Subcultures and Small Groups

A Social Movement Theory Approach

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Abstract

This dissertation uses social movement theory to analyze the emergence, activities and development of subcultures and small groups. The manuscript is comprised of an Introduction followed by three journal articles and one book chapter. The introduction discusses: 1) the concept of theoretical extension whereby a theory developed for one purpose is adapted to another; 2) it identifies the social movement theories used to analyze subcultures and small groups; 3) it describes the data used in the analyses included here. The data for this work derives from two distinct research projects conducted by the author between 2002 and 2012 and relies on multiple sources of qualitative data. Data collection techniques used include fieldwork, archival research, and secondary data. Paper I uses resource mobilization (RM) theory to analyze the origin, development, and function of White Power music in relation to the broader White Power Movement (WPM). The research identifies three roles played by White Power music: (1) recruit new adherents, (2) frame issues and ideology for the construction of collective identity, (3) obtain financial resources. Paper II gives an overview of the subculture of Freestyle BMX, discussing its origins and developments—both internationally as a wider subcultural phenomenon, and locally, through a three-year ethnographic case study of a subcultural BMX scene known as “Pro Town USA.” Paper III conceptualizes BMX as a social movement using RM theory to identify and explain three different forms of commercialization within this lifestyle sport in “Pro Town.” The work sheds light on the complex process of commercialization within lifestyle sports by identifying three distinct forms of commercialization: paraphernalia, movement, and mass market, and analyses different impacts that each had on the on the development of the local scene. Findings reveal that lifestyle-sport insiders actively collaborate in each form of commercialization, especially movement commercialization which has the potential to build alternative lifestyle-sport institutions and resist adverse commercial influences. Paper IV refines the small group theory of collaborative circles by: (1) further clarifying its concepts and relationships, (2) integrating the concepts of flow and idioculture, and (3) introducing a more nuanced concept of resources from RM. The paper concludes by demonstrating that circle development was aided by specific locational, human, moral, and material resources as well as by complementary social-psychological characteristics of its members.

Keywords: theoretical extension, White Power music, BMX, commercialization, creativity, collaborative circles, right-wing extremism, lifestyle sports, small groups, subcultures, social movement, ethnography, social psychology, mobilization

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TO MY PARENTS

Pepi Pescetto e Daniele Corte
This thesis is based on the following four papers, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


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As it is customary, but nonetheless important to conclude: although all these individuals have contributed to my formation and the completion of this project, any errors are my sole responsibility.
1. Introduction

Thematically, and very broadly, this is a thesis about social movements, subcultures, and small groups. Theoretically, this is a study that applies a combination of a number of social movement, subcultural, and small group theories and concepts to investigate and explain specific aspects of those phenomena—and also, but to a lesser extent, demonstrates the usefulness of doing so. This dissertation comprises three journal articles and one book chapter tied together by this introduction.

The data for this work derives from two distinct research projects. The first is an investigation of the origins and developments of White Power/neo-Nazi music, and the connection with its subculture, social movements, and political parties. The second is an ethnographic study of an intentional community of professional BMX cycling riders—“Pro-Town USA”—focused on three main themes: formation and development, commercialization, and creative small group work.

The purpose of this introduction is twofold: First, to expose the reader to the topics of the thesis, the research projects I have conducted and their findings, the methodologies I adopted, and the papers I have written. Second, while each paper presents its own scientific contribution, this opening will tie them together showing their connection within the larger dissertation venture.

The thesis is divided into four main sections: (1) introduction, (2) central theories and concepts, (3) data and methods, and lastly, (4) the four papers.

This introduction is structured as follows: First, the aim of the dissertation as a whole will be presented. Second, four levels of interconnection among its four distinct parts will be explained. Third, the two research projects from which findings have been derived will be presented. Fourth, the four papers will be summarized, their findings reported, and fruitful future avenues of research posited. Some basic pedagogical points will also be formulated here. Finally, I will provide the reader with consideration of the central concepts and theories utilized in my investigations and analyses and conclude with the theoretical contribution of the thesis.
Overall Theoretical Aim of the Dissertation Project: Theoretical Extension

(...) theoretical extension focuses on broadening the relevance of a particular concept or theoretical system to a range of empirical contexts other than those in which they were first developed or intended to be used (Snow, 2004a: 134).

The broader overarching theoretical purpose of this dissertation project is to show the usefulness of applying modern social movement theory to investigate and analyze subcultures (in particular, the production and mobilization of music, and aspects of commercialization within and by subcultures), and specific dynamics of small groups (in particular, collaboration to achieve creative endeavours).

In other words, this dissertation intends to illustrate and partially theorize what is to be gained by applying analytical concepts of social movement theory to the study of subcultures and small groups through what Snow (2004a) and Snow et al. (2003) referred to as “theoretical extension.”

Theory Building

Snow (2004a) and Snow et al. (2003) have pointed out that much qualitative research suffers from a lack of precise language that would enable researchers to connect data with theory. According to Snow (2003) this has resulted in many overly descriptive studies that highlight specific instances of case studies, rather than contributing to the developments of specific theories (for example, Duneier, 1999). Such work while interesting, often well-researched, and purposeful — for example, in uncovering the complexities for social change (see for example, Duneier, 1999 and Maril, 2006) — leave some readers unsatisfied by the excessive specificity of the findings, and wondering if larger questions and more general mechanisms could have been tackled.¹ In this regard, Snow (2004a) writes:

(...) perhaps most qualitative research fails to maximize its potential theoretical yield because its practitioners too often enter the field with only the goals of description and interpretation to guide them, treating theoretical development as a black box or ignoring it altogether (Snow, 2004a: 133).

¹ According to a number of scholars—for example, Gary Alan Fine, who see theory as paramount, this is the difference between having a topic, rather than an argument (Fine personal communication with Corte, 10th of August, 2009). In this fashion of doing social science, beyond the specifics of the case being addressed a researcher needs to ask how does a piece of writing contribute to general theory. “Striking gold” may obviously not always happen, but it should at least be on the agenda to maximize the chances of success. See also, Fine (2004).
Offering a way to address this lack of focus on ‘theory building,’ Snow et al. (2003) articulated three analytical concepts to strengthen the connection between qualitative research and theory: (1) theory generation, (2) theory extension, and (3) theory refinement. Glaser and Strauss’ “grounded theory” approach (1967) represents the most typical example of qualitative research that aims at theory-generation. In short, researchers equipped with this methodology inductively ‘discover’ theory through highly meticulous data gathering, interpretation, and fine-tuning.

A second way in which qualitative researchers can contribute to theory is through an extension of “pre-existing theoretical or conceptual formulations to other groups or aggregations, to other bounded contexts or places, or to other sociocultural domains” (Snow, 2004a: 134). In other words, extension entails the application of theories or analytical devices that have been originally developed in the context of some specific class of phenomena to the study of another, thereby demonstrating the versatility of these theories, and potentially unveiling new or underemphasized aspects of these theories.

Lastly, and most commonly, qualitative researchers can contribute to the development of theory through the refinement of existing theories. As Snow writes: “This refers to the modification of existing theoretical perspectives though extension or through the close inspection of a particular proposition with new case material” (Snow, 2004a: 135).

This dissertation implements the kind of theoretical approach proposed by Snow et al. (2003) by using social movement theory to study specific aspects of subcultures and small groups. The rationale behind this “borrowing” of analytical devices and theories is based on two objectives. First, it is grounded in the idea that this work is beneficial because it highlights dynamics that would otherwise go unnoticed using the conceptual tools currently used to study subcultures and small groups. Put differently, distinct theoretical apparatuses provide dissimilar conceptualizations and empirical foci, directing attention to certain kinds of questions and issues to which others do not fully attend (Snow and Davis, 1995:210). Second, because it could potentially show the quality—as versatility—of the theoretical features of social movement theory.

\[\text{As Wendelin Reich pointed out to me during a personal conversation, theory refutation is surprisingly missing in the typologies presented by Snow et al. (2003).}\]

\[\text{Note that as Snow (2004a:133) has discussed, “grounded theory” is all too often invoked ritualistically, meaning that a large number of researchers use the term but do not adhere to the highly sophisticated guidelines of the method provided by Glaser and Strauss (1967).}\]
One of the Many Ways of Doing Sociology

Researchers ‘choose’ their heroes, models, concerns, and epistemological traditions. The focus on theory building, and in particular on theory extension discussed by Snow et al. (2003), is anything but new. Instead it has its roots in the work of Simmel, among others, and his idea of formal sociology (Snow, 2004a: 134; Zerubavel, 1980), which has been typically represented in some of the work of the Chicago School(s) (Fine, 1995).

The logic behind this dissertation work is then in tune with such a manner of doing sociology, while acknowledging that other approaches obviously exist and may be valuable as well. As different research questions require different methods, this way of working is appropriate trying to achieve some purposes, while not being concerned with others. The objective here is scientific rather than, for example, political or social. On the other hand this does not mean that these research findings cannot be used so to address the “real world”—quite the contrary—but that is only a second step, not necessarily advanced by the same researcher, and certainly not in the same space-limited, and narrowly addressed, article-length piece.

Social Movement Theory in the Study of Subcultures and Small Groups

It is surprising that subcultural theorists and social movement theorists have rarely crossed paths (Martin, 2002:73).


Social movement theory has been used to study a variety of phenomena as apparently diverse as the discipline of sociology (Mullins, 1973), leisure worlds (Fine, 1989), tourism (Kousis, 2000; McGehee, 2002), art worlds (S. Baumann, 2006), ‘scientific and intellectual fields’ (Frickel and Gross, 2005), and this can certainly be taken as an indicator of its analytical and theoretical quality, functionality, and versatility. There have also been a number of studies that utilized concepts of social movement theory to study subcultures (including Martin (2002), Haenfler (2004b; 2006), Wheaton (2007a; 2007b), and Roberts and Moore (2009), among others).

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4 Or, end up following depending on contingencies.
5 See, for example the work of Goffman, Lofland, and also of Fine.
Jarvie (2006) hypothesized the potential benefit of adopting such an approach to study sport subcultures such as lifestyle sports. Fine and Stoecker (1985) much earlier even proposed the advantages that social movement theory would bring to small group research and vice versa, arguing, among other points, that practically every social movement starts at the small group level (Fine and Stoecker, 1985).

Johnston and Snow (1998), referring to the centrality of “preestablished networks and facilitating organizations in mobilization” (see also Cress and Snow 1996; Snow et al., 1980), similarly contended that under some conditions subcultures may form the ground for a social movement to arise:

(...)

Political scientists Merkl and Weinberg (1997; 2003) give a good example calling for study of three levels of mobilization in their research on right-wing racist extremists. They argue that in studying extremism (but arguably applicable to other forms of mobilization) one needs to identify three interrelated levels of analysis: right-wing racist subcultures, right-wing social movements, and ultimately right-wing parties (Merkl and Weinberg, 2003: 5). These three levels of analysis can all be understood as part of right-wing extremism, although not all (of the three levels) operate at the same time and the relative importance of each will vary cross-nationally. Now, with my thesis I argue that we should include a fourth level: small groups.

Despite this literature that discusses or proposes the connection, there still remains a scientific gap: namely, no paper addresses the benefits that the conceptual apparatus of social movements, as a whole (McAdam et al., 1996), brings to the study of subcultures in comparison to the conceptual apparatus of subcultural theory.

And a similar case can be made for small group research. Like much research on subcultures, small group studies mostly deemphasize the contexts of action. Often such studies will exclude the context from analysis altogether.

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6 Note that Freestyle BMX, which is the focus of three papers in this dissertation, has been defined as a lifestyle sport. Lifestyle sports include skateboarding, surfing, and snowboarding for example, and share a common ethos that sets them apart from traditional sports. This is based on a value system incompatible with those of traditional sports featuring in the Olympic Games, which are characterized by competitive, disciplinary, hierarchical and nationalistic orientations (Wheaton, 2004). While each of these activities has a distinct history, all tend to exhibit anti-establishment, individualistic, and relying on DIY (do it yourself) philosophies, and subcultural style (Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011:832). They are also known as “action sports,” “extreme sports,” “alternative actions sports,” and “California sports.”

7 See also Harrington and Fine (2006) who help us understand that the connection should be analytical as well as theoretical.
er by employing experimental techniques which by definition aim at reducing contextual influences effectively to zero (Felmlee and Sprecher, 2000). This is in stark contrast to social movement approaches that make the context of action\(^8\) central to their theories. Sociologists Felmlee and Sprecher (2000) have discussed that research in sociological social psychology, and in particular of close relationships, has the tendency to ignore “the social and/or environmental context of relationship behaviour” (P. 369-370). Similarly, psychological social psychologists have argued that the physical ecology of groups—the context in which groups operate—has also been a neglected topic (Ancona and Bresman, 2007; Wittenbaum and Moreland, 2008).

Furthermore, a perusal of the literature shows that the lead proposed by Fine and Stoecker (1985) has yet to be embraced (see McPhail, 1991; Cook, 2000:689; Harrington and Fine, 2000), signalling that social movement theory has not been used\(^9\) to study small groups. An exception to this is represented by the last paper of this dissertation (Corte, submitted).

A partial exception to the intersection (and partial combination) of subcultural and social movement theory is represented by Greg Martin’s paper “Conceptualizing Cultural Politics in Subcultural and Social Movement Studies” (2002), as well as by Haenfler (2006) and Williams and Cherry (2011). In the first article the author contends that cultural politics can be fruitfully conceptualized using frameworks from both New Social Movement (NSM) theorists and the approach to subcultures represented by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), also known as the Birmingham School. However, the only social movement literature discussed by Martin is strictly European (Melucci, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1995, 1996; Touraine, 1985; Della Porta and Diani, 1999). This means that the author focuses exclusively on the concept of collective identity originally developed by the Italian sociologist Melucci (1989).\(^{10}\)

Surprisingly, by the end of the paper Martin mentions the importance of material resources, but without any reference to resource mobilization (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Edwards and McCarthy 2004), or other social movement literature including framing (Snow and Benford, 1988), and political opportunity structures (Eisinger, 1973; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1996).\(^{11}\)

Building on Martin (2002), Hanefler (2006) also discusses the benefits of understanding (some) subcultures like Straight Edge, as new social move-

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\(^8\) Or “ecological context.”

\(^9\) This does not mean that research on social movements has not taken as a unit of analysis small groups, or conceptualized them as the starting of mobilization (see for example, Snow et al. 1986, and Gerlach and Hine, 1970). Snow et al. (1986) talk about the “microstructure” of social movements.

\(^{10}\) For a review of the concept, see Snow (2001), and Polletta and Jasper (2001).

\(^{11}\) Note that there are other strains of social movement theory, including in particular the quickly emerging study of emotions in social movements (Goodwin et al., 2001; Jasper, 2011) and the cognitive approach (Eyerman and Jamison (1991)).
ments. Overly focusing on the fact that subcultures are typically more decentralized and diffused than ‘classic’ social movements, and do not target institutionalized politics (Haenfler, 2006: 63), Haenfler discards by default other social movement theoretical approaches such as those of resource mobilization, political process, and framing. At the same time he acknowledges—but fails to theorize—how subcultures do rely on a heavy set of infrastructures and resources of various kinds.

Hodkinson (2002) uses the concept of collective identity while not referencing to any social movement literature. On the other hand, even more clearly than Haenfler (2006), Hodkinson also recognizes the importance of “a complex infrastructure of events, consumer goods and communications, all of which were thoroughly implicated in media and commerce” (Hodkinson, 2002:32) distinguishing between internal, or subcultural forms of media and commerce, and external, or non-subcultural products and services (P.33). Lastly, Williams and Cherry (2011) illustrate the utility of a NSM approach, and in particular the concept of collective identity, in highlighting the political nature of (some) subcultures (Williams and Cherry, 2011:169). While all of these papers—Martin (2002), Hodkinson (2002), Haenfler (2006), and Williams and Cherry (2011)—attempt to apply social movement concepts to the study of subcultures, they remain fixated primarily on the concept of collective identity, and doing so, at its most basic form. Each falls short of ever discussing the potential benefits of applying other social movement concepts like resources, political opportunity structures, and framing processes.

Not every paper of this dissertation applies each of these concepts. On the other hand, a large part of this introduction is dedicated to presenting the usefulness of not only each of these concepts, but a social movements perspective in general, to investigate subcultures, and also small groups. Specifically, this introduction will illustrate the advantages of such a perspective over the perspectives currently used to research these phenomena. This argument will be further articulated at the end of Section II on concepts and theories.

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12 Indeed, Hodkinson acknowledges that Goth subculture does not qualify as a new social movement at all because it “involves no external political objectives (p. 76).
13 This distinction could be expanded with the three concepts of “paraphernalia commercialization, mass-market commercialization, and movement commercialization” proposed in the third paper of this dissertation by Edwards and Corte (2010). Such connection, however, will not be developed in this introduction.
14 See the section on concepts and theories, or for example, Taylor and Wittier (1992) and Hunt and Benford (2004).
15 Wheaton (2007a, 2007b) does the same as the authors just mentioned.
16 For example, the first paper on the origins and developments of White Power music focuses on resources and framing. Only incidentally, the piece refers to collective identity, and implicitly political opportunity structures while discussing the different international laws (from being illegal—much of Europe, to being protected by the First Amendment on Freedom of Speech—North America) and their impact on White Power music.
Also, it needs to be emphasized that this dissertation applies social movement theory to study subcultures and small groups— and that the section of the introduction devoted to its theoretical argumentation will discuss only a selection of the wider theoretical considerations. The goal of this endeavour is twofold, and it is pragmatic: First, to show as sharply as possible the connection between the different pieces that comprise the dissertation, and second, to lay the foundation for theoretical work which will build on to the dissertation and will be written as a separate paper after my dissertation defence.

Lastly, there is also one more reason for doing this work, which is reviewing the main concepts and theories studied and adopted during my PhD education, and give the reader a clear view of my fields of scholarly expertise, as well as provide a springboard for discussing the dissertation in toto.

Four Levels of Interconnection

Topical
The first and most evident thread that links the four articles together is that each analyses subcultures: from the oppositional subculture (Johnston and Snow, 1998) of neo-Nazi skinheads and the performance and production of White Power music to a lifestyle sport subculture (Wheaton, 2004), and its local representation as a case study of a lifestyle sport community.17

Theoretical
The second point of connection in my dissertation is the common theoretical perspective represented by (modern) social movement theory, and in particular by resource mobilization theory (Zald and McCarthy, 1977; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004) applied to the study of subcultures and small groups.

