

Defining car culture review

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Car culture as define by Best, A. L. (2006) “ Car culture is often seen as a space where men can be men, and in many instances it provides one of the few opportunities for men to forge emotional ties with other men, often across generations.” (p. 4) this states that the car culture is not just simply a space where car owners come together, simply just owning a car is just the tip of the iceberg, the car culture is a platform for men or car enthusiasts to be in contact with other enthusiasts, in forms of car meets or car shows, this is where they can socialize and form communities that revolve around their interest and passion for cars, regardless of their age and lifestyle the car community brings them together. To support this Best, A. L. (2006) also said “ At the heart of car culture is movement and flow; car culture is first and foremost a mobile one. With this in mind, I take as my starting point an understanding of “ culture” as a complex set of concrete social practices, symbols, artifacts, memories, and texts through which social meanings are expressed and created and social inequalities produced and reproduced.” (p. 14) thru this she states that the car culture is a social culture where participants share common practices and artifacts that revolve around cars, therefor the car culture is a community of people brought together by their passion and love for cars as Best, A. L. (2006) adds “ car culture to refer to various subcultural groups and spaces; by subculture I mean a loosely organized group of youth who share an appreciation for particular cultural styles and participate in a set of shared activities that revolve around the car.” (p. 15) also, this states that the car culture is a diverse community with various participants and subcultures that are made of groups according to practices they share within.

The author Brown, W. S. (2001) also defined car culture as “ Car culture is shared knowledge about cars, including knowledge as to what types of people drive particular cars, and the complex process through which this knowledge develops.” (p. 9) and where there is sharing that is happening there socialization is present thus showing again that the car culture a social culture. This sharing of knowledge achieved from socializing transforms to or becomes a platform now for car enthusiasts to form communities and platforms that focus on their interest for cars in general.

History of car culture

According to the author Madubuike, D. (2018) car culture has been present as soon as the first car was introduced to the public, from her statement “ An attachment to cars has been on the rise since the creation of the Ford Model T in the early 1900’s, and has since become a part of our everyday culture. Our society has become car-dependent with a car culture that focuses on single occupancy driving” (p. 1) this is according to her the earliest point in time when cars and society came together and man became dependent on cars, after this cars soon became a norm to society thus the earliest phase of the birth of car culture. Though this era of the car culture was leaning more towards on as of a consumer culture, they bought cars to attain a certain lifestyle because back then the car was more of a status symbol of the rich in a capitalist economy.

Fast forward 45 years later this was a turning point for the car community after the second world war, there was a boom in the automotive industry as part of the peacetime production agenda of the American industry, as a

transition of their economy from war to peace the car industry would now give employment to millions of civilians at the time. This resulted in the mass productions of automobiles at the time, millions of units were pushed out of the production line every year also resulting in cheaper prices for car, this time owning a car was no longer a luxury, this is also stated by Best, A. L. (2006) in her work " In post war America, fuel was inexpensive and in abundance, and second hand cars for the first time were widely available (since a growing number of Americans could afford and preferred new cars). Increasing economic prosperity, the expansion of the middle classes, the emergence of a mass consumer market, and the development of sprawling suburban communities in the early 1950s meant that many families owned a car, and a small but growing number owned two. Though few youth owned their own cars immediately after the war, the surplus of second hand cars in the 1950s meant that all was soon to change for these young drivers." (p. 29) for the majority to get their hands on cars even the youth, this was a point where the car culture would now tip towards to becoming more of a social culture.

When the united states was recovering from the war and many veterans, soldiers and other servicemen were sent back home together with other families that were still well off financially after the war, their demand for brand new cars was on the rise this also resulted in the growth of the market for second hand cars that now could be bought by the veterans, working class and youth, cars were so cheap you could buy them for a few hundred dollars as Sandoval, D. (2003) states in her book " you would buy a car in the 50s for fifteen dollars, it was easy to put dual pipes on it, you know, lower it

and if you messed that one up you go get another one” (p. 53) for the youth who had acquired vehicles they would now modify these cars into sleeker or faster versions and they would race them, this was now the birth of hot rodding, hot rodding was a scene in the car culture where the youth would customize their vehicles in their garages together with their friends who were also into hot rodding, this was how hot rodders formed some of the first ever assemblies similar to the car groups we have today, aside from customizing their vehicles they would also race them or just simply take them cruising down the streets this was also stated by Best, A. L. (2006) as she points that “cruising has been a popular activity for American youth since the end of World War II. And California has been its unofficial center. A series of shifts in economic and cultural life led to cruising’s widespread popularity following the war, even though smaller groups of kids had cruised long before then.” (p. 29)

