999:141) displayed a similar proactive movement pattern based on the logic of events, where they “move and transport themselves following a specific logic: if nothing happens or nothing significant can be noticed in a place, they can be elsewhere a brief moment later”. What “nothing” entails in Lieberg’s understanding is in line with what I, like Corrigan (1977), interpret as a lack of physical activity, rather than in a literal sense of not actually doing anything. In Willis’ (1977) study on young working-class men in postwar Britain, the interlocutors were also self-reportedly “doing nothing”: that is, engaged in talking and socializing or what they termed “chilling”. These different dimensions of the use of place brought up by Lieberg (1999) – but also indirectly by Corrigan (1977) and Willis (1977) – are affiliated to what many of my research subjects also talked about when asked why they spend so much time in the neighbourhood: avoiding boredom and avoiding be(com)ing restless. Alf, 18 and Sven, 17, elaborate:

Alf: sometimes there are like five [people] / sometimes maybe twenty-five / it depends / in case there is a party somewhere else then everybody’s there / then there’s no one up there [outside the store] / but it’s kind of when nothing else is happening then you stand there / a bit boring perhaps

(...)

Tanja: why do you think one goes out or why do you go out?

Sven: it’s boring to just sit inside

Alf: it’s much more fun to meet people / it would be hard if everyone was at home every night / much nicer just to be out somewhere

110 Tanja: om ni skulle beskriva litegrann vad ni gör där [vid affären] en fredagkväll
Isa: träffar folk som kommer dit / det är typ det vi gör
Tanja: men är man där hela tiden eller går man iväg någon annanstans
Isa: ja eller typ när det händer nånting så är man där / annars går man iväg

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These quotes from Alf, Sven and Isa relate to the car park and its function in a slightly different way. If Isa perceived the car park to be the place of action, Alf sees it as a place you go to when there is nothing else to do or when nothing else is happening (such as a party at someone’s house). Alf mentions the car park socializing to be “a bit boring perhaps”, whereas Sven finds staying at home plain boring. Despite this, all of them find being outside more attractive than staying at home – the reason for this is the high priority given to meeting friends and socializing. The lack of activity or lack of interesting situations taking place appear to be one dimension in the experience of boredom in the greasers’ lives, yet they prefer being together outdoors rather than at home alone. In this vein, the perceived boredom of having “nothing to do” is associated with having “nowhere to go”, and thus also with available spaces to hang out with friends (cf. Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006).

Other phenomena affect the greasers’ experience of spatial boredom as well. The seasonal cycle is one, contributing to diverse experiences of boredom depending on the season. For instance, during summer the experience of boredom takes on a different face than during winter when seasonal changes affect the physical landscape and hence the driving practices that are and can be carried out. Noise and silence are also pertinent for understanding how the greasers conceptualize boredom. The local youth centre is a meeting place that never goes quiet during the autumn and winter evenings when the greasers are present: if they prefer to stay silent, the sound of the TV or the radio or computer fills the sound void, unless loud and vivid conversations or games among the group of friends are taking place. During the summer months, on the other hand, the car park and other neighbourhood places become the arena for action. Time is of vital importance as well: the experience of time moving slowly obviously has an impact on experiences of boredom and some mentioned time moving more slowly during the winter season, due to the scarcity of things happening.

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111 Alf: ibland är de typ fem / ibland kanske tjugo fem / det beror på / ifall det är fest någon annanstans då är typ alla där / då är det ingen däruppe [vid affären] / men det är typ när det inte händer nåt annat då står man där / lite tråkigt kanske (...) 
Tanja: varför tror ni att man går ut då eller varför är man ute? 
Sven: tråkigt att bara sitta inne 
Alf: det är roligare att träffa folk så / det är lite jobbigt om alla skulle vara hemma hos sig varje kväll / sköna att bara vara ute nånstans
Spatial boredom

Lillby’s geographical placement affects the perception of the community and its inhabitants by other young people – within the community as well as in relation to their urban peers in Storköping. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, the peri-urban character of the community is what appeals to many of the greasers but it also affects colloquial views of the place and the people living in the community. Suffice it to say, place and geographical placement are entrenched in the kinds of activities that are available for the young to engage in: the culture of organized sports has a strong hold over sections of the young population. Due to the community and its placement some 20 kilometres from Storköping, the young greasers who were not interested in sports or more home-based activities, such as playing on their computers, talked of the necessity of creating fun activities for themselves. This could mean activities they arranged together with the youth centre, such as becoming a snowboard instructor, going on cultural trips abroad or learning to be a DJ. A number of the neighbourhood-oriented young people were ambitious and enterprising, encouraged by the youth centre staff to arrange activities and carry through ideas of their liking. This could also mean doing things that they perceived to be fun, although others might not think of them as fun but rather as risky and dangerous. Risky and dangerous driving practices are part of this cocktail of fun, boredom and risk that is of interest here. The greasers’ activities are known far outside their community’s borders – information travels through journalists from regional mass media, through the police, and by word of mouth. For young people interested in vehicles from other parts of the country, Lillby is known for its vehicle-centred action. On the other hand, it is precisely this type of vehicle-centred activity that makes up part of the “hillbilly” stereotype that other youth contrast themselves against: a racist, prejudiced and slightly doltish character with oil-stained out-of-fashion clothes and dirt under the fingernails.

Ottosson (2009) contends that, in order to understand what a place means to someone, one needs to understand what people are doing there and where their activities and practices are directed. The experience of boredom is entrenched in the young people’s lives as it relates to where they live their lives. When Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 94) discuss boredom in relation to young men, they argue that what they call “live zones” and “dead zones” can be seen as “space-time foldings that bind young people to a certain ‘ontology of place’ (Knopp 2004)”. What Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 94) argue is that “different zones require different ways of living”, and one emblem of a “live zone” appears to be the doing of friendship, which can attach young people to a place that would
otherwise be considered “dead”. The notion of a dead zone not only refers to how young people experience the place where they live in a static sense, but can also be perceived as a dynamic negotiation faced by the young people in relation to conceptions of the urban. Vanderbeck & Morse-Dunkley (2003) found that their young research subjects living in non-urban areas of various kinds were engaged in a reproduction of the powerful narrative of the rural-urban distinction, which again taps into how places and the social are necessarily intertwined:

Julian’s description of Andrewsville also reproduces the pervasive narrative that there is “nothing” in the country, implicitly suggesting that the urban has “something”. (...) With few exceptions, the young people indicated that cities are “full” and rural areas are “empty” of social, and other, opportunity. Jocelyn laughed when asked to describe the social scene to a city teenager: “There’s nothing really. You just sit around and do nothing”. (Vanderbeck & Morse-Dunkley 2003: 251)

Here, the country or the rural is constructed as empty, where there is “nothing”, whereas the urban is seen to contain “something”. Thus, it is not only lacking activities per se that are echoed in these studies, rather it is the lack of opportunities offered in comparison to what is imagined to take place in the cities. The most common complaint voiced by young people in my study, regardless of which social group they were assigned to or identified with, was the lack of activities besides organized sports, as well as the scarcity of places where they feel welcomed. This also relates to how young people in general in peri-urban or rural areas grow up to feel that their locality is not prioritized, or with a sense of being sidestepped or seen as not having enough potential to become interesting in anything other than purely economic ways (cf. Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, Nairn, Panelli & McCormack 2003, Vanderbeck & Morse-Dunkley 2003). Conceptions of rural or peri-urban areas are particularly poignant, then, when youth cultures are discussed. Laegren (2007: 29), in her study of the “råners” in

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112 In Närn, Panelli & McCormack’s (2003) study of young people’s experiences of rural and urban environments in New Zealand, the young people defined the urban in relation to the presence or absence of multinational companies, such as KFC or McDonald’s. The rural was equated with limited social and economic infrastructure alongside farming and very small population size. See also Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 108), who discuss the role of consumerism in relation to young people in general and in rural places in particular, and argue that “corporate power (...) dictate[s] global tastes, and exploit[s] local places (...) as young people in the country leave local places in search of cosmopolitan flavor.” Urry (1995: 23) understands these kinds of shifts in relation to how places are increasingly forced “to sell themselves as service and skill rich places” in an era of economic globalization.
Norway, a group very similar to the greasers I have studied, holds that they “are associated with rural areas that are understood as backward and boring, and as a dull rather than idyllic space for young people.” Ideas and conceptions associated with rural and urban place often revolve around the dichotomy of backwardness or modernity, stagnation or progress (cf. Stenbacka 2011). As we have seen in previous chapters, outside the city borders you automatically become a farmer or greaser – labels marked with negative stereotypical connotations. These labels create and uphold a dichotomous character between the city and the countryside, the so-called urban and the so-called rural, linking respectively with modernity or tradition, progress or stagnation (cf. Waara 1996).

In much research on young people, boredom is more or less a preconception that is never directly spelled out or problematized. For instance, analyses concerning young men (often in subcultural and urban contexts) revolve around making sense of the research subjects when they say that they are hanging around and “doing nothing” (Corrigan 1977) and around the subjects’ perceptions of being bored and how this boredom is cured or remedied by creating excitement and things to do (Lieberg 1999). Boredom should not be confused with not having anything to do, however, since “doing nothing” in the sense of socializing and hanging out is also an activity that the greasers in my study valued. “Doing nothing” transgresses into the realm of unwanted boredom when the young people perceive that they do not have the opportunity to choose what they do, or where and when they do it. In other words, boredom appears to be highly entangled with an experience of agency. What the “something” is that Isa and the other greasers are waiting for is largely practices and activities that they create themselves, and most of them have the aim and effect of positioning the greasers as fun young people in various ways. In this sense, they can be seen to fill an experienced emptiness with something they find meaningful and important. Moreover, as I stated before, being fun is an important marker for in-group belonging.

The activities young people carry out take on meanings that have the purpose and effect of constructing a person – of becoming someone – in the peer social geography (Strathern 1989). Public space thus becomes something beyond the functional or instrumental, as part of a peer-oriented construc-

113 In Lieberg’s (1999) analysis, the young friendship-oriented men he followed developed the skill of interpreting the local outdoor scene as part of a survival strategy kit, which stems from the effort to exceed and break with the experience of predictability and feelings of emptiness (cf. Ziehe 1993).
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tion and display of a person. However, the “identity construction” referred
to in much research on young people, appears to rely on an understanding
that the place in itself gives rise to boredom – not that the experience of
boredom is a social construction, which young people can actively relate to
and negotiate with. Boredom is inscribed in the spatial and follows the
same logic that operates in the rural-urban dichotomy. As Vanderbeck &
Morse-Dunkley (2003: 241f) point out:

narratives of rural–urban difference have received scant attention as a source
of identity within geographical work on children and young people. (...) We
argue, however, that these place-based notions and their associated imagina-
tive geographies (Holloway and Valentine, 2000b; Philo, 2000) often have
considerable significance for understanding how young people construct
their identities and understand their lives.

I consider boredom instead to be a resource for the young people to draw
upon, rather than a mental state or simply an effect of geographical condi-
tions, as many approaches related to boredom conceptualize the phenome-
on.114 Following this re-conceptualization of boredom, and drawing on de
Certeau’s (1984) everyday knowledge, the greasers’ practices can instead
be seen as discursive spatial tactics, denoting their active engagement with
an experienced boredom that is both imposed upon them externally and
(re-)created by themselves. In order to understand the importance of be-
coming and being a fun person, the construction of personhood in relation
to the greasers’ peri-urban placeness needs to be explored further.

Rather than perceiving and conceptualizing boredom as an inherent spatial
characteristic, I perceive it as negotiated in relation to place. From this an-
gle, the greasers (and also to a lesser extent the other young people in the
community) engage with the stereotypical notion of their community as
boring and backwards by creating a counter-image. The greasers take ac-
tion, quite literally, against the notion of a backward and boring rurality en-

114 The research I refer to here that relates to boredom is of two types: a) research that
directly addresses boredom, that is, either psychological (usually quantitative; Cal-
dwell, Darling, Payne & Dowdy 1999, Harvey, Heslop & Thorpe 2011, Mercer-
Lynn, Flora, Fahlman & Eastwood 2011) or philosophical (which have been under-
taken within literary studies, theoretical sociology or philosophy: Dalle Pezze &
Salzani 2009); and b) research that covertly relates to boredom in some sense,
which is a wider range of studies from the whole spectrum of disciplines/research
areas. Within this latter category, boredom is often taken for granted, not placed in
analytical focus and/or an unwanted and negative outcome of spatial, social or cul-
tural conditions. Examples from this latter approach will be dealt with later on in
this chapter.
forced upon them and their community, by claiming and occupying public space and by practising risk-taking with their vehicles. Regardless of how the condition of boredom has arisen, the consequence of experiencing it is that the greaser can only be discursively positioned as an active agent. When it comes to the greasers’ experiences of boredom, they remedy the problem by creating something fun to do or experience. Consequently, boredom can be perceived as a resource that they use efficiently in order to re-create a greaser: an agent in control of emotions and practices as the fun-loving, risk-taking and social young man he is. In the most elementary sense, the greasers engage in risk-taking partly due to their experience of a spatially influenced boredom, which is not equivalent to the simplistic notion of boredom as an effect of geographical conditions, as in the case of the rural. Spatial boredom refers to the co-constitution of place and culture: of cultural conceptions of age, place and gender and how people relate to and actively engage with these conceptions on the level of practice.\footnote{I recognize other power orders that intersect with the ones mentioned. Although not elaborated further here, race and ethnicity, and perhaps to a lesser extent also sexuality, also inform the research subjects’ relation to spatial boredom. One relevant example in Sweden is the highly racially and ethnically segregated areas where neighbourhood-orientation and territoriality among young men are considered “problematic” and linked to criminality (see for instance Hallin, Jashari, Listerborn & Popoola 2010, Listerborn, Molina & Mulnari 2011, see also Chapter Three).}

Understanding boredom in the way outlined above breaks with the colloquial and scholarly understanding, where boredom is most commonly depicted as a negative mental state of specific individuals (most of the psychological research goes under this rubric) or as a negative condition of Western postmodern societies (most of the sociological, philosophical and literary research can be placed here). Whether the research overtly deals with boredom or not, space and place are seldom taken into account in analyses in psychology (for instance, Mercer-Lynn, Flora, Fahlman & Eastwood 2011, Caldwell et al. 1999, Harvey, Heslop & Thorpe 2011) and the social sciences and arts (for instance, Dalle Pezze & Salzani 2009). When discussing young people, the effects are twofold. Firstly, most research on young people in Sweden and internationally is located in urban areas (pace Waara 1996, Kåks et al. 2011 on Sweden; Panelli, Punsch & Robson 2007 on global perspectives). Secondly, boredom is seldom made central in the analysis or linked to place.

In sum, spatial boredom is strongly associated with the greasers. It is a boredom intertwined with the geographical location and spatial semantics associated with the rural-urban divide. The greasers actively engage with
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this conception of themselves as rural and backwards and manage to create a position of spatial and social dominance with regard to the other local youth as well as in relation to their imagined urban peers in Storköping.

Boring people

Within the local community, boredom is explicitly associated with the identities of other youth groupings in the community. The most evident grouping ascribed the epithet “boring” are the nerds: the nerds are per se boring individuals. It was not only the greasers who spoke of the nerds as boring, the pupils from the local high school also elaborated on the connection between being boring and being a nerd. They were linked to a life with computers – not for keeping up an offline social network, but for gaming, programming or doing other things that were expressed as “geeky” and “asocial”. The fear of being depicted as a nerd was never spelled out directly, yet it was a strong conception and reference point among the local young people. The adjective “boring” derives from the perception that nerds are not social in the sense that greasers are; greasers devote most of their time to building up social and spatial capital in the neighbourhood scene. In this sense, being boring is nothing that can be changed by what practices you resort to, it is part of who the nerds are.

Being bored and experiencing boredom, on the other hand, is different from being boring. Boredom is an experienced emotion, temporary in character and defined by agency. When the greasers said that they were bored or were trying to avoid boredom, they also pointed out that there is always a way out of this condition. Being bored can be actively fixed or avoided by creating exciting events and situations. In this vein, being bored has nothing to do with the characteristics of the individual – it is a condition imposed on the greasers, affected by external factors.

The ascription of young people as one or the other and the identification with certain groups by some of them is connected to differentiation processes or what has been termed “othering”. On one level, the differentiation processes are upheld by others than young people themselves, such as parents or other adults. For instance, Morse-Dunkley (2004) argues that the study of young people’s socio-spatial places can reveal how processes of differentiation operate among young people within a given rural community. One separation she found in her research on “risky geographies” in rural North America was between girls and boys:

116 If some of the pupils I talked to identified as nerds, they either did not mention it explicitly or spoke of a social geography that was not socially divided.
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Parent's expectations for their son's and daughter's behaviours differed drastically. Girls appeared to be much more likely to have an evening curfew, be told not to take drugs, drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, and three times more likely to be prohibited from going to specific places, such as known party spots (...). While boys had few boundaries on their behaviour and mobility, the girls experienced a culture of protection (Morse-Dunkley 2004: 571)

This would suggest that young women were prohibited from moving freely. In relation to the greasers in my study, the effect would be that girls in general might be constructed as more boring than boys, given the fact that a fun person is developed around fun practices that are carried out outside the realm of the home. It also refers back to the discourse on the rural as an idyllic place, but where local parents hold similar protectionist views of children and young people as parents in urban places (Valentine 2004). This might be one piece contributing to the puzzle of why young women were not as numerous as young men in the greaser group on a more general level. On the other hand, divisions among the young people of Lillby rest on homosocial premises, rendering the young women who were present and their practices in some sense insignificant – at least in relation to how the social geography was perceived. Indeed, I did not speak to anyone who mentioned a young woman being a nerd. In this light, it is unlikely that the young greaser women were regarded as boring in the same sense as the male nerds. This would instead suggest that the troubled belonging I discussed in the previous chapter is a more viable understanding of how the local processes of differentiation between the genders are carried out. The processes of differentiation among the local peers are thus more localized in character. There are no clearcut divisions between these levels, however, and they can reinforce each other in various ways. In the case of the greasers, the forceful differentiation between a fun and a boring person is contingent on practices – which practices are regarded as accumulating capital within the peer social geography and which are not. The greasers can be said to value and work for a certain kind of social capital that is linked to how a social person is constructed through sociospatial visibility in the public places in the community.

Jenny, 15, points to the notions of being visible and being seen as vital parameters for who counts and who is cool among the young people, when she holds that "some you do not see/notice at all, some you see/notice all the time."117 She continues by stating that the ones who are regarded as popular (referring to the greasers) are "those who everyone has

117 Jenny: vissa ser man inte alls, vissa ser man alltid
seen/noticed." Being visible in the neighbourhood scenery is therefore a vital component of being perceived as a social person. The social capital the greasers strive to gain is also, however, closely associated with spatial capital – a kind of sociospatial capital one might say that is exclusive to the group of greasers.

After having explored the significance of spatial boredom and the construction of some young people as boring, I will now move on to discuss the different ways of being fun and the various sub-categories of the notion in order to frame the importance of creating oneself as a fun person. In the next section, the notions of fun and a fun person will be explored in relation to the vehicle-oriented practices of drifting and speeding, as well as in relation to partying.

Creating fun, becoming fun

A large part of how the young expressed themselves around, for instance, drifting was all about "having fun". Having fun is a marker for which individuals can qualify for a particular group (the greasers, the hockey fags or the nerds), but also a marker of who does not belong to the group. For the greasers, being boring was associated with being asocial or non-social. The young people who did not orient themselves to the neighbourhood but did sports (the hockey fags) were social with each other, but not with the greasers. However, the hockey fags were not perceived as boring, since they engaged in similar social activities as the greasers (hanging out, partying, being outgoing and social in a particular way).

