

Claiming the Freeway: Young Male Drivers in Pursuit of Independence, Space and Masculinity

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Motor vehicle crashes constitute a major cause of injury and death in Australia. The prevalence of young males (those aged between 16 and 26 years) within these statistics is predetermined by decisions and social values that are contingent upon the construction of hegemonic masculinity. This article utilises research undertaken in Newcastle, New South Wales, and argues that young males adopt a driving behaviour, characterised by aggressive speeding, so that they can distinguish themselves as being different from female and older male drivers. It is also argued that young male drivers engage in unconventional driving behaviour in order to express their driving prowess and to claim and dominate a “free” space between home and work spheres. Additionally, the concept that gaining a driving licence serves as “a rite of passage” is explored.

INTRODUCTION

On the Sydney-Newcastle Freeway, oblivious to the passing traffic, a couple aged in their forties stand gazing at a wreath placed on a roadside barrier marking the fatal motor vehicle crash of a 19 year old male. It is an all too familiar scene. The most enduring and powerful stereotype of fast and aggressive driving is associated with young males. The central aim of this article is to demonstrate how specific constructions and performances of masculinity by young male drivers are constituted geographically and reinforced as representations of hegemonic masculinity. The concept that obtaining a driving licence provides a “rite of passage” from youth to adulthood will also be examined.

Within Australia, road fatality is a leading cause of death for males. Young males constitute the group most likely to engage in reckless driving practices (Knott 1994; Thombs et al. 1994; Mundt, Ross and Harrington 1992). Yet, issues of gender have been largely ignored as a causal factor for road traffic crashes (Walker 1998; Connell et al. 1997). Instead, much of the literature on young male drivers attributes their involvement in road traffic

crashes to the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs (Donovan 1993; Mundt, Ross and Harrington 1992; Asch and Levy 1990) or as a behavioural syndrome in youth (Thombs et al. 1994). In an investigation of roadside memorials which overwhelmingly commemorated the death of young males, Hartig and Dunn (1998) argued that roadside memorials should be seen as artefacts of a hegemonic and damaging version of masculinity. Similarly, research that examined discourses of car culture highlighted the way in which car ownership enabled working class males to gain respect among their peers, express their skills with technology and assert their domination over females (Walker 1998). In other words, neither the motor vehicle nor driving behaviour is gender neutral.

There is nothing innately masculine or feminine about driving a motor vehicle. To obtain a licence males and females have to demonstrate the acquisition of the same skills. Similarly, both male and female drivers have to legally adhere to the same set of road regulations. However, although it is recognised that female drivers are increasingly becoming more aggressive drivers, and therefore are not excluded from the category of being high-risk drivers, statistically male drivers remain more at risk of being involved in road traffic crashes. For this reason, this research was not concerned with female drivers, but instead concentrated on young male drivers and explored the way in which the construction of masculinity contributed to these statistics.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses research carried out in Newcastle, New South Wales, that investigated the relationship between young male drivers' attitudes towards road safety and their driving behaviour. The findings were based on a questionnaire survey that was completed by 497 males aged between 16 and 26 years (Hartig 1997). As the research aimed to incorporate young males from all socio-economic backgrounds, questionnaires were distributed across various educational institutions as well as to those in the workforce and unemployed youth. The final representation of survey respondents was 140 high school students, 113 University of Newcastle students, 181 TAFE students and 69 non-students. It is worth noting that by far the greatest response rate came from TAFE institute students. From a total of 250 questionnaires (including the pilot of 50) the response rate of 181 represents a return rate of 72 per cent. This indicates that either this group is generally neglected in surveys, and/or the topic was of particular interest to them. Accessing young males outside educational institutions proved problematic. Indeed, the bias towards students meant that the 83 per cent of the respondents were 21 years or younger. Although it would seem to have been advantageous to have had a higher participation rate with males aged over 21 years, as the road traffic accident statistics demonstrated that the most vulnerable drivers are those aged between 17 and 19 years this was not considered too problematic.