I argue (and will further articulate at the end of Section II on concepts and theories) that employing social movement theory to investigate subcultures allows us to address research questions that are missed or ignored by a subcultural or post-subcultural theoretical frame.18 In relation to small groups, I

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17 As Magnus Ring helped me notice during my last seminar at the Department of Sociology at Uppsala University, issues of “commercialization” and “creativity” are present in each paper. For example, the first article describes the creative ways in which White Power entrepreneurs and musicians have used music as a tool to obtain a number of goals; some related to obtain financial resources, and others to attract members and sustain their commitment. The article “Commercialization and Lifestyle Sport: Lessons from Twenty Years of Freestyle BMX in Pro-Town, USA” (Edwards and Corte, 2010) then identifies and describes different forms of commercialization that have been taking place within this lifestyle sport. And lastly, the paper on the stage theory of collaborative circles is centred on small group creativity, but it is also related to issues of commercialization because the ‘separation stage’ is linked to the commercialization of the activity.

18 For a clarification of what these two terms mean, and for an overview of the study of subcultures, see Section II on “Theories and Concepts.”
propose that by borrowing some analytical devices developed by social movement theory we move a few steps forward integrating context within their analyses. And, more broadly, that using the concept resources from Resource Mobilization (RM\textsuperscript{19}) theory is useful to explain micro-cultures allowing us to better understand how resources are linked to the formation of culture and to its development.\textsuperscript{20}

In my four pieces social movement theory is used both explicitly and implicitly. In the first article I analyse the connection between White Power music and the White Power Movement (WPM) (Corte and Edwards, 2008), and in the third article I conceptualize BMX Freestyle cycling\textsuperscript{21} as a social movement (Edwards and Corte, 2010); in both those instances social movement theory is brought to the forefront. The same goes for the last article, in which Resource Mobilization is applied to refine a theory of small group dynamics—“collaborative circles” (Farrell, 2001).

In the book chapter, resource mobilization is embedded in the structure of the chapter, rather than being overtly presented (Edwards and Corte, 2009). This editorial strategy gives the piece an easier readability, and hopefully a larger audience.

The general focus of my research rests on “how, why, and when” (and in that order of importance), rather than on “what.” In other words, I am not particularly interested in the content of any small group, subculture, or social movement, but instead strive to identify common, possibly generalizable social mechanisms.

Methodological

The third common aspect that ties the four articles together is methodological: each article relies on multiple sources of qualitative data, in particular case studies. The White Power article is based on archival research, research on the Internet, in-depth interviews and secondary data. The three pieces on “Pro Town USA” use ethnographic field research in the form of participant observation and in-depth interviews conducted both in the field as well from afar.

Meta-theoretical

Finally, the fourth and last link between the articles is the desire to analyse the social psychological dynamics that take place at the small group level while embedding them in a larger context. This task, which I develop throughout the articles, but in particular with the fourth paper, is connected to a broader theoretical underpinning that bridges some of the work devel-

\textsuperscript{19} In this introduction “RM” and “RMT” are used interchangeably to refer to resource mobilization theory.

\textsuperscript{20} My theoretical points, and in particular this one, have benefitted both from a reading of Gary Alan Fine’s work, as well as from communication with him.

\textsuperscript{21} From now on only referred to as ”BMX Freestyle” or ”BMX.”
oped within the Chicago School(s)—in particular connecting small group and interaction studies with the more structural aspects of social movement theory.

Part of my goal is to show what can be gained by looking at the organizational level of subcultures with concepts derived from social movement scholarship. In short, by using social movement theory to study subcultures which questions would we be able to pose, and potentially answer? Could this work move us closer to understanding the analytical and theoretical connection between small groups, subcultures, and social movements?

After this brief introduction, I now present the two research projects from which findings have been derived. I will provide an overview of the main findings of the four articles of my dissertation before proceeding to the section on concepts and theories titled: “Toward a Theoretical Synthesis of Social Movements, Subcultures and Small Groups.”

Two research projects

…many activists are at pains to distinguish the political from the cultural in social movement activity (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998: 11).

I begin with a short account detailing how I came to be involved in both research projects on which this dissertation is based—a topic which can be valuable but not often disclosed. Part of this story may seem hagiographic, trivial, or contingent, and therefore not generalizable or of much use. Contrastingly, I think that the way I became involved in both projects represents both a more general way of doing sociology, and a personal way of conceiving research, which could also help the reader understand better the theoretical arguments being advanced.

Between 1997 and 2001, Professor Ron Eyerman chaired the Sociology Department at Uppsala University. A known social movement scholar, during this time he completed one of the first books addressing the connection between music and social movements (Eyerman and Jamieson, 1998).

In Fall 2001 I attended Ron’s seminar on Punk and White Power music at Uppsala University. In this seminar, he showed “The Filth and the Fury” (Temple, 2000) a documentary about the legendary punk band the Sex Pis-
tols, then gave a short presentation, and consequently opened up for discussion; nothing out of the ordinary for a seminar, if not for the topic, and the audience. Among the participants there were two future Uppsala University PhD students (Erik Hannerz and myself) and one current PhD student (Lars Holmberg). In retrospect, it is not hard to imagine what Ron saw in that group that led him to engage us in developing a research project that would engage the four of us for the following years. A few factors seem worth noting here. Erik, Ron’s most gifted and passionate student, had begun nurturing a passion for punk-rock music that in those years was still very popular in Sweden. Lars was interested in researching fashion, eventually producing a book around it years later (Holmberg, 2008); and fashion, or more broadly style, had for some quite some time been one of the key concepts of subcultural theory.

As for myself, I also had been interested in punk music for a long time, and had both played it in amateur bands and had worked as a freelance journalist in Italy and Poland with the task of interviewing music groups.

Not long after, we designed a project that subsequently was financed by the Swedish Research Counsel (VR), and each of us carved a niche within it. My initial questions, which are still present in much of my work today, were: Why, and in which ways, did people get involved in politics? Or more generally, how and why did people get involved in pretty much any endeavour? What did they get out of it? Which factors triggered participation, and then, eventually, disengagement? In which ways and under which circumstances, did individuals ‘do things together’—i.e. collaborate?

I assume that the reason why I was so attracted to these questions had something to do with their potential universal value—both theoretical and social—and also because they seemed of a very pragmatic nature: the data, insights, answers, and questions generated by this research can be used.

The original idea of the project, which I did not pursue at the time, involved a comparison of different pathways to participation and disengagement among White Power activists—neo-Nazis, and anti-Fascists—also known as AFA. My initial question, or as I called it then, preliminary hypothesis, was that politics, however conceived, was neither the only nor the most significant factor in predicting both participation and disengagement. At the time, I had little idea that participation had been one of the core questions of the social movement literature, or that disengagement was, and still is, a gap in that literature. It is interesting for me to recall that already at such early stage of my career, I was inclined toward the social psychological ap-

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25 Harrington and Fine (2000) arguing about the negative effects of fragmentation within small group research, suggested three general issues that should be revived. One of them, which they refer to as “How small groups get things done,” is the same as the topic I just proposed.
proach I eventually ended up pursing more overtly in the last paper of my dissertation (and latest research—planned and in-progress).

Following much media attention on violence by and toward White Power activists (Bjorgo, 1997)—likely one reason why the project was financed—the initial general focus of the project was to map out the activities of the White Power and Punk subcultures in Sweden.

The focal point of my part of the research arose inductively, and my main topic became the origins of White Power music in connection with the Punk subculture (or ‘movement’ as researchers like Roberts and Moore (2009) have referred to it).

I discovered that the origins of White Power music are historically linked to the Punk movement (or subculture); the first White Power band also played punk music and its audience was initially comprised both by punks, skinheads (both racist and anti-racists), and other subculturalists (interview with Balestrino by Corte, 2002). My second interest, focused on the cross-national developments of White Power music across Europe and North America. The more theoretical concern addressed three different roles played by White Power music in relation to right-wing extremist social movement organizations (SMO): recruitment, framing of issues and ideology, and obtainment of financial resources.


Getting to Greenville, North Carolina

As I was completing my Laurea\(^{27}\) in Sociologia (vecchio ordinamento) at Urbino University, Italy, I was awarded a scholarship to spend one semester at a North American University. The choice of the institution was not up to me, but I could at least express a number of preferences. On my list there were three universities; each located in North Carolina. Upon a perusal of research and discussion with colleagues,\(^{28}\) I learned that North Carolina had an unusual high concentration of good schools. Also, I thought that it seemed unpopular enough that if I picked all of my choices there, I would not end up in another State. I do not know why neither of my first two preferences were met (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke

\(^{26}\) Note that in the subculture literature the terms subculture and social movement are sometimes used interchangeably. Hodkinson (2002) also discretionally mixes the use of scene and subculture, perhaps delineating the un-clarity of much of this literature.

\(^{27}\) Equivalent to a Master degree.

\(^{28}\) I need to thank Tom R. Burns, Nora Machado, and Wendelin Reich.
University), but I know that East Carolina University (ECU) worked perfectly well for me, and my academic development.

The first impressions are easy to recall: the campus was large but contained and well-kept, and the weather was excellent—especially compared to Sweden where I had been living before. I was very happy to be abroad on a scholarship that paid for room and board, and full remission of tuition. The city, on the other hand, surprised me by how small it was.

I think that it was already during the first week that a graduate student at the Sociology Department introduced me to Professor Bob Edwards. Bob was curious to meet me, a European who had been working with Professor Eyerman and was interested in subcultures and social movements. Bob, in fact, held similar scholarly interests: he had been a student of Professor McCarthy who is a social movement scholar pivotal in the development of Resource Mobilization (RM) theory in the late 1970s. Additionally, to strengthen what would develop into a strong friendship and collaboration, Bob was originally from Northern California, and had grown up surfing and skateboarding, just as I did back home in Europe.

The Project on Pro-Town USA
This project\(^{29}\) concerns a study of the community—used here interchangeably with scene (Irwin, 1977)—of BMX riders who relocated to Greenville from different parts of the world. Greenville, apart from hosting a reasonably sized public university of at the time twenty-something thousand students, was also “Pro-Town USA.” This meant that it had the largest concentration of professional BMX riders in the world, nearly all of whom had moved there from elsewhere in the US or from abroad to create a community around their sport. Apparently, as Bob (see footnote below) and many others including the BMXers later on told me, this was puzzling: Of all places, why Greenville? Why not somewhere else?

Bob and I began discussing the project, and I started meeting BMXers. Having been a skateboarder for most of my life, I found myself with an advantage in gaining access to this insular group. And given time, luck and perseverance, I succeeded. What was harder, on the other hand, was finding the research focus. Sure it was fun to get to know and ride with BMXers and skateboarders, but to what end?

The focus of the research arose inductively, and while the broader research idea was Bob’s, I was the principal investigator: I found and read the relevant literature, entered the group, designed the interview-guide, collected fieldnotes and carried out all the interviews. Bob played an important role,

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\(^{29}\) What was supposed to be a one semester stay, ended up being a three year period in which I also earned a Master degree in Sociology, and did much fieldwork which I would use during my PhD degree years later. Bob, having heard my academic interests, and also my long time passion for lifestyle sports, talked to me about a research project he had been thinking about since he had moved to Greenville in 1996.
serving as a sounding board in the creation and refinement of the interview guide, balancing my perspective throughout the process (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Lofland et al., 2006), and eventually analyzing the data and writing up the results for publication.

I designed and tested a preliminary set of questions in an open-ended questionnaire with pilot interviews that I continued to refine over the course of about one year. Then, based on positive responses from the interviewees about the new instrument, I gained both confidence and verification that I had a solid set of open-ended questions. A turning point for me was when BMXers who I hadn’t yet approached began seeking me out for interviews. For a longer discussion on methods, see Section III.
Summary of the Four Papers

Paper I:

The first article of this dissertation analyses the origins, developments, and functions fulfilled by White Power music in relation to the White Power Movement (WPM). In accomplishing this task it discusses the connection between the neo-Nazi (racist skinhead) subculture, extreme right-wing parties, and the origins of the WPM, with a particular focus on England, Sweden and North America.

The piece, as well as the other three of this dissertation, relies on a number of qualitative methods that will be discussed in Section III “Data and Methods.”

This is both an historical as well as an analytical piece. More specifically, rather than ‘building theory’ it uses Resource Mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004) and the concept of framing (Snow and Benford, 1988), to explain the international historical developments of this phenomenon from its origins in the early 1980s to 2008.

Its analysis is based on a look behind the scenes, “backstage,” at the production of White Power music by investigating the entrepreneurs instead of the consumers.

To a lesser extent, the article also partially fills a gap within social movement research by analysing the functions of art in social movement activity. With the exception of a growing number of instances (Staggenborg et al., 1993; Eder et al. 1995; Eyerman and Jamison 1995, 1998; Eyerman, 2002; Adams, 2002; Roscigno, Danaher and Summer-Efflers, 2002; Lahusen, 1996; Jasper, 1997; Roscigno et al., 2002; Roscigno and Danhaer, 2004; Futrell et al., 2006; Dobratz and Shanks-Meile, 1997; Moore and Roberts, 2009; Roberts and Moore, 2009; Simi and Futrell, 2010), art has typically come in a secondary position in comparison to other aspects of social movement pursuit that are generally considered more tangible (Klandermans and Staggenborg, 2002) and of more short term reach, such as political turnout, media coverage, and protests. The relationship between music and social movements, in particular, has been a relatively neglected topic (Roberts and Moore, 2009).

The main findings of this research evidence the modalities through which music, as a subcultural production, has been successfully co-opted by populist political parties as well as by racist social movements. The origins of White Power music in the early 1980s in England show the interconnection between a racist offshoot of the Skinhead subculture and the populist party
known as the National Front (NF). While the partnership between the racist fringe of the skinhead subculture and party politics proved to be initially beneficial to both, it later led to many conflicts both over the style and content of the music, as well over the sharing of profits.

Throughout the last thirty years the connection between racist subcultures, political parties, and racist social movements has been underlined by conflicts of interest and diverging opinions revolving around a variety of issues—not least of which include the articulation of common goals and the strategy to reach them.

The research concludes that White Power music has been incorporated as a tactical repertoire by both racist social movements and political parties to obtain three goals: (1) recruit new adherents, (2) frame issues and ideology for the construction of collective identity, (3) obtain financial recourses that can be applied toward other resources such as employed staff, machines, or renting office space from where to organize collective action.

**Paper II:**


The second piece gives an overview of the subculture of Freestyle BMX, discussing its origins and developments—both internationally as a wider subcultural phenomenon, and locally, through the case study of a subcultural BMX scene. Analytically, it juxtaposes the grassroots early period of the subculture with its commercialization and (partial) professionalization. This interplay is viewed in the case study of “Pro Town USA,” a town in North Carolina, where a large number of professional BMXers relocated from different parts of the world between the mid-1990s and 2008. There, a high concentration of top riders transformed a long-standing and vibrant local scene into one of the world’s hubs of this activity.

The chapter focuses on two main research questions: 1) how did the grassroots organization of Greenville’s initial BMX scene emerge? And 2) how did commercialization and professionalization change the local scene?

The piece begins with an historical overview of Freestyle BMX, its first mass popularization in the late 1980s, and its subcultural, grassroots developments after the first wave of mass popularity had collapsed. Then, it gives an ethnographic account of a local BMX scene (Greenville, NC) during this grassroots period and explains the modalities through which its members overcame a number of structural constraints by acquiring different kinds of resources in order to practice and develop their activity.
Next, the piece highlights the properties of the ecological context of this local scene, explaining how, why, and when it became one of the international epicentres for this subcultural activity.

In its final pages the second wave of mass popularization of Freestyle BMX in the mid-1990s is discussed. More specifically, this part explains how this process of popularization affected the social structure of the scene, creating tensions among its members and splitting the scene into two main groups. Secondly, it also points out how this process attracted a large number of newcomers, and also won further moral legitimacy and support from the municipality toward the riders.

While Resource Mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004) is not explicitly mentioned in the chapter, it is indeed embedded in the structure of the piece that clearly focuses on resources.

**Paper III:**


The third paper conceptualizes Freestyle BMX as a social movement (Edwards and Corte, 2011: 1137) using Resource Mobilization theory to identify and explain three different forms of commercialization within this lifestyle sport in the subcultural local scene of Greenville, NC.

The work sheds light on the complex process of commercialization within lifestyle sports and possibly other subcultures, which until recently has been described in the literature as a unitary, top-down, ‘negative’ process (Wheaton and Beal, 2003; Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011).

And it identifies three distinct forms of commercialization, named *paraphernalia, movement,* and *mass market,* and explains the different impacts that each had on the on the local scene, as well as on the wider subculture. These three forms of commercialization differ from each other principally by their relationship to the lifestyle-sport movement (Edwards and Corte, 2011:1142), in the following ways: (a) production, (b) marketing, (c) consumption and (d) kinds of products.

The social location of movement commercialization lies entirely within the lifestyle sport movement, as rider-owned or controlled firms market products to other riders. In paraphernalia commercialization non-rider-owned firms market products to riders. By contrast, in mass-market commercialization riders play a role only in marketing. Non-rider-owned firms sell everyday consumer items to non-riders by soliciting rider participation in marketing, most commonly through sponsorship and endorsement contracts.
Movement commercialization emerges from within the lifestyle-sport scene to fulfill the necessities of a growing community of riders. Movement enterprises center first on producing equipment needed to participate in the lifestyle sport, but often branch out later into a wider array of products used to symbolically represent or exhibit the lifestyle.

Paraphernalia commercialization refers to the production and marketing of equipment including bicycles, pads, gloves, helmets and other products riders need to participate in the activity. The key exchange relationships characteristic of this form of commercialization are typically between non-rider producers and marketers, and BMX rider consumers.

Mass-market commercialization of BMX began in 1995 when ESPN, a global television network, launched the X Games. The X Games were promptly followed by other broadcaster-produced events like NBC’s Gravity Games and manufacturer-produced events like the Dew Tour (sponsored by PepsiCo, producers of the soda Mountain Dew). The two other forms of commercialization directly compete with each other to sell lifestyle-sport-related equipment and gear to BMX participants. Mass-market commercialization, on the other hand, employs an image of BMX to market products (like soft drinks, deodorant, and snack foods) not related to BMX participation to a mass audience, most of whom will never own, let alone ride, a BMX bike.