The next major phase in the car culture was when the Japanese were gaining acknowledgement in the car industry for their works in the 70’s and 80’s, they would now import cars into the United States through companies such as Honda, Toyota and Datsun now known today as Nissan, consumers were liking them as much as their locally manufactured units because Japanese cars gave them more options and better performance and durability, the Japanese would now also start importing vehicles around the world in several other countries in Asia and America, this was supported by Brown, W. S. (2001) in his book saying “The third major phase of American car culture occurred during the 1970s and through the 1980s. The preoccupation during this time period was with the success of Japanese cars in the American

marketplace. Once the world leaders in the automobile industry in both sales and technology, the American industry was seemingly mired in technological stagnation which was exacerbated by shoddy quality." (p. 30) still throughout the practice of hot rodding and cruising still carried on and not for long it had been adapted to these new vehicles available in the market. And the practices are still carried out today in evolutions of its forms.

Car groups

The communities within the car culture are what keep it alive today as to communities are the most important part of any culture as Best, A. L. (2006) states that " car culture to refer to various subcultural groups and spaces; by subculture I mean a loosely organized group of youth who share an appreciation for particular cultural styles and participate in a set of shared activities that revolve around the car." (p, 15) These multiple communities in the car culture are better known as car groups, some often formed according to the common aspects they have with their cars, some car groups are formed according to their place of origin or life style, members of this community are brought together by their love for cars and the activities that incorporate the car such as customizing, racing or just simply cruising or driving together with their associates just like what Best, A. L. (2006) states that " Perhaps more than anything else, cruising offers a temporary semblance of belonging to what can feel like a coherent cultural community. Cruising is all about community building." (p. 35) these activities are what brings the members together and help them form communities or car groups, these groups are where the members share knowledge and personal interest about cars. Car groups create bonds between their members and

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their vehicles this part of the culture gives them a sense of community belonging, As Best, A. L. (2006) states that “ it provides one of the few opportunities for men to forge emotional ties with other men, often across generations.” (p. 4)

Kinds of car enthusiasts

What makes up car groups are their members, and the car culture is composed of various types of car enthusiasts, according to Best, A. L. (2006) enthusiasts are “ young men and women who regularly participate in car-cruising or car-racing culture and whose activities are critical to the ongoing production of these cultural forms as both social practice and worldview.” (p. 15)

Car enthusiast and owners can be classified in to various groups, according to their preference of car styling, the purpose of their vehicles and their overall manners, after the second world war came the birth of the earliest type of car enthusiasts the way they styled and customized their cars performances and appearance gave them identity and a sense of uniqueness they were called hot rodders. Hot rodders by definition according to Kwon, S. A. (2004) at the time were “ mainly working-class white males referred to as “ hot rodders” raced “ muscle cars” stripped down V8 engine American cars such as Ford mustangs and Chevrolet impalas.” (p. 4) they only worked and were affiliated with certain types of cars mainly American brand and had to have big engines such as V8's and V6's in them, this gave them identity apart from other members of the car community, this is farther supported by Best, A. L. (2006) saying that “ hot rodders by the cars they drove and the

style in which they drove them. Where Anglo hot rodders focused on muscle and speed" (p. 31) street racing at the time was a common scene and pastime for car enthusiast, because of these hot rodders practices and the foundation of NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) in the 40's this would now give birth to a more modern type of enthusiast, they would identify themselves as racers by the name alone they are classified as car enthusiasts who race their vehicles and as said by Best, A. L. (2006) racers " modify the performance of their cars" (p. 95) simply to make them faster compared to stock to make them perform better at races be it at the race track or the streets.

