

Name

Professor

Class

Date

Speeding Up the Egosystem

In the movie *The Fast and the Furious* (2001), one character summarizes the film's attitude, saying "Winning's winning." Spawning six sequels, the film series glorifies the American obsession with breaking limits. A myth in the United States celebrates the "Horatio Alger" motif: the boy who became a successful man by breaking the rules and doing things his way. Ambition leads directly to material success. While this personal drive has helped make this country strong, it has also fed into a narcissist culture among Americans: speed demons have a haloed place in popular culture, signifying freedom and virility. Not only has this trend led to loss of life, but it has also contributed to an emphasis on personal fame. Stronger, faster cars are a microcosm of the American obsession with technology as a means of expressing individuality.

The automobile culture in the United States, especially California, has long been an expression of individual narcissism. In a historical context, hot rods, muscle cars, and cruising down Santa Monica Boulevard have resonated in popular culture as symbols of freedom, excess, and wealth. Speeding—the act of defying "rules" has played into this culture. According to historian Cotton Seiler, speed was an "equalizer"—a demonstration of control that raced across class, race, and gender boundaries (44-45). Since the days of the Model T, speed was a sign of independence and power for wannabe "king of the roads."

Car culture, and the need for bigger, faster, and sexier cars, continues today. In the 1990s, the SUV, while certainly a "utility vehicle" for busy soccer moms, has become a status symbol

among suburbanites to show off their largess while dominating the road (Twenge and Campbell 55). According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 2012 report, "Motivations of Speeding," many habitually fast drivers reported "the posted speed is more of a minimum speed, or that it is set y considering the worst driver in the population" (Richard 30). In other words, the speed limit did not apply to them. While these drivers no doubt considered themselves careful, it also sets them apart from the rest of the population. By speeding, they assert their individualism and what makes them stand apart from other drivers, even at the expense of public safety.



Works Cited

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