Findings show that lifestyle sport insiders actively collaborate in each form of commercialization, including especially movement commercialization, which has the potential to create alternative lifestyle sport institutions and resist adverse commercial influences. Each form of commercialization exercises different influences on the mobilization and development of the BMX movement. The findings are broadly consistent with the growing argument in the literature on lifestyle sports (Booth, 2005; Wheaton, 2005; and Thorpe, 2006, 2009) that understands commercialization as a multi-faceted process involving both collective and individual actors who often have competing agendas. Lifestyle sport participants are active agents in every form of commercialization and the impact of that participation is not uniformly negative; instead, it varies with respect to a number of factors and the standpoint of commentators.

Paper IV:

The fourth paper utilizes data from the case study of “Pro Town USA” BMX riders to refine the theory of collaborative circles (Farrell, 2001).

The theory of small group collaboration identifies seven stages of group development (formation, rebellion against established authority, quest, creative work, collective action, separation stage, and reunion), as well as a
number of concepts (most importantly, the norm of escalating reciprocity, and instrumental intimacy) that are typical of creative work done by small groups. It also singles out different roles played by a group’s participants (charismatic leader, gatekeeper, boundary marker, peacemaker, lightning rod).

The theory is valuable because: (1) it is an “an attempt to map the dynamics of collaborative circles over time so as to derive from it a more general theory of interchange and influence” (DeNora, 2003; 912), (2) it is an introduction of group theory, and therefore social psychology, to sociology of the arts, and more broadly to the sociology of culture (DeNora, 2003; Fine, 2003), and (3) it is, more generally, an illustrative example of the importance of comparative research for the generation of theory (DeNora, 2003).

The principal limitations of the theory are that: (1) at this stage, it is too descriptive, and (2) it focuses too narrowly on the internal dynamics of small groups while paying much less attention, especially analytically, to external factors such as the ecological context within which small groups operate.

My contribution lies in: (1) having further clarified the key concepts of the theory, (2) having incorporated the nuanced concept of resources from Resource Mobilization theory (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004) to allow for the analysis of context (or external factors), and (3) having integrated the concepts of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and idioculture (Fine, 1979) to the theory. The paper concludes by demonstrating that circle development was aided by specific locational, human, moral, and material resources as well as by complementary social-psychological characteristics of its members.

Results and Reflections

Concluding this introductory section I will emphasize the major findings of each project and provide the reader with what I think are fruitful future avenues of research in the scholarly areas I have addressed. In this section I will also put forth pedagogical “take away” points, which, in other words, are my suggestions if someone were to ask my opinion on matters researched in this thesis. There are a number of reasons for including this detailed section in addition to just presenting the major findings of each paper. As all papers of this dissertation except one have already been published (the first one on White Power music in 2008, the one on collaborative circles submitted), my work has been cited in a number of occasions, and the academic discussion on the issues presented advanced. Here, I continue this conversation by addressing both scholars’ comments on my work, as well as my take on some of the latest research on these issues. Consequently, this section is more up to date than what I already published.
Lastly, I benefit from a temporal distance from my work that allows me to see it from a fresh perspective and fix on paper ideas that have matured over time. This facilitates the formulation of future avenues of research on the topics researched by suggesting how key themes in my work can be further engaged and developed. This is something that, to varying degrees, is customarily dispensed with briefly in the concluding paragraphs of published articles. Here, with no space limitations, these reflections are formulated comprehensively.


Findings
Eyerman and Jamison (1998: 11) wrote that activists find it difficult to distinguish the cultural from the political. Klandermans (2004) has shown that participation in social movements is highly influenced by how deeply individuals feel connected to or identify with both the ideas and the other participants of a movement. Della Porta (2009) posited a similar argument in relation to disengagement from terrorist cells, stressing that the disengagement process was initiated when one member began disliking another’s behavior within the group. This obviously does not mean that politics do not matter, but instead that it is not as simple as one (especially from an opposing group) may conceive it to be. And also that it certainly includes much that is social, and therefore related to emotions rather than mere ideology, which is often only vaguely grasped by the participants themselves. Further, the same argument could be made in regard to strict costs/benefits explanations which, while still in vogue among some economists, have long lost their appeal to sociologists.

As provocative as it may sound to some, members of a White Power group may have more in common with their counterparts in, for example, the Anti Fascists (AFA), as either might like to learn. And, as already pointed out in this introduction, a comparative study between these two groups is waiting to be done.

It follows that the cultural and social side of a movement is crucial for individual and collective participation. Commenting on the origins of White Power music an expert on the extreme right-wing in Britain noted that “…The National Front was quite a reasonably sized organization, but with

31 In regard to White Power groups in Scandinavia, see Bjørgo, 1997, as well as Kimmel, 2007 who argue for both pragmatic and emotional reasons related to participation in such groups.
32 Nonetheless, as it will be discussed under “take away” points, this should not call for sociopsychological explanations verging into solutions that do not acknowledge the presence of political interests and organizations behind White Power music.
no culture element to it whatsoever, it was not able to attract young people” (Silver, personal communication to Back, 1998, cited in Corte and Edwards, 2008: 6).

Krzys Acord and DeNora (2008) argue that both my work and Eyerman and Jamison’s (1998) study on music and social movements show in a neo-Durkheimian fashion the importance of collective representations to collective action by underlying “the emotional basis for activism” (Krzys Acord and DeNora, 2008: 230). It is worth emphasizing that this may seem antithetical to a reading of my work that focuses on a classic, narrowly structuralist formulation of Resource Mobilization theory that I do not embrace. In my research in fact, I tend not to talk about resource mobilization theory, but more as one element of a broader approach that aims at capturing both structure and culture. To me, both the expressive forms of social movements and their pragmatic material base are essential to their functioning as I think the paper on White Power music shows.

Specifically, my paper on White Power music has explained: First, the critical importance of music to attract and retain members; second, but in relation to point one, the ways in which music is used to frame issues and ideology while nurturing collective identity; and third, the salience of music in relation to the generation of conspicuous economic resources, which are then used to maintain and advance a variety of political projects. Collective identity (point two), like much literature has discussed before, is a key factor that allows members to feel connected and motivated toward activism whether in proximity to each other or not. The final point is theoretically novel to the literature on music and social movements which has mainly focused on the previous two (Danaher, 2010: 818),

Historically, the piece has explained the origins and international developments of White Power music. Theoretically, while adopting a social movement perspective, it has uncovered the ways in which its lyrics and documents written about the music (for example, on niche websites), are built to create a ‘frame’ consisting of three elements that serve the purpose

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33 Also note that in both Corte and Edwards (2008:5), as well as in Edwards and Corte (2010:1135) we refer to the “the resource mobilization perspective” (emphasis added).
34 Roberts and Moore write: “Corte and Edwards (2008) make an important contribution toward filling the gap in research on much and social movements because they seek to draw attention to the ways in which music can be a crucial factor in the process of obtaining resources for a social movement” (Roberts and Moore, 2009:23).
36 Moore and Roberts, discussing “Punk Do-It-Yourself Mobilization” (2009), make a similar point when they take into account the “mobilizing” properties beyond collective identity of music in social movements. However, they do so one year after the publication of my article, and unfortunately without citing it.
37 For example, Eyerman and Jamison’s work (1998).
of broadening music’s appeal: (1) oppositional, (2) authentic, and (3) persecuted. In what follows I will explain what each of these features stands for.

White Power music is presented as oppositional, or “resistance music,” which akin to many other genres like punk-rock, for example, is presented in opposition to an imaginary mainstream. Therefore, rebellion is the common denominator—a sort of frame extension (Snow et al., 1986) that links WP music to other genres. But differently, according to some of its producers, WP music is not nihilistic, but instead part of a much more grandiose and constructive project that has ambitions of historical consequence. As written on a White Power page: “We want you to know why so many young white kids today are alienated and to give you the opportunity to do something about it and become part of history” (Pierce, 2002 cited in Corte and Edwards, 2008: 13). This trait then blends with the second feature that revolves around authenticity, and which to my knowledge, is a new finding in regard to studies on White Power music.

Many subcultural musical genres are constructed around the idea that authenticity (Frith, 1987; 1996; Garofalo, 2010:744) is achieved through a sincere pursuit of the activity, independent from commercial forces. The counterpart to this is something fake, done mainly for commercial purposes, or anyway under the influence of a third party which typically constraints the artist’s freedom of expression. Succumbing to this influence is considered “selling out” by fans.

White Power music is portrayed as the genuine expression of the activist’s feelings in clear distinction from music mass-produced by large record labels and played by MTV, which is considered fake, and consequentially of lesser value. This is a rhetorical, circular strategy that partially makes use of the niche market of the music, and the fact that the possibility for it to achieve large ‘mainstream’ success is very slim. The argument goes like this: if the music has not gone mainstream, it must be authentic. Furthermore, musicians could, if they wanted to, sell millions of records simply by toning down their message, because then they would no longer be held down by powerful opponents—typically understood in the form of a Zionist conspiracy. Consequentially, the illegality of the music, message, and symbols of many White Power bands is then used to further legitimize its importance, along with the presumed double standard that society holds toward other groups and genres like, for example, Gangsta Rap. As posted on a White Power Internet page: “After the L.A. riots did the cops inspect the nigger rioters’ homes for rap music? Somehow I don't think so” (Byron, 2008, cited in Corte and Edwards, 2008: 12). The logic further goes like this: Our musicians stay true to the cause, and don’t sell out no matter the lure of making millions. And this framing reinforces the “us against them” feeling of collective identity.

This brings us to the third frame which lies on a perceived and articulated persecution of underdogs, and which in turn leads us to show how hate has
been reframed as self-love. In fact, in an attempt to expand their appeal, many White Power bands have reframed their core message from racial hatred to racial survival, pride and self-love (Corte and Edwards, 2008). A White Power page reported:

The white race deserves to survive and prosper as much as any other biological entity in this world, whether it is a type of polar bear or the panda or the thousands of other endangered species. To my mind the world’s most endangered species is our people (quoted in White Off the Scale, 2006 in Corte and Edwards, 2008: 8).

Future Research

“Music is an incredibly powerful (emotional) force” (Garofalo, 2011: 727).

Research on music and social movements is not new, but still limited (Corte and Edwards, 2008; Moore and Roberts, 2009; Roberts and Moore, 2009). In particular, the relationship between music and emotions has remained a focus of research in sociology and has recently drawn the attention of psychologists as well (Juslin and Sloboda, 2011). There has been renewed interest across different disciplines in the emotional effects caused by music (Garofalo, 2011:725), both through listening (in private or collectively, as for example during a concert) or through performance (playing music).

Recently, psychologists Juslin and Sloboda’s interdisciplinary “Handbook of Music and Emotions” (2011) offered a very valuable contribution to the area, yet reasonably acknowledged that much work is left to be done.

Within social movement research, the study of emotions is a quickly emerging and promising topic of study (Jasper, 2011; Parker and Hackett, 2012). Eyerman and Jamison’s “Music and Social Movements” (1998) provided a springboard for theoretically conceptualizing the relationship between music, emotion, and collective action. Yet, even though this was followed by a number of discrete studies (for example Roscigno and Danaher’s “The Voice of Southern Labor: Radio, Music and Textile Strikes, 1929-1934” (2004) and Corte and Edwards (2008), among others), it leaves many questions (like the one proposed below) unanswered.

As recognized in both my paper and Les Back’s (2004) earlier study, at this point, one can only make educated guesses on the impacts of music on activists’ political behavior and beliefs. Does music have an impact on polit-

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38 For a review of the literature on music and social movements that asserts that emotions are one of the four key concepts, see Danaher, 2010. The other three concepts are: collective identity, free space, and social movement culture. Danaher also points out that research on music by social movement scholars has principally focused on how it constructs collective identity (Danaher, 2010:818).
ical behavior? And if so, can we measure (or more mildly, assess) to what degree? How should such a measurement be conducted?

My work is focused on the production side of music, rather than on its consumption side, addressing questions such as: How did White Power music develop, what does the international scene look like, what are its major themes, how did these themes change over time, and, not least, what were the producers of White Power music trying to achieve through their music?

A promising complementary study might examine the same phenomenon from a new perspective by investigating different questions. For example, how do listeners learn about the “product,” how do they principally consume it and why, and what effects (presumably over time) does listening to White Power music (in private and in a collectivity) have on their political outlook and behavior. Also, what do listeners of White Power music think of the recruitment strategies constructed and divulged by its producers and players?

There are several ways in which a study addressing those research questions could be undertaken, and much depends on the kind of access to the research subjects the investigator could gain. Ideally, such study would include one or more elements of comparability achieved through considering variables like gender, age, and nationality, along with different modalities and intensities of consumption in the research design.

Lastly, Garofalo provides us with another interesting avenue of research: To what extent, and in which ways, do White Power musicians discuss music in relation to the lyrics and to the effects they wish to achieve?

Take Away Points

White Power music and neo-Nazism in Sweden have been understood by some as merely a socio-psychological problem of youth, failing to acknowledge the presence of political organizations around and behind them. Kimmel’s paper “Racism as Adolescent Male Rite of Passage Ex-Nazis in Scandinavia” (2007) clearly reiterates this partial view.

The inability or refusal to see the political structure behind the phenomenon has led to gross and consequential mistakes in terms of policies to contain the growth of neo-Nazism in Sweden; according to experts like Stieg Larsson, these errors led to funding of programs which had egregious unintended and directly counterproductive consequences during the mid-1990s. For example Exit, designed to help youngsters leave the movement, lacked accountability in terms of numbers of activists who left because of it. Fur-

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39 Incidentally, Garafalo mischaracterizes our work when he writes: “Corte and Edwards maintain that the reinforcement of racist ideologies occurs primarily through the lyrics of the music (Garofalo, 2011: 744).” In fact the paper mentions lyrics, rhythm and music (Corte and Edwards, 2008: 9). Admittedly the paper empirically focuses on the first (lyrics), and perhaps indirectly it may read that we meant they have a stronger effect, while they simply were the focus of the research. In other words, we did not intend to underemphasize the importance of music and rhythm.
ther, they neglected to track how State provided resources were used; according to Expo representatives, these resources were in fact co-opted by the White Power movement rather freely and used for their own political interests. As Stieg Larsson pointed out to me during one interview: “The Nazi-Skinheads visiting from other countries could not believe their eyes when they saw that these ‘top’ conditions were provided by the Swedish government” (Larsson, personal communication, 2002).

While the causes of activist participation are a mix of social, emotional and political factors that are difficult to disentangle (both for activists and researchers), programs designed to control extremism need to be careful about how they allocate their resources. An attentive investigation of experts’ opinion must be consulted prior to enacting policy, preferably at their design stage, and throughout their implementation.


Findings

The ethnographic study on the BMX scene of “Pro Town USA” has led to a number of findings that can be summarized in two key words: “commercialization(s)” and “collaboration.” More specifically this study deals with the empirical and analytical identification of three forms of commercialization within lifestyle sport subcultures, and a refinement of the theory of collaborative circles (Farrell, 2001). The respective scientific contributions are presented in two distinct papers and refer to two streams of scholarship: “lifestyle-sport subcultures,” and “small group research,” but could certainly be of further reach. I begin by taking up the first contribution, presented in the article “Commercialization and Lifestyle Sport: Lessons from Twenty Years of Freestyle BMX in Pro-Town, USA“ (Edwards and Corte, 2010).

Commercialization is one of the key topics in research on lifestyle sport subcultures (Rinehart and Sydnor, 2003; Wheaton, 2004), and not surprisingly since activities like surfing, skateboarding and BMX, among other lifestyle sports, have recently experienced a conspicuous commercialization of unprecedented scale (Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011).

In terms of scholarly literature, commercialization has long been a major theme in research on subcultures. This focus dates back to Howard Becker’s book “Outsiders” (1963), and is most evident in research that came out of the Birmingham School (Clarke, 1976) which in the 1970s studied subcultures like punks, mods, and skinheads who were going through a process similar to lifestyle sports today—and which, not incidentally, were referred to as “spectacular subcultures” (Hebdige, 1979).  

40 Those researchers focused on the process of commodification, which is commercialization through the diffusion to the mainstream of symbols (and to a lesser ex-
In both the general subcultural literature (for example, Blair, 1993; Muggleton and Wienzierl, 2003), and the literature that focuses on sport subcultures (for example, Beal, 1995; Borden, 2001; Heino, 2000; Rinehart, 1998), commercialization has typically been understood as a top-down negative process that damages subcultures and subculturalists at large, while diluting and stripping its message of initial (rebellious) strength (Clarke, 1976; Hebdige, 1979).

For Becker’s jazz musicians, commercialization was a compromise they made in order to get paid by pleasing ‘squares,’ who wanted them to play commercial music they did not particularly enjoy. These concessions allowed them the freedom to perform the jam sessions they truly loved (typically later on at night after these patrons had left). For researchers of the Birmingham School, instead, commercialization was mostly hurting the subculture. It was a process that either killed the subculture through co-optation and incorporation (Hebdige, 1979:96), or pushed subculturalists to continually innovate new symbols and practices in order to retain a distinct identity (Muggleton and Wienzierl, 2003). Similarly, for researchers within lifestyle sports, commercialization was, and partially is still, seen as a “corporate colonization” (Edwards and Corte, 2010:1136) to be resisted. This stance is apparent in the resistance toward commercialization that a large number of lifestyle sport subculturalists feel and enact.42 Palmer writes: “Three main aspect of the commercialization debate are the commercial power of extreme sports, the particular qualities of extreme sports that lend themselves to commercialization, and the consequences of commercialization for proponents of extreme sports (Palmer, 2007:74, emphasis added).”

Therefore, early work on lifestyle sport subcultures tended to follow theories of the Birmingham School as portraying participants as uniformly resisting the negative effects of commercialization coming from ‘the outside’ “mainstream” (Wheaton and Beal, 2003).43 Beginning with Thornton (1996), recent work on subcultures has, however, conceptualized the relationships between lifestyle sports and commercialization as more complex than originally thought (Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011; Booth, 2005; Wheaton, 2005, tent, practices) created within subcultures.

41 A few similarities between the spectacular subcultures researched by the Birmingham School and modern lifestyle sport subcultures can be drawn: both in fact have a spectacular appeal which attracts general and media attention, as well as relying on objects (clothes, gear, and in the case of lifestyle sports, equipment) that can be turned into commodities.