Another modern type of car enthusiasts contrary to modern racers are named ricers, ricers are the type of enthusiasts who make their cars only look fast but in reality they do not improve anything about their cars related to performance they only improve aesthetic components of their vehicles as Best, A. L. (2006) states " a particular group of racers who are recognized as " all show and no go," the aforementioned " ricers." ricers these days who drive to be trendy and be " noticed". African American men aligned with domestics denounce any association with the import car scene, the cars, rice rockets, and the drivers, known as " ricers." racers who focus on exterior changes rather than performance upgrades as " ricers" is quite telling." (p. 98) ricers also only make improvements to their cars exterior to gain attention, this is why they are the most judge or detest people of the car culture, they are associated with the import scene, but not all enthusiasts who patronize the import scene are ricers, there is also a good side to the

import scene, there are enthusiasts who make good and beautiful creations of what they get from the import scene.

The import scene is mostly composed of JDM cars (Japanese Domestic Market) this is also stated by Kwon, S. A. (2004) as he says " Import enthusiasts choose to purchase and modify " Asian" cars meaning Japanese imports today" (p. 10) Japanese cars are popular because of their reliability and durability and because of this their engines are easier to tune and modify, which gave birth now to another modern type of car enthusiast known as the tuners, tuners are the good side of the import scene, they make Japanese cars both aesthetically pleasing and perform well, it is like they follow the principle that form follows function they rely heavily on parts they source out to modify their vehicles as stated by Best, A. L. (2006) that " tuners largely depend upon a consumer market to fashion or modify their cars and thus play an important role in bolstering what has become a multibillion-dollar industry in after-market car parts." (p. 170) there is also an abundance of car parts that can be bought from the importers another reason why the tuners are closely affiliated with the import scene, with these parts they improve the form and function of their cars by tuning the engines and lowering the heights of their cars just enough to improve handling. Between the ricers and tuners there is another group that lowers their cars for fashion and put minimal upgrades to their engines, they call these types of vehicles stanced cars, these are the modern counterparts of one of the oldest and first ever types of enthusiasts who dwelled on cruising and lowering their cars for identity and fashion, they were the opposite of the hot rodders in the 40's and 50's as hot rodders always wanted to go fast, these

people stuck to their saying that they only go low and slow, they are called the low riders as defined by Sandoval, D. (2003) a “ Lowrider refers to any automobile, van pick up truck, motorcycle, or bicycle lowered to within a few inches of the road. It refers as well to any individual or club associated with the style and the “ ride” characterized as” low and slow, mean and clean.”” (p. 1)

Low riders were the Chicanos or the Mexican Americans who were residing in the united states after the second world war, they also wanted to make their own mark in the car culture at the time, opposing the style and function of the white American youth in the car culture they invented low riding, low riding is simply cruising or driving in lowered and pimped out cars while playing blasting music thru car stereos, as defined by Best, A. L. (2006) they were “ Mexican Americans, mostly men, rode their cars “ slow and low,” since their purpose was to prolong the length of time on a main roadway and thus enhance their visibility. 11 The cars they drove were called lowriders, mostly 1930s and 1940s Chevys. These early lowriders were driven by the zoot-suiters, so-called Pachucos, young Mexican men from the 1940s southern California barrios” (p. 31) they were the counterparts of the hot rodders who’s main goal was to dominate the race strips and tracks at the time, unlike the low riders attention was not important for the hot rodders for one because they participated in illegal street races so they did not want to gain any sort of attention from the police, while the low riders wanted to make their own form of rebellion thru cars so they slammed American cars similar to the hot rodder’s car choice with their own unique style closer to the ground for them to make a statement they were also present and they

wanted to make their own mark in the car culture, this is also stated by Kwon, S. A. (2004) as he says “ Practice of modifying cars also evident among Chicano males, whose “ low rider” cars are associated most closely with the distinctively Mexican American oppositional style, panchisismo. The low riders take used cars, similar to those of the hot rodders, and create a unique Chicano style that borrows from the dominant cultural practices of car modification.” (p. 4)

Car meets and car shows

Benefits of joining car groups