Fun: enjoyment, pleasure, thrills and excitement

"To have fun" is for the greasers intertwined with perceptions and experiences of boredom in two distinctive ways: a) when you have fun in the right way (with vehicles, by joking about accidents or by partying) you are eligible for membership in the greaser group, and b) being a greaser makes it possible to use boredom as a resource where risk-taking with vehicles appears to be the "natural" outcome – which in turn functions to remedy experiences of boredom. Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006) further argue that boys' practices of pleasure and enjoyment are very much linked to space and place, making pleasure seeking and having fun spatial practices. Accordingly, given the discussion above on how spatial boredom feeds into

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118 Jenny: det är dem som alla har sett
the kinds of practices the greasers devote themselves to and the ways in which they are carried out, which practices are or become fun is of course dependent on others’ attestation – what is fun, who is fun and who can be fun. So, having fun and doing fun things not only constitutes you in relation to other youth, it also prevents or resists the quietness, issues, people and lives that are infused by a perceived boredom (cf. Nordberg 2010, Laegren 2007).

Being able to identify and practice fun things is, in other words, constructing yourself as part of a group who are doing things that are identified as fun and reinforcing what is fun, and also a person or individual who is fun to be with. Having fun is hence also enmeshed in being fun. Doing fun things is vital in relation to what it does for the young person. What is considered fun, then? One obvious practice, which the greasers overwhelmingly referred to as fun, is drifting with their motor vehicles. Anders and Malte describe an ordinary day in their lives as a movement between school, home and the neighbourhood. The weekends are devoted to being with friends and the weekend evenings are eagerly anticipated. During the weekends the local hot spots are swarming with greasers, engaging in social activities such as talking, cruising, drifting or speeding, roughly captured in Chapter Four where Kalle burns his tyres. Drifting is perceived to be almost an obligatory part of what the greasers devote their weekend evenings to during the winter season – a crucial practice in their creation of their own fun. Drifting is performed on sand or gravel roads during the seasons when the ground is bare of snow and ice. During snowy winters, drifting can be performed on any underlay due to the fact that the snow, sometimes and preferably in combination with ice, makes it easier for the car body to drift.

Within the framework of spatial boredom, fun is central. However, recognizing this is not enough. The notion needs to be unwrapped and broken down into sub-categories in order to fully apprehend the different layers of meaning that are encapsulated. Two interrelated facets can be extrapolated: one concerning joy, fun and enjoyment and another concerning excitement and thrills. In psychology, for instance, “positive emotions” such as joy, love, pride and relief have been considered primary, but have been less investigated than their negative primary companions such as anger or fear

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119 Emotions have obviously been studied from various angles and within diverse fields of research. Depending on where you retrieve information from, you will get slightly different answers as to how emotions are perceived and defined. Due to space constraints I will not offer any substantial discussion on this topic, since it has been written about at length and with brilliance elsewhere (see Wetherell 2012, cf. Ahmed 2004).
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With regard to sports psychology, Jackson (2000) views joy as a core positive emotion with a desired outcome, and further holds that fun and enjoyment have been considered to a greater extent than joy. Due to the problems associated with defining joy, fun or enjoyment, Jackson finds it more apt to discuss how individuals report these emotions as positive affective states. She (2000: 139) concludes that “[o]ne has fun, makes fun, but does not feel or experience fun. Enjoyment is defined as the act or condition of receiving pleasure from something”. Fun is here partly distinguished from enjoyment. Fun is something that is created, while enjoyment is felt or experienced. In relation to the notion of spatial boredom, it is not surprising that the young greasers feel the need to create their own fun through the means available to them. The greasers are in this sense modifying and re-constructing their local community to better conform to the hegemonic norms of having fun and enjoying life that are associated with their life phase (cf. Panelli, Nairn & McCormack 2002). Moreover, although having fun might be considered rewarding in itself, the social effects of creating fun are heavy motivators for the re-iteration of certain practices such as drifting. The greasers’ creation of fun is a social, collective endeavour, which has the aim of constructing the greaser as a fun person intelligible within the realm of the social geography of the young people of Lillby and in relation to the norms of the greaser group.

Enjoyment and pleasure on the other hand are, as Jackson (2000) states, experiences, and therefore harder to apprehend as a social or collective practice. These experiences can obviously be a result of having or creating fun, but are more likely to be considered as an individual accomplishment. Using “fun” to describe drifting was far more common among the greasers than relating it to an experience of pleasure. Enjoyment and pleasure have been increasingly noted by critical social researchers interested in the pervasiveness of car cultures and the system of automobility (Sheller 2004, cf. Hagman 2010). These studies discuss men and their relation to driving technologies, most notably cars and motorcycles, and bring up emotions such as desire, enjoyment and lust as focal rather than peripheral aspects of the co-constitution of (hu)man and machine (Mellström 1999, 2004, Bjurstöm & Rudberg 1996, Grundvall 2005, Hagman 2010, Lupton 1999a, Shel-

\[\text{120} \text{While I acknowledge that this depiction is simplistic and does not cover the full range of theories on emotions within psychology, my intention here is to discuss certain aspects of fun and not to provide a detailed account of different definitions or perspectives on theories of emotions.}\]

\[\text{121} \text{However, in some of the individual interviews I conducted with the pupils in Year Nine in Storköping during the pilot study, young people expressed their liking of driving fast in terms of pleasure and enjoyment aside from it being fun.}\]
Bjurström (1995: 236) explains how:

[f]ew other areas of young men’s lives supply the combination of embodied experiences, competences, skill and risks that – both in material and symbolical meaning – are part of the potential of the motorcycle and the car (my translation).

Lagergren (1999) aptly terms the motorcycle an experiential tool, stressing the significance to the rider of experiencing the motorcycle, the riding and the surrounding geography while riding (see also Kinnarinen 2005). Most research on car or motor vehicle cultures relates to the notion of fun in passing, but seldom distinguishes it from enjoyment or pleasure.122 One reason for this might be that most research has tended to focus on the individual driver in relation to the car/motor vehicle, whereas I understand drifting, or driving in general, as a social and collective enterprise too – especially in cultures like the greasers.123

What does matter, though, is the type and model of car that the greasers use for generating fun through risk. Volvo has a solid reputation for safety (MacGregor 2009), but is also considered a dull and unattractive car (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001, O’Dell 2001). The Volvo cars are associated with agricultural machines and are in this sense considered practical. As one of Muniz & O’Guinn’s (2001:16) interlocutors, George, explain when trying to describe Volvo cars (in contrast to Saabs): “They don’t make tractors for nothing.” Muniz & O’Guinn continue (2001:16):

The fact that Volvo also makes tractors seems to indicate something fundamental about the brand to George. George, like most members of the Saab brand community, recognizes safety as an important part of what Saab represents. But Saab has the benefit of also being fun, whereas Volvos are just safe and, by extension, dull. Saab, brand members are quick to point out, also makes airplanes and jet fighters, not tractors, like Volvo. (My emphasis)

122 For instance, Hagman (2010) talks of how the concept and discourse of driving pleasure is often used in advertisements for cars, and argues that this latches onto existing ideas about the relation between the driver and the car. Dant (2004) discusses the relation between the driver and car as a hybrid, a “driver-car”, and Sheller (2004) argues that we cannot begin to grasp the pervasiveness of the hegemony of automobility unless we discuss the emotions that arise from the entanglement human-car.

123 I would argue that making an analytical distinction between the concepts used in order to understand individual practices vis-à-vis collective practices also makes it easier to comprehend the inertia of the regime of automobility. See Chapter Seven.
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Volvos are thus considered less fun vehicles than Saabs (and other cars), due to the Volvo manufacturer's history of producing agricultural machines. Being both Swedish cars, Volvo and Saab are in an international perspective perceived as safe vehicles, itself giving rise to many associations. However, the distinctions posed between Volvo and Saab are equally important to understand. Being safe and dull exclude being fun. For a car to be fun, the boundary between safety and unsafety must in some sense be crossed. Safe cars are dull cars. Cars you can have fun with are cars you can take risks with, drive dangerously with, whereas tractors are dull vehicles. A company that produces tractors cannot make but dull cars, in contrast with Saab that also makes airplanes and jet fighters – machines that echo strength, virility, speed and force; machines that connote masculinity. Following the notion of a dull and boring car, the greasers can be perceived as trying to transgress or expand the image of Volvo as a vehicle that is safe, and therefore non-fun, by using it as their preferred vehicle in risk-taking situations. The greasers can be seen to both subvert this “safe car” relation by taking risks, and at the same time conform to what Balkmar (2012) has succinctly called “doing dangerous driving safely” by using a car that is considered to be the safest on the Swedish market as well as accentuating the need to be in control of the vehicle regardless of the external conditions (see Chapter Six).

The other facets of emotion that are often brought up in relation to fun are thrills and excitement. The bulk of the literature that can be seen as relevant in this context, studying thrills and excitement, and especially seeking them out, can be found in research on extreme or alternative sports (Robinson 2008, cf. Brymer 2005). A closely related area concerns voluntary risk-taking – sometimes referred to as the "quest for excitement" (Elias & Dunning 1986), “thrill seeking” or “adventure seeking” (Breivik 2007), or “edgework” (Lyng 1990, 2005). Zuckerman (1994, in Breivik 2007: 18) suggests that we distinguish between the search for different kinds of sensation:

"Thrill and adventure seeking" contains physical thrills like scuba diving, parachute jumping, fast skiing or diving from a high board. "Experience seeking" relates to inner experiences, like yoga, music, drugs and to new experiences with strange people or faraway places. "Disinhibition" refers to partying, flirting, drinking, gambling, sex. "Boredom susceptibility" describes rest-

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124 From a phenomenological standpoint, however, Brymer (2005) argues that the essence of extreme sport (and here he defines extreme sports as those that result in death rather than injury if mistakes are made) is seldom about thrill or excitement seeking, but about transcendence. He does not touch upon the issues of fun, enjoyment or pleasure in any substantive manner.
Breaking bored

less seeking of stimulation, and avoidance of boredom of any sort. All of these factors describe attitudes and behaviour that may lead to risk-taking.

Here, Zuckerman differentiates between avoiding boredom and the other dimensions. Although his perspective is that of a psychologist, it might be worthwhile to dwell on his distinctions. There is obviously a sharp line between what he sees as exterior thrills (outside the body) vis-à-vis interior experiences (within the body). “Disinhibition” and “boredom susceptibility” come with more negative connotations than the others. Interestingly, drugs are not perceived to be “disinhibition”, and none of these practices (partying, flirting, drinking, gambling, sex) are considered to relate to thrill, experience or stimulation seeking. Also one can discuss here whether thrills and excitement are seen as individual or social phenomena. In the psychological literature cited above, they are definitely understood in individual terms, whereas I would argue that they make more sense in relation to the greaser culture if perceived as social achievements (see also the next chapter). Much of the existing literature on the links between fun and its associated facets and risk-taking, remains individualized, which does not capture the social significance of such practices, for example, for the greasers in accomplishing a fun person in relation to spatial boredom or the boring nerds.

If I connect to one of the hegemonic notions of youth discussed throughout the text, where having fun and enjoying life are foregrounded, the discourse of a fun person that the greasers construct is not difficult to register. The language of fun in relation to gender, and particularly masculinity, has been discursively recognized elsewhere as well (Robinson 2008, Lyng 2005, Lupton 1999, Redshaw 2008, cf. Panelli, Nairn & McCormack 2002). As Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 172) suggest:

One way in which young men craft their identities is by folding together leisure and pleasure. As they plug into diverse forms of local/global leisure by “having fun”, fun becomes serious business.

In this sense, having fun can be perceived as a critical practice. One can, for instance, discuss whether some parts of the discourse around having fun, and the practices related to it, can be seen as a form of ‘glocalization’ (Robertson 1995, cf. Best 2007), a local appropriation of global cultures that refer to how young people interpret and rework global cultural practices and meanings to fit their local contexts (Robertson 1995). I am particularly thinking about the immense influence of popular TV shows such as Jackass, Wildboyz and the Dudesons, which have also spurred young men to post video clips on YouTube where they either imitate or creatively develop the stunts in these TV shows, with the hope of gaining visibility and perhaps al-
Although none of the greasers explicitly mentioned being directly influenced by them, these programmes reflect what Brayton (2007: 57) terms an “alternative version of white male victimhood (...) by portraying an abject white masculinity through parody and humour.” The practices the actors/amateur stunt men resort to are, however, often dangerous, painful and risky, but framed as humorous and fun. I will return to these matters in Chapter Six, where I discuss joking and humour and “carefree” and careless masculinity.

An adjacent facet of this discourse, aside from the contrast between being boring and being fun, relates to seriousness. The ability to be serious and take things seriously in the right situation or as part of a particular position is associated with maturity and adulthood. For instance, Thorpe (2009) highlights how snowboarding and snowboarders were perceived as childish and immature compared to other athletes when they first entered the Olympics as an official sport, due to the snowboarders’ insistence on having fun instead of taking themselves too seriously as athletes. A reporter cited in Thorpe (2009: 369) sums up the dividing line between those who take sports seriously and those who do not, imbued with age-related preconceptions:

> It would probably be a good thing if somebody explained to the snowboarders that once they decided to sit at the adults’ table, they made the tacit agreement to play to win. They made the decision to act like Olympians, which now means to act professional.

What this reporter implies is that once young people take up the practices or otherwise enter the realm of adulthood (by for instance getting a driver’s licence), they are expected to play by the existing adult-coded rules. In this sense, biological age per se is not the decisive factor for when you are seen as child, youth or adult. However, a correspondence between one’s age and behaviour in relation to the arena of practice appears to be important – or to act one’s age – if one wants to be seen as “the age one is” (Kåks 2007). In this sense, the greasers’ risk-taking practices with motor vehicles does not correspond to the expected behavior that comes with a driver’s licence.

125 Numerous examples show that posting a clip on YouTube or any other social media site can be one way to become widely known, and it has even on occasion sparked some people’s careers, for instance in show business or the entertainment industry. Some of the greasers were engaged in filming their drifting or other vehicle-related practices and also posted these on YouTube (where you can find millions of similar clips).
Party hard

Most of the greasers mentioned parties as vital for experiencing excitement in their lives. According to Alf, above, socializing at the car park is second choice if someone is throwing a party: "if there is a party somewhere else then everybody is there [instead of at the car park]." What the young people meant by party was usually something they arranged themselves, a party that was traditional and therefore attracted many people, such as around holidays and festivities (New Year’s Eve, for example) or a party that was semi-formal, such as the school prom, arranged each spring at the public baths. Depending on who arranged the parties and who was invited, the greasers either socialized amongst themselves, or, if the party was larger, young people from Lillby and nearby communities met and hung out together. Maja said:

You’re out the most during the summer / unless you’re with someone who has a licence / then you’re out drifting and things like that / otherwise you go to some party or something / there’s always some party here / maybe not in Lillby but in [mentions three communities within driving distance].

More parties were arranged during the summer when the greasers were able to be outdoors, most often at the public baths, which was a popular place to hold them. Consequently, there were fewer parties to attend during the winter. When I asked the young people about the parties and whether they were arranged at someone’s house, most of them responded that very few people wanted their parents’ houses invaded by young people and potentially trashed. Unless someone offered their parents’ house for a party during the cold seasons, most of the young people used their cars and EPAs as venues for drinking. On special occasions the greasers went to Storköping to attend nightclubs or bars, such as to celebrate someone’s birthday or if someone had earned a driver’s licence. The more spontaneous parties during the summer at the public baths consist of hanging out, having barbecues and drinking alcohol. Due to the gathering being outdoors, the young people come and go as they please, walking or driving between the public baths and the other hang-out spots in the local neighbourhood. Usually the young women walked in groups of two or more, whereas young men rode their bikes or mopeds. The ones with a driving licence stayed for a longer time, until they were called for or wanted to check out the car park or the pizzeria.

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126 Maja: man är mest ute på sommaren / om man inte är med nån som har körkort / då är man väl ute och typ sladdar och sånt där / annars åker man väl på nån fest eller nåt / det är alltid nån fest här / alltså kanske inte just i Lillby men i [nämner tre samhällen inom köravstånd]
Most of the parties include alcohol and many stories afterwards concern incidents around someone being too drunk or something happening in relation to being too drunk. At the youth centre one evening, Rolf talks about a party last Saturday, which derailed – literally. He is very engaged in the storytelling when he shares with the attentive listeners how two EPAs collided and one of them rolled over four times before it hit someone's fence in Lillby. “Did they drive drunk?” someone asks. “Yeah, they were hammered,” Rolf continues. In one of the EPAs the guy was driving and the girl was sitting next to him, and when the accident happened, the guy went through the windscreen and was completely bloody (Rolf spreads his hands over his face and pulls them downwards while he narrates). The group of young greasers around Rolf engage in a detailed discussion about whether you can really roll over four times with an EPA, especially given that the fence in question is not located very far from a ditch.

These social events where some incident or accident was recounted to the rest of the group was not only about revealing that the person narrating, in this case Rolf, had a position where he could gain information fast – either by being present himself or knowing someone who had been present. It is as much about creating excitement in their lives, aided by a dose of humour and drama. The discussion culminates in instrumental details of the accident rather than dwelling on the role of alcohol or the injuries to the individuals involved.

The parties are also one way of being visible in the social scene of Lillby, which I have argued to be vital for gaining a particular standing within the greaser culture and in the wider social geography of Lillby youth. The greasers were, as I have illustrated, perceived to be more social and outgoing than the other young people of Lillby. Being social and being visible are hence connected, and the places where the young people socialize are the car park and the other hang-out spots in the neighbourhood. Being social is thus also associated with drinking alcohol and partying. Isa, 15, summarized one of her and her friend Sune’s recent Friday evenings as about “drinking and being social”. The social importance of drinking cannot be underestimated and can be interpreted in light of both the particular greaser culture and the more general attitudes towards alcohol consumption in Sweden. Drinking, and its relation to being social and having fun, does not depart from mainstream conceptions as long as the consumption is perceived as bounded and controlled (Abrahamson 2004). I would also

\[\text{Isa: vi drack och var sociala}\]
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add that hegemonic conceptions of youth play a part here, in the sense that trying out alcohol and drinking is seen as one step on the path towards maturity and adulthood, similar to, for instance, having sexual encounters. Among some groups of young people, the consumption of alcohol – and also framing this consumption and its potential consequences in a fun way – is one important part of belonging-work to a particular peer group. On this note, Kolind (2011) argues in a study of young Danes’ alcohol consumption that what has been termed bounded consumption or “controlled loss of control” needs to be associated with class in order to see how social distinctions are being created among young people as to who consumes alcohol in an appropriate way (cf. Sato 2004, Abrahamson 2004). Kolind holds that (2011:298):

for some young people bounded and controlled intoxication and risk behaviour go well with mainstream values and ideals communicated in school and health discourses. Whereas for others excessive, unbounded and uncontrolled intoxication and risk behaviour form parts of a counterculture introducing oppositional values.

Kolind (2011) distinguishes between “mainstream breakers” and “mainstreamers”, and contends that the mainstreamers distanced themselves from those who consumed too much alcohol in the wrong way. In this process, the mainstreamers engaged in creating distinctions between themselves as "normal" and the mainstream breakers as "the working-class other". Among the mainstream breakers, the central values were not only being able to drink excessively, but also "being able to defend yourself, being good at fighting, supporting friends and not being afraid" (Kolind 2011:307). On top of this, the mainstream breakers defined the mainstreamers as "boring". While Kolind (2011) suggests that the social distinctions created through alcohol consumption position the mainstream breakers as a “counterculture” with “oppositional values”, and although I concur with the majority of his analysis and agree that attention to class is crucial, I am reluctant to go as far as to view the drinking and partying of the greas-

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128 Although Denmark has a more liberal history related to politics around alcohol, there is no reason to believe that the attitudes among young people about heavy drinking differ. Leifman & Gustafson (2003) hold that the consumption of pure alcohol in Sweden has increased rapidly since the mid 90s, from 8 litres/person in 1996 to 9.6 litres in 2002 (a 24% increase; cohort 15 years and older). Men consume twice as much alcohol as women.
ers – who can be regarded as “mainstream breakers” in Kolind’s sense – as in any sense “oppositional”.