42 One telling example of this is the mobilization that skateboarders across the world engaged in as a response to the “threatening” possibility that “their” activity could debut in the 2012 Olympic Games (Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011:831). Others include the contestation that snowboarders initially had toward the inclusion of snowboarding in the 1998 Olympics, and the recent (and successful) resistance by Freestyle BMXers to similar inclusion (Thorpe and Wheaton, 2011).

43 This is unsurprising, given the significant impact of the Birmingham School on the general study of subcultures.
2007; Giulianotti, 2005). However, this new literature, like the work that preceded it, has yet to come up with analytical tools to capture and investigate the different forms of commercialization that take place within (lifestyle sport) subcultures.44

The contribution of my work with Edwards that appeared in the journal *Sport in Society* in 2010 fills this gap by identifying three distinct forms of commercialization that operated in “Pro Town USA:” paraphernalia, movement, and mass-market. Those, we argued, help tackle complexities related to commercialization in lifestyle sports by specifying the different outcomes and actors involved. In order to do so, we conceptualized BMX as a social movement—therefore, applying theoretical extension—and used the resource mobilization approach to analyze its developments and interaction with different commercial actors and processes over time.

From this perspective we found that what we called “movement commercialization” had the potential to be both a market-based form of collective action, resisting the perceived negative impacts of other forms of commercialization, and a producer of alternative institutions promoting the broader lifestyle sport ethos. Movement enterprises tended to institutionalize resistance and re-invest some economic gains back into the movement to increase participation and build their base of rider customers. There is also some evidence that movement enterprises help to produce an infrastructure and a form of social capital that play crucial roles in the mobilization, development, and durability of other movements (Minkof, 1997). Such endeavors may be mutually beneficial to the movement entrepreneurs and the lifestyle sport.

Methodologically, we relied on a triangulation of different methods, data sources, and investigators (Denzin, 1989) that allowed us to capture the unfolding complexities and dynamics of commercialization, as well as its multiple influences on the development of a distinctive and influential BMX scene. Our findings confirm the emerging argument in the literature that posits commercialization as a multi-faceted process involving different actors with competing agendas. However, lifestyle sport participants are active in each of the forms we identified, and the impact of their participation is far from uniformly negative. The three forms of commercialization identified by the research are schematized in the figure below.

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44 Thornton (1995) for example talks about the function played by three types of medium (micro, niche, mass) in the building of club cultures in Britain. Hodkinson (2002) distinguishes between internal (subcultural) forms of media and commerce which predominantly operate within networks of specific subcultural groupings, and external (non-subcultural) products and services, produced by larger-scale commercial interests for a broader consumer base (Hodkinson, 2002:33). The work of McRobbie (1989) on small-scale subcultural enterprises should also be mentioned.
**Figure 1: Three Forms of Commercialization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Commercialization</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Consumption</th>
<th>Products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paraphernalia</strong></td>
<td>Non-rider owned or controlled</td>
<td>Rider participation</td>
<td>By riders</td>
<td>Bikes and gear needed to participate in the lifestyle sport with little or no emphasis on exhibiting the lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Movement</strong></td>
<td>Rider owned or controlled</td>
<td>Rider participation</td>
<td>By riders</td>
<td>Bikes, gear, services, and specialized clothes needed to participate in and exhibit the lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mass Market</strong></td>
<td>Non-rider owned or controlled</td>
<td>Rider participation</td>
<td>By non-riders</td>
<td>Everyday consumer items like deodorant, toothpaste, soft drinks, snack foods of no direct pertinence to the lifestyle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Future Research**

The proposed concepts (movement commercialization, paraphernalia commercialization and mass-market commercialization) should be applied to other cases to see how they work, and if they need to be modified. Cases should not be restricted to lifestyle sport subcultures, but extended to other types of subcultures as well. Furthermore, this work of conceptualizing lifestyle sport subcultures as social movements could also make use of the theoretical extensions of other social movement concepts presented in this thesis.

**Take Away Points**

There are many things to keep in mind while doing research. In this regard, analysts, especially with a rather strong Left leaning, may have a spirited reaction toward commercialization. However, until someone has done research, it is hard to know that commercialization may take different forms, and have very different effects depending on the standpoint of the commentator, and other social actors. More generally, researchers should prepare to be surprised at how creative their subjects can be in working with, or against the larger structural forces we learn about in sociology classes.

The second contribution derived from the study of “Pro Town USA” resulted in the article “A Refinement of Collaborative Circles Theory: Resource Mobilization and Innovation in an Extreme Sport.”

**Findings**

The theory of collaborative circles (Farrell, 2001) is about small group collaboration among peers who become friends and achieve highly creative work; in the cases examined by Farrell to develop the theory, this work is consequential for the field in which small group members operate—for ex-
ample, the pursuit of Monet, Manet, Degas and Pissarro and the invention of Impressionism.

As already noted in the above summary, the theory of collaborative circles centers on stages of group development, the identification of different roles played by group’s participants, and two key dynamics taking place among them—*instrumental intimacy,* and *escalating reciprocity.* Therefore, it pays more attention to the internal dynamics of circles and says much less about how variations in the context in which circles function can facilitate (or hinder) their development. To remedy this limitation, I drew on resource mobilization theory to explain that resources—and not social dynamics or culture alone—contribute to the development of these types of groups. In doing so I apply parts of the theoretical framework of collaborative circles theory and of Resource Mobilization theory to an analysis of Freestyle BMXers living in “Pro Town USA.”

My argument is that a number of resources, drawn from a specific geographical context, played a significant impact in the development of the circle of the BMX bike riders who honed their bike riding skills and stunts in Greenville, NC.

These resources include *locational resources,* *material resources,* and *moral resources.* By locational resources I mean a geographic setting where the economic, climatic, and demographic characteristics allowed group members to enjoy a lifestyle that permitted for large blocks of time devoted to perfecting their skills, as well as much recreational time to be spent off their bikes, which was essential for developing and solidifying friendships. Material resources refer to the space and materials necessary to meet and practice their sport. Finally, moral resources refer to a normative climate that initially tolerated, then encouraged and even rewarded the activities of the group members. In short, my contribution lies in having empirically and analytically incorporated contextual factors to the small group theory of collaborative circles, which originally focused almost exclusively on the internal dynamics of group development.

*Future Research*

There are many different ways in which this research could be expanded. The paper argued that by including the contextual factors identified in a refined theory of collaborative circles, we could derive hypotheses about the factors that contribute to the formation and sustained development of circles. This suggestion proposes that by selecting case studies that vary in contextual resources, we might better understand (and theorize) the conditions under which circles form and thrive.

Another possibility entails further development of the theory by articulating more precisely how resource mobilization theory affects the stages of group development. Such a project would extend the argument of the paper that resources matter for the development of circles. A study like the one
proposed would not necessarily focus on each stage of the theory, but instead could be circumscribed to the crucial ones (for example: formation, collective action, and separation) in order to apply the principles of resource mobilization theory.

**Take Away Points**

The basic premise of the theory of collaborative circles posits that consequential creative endeavors are *often* the result of successful collaboration among peers who become friends and work together over extended periods of time. However, simply put, not any configuration of members will work; my central contribution is simply to point out that not any setting will work either.

Both the theory and its two key dynamics—*instrumental intimacy*, and *escalating reciprocity*—rely on two fundamental and tightly related components: trust among members, and their friendship. It is worth pointing out here what these two concepts mean: *Instrumental intimacy* is the knowledge that members, and in particular dyads within the group, acquire of each other, and which leads them to virtually tap into each other’s minds, and anticipate each other’s comments. The *norm of escalating reciprocity* is the dynamic that pushes members to both match and exceed each other’s work, ultimately increasing the quality of the work done by both individual members and by the group as a whole. Importantly, both of these two pivotal dynamics seem to work, or work best, if members deeply know and care for each other, and have developed enough trust to share even “their wildest ideas” (Farrell, 2001)

In other words, when engaged in creative work, try to collaborate with people you profoundly like, respect, and who you envision yourself sincerely trusting. In addition, seek others at a similar stage of development, with personalities and skills complementary to your own, as this will increase the chances of producing work that matters while enjoying it. These relationships cannot be cultivated in a vacuum, however. Thus, aim to be in an environment where you, as a group, can have access to adequate resources. Of special consideration here is the existence of a sort of backstage in which you can work without having others controlling or limiting what you do.

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45 Both Farrell (2001) and Parker and Hackett (2012) stress the importance of “fun” for the achievement of successful endeavors.
2. Towards a Theoretical Synthesis of Social Movements, Subcultures and Small Groups

In this section I will first, and primarily, introduce social movements, subcultures and small groups, and the main concepts connected to the first two. The area of small groups, however, is too vast and scattered (Harrington and Fine, 2000) to attempt to identity and summarize even just some of its concepts. Second, I will dig deeper into the theoretical linkage among these topics, while further expanding on the overarching theoretical contribution of the thesis as a whole.

I present these three scholarly fields and their approaches in order to help the reader understand the thematic and analytical connections between them, and prepare him (or her) for an eventual move toward theoretical synthesis.

Social Movement Definitions

There are many definitions addressing what qualifies as a social movement (see for example, McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Ash and Zald 1987; Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Della Porta and Diani, 1999; Snow, Soule, and Kriesi, 2004), with many of these focusing on different organizing concepts and units of analysis (Snow, 2001).

In what follows I will describe the main characteristics of the type of phenomena that meet some of the most general criteria of social movements. Next, I will introduce the definition I prefer—my “working definition”—before moving on to present the major concepts of the literature.

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46 Note that the purpose of this section is simply to introduce some of the ideas related to social movement literature and subcultures, and not to discuss them in depth.

47 There has historically been a disconnection between European and North American literatures on social movements. This division was perhaps more pronounced in decades past, when resource mobilization and political process approaches dominated the North American field. Recently, with the spreading of cultural approaches in North America (including for example, attention to emotions in social movements), the divide has become less obvious.
General Definition

Whether about change or about a resistance to change, social movements are collective endeavors put forth by a social group to obtain specific goals. In this general way social movements refer to “collective action” and, in fact, the two terms have often been used interchangeably (McAdam and Snow, 1997: xxiv). The most basic description of collective action is “any goal-oriented activity engaged in jointly by two or more individuals” (Snow, Soule and Kriesi, 2004: 6).

However, social movements are only one kind of collective action (Snow and Soule, 2010:15). Indeed, the study of collective action and collective behavior (the connected ways in which individuals behave when they engage together in these activities) encompasses the study of various collective phenomena such as crowds, subcultures, interest groups, and social movements (see Turner and Killian, 1972; Snow and Soule, 2010:15; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). Nonetheless, the analytical distinctions between these different phenomena are not sharp; even ideal-typically, these classifications are defined by their connections and overlaps (McAdam and Snow, 1997).

For example, a social movement may engender or have its origins in a particular related subculture that may occasionally erupt in a form of crowd behavior. Similarly, a particular kind of subculture may plant the seeds for a social movement to arise (see, Johnston and Snow, 1998). The main dissimilarity between social movements and other forms of collective action is that the former operate “in part or totally, outside normatively sanctioned institutional or organization channels” (Snow and Soule, 2010:15; see also Snow, Soule and Kriesi, 2004: 6-7). In line with this specification, “social movements are more precisely described as a form of collective action that is goal oriented and operate outside of what has been institutionalized using extra-institutional means” (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003: 3, emphasis added).

One of the latest definitions in the literature is provided by Snow and Soule, who conceptualize social movements in relation to five key elements: (1) challengers or defenders of systems of authority, (2) collective rather than individual enterprises, (3) in varying degrees acting outside existing institutional or organizational arrangements, (4) operating with some degree of organization, and (5) with some degree of temporal continuity (Snow and Soule, 2010: 6).  

48 As Snow, Kriesi and Soule put it: “Social movements are in the business of seeking or halting change” (Snow, Kriesi, Soule: 2004, 8). One could also think of movements and counter-movements. McAdam and Snow write: “It is difficult to think of a major social issue in which social movements are not involved on one or both sides” McAdam and Snow, 1997: xviii).

49 As Diani and Eyerman write: “(...) it is not easy to isolate social movements from other forms of collective action” (Diani and Eyerman, 1992:1).

50 A very similar definition was put forth earlier by Snow, Soule and Kriesi: “Although the various definitions of movements may differ in what is emphasized or accented, most are based on three of the following axes: Collective or joint action; change oriented goals or
Different movements then are distinguished along a number of dimensions: the variation in scope of significance and target, their newsworthiness, and also whether they pose direct or indirect challenges to systems of authority (Snow and Soule, 2010: 3, 13-15). Direct challenges have been the most widely studied by social movement scholars; these types of challenges are overt, explicitly aimed at a specific entity, and have articulate demands. Indirect challenges, on the other hand, are covert in regard to actions and demands (for example terrorist movements), and may even seek to escape authority by withdrawing from the system (for example separatist movements and cults of various kinds).

Introduction to my Approach: A Working Definition

As Snow (2004) correctly notes, many definitions of social movements are overly restrictive, focusing exclusively on collective action directed against the State, in what he refers to as a “contentious politics” hegemonic frame. This emphasis, whether implicit or explicit, stems from the efforts of McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) to link social movements, cycles of protest, and revolutions under the overarching concept of “contentious politics” (Snow, 2001:4). As a consequence, scholars have used the anchoring concept of contentious politics to refer to a number of different phenomena, perhaps uncritically or unknowingly, accepting that such term was clearly specified (Snow, 2001: 5). Snow comments that such a way of thinking about social movements may function as a hegemonic frame which excludes any social movement activity that it is not directly addressed against the State or the government.

The drawbacks of such a restrictive definition far outweigh the benefits. For example, such a definition excludes a large number of social movement activity targeting changes at the local level. It also excludes covert movements, religious movements, consciousness raising movements, and movements aimed at modifying cultural codes rather than changing political institutions. These last are often referred to as New Social Movements (NSM) (see, for example, Laraña, Johnston, and Gusfield, 1994).

Finally, while the contentious politics approach attempts to provide conceptual and theoretical clarification, it actually moves us into a sort of theoretical parochialism, for two reasons. First, it deflects our focus from authority, one of sociology’s central concepts (Snow, 2001:19). Second, it seems to
jettison one of the discipline’s original concerns: understanding basic, general mechanisms which apply to a wide variety of phenomena. For this last point in particular, which is closely related the concern for “theory building” presented in the introduction of the thesis, I embrace the definition of social movements provided by Snow and Soule (2010). In its simplest form, then, social movements are “collective challenges to systems or structures of authority” (Snow, 2001:11).

Social Movement Theories and Main Concepts
At least in North America, the field of social movements as a distinct and contemporary area of study has existed since 1979, when the section on Collective Behavior and Social Movements (CBSM) was established within the American Sociological Association (ASA). Before that, there was no field of study explicitly referred to as such. This, however, did not mean that sociologists had not studied social movements before. Rather, the study of social movements fell under the overarching conceptual umbrella of collective behavior; the large majority of this early work was social-psychological, or simply psychological in nature.

Since the mid-1970s much has changed and much has also been achieved. First, the field of social movement research has grown dramatically in terms of publications, students, and researchers. Second, the research done by sociologists in this area has spread to a large number of other fields. Third, there has been much conceptual and theoretical advancement that was mostly based on systematic empirical research. And fourth, departing from the initial frictions between different approaches (for example, between framing and resource mobilization), the field has come to a more inclusive approach which recognizes the strengths of different theories (see, McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996; McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow, 2001).

Schematically, scholarship in social movements can be divided into structural approaches and cultural approaches. Structural approaches include resource mobilization, political process and political opportunity, and fram-

53 It is also worth acknowledging the European and North American research on labour movements that took place earlier.

54 An example of psychological theorizing is Lewis Feuer’s “The Conflict of Generations” (1969). This manuscript argues that those students who were attracted to the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964 were males and were trying to deal with “unresolved emotional conflicts with their parents” (McAdam and Snow, 1997:120). Similar psychological views are evident in the work of Adorno (“authoritarian personalities”) (Adorno et al., 1950), Hoffer (1951), and in much earlier work like LeBon’s (1897), Tarde’s (1903) and Blumer’s (1939). Note that many of these early theorists lumped social movement participation in with the more general concept of collective behavior, and often considered such activity negative and pathological).

55 McAdam calls this “interdisciplinary resonance,” (McAdam, plenary session at the American Sociology Association (ASA) annual meeting in Las Vegas, USA, 2011).
ing, ⁵⁶ while cultural approaches include collective identity, cognitive approach, and the study of emotions. ⁵⁷ We begin with the first.

Structural Approaches

**Resource Mobilization and Resources**

Prior to the 1970s, the dominant (functionalist) view of social movements understood participation to be based on personal traits, which in turn were understood through the concepts like deviance, strain, and anomie. ⁵⁸ Implicit in this view was a pluralist assumption that imagined that all individuals had fair access to political participation, meaning that anyone who chose extra-institutional means must have some special motive for doing so (Edwards, 2006). A new generation of sociologists who had been involved in social movement research during the 1960s took a different stance on these matters, and began developing an alternative way to look at participation and social change. Rather than focusing on individuals or the content of movement grievances per se, those students instead started investigating the role of resources for mobilization. ⁵⁹ These were the origins of Resource Mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). As Edwards wrote: “The organizational-entrepreneurial branch of resource mobilization theory (RMT) reoriented social movement analysis by taking the analytical insights of organizational sociology and extending them by analogy to social movements” (Edwards, 2006: 3891 emphasis added).

Rather than take the social-psychology of individuals as the center of analysis, this approach focuses on movement organizations as the principle unit of analysis, As Edwards writes:

> A key analytical issue for RMT is understanding how social movements turn bystanders into adherents and subsequently adherents into constituents and ultimately mobilize constituents to active participation. Such tasks of mobilization are undertaken most often by social movement organizations (SMOs) (Edwards, 2006: 3893)

⁵⁶ “Framing” is a structural approach to culture. A focus on strategic framing a la Snow structures the analysis and consideration of culture in a way that fits the pursuit of goals, as opposed to examining culture as an end in itself. This perspective sees framing as a means to an end, a cultural tool or resource for pursuing social change.

⁵⁷ Framing can be conceptualized as a structural approach to culture. “Frames” and “strategic framing structures” incorporate “culture” only insofar as its manifestations are purposeful to the movement, rather than analyzing culture as an end in itself. For scholars like Snow, framing is a mean to an end, a cultural tool, or a resource for pursuing social change.

