



**Nayak, Anoop (2006) *Displaced Masculinities: Chavs, Youth and Class in the Post-industrial City*, in *Sociology*, Vol. 40, October 2006**

This study was based in the city of Newcastle – a post-industrial area, where working-class young men have had to rethink what it is to be a ‘man’ beyond the world of industrial paid employment. Nayak focused on the experience of young men in this area to examine how they reshaped a whole ‘way of life’ with the decline of traditional work and leisure lifestyles. In this ethnographic study, he contrasted the cultural habits of young men from traditional skilled working-class backgrounds with those from families experiencing long-term unemployment. It explored their different ‘going out’ experiences, their values, attitudes and practices. 5

Nayak conducted an ethnographic study with two groups of young men in a range of different locations – school, neighbourhood and city-centre sites – in Newcastle. The first group (the ‘Real Geordies’) came from families with a background predominantly in skilled labour, and the second were largely from unemployed communities (the ‘Charver kids’). The findings were gained from an analysis of local history, and the undertaking of semi-structured interviews and participant observations. 10

Nayak gained initial access to the young men through two schools in Newcastle, after requesting permission to carry out interviews from the head teachers. The two schools were targeted as they had a high proportion of white working class youngsters. Nayak did not set out to examine the subcultures of Real Geordies and Charver kids; these categories emerged during the research, in conversations with the young people themselves who seemed to use these terms as important markers of social class distinction. 15  
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The semi-structured interviews took place with small groups of students in the school setting. They were recorded, transcribed and then thematically coded. The interview questions were based around exploring their values and attitudes as well as their leisure time activities, such as going out. There was a structure to the questions, but Nayak was keen to follow the interests of the interview respondents as this in itself was an indication of their values. However, Nayak found that he could not easily access the Charver kids as their school attendance was so poor. As a solution, Nayak used his position as a resident in a run down estate, near to one of the schools, which was associated with high unemployment and those labelled Charver kids. For Nayak, this was a valuable part of the ethnographic approach as it allowed him to observe the young people outside of school. 25  
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Nayak also used observations during nights out at weekends in the city centre and used memory recall and observation diaries to record his findings. Nayak recognised that participant observation could lead to unpredictable social interaction. For example, on one occasion he bumped into a group of ‘Real Geordie’ lads on a night out whom he had interviewed the week before. He observed a chip-throwing fight in a local takeaway which ended up with them all being barred – including Nayak. 35

The ethnography included findings from his analysis of local history. Nayak comments that the North East, as a region, and Newcastle, as an urban area, has undergone massive economic change, from being a large vibrant industrial centre and mining community towards a service-based economy. Newcastle itself has tried to rebrand it’s image as a ‘Party City’ – a site for excessive drinking and hen/stag parties. However, this shift from coal mining to ‘clubbing’ has had a huge effect upon both the material landscape and the formation of local identities. The new ‘feminised’ economy of call centres does not fit easily with traditional masculinity and Nayak wanted to research the effect of these economic changes on masculine identities. 40

The first group of young white working class men who have a history of family involved in manual labour, styled themselves as ‘Real Geordies’ who “give as good as we get” (Duane) and who “kna who we are at the end of the day” (Cambo). Nayak found that drinking culture 45

remains a strong part of their working class and masculine identity and on weekends “oot on the town” (Spencer) the Real Geordies would undertake circuit drinking – going from pub (or bar) to pub having one drink in each. The Real Geordies appeared to get great satisfaction from relating humorous events, sexual anecdotes and tales of casual violence. Such shared stories bind people together and provide a sense of collective history. This collective sense of identity was enhanced through physical appearance; the real Geordies would have immaculate hairstyles and dress in expensive designer shirts. 50

The second group of young white working class men, known locally as ‘Charvers’ and nationally as ‘Chavs’, came from long-term unemployed families and found themselves to be more marginalised than the Real Geordies. Their style of clothing tended to be tracksuits, trainers and baseball caps – all of which were banned from the city centre bars and pubs frequented by the Real Geordies. In response to this, many Charvers relied instead on the culture of the streets – hanging around street corners, drinking cans of beer, smoking and chatting to friends. The Charver lads maintained their masculine status as ‘hard’ through acts of violence and unlawful activities. 55 60

Nayak concludes that despite major economic transformation and media rebranding, the male working class cultures and identities from the old industrial city refuse to disappear. As creative actors, young men respond to change by intertwining new and old cultures. 65

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