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"An excellent collection of chapters critiquing the ongoing commonsense notion ... that there is a crisis of masculinity. The chapters are united in their deconstruction of this notion, presenting instead a range of portraits of modern masculinities. It will be of interest to students and researchers in a number of different fields, most notably in gender studies and the sociology of youth." – Charlie Walker, University of Southampton, UK

"Challenging the assumption that masculinity is in crisis by outlining how social change has had a positive impact upon the identity of boys and men, this book presents a wide ranging set of chapters that place contemporary masculinity in a more inclusive, rather than orthodox, state of flux. Educators, researchers and students interested in the changing nature of masculinity will find the book engaging and highly informative with the collection of chapters it contains and the research that has been conducted within them." – Jamie Cleland, Loughborough University, UK

According to social commentators, masculinity is in crisis as a result of profound social transformation. This kind of public discussion of the behaviours of boys and men points to a presumed need for policy intervention to act as a corrective to the apparent crisis in masculinity which presents (young) men as both at risk and also a risk to others. This is counter to recent scholarship that has documented positive changes in the performances and expression of contemporary masculinities. Such academic research has suggested that we are witnessing the emergence of more inclusive masculinities, no longer predicated on homophobia, marginalization or subordination. This edited collection critically interrogates both sets of claims, by deconstructing and rejecting the masculinity in crisis discourse, before engaging in an internal debate about the implications of social change upon the identities of contemporary boys and men and for the ways in which we theorise contemporary masculinities.

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‘We’re Different from Everyone Else’: Contradictory Working-Class Masculinities in Contemporary Britain

Michael R.M. Ward

Abstract: Alongside industrial change, social, cultural and political traditions have altered youth transitions from school to work. A ‘crisis’ of masculinity has also been reported to have developed alongside these changes, with working-class men in particular struggling to adapt. This chapter looks at the experiences of those who embrace a contemporary form of youth culture known as the ‘alternative scene’. These young men were often alienated, bullied and victimised for their apparent non-normative performances of masculinity in their community. However, I suggest that these non-normative performances of masculinity continue to evidence many traditional discourses that contradict their own ‘alternative’ displays.

Keywords: alternative scene; masculinities; marginalised masculinities; place; social class; youth culture


Introduction

The shift to adulthood for young working-class men in particular was once inextricably linked to labour. However, due to economic restructuring over the past half century, working-class young men are no longer likely to be ‘learning to labour’ (Willis 1977) but ‘learning to serve’ (McDowell 2000). The performances of a masculine self, which accompany these newer industries, are also highly contradictory to what preceded them (Kenway et al. 2006, Walkerdine 2010, McDowell 2012, Roberts 2013). These changes in status and forms of employment patterns have also been accompanied by a common assumption that appears to have developed in the media and public policy since the mid-1990s indicating that there is an apparent ‘crisis’ in contemporary forms of masculinity (MacInnes 1998, Clare 2000, Morgan 2006). Men, it has been claimed, are now the new disadvantaged and are increasingly seen as struggling in contemporary society. A persistent media discourse suggests it is now girls who are achieving in schools and becoming the more advantaged group to the supposed disadvantage of boys (Weiner et al. 1997, Segal 2007, Francis et al. 2012). These arguments of ‘crisis’ are further manifested through uncertainties around social roles, role models, absent fathers, sexuality, high rates of suicide, truancy levels and the use of violence by young men (for an excellent summary of these issues see Beynon 2002). However, what some studies have shown is that the loss of well paid, secure, industrial and manufacturing jobs, which has deeply affected the towns and cities that relied on these industries, overtly disadvantages some subgroups of men over others (see MacLeod 1995, Kenway et al. 2006, Weis 2008). As studies with young men have shown over the last decade (Frosh et al. 2002, McDowell 2003, Nayak 2006, Ingram 2011, Ingram and Waller Chapter 3 this volume) the crisis of school to successful adult futures may not really be linked to a ‘crisis’ of masculinity at all, but more to one of social class inequality. The development of this ‘crisis’ discourse overtakes other issues of poverty, racism and structural inequalities that impact on wider society. These factors have been increasingly under reported in the recent debate within policy and the media that have emerged following MP Diane Abbot’s speech in the spring of 2013 (see Syal 2013). I suggest that these issues are being structured around a discourse which is as a result of a so-called war on boys (Centre for Social Justice 2013, Hoff-Sommers 2013).
In this chapter, I consider how a particular group of young, white working-class men, who I term The Emos, were dealing with industrial change and this supposed ‘crisis’ or ‘war’ on boys. I begin by outlining the socio-economic context of the region – where the research was conducted – before moving on to outline the work of Goffman, which I use to theorise these young men’s performance of masculinity through a particular ‘alternative’ music scene that distanced them from their peers. Drawing on ethnographic material, I illustrate how their contemporary displays of masculinity, rather than offering an alternative form of manhood, were a re-traditionalisation of older displays of working-class masculinity, through pain, heroism, physical toughness and acts of homophobia.