⁵⁸ As McAdam and Snow write these approaches were “individualist” and “psychologistic” in orientation (McAdam and Snow, 1997:120).
At root, the resource mobilization perspective on social movements examines how social actors gain access to key material, human, social, or cultural resources in order to pursue a common agenda (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). The resource mobilization approach to the study of social movements was principally developed by Zald and McCarthy during the 1970s and 1980s in order to complement the socio-psychological and cultural paradigm approaches that had dominated the study of collective behavior.

For resource mobilization’s theorists, social actors engaging in social movement activity were no longer seen as irrational or capricious, but were perceived as individuals who had come to realize common problems and acted collectively to increase their chances to overcome them. Furthermore, RMT theorists questioned “the privileged role of ideas in social movements,” treating each movement as the equivalent of an organization that had goals to reach (Fine, 1989).

Unlike earlier studies on collective behavior and social movements, the focus of RMT research was no longer the individual, as, for example, in “strain theory” (Smelser, 1962), but instead the infrastructure and resources that enable or impede mobilization, and consequently how a group of individuals manages to mobilize successfully. Therefore, the research question of resource mobilization theorists was no longer why certain individuals might join social movements (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003: 11), but why certain movements are successful in mobilizing while others are not—focusing the analysis on resources available to the movement.

As Zald and McCarthy (1977) put it in the original article in which they articulated the key premises of such theoretical perspective:

Resource mobilization approach focuses on strategic (structural) dilemmas that each social movement organization has to take into account in order to operate. (…) It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements (Zald and McCarthy, 1977: 1212-1213).

This approach focuses on the explanation of how a movement is formed, how it persists through time, and how it relates to its environment.

Four main premises summarize RMT: First, grievances are ubiquitous; resources, not grievances, are the strongest variable explaining mobilization. Second, resources are unevenly distributed across societies and among social groups, and therefore mobilization is more likely to originate from the middle-class than the poor. Third, the availability of resources alone is not sufficient to mobilization—coordination and strategic effort are equally essential. Fourth, resources can be internally produced, as well as acquired from out-
side contributions or co-opted from institutions or other groups (Jenkins 1983; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004).

Resources
The latest formulation of the theory includes five general types of resources: material, human, social-organizational, moral, and cultural (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). Material resources are tangible artifacts such as money, equipment and supplies. Human resources include labor, experience, skills and expertise. Social-organizational resources include the capacity to build networks and form coalitions among different organizations. Moral resources include solidarity support, sympathetic support, and celebrity (Snow 1979; Cress and Snow 1996; Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Finally, cultural resources include legitimacy or sets of “know how.” This includes knowing how to run effective organizing meetings, how to lobby, and how to write, design and printing flyers for a demonstration.

There are many empirical examples within the literature supporting the theory (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). One of the most well-known is the emergence of the Civil Rights movement in the US. From an RMT perspective, its origins can be traced to the availability of two key resources: human and social-organizational, and the co-optation of a communication network established through the black churches (Freeman, 1971).

However, there are many critiques that contest the overly rational, calculating, strategic nature of human behavior that RMT theorists seem to assume (see for example, Eyerman, 2002:445; Fireman and Gamson, 1979; Mueller, 1992; Ferree, 1992; Piven and Cloward, 1992). It is worth noting that many of these criticisms are based on the earliest formulation of the perspective, which insisted on propositions that could be empirically tested (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). As written earlier in this text, in my dissertation work I use resource mobilization as an “approach,” rather than a theory.

60 In terms of human resources, the urbanization of the southern black population brought disparate people close, and in a strategic location for voting (Morris, 1980; McAdam, 1982), while the increase of black college enrollment partially culturally emancipated young blacks, furnished them with disposable time, and also brought them near (Morris, 1980). Much of the overall success of the Civil Rights Movement can be attributed to the Black church that served several functions. Most importantly, black churches were co-opted both as a social-organizational resource and as a communication network in which the members had common experiences that predisposed them to being receptive to the ideas of the emerging movement (Freeman 1999). Lastly, the growing number of blacks in middle-class and working-class also functioned as a material resource.

61 Note that a number of these critiques lump together both resource mobilization and political process, and sometimes also framing.

62 Structural approaches in general have been quite often criticized for not taking into consideration historical context. I don’t agree with these critiques. One could look at the work of Charles Tilly, for example, to see how historical context is clearly taken into account in much of this work. Also, I think that the entire notion of political opportunity is dependent upon
The Framing Perspective

While the focus of RMT rightly recognized the importance of the resources that a social movement needs to form, grow, and persist (including recruiting new members and sustaining different forms of participation), the link between structural-organizational factors and individual social-psychological dynamics was still lacking. To address this lacuna, Snow et al. (1986) developed a number of key analytical devices to explain the ways in which individuals become interested (and potentially participate) in the issues put forth by a social movement. This approach is called the framing perspective.

This approach is grounded in symbolic interactionism and constructivism, and most clearly on Goffman’s concept of frame and framework (Goffman, 1974). More precisely, it is based on symbolic interactionism’s three core premises that state that (1) humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things, (2) that “those meanings are likely to change out of the social interaction with others and the society,” and (3) that these interpretations are not stable, but instead are continually modified (Blumer, 1969). Scholars working in this tradition put meaning and meaning production as the focus of their research program. For them, meaning is neither a given nor an independent variable, but rather a dependent variable which in turn also holds explanatory power. Meanings are not naturally attached to things and situations, but instead are constructed, and their interpretation is mediated by culture (Snow and Soule, 2010:51). Note that Goffman defined frames as “schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences within their life space and the world at large (Goffman, 1974:21). Put another way, frames help us organize our experiences and consequentially guide our actions (Benford and Snow, 2000: 464).

From the perspective of social movements, “framing is an “impression management” of sorts (Goffman, 1959), a kind of “packaging” that deals with conveying a subjectively selected or perhaps even fabricated part of reality, leaving out what does not fit, and/or presenting it in terms expected to resonate with a target audience” (Corte and Edwards, 2008, 12-13).

More specifically, therefore, this tradition views social movements “not merely as carriers of existing ideas, but as signifying agents actively engaged in producing and maintaining meaning for their constituents, antagonists, and bystanders” (McAdam and Snow, 1997: 234; Snow, 2004b: 384). Observe also that in this literature, framing, in contrast to the apparently similar concept of ideology, is referred to as a verb highlighting the “meaning-
work” (Benford and Snow, 2000:614) that takes place among a movement’s leaders, activists, rank-and-file participants, adversaries, institutional elites, media, and counter-movements (Snow and Soule, 2010: 51).

**Political Opportunity Structures and Political Process**

There are many factors that are essential for mobilization. Apart from a number of people caring enough about a social issue and being in touch with one-another (an ecological factor), and disposing of a number of resources, other contextual conditions also matter a great deal.

As noted in Snow and Soule (2010), before the distinct field of social movement theory was created, the scholar of collective behavior Smelser highlighted the importance of contextual conditions to mobilization, coining the concept of “structural conduciveness” (Smelser, 1962:15). Some analysts further developed the concept by specifying the role of resources for mobilization (Resource Mobilization), while others focused on the windows of opportunities provided to and created by social movements (Political Opportunity). Such opportunities include whether authorities repress, tolerate, or even support activists’ endeavors and demands, and the presence or absence of allies (including, for example, other social movements).

“Political Opportunity Structure” (POS) is the key concept of this approach. Theoretically, POS, as originally defined by the political scientist Eisinger (1973) refers to the degree of openness of a political system to the social and political goals and tactics of a social movement. Political opportunities therefore are “the conditions that encourage, discourage and shape the likelihood and success of mobilization” (Vogus and Davis, 2005: 102); they are socio-culturally embedded and are likely to change over time.

Social movement scholars who followed and developed this approach created the political process model. Scholars in this tradition understand the timing and outcome of movements as largely dependent on how much opportunity is afforded to activists, and how receptive the social system within which they operate is. Furthermore, one of the principal insights of this tradition states that the context within which a movement operates chiefly determines its strategies, development, turnout, and political impact (Meyer, 2004).

But note that the connection between opportunities and mobilization is not at all straight-forward. The opportunities to mobilize are not always clear and ‘real’; they may be perceived to be so, and eventually snowball into

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64 Think of the different political opportunities structures that the White Power Movement (WPM) faces in Europe where much of its activities and symbols are forbidden by law. Then, contrast these opportunities to the WPM in North American where both the behavior of its activists and their symbols are protected by the First Amendment. These different political opportunities shape the strategies of the movement operating in two different contexts.

65 Note that within this tradition there is much disagreement on the different definitions of political opportunities (Meyer, 2004).
creating spaces that were not there to begin with, in a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:290 in Snow and Soule, 2010). Furthermore, movements tend to positively overestimate their reading of opportunities, while on the other hand underestimating impediments (Gamson and Meyer, 1996:289-290).

A number of scholars have criticized this perspective: Meyer (2004) has argued that researchers within this approach have conceptualized opportunities too narrowly; Goodwin and Jasper (1999), that the approach overly pays attention to structural factors over cultural ones; and Polletta and Amenta (2008) have posited that emotional factors can spur mobilization even in the absence of ‘real’ opportunities (see also, Danaher, 2010:814 from where these critiques have been synthesized).

Cultural Approaches

New Social Movement Theory and Collective Identity
The concept of collective identity, like framing, is also deeply rooted in constructionism. For this reason, it is understood as a process, rather than as a static property of individuals. It is something activists work to achieve through various endeavors, like framing processes and grievance constructions (Hunt and Benford, 2004).

Since its introduction in the social movement literature, the concept has been referred to and applied to an enormous number of phenomena across a vast variety of disciplines and sub-fields. Snow writes that if there would be one key concept to capture “the animating spirit (…) of the latter quarter of the 20th century” collective identity would certainly be a candidate (Snow, 2001:2212).

Based on earlier concepts of “group identity formation” (Hunt and Benford, 2004: 434), collective identity according to Hunt and Benford (2004) is rooted in Marx’s “class consciousness” (Marx and Engels, 1970), Durkheim’s “collective effervescence” (Durkheim, 1965), and Weber’s construct of collective action streaming from group identification based on class, status and party (Wright, 2002 referred to in Hunt and Benford, 2004:435). The concept also owes debts to Mead’s (1934) social-psychological work on identity as a construction, further developed by other symbolic interactionists and constructivists like Berger and Luckman (1966) (Hunt and Benford, 2004: 435-436).  

Within the social movement literature the concept of collective identity was famously introduced by Melucci (1984) and further expanded by a large number of scholars, including Taylor and Wittier (1992) and Hunt and Benford (2004).  

66 As note by Hunt and Benford (2004) another precursor of the concept was Blumer’s “esprit de corps” (Blumer, 1939).
The European scholars like Melucci who initially developed and refined the concept of collective identity were associated with the study of New Social Movements (NSM). According to such scholars, those movements, also known as “identity movements,” arose in post-industrial societies, and were understood to be “qualitatively different” (Melucci, 1981) from older, traditional, class-based social movements. To begin with, they would focus on quality of life and life-style issues (what is understood to be important for conducting a ‘good’ life), rather than focus on redistributive issues as working-class movements (Touraine, 1971).

Kauffman, like Melucci, speaks of the politicization of previously apolitical terrains (Kauffman, 1990:67), signalling an extension of what politics means (“the personal is political”) and how it can be exercised (“identity politics”). According to NSM theorists, social movements have shifted their focus from class, race, and other more traditional political issues toward the cultural ground. Melucci writes that:

(... in the past twenty years emerging social conflicts in advanced societies have not expressed themselves though political action, but rather have raised cultural challenges to the dominant language, to the codes that organize information and shape social practices (Melucci, 1995:41).

Furthermore, Melucci described “new” social movements with the following characteristics: “(having) solidarity as an objective,” “not focused on the political system,” “making demands regarding identity, and daily life,” and becoming increasingly less political (Melucci, 1980:220-222).

Although there is no single agreed-upon definition of collective identity (or new social movements, for that matter67), most versions allude to something like a “shared sense of ‘one-ness or ‘we-ness’ anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of ‘others’” (Snow, 2001:2213).68 Many versions highlight the importance of “identity work,” or the identity construction process. Less explicit, and often only implied in the literature, is that collective identity also refers to a corresponding sense of ‘collective agency’ (Snow, 2001:2213). Much empirical work, in fact, supports that participation is highly influenced by how deeply individuals feel identify with the movement’s ideas and other participants (Klandermans, 2004).

The researchers who take this approach have traditionally organized their research questions around how collective identity is created, expressed, sus-

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68 For Taylor and Whittier collective identity is the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences, and solidarity (Taylor and Wittier, 1992).
tained and modified (Snow, 2001: 2216), while newer research has reemphasized the relationship between collective identity and mobilization (Hunt and Benford, 2004). Scholars have continued to develop the concept. Notable among these is Taylor and Wittier’s (1992) introduction of boundaries, consciousness, and negotiation as devices aimed at gaining a better analytical purchase on the construction of collective identity in social movements (Taylor and Wittier, 1992).

**Cognitive Approach**

Eyerman and Jamison (1991) understand social movements as moments in which cultural changes are debated, experimented with, and brought forth. The link between culture and politics is at the core of their approach, as it was in NSM. Like Melucci, they underline the importance of collective identity, the symbolic dimension, and the power of objects and performances created within the movement. However, they use the term ‘cognitive praxis’ to also emphasize the creative intellectual role that actors bring to the movement (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998:21). For these theorists, movements work in ‘alternative spaces’ where movement intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) have the chance both to create new knowledge and reinterpret older ideas. For them, action within movements “is never predetermined nor completely self-willed; its meaning is derived from the context in which it is carried out and the understanding that actors bring to it and/or derive from it” (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991).

**The Study of Emotions**

In 2005 Eyerman wrote that the recent cultural turn has re-opened a discussion on the role of emotions in mobilization. Currently, the study of emotions is arguably the fastest growing area within social movements, as well as one of the most promising (Jasper, 2011). Among many reasons why this topic had been neglected, two seem key: First, emotions have often been regarded as irrational and difficult to measure (Jasper, 1998, 2011; Danaher, 2010); second, its study has been dominated by conceptual confusion (Jasper, 2011). The outstanding recent work by Jasper (2011) aims exactly at remedying these shortcomings by developing a typology of emotional processes, and by showing how different emotions may work for or against mobilization.

There are two main reasons why Jasper’s article (2011) is particularly important to my thesis: First, by emphasizing the importance of emotions for (collective) action, it stresses how social psychology, the scholarship area of

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69 For a review of further refinement of the concept of collective identity, see Hunt and Benford, 2004.
70 Arguably, another important reason rests on the fact that resource mobilization originated as a reaction against emotion-based analysis of the past, and this legacy has made it difficult—at least for North American scholars—to take emotions seriously until quite recently.
small group research, matters for studying social movements. Second, because it clearly shows how little we know about small group dynamics in social movements, the piece further demonstrates the need for linking social movements and small groups together—analytically and theoretically.

Subcultures

Within sociology, the concept of subculture has been very widely used, but with little agreement on a working definition. This lack of conceptual clarity extends to a lack of an encompassing typology of different types of subcultures.

Most scholarship on subcultures has been less concerned with precisely determining the boundaries of subcultures than with using subcultures as a setting in which to create or refine new concepts. At least, this has been the case when the literature has risen above the level of purely descriptive work. In addition, even the more theoretically oriented pieces have been primarily occupied with arguing against perceived fallacies and shortcomings of previous literature, or even proposing new terminology to replace ‘subculture’—often as an end in itself.

In this subsection I will accomplish the following: First, I will briefly discuss the concept of subculture and point out its main features. Second, I will introduce the origins and distinctive traits of the study of subcultures in sociology, and the different traditions associated with it, along with their underlying theoretical assumptions about the phenomena. Lastly, I will make some remarks about the approach to subculture in the current literature.

Definition of Subculture

There is no consensus definition of subculture, and there has been much discussion on the theoretical value of the concept itself. A number of scholars have contended that the term has become a ‘catch-all’ term having lost its analytical utility (Maffesoli, 1996, Bennett, 1999, 2000, 2005; Chaney, 1996; 2004; Hetherington, 1998; Clarke, 1974, Kornhauser, 1978; Jenks, 2005), or that it is “too broad, too biased, or simply out of date” (Williams, 2011:3).

Part of the problem, perhaps, is that much of the most important work on subcultures has come from outside of sociology.

A beginning of this endeavor can be found in Johnston and Snow (1998).

For examples of the generation of new concepts, see Thornton’s “subcultural capital” (Thornton, 1996) or Hannerz’s frames of authenticity (Hannerz, 2010a, 2010b, forthcoming). For examples of conceptual refinement, see Williams’ (2009) discussion of the three dimensions of “resistance.”

Gelder, 2005:1 referred to in Williams, 2011: 36, calls this trend “the “rhetoric of newness.”

For example, two alternative terms that have been proposed are “neo-tribes” (Maffesoli, 1996), and post-subculture (Muggleton, 1997). Others that have been less ‘successful’ are counterculture (Roberts, 1978), and contraculture (Yinger, 1960), but there are many others.
Others maintain that it is still relevant, and its use should be continued (Williams, 2007; 2011; Hodkinson; 2002; Haenfler, 2006, 2004b; Moore, 2009; Kidder, 2011; Gelder, 2005), not least because individuals involved in subcultures use it.

Despite these debates, subculture endures in the literature. The concept, however, has not been clearly developed in a manner that could allow for comparisons across case studies and “measurements.” Instead, it has been used more as a sensitizing concept to orient researchers and readers (Blumer, 1969, referred to in Williams, 2011:188).

In addition to the conceptual confusion surrounding the term, there have also been various delineations of the core concepts surrounding subcultures, which are also quite conflicting (Williams, 2007:587).

After having reviewed the literature, Johnston and Snow (1998) suggested five elements that should be taken into consideration for a satisfactory conceptualization:

First, rather than being autonomous from the larger culture, subcultures include some of its values and behavioral norms. Second, this overlap notwithstanding, subcultures are distinguished from the larger culture by a fairly distinctive mélange of behaviors—such as style, demeanor, and argot—that function as its material, artifactual, and behavioral markers. Third, subcultures are also distinguished by a set of beliefs, interests, attributions, and values that are variously shared and elaborated in subcultural interaction. Fourth, subcultures are characterized by a common fate or dilemma derived from their position in the larger social structure. And fifth, subcultures are characterized by patterned interactions and relationships within the subculture and between the subculture and larger social structure (Johnston and Snow, 1998:474, emphasis added).