All in all, the activities of drinking alcohol and partying in the greaser culture are linked to being social, outgoing and fun. It is also a way of being visible. Both of these aspects relate to spatial boredom and the greasers’ way of negotiating their placeness by creating activities that fill their lives with exciting content. But what are the discursive effects of the greasers’ negotiation with spatial boredom? Can the employment of a discourse around experienced boredom be analyzed as yet another conceptual space for the expansion of dominant forms of heterosexual white masculinity? In the last section before rounding off the chapter, I will engage in a metatheoretical discussion of the relation between gender and place.

Spatial boredom and conceptions of place and gender

For the greasers, orientation towards the neighbourhood and their peers entails a distancing from the home, which I have interpreted as a distancing from both the adult world and a home-confined feminized sphere. In turn, confinement to the home or private domestic sphere organizes the spatial order: the greasers associate the home with different values and practices (notably boredom and restlessness) than the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood, on the other hand, comes to portray values that connote culture, danger, risk – and masculinity (cf. Massey 1994, Rose 1993, Domosh & Seager 2001). In line with this, the discourse on boredom can be perceived to uphold dominant conceptions of masculinity, in that the social norms associated with masculinity in the greaser culture encourage appropriation of public space (and distancing oneself from feminized private space) by exercising and encouraging risk-taking with vehicles. Thus, Sune, Jens, Kalle and the other greasers are not doing anything socially or culturally “extreme” when they use their vehicles for burning, drifting and speeding. These activities are negotiated in relation to spatial boredom and work towards a social goal of in-group membership – of social acceptance among one’s peers. Neither, I argue, are the greasers primarily opposing or confronting the adult world by their risk-taking practices. Although their acts and the con-

129 Moreover, understanding the greasers’ alcohol consumption also requires a closer look at the social alcohol related practices of the young men and women, as well as scrutinizing cultural conceptions about gender with regard to alcohol consumption. This is, however, beyond the scope of this study.
sequences stir up irritation and anger in both the local adults and the young non-greasers, it is seldom their intention to do so.

In addition, the greasers’ talk of having fun creates a discursive arena where they are able to be actors. The necessary outcome of such an analysis must therefore be to determine what the wider social, cultural and spatial effects of such practices are, in relation to concepts around gender, age and place. The feelings, perceptions and experiences of boredom that the young greaser men (and also to some extent the young greaser women) express, benefit from being understood from a feminist point of view. Given the semantics of spatial boredom – the community’s geographical placement as boring, reactive rather than active, static rather than dynamic – a symbolic link to femininity, domesticity, safety, routine and hence immanence is established.\footnote{The notion of home and the conceptions of home as a safe haven have been extensively discussed in feminist theories, especially with reference to men’s violence and same-sex violence (see Tyner 2012: chapter 2 for an overview); and within feminist post-colonial studies (see for instance books 1990, cf. Cresswell 2004). A more metaphorical notion of home has also been a frequent topic in anthropology, particularly in relation to issues of positionality and ethnographic reflexivity (Viswesvaran 1994).}

\footnote{Anna G. Jónasdóttir (1991) has termed this type of invisible labour to which women devote themselves “love power” in an effort to capture the care and love inherent in it (cf. Lynch, Baker & Lyons 2009, Hanlon 2009). Brantsæter (2001), in her research around men’s sexual violence, discusses her male research subjects’ narratives and views of women in terms of the availability of “services” – sexual and/or care oriented (sexuell eller omsorgsmässig tillgänglighet). Although dealing with a different topic, this reflects cultural norms and conceptions of women and femininity in society.}

\footnote{This analytical tool is not uncontested by any means and has been both criticized and developed widely, most notably by feminist political scientists (see for instance Pateman 1983 for an early feminist critique and development, see also Hearn 1992) and by feminist geographers (Bondi & Domosh 1998, cf. Rose 1993: chapter 6).}

The domestic sphere is where the everyday and routine character of women’s lives and practices, that is, care work such as child-rearing, care of the elderly and domestic work, is symbolically linked to women and the feminine and is also part of the everyday tasks of many women in Sweden (Holmberg 1993, Magnusson 2006).\footnote{For Hanlon (2009), dominant definitions of masculinities still relate heavily to the public-private split, accentuating the activities, practices and values that define what is masculine and what is not. These processes...} It is these feminized practices and phenomena that are perceived as dull and positioned as in need of being exceeded or broken away from. Consequently, the orientation towards the “dangerous”, masculine-coded public space is reinforcing a split between both the feminine and the masculine and the public and the private.\footnote{For Hanlon (2009), dominant definitions of masculinities still relate heavily to the public-private split, accentuating the activities, practices and values that define what is masculine and what is not. These processes...}
of distinction can be seen as reproducing what some researchers term “affective (in)equality” (Lynch 2010, Lynch, Baker & Lyons 2009). In relation to masculinities, Hanlon (2009: 195) argues that:

[d]ominant definitions of masculinities as care-free write out primary love and caring from men’s lives because dominant masculinities are defined in terms of the men’s accumulation of symbolic capital in the public sphere in contrast with the time, dedication, and other-centred practices and identities that define love labour.

Cultural conceptions of men’s activities and men’s place in the organization of society separate men from women and masculinity from femininity, conceptions that also have spatial effects. Women are perceived as the default providers of love and care, where men avoid being linked to feminine coded practices, activities and spheres. I will return to this topic in the next chapter, when I discuss the greasers’ risk-taking practices with motor vehicles and how these practices, in conjunction with the humorous recounting of the accidents related to risk-taking practices, reinforce a notion of not only “care-free”, but also careless, men.

Summary and concluding remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the central position given by the greasers to notions of boredom and, in light of this, I have elaborated upon the interlinked significance for the greasers of creating a fun person and fun practices. Firstly, I argue for the use of spatial boredom as a way to understand the greasers’ relation to and negotiation with their peri-urban placeness. The experience of boredom is part of the narratives and practices of the greasers, and used as a resource by the young greasers to create themselves as fun and social. Moreover, they re-create social distinctions with other young people by labelling other, non-greasers, as boring people. In this process, they position themselves as fun through engaging in fun practices such as partying and risk-taking with motor vehicles.

I have also discussed the importance of differentiating between fun and related practices and experiences, such as thrill-seeking, excitement, enjoyment and pleasure, in order to tease out their explanatory value. In this context, fun is created rather than experienced and is therefore better suited to frameworks that highlight its social significance. Enjoyment, on the other hand, is experienced and is more often used in research concerning how individuals relate to certain activities or practices, whereas thrill-
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seeking and excitement can be regarded as having both individual and collective facets. The greasers portrayed their risk-taking as fun rather than enjoyment, thrill-seeking or excitement. Most importantly, the social accomplishments that the greasers gain by partying or driving in a risky manner are in some sense primary in relation to their individual experiences. These activities and phenomena are thus important as ways in which the young people can fill their lives with content that has social value, activities and practices that can be re-created and re-told in a way that reinforces the notion of the greaser as a fun person. How the greasers recount stories around risk-taking is developed in the upcoming chapter.

Lastly, I have dealt with a more metatheoretical discussion of ways to interpret the greaser culture in light of place and gender. Keeping in mind Dalle Pezze & Salzani’s (2009) important note that boredom in fact lies at the centre of contemporary society and should therefore be of vital importance to theorists concerned with theorizing society, it is noteworthy that boredom has not received the attention it rightfully deserves, especially in relation to research on age, gender, class and place. The discursive effects of relating to spatial boredom and utilizing notions of being bored can be seen as tapping into existing notions around gender and place. If the home is coded as feminine through the notion of a safe and secure – but also rather dull and boring (cf. Tyner 2012) – place, whereas the neighbourhood is coded as masculine through associations with danger and risk – and therefore an exciting place – a contrast between the places appears to be reinforced. It is not only the gendering of place that is reinforced, however, but also place in relation to time. Whereas place is conceived of as stasis and immanence and therefore feminine in line with the home, time is perceived as flux, fluidity and transcendence (cf. Massey 1994). Yet again, the passive character of the home can be seen as the place from which the greasers need to “flee” in order to be able to build their fun person. It is impossible to be anything other than boring if confined to the stasis of the home. Furthermore, the (potential) activities associated with the neighbourhood are conceived of in terms of movement and activity – of time moving fast, of “something happening”. Although the car park could turn into a boring place temporarily, there is still the potential for activity and change. The co-constitution of place and person is here vital in the greasers’ creation of themselves as fun through fun practices.

Lieberg (1999) finds that the young men he studied sought excitement by engaging in “mischief” and “making trouble”, by actively seeking out (or, I would add, by creating) situations where they can experiment with their lives, test boundaries and endurance, and be challenged. One prerequisite
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for these kinds of activities is that the young people are kinesthetically acquainted with the morphology of the area they use, and that they have a high degree of knowledge of places to hide, sneak away to and rest at – what Lippard (1997: 33) has termed “topographical intimacy”. As I have touched upon on several occasions so far, part of the constitution of a greaser entails engagement with risk. Hence, some of the social practices I want to specifically turn my attention to are the risk-taking practices the greasers carry out with their motor vehicles. Next, then, in the last empirical chapter, the greasers’ risk-taking practices will take centre stage.
"The sand and the curves are perfect for drifting here." I am caught off guard, but Jens is already accelerating. At the next curve, which comes up very suddenly, he brakes. I let out a cry while I cling on to the car seat and the door handle. My body is on the edge when he drifts. After a few seconds, the car is back on course and he drives on to the paved highway. He is very relaxed when he drifts, unruffled: one hand on the steering wheel, seat down, cell phone plugged in, and music on high volume. The safety belt is on, his eyes are on the road. There is not even a slight tremble to indicate insecurity or fear when the car body is slung from one side of the road to the other. Johan sits as relaxed and safe in the back seat as Jens does in the front. My reaction is the only thing that breaks with the coolness they embody and present. I suddenly feel very old.

The discussions related to the greasers’ placeness in the previous chapter, along with the emphasis on creating a fun person, have given some important keys to understanding practices such as Jens’ drifting described above. This chapter will frame risk-taking with motor vehicles, and the stories constructed around them, as social and cultural practices. The analytical thread throughout this chapter is control – how different activities, prac-
tices and recountings of particular situations together function to control vehicles and the borders of the social geography, as well as the narrative around risk-taking and the emotions involved in it. I argue that the foregrounding of the controlling aspects in the greaser culture legitimates a lack of care for oneself and others. Here, hegemonic notions and conceptions of youth, which are associated with masculinity, the urban and middle-class norms in various ways, are obviously of importance when, in the final section, I suggest an approach to risk-taking practices as a kind of violation. Before I embark on this journey, however, I need to say a few words on the concept of control.

A clarification of the concept of control

In many studies of motor vehicle cultures, control is brought up as significant. In their interview study on voluntary risk-taking, Lupton & Tulloch (2003) found that the discourse of control was a significant pattern. They conclude by stating that voluntary risk-taking can lead to a greater sense of control for individuals, resulting in accomplishment and agency. Lupton & Tulloch (2003: 122) further discuss how their research subjects framed risk-taking with spatial metaphors that suggest mobility, movement and progression – for the most part in relation to self-realization and work upon oneself:

The notion of risk-taking as contributing to self-development, self-actualisation, self-authenticity and self-control is part of a wider discourse that privileges the self as a continuing project that requires constant work and attention – a particular "practice of the self". (Foucault 1988)

Rosa (2010: 249) finds a similar pattern in her analysis of adventure literature and in her interview with one risk-taker:

They have a sense of mastery and control over the tasks they take. We might describe this cognitive balancing as a framing that suspends or displaces the recognition of a real danger (...) with an emphasis on the demands, mastery, and pleasures of the activity.

As I hope to show in this chapter, there is a need to differentiate between different kinds and levels of control. In this chapter, control is linked to the ability to regulate one's actions at the level of practice – a kind of self-control that can be observed by others. A sense of control is then the subjective dimension of whether or not someone is feeling or experiencing themselves as being in or out of control, or having or not having control. This is a dimension that I cannot relate to on the empirical level, since neither in the
interviews nor in our more informal talk did I ask about the greasers’ sense of control when practising risk-taking with motor vehicles. Practising control does not necessarily link to a sense of being in control and vice versa.

The last facet pertains to the level of analysis; that is, my use of the concept of control relates to the empirical level (that is, the control I have observed) and, by extension, to the analytical or more abstract level in the way Vaaranen (1999) and Hatton (2007) propose in their studies. Hatton’s (2007: 219) analysis of boy racers in the UK is firmly based within a socioeconomic framework, perceiving their risk-taking activities as part of a “momentary escapism from what they perceived to be their disempowerment and disenfranchised existences” and in that sense is in line with what Hayward (2002: 311f) has termed a “controlled loss of control.” In some ways then, this space that the young men create, whether they be greasers or boy racers, is a space where they can feel empowered and can show off skills and competences that the rest of service society no longer values as important (Hatton 2007, Vaaranen 1999). Although it is important, I have not used the concept of control in this last abstract sense and manner.

Stepping on it - controlling the vehicle

The car body is central in greaser culture. It is the artefact around which the culture revolves, associated with particular items, people and practices. The car is also co-constitutive in the production of the relations that make up the neighbourhood in general and the places of interaction in particular – such as the car park outside the local grocery store. So what do the greasers use their cars for? The practices of drifting and speeding were central activities for the greasers. Their extensive vehicle use and interest obviously contributes to this, as does the relative absence of law enforcement.

In the vignette above, Jens displays one of the most vital ingredients of a good driver: the ability to master and control the vehicle despite the surrounding conditions (inside as well as outside the car). By taking the decision to drift, and by actually drifting, he places himself and all his passengers in a potentially dangerous situation. By controlling the vehicle, however, he simultaneously evades the potential harmful outcome. He is the solution to a dangerous and risky situation that he himself has created. The common conception and a prerequisite for risk-taking does not lie in whether or not to drive or use the vehicle in question; instead, the ability to control and master the vehicle separates the wheat from the chaff in the
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greaser culture. Evidently, both speeding and drifting are dependent on a driver who is in control – an essential prerequisite for the development into a greaser.

To master the vehicle, to have control and display coolness in dangerous situations, are not new findings in research on male-dominated cultures (Grundvall 2005, Lyng 1999, 2005, Robinson 2008, Lupton 1999a, Vaaranen 2004, Hatton 2007). The ability to maintain control in a more general sense than merely in relation to motor vehicles has long been associated with dominant forms of masculinity (Brittan 1989, Hearn 1987). Controlling is foremost associated with power: the tasks of exercising authority, of regulating or restraining oneself or others’ ways of behaving, being or acting. Vaaranen, for instance, holds that street racing in Helsinki is an “embodiment of a masculine desire to control,” whereas Redshaw (2007) understands the dominant cultural articulations of the car as enabling this potential for aggressive control (cf. Michaels 2001). “The race and rally drivers”, she writes, rally driving usually being upheld as “real” driving, “are considered models of good, skilled driving” (Redshaw 2007: 127). In her research on how young men and women reason around popular car advertisements, Redshaw (2007: 135) concludes that:

the males tended to be less concerned about the suggestions of racing, pushy, competitive, dominating driving and saw the advertisements showing normal male activity.

In line with Redshaw’s reasoning, the greaser men in my study can be understood to adhere to a culturally gendered conception of “normal male activity” when taking interest in and performing dangerous driving. Even though not all of them reported driving in this way, the associations with competitiveness, domination and control were intelligible to them. Also, since appropriating and occupying public space is highly gendered on many levels, the greasers’ voluntary risk-taking with motor vehicles in public is in this sense nothing that fundamentally breaks with cultural conceptions of masculinity in relation to place. Importantly, the different leisure practices that the young people of Lillby engage in have different social status. Furklong & Cartmel (1997: 58) have argued that:

the range of choices and decisions about leisure participation continues to be influenced both by class cultures and young people’s access to material resources.
Managing risk

Social distinctions are hence re-created not only in relation to leisure activities in general, but also in particular to leisure practices that are risky, such as drifting. In Morrissey’s (2008) study of young people and risk performing, he argues that a successful performance aids the young people in securing their peer group position and status. Analytically, Morrissey (2008) understands voluntary risk-taking as either “mimetic” (from Elias & Dunning 1986) or “carnivalesque” (from Bakhtin 1941): “mimetic” risk-taking is here understood as a simulation of risk (skydiving or bungee jumping), whereas “carnivalesque” refers to a transgressive, unregulated, spontaneous and ad hoc risk-taking. The thrill of carnivaleque risk-taking lies precisely in the courting of death. The greasers’ drifting and speeding are prime examples of this. Nevertheless, Morrissey (2008: 424) contends that there are apparent social distinctions that are performed whether or not one “chooses” to engage in mimetic or carnivalesque practices:

The apparent “choice” between mimetic and carnivalesque activities may not be solely determined by a young person’s a priori possession of capital (habitus). It may also be influenced by the forms of capital bestowed upon them by the activity, the convertibility of this capital into membership of, and status within, desirable peer groups and, therefore, young people recognising that an act is effective (or otherwise) in helping to construct an expedient identity (illusio).

Risk-taking is related to masculinity as it is centred on activities and practices that are male dominated, often perceived as “subcultural”, highly visible and “deviant”, but there is no straightforward link between men and risk-taking.133 Inherent in the notion of a good, skilled driver, is the ability to have and maintain control over the vehicle, regardless of the conditions. Driving skills are stressed as being crucial by drivers (Vaaranen 1999, Miller 2001, Hatton 2007, Lumsden 2010) and signify the potential dangers that can be unleashed unless a skilled driver masters and remains in control of the vehicle (Willis 1978, cf. Redshaw 2005, 2007, 2008). Redshaw (2008: 130) makes it evident how this construction of control is “often related to the glorified ability to control the car and less often self-control.” However, as I aim to show and develop throughout this chapter, self-control cannot be distinguished from control in the sense that Redshaw (2008) proposes.

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133 What has been perceived as risky in the first place has tended to direct attention to men and male activities, such as alternative or extreme sports (for example, rock climbing and bouldering, see Robinson 2008, cf. Brymer 2005) or certain car cultures (such as street racing, see Vaaranen 1999, or the boy racer culture, see Hatton 2007, Beere 2007, Lumsden 2010). Riding horses or figure skating could be perceived as risky activities/sports as well, but often this is not the case because they are dominated by women and hence linked with femininity.
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The greasers work hard to control more than just the vehicle, namely their emotions and their surroundings, when practising risk-taking. Having self-control is expressed, for instance, in the greaser group’s rule of not drinking and driving. On the weekends when the greasers have decided to party, a discussion about who needs to take the steering wheel usually erupts. Being a chauffeur is tiresome at times, Jens explains, since you cannot drink anything then. A chauffeur has the responsibility of transporting goods and people for the whole evening. The negotiation around who is driving tonight and who is allowed to drink generates a heated discussion, and although being a driver is not the preferred role it is one that is taken seriously.

All in all, the ability to have control over the vehicle becomes a safety precaution. In this mode of reasoning, the safest young people are in fact the greasers: they have a high acquaintance rate with a spectrum of vehicles from an early age and they practise risky activities and create dangerous situations in order to perform the ideal greaser.