Deindustrialization and the South Wales valleys: Young men in changing times

The South Wales valleys were once major contributors to the British coal industry (Williams 1985). As the industrial regions developed, the South Wales coalfield encompassed ‘only a fifth of the total Welsh land mass’ (Day 2002: 29), yet came to contain over two-thirds of Wales’ population. Yet, despite periods of extreme growth, the severe depression of the interwar years exposed the region’s reliance on heavy industry and a slow decline began. The Conservative government’s restructuring policies of the 1980s and onwards into the 1990s, especially, ensured that the region really began to change and underwent rapid deindustrialisation (Williams 1985, Smith 1999, Day 2002). This acute collapse, coupled with the decline of the manufacturing industry, led to a drastic increase in economic inactivity (see Fevre 1999). The area is now characterised by what Adamson (2008: 21) terms a ‘triangle of poverty’, with low levels of educational attainment and high levels of health and housing inequalities across the region (see also Gorard et al. 2004).

These transformations of the industrial base of the region have led to changes in the relationship between work and masculinity. A strong division of labour once accompanied these communities where distance from anything seen as ‘feminine’ was essential for a strong masculinity, that which would enable the communities to survive (Walkerdine 2010). Men earned respect for working arduously and ‘doing a hard job well and being known for it’ (Willis 1977: 52). Kenway and Kraak (2004) suggest that these roles were often seen as heroic with punishing physical labour that involved different degrees of manual skill and bodily toughness, creating a tough, stoic masculinity (Ward 2014). However, in areas where heavy industry has declined (such as the South Wales valleys) traditional masculine identities may have been challenged, but the attitudes to work and identity are still intrinsically connected to the community in which young people are brought. To be seen as a ‘proper’ boy or man from the South Wales valleys, an archetype of masculinity associated with an older world of industrial work, must still be outwardly performed through ‘masculine’ affirming practices of playing sports, engaging in physical and aggressive behaviours and certain ideas of male embodiment. The expulsion of the feminine or homosexuality is also an essential aspect in this performance.

Masculinity as dramaturgical performances

The symbolic interactionist perspective sees gender as representing a range of dramaturgical performances that individuals display through a number of face-to-face interactions within different settings and situations (Goffman 1959, 1977, West and Zimmerman 1987, Brickell 2005, Schnick and Schwalbe 2009). As West and Zimmerman (1987: 137) propose ‘doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential or biological’. This perspective argues that therefore that femininities and masculinities are not instinctive or innate biological accomplishments, but are undertakings of human behaviour which appear ‘natural’ because individuals gain knowledge of and adhere to strict social codes and signifying practices learned through the interaction order (Goffman, 1983). These expressions are then performed through a number of acts, or displays which convey to others how we regard them and indicate how individuals interact with others during a range of social situations.

In Goffman’s most renowned work The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1956 1959), his dramaturgical framework is laid out to represent the conduct of individuals’ interactions. He uses the stage metaphors of ‘front’ (made up of setting, appearance and manner) and ‘back’ regions to illustrate how the self is a social product of performances that individuals or ‘teams’ of individuals (Grazian 2007, Hughey 2011) display in different situations. Goffman (1959: 32) argues that the front-stage or
front region is the part of the performance that functions 'to define the situation for those who observe the performance' (Goffman 1959: 32). The front then is the 'expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance'. These are the scenic parts of the performance and the stimuli, which tell us about the performers' social status and the interaction role that is being performed in a given situation. A large number of different routines can also be presented behind the same front. This means that there is not always a perfect fit between the character of a performance and the socialised guise. Goffman (1959: 85) also uses the term 'team' to refer to sets of individuals who 'co-operate in staging a single routine'. These cooperations then help express meanings within different social relations. The overall team impression can be seen as a performance alongside the individual acts, through forms of impression management. The back region or back-stage, which occurs behind the front and the team performances, is further defined by Goffman (1959: 114) as 'a place, related to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course'. Away from the front, things can be adjusted and changed. Although I acknowledge that for every front performance, there is another region behind it, due to the limitations of space in this chapter, I will only concentrate here on the front displays of masculinity by one group of young men, who I term The Emos, who at first seemed to perform their masculinities in a very different way from their peers. However, as I go on to illustrate, I suggest that The Emos who embraced the trans-global form of youth culture known as the 'alternative scene', continue to evidence many traditional discourses that contradict their own 'alternative' displays.