More recently, but as a distinct effort, Hodkinson has identified four indicators of “(Sub)Cultural Substance: consistent distinctiveness, identity, commitment, and autonomy” (Hodkinson, 2002:30-31). And Williams defined subcultures as “cultural bounded (but not closed) networks of people who come to share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects, and practices through interactions” (Williams, 2011:148).

In light of these definitions we can derive three general factors—style, values, and behavior—that make subcultures distinguishable from the larger society and other groups. And also, for the purpose at hand, we should point out the most important factor differentiating a subculture from a social movement. A subculture is an aggregate of individuals who, more than having similar goals, have similar style, values, and taste. People involved in

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76 Note that this piece has never been cited within the literature on subcultures.
77 More recently, but as a distinct effort, Hodkinson has identified four indicators of “(Sub)Cultural Substance: consistent distinctiveness, identity, commitment, and autonomy” (Hodkinson, 2002:30-31).
subcultures, generally, are much less goal-oriented than those involved in social movements. Thus, they tend to act more in a parallel, rather than in the explicitly orchestrated manner of social movement activists.

Origin of the Sociological Study of Subcultures

Research on subcultures has originated from two distinct traditions: The Chicago School of Sociology (1920s-1940s), and the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (late 1960s-1970s) at the University of Birmingham (also known as the “Birmingham School”), and it remains a vibrant and growing field.

The theoretical insights and methodological approaches developed by these “schools” are very different, and their legacy has had significant effects for how subcultures are studied today. However, it is also worth pointing out that the difference between the two is often overstated, and that there is a continuity between the two approaches. The CCCS, in fact, built on Chicago sociology of subcultures rearranging its elements into a new perspective.

The Chicago School and the Study of (Deviant) Subcultures (1918-1955)

Founded in 1892, the department of Sociology at the University of Chicago was the first department of Sociology in North America (Collins, 1985: 42). The department was the birthplace of microinteractionism, the first distinctively American approach to sociology; this approach encompasses pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology; in 1985, Collins wrote that microinteractionism was the most original American contribution to sociological thought (Collins, 1985:242).

Methodologically, the Chicago School is known for having initiated and advanced a naturalistic style to study social life in its ‘real’ environment in Sociology—and social sciences in general. The classic works that came out of this department have become “major models for what sociologists do best” (Gusfield, 1990 in Fine, 1995:6), or less grandiosely, models for eth-

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78 This discussion, as well as the one on core concepts, is partially derived from Williams (2007; 2011).
79 This is not to say that everyone in the department did the same kind of work, or that scholars who utilized qualitative methods did so to the exclusion of the collection and analysis of numerical data (Fine, 1995; Colomy and Brown, 1995:29). I also do not wish to imply that ethnographic field methods were an invention of researchers working in this department. Anthropologists had been using a similar approach since much earlier. My point is that researchers and students working at that department gave the first impetus to integrate the methodology in Sociology, and also to develop a distinct version of it: sociological ethnography (Atkinson, 1982; Snow and Morrill, 1993).
nographic work.\textsuperscript{80} The study of subcultures developed along with ethnographic field methods. Sociologists at Chicago were interested in understanding first-hand the extraordinary urban expansion that the city had experienced between 1860 and 1910 (Williams, 2011:18), and in particular, life on the margins.\textsuperscript{81} Note that the focus of this research was not on any type of subculture, but on deviant subcultures which, at least initially, largely meant subcultures involved (or assumed to be involved) in criminal behavior.

The emphasis of the researchers of the Chicago School was not only concerned in understanding what was really going on in these new enclaves \textit{per se} (for example, they were generally uninterested in debunking widely held stereotypes), but rather to provide knowledge that could be used to improve life in the city.\textsuperscript{82} As noted by many researchers, Chicago at the time was a natural social laboratory for the study of ethnic relations, crime, and social problems more generally (see for example, Lindner, 1996:41). Not lastly, sociologists working within this tradition were interested in developing theory, and doing so through the use of empirical data rather than through armchair theorizing or second-hand accounts.\textsuperscript{83}

Theoretically, there are two main concepts that guided this tradition and illustrate the perspective of these scholars toward subcultural participants and subcultures. The first is the ecological model, and the second is strain theory—itself subsequently and subdivided into psychological (Merton, 1938) and social versions (Cohen, 1955).

The ecological model adopted by Chicago scholars like Cooley (1894) and Park (1925) conceptualized the city not as a geographical entity, but as a system of relationships among individuals akin to a biological organism.\textsuperscript{84} In summary, it contended a functionalist view of subcultures, and held that they arose as a consequence of urbanization (Williams, 2007:573).

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\textsuperscript{80} An example is William Foote Whyte’s “Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum” (1943).

\textsuperscript{81} Park who was one of the leaders of the ethnographic fringe at the Department famously advocated his students to: “Go and sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shakedown; sit in the Orchestra Hall and the Star and Garter Burlesque. In short, gentlemen, go get the seat of your pants dirty in real research” (quoted in McKinney, 1966:71). And as Franzén often repeated to me, Park would typically begin conversing with his students by asking: “Were you there?” (See also, Lindner, 1996). Examples of the topics covered by the Chicago School range from the analysis of the Chicago’s neighborhoods that were newly populated by immigrants (social organization) (Park, 1925; Whyte, 1943), emigrants in general (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918), gangs (Thrasher, 1926), and occupational subcultures (Hughes, 1962; Becker, 1963).

\textsuperscript{82} In this we can see the influence of Pragmatism on these scholars.

\textsuperscript{83} Williams pointedly noted that the main difference between European social science research on cities, and the Chicago School rested exactly on these diverging methodological orientations (Williams, 2011:18).

\textsuperscript{84} Note that this conception was not new, but instead a variation (primarily differentiated by methodological considerations) of the work of earlier European theorists like Montesquieu and Durkheim (Duncan, 1964).
Strain theory, initially proposed by Merton (1938), asserted some disadvantaged individuals would experience a kind of psychological tension because they lacked the means to achieve mainstream goals. This psychological strain, then, could cause a number of different types of deviant behavior for ‘mismatched’ individuals, which varied according to the level of anomie experienced (Williams, 2007:574). Those who experienced strain would either reject society’s goals altogether, or utilize alternative means to achieve them (for example, through crime).

Cohen (1955) augmented and improved the theory by asking why and how youngsters would get involved in deviant behavior. Adopting a more sociological perspective, he, among others (see for example, Cloward and Ohlin, 1960, and Irwin, 1970), emphasized that the process of subcultural formation would only result if a number of similarly minded individuals had the chance to come into contact with one another. Then, those individuals would innovatively create new frames of reference, giving rise to alternative subcultures (Williams, 2007:574). Put differently, in subcultures, new values and norms would be created which, contrary to Merton’s strain theory, generated feelings of well-being and belonging. As Williams writes: (according to Cohen) “When a critical mass of similarly disenfranchised individuals was reached in a similar geographical area, a subculture (or multiple) subcultures would arise (Williams, 2007:574).”

The main problems associated with this tradition are: First, it was overly deterministic in its understanding of subcultural formations as primarily a reaction to external forces. And second, strain theorists put a disproportionate emphasis on economic goals, paying less attention to more culturally oriented preferences (Williams, 2007:575; 2011). Lastly, as social movement scholars detailed years later with the emergence of the RMT approach, experiencing “strain” is not enough to explain the emergence of social movements, and by extension other group formations like subcultures.

Despite these drawbacks (which have only become clear in retrospect), this remained the dominant perspective in North America. As a result, the study of the subcultures in North America came to be seen as belonging de facto to the field of criminology when it emerged in the 1950s. This shifted the focus of investigation from cultural processes to quantitative analysis solely related to crime and criminal behavior—a defect that persisted until the last two decades.85

85 But note that cultural criminology has been an emerging area of research at least since the early 2000.
The Birmingham School (1964-2001)

A very different approach to the study of subcultures arose in England after the Second World War. It is worth pointing out up front that the Birmingham approach has had a much larger impact than the Chicago school on how subcultures have been studied over the past two decades, up to the present time (Muggleton, 2000:4). Also worth mentioning is the emergence of a group of sociologists that have very recently been claiming a move forward by taking into consideration the Chicago School, as well as other North American literature also rooted in symbolic interactionism (Williams, 2011; Kidder, 2011; Haenfler, 2006).

The Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham was established in 1964 as the first program to address a new interdisciplinary area that its founder, Richard Hoggart, named Cultural Studies. Researchers within this group focused on understanding the interconnection between culture and politics. According to Stuart Hall, “the concept of culture (was) not seriously theorized,” and “cultural forms did not constitute a serious object of contemplation in the academic world” at the time of CCCS’s founding (Hall, 1990:15).

Researchers within this tradition were initially concerned with British working class youth subcultures that had visibly blossomed after WWII, partially as a result of the economic expansion in Britain at that time. So, like the Chicago School, the CCCS, at least in its first stages, analyzed white, lower class, males to the exclusion of other classes, women (McRobbie and Garber, 1976), and other ethnic groups (Nayak, 2003; Skelton and Valentine, 1998). However, these critiques refer to the early work of the Center—published in the early 1970s mostly in the Resistance through Rituals (Stuart and Jefferson, 1976) working papers, and not to later work within the Center that rectified those initial shortcomings. Angela McRobbie (1991; 1994), for example, addressed gender issues, and both Paul Gilroy (1987; 1982) and Stuart Hall focused on race (1987).

Also, while the research of the Chicago School mostly focused on immigrant youth who were understood as having been forced into subcultures of deviant behavior, the CCCS conceptualized subcultures as a choice expressed through style (Williams, 2011:6). This, however, did not mean that scholars of the Birmingham school did not interpret subcultures as a result of larger structural dynamics. These dynamics included the emergence of consumer culture, the restructuring of urban landscape, and the advancement of

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86 There are two centers for Cultural Studies in Sweden: one at the Department of Sociology of Liannaeus University, and the other at the Department of Cultural Studies at Linköping University. A key figure in developing cultural studies in Sweden is Johan Fornäs (see Axelson and Fornäs, 2007).

87 McRobbie’s work was particularly influential in inspiring Nordic youth researchers to study girls, a field that grew into feminist studies.
media technologies (Williams, 2011:28). Ultimately, these factors were not key ‘explanatory’ variables to be investigated, but a corollary frame from within which to analyze the main focus of research of the CCCS, namely intentional symbolic resistance.

Heavily rooted in neo-Marxism, and, in particular, Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony, theorists of the CCCS conceptualized the stylistic choices of British working-class subculturalists as an opposition to the oppression by the dominant classes. Subcultural participation was then interpreted in the frame of class struggle. In this setting, class struggle did not take the form of working-class mobilization a la Marx; subcultural resistance was instead performed on cultural grounds, through style. For this reason, theorists like Clarke (Clarke, 1976) viewed subcultural style as ephemeral and largely inconsequential, especially in contrast to the more concrete material and political inequalities with which subculturalists did not seem to bother, or were unable to cope with.

As a result, style was seen as a temporary symbolic resource that subculturalists disposed of. Temporary, because the dominant culture would cyclically discover, change, and diffuse it by processes of commodification. At the same time, this process pushed subculturalists to modify and create new styles, which would then be discovered and corrupted in a kind of ongoing dialectic.88

The CCCS has been criticized on various grounds (for examples, see Chaney, 2004; Jenks, 2005). First, at least some of the earlier work privileged the development of social theory over the collection of data, to the point where studies were essentially conducted without subjects. In other words, scholars of the CCCS initially relied on semiotic analysis to uncover meanings of objects89 and, to a lesser extent, practices without regard for the meanings that these objects and practices actually held for real people (see Widdicombe, 1995; Muggleton, 2000; Hodkinson, 2002; Williams, 2011). A clear exception to this critique is Paul Willis seminal ethnographic study “Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs” (1977).

Theoretically, the Birmingham School, like the Chicago School, understood subcultures as more internally coherent and homogenous than they actually were (Moore, 2009:35). Nonetheless, a large number of insights, concepts, and findings inspired and influenced how subcultures are studied today.

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88 See the concepts of “defusion” and “diffusion” (Clarke, 1976: 185-89).
89 Wheaton and Beal in relation to the CCCS methodology write: “This highlights a central weakness in textual approaches to cultural consumption more widely; the assumption that the researcher can accurately identify meaning systems of the social actors or ‘audiences’ without consulting them” (Wheaton and Beal, 2003: 156).
Current Research

After the origins and initial development of the study of subcultures just presented, three main approaches emerged: The Manchester School, the Post-Subculture, and a Symbolic Interactionist Approach. It is beyond the scope of this introduction to offer a comprehensive account of each. Instead, I will only offer a few words about each of them before moving on to a description of the core analytic concepts that are currently used to study subcultures. This overview will provide the grounds from which to sketch out the potential benefits of applying social movement theory to study subcultures.

The Manchester School refined the Birmingham School’s frame in three main ways: First, by understanding subcultures as an internally heterogeneous phenomenon. Second, by taking into account not only working-class based subcultures, but also other classes and, most importantly, bringing to the fore other variables such as gender, sexuality and race. Third, by embedding the analysis in a postmodern perspective, and consequently including in the analysis new key dimensions like consumption, media, identity, and pop-culture.

The Post-Subculture approach turned back to the Chicago ethnographic style. Methodologically, it re-emphasized an insider’s perspective where researchers actually did observe first-hand subcultures from the inside. Because of this, researchers like Thornton (1996) were able to uncover complex cultural dynamics that had gone unnoticed (related to commercialization and different forms of media; see Thornton, 1996). The methodological revival and attendant theoretical discussion initiated by Thornton continues to remain relevant today.90

The newest approach to the study of subcultures has emerged from a group of younger scholars who work in the symbolic interactionist tradition—therefore also theoretically and methodologically grounded in the Chicago School. This version of Chicago School revival is founded on long neglected work by Fine and Kleinman (1979), and is characterized by a critical insider perspective (Hodkinson, 2005), and a call for re-discovery of older sociological research on subcultures.

From my understanding, this work, mostly North American, is influenced by constructionism and, to a much lesser extent, by postmodernism. This is in marked contrast to the current schools of thought in Britain, other European countries, and Australia, who generally take postmodernism more seriously.

One significant feature of this new approach is that it is interested in unveiling the influence of “meso” structures on subcultures. In other words, this approach understands subcultures as embedded in “macro” socio-

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90 See, Hannerz, 2010a.
economic structures, but also as connected through a number of local manifestations. These local manifestations, or local scenes function as “interlocking group networks” that structure subcultural activity at the intermediate level (Fine and Kleinman, 1979). This focus is not only theoretical, but also analytical, and promises to provide a novel and powerful addition to our conceptual framework.

I believe that one of the ways to move toward such an ambitious project rests on connecting subcultural theory to other sociological theories, like those that address small group research and social movements. Theories and concepts from other fields like the two just mentioned should be integrated into the study of subcultures, and there is prospect that they could also be more clearly connected analytically.

With this in mind, I now turn to the core concepts of subcultural scholarship before introducing small group research. To conclude, I will sketch out some of the potential benefits that social movement theory could bring to subcultural scholarship, and small groups. In the best scenario these concepts would also be able to help resolve long-standing debates in the field.

Core Analytic Concepts

Reviewing the subculture literature, Williams (2007) identified the following key concepts: style, resistance, subcultural space and media, societal reaction/community response, identity, and authenticity. As is the case for most of this introduction, depth will be sacrificed for an overview that will likely leave both readers familiar with the literature and those new to it equally unsatisfied.

What is to be taken from this glimpse is not a deep understanding of each of these concepts, but instead a glance, fast and wide enough to grasp the main questions that the literature currently covers. By the same token, this overview offers an opportunity to start to think about which questions are as yet neglected or inadequately addressed.

Style

The study of style within subcultures is linked to the Birmingham School. The canonic book is Dick Hebdige’s “Subcultures: The Meaning of Style” (1979). Style can be understood in many ways and along a number of different yet interconnected factors; chief among these are objects (such as clothing) and practices (such as rituals and behaviors). Through style, subcultural

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92 The best scenario would mean researchers taking my advice regarding attention to resources and scene-level analysis to understand how subcultures (and social movements) emerge from daily communal life.
93 For a thorough review of this concepts see, Williams 2007; 2011.
members mainly seek to distinguish themselves from “mainstream” society, distinguish themselves from different subcultural groups or sub-groups within the same subculture, and also express personal identity.


Style is not a fixed factor, but instead a constantly changing variable that is crucial in understanding both the content and internal dynamics of subcultures.

Resistance

Resistance is again a concept introduced in the literature by CCCS scholars (see, in particular, Willis, 1977). As already discussed, resistance for these scholars was understood strictly in terms of class. Working class youth would resist the hegemonic order maintained by the dominant class through style and consumption. This strategy was understood to be inconsequential, impotent, and “magical” because it did not aim to change the class structure of society (Clarke, 1976).

In current literature, the scope of resistance is much wider and not solely class-based. Subculturalists can resist many entities, including the “adult world,” or simply the thus far poorly conceptualized “mainstream” (Hannerz, 2010a, forthcoming). Further, subcultures also resist the normative claims of their society, and show opposition to social conventions that they maintain are unjust. In this sense, their resistance is clearly political, but in a broader sense than the CCCS had it. One implication is that subcultures should not be so quickly dismissed for being inconsequential. Indeed, subcultural activity has been linked to both activism and identity politics—an accepted feature of NSM scholarship. In other words, many subcultures have social change as one of their goals (see, Haenfler, 2006, 2004b).

Societal Reactions

Societal reactions to subcultural activity are typically generated in one of two ways: first as a consequence of direct observation (some sort of experience), and second, as a consequence of how subculturalists are represented in mainstream media (representation by a third party). Portrayal of subcultures through mainstream media (as opposed to micro-media, which is subcultural and serves others purposes; see Thornton, 1996) typically has the effect of spectacularizing subcultures, either positively (‘heroes’) or negatively (‘villains’), and likely stereotypes how they are viewed from the out-

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94 For a longer review of the concept and for its latest developments, see Williams 2009; 2011.
side by offering a falsely homogenous image. This in turn can create variety of different consequences for subculturalists; one of the most interesting, as already pointed out by the CCCS, is the defusing and diffusion of their style through commodification, and subsequent modification of that style by the subculture as a response. This last effect leads some subculturalists to actively protect against commodification by shielding elements of their style from mainstream eyes.