Policing social borders

The greasers’ motor vehicles are used for drifting and speeding, but also for picking up and dropping off passengers. The vehicles facilitate sociality (Carrabine & Longhurst 2006), but they also produce sociality and the practices that are carried out with the vehicles are part of controlling the social geography of the young people of Lillby. In order to understand the attractiveness of risk-taking practices, one must first understand their place in greaser culture. According to Lieberg (1999), the public’s more commercialized and theatrical character is aptly carried by young people, making the important point that the public “scene” is a social one that rests on relations between the performing actors and their audience. The greasers’ risky driving activities are confined in place and time, displayed for particular audiences and with particular purposes and functions. In other words, in order to be someone, you need to be visible (see Chapters Four and Five). There is an immediate audience for the risk-taking practices: the passengers (who are also co-producers of the activities); the audience outside the car body made up of the other greasers who are hanging out on that particular night outside the pizzeria, the local store’s car park or at the public baths; and an imagined audience made up of non-present greasers and other youth, who are targeted as potential listeners when the incident is recounted afterwards.
Performing distinction

Recall Sune's speeding performance in the vignette for the introductory chapter to this thesis. Sune's adjusted EPA was accompanied by many other adjusted EPAs and mopeds. The car and its inbuilt capacity for higher speed, which I pointed out in Chapter One, is in this respect the vehicle many of the younger greasers longed for (cf. Michaels 2001). Sune's EPA is a car, if defined by its speed, as well as by its physical resemblance to one. Being able to listen to the sound of the motor and tell whether or not it has been adjusted were part of the skills the greasers had developed – part of their credibility as greasers. Doing the adjustments was another important skill, and testing the effect yet another. I was often able to make educated guesses about whether a vehicle had been tinkered with to adjust its speed, but I was not nearly as knowledgeable as the greasers. In addition, I cannot "verify" whether Sune's EPA "really" went at 140. The important thing is that speed is a crucial component for the greaser community, both in practice and in talk.\footnote{I can note that discussions on speed and speeding were familiar from research subjects in the pilot study as well. In this respect I cannot make a distinction between how young people in the urban setting talked about and practised speeding with their mopeds and the greasers in Lillby. I have interpreted the similarity between the different materials as relating to a discourse on speed, where speed is related to in an ambivalent manner: both glorified and in need of regulation (see the introduction, note 26). Within this discourse, certain groups are more likely to be perceived in a neutral or glorified light (middle-aged drivers or professionals such as rally drivers, F1-drivers, the police or fire-fighters) than in need of regulation (young male drivers who drive in their leisure time for seemingly no purpose, goal or destination such as greasers or equivalent, also drunk drivers).} Talking about speeding, speed limits, speed records or other matters concerning speed, is significant. Kim's proud remark about Sune's performance – that his vehicle can reach 140 km/h and that Sune is willing to test the performance of his EPA, creates Kim as knowledgeable about Sune's vehicle in particular but also (adjusted) vehicles in general, and Sune as a skilled adjuster and a daring risk taker.

Not all greasers escaped criticism for their risk-taking activities. Even though they saw themselves as a coherent group, in-group tension existed and was on occasion publicly vented. The same or similar practices are positioned differently depending on who performs them and who acts as the audience. While some acts become stupid, childish or dangerous, others are recognized and identified as fun and cool. A brief moment after Sune leaves the pizzeria to cruise, another car speeds by (I recognize it to be Alf's), clearly over the speed limit. Everyone at the outdoor seating stops talking and turns their head to get a glimpse; Josef is quick to comment: "I hope
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they drive themselves to death!” Kim and the others at my table protest, arguing that one cannot say such horrible things and forcing Josef to take his words back. He succumbs for a brief moment, after which he repeats the same phrase and adds: “then they would learn not to drive that fast.” Apparently Josef finds Alf’s speeding to be out of line and feels the need to remark on it. The speeding carried out some minutes earlier by Sune, however, was perceived very differently. To an outsider, Alf’s speeding would objectively position him as a skilled greaser driver, engaged in vehicle-oriented risk-taking practices, in the same vein as Sune. But, as I illustrated in Chapter Four, risk-taking practices alone do not qualify a person to be regarded a greaser. An analytical tool for understanding the processes of selection and distinction in social environments, particularly in car cultures, is the concept of authenticity (Hatton 2007, cf. Balkmar 2012). Authenticity refers to a certain attitude or approach towards the practices carried out, or a commitment to a particular social community, and the evaluation of this commitment or the practices by others in the group. Who passes as authentic is thus not dependent only on the individual carrying out certain practices or activities; it is a joint effort of continuous negotiation. As we saw in Chapter Four, Alf did not identify overtly as a greaser, although he spent extensive amounts of time hanging out with greasers and carrying out vehicle-oriented practices. When Alf’s practice of speeding is condemned by Josef, it can be seen as a vivid illustration of how in that moment Alf is constructed differently from Sune. Sune is regarded a full member of the greaser group and has standing as a person, whereas Alf is positioned as more peripheral.

Lupton (2004: 30) concludes from her study of young drivers in Sydney, Australia, that driving is not only perceived as a means of transport “but a way to exert control over one’s environment” (cf. Grundvall 2005). The social world created around the greasers’ local neighbourhood and their vehicles necessarily makes it an arena for power struggles and negotiations and, as we have already witnessed in previous chapters, boundaries between in-group membership and out-group belonging are constantly under negotiation. The social skills of the greasers are developed in relation to greaser community norms and, as with any form of social belonging, the tension between conformity and resistance to the group norms mark out the social dynamics of the arena. Gillen, Guy & Banin (2004) found that young people’s risk-taking often occurred with groups of friends, which points to the important aspect of evaluation and assessment by their peers. Furthermore:
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adolescents’ perceptions of risk appear to depend on an evaluation of the potential consequences of taking the risk in terms of the potential rewards and penalties, a pervasive theme in the data. The perceived costs of taking a risk included, for example, injurious health consequences and the perceived benefits included, for example, affiliation with the peer group. Conversely, the costs of not taking a risk included losing status with the peer group and the benefits included avoiding ill health. Such perceived costs and benefits often co-exist, but results strongly suggest that young people will take a risk even though they are aware of potentially severe consequences (e.g., smoking) so long as taking a risk has the potential to provide a valued benefit (such as, being accepted by others). (Gillen, Guy & Banin 2004: 45)

Gillen, Guy & Banin’s (2004) findings point to two things that are in line with my study: that risk-taking among young people is a social activity taking place in the presence of peers and that the outcome of the risk-taking practices are assessed and evaluated collectively. It can be argued, then, that the social rewards of risk-taking in some peer groups are perceived to be more significant than the potential costs – whether the costs are of a social or physical kind (such as injury or death). However, successful risk-taking not only depends on the practices being performed to perfection, it is also contingent on more precarious aspects related to standing, as evident in the situations of Alf and Sune above.

Some of the in-group norms that the greasers cultivate relate to risk-taking practices. One of the norms that they upheld related to alcohol consumption and driving. Not drinking as a driver was an important rule for the greasers, partly due to the detrimental consequences they had witnessed for some of their friends (more on this below). Drunk driving was hence perceived as stupid and idiotic and most often linked to another group of young people – the hockey fags – in the local community, who reportedly did not have any problem driving mopeds after drinking. Interestingly, driving under the influence of alcohol is often brought up as a focus area in relation to young people’s driving violations (Forward 2008). On the other hand, although the greasers maintained the importance of driving sober, stories around other friends’ accidents (such as the EPA accident with drunk drivers recounted in the last chapter) often contained references to alcohol and were narrated in a humorous manner. Talking about risk-taking practices, about who is performing risk-taking activities and how, is in some sense as important as the actual practices themselves. The stories that are told and that get told are not only part of constructing the authentic greaser, but also of solidifying the greaser group and policing the borders of the group.

When Maja recounts her boyfriend Gurra’s accident a year ago while he was a passenger in an EPA, she mentions that the driver lost control of the
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vehicle due to being chased by the police. Both were injured, Gurra broke his leg and was hospitalized for a year. Not surprisingly, Gurra is not held responsible for the accident, but neither is the driver since they thought they were being chased by the police. Maja talks further about how the greasers – at least her clique of greaser friends – have cultivated an understanding of danger and risk because some of their friends have ended up in the hospital or even a coffin. But this experiential knowledge has not seeped down to some of the other greasers according to her:

some are stupid and think they can drive / although they might have had a licence for a week and don’t have control at all / they think too much of themselves simply / because the guys who have had their licence for four five years can drive really fast / then they think that they can as well.135

The main reason for accidents, according to Maja, is alcohol use, not driving, drifting, speeding or cruising per se. She concurs that age affects driver performances: those who grandiosely think of themselves as competent drivers do not have the skills to prove it. In other words, how long you have had a driver’s license hugely affects your ability to control the vehicle.

In the interviews, prompted by my queries around the frequency of accidents among the greasers in Lillby, most of them refute my suggestion that accidents would be rather uncommon. The incidents are not straightforwardly perceived as risky, and the frequency contributes to their commonality – accidents are part of the everyday lives of the young people. Whereas the young greaser men did not relate to the dangers and risks associated with drifting, or give any exhaustive examples of how they perceived or experienced the accidents, some of the young greaser women picked up on this topic. In a rather lengthy interview excerpt, Maja talks of the drifting accident and elaborates on its severity by relating this recent accident to other past accidents:

Maja: the thing is that the one driving didn’t even have a driver’s permit / she’s the same age as me / I was down checking out the tracks the day after like and it was nearly a hundred metres straight down into the pole / so it wasn’t like she had drifted into the pole / but she could have turned or stepped on the brakes or whatever / and worse things have happened if you ask me / like now in the winter it happens a lot that someone’s taillight is broken or someone has a flat tyre or something like that / because everyone

135 Maja: en del är ju dumma i huvudet och tror att de kan köra bil / fast de kanske haft körkort en vecka och inte har nån kontroll alls / de tror för mycket [om sig själva] / bara för att de killarna som kanske har haft körkort i fyra fem år kan köra jättefort / så tror de att de också kan det

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drives and happens to touch a pole or something / but it was about a year ago
one guy from here who crashed into a pole in Slamby and he has brain dam-
age now / and about three years ago a guy in Vallinge who drove himself to
death and

Tanjia: was that also in the winter?

Maja: no in the summer both of them / although it was due to alcohol but it is
not many nowadays, not to my knowledge anyway / not in our gang here be-
cause we're quite close to those involved / but I think many mopeds and the
hockey fags drive drunk a lot because you hear that and see it too / though
it's not often accidents happen actually / sometimes somebody runs into the
ditch because it's slippery but it's not like someone gets hurt

Maja's way of reasoning was not unusual among the greasers. A closer
reading reveals that she constructs drivers who end up in accidents as young – the age of the driver is a decisive factor (“she's the same age as me” – and does not have a driver's permit). The driver is also inexperienced, lacking the skills and resources to manouevre the car. Maja even questions the official story that the accident was related to drifting, suggesting that the tracks prove otherwise. She then proposes several alternative ways the driver could have handled the situation, such as turning or braking. The accident could have been avoided if the driver had been mature, old and competent enough. This particular drifting accident, however, was not severe according to her, if compared to other accidents she and her greaser friends have experienced where the consequences have been more dire. Different types of accidents are hierarchically related: some accidents are not really worthy of the name. The ones that are perceived as “real” accidents are those resulting in death or serious bodily injury.

136 Maja: grejen är den att den som körde hade inte ens körkort / hon är lika gammal
som mej / jag var ju ner och kolla på spåren dagen efter typ / och då var det nästan
hundra meters raksträcka rakt ner mot stolpen / så det var inte så att hon hade
sladdat in i stolpen / hon hade ju kunnat svänga eller bromsat eller vadsomhelst / och det har ju hänt värre saker om man säger så / nu på vintern händer det ju ofta
att nåt baklyse går sönder eller nån får punka eller sånt där / eftersom att alla hål-
ler på och sladdar och räkar toucha en stolpe eller nånting / ett år sen ungefärd då
var det en kille härifrån som körde in i en stolpe i Slamby och han har hjärnskador
nu och cirka tre år sen var de ju en kille i Vallinge som körde ihjäl sej
Tanjia: var det också på vintern eller var det nån annan [årstid]?
Maja: nej sommaren båda två / fast det var ju av alkohol men det är inte mycket
längre inte vad jag vet av i alla fall / inte i vårat gång här eftersom vi är ganska nära
till dem som det hände / mycket moppar och hockeybögarna som kör mycket fulla
för det hör man ju och ser fast det inte ofta det händer några olyckor faktiskt / ibland att någon kör ner i diken för att det är för halt men inte att någon skadar sig
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The more grave accidents involving in-group members have a sole cause: alcohol. In other words, the practices that are perceived as dangerous by the greasers relate to external factors – where the driver has consumed alcohol or other drugs and therefore has not been able to control themselves or the vehicle. In Maja’s story there is a succession from presumed alcohol acceptance to not drinking and driving, a lesson the young people have learnt the hard way. There are other young people who have not taken the accidents seriously, Maja suggests, by referring to the hockey fags, thus creating hockey fags as more inclined to have accidents that are substance related.

In the interviews, then, two explanations are deployed to comprehend accidents. The first relates to youth and inexperience as causes of accidents. Here the greasers are included, since they are also inexperienced and young – although their acquaintance with vehicles has afforded them a successful progression into the company of skillful and competent drivers. The other explanation relates to alcohol or substance use. Here the greasers are not included: although there obviously are examples where intoxicated greasers have ended up in accidents, the greasers have learnt from this and in the present situation the rule of not drinking and driving is a strict one. Instead it is the hockey fags who exhibit idiocy according to the greasers, since they continue to drive mopeds under the influence. In Maja’s opinion, the introduction of the rule of not drinking and driving and the development of driver competence will have the effect of reducing accidents. If the greaser driver was obliged to stay sober, this rule did not pertain to the passengers in or on the vehicle. Drinking alcohol was in itself not regarded as stigmatized at all, it was rather a common and ordinary part of the greasers’ weekend activities (see Chapter Five, cf. Kolind 2011). In relation to traffic safety, then, the greasers found it important to stress a non-drinking norm, but alcohol per se was not considered harmful for the individual. The risk assessment the greasers had developed in relation to alcohol and vehicles in particular, and alcohol in general as part of their culture, relates to different discourses of safety and well-being. Traffic safety (not dying or causing deaths as a result of an alcohol-related traffic accident) precedes personal safety (not drinking alcohol due to its toxicity to the body) and holds a stronger position in the greaser culture.\(^{137}\) However, having a strict rule about not driv-

\(^{137}\) This can also be interpreted partly due to successful traffic safety campaigning on the issue. Since 2003, the Swedish Transport Administration has hosted a permanent national operation called “Don’t drink and drive”, on zero tolerance against drink-
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ing drunk can also be seen as a strategy for maintaining control of the vehicle and the driving situation: it feeds into the construction of the skillful greaser driver who is in control.

Talking risk

The extensive use of vehicles is entrenched in the young greasers’ lives – vehicle presence and use is unquestioned and uncontested – instead, control of the vehicle is put forward as the crucial parameter for accident prevention. When the greasers talked about why accidents happen, the ones who do not exercise control of the vehicle – the unskilled drivers, the ones who are driving drunk or lacking insight into the boundaries of their competence – were conceptualized as most prone to accidents and injuries. It is precisely this logic that the traffic safety campaigns in Sweden revolve around – and precisely these answers that were given to me, the adult researcher, if I asked direct questions. The discourse of reason and rationality is sound and intelligible. The question is not about the young people being unable to comprehend or the lack of information on traffic safety precautions, quite the opposite. The young people in both my pilot material and the fieldwork material have extensive information on traffic safety, precautions and measures on how to avoid traffic unsafe. They have the knowledge and are able to navigate and critically reflect upon their own behaviour in talk. In this sense, the work on traffic safety aimed at distributing information, carried out by government agencies, authorities and associations has been successful. However, I argue that the practices of the greasers do not necessarily correspond to a rational traffic safety discourse if the investments and rewards are of another – more social – kind.

138 The outcome of most of the traffic safety models is also a change in behaviour (a rational agent model entailing that information input equals behaviour in line with that information), which obviously is not the case (cf. Sheller 2004). As Hatton (2007) also notes, the social stigma attached to driving offences (drink driving excepted) in relation to other offences was very low or even non-existent (cf. Forward 2008). This links well with what I brought up in Chapter One about the discourse on glorified speed in relation to vehicle technologies as well as in relation to hegemonic notions of youth. Speeding and other risk-taking practices such as drifting obviously have other rewards that outweigh the potential consequences for the young people’s health and wellbeing or the judicial consequences.
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Despite the ideal of the skilled driver in control of the vehicle, accidents do happen. The way in which these accidents are recounted and narrated partly reinforces the conception of the competent greaser driver, and partly employs other strategies for making sense of why accidents occur. During many of my talks with the greasers the issue of accidents surfaced – due both to my interest and also to the frequency and proximity of accidents. Others’ or the greasers’ experiences of being a driver or passenger in or on a vehicle that had been in an accident seeped out: many of the young people had also witnessed or experienced accidents firsthand. Approaching the greaser men’s recounting of risk from the angle of how the storytelling is done, instead of only focusing on the content, captures the narration as a social situation where joking is central, and enables an additional practice-based perspective. In the following sections, I will focus on the social practice of storytelling and the effect the narratives of the accidents have. Consequently, I address how the controlling of certain emotions re-creates the greaser as cool, daring and risk-taking, and how the controlling of the narrative discourse through humour feeds into the construction of the fun greaser.

Controlling emotions and the risk-taking narrative

As a greaser, being daring and taking risks is one part of gaining a standing in the group. Another part is remaining cool while practising drifting or speeding, as Jens does in the vignette that opens this chapter. Also, the passengers in a drifting or speeding car need to remain cool and unaffected. I was not “cool” in my first ride-along with Jens, which also made my outsider position painfully obvious in that particular situation, causing me both shame and embarrassment, aside from feeling very old (or an adult) in relation to my research subjects. The situation highlights another necessary component in relation to risk-taking with motor vehicles besides the need for a mastered vehicle, namely, the need for the driver to be in control of their emotions. This entails remaining calm and seemingly unaffected, regardless of what happens in or outside the car body. The tacit agreement is that displaying certain emotions inside the car body, such as showing positive excitement or exhilaration that does not disturb the driver but rather encourages them, is preferred. In short, emotions that in various ways support the driver in their ongoing activity and conform to the norms of the greaser group are regarded as appropriate, whereas expressions of negative emotions that disturb the driver are considered inappropriate.

It was not only in these situations and in relation to the performing of risk-taking practices that control of emotions became evident. In the greasers’
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recounting of accidents or close-call incidents, the concrete descriptions almost completely lack emotional content and are narrated in a naturalized manner. Many of the young men’s accounts of accidents and incidents were not as elaborate or extensive in this sense as many of the young women’s stories, but Anders and Malte reason around this theme when I present them with a picture of one of the cars involved in a recent crash during an interview. They were passengers in the car at the time of the accident, but were not injured “seriously” as Anders puts it.

During my fieldwork in the autumn two drifting accidents occurred, only weeks apart. Tom, Jens, Kajsa and Anita were four of the young people involved, and only a few days later when I visit the youth centre some of them are present. Jens, Kajsa, Johan, Mia (staff) and Agnes (staff) and two younger boys sit at the large table in the youth centre living room. They are engaged in discussing cross and fiddy riding (motor sports with two wheelers). When the conversation falls silent for a moment I say that I have read in the Storköping newspaper about the car crash that happened last weekend. Mia laughs and points at Jens, saying I should ask “the guy with the white cap” about what happened. Jens begins by saying (quite proudly) that the incident was reported in the regional newspaper as well as on [social network site] and on the site for emergency calls. I ask him if he was driving, since he got his licence recently. Jens says no, it was Tom. “What happened then?” I ask. Jens starts to tell how he, Kajsa and Kajsa’s friend Anita were riding in Tom’s car that Saturday and that they decided to drift on the snowy road and then went straight into a lamp post. “Oh. Was anybody hurt?” I cautiously ponder. Jens continues: “Well, we all went to casualty ward later. First only Kajsa and Tom. Then also Anita. I went home but my parents thought I should be checked to make sure that everything was alright with me too, so they drove me in later on. Then everyone was lying there in the casualty ward!”

Jens is smiling the whole time while he recalls the accident. Kajsa sits beside him looking down at the table. Agnes shifts the topic slightly when she asks if they do not train on slippery roads when they have their driving lessons, and Jens answers rapidly that of course they do. He continues to describe how the truck is flipped around and they are supposed to hang upside down in the cab of the truck and try to get out. Jens remarks that he passed the test and everyone around the table laughs again.