The questionnaire encompassed a number of basic demographic questions relating to age, education level, socio-economic status (of their parents) as well as questions regarding driving experience, driving convictions, attitudes towards driving safety issues (such as road safety slogans and television commercials) and their perceptions of their driving competence. The questionnaire included a range of questions with scales, developed to quantifiably measure attitudes towards road safety as well as open-ended questions. With very few exceptions the respondents took advantage of the opportunity to comment in their own words. Their comments revealed a comprehensive picture of the perception and attitudes of young male drivers about their driving abilities and road safety. It is interesting to note that there was no correlation with the socio-economic status or education with young male drivers' attitudes towards the above stated issues. All drivers under 21 years tended to overestimate their driving ability and underestimate their lack of experience and chances of being involved in an accident. Conversely, older male respondents, that is males over the age of 21 years, were more modest about their driving ability and showed greater awareness of the hazardous driving behaviour of younger males.

Table 1: General Features of Road Traffic Crashes in Hunter Region

Crash features	Males 16-26 yrs Per cent	Females 16-26 yrs Per cent	All drivers Per cent
Fatal crash	6.2	3.7	5.7
Restraint used (yes)	68.3	93.4	78.3
Cause: Disobeying traffic sign	3.3	5.4	5.6
Cause: Loss of control	18.3	14.6	12.1
Cause: Excessive speed	1.5	0.1	0.4
Occurrence: During hours of darkness	39.8	28.8	25.3
Base Count	4339	2263	18468

Source: Road Traffic Authority (Hunter Region) July 1991–July 1995

Part of the research undertaken involved an indepth analysis of official road traffic crash data for the Hunter region. This analysis identified major demographic and gender characteristics of those most likely to be involved in road traffic statistics. Close to 24 per cent of all crashes were attributed to males aged 16 to 26 years compared to 12.2 percent for females of the same age cohort. In relation to the statistics for this age cohort, fifty per cent of all accidents recorded in the Hunter region were attributed to male drivers aged between 17 and 20 years. Moreover, males in this age group were more likely to be involved in a fatal crash, and experienced more crashes during the hours of darkness (Table 1). Because road traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for young males throughout Australia it is argued that these trends are not place specific. Indeed, the dilemma of the high death rates of young male drivers is widely recognised. It is perhaps too easy to attribute such rates to speeding and drink-driving practices. Instead, these statistics should be seen as a demonstration of the ways in which masculinity is constructed and expressed.

SOCIAL (RE)PRODUCTIONS OF GENDER

It is widely accepted that gender is not innate in the individual but is instead a learned social construction (Bell et al. 1994; Connell 1993; Jackson 1991; Messner 1991; Kimmel 1987). In other words, although their sex may be male or female, men and women are not born, they are made. Males and females make themselves by reading and learning the "gender scripts" within their specific social and historical context (Bird, 1996; Jackson 1991; Kimmel 1987). Throughout their lifecycle, males and females actively construct and reconstruct their gendered identities. Gender is therefore a powerful ideological device that legitimates the choices and limits of males and females (West and Zimmerman 1991).

Through their performances as drivers, young males construct a version of masculinity that is hegemonic. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity within the context of patriarchy and argues that hegemonic masculinity is when "one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted" (Connell 1995, 77). Hegemony can be seen as being an ideology that becomes "taken for granted as the way things are and should be" (Pyke 1996, 529). From the perspective of understanding the inequalities of power between men and women, concepts of hegemonic masculinity have become important within an analysis of gender relationships (Agostino 1997; Connell 1995; Segal 1990; Kimmel 1987). Not only do men as a group exert power over women as a group, but the historically derived definitions of masculinity and femininity reproduce those power relations. Masculinity has become associated with those traits that imply authority and mastery, and femininity with traits that suggest passivity and subordination. However, other theorists such as Donaldson (1993) have argued that hegemonic masculinity is not so much concerned with men's control over women, but rather the control of ruling class men over other men. Although

accepting the plurality of masculinities, the notion of hegemonic (dominant) masculinity is important in this analysis because it establishes “the ideal” for young male drivers. Namely, risk-taking driving provides solidarity among young males, and asserts the naturalness of male domination as well as the subordination of women.

The family context

Gender is a learned social construct concerned with not what one *is* but what one *does*, and is therefore determined by the acceptance of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for the performance of one’s sex category. From a young age defined gender roles grounded in societal attitudes are constructed and reinforced. Notions of masculinity and femininity are based on gender difference. The formation and learning of gender begins in the home, continues at school, in the workplace and within the social network. In a study that compared female and male children’s spatial cognition, Matthews (1987) argued that boys possessed greater ability to represent space more accurately than girls. The marked difference between male and female children’s environmental cognition was attributed to the fact that the male child is generally allowed to explore more freely and play more adventurously (Miles 1991; Matthews 1987).