The study and methods

This chapter draws on findings from an Economic and Social Research Council-funded ethnographic study, which was conducted over a two-and-a-half-year period, and looked at the diversity of a group of white, working-class, young men within the former industrial town of Cwm Dyffryn situated in the South Wales Valleys. The investigation focussed on how masculinities were formed, articulated and negotiated by one school year group at the end of their compulsory schooling and then to subsequently follow them through their different post-16 educational pathways. This was conducted in the same school sixth form (ages 16–18) and within other educational institutions in the locale that some of the young men attended. Having personally grown up there, the research area was well known to me, enabling me to form close relationships with many respondents through a shared biographical history. Access was granted by the head teacher of the high school where much of the research was conducted. The fieldwork included participant observation supported by extensive fieldnotes, focus group interviews, ethnographic conversations and more formally recorded one-on-one interviews over the research period. These interviews were fully transcribed and, along with the detailed fieldnotes, coded using a CAQDAS package for key themes. Different groups or teams (Goffman 1959) of working-class young men were identified and alongside The Emos reported here, others included The Geeks (those young men who worked hard to achieve academically), the Valley Boys (young men who came from families that would not have traditionally continued into post-compulsory education and occupied the hegemonic position in the school) and other young men who crossed friendship groups and adopted multiple presentations of self (see Ward 2013, 2014). The data analysed here draw primarily from one friendship group of young men. Their 'front' performance of masculinity made them stand out from their peers; they differed in the ways they constructed their identities against the school and the locality compared to the other boys in their year group.

The 'alternative scene' and being an 'emo'

The 'alternative scene' revolves around a combination of guitar-based bands stemming from broad globalised genres of non-mainstream music (Moore 2005). 'Alternative' can be used as an umbrella term for a music scene with fluid, flexible boundaries, which can incorporate many sub-divisions of punk, different forms of heavy metal, nu metal (Harris 2007), hard-core, glam, thrash, grunge, riot grrrl (Moore 2010), emo (House of Emo 2010) and the goth scene (Hodkinson 2002). Multiple forms of dance and violent body movements, such as moshing, slam dancing and crowd surfing accompany the live arena with many of these activities being carried out in spaces known as 'pits' (Tsitos 1999). Riches (Chapter 6, this volume) also suggested that these rituals allow for men to play out homosocial relations within an aggressive, physically
demanding environment, offering men opportunities to embody and perform multiple masculinities within this interaction space. The broad scene is also marked with different clothing fashions, but these are frequently combined together to make a complex appearance. These incorporate tight or over-sized jeans, T-shirts emblazoned with slogans or band logos, canvas or chunky trainers, heavy boots, dark or colourful belts with big buckles, hooded jumpers and jackets. Hair is often straight and long (sometimes pulled down over one eye) and dyed in various shades, but usually black. Tattoos, facial and other body piercings are also popular. Leisure pursuits or 'extreme' sports loosely associated with the music, such as skateboarding, BMX riding, surfing and snowboarding also accompanied the scene. Holly Kruse (1993) argues that the loose term of 'alternative' music also means that 'local identities and traditions interact with relatively coherent translocal frames of reference' (Kruse 1993, cited in Hodkinson 2002:27). The shared task of networks, communications and commerce can and does connect people with each other.

When I first met the key members of The Emos friendship group — Bruce, Clumpsy, Jelly Belly, Jack and Tommy — they were coming to the end of their final year of compulsory schooling (Year 11) and aged between 15 and 16. Over the time, I was acquainted with them and as their educational pathways changed, other young men and women were introduced to the group. Jenkins, Dai and Billy-Joe became friends with Clump and Jelly Belly at a local Further Education (FE) college and they performed together in different guitar-based bands playing music in pubs and clubs across the region. Brittany and Rosie also became part of the wider group when they became romantically involved with Clump and Bruce, respectively, and would attend live music events with them, standing at the front of the crowd closest to the stage when the different bands played.