The practice of drifting was not normally linked to accidents. The conceptions of a fun person creating excitement and doing fun things are needed in order to grasp the risk-taking practices. Bunton, Crawshaw & Green (2004),
in their research on young people and risk, have identified that pleasure and pleasure-seeking appeared integral to risk. Among their interlocutors, risk was framed as “doing ‘mad’ or ‘daft’ things for fun or the ‘buzz’” (Bunton, Crawshaw & Green 2004: 165). They also noted that the older young people in their sample reported the pleasures of risk as predominantly about the thrill. In line with this, stories around the incidents that occurred in Lillby were usually told accompanied by laughter, jokes and humour (cf. Kehily & Nayak 1997). Even though the seriousness of the accidents was recognized to some extent, the framework for the re-telling of what happened entailed a great deal of joking – as illuminated in Jens’ recounting above. In Willis’ (1977) study of working-class lads, rough humour and “havin’a laff” is utilized as a way to cope with heavy physical labour, inflicted by routine and boredom. Humour in Willis’ analysis becomes an antidote and a point of class tension and class reproduction in the school context – in other words, an act of symbolic resistance and a counterculture to middle-class society and its institutions. Humour in this approach is recognized as an effect of working-class masculinity (Kehily & Nayak 1997). A similar analysis relates to how joking about death-defying practices can be seen as a coping strategy where humour is used as a relief from ritual, routine and experienced boredom (cf. Woods 1990). Employing humour coincides with the quest for everyday excitement and the need to “exceed reality” (Ziehe 1993, Lyng 1990, 2005, Lieberg 1997).

I would rather argue, however, that by narrating risk-taking practices through utilizing a discourse of fun, the emotions that it is possible to display and convey are strictly regulated. In other words, certain emotions become out of place because the narrative discourse prevents them from being expressed. Joking becomes an effective way to control emotions. Not only is the content and form of what it is permitted to express regulated, but also joking as a practice can be understood to regulate the greaser group. Fine & De Soucey (2005: 11) argue that:

> [e]ffective social units attempt to enforce social control in ways that do not appear oppressive; the best control is that which individuals perceive as beneficial in its own terms. A strong joking culture constitutes one of the more effective techniques of social control (...). Individuals may be tested by joking, ensuring that they know the normative expectations of the group (...), or the joking may be responsive to a perceived violation of those expectations.

Who is doing the joking is also a measure of the person’s standing in the group: the more secure and the higher up in the group hierarchy, the more tradeoffs in relation to social agency. In the situation above, Jens obviously enjoys an important position, enabling him to control the direction of the
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narrative about the accident. Kajsa’s bowed head during her boyfriend’s recounting of the incident is a sign of emotions that do not fit the ideology of displaying coolness and fearlessness. She was not perceived to be a greaser per se, but the girlfriend of one, and was hence expected to adhere to the same norms as a greaser, although she expressed more emotions and opinions in a talk with me than in the social situation played out at the youth centre. In the conversation with me later on the same evening, she exclaims that the accident was “not really that dangerous,” although she admits to shock afterwards and that she lacks memories of what happened that evening.

This is also why the recounting of accidents in individual interviews tended to be slightly different and focused on slightly different matters than the situations where the narration became a social event. Fine & De Soucey (2005) hold that the “joking culture” of a group relates to shared knowledge and a common history. Joking occurs within a context of on-going relationships and imbues the joker with authority. Joking is further interactive and referential, that is, it demands responses from other group members and it:

presumes that the parties involved share references – their idioculture – by which they make sense of the implicit meanings of this jocular interaction. (Fine & De Soucey 2005: 3f)

In light of this, the interview situation and their relation to me, the researcher, made it more difficult for them to joke about accidents when I asked about such situations in the interviews. We did not share references in that sense and there was little social significance in using me as a resource for regulating the greaser group (Fine & De Soucey 2005).

One way of analyzing this rather peculiar combination of risk, violence and even death with humour, jokes and laughter is by understanding how normative greaser masculinity conceptualizes fear. Displaying fear was rare among the greaser men (cf. Lupton 2004). Recall how Jens and Johan appeared unaffected in the drifting car described at the beginning of the chapter, whereas my reaction to the situation instantly revealed my outsider status.139 Other scholars have argued that, “males who are

139 In situations like these my outsider status became apparent: being unaccustomed to driving or riding along with someone who drifts can be related to my age, gender and social class. Although in many other situations I felt closer in age to my interlocutors, the risk-taking practices with vehicles were a dividing line. I have interpreted this foremost as part of my feminist approach, where I find these practices
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frightened are more prone to joke about it” (Engström 2008: 24). It is not my intention to establish whether the greasers felt frightened or not, the important matter is whether they in any way expressed fear in the risk-taking situations or afterwards. In general, being affected by certain emotions – such as fear – is not compatible with the male greaser position. Goodey (1997) finds the construction of “fearless masculinities” to be part of the reluctance of many men, young and old, to align themselves with the role of victim (cf. Burcar 2005). In reply to a direct question to Anders about whether he was scared when he sat in the car in the other drifting accident, he immediately says “yes”, but refutes this the second after by explaining that it was "more adrenaline maybe because I hadn't done anything wrong." Displaying emotions such as fear is configured as less effectual or even non-effectual. The way to handle danger and risk in an acceptable manner for the greasers is through humour: jokes and laughter. Joking and laughing about something serious is also conceptualized as having distance from the incident in question - being "cool" about it and remaining unaffected.

For young men, displaying coolness in relation to joking is a theme brought up by Kehily & Nayak (1997) and can be discussed in the context of the greasers as well, even though Kehily & Nayak’s research setting is the school. They argue that humour is an “organising principle, deployed to position pupils within differing dominant and subordinate peer group sexual cultures” (Kehily & Nayak 1997:69). In this vein, heterosexual masculinity is regulated and organized through humour or a form of “joke-work”, where joking is perceived as a social contract (cf. Fine & De Soucey 2005). Lyman, in his (1987) research on a U.S. fraternity, where ritual exchanges of insults are common, argues that the ritual insults perform a range of functions. One of Lyman’s (1987: 155) interlocutors explains:

If there’s one theme that goes on, it’s the emphasis on being able to take a lot of ridicule, of shit, and not getting upset about it. (...) And you aren’t cool unless you can take it without trying to get back.

If there's one theme that goes on, it's the emphasis on being able to take a lot of ridicule, of shit, and not getting upset about it. (...) And you aren't cool unless you can take it without trying to get back.

problematic. As I explained in Chapter Two, this feminist position runs the risk of becoming adultist, a concern that has occupied my mind a great deal throughout the research process. Another facet relates to ensuring my personal safety, a consideration I needed to engage with when designing and carrying out the project. Being a parent myself made me emotionally aware of whether my research project was really worth the “risk” of being injured, but also about the potential fears and worries of the greasers' parents.

140 Anders: jo / mer adrenalin kanske / man själv hade ju inte gjort något fel
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The ritual exchange of insults works to control emotions, which is seen as a prerequisite for group membership as well as part of the display of a “competent, socially validated masculinity” (Kehily & Nayak 1997: 73). Ritual insults were part of the greasers’ joke jargon, although not as ritualistic in the sense that I understand Lyman’s to be. Despite the character and nature of the jokes, the male greasers’ joking had similar functions to those identified by both Lyman (1987) and Kehily & Nayak (1997) in their respective settings. Joking about accidents is a necessary condition for group membership; it displays the male joker as a cool greaser, disconnected from feminized and femininely coded emotions such as worry or fear. Hence, vehicle and driver/passenger safety or the consequences of risky driving were not matters that the male greaser position allowed them to elaborate upon too extensively, at least not in a way that illuminated seriousness, worry or fear.

For Anders, above, feeling and displaying fear has yet another dimension, that of responsibility. He appears to connect the feeling of fear with whether or not he had something to do with the cause of the accident, whether he was to blame for it. After the other drifting accident, Tom clearly felt responsible, and afterwards declared that he would “take it easy” for a while. Tom decided not to drive for some time, mostly due to his injuries and the fact that his car was wrecked, but also due to remorse and guilt about what could have happened. In our occasional chats afterwards, I made sure to ask him about his recovery. I could tell that my concern for him made him feel uneasy, as he mitigated the severity of his injuries and avoided mentioning

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141 In Kehily & Nayak’s (1997) research, humour is used to avoid outright violence, aggression or abuse, yet the relationship between power and humour is tightly connected. In my understanding, direct physical violence and aggression are not a necessary component for establishing hierarchical power relations. The workings of language and verbal insults function as psychological violence, rephrasing violence as humour. Bullying and forms of mental violence were reported to be common in the local school in Lillby, the difference between the pupils subjected to it and the pupils exercising it was articulated as a matter of humour: “they know that we don’t mean anything by the mean words or insults.” If the prevailing dominant group of pupils phrased the incidents in terms of a joke, the subjected pupils’ differing perspectives of it not being funny at all, and their feelings of humiliation or even fear, were not possible to even bring forth (cf. Edley & Wetherell 1996). These techniques that the young men in Kehily & Nayak’s research utilize function to make other young men vulnerable – and, I would add, the (verbal) display of how (not) to handle this vulnerability. The control of emotions becomes a decisive factor that produces heterosexual hierarchies that differentiate the “real” men from the effeminate and feminized men (the pupils who burst into tears or become offended in the wrong way).
the guilt he felt over the welfare of his passengers at the time of the accident. My worry, expressed at some distance from the other greasers present but still in their social setting, was not compatible with Tom's standing as a greaser. He was considered a skilled driver with a lot of experience and was not supposed to dwell on the accident or on possible worse outcomes. The discourse of fun and the construction of a fun person who is able to make and take jokes exclude the possibility of relating to accidents or close-call incidents involving motor vehicles as serious or, as the greasers frame it, "real", threats to one’s wellbeing or life. If everything is framed as just fun and games, the activities cannot become serious. But "by being just fun, jokes serve, in a latent fashion, as much more than fun" (Fine & De Soucey 2005:17). Hegemonic notions of youth and the centrality of having fun is also linked to a certain degree with being carefree and autonomous in an almost invincible sense, a kind of “nothing can harm me” approach. What can be said to be the discursive effects of this joking approach? Being serious is associated with being dull and boring, with adulthood and femininity, all of which are antitheses to the notion of a carefree – and perhaps also careless? – greaser.

Careless young men and caring young women?

Even though the drifting incident where Jens, Tom, Anita and Kajsa were injured occurred only days before the moment of retelling, Jens makes sure to narrate the accident as humorous rather than serious. By staying in joking mode, worries about personal health or safety are played down or rendered non-existent. Jens’ parents are created as the sole bearers of worry when it comes to his health; they persuade their son to seek hospital care while Jens himself downplays the gravity of the accident. Jens’ care of and for his own body and its vulnerability are downplayed. In general, I would argue that this lack of care for their own bodies and wellbeing was striking, not only in relation to the young greasers’ risk-taking practices with motor vehicles but also in relation to alcohol consumption. Besides neglecting their own wellbeing, the lack of care for the wellbeing of others can be noted in the same paragraph. Passengers in their motor vehicles face the same consequences if something goes wrong, and other people in the local surroundings can be

Moreover, I was also reenacting the stereotype of an adult woman: the mother-like worried character making a big deal out of seemingly nothing.
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equally affected. Can we write the young greasers off as not only carefree, but also careless? And does this imply that the young women adhered to the same norm? These questions are phrased in a manner that points to the importance of analyzing the issue in a gendered light.

In contrast to some research within the field of gender studies, I want to put forward a conclusion that practising risk-taking with vehicles is not masculine per se. As Lupton (2004) has argued, the relation between risk and gender is not a straightforward one. Rather, what is created as an effect of the risk-taking practices by the driver, is a space where the greasers can be(some) skillful drivers in control. From this perspective, the risk-taking practices can be perceived as a means to re-establish oneself as a successful greaser. What can be linked to gender, however, is precisely the discursive space that is produced with the help of these risk-taking practices. In this space, the ability to drive well and to have control over the vehicle is valued and praised. To have control over one’s emotions in the risk-taking situation is another facet, as is having control of the emotions displayed afterwards in talk and practices. The space where the greaser-in-control is created is simultaneously a space that does not allow caring for others. The greasers’ foregrounding of control can be said to legitimize a lack of care for their own and others’ well-being, which can be interpreted in line with notions of a careless masculinity brought up at the end of the previous chapter (Hanlon 2009). However, one could also argue, in line with Hatton (2007), that the friendship building the greasers engage in, is a form of caring, and that the rule of not drinking and driving is a caring gesture.

In this respect, the greaser women had a more flexible position, although they too adhered to the mitigating of seriousness by the hierarchization of accidents. They seldom employed humour or joking when discussing accidents, either in one-to-one talks with me or in the larger social situations at the youth centre or the car park. However, the young greaser women are also involved in and enjoy drifting, even though it is predominantly men who perform such activities. Many of the young women expressed a liking for being a passenger in the drifting cars. Two of these were Maja, 17, and Kajsa, 15. Kajsa had recently been involved in a drifting accident as a passenger in Tom’s car when I spoke to her about it. After quite an extensive time spent discussing what happened and her injuries, I ended up by asking why she believes drifting is perceived as fun, whereby she responded with a short “because it is, at least to ride along.” Kajsa expressed without hesitation that she quite likes riding along with Tom while he drifts, but that she would not do it herself if she had a driver’s licence and a car. Both Kajsa and Maja like to be passengers in a drifting car.
and they both cite traffic safety as the reason when stating that they would never themselves drive a car and drift. Maja has had several experiences of close friends being seriously injured, some have even died, during the last few years. She finds it unthinkable that she might be the one who is driving a car that possibly ends up in an accident, yet remarks on what “super super fun” it is to ride along when someone else is drifting.

One way to understand this difference relates to discourses on risk perception, traffic safety and gender. In many discussions around traffic safety, women are conceptualized as either passengers – hence not agents (in control of the vehicle) – or safety enhancers. In psychometric research on risk-taking and gender, women usually score lower on the willingness to take risks. The plausible explanation within this field of research concerns social values and norms: women’s orientation towards home and family makes them less willing to take risks and contributes to a different perception of risk (cf. Slovic 1987). Consequently, women consider many risks as threats to home and family, while men tend to relate risks to working life. One result from this type of research can be articulated as women’s and men’s diverging perceptions of what a risk is (Gustafson 1998). Davidson & Freudenburg (1996) contend that the social role and everyday activities women predominantly engage in, as nurturers and care providers, make women more concerned about health and safety in relation to men. Women, they argue, show an overall concern about others’ wellbeing. These studies, being predominantly quantitative, do not look for or take much interest in variations from the socio-cultural pattern. Another obvious lack is that they do not consider age (or any other power axis for that matter), despite the fact that young men are commonly perceived as risk takers with a capital R.

Interestingly, work on traffic safety has picked up on the rudimentary use of gender in psychometric risk discussions and applied it to campaigns for enhancing traffic safety among young people. The assumption is that the presence of passengers in cars in general, and female bodies in particular, has a positive effect on young male drivers.143 Hatton (2007:45) cites a report from the UK Automobile Association, which concludes that:

Typically “safe” drivers had regular girlfriends, while “unsafe” ones spent more time with male friends. This turns out to be a key factor because sepa-

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143 Norway recently launched a traffic safety project specifically targeting young girls, who were depicted as safety promoters due to their mere presence. Their function as passengers was in other words to promote a safer driving environment by sitting next to the driver, implicitly young men/their boyfriends (see http://jentenes.no/ for more information about this nationwide campaign).
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rate studies have shown that young men drive more slowly when carrying older adults or girlfriends as passengers and faster when the others in the car are other young men. (Johnstone, Sept 1998)

Although some studies find a general tendency for drivers with passengers to have a lower risk of ending up in an accident, the results are not conclusive when it comes to young male drivers (see Engström 2008 for a more in-depth discussion). Engström (2008: 74), in her study of crash risk and group processes of young male drivers, holds that:

[s]ome studies have shown that young drivers are at greater risk of being involved in road accidents when travelling with passengers, especially when both drivers and the passengers are young males (Chen et al., 2000; McKenna et al., 1998; Regan & Mitsopoulos, 2001).

I perceive the young greaser women as navigating a highly gendered risk landscape. The female greasers, by finding it fun and enjoying risk-taking, do not conform to a femininity that is necessarily risk-averse in the conventional sense suggested by the psychometric research. Greaser femininity is constructed around similar conceptions that build greaser masculinity: to be social and to have fun. In being social and having fun, risk-taking with vehicles is included. Although you do not sit behind the steering wheel, expressing enjoyment of the activity is part of positioning yourself as a greaser (this also applies to the young people who do not have a driver’s licence for a car or driver’s permit for mopeds/tractors). They are, however, in contrast to many of the male greasers, able to employ an elaborate reasoning about safety within which they negotiate between traditional conceptions of femininity, where safety thinking is central, and the conception of a risk-taking greaser.

Moreover, and as I pointed out in Chapter Four, one of the few positions allotted to young women in the greaser culture is the role of passenger – which in turn is tightly connected to the enactment of heterosexuality. So, while I recognize the rather traditional position the few young greaser women held in the culture, it would be unfair to portray them in a way that only renders them passive in circumstances they cannot or do not transform. As I have illustrated, not all past or present greaser women felt the need to be present at the car park in order to perceive themselves as greasers, and some – like Kim and Jenny – expressed a true interest in motors, machines and mechanics. Even the greaser women who did not view vehicles as particularly interesting found drifting and speeding – usually as passengers – both fun and joyful.
Chapter Six

Risk-taking as violations

So far, I have outlined the greasers’ diverse but interlinked ways of exercising control: over the motor vehicle, over the local sociospatial geography, over emotions and over the narrative discourse. The intention has been to illuminate the effects of their control, whether it is becoming a skilled driver, a fun greaser, or a person with the preferential right of interpretation. In this section, I will argue that the greaser men’s lack of care for themselves and others brought up in the previous section is thus, alongside the argument of the potentially harmful effects, another dimension of my suggestion to view risk-taking practices with motor vehicles as a kind of violation. I will therefore devote this last section to developing the approach on risk-taking practices as violations.

In this study, I have referred to some of the practices the greasers carry out with their vehicles as risk-taking. As I discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, risk and risk-taking are problematic concepts and have been used in a myriad of ways, making it hard to disregard their genealogy – and perhaps also to redefine them. My approach to risk as a concept in this study has instead been to carefully define the framework within which it is used and I also use it pragmatically and, in some senses, tentatively. Risk-taking, as I along with several other scholars have argued, is always a situated social practice (Douglas 1992, Bunton, Green & Mitchell 2004) and risk must therefore be analyzed with particular attention to spatial and sociocultural contexts. In this vein, my study has not dealt with the psychological, social psychological or other individually based literature that exists on risk and risk-taking (see for instance Brymer 2005). Nor have I paid any substantial attention to what Zinn (2006) argues is crucial, namely to better integrate the sociological approaches to risk, that is, the more quantitatively oriented approaches, with the more qualitative approaches. Zinn (2006: unpaginated) argues that there is:

144 Brymer (2005) outlines several different approaches to what he terms “the extreme sport experience” (extreme sports are defined here as sports where a mistake leads to death rather than injury, cf. alternative sports), which are not exclusively about risk-taking. However, as he rightfully points out, in relation to extreme sport, the discourse on danger and risk is pervasive and needs to be reviewed. His own approach is phenomenological and he argues accordingly that “the extreme sport experience” is not foremost about risk-taking, or seeking out thrills, excitement or danger for that matter, but about transcendence.
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still a tendency in risk research to distinguish between objective statistical/technical risks as the real risks and social or subjective risks as biased perceptions of objective risks.

I would argue that these approaches are not only about objective versus subjective, but also, as Zinn (2006) too points out, about the general vis-à-vis the particular. The question is thus whether it is possible or even desirable to merge them in a satisfactory manner. If such an endeavour is taken up, it entails a close examination of and sensitivity to research design, methodology and theoretical framework. All in all, my aim is not to propose any general or abstract definition of risk or risk-taking, but merely to point out the humble notion of risk-taking as situated.