Valentine (1997) investigated parental attitudes towards the vulnerability of their sons and daughters and discovered that parenting was conducted on traditional gender lines. Mothers took responsibility for caring for their children while the fathers took a more disciplinary role within the family. Fathers play a significant role in the early construction of masculinity as they show a far greater anxiety than mothers that their sons grow up to be “regular guys” (Miles 1991). Becoming a “regular guy” means that boys learn and adopt behaviours “such as competition, toughness and winning at all costs” because they are culturally valued aspects of masculinity (Messner 1991, 62). Because driving is considered a “male thing”, fathers play a greater role than mothers in fostering an interest in motor vehicles and driving skills in their sons (Walker 1998). Such views were clearly validated in the survey conducted in the Newcastle area where almost 57 per cent of the respondents noted that their fathers taught them to drive and were influential in their early driving behaviour. In comparison only 16 per cent noted that they had received driving instruction from their mothers.

As Connell (1998) argues, there are many ways of learning to be a male. Related to this learning is the need to prove oneself according to external rules (Jeleniewski Sideler 1995). Peer pressure and competitiveness are forms of living up to external rules. This begins in school when boys find themselves competing against each other to impress their “mates.” Competition with other males continues into adult life. Whether it is expressed through sporting, work and/or social activities, it provides a stage for establishing oneself as an individual, as a member of a group, and is also appropriately masculine (Bird

1996). Extreme masculine stereotypes are readily available in macho Rambo type movies and further typified in many male sports such as motor racing (Edgley 1987). It is argued that the challenge for being quintessentially male is driven by the fear of feminine identification (Steinberg 1993; Segal 1990). Being “male” inevitably involves exaggerated and aggressive masculine posturing. Adopting hyper-masculine driving performances assists in defining the essential nature of males as male. All too frequently the construction of hegemonic masculinity involves violence, danger, and sometimes death.

SPACES AS PRODUCTS OF GENDER

Part of the notion that gender is socially and culturally constructed is that it occurs in space. Using the term “social spatialisation,” Shields (1991, 6-7) argues that spaces are never simply just a place. Instead they are sites that provide a context for social action. Geographers have discussed extensively the various ways in which space is gendered (Bell et al. 1994; Valentine, 1993; Bondi 1992). The construction of masculinity invariably excludes the feminine by designating boundaries around what is perceived as male spaces (Frosh 1995). Despite increasing rates of females in the paid work force, society on the whole perceives women in a “traditional role,” as being chiefly a homemaker and carer of children. Men on the other hand are perceived as head of the household and the “breadwinner” (Winchester 1992). Accordingly, domestic places are viewed as women’s space (Phua and Yeoh 1998) and the workplace as male space (Connell 1995; Willis 1979). Everyday experiences and the (re)construction of masculinity and femininity are therefore separated socially and spatially. Such constructions of place based on gender that reflect and reinforce gender inequalities have been well-documented (Woodward 1998; Frosh 1995; Pratt and Hanson 1994; Valentine 1993). However, the division between male space (the work place) and female space (the home) which Frosh (1995) described as separated by a wilderness, is becoming blurred (Smith and Winchester 1998). Nonetheless, these in-between spaces remain gendered. More importantly, all spaces serve as a spatial context to construct gendered identities and provide a place of social action (Phua and Yeoh 1998). Jeleniewski Seidler (1995) asks – what spaces do boys grow up into becoming men and how is this related to different masculinities? It is argued here that spaces are not gender neutral or static. Young males negotiate constructions of masculinity, which involves a “mobile space,” in order to appropriate and dominate a space between home space and work space. Public roads are perceived as a “free” space to claim and dominate. Through their driving performances young male drivers construct a highly gendered stratified space. The degree to which young males use driving performances to reflect and (re)construct hegemonic masculinity provides a useful basis for understanding their high rates of crash involvement.