In keeping with the scene that I outlined earlier, and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework to understand this interaction order, one of the ways these young men's personal front performance of masculinity was displayed was through their distinctive style of clothing. When not in school uniform, they tended to dress in baggy trousers or very tight skinny jeans, with dark T-shirts, which had their favourite band logos on them and big baggy hooded jumpers. The Emos tended to have long hair, which was dyed a variety of bright colours and sometimes, but not always, pulled down over their eyes. Their bodies were also adorned with piercings in their eyebrows, ears, tongues, noses and even through the base of the neck. Even in their school uniform, these not so subtle symbolic representations of the 'alternative' scene were evident, with the young men frequently reprimanded by teachers for breaking uniform policy. As they grew older, ever more elaborate tattoos were added on their arms, legs and bodies to further enable them to showcase their allegiance to the 'alternative' scene. However, embracing this scene caused alienation within their schools and colleges from both teachers and their peers. They were often bullied in the wider community because of the way they dressed, their hairstyles and the variety of body piercings and colourful tattoos that made them stand out within the locale as they transgressed accepted patterns of behaviour and masculinity. While this bricolage of styles acted as an unofficial group 'uniform', its contradictions to more traditional working-class culture highlight the plural nature of young working-class masculinities and how gender is produced and performed within this scene.

Alienation, bullying and intimidation

At school, teachers and their peers referred to the group as 'emos', something the popular press and other forms of media have sought to mock (Guardian Online 2006) and vilify (Daily Mail 2012) when writing about the 'dangers' of non-mainstream youth (also see Peters 2010). The Emos did enough to 'get on' in school and achieved a mid-range of GCSE grades (see Brown 1987, Roberts 2012). However, they all said that they hated the way they were treated in school and the majority of the group left after their GCSEs to undertake a variety of music- and arts-based courses at an FE college. Bruce and Tommy did opt to return to school to undertake A-levels, but they continued to feel out of place. This feeling of alienation resulted in Tommy leaving before he had completed his course, so only Bruce remained to complete his final year. Between lessons, Bruce would distance himself from the rest of his year group and escape to the art department to work on his art project or play his guitar and practise songs to music that he liked such as Lamb of God, Kill Switch Engage, Bullet for My Valentine and Funeral for a Friend. He said that he preferred being on his own to mixing with the others in his year group (see Ward 2014 for other narratives from this year group).

Alongside the alienation which many of the group felt within the school, The Emos also indicated that they felt they did not fit in with the
town of Cwm Dyffryn. Their involvement with the different aspects of the 'alternative scene' (as noted earlier) attracted unwanted attention within the locality.

**JACK**: Yeah, it used to be bad, and used to be annoying, because everyone hated each other but it's a bit better now cos everyone's grown up a little bit now.

**CLUMP**: Yeah used to get heaps of shit every day in like Year 7...

**MW**: ... Who did?

**BRUCE**: Us, cos we're different to everyone else so we just got shouted at... called names but now in Year 11 we get hardly any of it.

Jack, Clump and Bruce here try to play down or minimise any bullying that occurred to them, but it is also possible that the bullying could have diminished as they rose through the age hierarchy and occupied the position that older bullies once occupied. They frame it as occurring in the past and therefore make it safe by indicating that it 'used to be bad' and that now, as they and others are older, they 'get hardly any of it'. In this way, *The Emos* are also able to distance themselves from any negative feelings associated with this bullying or how it may have affected their self-esteem and attitudes to school in general. Outside school, the bullying took a more violent turn. They explained that on certain occasions when they were out at night, they felt threatened and intimidated when they came across other young men drinking alcohol in parks or in the street:

**JACK**: Like, yeah, wherever we go out, cos we don't wanna go out drinking round the street, say we wanna go up the country park sitting on the swings like that and a load of piss heads (drunks) will walk up like.

**BRUCE**: Yeah I can guarantee that you'll go out on a Friday night and you're guaranteed to see loads of um.

**JELLY BELLY**: It's like they can't enjoy themselves.

**CLUMP**: Like drink after drink just to get smashed and...

**BRUCE**: [cuts in] the bad thing then is that you're walking through them you are a bit weary of things.

**TOMMY**: You walk past some of um and they'll go [change of tone] 'can I have a fag en butt' (can I have a cigarette then) and if you don't have a fag you're fucked!