In other words, I have tried to capture the situatedness of risk (Bunton, Green & Mitchell 2004), by illuminating how the greasers relate to risk and risk-taking as practice and talk. It is indeed important to recognize the differences between young people’s own perceptions of risk and the “objective” definitions that circulate in official policy. As many scholars have argued (see Mitchell, Bunton & Green 2004), young people tend to construct their own risk hierarchies within their social and cultural context where education, family and the peer group are powerful influences. What is needed then, as argued in the previous chapters, is a commitment to contextualizing these practices so that the sociocultural incentives for and accomplishments of risk-taking with motor vehicles, despite the dangers associated with it, are made visible. The greasers engage in these practices because they have a socially rewarding function in their everyday lives. Hence, I agree with Kolind (2011: 309) when, referring to the mainstream breakers in his study, he finds that:

risky behaviour was attractive not because of any potential for self-development, but because it could be used to produce an alternative space defined by values of which these youngsters were masters: masculinity, courage and toughness, for instance.

The tension I have touched upon on several occasions throughout this thesis between a feminist interpretation of the greasers’ risk-taking with motor vehicles and the greasers’ own perceptions of their driving practices, can be seen in the light of objective vs. subjective interpretations of risk-taking. My interpretation of the greasers’ risk-taking practices as violations can be argued to be, if not “objective” then at least to have “objective intentions”, in that my focus is on the negative material and discursive effects of the practices. The greasers’ own understanding of their driving practices, that they are fun, focus instead on the positive aspects. In this
sense, the difference between objective and subjective is not about differences in research design, but theoretical approach and analysis. My effort has been to be attentive to the important calls for reflexive, accountable research both in relation to feminist research and the field of youth studies without compromising being critical. I have no desire or intention to frame the young greasers as socially deviant or problematic in relation to their use of public space and so on, but I recognize their risk-taking practices as problematic.

What has been made clear, is that the greasers do not lack control, nor are they “out of control” in the sense that hegemonic notions of youth as problematic often portray young people – and especially young men. The discourse on lack of control or being “out of control” can also be linked to dominant conceptions of men who use violence against women, and is a common discourse used by violent men in order to explain or excuse their violent behaviour (Hearn 1998, cf. Lundgren 2001). However, the situation here is quite the reverse; the greasers are, as we have seen, practising control in various ways. Furthermore, if part of the social accomplishment of the greasers’ risk-taking is instead perceived as harmful to themselves and others, their risk-taking practices can be interpreted as part of a particular (often working-class) masculinity that deploys violence to reinstate that masculinity. Lupton (2004: 34), in her study of young people, driving and aggression linked to driving behaviour, contends that:

It is likely that, like many other working-class men (Connell, 1995; Canaan, 1996), they tend to seek empowerment and a sense of identity through pursuits and encounters linked to displays of power and masculinity through aggression and violence.

In line with these studies, the violence could be explained as an effect of the construction of a working-class-connoted “greaser masculinity” (cf. Chapter Four). I would, however, be very cautious about proposing that violence, in general or with reference to motor vehicles and risk-taking in particular, is in any way specific to or used more extensively among working-class men than men from other social strata (cf. Lundgren et al. 2001). In line with feminist theories on men’s violence, where the notion of control in relation to the construction of masculinity is central, I have argued that the young greasers are in fact engaging in a kind of violation in public space. Risk-taking in the public can thus be seen as one form of men’s violence, where the perspective relates to the all-pervasiveness of violence in young men’s lives (Nordberg 2008), expanded beyond the heterosexual confinement of home (Westerstrand 2010) and more explicitly linked to place (Tyner 2012,
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Listerborn, Molina & Mulinari (2011). In the next chapter, I will return to how risk-taking as violations understood from an analytic perspective where seeing the violence and foregrounding violent practices as constitutive for unequal social relations prevents fragmenting violence and violations and separating them from an everyday life context.

Moreover, and in line with a situated analysis of risk and risk-taking, it is important to acknowledge other differentiation processes that play a part in creating the greaser culture – such as age and gender – as well as preventing class as a tool from becoming analytically monolithic and too explanatory. Within the greaser group, the differences in socio-economic position between the greasers was naturally as noticeable as between the young people overall in Lilby and Vallinge (cf. Elias & Scotson 1994) and there is no causal link between cultural notions related to class and the social practices carried out by the greasers. For instance, the kind of self-control over emotions illustrated in this chapter can, just as well, according to Lupton (2004: 39f, cf. 1998, 1999), be linked to “a bourgeois form of masculinity” that, in contrast to “working-class masculine ideals disdains aggression and public displays of anger.” The civilized body is thus reinstated as emotionally contained. In other words, the kind of emotions that are displayed appears to be as important as where and amongst whom they are displayed, and no straightforward link between cultural conceptions and social practices can be determined.

To sum up this section, risk-taking with motor vehicles as violation entails:

- Understanding risk-taking as situated social practices related to gendered, classed, aged and place-associated norms and conceptions
- Understanding risk-taking from the vantage point of its potentially harmful consequences
- Perceiving risk-taking in public as one form of men’s violence
- Proposing an analytical link with the under-studied area of the violent and violating aspects of “the automobility regime” (will be dealt with in the next chapter)

Summary and concluding remarks

In this chapter I have foregrounded control as a crucial parameter for understanding the dangerous driving practices the greasers engage in and talk about. The greasers’ controlling practices construct and police the
borders of greaser masculinity and by extension the greaser community. In their narratives and practices an inconstant topography of risk emerges: certain practices are created as high risk, while others are practised on a regular everyday basis. The same practices are evaluated differently depending on the actor, the purpose, the place and the audience. For instance, ridiculing and bullying other young people, despite the fact that they too perform similar practices, creates and maintains the social divisions within the local youth geography. This risk landscape is in many senses fluid in the greasers’ narratives in relation to their negotiation of which practices remain in their everyday repertoire.

At the most concrete level, control over the vehicle during risk-taking situations posits the driver as skillful and the ability to master the vehicle regardless of the conditions is a vital part of the notion of a greaser. Hardly any of the greasers questioned their own driving skills or capabilities, which Hatton (2007) also identified in her research among boy racers in the UK. Another facet of controlling the vehicle has to do with which emotions can be displayed and how this is done. Controlling emotion in relation to the practice of driving dangerously is hence entrenched in the construction of a greaser: being cool and seemingly unaffected by the precarious practices. In this vein, controlling but also producing particular emotions and tapping into specific emotional discourses when recounting violent and dangerous activities – most notably accidents – falls under the same heading of control. To joke about accidents and violent driving practices becomes an effective way of re-creating a gendered position that distances itself from displaying certain femininely coded emotions, such as fear and anxiety. Creating these risky and dangerous practices within the realm of “fun” in general is part of the accepted way of being a greaser.

The controlling of certain emotions can also be seen as part of an emotional labour that the greasers maintain. Hatton (2007) recognizes the emotional labour the young boy racers engage in when relating to their cars (cf. Mellström 1999, 2004), where they see the cars as places of/for friendship and intimacy, for the building and maintaining of networks of support and trust:

Their significant ties of friendship were far more important and nurturing than the media or existing academic literature has suggested, and it would appear that male friendships like these have been neglected areas in research, and all too often such omissions allow areas of need and understanding to go unaddressed. (Hatton 2007: 268)
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I agree with Hatton (2007) that men’s friendship ties have in some senses been neglected, but I would also add that affective areas between men and motor vehicles are gradually being studied in various ways (see for instance Robinson 2008, and in relation to cars, Mellström 1999, 2004, Sheller 2004, Balkmar 2012). Although I have not engaged with the greasers’ friendship ties in exactly the manner that Hatton suggests, the notion of building and maintaining relations within the greaser culture permeates my study. Focusing on the social character of the greasers’ everyday practices (including risk-taking) is, as I have illustrated, about building and maintaining social relations in various ways. It is therefore important to distinguish between the different kinds of emotions that men experience and the emotional labour they accomplish. All too often emotions are perceived as individual rather than social, thus placing the limelight only on the individual rather than perceiving emotions as social accomplishments as well (Wetherell 2012). The effects of some kinds of emotional labour are definitely more “harmless” than others: the relationship building between the young greasers and between the greasers and their cars is something other than joking about accidents (although this has the effect of building group cohesion) or controlling emotions that are seen as non-compatible with the greaser position (fear and anxiety). This is not to suggest that young men’s friendship building as a kind of emotional labour is always problematic or potentially harmful, but that the effects can be. Nevertheless, fun-making through taking risks with motor vehicles and joking about these risks are necessarily linked to the construction and maintenance of the greaser in control.

Consequently, I have argued that foregrounding control as crucial for becoming a greaser has the effect of obscuring and obfuscating aspects of care and caring for oneself as well as others. In this way, the greasers are recreating a conception not only of a care-free, but also of a careless, young man. On this note, I have suggested that risk-taking practices with motor vehicles would benefit from being framed as violations because of their potentially harmful consequences, but also due to the discursive space that is created by the controlling practices. Understanding risk-taking with motor vehicles from the vantage point of situated social practices related to gendered, aged and place-associated norms and conceptions, is here of central relevance. Lastly, perceiving risk-taking with motor vehicles as violations can also help to link everyday practices with more general theories of the under-studied area of the violent and violating aspects of “the automobility regime”.

With this chapter, I close the empirical part of the thesis. In the next and final chapter I summarize my central arguments and engage in a metatheo-
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retical discussion in relation to some of the important themes and topics that I have touched upon so far: placeness and personhood, and their entanglement with social practices and relations. Here the notion of spatial boredom and the discourse around the making of fun will be revisited. Consequently, the central argument of this thesis around a concept of situated risk-taking is picked up. In light of this, I will address another facet of the study’s aim: to review some implications of a theoretical and analytical shift towards viewing risk-taking with motor vehicles as a form of violation with regard to theories on gender, age, place and (auto)mobility as well as in relation to practical work on traffic safety.
Chapter Seven

Placeness, risk-taking and violations

This thesis began with two entry points in the preface: an account of the tragic drifting accident in Malå in late 2012 and a response to a popular scientific text on the teenage brain, particularly focusing on risk-taking. The reason for presenting the reader with these two accounts is to highlight two interlinked discourses around teenagers and risk-taking. One discourse focuses on the problematic effects — accidents, injuries, death, grief and sorrow — evoking emotional responses and questioning the non-existent or, at best, scattered measures that these phenomena have so far yielded in Sweden. The other discourse aims to frame teenage risk-taking more generally as an age-related phenomenon with neurological explanations. In both discourses, teenagers are cast as problematic and their risk-taking in need not only of explanation but also of abolition. Although the Malå story provides the reader with more contextual matter, including interviews with young people involved in risk-taking with motor vehicles, than the neurological article, they operate within similar understandings of young people as especially prone to risk-taking, as deviating from the adult norm of risk-aversion and, therefore, they cast youth as a discontinuous phase. What this thesis has suggested is that the normative and even hegemonic conceptions of youth as a life phase and young people as a group in fact incorporate an
idealized notion of the youth phase where risk-taking is ordained and perceived as part of a normal maturation process. Moreover, I have illustrated how risk-taking practices are situated and implicated in socio-spatial processes that relate to gender, age and class. I have aimed to construct a framework where their practices are socially and culturally intelligible and, in this sense, do not deviate from what is perceived as “normal” or “cultural”. This has not, however, entailed treating their risk-taking practices as unproblematic. On the contrary, I remain critical of these practices due to the potentially devastating effects – and argue that they can indeed be seen as violations.

In this last chapter, I wish to draw some conclusions from my study and discuss them in more depth, as well as point to areas for future study. After summing up the conclusions from the thesis in the first section, the second section is devoted to a discussion of placeness and risk-taking with motor vehicles, or how place matters with regard to the intertwining of social relations, issues of personhood and place. Consequently, I will point to some general theoretical debates on place and mobility that my conclusions connect with. Another topic I delve into in this final chapter relates to the risk-taking practices themselves, where I expand on the notion of a situated risk as well as focusing on risk-taking with motor vehicles as social practices that benefit from being framed as a kind of violation. Here I will also address the greasers’ place in the re-production of the automobility regime and how a reframing of their risk-taking practices as violations opens up a fruitful way of investigating the violence of the regime. The chapter is rounded off with a summary of the theoretical and practical implications and contributions of this study and, consequently, to some potential areas for future research.

Placeness and the politics of stability

Throughout this text hegemonic, yet ambivalent, notions of youth have underpinned my analysis. These notions are ambivalent because they co-exist with and relate to the youth phase as both idealized and problematic. The worldview that stresses youth as a phase where life should be about fun, enjoyment and living out, also stresses the immaturity and irresponsibility in a positive manner. Here, young people are portrayed as needing to test boundaries before attaining the adulthood that lurks around the corner. The hegemonic notions of youth that the greasers are faced with relate predominantly to masculine, urban and middle-class norms and values. These masculine associations are linked to ideas of freedom and autonomy, of be-
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Youth as a problematic phase, on the other hand, has been extensively covered in research and thoroughly addressed from various angles, in my study as well as in others. As I have aimed to illustrate in this thesis, the young greasers are faced with an apparent dilemma as to which discourse they tap into when exercising risk-taking with their motor vehicles. Obviously, the more positively laden conception of youth as an idealized phase, with its emphasis on fun and enjoyment, is clearly in line with how they practice and talk about risk-taking – and how they position themselves in contrast to the boring others in the youth social geography and their experienced boredom in conjunction with the stigmatized perception of the peri-urban community in which they live. Others (peers, the surrounding community and society at large) are more likely to present the greasers’ risk-taking as problematic – as illuminated in Chapter Four of this thesis as well as how young men who engage in similar activities in Malå and Norrköping and such places are portrayed in an article in Fokus (Anderberg 2012). However, the suggested policy solutions to these problematic practices are seldom based on critical ethnographic research where the intersections of age, gender and place are highlighted.

Place, personhood and belonging

In Chapters Three and Four I engaged in a discussion of how place, personhood and belonging are related in order to locate the greasers in relation to structural dimensions. Here, by relating to similar studies, the urban foundations of hegemonic notions of youth were deconstructed in order to understand how certain places become stigmatized. Lillby community is stigmatized as a rural area, which is related to the urban-rural divide and associated with socioeconomic and ethnic segregation. These political and cultural processes shape the greasers’ leisure space and everyday lives. By positioning them within a context of wider societal processes and politics related to regional enlargement and its effects, a wider perspective on the greasers’ particular culture and how these processes necessarily have an impact on their local practices can be gained.

However, the greasers’ way of adapting to and navigating through these processes does not entail a passive receptive mode. Social stratification, ethnic and racial segregation as well as gendered and age-related expectations influence the greasers’ use of space and movement patterns in various ways; however, the use of the local neighbourhood can provide them with spaces where they feel empowered and even powerful. The greasers’ ap-
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propriation of the youth centre and the car park is a way to maintain social standing and hierarchies within the youth landscape of Lillby.

Within the social geography of Lillby youth, visibility and gaining a standing is crucial, and particularly so for the greasers whose social capital is strongly intertwined with their spatial capital. Through the notion of belonging-work I have striven to capture the practices that are crucial in practising a greaser: social and physical skills construct the greaser as fun and tough. This belonging-work accomplishes belonging and affinity, as well as to be someone, to gain a standing, within the greaser culture and the youth social geography, which in turn gives the greasers agency. The greasers are in this sense accumulating a form of spatial capital. This spatial capital can be further associated with nationalism, where cherishing notions of craftsmanship in relation to motor vehicles, and particularly Volvo cars, is of central concern. However, belonging relies on the acquisition and accumulation of social and spatial capital carried out through the greasers' belonging-work at the car park and the youth centre, which are not straightforward processes but rely on both inclusion and exclusion – of younger people, of young women and of other men who do not conform to the group norms. For instance, the few positions that young women in the greaser culture held were related either to a heterosexual relationship with a greaser man or passing socially as a greaser man. Very few young women cultivated an interest in motor vehicles, and the ones who did were not considered part of the group by the greaser men.

On a general note, the situation of the few active greaser women can be perceived in relation to theorizations on modernity, gender and place. In Waara’s (1996) work on young people in the border regions of Norrland in the northern part of Sweden, the young people interviewed tended to link places with either stability or change when asked about “gender roles”, which in effect were understood in terms of “tradition” or “modernity”. The local, often rural, villages were perceived as gender stereotypical, while they held ideas about the urban, often cities south of Norrland, as being more fluid when it came to “gender roles” (Waara 1996, cf. Lalander & Johansson 2012). This also links with hegemonic notions of youth and echo Stenbacka’s (2011: 236) findings on how “constructions of rural masculinities [in the media] are created by mirroring them against an invisible norm: the urban masculinity.” Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006) concur that places outside and beyond the metropolis tend to be represented as antithetical to the metropolitan and perceived as morally different – most often in a derogatory way. These “place myths” that are produced and reproduced by the media and other public conceptions are negotiated by in-
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dividuals in non-metropolitan areas in their everyday lives. According to Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 103) one consequence is that:

many such boys [living in rural areas] feel that their masculinity would be put under severe pressure in the city, that while they might be “the big man” in a country town, the city would expose their weakness and vulnerability and also potentially corrupt them.

In Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody’s (2006) research, the young girls saw themselves and were perceived by both young women and young men as more suited to city life, particularly due to its association with consumption and femininity (cf. Bondi & Domosh 1998). Places are associated with meaning, and age, gender and race are enmeshed in these meaning-making processes in complex ways. A discussion of how women and girls take up, make use of and move in space has been a key issue for feminist geographers and is far from insignificant in this study. Feminist geography has also reflected upon and challenged the meanings attached to the social categories “men” and “women”, and to “masculinities” and “femininities”, as well as the fundamental core concepts of geography itself: space and place (Bondi & Davidson 2005). In Bondi & Davidson’s (2005) outline of feminist geography, two approaches to space and place are identified (which sometimes overlap and complement each other): a materialist analysis of social differentiation and another that weaves together geography and feminist theories of subjectivity. Although Massey’s re-thinking of space as relational offers a materialist alternative to dominant conceptualizations of space, it does rely on the problematic assumption of a relationship between metaphor and materiality (Bondi 2005). Rose (1996) has termed this distinction one between “real space” and “non-real space”, a distinction with gendered connotations where “real space” is associated with the concrete and dynamic and hence the masculine, whereas “non-real space” comes to hold associations with fluidity and imprisonment that are coded feminine. These geographical imaginations encourage men to “take up space” and to “make their presence felt” (Bondi 2005: 144, cf. Young 2005).

While I have not specifically explored the greasers’ self-reported gendered imaginaries and experiences in relation to place, the “place myths” associated with Lillby resemble the findings of Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006). What is clear, however, is that the greasers have carved out a space where they can exercise agency on what they perceived as their

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145 The greasers’ experiences of their community and places in the local neighbourhood would entail a more focused study on the meanings they attached to these places in particular and the community in general, both as individuals and as a group.
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terms. This agency is, however, in part a consequence of others’ non-agency and passivity, of the exclusion of certain groups and certain people.

Spatial boredom and the making of fun

The urban bias of the hegemonic notion of youth conveys norms and values that have the urban as their backdrop. As Fenster (2005) has argued, in contrast to the commonly held view that it is the non-normative and subjugated who “appropriate” space (whether it be children or young people, the homeless, women...), it is in fact the other way around. It is the normative, white, urban middle-class that appropriates and defines public space. Being placed and labelled as “hillbillies”, farmers and greasers positions the young people in the study as the rural Other – hence also seen as backward, less modern and more traditional. In line with where the risk-taking practices take place, the notion of the greasers as backward in relation to their urban peers is re-created. Needless to say, the continuous process of defining, using and appropriating public space does not go uncontested by everyday users. The greasers contest the preconception of them as “hillbillies” and manage to some extent to create a position where they are agents in control, among other things by practising risk-taking with their motor vehicles. On the other hand, these same practices can be regarded to re-create the greasers’ spatial and class position.