A RITE OF PASSAGE

One of the major findings that emerged from the survey was that males acquired a drivers' licence in order to gain "independence" from their family (see also Walker 1998). In reply to the reason why they learn to drive, many respondents wrote comments like "I wanted to break free from home" (R#311), "to get away from the house" (R#117) or "to get out without my parents taking me" (R#275). This sense of independence was often accompanied by feelings of powerfulness. As one respondent noted, learning to drive gave "the freedom to go where I wanted, when I wanted without having to rely on my 'oldies'" (R#496). Embedded within such sentiments is the rejection of childhood and the construction of a new self. This period of change is summed up by another respondent who stated "learning to drive is the most important step to being an adult" (R#259). The licence itself provides much more than gaining the right to drive a vehicle. It serves as a metaphor for their new identity, the gaining of power and autonomy. Therefore the licence represents the means for the transition from childhood to adulthood. The motor vehicle provides the transport between the two phases and in itself creates a space, albeit a mobile space. However, mastery of the motor vehicle often involves risky, dangerous and competitive driving (Farrow and Brissing 1990).

Some researchers have suggested an analogy of the "rites of passage" associated with traditional societies with the damaging behavioural practices of young males (Miles 1991; Farrow and Brissing 1990; Segal 1990; Pleck 1981). A rite of passage was the term used by Arnold van Gennep in 1907 that referred to those rituals that marked the passage of an individual through life cycle stages. Within the rite of passage Van Gennep identified three phases. Firstly, separation: in which the person disengages from an existing social role; secondly, transition: in which the person adapts or changes to fit a new role; and thirdly, incorporation: in which the person integrates the new role into the self (Shouten 1991). Thus the rites of passage signify a change in status, a transition from one social category to another. In the case of young males, learning to drive can be viewed as phase one, when they attempt to separate themselves from childhood and its dependencies. The early years of driving can be seen as the transition period; a period when young males attempt to redefine their masculinity between youth and manhood. Within such a transition not only do they want to be distinguished from the "boys" but by becoming "men" they must also be distinguished from women (Segal 1990, 132).

Within traditional societies adolescent tribal initiation rites into manhood marked the separation from childhood and identification with females. The male child entering manhood is endowed with power and, generally, control over resources. It is not an easy passage. Ceremonies generally involve the infliction of ritualised violence and pain. Such pain is endured to promote bonding and identification with other males in the community.

Farrow and Brissing (1990) argue that western society, lacking a “rites of passage,” utilises competence over the motor vehicle to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood. Motor vehicle competence transcends cultures. In Western Australia it has been noted that Aboriginal youth that have experienced cultural dislocation are replacing traditional rites of passage with car theft (Beresford and Omaji 1996). It could also be argued that economically marginalised Aboriginal youth engage in car theft in order to gain a sense of power and independence in the same way as their non-indigenous counterparts. A rite of passage equally applies to females. Winchester, McGuirk and Everett (1999) investigating “Schoolies Week” on the Queensland Gold Coast have argued that the holidays taken by Australian male and female students on completion of their final high school exams constituted a “rite of passage” marking the transition from youth to adulthood. This transition from schoolchild to adulthood involved hyper practices that necessarily implicated the body: having sex and getting drunk.

Undeniably, the motor vehicle serves as a means of engendering power through independence from the family milieu. Moreover, gaining mastery of a motor vehicle coincides with other “rites of passage” for Australian youth. At the age of 17 and 18 years they are in the process of studying for their Higher School Certificates, leaving school, gaining employment or placement in tertiary institutions. More significantly, most young adolescents within this age group have had some initial experiences with sex, drugs and alcohol (see Winchester, McGuirk and Everett 1999). These acts represent major milestones involving decisions that may affect their future lives. All these factors contribute to a somewhat traumatic transition from childhood to adulthood. The link between childhood and adulthood is the possession of a driving licence. The ability to drive also provides young males with the means to appropriate a space in which to construct a new gendered identity.

BECOMING THE MAN

As argued above, gender is a learned social construct developed through a complex process of interaction within a specific culture. Gender roles are therefore necessarily socially emergent and grounded in behaviour. The following section uses quotes from open-ended questions in the survey and exemplifies the ways in which young males in the Newcastle region construct a version of hegemonic masculinity. This construction is related to the gendered identity of young males that asserts the naturalness of male prowess over technology and the claiming of space through the subordination of the feminine.