*Identity and Authenticity*

Identity is a concept that has been developed by psychologists and social psychologists and that has spread to an enormous number of fields—especially in recent years. It can be divided into personal identity, social identity, and collective identity (Snow, 2001). It is to be understood as a process rather than as a static phenomenon, and it is typically constructed by defect—in opposition to something else. As Frith notes: “The production of identity it’s also a production of non identity—it is a process of inclusion and exclusion” (Frith, 1996: 109).

Sociologists of the Chicago school were interested in the effects that subcultural participation would have on personal identity. Part of their interest was also in understanding how subculturalists drew the boundaries between “us and them,” insiders and outsiders.96

Closely related to the concept of identity is the issue of authenticity. Recent work on subcultures addresses these issues not in an “anti-mass culture way” *a la* Adorno (1973) (and typical of the CCCS approach), but rather in an agnostic97 manner, seeking analytical and relational explanations. How is authenticity achieved? How is it constructed? Who and what is authentic, and *in relation* to who and what?98

*Space and the Concept of “Scene”*

Much in line with Fine (2010), I believe that a “sociology of the local” (Fine, 2010) which takes as its analytical and theoretical departure small groups operating in specific contexts—scenes, offers an opportunity to link micro dynamics to macro factors, ultimately helping us understanding how social order99 is created. The concept of scene, also, bridges my two studies. While the first is about the White Power scene seen internationally, the study of BMXers in Greenville is focused differently on a local scene. However, both

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96 See Becker, 1963.
97 “Agnostic” meaning “unprejudiced:” not making any presumptions about, or assumptions of mass culture being inauthentic or bad, and conversely not assuming subcultures are “resisting” or “penetrating” or good.
99 Patrik Aspers and a team of researchers at the Department of Sociology at Uppsala University are currently engaged in a large project on social order.
uses of the concept are important and useful, and should be further explored in a future piece.

Nearly every empirical study of subcultures has taken place in a location. Peterson and Bennett (2004) distinguished between three different subcultural spaces: local (for example “scenes” (Irwin, 1973, 1977)), translocal (for example music festivals), and virtual (for example, Internet message boards). Interlocking group networks operating at these three levels of interaction circulate information (Fine and Kleinman, 1979), resources, and emotions between members.

The concept of scene is particularly important for this introduction because it is relevant to the study of subcultures, small groups, and social movements. In a not so often cited article within the subcultural literature, Irwin articulated that at the origins of subcultures is a group of actors operating at a specific location—scene— who through continual interaction form “a new subcultural configuration” (Irwin, 1973:158). And Leech and Haunss (2009) recently coined the term “social movement scene” to refer to a “social and spatial infrastructure” (2009: 255) where activists get together. They write:

A scene is simultaneously a network of people who share a common identity and a common set of subcultural or countercultural beliefs, values, norms, and convictions as well as a network of physical spaces where members of that group are known to congregate. Put differently, it is a network of free spaces that encompasses one or more subcultures and/or countercultures. Where movement and scene are tightly interconnected, one may speak of a movement scene. (Leech and Haunss, 2009: 259)

Furthermore, Leech and Haunss refer to Goodwin and Jasper (2004), who claimed that an understanding of scenes could fill the gap between cultural and structural approaches of movement scholarship.

Recently, Creasap (2012) argued that the concept of scene was lacking because it implied a stasis—“a static context” (Creasap, 2012: 183)—and because its application tended to be shallow, with researchers principally interpreting scenes along one dimension, as beneficial to the movement or hindering it. What is more relevant for my purposes is that Creasap reiterates a number of points (posited a few years earlier by Leech and Haunss, 2009) that suggest fruitful directions for further research. Her main point is how little we know about scenes, how they originate, how do they grow, and how they may eventually flounder or change. I propose that looking at the small group level of scenes—whether social movement scenes, subcultural scenes, or subcultural scenes that are connected to a social movement—with conceptual tools from social movement scholarship (like resources, political opportunity structures, and framing) may be a good starting point.
In regard to future research, Leech and Haunss write: “First, we need to understand more about the conditions under which scenes take root and thrive. (...) Second, it would be useful to know more about the negative effects scenes may have on a movement.” Could not the first question be answered by research using resource mobilization theory and political opportunity structures? And could not the second be answered, potentially, by using the concept of framing?

I think that the most promising level of analysis for addressing these questions is at the level of small groups operating within a local scene, because it is here that cultural and structural elements are readily disentangled and apprehended. With this in mind, I now turn briefly to “small groups” before talking about the theoretical contribution of the thesis as a whole.

Small Groups

The study of small groups has a long history both within sociology and psychology, and at least in the beginning, it involved much overlap between the two fields.

While small group study has been fragmented and marginalized within sociology, “almost-resurgent” is a description that fits both fields without pretending to be elegant (Wittenbaum and Moreland, 2008; Harrington and Fine, 2006). This was not always so; in the mid-1950s small groups occupied a central place within the discipline. Since then, the study of small groups lost its place as a topic of research in “its own right” (Harrington and Fine, 2000), but flourished in a scattered and instrumental way across a large number of scholarly fields and topics. Today, few papers focus specifically on small group behavior (Harrington and Fine, 2000:312). Instead, researching small groups now mostly means using small group settings to study narrow phenomena relevant to other fields and subfields, rather than using small groups as a lens for addressing core questions of the discipline (see, Harrington and Fine, 2000).

O’Connor’s (2002) comparative ethnographic analysis of four different local punk scenes (in Washington D.C., Austin, TX, Toronto, Canada, and Mexico City, Mexico) offers a beginning for the kind of scene-level work I am suggesting. Although he does not explicitly use social movement theory concepts (as I suggest in this thesis), he explains the difference in the characteristics of the local scenes and the (local) punk style through a number of contextual resources. He is also able to explain the pragmatic difficulties that members encounter in launching and sustaining their scene by attending to local conditions. As he writes: “A scene is something that takes work to create. It requires local bands that need places to live, practice spaces and venues to play. To do this within the punk ethic of low-cost and preferably all-ages shows requires hard work, ingenuity and local contacts. A scene also needs infrastructure such as record stores, recording studios, independent labels, fanzines and ideally a non-profit-making community space (O’Connor 2002:233; 1999).”
This process has resulted in three outcomes: First, it has produced a myriad of findings and studies that very often overlap. Second, it has left us without a comprehensive overview of all research that gets done across these various fields. And third, it has culminated in a lack of interest in contributing to more general theory (Harrington and Fine, 2000, 2006; Stolte et al. 2001).

Researchers like Stolte et al. (2001), Harrington and Fine (2000; 2001), and Fine and Stoecker (1985) have called for a revitalization of the field, arguing that small groups provide a “sociological miniaturism”—“society writ small” in Fine (2003)—that permits us to study large-scale phenomena at the small-scale level (Stolte et al. 2001).\textsuperscript{101} Whether this call is heeded is still too early to tell.

In what follows, I will not review the concepts used and created by researchers who have studied and are currently researching small groups; such task would be immense. Instead I will provide a sensitizing definition of small groups, and then point out what is generally missing from studies in the area (namely, an empirical and theoretical inclusion of “context”), and why social movement theory could fill such shortcoming.

As defined by Bales (1950):

A small group is defined as any number of persons engaged in interaction with each other in a single face-to-face meeting or series of meetings, in which each member receives some impression or perception of each other member distinct enough so that he can, either at the time or in later questioning, give some reaction to each of the others as an individual person (Bales, 1950: 33, quoted in Harrington and Fine (2000:313).

Harrington and Fine (2000), commenting on Bales’ definition, underline the importance of an interactional scene. This is usually understood as physical (allowing for face-to-face interaction), but now we can add virtual (mediated over the Internet for virtual interaction)—an innovation that Bales obviously could not have anticipated.

Sociologists Felmlee and Sprecher (2000) have contended that research in social psychology, and in particular of close relationships, have the tendency to ignore “the social and/or environmental context of relationship behaviour” (P. 369-370). Similarly—but somewhat more expectably because of their experimental orientation—psychological social psychologists like Ancona and Bresman (2007) and Wittenbaum and Moreland (2008) have also

\textsuperscript{101} For a review of the five areas within which small group study is dispersed, see Harrington and Fine, 2000:314). As a summary, these include: (1) socialization and pressure, (2) a chance to challenge community standards and expectations, serve as incubators for social change, (3) provide networks for diffusion of cultural forms, (4) space for collective development, appropriation, and interpretation of meanings, and (5) a domain in which status processes and identity are made concrete (Harrington and Fine, 2000:314).
asserted that the physical ecology of groups—where groups operate—is also a neglected topic.

As already pointed out, work done by researchers of the Chicago School did take into account the ecological context of action when they studied their own small groups. Nonetheless, I argue that the theoretical devices developed by social movement theory are particularly well suited to a study of small groups in situ.

Theoretical Contribution

As already mentioned earlier in this introduction, the connection between social movement theory and subcultural theory (and small groups) has been only partially drawn, and there is much theoretical and empirical work left to be done. The link has been solely based on New Social Movement (NSM) theory, and then almost exclusively built around the concept of collective identity. Other potentially useful concepts from social movement theory (resource mobilization theory, framing processes, and political opportunity) have been ignored.

I think that the reason why this project has not been conducted rests mainly on two failings. First, a clear definition of subcultures has not yet been formulated. Second, but connected to the previous point, the linkage between certain types of subcultures and social movements has not been advanced since Johnston and Snow’s (1998) effort. Furthermore, I argue that a clear definition of subcultures—one that would allow comparative empirical research—would necessarily entail delineating the relationships between small groups and subcultures (and ultimately with social movements as well). Such a definition would at minimum allow us to analytically distinguish between different types of subcultures.

Small groups offer a good analytical and empirical point of departure because they often operate in rather clearly bounded scenes (Irvine, 1977), and temporally are the incipit of both subcultures and social movements (in regard to social movements, see, for example, Harrington and Fine, 2000: 314-316). If the foundations of culture are small groups (Harrington and Fine, 2000:317: Fine, forthcoming, 2012), then the foundations of subcultures, perhaps even more clearly, are small groups as well.

I am obviously not suggesting that all subcultures advance into social movements. Rather, my argument is that the work of small groups at the level of scene is very similar to the work required to launch a social movement. Furthermore, I propose that beginning with scenes—which are more empirically accessible than, for example, subcultures (which have ambiguous boundaries as discussed)—as the level of analysis would help us understand the pragmatic nature of subcultures that, at their minimalist level, are comprised by small groups that operate in scenes.
For these reasons, I contend that integrating concepts about *mobilization* would help us pose and answer questions about subcultures that we are not currently asking. In turn, this could help us better understand and conceptualize subcultures in relation to small groups, scenes, and social movements.

Secondarily, this project could also shed light on more general mechanisms such as emergence, mobilization, diffusion, impact, and decline that are the classic questions of contemporary social movement scholarship, and also of central importance to many other areas of sociology.

The research program I have proposed here is ambitious, and too large to be comprehensively addressed in this thesis. What I offer instead is a series of results that, while providing only *partial* evidence for the boldest claims, are in my opinion promising enough to justify this particular avenue of study. To conclude, I will provide examples of the types of questions that using social movement theory to study subcultures could pose and potentially answer.

**Emergence, Development and Decline**

Convincing general accounts of emergence, development, and decline continue to elude scholars of social movements and subcultures. What are the modalities through which subcultures arise? Are there some general mechanisms? Are there similarities between how subcultures and social movements emerge? Are small groups the “missing link”, so to speak? Do all subcultures develop in similar ways, or are there important differences? And if so, how and why? Could findings and theoretical constructs developed by political process researchers on political opportunities be applied to subcultures? Why and how do subcultures decline or fade away? Why do some phenomena that looked like they could have evolved into subcultures instead become only fads? What happens when subcultures decline? What do the dynamics at the small group level look like when a subculture or movement is in decline? What is the timing of these dynamics? If there are small group tensions, are they the result or cause of decline?

**Institutionalization**

Many social movement scholars have observed socio-political movements running their course when they become institutionalized (Koopman, 1993; Meyer and Tarrow, 1998). A similar process has been argued for subcultures (see, for example, Hebdige, 1979:96) when they become exclusively integrated in what Edwards and Corte (2010) call mass-market commercialization. Is there a relation between the theorizations put forth within social movement and subcultural literatures?

**Internal Diversity**

As pointed out by Williams (2011) referring to Clarke:
There is a relative neglect of features such as internal diversity, external overlaps, individual movement between subcultures, the instability of the groups themselves and the large numbers of relatively uncommitted ‘hangers-on’” (G. Clarke 1981: 82–3 referred to in Williams: 2011:11)

Social movement theory has worked extensively on the issue of internal diversity of movement “members.” Could this literature help us better understand and conceptualize differential participation in subcultures?

Media Relations
The relationship with the media has also been a core question of social movement literature (see for example the work on framing processes and political opportunity in Gamson and Meyer, 1996; Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Dillard, 2006). Hodkinson recently wrote that the role of the media in subcultures—and in particular with spectacular youth subcultures—is also an area where more research should be conducted (Hodkinson, 2002:12). Again, could the findings and theoretical constructs of social movement literature be useful to research on subcultures (and vice versa)?

These questions are only a primary sketch; others will certainly follow, and some leads proposed herein will prove to be dead-ends.

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102 Media relations vary in degree depending on the type of subculture.
3. Data and Methods

The purpose of this section is to provide an account of the data and methods that I used in my two projects. But before I enter into the details, I think a few words about my approach are due. Akin to the kind of work done by historians, my research relies on multiple methods and many different sources in trying to uncover a multidimensional understanding of the phenomena I analyze. In what follows, I detail the specific data and methods used for each project.


The work on White Power music uses an indirect approach whose opposite might be, for example, ethnography. To be clear up front, I never interviewed any White Power activists or participated in any White Power music shows during this research. While I initially considered this approach, I ultimately decided that it would be too dangerous. Instead, I learned from White Power opponents, using direct interviews with researchers who studied the phenomena, as well as second-hand interviews with political leaders and experts (see below). I also interviewed people who had been witnessing the phenomenon first-hand, and analyzed written publications (on-line and printed) about, and by White Power activists. The White Power study can be considered an “odd case” in a way (see below); problems associated with this kind of research are very different than for a more conventional case study of, for example, a BMX community (where, among other things, violence toward the researcher should not be something to fear for). However, I do not think that the material I relied on impinged on the validity of the study. While it is true that opponents have their agenda (as academic researchers often have as well), but they also have a great deal of in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon derived by years or even decades in the field (as had, for example, Stieg Larsson, one of my primary informants in the study).

This study relies on in-depth interviews and on analysis of documents of various types. The focus of the research arose inductively and had to be re-

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103 Note that while the project was financed between those years, research was carried out until 2008.
vised several times, partially due to the fact that neo-Nazis are a secretive population (Blee, 1998, 2006). When dealing with a secretive population a researcher faces several questions, some of which revolve around personal safety. For this reason, my initial idea of interviewing neo-Nazis and anti-Fascists was jettisoned. Instead, I decided to interview experts and rely on researching and analyzing material that was publicly available on the Internet (webpages and message boards), on other published sources (books and magazines), and collected in one archive (Expo in Stockholm).

More specifically, the data consists of thirteen first-hand in-depth interviews (4 with experts, and 9 with musicians who have knowledge of the phenomenon), and six second-hand in-depth interviews (2 with white power activists, and 4 with experts). The thirteen first-hand interviews were conducted face-to-face, were open-ended, and took place between 2002 and 2004.

**First-hand Interviews and Archival Research**

Among the key interviewees was Stieg Larsson, who at that time served as the chief director of Expo, the Swedish anti-racist magazine and organization that he had founded in 1995. Decades earlier, Larsson had been one of the first journalists to study racism and neo-Nazi organizations in Sweden. He recalled that there were very few researchers and journalists interested in the topic in Sweden at the time. Larsson collaborated with Anna-Lena Lodenius, producing a book on the topic in 1991 (Lodenius and Larsson, 1991).

I carried out two extensive interviews with Stieg Larsson, in 2002 and 2003. These took place in the headquarters of Expo, located in Stockholm, Sweden. We also had several follow-up telephone and e-mail conversations following the initial interviews.

**Entering the Field: Meeting Stieg Larsson**

I ran into Stieg Larsson in Stockholm during an event on racism that was largely attended by journalists, academics, and policy makers. Stieg’s talk was clear, passionate, and direct. Afterwards, I made my way through the crowd and approached him, telling him that I was a student interested in researching right-wing extremism. He encouraged me to pursue my research, gave me his phone number, and seemed to genuinely mean it when he told me: “yes, do contact me, and we will find time to meet.”

Looking back, I remember how I felt when I went to meet him. I had already done some research about the topic, about him, and the organization and magazine he created. He e-mailed me to get to one subway station in Stockholm, and call him when there. Following his instructions, I got there and called him. He told me to wait and that he would be coming—on foot. In the mid-1990s, Expo’s journalists had, in fact, been attacked by neo-Nazis, and Larsson’s life had been threatened several times. According to Larsson, this was the first wave of modern terrorism that Sweden had experienced.
For this reason, Expo’s address was secret. Being cautious and secretive seemed a fact of life in the business—something I was not used to.

We walked for a solid two hundred meters, and then we entered an ordinary yellowish building, working-class and anonymous. While on the street next to him, I felt uneasy thinking about what might happen to me if someone interested in stopping the work that Expo was doing photographed us together. And when I eventually left the building after the interviews, that feeling remained—more penetrating and discomforting than before, because this time, I walked alone. Then, I was not only looking around, but over my shoulders as well.

We took the elevator, and once on the right floor, a door with a private name like “Johnsson” or “Erikson” stood head of us. Almost the whole level was devoted to a large investigation office that, in another part of town, with a different light, and different furniture, might have been the editorial office of a magazine. I saw old computers, copy machines, and multiple copies of Expo the magazine organized and evenly laid out. They stood in a practical rather than decorative fashion, to signify that visitors were not an everyday affair. I got the sense that people who came there had something to bring to the table, or else something to dig out and take. People did not come there to hang out or kill time while heading home from work.