In effect, the greasers negotiate their relation to their community’s peri-urban positioning through both talk and practice. Re-creating the conception of their community as a boring place where nothing ever happens and they have nowhere to go, as well as labelling other youth groupings as boring people, places the crafting of a fun person centre stage. The concept of spatial boredom is here an analytical tool to understand the greasers’ relation to and negotiation with their peri-urban situation. Through social practices such as partying and risk-taking with motor vehicles, where the greasers emphasize social and physical skills, they are also created as fun people. The intertwining of place, personhood and social relations through the activities the greasers engage in have social value and significance in the greaser culture.

Moreover, the discursive effects of the greasers’ relation to spatial boredom and utilizing notions of being bored reinforce cultural conceptions around gender and place. In general, the local neighbourhood is inherently associated with excitement and danger, whereas the home is conceived of as feminine through being safe, secure, dull and boring – in the same vein as the greasers are linked to the local neighbourhood and the nerds to the confinement of the home. The greasers need to move beyond the home in order
to construct a fun person altogether. Despite the risk of the car park becoming boring, the greasers’ practices co-constitute the place as one of activity, fluidity and change.

As I have argued when it comes to the greasers, or any local community of practice or culture for that matter, one must understand the context in order to understand the practices they carry out. The context is multi-layered and hence relates to several levels where meaning is constructed, negotiated, contested and made intelligible. Change at one level does not automatically entail change at another level; it is therefore difficult to single out elements, phenomena or practices from their wider web of relations without relating to the meaning they are given in that particular context. All in all, rather than arguing for the greasers’ sociocultural distinctiveness, I would contend that in fact they are well aware of and navigate between the prevailing notions of youth as a life phase. Moreover, these hegemonic notions have masculine, middle-class and urban connotations, thus displacing and othering femininity, the working-class and the rural, sub- or peri-urban. The greasers create their own fun, then, by employing the means available within their social, cultural and spatial position. To have and be fun is more than “just fun”, which is manifested most clearly in the case of risk-taking with motor vehicles.

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For some years, there has been an upsurge of interest in various forms of mobility on a local as well as a global scale. Some researchers have even contended that place and locality matter less and come to hold less value for individuals in the global information technology age, referred to as time-space compression (see Massey 1994). Especially in the literature on globalization, Sassen (1999: xxiii) finds that there has been an overemphasis on speed and hyper-mobility that needs to be countered with a place-based analysis that acknowledges “material conditions, production sites and place-boundedness”, which echoes Massey’s (1994: 149) seminal critique of time-space compression:

For different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of who moves and who doesn’t, although that is an important element of it; it is also about power in relation to the flows and movement. Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.
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In line with this, Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 21) find that “place, more traditionally defined, still matters, and certainly matters for some people more than others.” The overemphasis on speed, flux and fluidity has not, however, gone unnoticed, and certainly among geographers concerned with issues of place, placeness and place-boundedness:

“place, more traditionally defined, still matters, and certainly matters for some people more than others.” (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006: 21)

The overemphasis on speed, flux and fluidity has not, however, gone unnoticed, and certainly among geographers concerned with issues of place, placeness and place-boundedness:

[t]here is a renewed interest in the established, the settled, those who choose to or are locked in a place, and overall, the politics of stability and its relation to the politics of mobility. (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006: 22)

Throughout this thesis, I have illustrated in various ways how place matters to and affects the greasers of Lillby: how the place they live in is marginalized and stigmatized in a regional sense within regional and national politics; how they as young people are positioned in society in relation to conceptions of youth as an idealized and problematic life phase; how young people are placed within society with regards to these notions of youth and how politics of youth come to have effects that have spatial implications, such as the institutionalization of leisure time and space; and lastly, how all of the above-mentioned taken together affect the greasers’ possibilities to act. In this sense, I feel strongly about what Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 22) speak of, in highlighting “the established, the settled, those who choose to or are locked in a place.” The underlying point is to show how place matters and that a thorough analysis of the spatial, as well as its entanglement with the social and cultural context, is not only a necessary but a crucial engagement in understanding the persistence of social formations and power orders related to, among other things, age, class and gender. In relation to this, the most influential theories of space and place are, according to Creed & Ching (1997: 7), imbued by the urban as the reference point:

Postmodern social theory’s stable reference point has been the city; it unquestionably posits an urbanized subject without considering the extent to which such a subject is constructed by its conceptual opposition to the rustic (…). In much postmodern social theory, the country as a vital place simply doesn’t exist.

What Creed & Ching (1997) point to, then, is what Halberstam (2005: 12) calls “metronormative” and Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody (2006: 10) “city-centric” approaches. Even in the works of Lefebvre and Soja, “space” is urban, and the rural conceptualized as future sites of urbanization. In this sense, the rural is still a relatively “neglected geography”, not least in relation to young people (Tucker & Matthews 2001).
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If the urban-rural imaginary has a strong hold and remains a challenge in geographical theory, the need to highlight the concept of place in feminist theory and in research on young people is even greater. Feminist theory has in many senses a solid foundation for taking place seriously through the important notions of “contextualizing”, “situated knowledges” and “positionality”. These concepts are in essence spatial metaphors but they are often used, paradoxically, in an a-spatial or de-contextualized way (one could also argue an asocial way, if place and culture are seen as co-constituted). While I rely heavily on (some) feminist analyses of social life, I am also critical of the way in which much feminist research talks of contextuality and particularity from a high level of abstraction, often erasing or mitigating the complexity of social processes and everyday lives. These very abstract-theoretical strands tend to become hegemonic, are thus considered to be “high theorizing” and often become trendy within the field of feminist theories. Destabilizing the urban-rural divide and arguing for the importance of place is as pertinent in theory as in ethnographic analyses of the social, it seems, and I see my study as a contribution to these parallel calls.

The discussion above relates not only to theory, but to methodology as well. It has on occasion been claimed that ethnography is methodologically poorly suited to relating to social change, due to its focus on the nitty-gritty details of social life. It has been implied that ethnographic work is preoccupied with the empirical in such a way that it often remains descriptive and seldom addresses general, or more abstract, matters (Davies 2008). The focus on place, locality and placeness can in one sense be seen as running the risk of reiterating these discussions. However, a focus on place and how it matters, and on the politics of stability more generally, does not exclude taking change, mobility and movement into account. In fact, binaries of this kind might run the risk of being overstated. As Lippard (1997: 5f) thoughtfully expresses it:

Most of us move around a lot, but when we move we often come into contact with those who haven’t moved around, or have come from different places. This should give us a better understanding of difference (though it will always be impossible to understand everything about difference). Each time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really what all “local places” consist of.

146 These concepts not only relate to the content of research, but also to how the knowledge has been produced, with the aim of illuminating knowledge production as a political process where engagement with reflexivity and accountability is central.
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Lippard (1997) seems to propose that place and mobility are in fact intertwined as a hybrid, and that neither place nor mobility remain unchanged by the processes of convergence. I do not equate place per se with any notion of stability in the sense of not relating to issues of change. As I have discussed, social life often entails both, sometimes at the same time and in the same place. The meaning of social change, or the elusive concept of subversiveness for that matter, that often tends to accompany the concept of social change, has always intrigued and fascinated me. How should we understand social change and when can it be argued to have occurred? Is it even possible to argue that social change has taken place or is in the process of doing so? What is really subversive? Or, to put it more eloquently, which norms are regulative – at the "surface level" – and which are constitutive – at the "deep grammatical level" – at specific moments in specific arenas (cf. Lundgren 1993, 1995)? And how do these norms relate to people’s practices? It is, ultimately, a question of how power is understood. In line with Sangren (1995:21), I see power as

neither the exclusive property of individual subjects nor of intersubjective discourses or practices; rather, it manifests itself in the activities in which both subjects and collective institutions (including the state, communities, language, and society) are produced.

Sangren (1995) further proposes that power be seen as control, implying a subject which can be either individuals, collective institutions or society in a more abstract sense. Grasping social change, then, ought to entail detailed accounts of people’s localized social practices (agency) and everyday lives, and their relation to cultural conceptions and norms, as well as how these levels conform to and diverge from each other. I do not argue that my study fits this description in any neat sense, but I do contend that ethnographic methods in general, which not only relate to the cultural level but also to the socio-spatial, are crucial in this project. Meaning is negotiated at the level of practice, through social relations and practices that are always placed and linked to place, but also in relation to cultural conceptions and norms. Whether or not social change has occurred, then, appears to partly depend on the theoretical perspective adopted and on the level we relate to (cf. Sangren 1995).

At the local level, risk-taking with motor vehicles has not changed in the Lillby community for several decades – it still preoccupies the community’s greasers. If relating to the question of whether change has occurred in relation to cultural norms around young people, the answer would be negative. In relation to the hegemonic norm of the young person who should "go be-
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before it's too late”, risk-taking is concurrent with trying out new, even risky, activities. In relation to the hegemonic norm of young people in public space and young people with motor vehicles, the greasers are enacting risky, problematic youth. As I have discussed at various points in the text, the greasers are rather reinforcing many of the cultural conceptions of youth, which, again, are associated with conceptions of gender and place. The greasers are predominantly men and the social norms in the group very much associated with masculinity and social practices that reinforce this masculine norm. The changes I have encountered and identified can be said to remain on the regulative, or surface, level rather than on any profound, constitutive, level. In order to explore risk-taking with motor vehicles, I have argued for two things: a situated concept of risk-taking and a shift in analytical framework where risk-taking with motor vehicles is instead perceived as violations.

A situated concept of risk-taking

One of the aims of this study has been to investigate young men’s risk-taking with motor vehicles. Using contextualization as an analytical tool for locating and placing the greaser culture has enabled me to look for social as well as cultural connections and disconnections. The research questions that have guided my work in relation to risk-taking have thus been both descriptive – how do the greasers talk about and practise risk-taking with their motor vehicles? – and analytical. The latter relates to the social, cultural and spatial implications of the discursive positions that are created as an effect of the greasers’ social practices and talk. Furthermore, I have taken an interest in what the implications of a theoretical shift of viewing risk-taking with motor vehicles as a form of violation would entail.

As mentioned above, young men’s risk-taking with motor vehicles can be seen as conforming to the idealized phase in the sense that it encourages young people to experiment, test boundaries and live out – before settling down and becoming respectable adults. At the same time, the greasers tap into another hegemonic notion of youth as problematic, one that is much more widely recognized and acknowledged – and more readily to hand. I find it important to nuance the greasers’ risk-taking activities with motor vehicles and one way of doing this has been to stress the significance of contextualizing them. One of the main contributions of this thesis is to elaborate and develop the concept of risk-taking by arguing for its situatedness. One aspect of this is what I have been stressing in relation to place above.
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Below I will discuss the discursive effects of the greasers’ risk-taking in light of their social accomplishments.

Becoming a careless young man

In the previous chapter, control was seen as a crucial component in understanding the greasers’ risk-taking practices with motor vehicles. Maintaining control over the vehicle in risk-taking situations regardless of the conditions demonstrates the driver as skillful and is a vital part of the notion of a greaser. Another facet of controlling the vehicle has to do with which emotions can be displayed and how this is done, which is part of an emotional labour that the greasers carry out. Here it is important to differentiate between the different kinds of emotional labour that the greaser men accomplish. Understanding and reinstating risk-taking practices as “fun” is part of the accepted way of doing the greaser. The discourse of fun and enjoyment is well integrated, as is the idea of not taking life too seriously – something that I illustrated in Chapter Six, where joking was seen as a pervasive approach to the risk-taking the greasers carry out. Joking about accidents and using humour as a framework to control the narrative around risk-taking can be seen as an effective strategy on the greaser men’s part to construct masculinity. While some researchers have argued that this kind of masculinity is foremost connected to a working-class position, I am somewhat reluctant to make that kind of simplified analysis. Certain elements can certainly be traced to what has been seen as a traditional working-class position, such as valuing physical skills (craftsmanship, the ability to fight), whereas other elements blur the precarious boundaries between the classes. In my view, one such constitutive element is control.

Although controlling both the motor vehicle and their emotions through risk-taking practices is entrenched in the construction of the greaser, control as an important element is not exclusive to the constitution of a working-class greaser man. Remaining cool and manifestly unconcerned despite courting injury or death has been foregrounded as important in voluntary risk-taking cultures, made up by different kinds of activities which are evaluated in relation to gender, class and age, among other things (Morrissey 2008, Robinson 2008, Brymer 2005, cf. McNamee 2007). In effect, the greasers do not, then, lack control or become “out of control” in the sense that hegemonic notions of youth as problematic often portray young people – and especially young men. The discourse on lack of control or being “out of control” can also be linked to a commonplace mainstream discourse that is used to explain or excuse men’s violent behaviour and to dominant conceptions of men who use violence against women – it is common to understand such men in terms of powerlessness and of having lost control over
their violent actions (Hearn 1998, cf. Lundgren 2001). Latching onto the discussion above on class, Lupton (2004) has argued that a civilized body entails self-control, especially over displays of emotion, and that this conception is in turn associated with middle-class masculinity. In line with this reasoning, being in control can be conceived of as having strong masculine connotations, but not necessarily any direct links to a particular class position.

Controlling and mastering the vehicle constructs the driver as skilful and capable, and in conjunction with the controlling of emotions both in and out of the vehicle the greasers secure and re-create their in-group position. Consequently, the risk-taking practices (performed by the right people in the right way) are a way of policing in-group borders. But this belonging-work also has other effects, I have argued. Foregrounding and highlighting control as crucial for becoming a greaser simultaneously has the effect of minimizing care and caring for oneself as well as others. The greasers are producing a discursive space for themselves and thus also re-creating a conception not only of a care-free, but also a careless, young man. This discursive space enables an analytical connection to perceiving risk-taking with motor vehicles as violations.

Risk-taking as violations

I have proposed that risk-taking practices with motor vehicles are better understood as violations due to their potentially harmful consequences, but also due to the discursive space that is created by the associated controlling practices. The notion of control in relation to the construction of masculinity is central and can in this sense be understood with reference to feminist theories of men’s violence. Within this framework, the young greasers can be seen, through their practices, to engage in a kind of violation that re-creates gendered, age-related and place-based conceptions that reinforce social inequalities. Through their collective appropriation of public space and their risk-taking practices, they are re-creating the gendered binary inherent in the public-private split discussed in Chapter Five. This does not merely have conceptual implications, but can also be related to a profound embodied fear of men’s violence that affects women’s use of public space.

As many feminist scholars have pointed out, fear of men’s interpersonal violence is an integral part of women’s living conditions (Wendt 2002, Lister-born 2002, Koskela 1999, Pain 1999). Violence, and fear of violence, char-

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147 Men’s experience of violence in public space is much higher in numbers than for women, but the character of the violence is different: women often report perceiv-
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acterizes women’s relation to place and affects their movements and bodily comportment throughout their life course. Women live in a geography of fear within which their movement patterns are constrained and restricted and where from an early age they are taught and learn to navigate their behaviour and activities with these powerful discourses in mind. Fear is hence gendered and re-gendered through the practices and behaviours that men and women enact in public space (and in non-public space too). In effect, the geography of fear works effectively to reinstate the public as a male space and the private as female. Women who resist this powerful discourse – willingly, by force or necessity – run the risk of being penalized as not respectable and irresponsible (especially if they are harmed in some way). Ahmed (2004) interprets women in public in line with Skeggs’ (1997) classed notion of “respectability”. In order to become respectable, women “must either stay at home (femininity as domestication), or be careful in how they move and appear in public (femininity as constrained mobility)” (Ahmed 2004: 70, cf. Young 2005). These gendered and omnipresent discourses certainly affect the population of young women in Lillby community, hence making it less likely that the young women, who place high priority on being perceived as respectable, devote their leisure time to becoming part of the local neighbourhood youth scene. The young women who do take part find ways to gain confidence and strategically negotiate with the discourses through different practices (Pain 1999, Koskela 1999). It could be argued that the young greaser women negotiate with the powerful discourse of fear by making their presence visible in the local neighbourhood, but they simultaneously run the risk of being seen as less respectable young women. One way of avoiding being regarded as less respectable might be by not carrying out the risk-taking practices with motor vehicles in the same active way as the greaser men do. It is further possible to see the young women’s more elaborate safety reasoning as a strategy to appear not only responsible and caring, but also respectable.

One should not overstate any causal unidirectional relation between conceptions of men and young men in public space and the practices of young men and women, however. In this thesis, I have made considerable efforts to avoid conflating the problematic aspects of the greasers’ risk-taking practices with cultural conceptions of youth, including the links to gender, class and place inherent in these conceptions. One way of doing this is through contextualizing the greasers’ lives and practices. Understanding risk-taking with motor vehicles from the vantage point of seeing them as

ing violence in relation to other violations and violence they have been subjected to in different arenas at other times in their lives as less fragmented and less isolated incidents (Koskela 1999, Pain 1999, see also Kelly 1988, Lundgren et al. 2001).
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situated social practices related to gendered, age-related, class-based and place-associated norms and conceptions, is here of central relevance, but so is the local enactment and negotiation of these norms. I hope to have made it clear that contextualization does not mean that the greasers are any less responsible for their actions (Hearn 2012b). As Hearn (2012b: 13, cf. Lundgren et al. 2001, Westerstrand 2010) points out, with reference to “domestic violence” but as I see it with figurative significance also in discussions on violations:

Violence is not always simply a subset of some other social division. This is a change of perspective from seeing violence as always “caused” by something else, to one in which the practice of violence is itself a form of social inequality, an unequal and unequalizing social structural division and relation of its own.

As I outlined in the introduction, violations and violence can instead be regarded as constitutive elements of gender relations (Lundgren 1995, cf. Hearn 2012a), making violence something much more pervasive and profound than an aberration from the routine character of everyday life (cf. Tyner 2012, Ray 2011). This paradox – that violence is both a pervasive phenomenon in our everyday lives, and yet seldom associated as being part of our everyday lives – has been noted by many scholars (Ray 2011, Tyner 2012, Hearn 2012b). More significantly, the lack of attention to or even omission of violence in theories of society (Hearn 2012b), place (Tyner 2012), and even in critical work on men and masculinity (McCarry 2007, Hearn 2012a), is both noteworthy and striking.

Perceiving risk-taking as violations is an analysis of the greasers’ risk-taking practices that not only relates to the possible, albeit direct, material consequences of causing death or injury, but also to the discursive effects in relation to gender and place. Young men practise violations with their motor vehicles that reinforce social norms of men as daring, aggressive, competent, humorous and fun-making, as well as conforming to hegemonic cultural conceptions where men are cast as active, risk-taking and making their presence felt. In addition, seeing risk-taking with motor vehicles as violations can also help to link everyday practices with more general theories of the under-studied area of the violent and violating aspects of “the automobile regime”, to which we will now turn.

\[^{146}\] Hearn (2012b) discusses how “agentic discourses” and the use of words such as “choice” and “responsibility” might feed into a liberal individualism, where social forces remain unattended to.
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Challenges for car hegemony - challenging autonormativity

In the introduction to this thesis, I briefly touched upon the paradoxical character of automobility – of a system or regime that affords both mobility and immobility. The tendency so far has been to concentrate on mobility and movement, which in turn is often associated with freedom, autonomy, flux and change. Moreover, as I have discussed in this chapter regarding the relevance of place and the politics of stability, the preoccupation with mobility and movement has spilled over into how place has been understood. As Lippard (1997) suggests, the distinction between mobility and stability can be overemphasized in a way that makes them dichotomous rather than mutually constituting. Although the concept of mobility within mobility studies assumes its counterpart of stability, stability encompasses mobility and vice versa, since it is movement that produces place. Mobility also takes on a metaphorical meaning, and hence is used figuratively for movement in the abstract, in discourses on metaphysical space. One example would be how the focus on technological innovation, on middle-class consumption patterns, on the flows and movements of the affluent, tend to disregard the people who remain in some sense "local". It seems as though it is mobility that takes precedence over immobility, if I am temporarily allowed to use a rather dichotomous language. Furthermore, much research is not empirically grounded and has a tendency to become abstract and disconnected from people’s everyday lives (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006).