**BRUCE**: Yeah that's like, no fag or lighter they start on you!

**JELLY BELLY**: Me, him [Points at Clump] and Jenkins [not present] right got jumped on down the skate park because we didn't have a fag or nothing, they kept shouting at us, about 15 of um coming on to us.

**MW**: Did you manage to get away?

**JELLY BELLY**: Well all them lot, Jenkins and Clump run off!

What these highly charged discussions show, and in keeping with other studies of marginalised masculinities (Connell 1995), is that *The Emos* were subordinated by others for not adhering to the normative masculine practices of the region and in the spaces where these practices were played out. The boys used the focus groups and interviews over the period to voice their concerns and had angry discussions of the bullying and harassment they received. Nonetheless, as can be seen in the defence of their actions when they were 'started on' (a verbal or physical altercation) for not having a cigarette in the skate park, instead of seeing themselves as victims, *The Emos* try to frame their experiences as forms of heroic narratives. When Jelly Belly states '15 of um coming on to us', he sets himself up as trying to battle back against the odds in the face of intimidation and to hold onto his pride. He also doesn't talk here about any of the physical or emotional pain that these beatings may have caused, adding to his heroic narrative and proving he has the ability to suffer. This is potentially also about the reinforcement of a minority marginalised status through the numerical terms of the bigger group of 'them' versus the smaller outside group of 'us'.

*The Emos* strategies for performing non-normative ways of being against the dominant notions of masculinity in Cwm Dyffryn produced a troubled and risky subject position. However, in this final section I focus on how these positions were quite often contradictory. These young men who were 'othered' by their peers, often tried to maintain their position or justify it by exaggerating their expulsion. These contradictory ways that Bruce, Clump, Jelly Belly and the others adopted as part of their front displays of masculinity were in many ways re-traditionalising (Adkins 1999) older discourses of class and gender and efforts at a claim for power, where there was none.

**A real 'alternative'?**

The following extracts illustrate how strongly *The Emos* felt about some issues which defined their difference, but also how, by engaging in
practices such as skateboarding (which were not allowed by the school) and surprisingly American Football (although through observations this never amounted to more than a casual throwing around of a rugby ball), the traditional masculine values of the locale were reborn or ‘retraditionalised’ (Adkins 1999) through ‘alternative’ performances of pain, heroism and physical and verbal toughness:

**Tommy:** The only games played are like football and rugby...

**Hendrix:** Like the normal games.

**MW:** So that controls what you can do and that’s what annoys you?

**Hendrix:** They don’t like listen to opinions of other people...like us we hate football!

**MW:** Yeah, yeah...

**Hendrix:** Like we’ll have a kick around, but stupidly not so seriously like we like American football, that’s fun but they won’t let us do it.

**Jelly Belly:** (talked over by Hendrix) Kids take it too serious football, like.

**Jack:** We even asked once if we could bring our skateboards in once.

**MW:** Why did you say American Football though?

**Hendrix:** Cos’ it’s fun, you like get to munch people, like.

**Tommy:** It’s different, init, more running...

**Jack:** We even asked if we could bring our skateboards in at one point for games lesson but they wouldn’t let us...

**Tommy:** [talks over Jack] ...it’s an extreme sport that is...

**Jack:** But they wouldn’t let us.

**MW:** Have you guys ever tried and, I know it’s hard because it’s uphill to the school, but skated to school?

**Various:** Not allowed...we’re not allowed, they take the boards off us. We’re not allowed to do it!

In the narratives these young men told of their lives, a collective identity emerged which saw them positioning themselves away from their peers by not participating in certain sports. Jelly Belly thought these were taken too seriously by others who he saw as ‘kids’ indicating that he felt more mature than others for not doing so. One afternoon in the music practice room at the school, whilst trying to learn a variety of guitar riffs from their favourite bands, Bruce and Tommy discussed how they liked to spend their Educational Maintenance Allowance (students in full time education from lower income households can receive between £10 and £30 per week from the Welsh Government) on going to see gigs or spending it on musical equipment. Instead of tales of drunken antics (which they saw as a waste of money) or watching sport, these young men talked about going to see the music they liked and participate in,

jumping around in the ‘mosh pit’ at live music events in clubs and the festivals that they went to. Tsitsos (1999) describes these as practices and forms of dance and body movements which are violent and aggressive. This particular space was one where they could connect with other young people with similar interests as them, but also perform older discourses of masculinity displayed through acts of physical toughness in the mosh pit. In the final section of this chapter, I now turn to look at some other ways more traditional masculinities attitudes were performed by these young men.