Gendering technology

Cockburn (1985) and Leckie (1996) have demonstrated the way in which males

have utilised technological skills within the workplace to affirm the social and economic superiority of masculinity and the inferiority of femininity. Similarly, Willis (1977) argued that working class youth transformed the stigma of factory manual labour into a positive expression of masculine power. Prowess over technology has therefore become a culturally valued aspect of masculinity. Such attitudes may begin at an early age. In the home, sons rather than daughters and fathers rather than mothers are the main users of personal computers and video games (Wheelock 1992). In the survey conducted in Newcastle, almost 70 per cent of respondents noted that they had driven before they were legally old enough to hold a licence. The average age when these males had their first driving experience was 9 years. Several respondents recalled sitting on their father's lap as he drove. Many others noted how they had driven from a "young age" on relative's properties, beaches etc. Indeed their comments about "paddock bashers" indicated that it was a commonly accepted practice to drive "off road" before being legally old enough to acquire a Learner's Licence. Early age driving was invariably conducted with permission and/or accompanied by their father as the following quotations from the survey indicate: "Driving in the state forests with father at age 11" (R#054); "From an early age on a property with assistance from my father" (R#153); "Age 10 taking dad to the pub" (R#003).

It was self evident from the survey that young males were given parental permission to drive in "off road" situations under the assumption that they could not come to harm, or conversely, hurt anyone else. However, the "child play" context of their early driving experiences has the potential to encourage a confidence in their driving skills well beyond their actual ability. Certainly, concepts concerning the destructive capability of a motor vehicle are beyond the comprehension of a nine year old child. Findings from the survey demonstrated that driving a motor vehicle had many dimensions. It assisted in socialising boys to become men, it gave the individuals a space where they were able to express directly the power of their vehicle (through speeding) and to define their masculinity by facilitating superior driving skills.

Speeding was the dominant cause for traffic offences and crashes that had involved respondents. Many of the men surveyed recognised the dangers of speeding for other drivers in relation to the main causes of traffic accidents, but failed to attribute this risk to their own driving practices. Indeed, many argued that speeding was not a dangerous practice. "I always remain in control of my vehicle" wrote one young male (R#216). Being fined, losing driving points and even losing their licence was considered more an inconvenience than something that changed their driving behaviour. Indeed, the detailed attention given to describing the offences (particularly speeding offences) indicated that many young drivers interpreted the loss of points, fines and even losing a licence as a "badge of honour." Excessive speeding was generally normalised as being "a male thing, the speed and the adrenalin rush" (R#487) or rationalised by stating that "speeding allows people to test their driving

capabilities” (R#311). Another respondent reasoned that “if you learn to control a car when you are young by driving quickly, then you will have less accidents when you are older” (R#429).

However, as the following quotations illustrate, many of the respondents recognised the pressures of conforming to peer-pressure and the desire to exhibit a performance of masculinity: “There will always be peer pressure to hoon” (R#223); “The majority of drivers (especially male) are pressured at some time to drive very fast, and I have experienced this often” (R#454); “Men have to have the fastest car” (R#188); “Men will always speed. There is determination for social acceptance” (R#477). Interestingly, all males regardless of education and/or socio-economic background confirmed an acceptance that speeding was “normal” behaviour of males. Older males (those aged between 22 and 26 years) usually made comments relating to the age of those that they perceived as participating in high speed activities. For example, speeding was generally perceived as the activity of “boys trying to be a hero” (R#455); “boys showing off in front of their friends” (R#477); “teenage idiots trying to prove a point – it relates to the feeling that they get when they ‘drag’ someone off” (R#463).

It is important to note that the older drivers in this survey, those in their twenties, differentiated themselves from the teenage driver who was regarded as the most reckless. However, there was a note of inevitability within their statements. In other words, they were perceived as just behaving like young male drivers. This notion is substantiated by the comment that speeding was “hard wired biologically into young people, especially men” (R#507). Moreover, it became evident from their responses that males used speed as a way of claiming space and distinguishing their driving practices from other road users, notably females.