Motor vehicle dependency in the automobility regime

The concept of ‘automobility’ identifies one of the most important contemporary socio-technical institutions – the car as ideological and discursive formation – and is defined as self-directed movement (Featherstone 2004). Automobility can further be perceived as a regime (Böhm et al. 2006), thus recognizing the naturalized and normalized character of discursive formations of social and political relations that legitimizes some forms of automobility, and marginalizes others. In my study, it becomes strikingly apparent that the young people of Lillby are not only marginalized as young people, but as young people living in an area outside the metropolis. This has several implications that relate to mobility in its literal spatial sense, as I pointed out in Chapter Three on the major challenges facing young people in rural and peri-urban areas in relation to transport and movement. Due to the erosion of public services such as accessible transport, the car remains a crucial mode of transport. In order for this to change or shift, urban politicians need to recognize and work for a truly equal welfare system where public transport is offered and spatial planning take other means of
transport than the car into account. This must be a foundational part of the Swedish welfare state’s ambition of accessibility for all. Politics related to mobility tends to operate within an urban framework, with the consequence that areas outside the metropolis lose out and become caught in a vicious circle of worsening of the public services that people in metropolitan areas take for granted. In addition, this erosion of basic public services has implications for the on-going debates on rural depopulation in Sweden, which should indeed make issues of mobility a pressing political concern nationwide. But, as with many matters, the different political goals set up in relation to mobility are seldom fully compatible. Many discussions around ecological, social and economic sustainability face stark opposition from people in sparsely populated areas – mostly due to the fact that car dependency is a necessity.

To acknowledge the different social and spatial circumstances and conditions young people live by necessitate a nuanced perspective on motor vehicle dependency vis-à-vis car normativity. There is a need to discuss the downsides of car dependency and its connection to vehicle-oriented cultures such as that of the greasers in Lillby. This is pertinent not least due to the emotionally laden responses from the media and the public when accidents such as the one in Malå happen. Another death is incorporated into the statistics of traffic accidents. But is it really a traffic accident? Are the risk-taking practices the greasers carry out with their motor vehicles traffic related in this sense? If so, what do we count as traffic space? If not, how should we understand them differently and what would that entail?

With this thesis, I hope to have extended the work on understanding risk-taking practices with motor vehicles as being something beyond a traffic or transport-related issue. The aims have been to make sense of the risk-taking practices that are prevalent within a motor-vehicle-oriented culture from a feminist theoretical perspective and to illuminate the everyday lives of a group of young vehicle-oriented people – the greasers – living in a peri-urban environment. I have analyzed traffic-related practices from a broader socio-cultural perspective, which differs from most conventional transport studies. Conventional transport research is often founded on "econometric models of traveller behaviour based on methodological individualism and a view of transport as if it is just an exchange based transaction" (Root 2003:1, cf. Urry 2001), and hence rather instrumental in character.149 Wid-

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149 A body of work concerned with the psychological aspects of traffic behaviour also exist. See for instance Dula & Geller (2003), Shinar & Compton (2004), Forward (2008), Falk (2008), and for an overview Summerton & Berner (2002).
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Enlarging the analytical scope enforces a quite literal geographical move to spaces and places that are not initially understood as part of traffic space (such as roads, highways, bicycle and pedestrian lanes and the like, by referral to land traffic space): car parks and youth centres, public baths and schoolyards, or other public places. It also entails a close contextual approach to a culture that is highly suitable for this kind of analysis – a group of young Volvo greasers in a peri-urban community in Sweden where vehicle interest and orientation, as well as vehicle-centred practices, are central for their personhood formation as greasers. The greaser culture and the practices they carry out with their motor vehicles must also be seen in the light of a pervasive regime of automobility.

Acknowledging the emotional facets that accompany, are part of and produce local vehicle cultures that re-create the automobility regime, is important (Sheller 2004, Balkmar & Joelsson 2010, Balkmar 2012). Instead of treating emotions as separate from the motor vehicles, one must recognize the co-construction of man/motor vehicle as a form of hybrid (Lupton 1999a, Michael 2001, Dant 2004). Although I do not elaborate on the interface between man and machine too extensively in this thesis, I find it important to recognize the link, since it has been said to play a significant part in the persistence of vehicle-related socialities and in the automobility regime (Böhm et al. 2001). For instance, in relation to motor vehicles, especially cars and motorcycles, the concept of “driving pleasure” is often used not only in advertising (Hagman 2010) but also colloquially. As I have argued with Balkmar (Balkmar & Joelsson 2012: 43, see also Balkmar & Joelsson 2010):

The car’s driver appeal is written with the help of an emotional register where the car is depicted as fun, entertaining, seductive, pleasurable and erotic. Identifying already existing cultural scripts in which relations between men, masculinity, technology and desire are continuously consolidated, entails recognizing the symbolic link between man-masculinity-machine (Mellström 1999, 2004). These scripts in turn, are materialized in the lived experience of many men – and an increasing number of women – of what it is like to get in the car or on the moped, to give gas and to drive (fast). These associations reinforce already existing imaginaries of the car/masculinity nexus in its associations to danger, power and the spectacular. Such associations may facilitate as a signifier of aspects of western culture that are based on “individualism and getting ahead”, providing an aggressive means of achieving mobility at the expense of others (Redshaw 2007, 122). The associations between cars, aggressiveness and power as exciting spill over to what is perceived to be the incentives for using cars at all. Masculinity is in this sense expressed in relation to specific ways of designing a car where aggressiveness, violence and force are highlighted, rendering the car to be used in certain ways and marketed through rhetorics and imageries of speed as about fun and play.
Perceiving motor vehicles as "experiential tools" and pointing to the emotional and kinaesthetic experiences of driving, tinkering or handling motor vehicles, entails a deeper engagement with how autoemotive emotions matter in the preservation and the tenacious character of the automobility regime (Sheller 2004, cf. Letherby & Reynolds 2009). However, these aforementioned studies tend to perceive the individual driver as the unit of analysis. I argue that the social dimensions are lacking – how social relations and social practices unfold and manifest, and how these practices and activities are collectively negotiated within groups of people. There is a strong point for further engagement with the social dimensions in research on automobility as a pervasive regime, in addition to the individual approaches on emotional entanglements (cf. Sheller 2004).

Many of the mentioned mobility scholars hold that automobility is paradoxical and inherently incongruent. According to Beckmann (2004), automobility continues to be a successful regime of dominance because its damaging effects are denied: traffic accidents, deaths, pollution, congestion and so on. In my case, the relation between violence and the automobility regime is relevant in relation to the analysis of the greasers’ risk-taking practices as a form of violation.

**A violent regime**

Studies of automobility have, with a few exceptions, tended not to problematize the violating effects of automobility as a regime. As I see it, this has had at least two consequences, which this study has addressed. First of all, references to the detrimental effects of automobility as a regime – most notably traffic accidents, deaths and injuries, as well as the environmental consequences – are to some extent highlighted in previous research (Böhm et al. 2006, Conley & McLaren 2009, Dennis & Urry 2009, Beckmann 2004).

What I have seen as missing and have tried to include in this study is a qualitative empirical soundness – but also challenge – to the more general theories on automobility. How can a culture like the greasers’, built around motor vehicles and the practices related to them, be understood in the light of contemporary theories on automobility? Do the more abstract theories on mobility shed any substantial light on the everyday lives and practices of young men in a peri-urban community in Sweden? In some sense they do, but in others they fall short. For instance, framing the greasers’ practices within a system of automobility makes it possible to a certain extent to understand and place their motor vehicle culture in a global context. Relating the greasers to other vehicle-oriented cultures give a glimpse of a global phenomenon where cars and motor vehicles are used and related to as more than just transport facilitators. On the other hand, these different cul-
Chapter Seven

tures may share an overarching orientation towards cars or other vehicles, whereas specific practices, the social organization of the groups in question and so forth, can differ. Nevertheless, neither place, age, gender, class nor any other axis of power is considered more than in passing and often only in sweeping terms. Most importantly, my study has exemplified both the meaning the greasers attach to their risk-taking and negotiate in relation to it and how the risk-taking is carried out – and furthermore, how both meaning and practice are comprised in the greasers’ situated, gendered, aged and classed existences.

Secondly, although road deaths and traffic accidents are pointed to as problematic, they have rarely been understood as violations or as a kind of violence in the sense I have argued for in the discussion above. By arguing that risk-taking with motor vehicles in public space is better understood as part of sociocultural scripts of violence, with gendered associations and implications, we also move forward a little in addressing the character of the automobility regime. In this thesis I have illustrated how fun, excitement and thrills are part of the construction of the risk-taking events, and that the potentially harmful consequences are seldom thought of by the greaser men. Furthermore, in order to be perceived as a skilled driver, risk-taking with motor vehicles is not only implicated, it is a necessity. Apparently, the positive outcomes for the individuals in the greaser culture and the affirmation these practices convey for the greaser group as a whole, are highly intertwined with the violating effects. Risk-taking with motor vehicles, then, needs to be addressed as a phenomenon beyond the realm of traffic or traffic-related events. Within the theoretical framework I have argued for in this thesis, risk-taking with motor vehicles is perceived as violating in a much broader sense than simply as traffic violations. In research on mobilities and movement, the violating and violent effects of “the automobility regime” (Böhm et al. 2006) have recently begun to be recognized and theorized (see for instance Böhm et al. 2006, Beckmann 2004, Dant 2004, Featherstone 2004, Redshaw 2007). Böhm et al. (2006) and Conley & Tigar McLaren (2009) discuss automobility in itself as a form of violence, where the car in particular plays a fundamental part in shaping and recreating (hegemonic) experiences and practices. Although these analyzes often lack a more direct empirical connection, the idea that the regime of

\footnote{The references to the violent effects in research on mobilities largely remain on the structural macro-level (or are mentioned as illustrative examples merely in passing without further analysis). The violating effects have been fore fronted in some analyzes on mobilities and movement, still the often highly gendered character of mobility and the affiliated violence has remained unexplored (Balkmar 2007, Balkmar & Joelsson 2008, cf. Uteng & Cresswell 2008).}
Placeness, risk-taking and violations

automobility rests on a foundation of violence is both thoughtprovoking and intriguing. Automobility could thus be seen as a system where the violence inherent in and perpetuated by this system makes it possible to talk of a kind of systemic or structural violence (cf. Žižek 2009, Bourgois 2001). Moreover, in a report from 2005 (Vägverket 2005) concerned with gender equality within the transport sector by the Swedish Road Administration\textsuperscript{151}, traffic accidents are framed not only as a gendered matter, but also as a question of men’s violence. Never before – and never since – have a Swedish authority proposed a link between lethal traffic accidents and men’s violence. This link is not further analyzed, but does propose an interesting break from how traffic accidents are commonly perceived or conceptualized. In this study, I have provided some tools for engaging in the kind of analysis where risk-taking as violations can be linked to the damaging effects of the automobility regime.

Where to from here?

By employing contextualization as an overarching analytical tool, this thesis has provided a thick ethnographic account of young men’s risk-taking with vehicles in a local youth culture. I have argued that this way of approaching risk-taking with motor vehicles enables a deeper understanding of the social character of such activities. In general, the benefits of ethnographic methods in grasping the complexity of everyday life are many. My main contribution with this thesis, then, is to discuss and extend the discussion on young men’s risk-taking with motor vehicles that is rooted in ethnographic material. In effect, I have argued for not only the relevance but also the necessity of moving beyond the scope of traffic violations or traffic space in order to grasp at least part of this complexity. This has entailed a transdisciplinary approach where several angles, perspectives and fields of research have been addressed and scrutinized. In relation to this, I want to point to a few theoretical implications of my study before ending on a more practical note, while also relating to areas of interest that my thesis has not been able to delve into. This section ends the final chapter of my thesis.

Firstly, I have made efforts to enhance the theorization of men’s violence by engaging with a) risk-taking as violation (focusing on dimensions that are rarely seen as violence, those mundane and trivial activities that are practiced every day) and b) risk-taking in relation to age and place. As Tyner (2012: 22) points out, “violence is a practice of both social and spatial con-

\textsuperscript{151} From April 1\textsuperscript{st} 2010 the Swedish Transport Administration.
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trol” and the spatiality of violence must therefore be addressed. In this vein, and secondly, I have striven to enhance theorization about place by engaging with gender, age and men’s violence in the intersections of movement and stability. The ways in which place and the politics of stability continue to be of relevance and need to be addressed are, as I see it, increasingly important, not least with reference to the widespread use of ICTs.

Another future research area might be how places are constructed in relation to race and ethnicity, and more specifically to whiteness. As I pointed out in Chapter Three, through the celebration and maintenance of craftmanship in relation to motor vehicles and the particular position of the Volvo car for the greasers, a link to cultural heritage and notions of tradition, and thus also to a form of nationalism, are upheld. Although I have not been able to expand this discussion here, the issue is worth exploring.

Thirdly, I have pointed to ways which much feminist theory that tends to become hegemonic in the Anglophone world needs to engage more thoroughly with aspects concerning place and placeness. Place here necessarily refers to all kinds of places in rural, urban, peri-urban and sub-urban areas, in metropolitan as well as in non-metropolitan areas, to real and virtual places, but first and foremost to lived places. This has both theoretical and methodological consequences. It entails more than merely paying attention to abstract notions of contextualization, placeness and positioning, namely, to an engagement with the spatial materiality of social life – especially if one claims to theorize social reality. The methodological implications are of course that you start where you are, literally, and engage with everyday life in its sociospatial context from below and not above.

Fourthly, I have provided empirical grounding for how one can research the violent effects of automobility from a qualitative ethnographic vantage point. In relation to the greaser culture, a further possibility would have been to differentiate between various kinds of risk-taking practices and their social and emotional rewards and how they are connected to reinforcing automobility, which I did not engage in because it extended beyond the scope of this thesis. Here a more thorough discussion on gender relations would prove useful, and in relation to the greaser culture, a more detailed investigation of the young greaser women.

In sum, in my analysis of the greasers’ risk-taking practices I have striven to relate to some of the perceived limitations I have identified in previous research and I hope, at least in part, to have accomplished what Tyner (2012: 22) calls for:

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Placeness, risk-taking and violations

A critical approach to space, place, and violence is one that addresses the forms of oppression and inequality wrought by structural and institutional processes; works to overturn the socio-spatial processes that regulate and reproduce social exclusion; remains sensitive to the life experiences of marginalized groups; seeks to be empowering and emancipatory; and promotes political and social change.

One of the most important hopes I have with this thesis is that it proves useful for people working with young people and/or with traffic safety in any capacity. Although some of the topics are discussed at a high level of abstraction and despite the fact that this study is in its format an academic exam, I have continuously made efforts to also keep a non-scholarly audience in mind. On this note, I wish to close this book – not by declaring an end, but by calling for multifaceted discussions and fruitful dialogue on a topic that leaves no one indifferent.


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Appendix 1

Appendix 1. Research participants

The Youth Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Place of residence</th>
<th>Interview</th>
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<td>Sven</td>
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<td>Tom</td>
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<td>Senior high school (KSH)</td>
<td>Toryd</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Kim</td>
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<td>Lillby</td>
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<td>Felix</td>
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<td>Frank</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Johan</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Isak</td>
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<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>?</td>
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<td>Lillby</td>
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<td>Arne</td>
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### Appendix 1

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<td>Together with Saga</td>
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<td>Sune</td>
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<td>Together with Isa</td>
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<td>Tobias</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Lillby</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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</table>

**Storköping senior high school (BSH).** School focused on vocational training. The educational programmes range from a focus on work within industrial technology, plumbing, electricity/energy, hotels and tourism, different types of caregiving (children, elderly etc.) to construction and other types of work.

**Karla senior high school (KSH).** Vocational school similar to BSH.

**Marka senior high school (MSH).** A smaller vocational school with four programmes: electricity and energy, restaurants and food, hotels and tourism and floristry.

**Youth centre staff:**
- Karl (Head), interviewed
- Betty (Vice head)
- Hans, interviewed
- Jonas
- Johanna, interviewed
- Sandra
- Mia
- Agnes
Appendix 1

Lillby High school, grade nine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Algot</td>
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<td>With Kevin &amp; Orvar</td>
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<td>Kevin</td>
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<td>Helena</td>
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Pilot study, Vexby High school in Storköping

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<tr>
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</table>
Appendix 2.

Appendix 2. Interview guide

I. Your day (map, show where you live and how you move)
• Where you live, show on map
• Tell me about a typical day for you. What does it look like?
• Can you show me your way to school on the map?
• What you do after school, also show on the map
• Tell me about a typical weekday (if you go somewhere, show the route on the map) and evening
• A typical weekend – how does it look to you?
• A weekend night. What do you do?
• Seasons (spring, summer, autumn, winter), holidays – is it different then?

II. Places (what do you do there)
• Being young in Lillby – what do you do in your spare time?
• Why do you think young people are out in the evenings and at weekends, when?
• Do you go to the youth centre / the car park / public baths / elsewhere?
• What do you do at the youth centre?
• In the store yard?
• At the public baths?
• Other places where young people in Lillby go to hang out?
• Are there places you avoid during the day? In the evening?
• Would you say that there are places appropriated by certain people or groups?
• Do you think that there are unsafe places in Lillby?
• Is it mostly guys or girls that are out? Why is it like that?
• (In your club / in your sport / what do you do in your leisure time: mostly guys or girls?)
• Would you like to be out more in the evenings / at weekends?

III. Groups / Individuals
• Who do you hang out most with at school? In your spare time? At weekends?
• Do you spend time with the same people at school and in your spare time?
• Are there any groupings at school? How do you know who belongs to which group?
• Are there people who are considered more popular here at school than others?
Appendix 2

• Are there groups who “fight” with each other? Does it show in any particular way?
• Is there a difference between the young people who are very much out in the evenings and those who would rather do other things (staying at home, have other hobbies)?

IV. Transportation
• How do you get to school?
• For hobbies, if you have any?
• Do you have a moped? Moped licence? Other vehicles (EPA, car)?
• What do you use your moped for?
• If you do not have scooter, why not?
• Do you know someone who has a moped?
• Is it considered cooler if you have a moped or have friends with a car?

V. Discuss the views of the young people who spend time at the car park and other places in the local neighbourhood (copy from website)
• Why do you think some do that? What do you think about it?
• Have you experienced / seen it?
• Some things have happened here in Lillby – vandalism at the school and the baths. Do you think it is young people who do these things?
• Some adults seem to blame young people in general. How does it feel to you?
• How do you like to live as a young person in Lillby? Is there anything you would like to change? Is there anything you miss as a youth?
• Someone on the website proposed building a [motorgård] – what do you think about that? Where do you think it would be placed in that case? Do you think young people would stop hanging out in front of the store then?
Appendix 3

Appendix 3. Informed consent

This paper on informed consent is intended for you who take part in my research project on young people’s leisure activities in Lillby. It is written so that you can get information about the project and understand why you have been chosen for it and what your rights are. Read through the paper carefully before signing!

The research is carried out by me, Tanja Joelsson, and I am a PhD student at the Thematic Unit of Gender Studies at Linköping University. I am interested in what young people do in their leisure time and how they move around to different places and would therefore like to interview you.

• It is completely optional for you to participate.
• You can always change your mind even if you have said yes initially. You have the option to withdraw at any time and you do not need to tell me why. However, I would appreciate it if you let me know.
• You will remain anonymous.

The interview will be recorded on tape if you think that is okay. If you want to contact me you can do so via email or mobile phone. My contact details are at the top of the paper.

Here you can sign if you agree to be interviewed by me. Also write down the current date.

_________________________________________ Date ___/___ 20___
Your name

Contact information

Write clearly!

Name: ____________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________

Home telephone number: __________________________

Mobile phone number: _____________________________

E-mail: ___________________________________________
Appendix 4

Appendix 4. Transcription conventions

- **hello** emphasis
- / turn taking
- (LAUGH) extralinguistic practices of importance
- *hello* uttered laughingly
- (...) omitted section