**Hetero-normativity and homophobia**

The position that the young men took on some aspects of sexuality also seemed connected with the traditions of the locale and they still emitted older dominant notions within their language and speech patterns. When discussing another young man from their school (Nibbles) who was openly gay, the contradictions were made clear.

**Bruce:** He deserves a right fucking slap...

**MW:** Why does he deserve it?

**Bruce:** Cos he’s GAY...I got... no... I haven’t got a particular thing against gays but why? I mean why?

**Clump:** They walk past and you know they are looking at your ass and stuff, you know it’s wrong like.

**MW:** Why do you think that then?

**Clump:** No it’s just the possibility that they could like...

**Bruce:** And if there was a so called god do you think that they’d want males together!

**Tommy:** Stopping the race, init!

**Bruce:** I know it’s up to them but keep it to themselves like, behind doors like.

**Jack:** It’s like in Glyn Neath [a nearby town] before I went fishing with my dad and my Nan we went down like that and there was cars everywhere and just two blokes or blokes going in and out of the bushes like we perted it away [ran off]...

In other recent studies with a range of young men in various educational settings, some authors have proclaimed that contemporary masculinities have become much more complex, fluid and different from what came before (Anderson 2009, McCormack 2011). While the picture I present here certainly highlights the complexity of contemporary masculinity
of young working-class men, I would not agree that all young men are changing or have the ability to change. The expectations of masculinity in particular places and spaces have a huge impact on expectations of manhood, and the performances that are then displayed link to back these traditions. As we have noted, the attributes of the ‘alternative scene’ might make *The Emos* stand out and in some cases become victims of abuse, but by projecting a strong heterosexual/homophobic stance they could distance themselves from the harassment that was regularly aimed at them for being ‘emo’ and expresses attitudes of the white, heterosexual, heritage of the region in relation to masculinity and sexuality (Mac an Ghaill 1994, Epstein 1997, Nayak and Kehily 1997). This display also allows *The Emos* to validate their own heterosexuality by positioning themselves against another form of ‘other’ which they proclaim to be unnatural as it was ‘stopping the race’; being gay was deemed as undesirable or occupying a lower place than their own marginalised position. By using this homophobic discourse, they were also able to distance themselves further from being seen as a source of desire by other men.

**Conclusion**

The reordering of work since the 1970s has resulted in the disappearance of industrial jobs that were once the cornerstones of communities, altering meanings behind masculinity (Kenway et al. 2006). These changes have also been accompanied by a ‘crisis of masculinity’ discourse. In light of these economic transformations, whereas class and gender boundaries have become less important for some (Beck 1999), in the former industrial places they remain a major form of social inequality. In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which one group of white working-class young men from a deprived community, who I have termed *The Emos*, displayed an ‘alternative’ version of working-class masculinity. I have argued here how the experiences of those who embrace a trans-global form of youth culture known as the ‘alternative scene’, are often alienated, bullied and victimised both within the school arena and outside of it, for their performance of apparently non-normative masculinities. However, as the locality’s traditional culture is linked to a specific form of classed work, the masculinities that are played out within this youth scene are undergoing a ‘retraditionalisation’ process reconnecting to these older forms of identity, and are not as ‘alternative’ as they may be first proclaimed by the young men themselves and others. These young men are trapped between two strong gender cultures, one of the traditionally physically hard working-class masculinity, and the more ambiguous masculinity of the scene they embrace. This is particularly evident through their personal front displays, which are performed through certain fashion tastes and other aspects of the scene that I have highlighted in this chapter. As the young men in this study experienced life, they were not the totally free agents that neo-liberalism proclaims and holds others to be. Their ‘alternative’ subjectivities were still bound to the classed and gendered codes of the former industrial heritage of place. Nonetheless, on a more optimistic note, the youth scene they embraced offered these young men a refuge and a source of solidarity from the marginalised position in which they continually found themselves.

**Notes**

1 The name has been changed to maintain the anonymity of participants, but chosen to reflect its history and geography.

2 Participants chose their own pseudonyms, many of which reflect their musical tastes. E.g. Bruce was chosen because it was the lead singer’s name of one of his favourite bands, Iron Maiden, and Jack chose his after the musician Jack White.

3 In 2010 the UK Coalition government announced that the Education Maintenance Allowance would come to an end in England. However, the Welsh Government continued to support students in full-time further education via this mechanism.

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