Claiming a space

In the survey the respondents were asked if they would like to comment on the statement that “drivers aged under 26 years are most at risk of being involved in an crash.” Gender was deliberately not stated. Overwhelmingly the respondents denied the validity of this statement or denied applicability to themselves or to other young male drivers. In response to the statement it was commonly argued that male drivers were better drivers because they had quicker reflexes and/or were more alert, and because they spent more time in their cars. For example, “male drivers under 26 are better drivers, because they freshly know the road rules and usually have more driving experience, because they drive a lot when they get a new car” (R#007). Similarly, another respondent noted that he was “a better driver than most drivers because [he] travelled a lot” (R#125). Overwhelmingly, those perceived as being inferior drivers and more likely to be the cause of traffic crashes were “old ladies and women” (R#002); “old people and women” (R#065); “silly old men and women” (R#151). Some respondents went to considerable lengths to assert this

belief:

I would trust my own driving any day over my sisters, mothers, and especially my grandmothers. I think that we are more impatient drivers and maybe a little reckless at times, but we're still better drivers than old people, girls and women (R#161).

I don't mean to be sexist in any way whatsoever, but the worse drivers I've met with were female, honest (R#499).

Although one respondent offered an explanation in that he believed "elderly drivers and women cannot cope with modern day traffic conditions" (R#007), many others argued that women drivers and old men were not good drivers because they tended to be too cautious or did not drive to the conditions. In other words they went too slow. These quotations demonstrate a masculine strategy to exclude the feminine by repudiating the ability of females and elderly males (generally males aged over 50 years) to be competent drivers. By constructing women and the elderly as ineffective drivers rendered these groups as powerless within a space that these young males sought to appropriate and dominate.

As argued earlier, spaces are the product of gender where particular groups through their construction of gender and performance in space are able to appropriate and dominate places. It can be argued that young people in their mid to late teens no longer want to be identified with home space (a female sphere). They are clearly not yet firmly enough established in the work force to make an impression on work space (an older male sphere). Nonetheless, there exists a desire by young males to exert power and influence between these two spaces. Newcastle is a ninety minute drive north from Sydney along the F3 Freeway. Not surprisingly, as it is a route familiar to Newcastle residents, the Freeway was mentioned by many of the respondents. It represented a space where they could (re)construct a new identity. It was a space where they could challenge the security of home and the perceived economic power of older males.

The Sydney-Newcastle Freeway is a place where space and time intersect and are reconstituted as representations of power. The Freeway can be seen as a metaphor for young male drivers' independence from childhood, and also as a "free space" for them to appropriate. This space is deliberately gendered spatially and temporally. Many males who responded to the survey question which asked how road safety could be improved, suggested denying elderly people and women a licence and increasing speed limits. Indeed, several respondents questioned the validity of current speed limits especially on the Freeway: "Why is the speed limit only 110 km/h when cars can travel up to 240 km/h?" (R#289); "Speed limits should be increased on open roads such as freeways" (R#462); "There is a need to increase speed on major roads by 10-20 km/h to keep up the flow" (R#077). Leaving aside the comment that "if speed limits were increased, the incidence of aggressive driving would be reduced" (R#251), it was clear that speeding enabled young males to

differentiate themselves from female and older male drivers and claim a space for themselves. Their disdain for safety reflects a regressive machismo that becomes a symbol of superiority over females. It could be argued that young males deliberately engaged in excessive speeding and risky driving behaviour to reinforce their competence in driving skills and to conform to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, namely as an expression of hegemony masculine power.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored how specific constructions and performances of masculinity by young male drivers are geographically constituted and reinforced as representations of hegemonic masculinity. It has been suggested that, lacking a formalised “rite of passage”, young males use their mastery over motor vehicles to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood. Gaining a driving licence provides them with the mechanism to achieve personal autonomy and detachment from their childhood. In other words, driving provides them with the personal power to independently establish themselves as an individual, as part of a group and more importantly as appropriately masculine. Underpinning the notion that gender is socially and culturally constructed is the concept that it occurs in space. Thus space cannot be separated from the ways in which people live their lives, or construct their gender identities. For young males, who have not yet established power within the work space and yet wish to detach themselves from home space, the motor vehicle represents a mobile place which enables them to claim and dominate a “free” space between these two spheres.

Within Australia, motor vehicle crashes constitute a major cause of injury and death. The prevalence of young males within these statistics is predetermined by decisions and social values that are contingent upon the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Young males adopt a driving behaviour, characterised by aggressive speeding, so that they can distinguish themselves as being different from female and older male drivers. It also enables them to express their expertise and power over technology and to maintain their definition of masculinity and their self esteem. As argued elsewhere (Hartig and Dunn 1998; Walker 1998; Hartig 1997), reducing road toll statistics will necessitate redefining gender roles.

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