There was a large room connected to the kitchen that was mostly used for general meetings, and then a number of separate rooms divided by task or person. Material ranged from extremist magazines and fanzines to court case files and White Power videos—some of which we watched together.

Stieg said that it was the largest archive of extreme right-wing paraphernalia in Scandinavia. Anytime there was a crime that involved racial hatred, the Swedish police would contact Expo’s researchers, who would immediately get to work trying to find links among different activists. Obviously, extreme right-wingers did not benefit from such an archive. This publicity is something they simply never seek.

On the other hand, many university researchers had made use of the archive. Stieg did not particularly appreciate their efforts, and he was not reserved in expressing his frustrations to me. According to him, many of the scholars had only used the material for their own ends, without any thought to helping solve the problem. And surprisingly, many of their papers and dissertations often neglected to even thank Expo.

I was humbled by the kind of work that Stieg and his colleagues did. Could my work amount to anything more than the kind he had just harshly (but understandably) criticized?

Like a good student I came prepared with an interview-guide composed of questions derived from reading the academic literature. But both times we met, I questioned Stieg on which topics could potentially matter outside of academia, and make some impact beyond simply furthering my career. Not only did I want to invest my time in something relevant outside the ivory
tower, but also something worthwhile. That feeling haunted me. Moreover, because the research had been financed by an outside source, I felt compelled to do something that could matter. Plus, this was hardly an entertaining and trivial topic.

Stieg regarded the “money flow” as the most important, but also perhaps most difficult, issue to uncover. He also assured me that any work I would do, if done well, would matter by adding a bit of knowledge to the complex picture of the extreme right. Later, when the research was completed, I felt compelled to begin my article on White Power music with a quote from one of the interviews we did that summarizes both my main findings and his message:

The biggest mistake, in terms of counter-strategic policies, is to relegate the whole phenomenon as a “psychological problem” and in this way omit the presence of political forces behind [White Power music.] (Larsson, personal communication, 2002 cited in Corte and Edwards, 2008)

The quote reflects the mistakes that the Swedish government made during the mid-1990s when it unwittingly provided the White Power movement (WPM) with a number of key resources that the movement used to put Swedish White Power on the “international map”—especially in relation to music (Corte and Edwards, 2008).

An example of this is the desktop publishing training that was afforded to White Power activists who, in turn, transformed a number of fanzines into some of the most polished magazines in the international movement. Another is the program on neo-Nazis at “Fryshuset,” which, while intended to be a sort of rehabilitation center for neo-Nazis, instead provided the movement the equivalent of a State financed headquarter.

It is very important to emphasize that Stieg recalled that when activists from other countries would come visit, “they simply could not believe their eyes.” Those strategies largely stemmed from having missed the linkage between the subculture, the movement, and political parties. Those “mentally crazy” neo-Nazis were to be reintegrated into “normal society.” Plenty of resources were invested, and given to neo-Nazis, but these were neither tied to any obligations on the part of the recipients, nor effectively tracked and accounted for by program staff.

Our two interviews lasted long, averaging between two to three hours. They were audio recorded and partially transcribed. While at Expo, I had access to its archive (Webb et al., 1981), meaning that when Stieg answered my questions or wanted to illustrate a point, he would often either show me a video, a magazine, let me listen to a recording, or provide me with photocopied material to read at home.
Other First-hand Interviews

Wanting to interview other Swedish experts, I contacted and interviewed a representative of the media-watch organization “Quick Response” which monitors and educates the Swedish mainstream printed media.

While I was trying to find the research focus I also interviewed Dennis Lyxen, a famous Swedish Punk/Hardcore musician. I wanted to know what he knew about the White Power scene, especially in relation to music. I investigated the same sort of lead with other three Swedish bands: the singer of the punk band Randy, the singer of The Hives, and members of another punk band by the name of Coca Carola. This route, however, did not prove to be particularly fruitful. By having read a good number of books, journal articles, and a very large number of internet documents on the origins of White Power music, I came to think that if I could locate and interview someone who actually was there at the time, I could gain some important insights.

As pointed out at the beginning of this introduction when I describe how I became involved in the research project, my “preliminary hypothesis” presumed a secondary role in recruitment for politics in comparison to music. In my understanding, partially derived from the readings I had voraciously consumed, right-wing political parties were in the business of “getting kids” while also “pitting them against each other” for their own instrumental ends.

Not through snowballing but through casually talking about the project, I was luckily able to locate and gain access to a number of musicians who were active in England during the 1970s and 1980s, and thus had directly witnessed the emergence of the White Power subculture and movement.

On May 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2004, I met Steve Diggle, the singer of the British punk band Buzzcocks before his Stockholm concert. Then, we discussed the role of party politics in both the Punk and Skinhead subculture. Afterwards, I interviewed Marco Balestrino twice in Italy. Balestrino was the singer of the skinhead band Klasse Kriminale. During the late 1970s and 1980s, he had spent much time in London and was able to recall not only the political atmosphere at the time, but also the work that the extreme right-wing party known as the National Front (NF) did in subcultural milieus. Balestrino attended the debut show of the band Skrewdriver for the album “White Power,” which signified the connection with the NF as well as the origins of White Power music. I discussed in detail with Balestrino the ways in which the Skinhead subculture became associated with racism. Through Balestrino, I was able to meet Francesco Barile, author of a book on the Skinhead subculture (Barile, 1999), who I interviewed in Genoa in September 10\textsuperscript{th}, of 2003.

In the summer of 2002, I went to San Diego, California where I interviewed Curtis Casella, owner of the cornerstone American punk/hardcore label Taang! Records. I discussed with him and with one of his employees
the origins of White Power music in the U.S. and the current White Power music scene in Southern California.

**Second-hand Interviews**

Subsequently, following up on a suggestion that professor Eyerman gave me, I contacted professor Les Back at Goldsmith University in London. Professor Back had done extensive research on White Power music and had published various articles on the subject, in addition to the book “*Out of Whiteness*” (2002), co-written with professor Vron Ware. I traveled to London to meet professor Back, who allowed me to copy transcripts of interviews he conducted in 1998, and granted me the right to use them for my research.

Given an office, I had four days in which I studied the full-transcripts of a little less than twenty interviews that professor Back had done. I identified six (mentioned below) that proved particularly useful to my project.

During my stay at Goldsmith, I also interviewed professor Back (10\(^{th}\) of February, 2004). The majority of interviews that professor Back had collected were obtained by telephone. The interviewees included experts, and political leaders and activists of the extreme-right. One interview (Mark Atkinson) was conducted by mail because the interviewee was in jail at the time.

The experts were Steve Silver of the British research organization Searchlight (the British equivalent of Expo); Stieg Larsson of Expo; Michael Wine of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC); and Rick Eaton, senior researcher at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a human rights organization located in the U.S.

Professor Back also interviewed Patrick Harrington, an ex-political leader of the British National Front (NF) and key figure for the creation of White Power (WP) music at the end beginning of the 1980s; and activist Mark Atkinson, an ex-leader of the British racist terrorist organization Combat 18 and co-publisher of the racist magazine *Stormer*.

Other secondary data consisted of content analysis of lyrics from White Power songs and written statements by White Power musicians, producers and activists, the viewing of about 30 White Power websites, video-magazines, and print magazines.

This study of a local BMX Freestyle scene utilized a mixed methodology (Alexander et al., 2008) of direct and participant observation, ethnography, and in-depth interviews, supplemented by the examination of subcultural and mainstream media.

Note that the only involvement of Professor Edwards in data collection took place for the writing of the paper “Commercialization and Lifestyle Sport: Lessons from Twenty Years of Freestyle BMX in Pro-Town, USA” (2010). Professor Edwards collected a small minority of the data that appear in the article. His data was derived from direct observation (Denzin, 1978) as well as collecting documents such as newspapers articles. The involvement of Professor Edwards mainly served the function of offering a “balancing perspective” (Snow and Anderson, 1993; Lofland et al., 2006). That role counter-acted the possibility that my involvement in the scene could have led to over-rapport with my population of research (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2003:110), as well as providing a sounding board for my ideas as they progressed.

The greatest portion of the research was carried out in Greenville, North Carolina between September 2004 and July 2007, and consisted of participant observation recorded through fieldnotes and twenty-six semi-structured interviews with BMX riders who were living in or visiting Greenville during that period. The interviews were audio-recorded, selectively transcribed, and coded in Word (Lofland et al., 2007). One interview was conducted as a focus group with two professional riders (Josh Harrington and Steven Lilly) and one other rider who is a movement entrepreneur (Steve Caro, see Edwards and Corte, 2010). Also, two interviews (with Marcus Tooker and Shea Nyquist) were repeated at two different points in time to further inquire about specific topics that arose during the research.

The second bulk of data consists of one additional interview that I conducted with the professional BMXer Ryan Nyquist in Santa Cruz, California during Summer 2009, complemented by secondary data in the form of BMX print and video magazines.

A Case Study
Greenville represents a case study of an intentional community whose core members have been particularly influential in the evolution of their activity. Contest results and recorded performances are the most tangible indicators of the success of Greenville BMXers; prestige and notoriety of some of its riders, while being harder to assess, also serve the same purpose.

Greenville was aptly dubbed “Pro Town USA” by Ride BMX, niche magazine, in March 2001. This was because the professional riders who initially moved there became exceptionally successful in large competitions over a
rather short amount of time and steadily occupied the top spots in national and international contest results over a number of years. Greenville’s riders also developed a riding style that was both very progressive—they invented high level and risky maneuvers—and very consistent—they were able to perform those maneuvers in a sequence, under time pressure, and on different terrains while largely avoiding falling. BMXers call this “being dialed” meaning being able to perform tricks almost instinctively. Contemporaneous with this success was the influx of a large number of professional BMX riders, who relocated to this peripheral town in North Carolina from all over the U.S. and even from as far away as Australia.

**Getting in**

I lived in Greenville for three consecutive years because I was pursuing a Master of Arts in Sociology from East Carolina University (ECU), and I stayed in town throughout the years except for two months each summer when I returned home to Italy. Because I had been skateboarding for more than twenty years, getting in contact with BMXers was easier for me than it might have been for another researcher with a different background. In other words, I made use of my subcultural capital (Thornton, 1996) to get in, get along, and reduce the risk of being fooled by my interviewees (Nelson, 2010). As Lofland et al. asserted, researching a social world within which the researcher has deep knowledge, interest, and familiarity holds more advantages than drawbacks (Lofland et al., 9-14: 2006). While skateboarding and Freestyle BMX are not the same activity, they are similar enough to lead to several connecting points, not least of which was the fact that we ride the same (or similar) facilities.

Concretely, my history of skateboard riding brought the following advantages. First, it functioned to build trust with my population of study by showing my sincere desire to ride, and by displaying my subcultural capital both in activity performance as well as in demeanor and speech. Second, not only I could find something to get busy with while in the field, but I could use this opportunity to be a participant observer without looking “out of place” (Junker, 1960: 36; Hammersely and Atkinson 2003: 104-105).

This further enabled me to ask questions *in situ* as informal interviewing (Lofland et al., 2006:88), obtaining “perspectives *in action*” (Gould et al., 1974) to complement, as well as to triangulate (Denzin, 1989) with “perspectives *of action*” obtained in interviews that take place outside of the field.  

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104 There is a distinction between “perspectives *of action*” and “perspectives *in action*” (Gould et al. 1974). The second occur naturally as action unfolds, while the first are prompted and influenced by the researcher’s presence. While both yield valuable information, they are of a different order—the second being more promising when researchers are interested in the “lived experience and the management of everyday routines” of the group under analysis (Snow and Anderson, 1993, 22).
Furthermore, I learned that my skills on a skateboard could be taught to BMXers and used as a token to be exchanged for instruction about BMX and be genuinely accepted as a “novice” (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2003: 81). Hammersely and Atkinson write that the people who are researched are:

(…) often more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than the research itself and also that they will try to gauge if the researcher can be trusted and if he or she has anything to offer to the group, whether as a friend or through the sharing of skills and labour (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2003: 83).

By about one year prior to my departure, I had become a well-integrated member of the community. Everybody knew who I was, knew that I was doing a research that pertained to them, and invited me to both parties and many riding sessions. At that point, members of the BMX community that I had not yet interviewed began approaching me about the project, asking why I hadn’t had yet interviewed them. I was certainly counted as ‘one of us’ by the large majority of the riders, and simply acknowledged, respected, or tolerated by others.

Questions
My interviews included a mixture of “descriptive questions,” “structural questions,” and “contrast questions.” For descriptive questions, I let the interviewee free to be broad about the topics I was interested in. Structural questions were asked in order to learn in detail about specific themes and problems. And contrast questions used to verify the truthfulness of the responses, as well as to learn about the topic and themes by having them compared in unexpected ways (Spradley, 1978). As Spradely wrote: “The meaning of a symbol can be discovered by finding out how it is related to all other symbols” (Spradley, 1978:156). Contrast questions were particularly useful to learn about the rules and boundaries of the group.

The focus of the interview questions arose inductively. I initially developed and tested a preliminary set of questions in an open-ended interview guide with pilot interviews. I kept refining them until I noticed that what I was asking stimulated my respondents enough to inspire articulate, vivid responses. The refined instrument consisted of six main themes: (1) Demographics and Relocation Process, (2) Perspectives on the Evolution of the Scene, (3) BMX, Lifestyle Sports, and Other Sports, (4) Diffusion and Commercialization of BMX, (5) Personal Values, Subcultural Norms, and Collaboration, and (6) Socialization Process.

105 There were three sets of keys to one of the largest private riding facilities in town (known as “The Unit”). When one rider who had a set was going out of town for a few weeks, he offered me his copy. I declined, but took the gesture as a sign of acceptance.
During the interviews, while I began with a particular set of initial questions, I let the interviewee occasionally take lead of the conversation to allow the different knowledge retained by different riders to come to the fore, thereby acquiring a kind of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For example, local riders were the best source to find out about the early scene, while the first transplanted pros could tell me why they relocated as well as the dynamics of the formation stage of the first collaborative circle. On the other hand, visiting riders had an outsider perspective on the scene.

Apart from direct questions, I also interviewed “by comment106” (Snow et al., 1982) engaging myself in conversation while making the interview an interactive process rather than a dry ‘question and answer’ procedure. In other words, instead of chasing an unattainable full objectivity which would better fit an experimental setting, I wanted to maximize the chances that my questions resonated with my subjects, that they were answered, and that I understood the responses that were given to me. Different kinds of probes and prompts were utilized to facilitate the interviews (Spradley, 1979). Understanding interviews as “speech events” (Spradley, 1979, Briggs, 1986), I often asked the same questions to the same riders at different points in time, as well as to others, to check for consistency and account for opposing views on the same topics. Simultaneously, I further checked how well the given responses matched the behavior I observed. Finally, on certain sensitive matters (such as the separation of the first BMX circle), I read selected excerpts from previous interviews (with permission, leaving the original interviewee anonymous) to the rider I was interviewing in order to learn his take on such questions. This strategy proved effective in generating extensive and genuine answers, which I feel would have been difficult or impossible to obtain through other methods.

I interviewed nearly the totality of Greenville riders, and informally talked about the project with various community members. While I aimed at covering each theme of the interview guide, I did not always ask each question or retain the same order. My goal was neither scientific knowledge of the positivistic kind nor a postmodern tale, but instead I strived for “close

106 The latter were administered both to discover matters I was not aware of, as well as to elicit information about behaviours, events, and relationships (Snow et al., 1982: 285) I observed in the field and acquired through direct questions. The two data gathering techniques complemented each other. Simply put, interviewing by comment means trying to obtain information from a respondent “by making a statement rather than by asking a question” (P. 287). It is a particularly useful strategy when conducting interviews in the field. One of its many benefits lays in maximizing the chances to learn unexpected findings (P. 287-288). Eight different types of comments have been identified: puzzlement, humorous comments, the replay, descriptive comments, motivational comments, outrageous comments, altercasting comments, and evaluative comments (to learn more about them, see Snow et al. 1982 and Snow and Anderson 1993: 22 and 322). I made use of all of them to the exception of the last three.
approximations” (Snow and Morrill, 1993: 10) of reality reached by intensive fieldwork, and post-fieldwork research.

Consequently, as I was writing each paper I further contacted some of my interviewees by email or telephone to fill in details. In addition, of course, I also wanted to increase the chances that my analysis was as correct as it could be.

Conceiving interviews as “speech events” means viewing their outcome as largely dependent on the context in which they take place (physical and cultural), as well as on the specific social interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. Critics of qualitative methods refer this limitation of interview technique for data gathering as “reactivity.” My take, which is in line with other sociologists and social anthropologists, is not to attempt to neutralize my impact on the field (which would be an impossible task), but to be conscious of it and to use it in order to get further information (Buraoy, 2009:40). This is one of the advantages of “interviewing by comment,” but there are other ways to take advantage of a researcher’s conspicuous presence in the field as well. For example, breaking specific norms of the group a la Garfinkel can be utilized to learn the rules at play in the social setting under analysis, and the sanctions that follow for violating these rules. How interviewees reacted to my presence in the field and my line of questioning could be as informative as the explicit answers they give to my questions or how they react to other “naturally arising” situations (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2003). For example, as cited in the paper on collaborative circles, I learned how authenticity was a sensitive subject to Greenville Bmxers when I made the following slip-up:

After having ridden “Jaycee” (the local park), and as I am leaving and getting ready to drive off, I talk with some riders who are also in the parking lot and about to go eat: One is a newly relocated, and the other one of the original pros. Surprisingly, I notice that the latter is sporting a very clean look which seems to clash with the clothes I have seen him wear before: provocative t-shirts displaying names of [music] bands like “Born Against” a pun of the Christian slogan “Born Again.” I ask him about his “new” look and he says: “You know, now I am on corporate sponsor.” And I instinctively reply: “Oh yeah, I understand you had to compromise” to which he quickly hits back appearing both surprised, but mostly irritated of what appears to be a slip off from both sides: “No, I never compromise!” (Fieldnotes 10/5/08, emphasis added)

107 This does not undermine their validity. Fieldworkers routinely interview the same subjects multiple times at various points in time, and triangulate what they learn in this way with observations and other types of data. See for example, Snow and Anderson (1993) who provide one of the best examples of high quality sociological fieldwork.
Observations

My observations took place in a large number of settings which ranged from the public BMX park, a number of private facilities,108 houses of the riders (where I also at times conducted interviews and was shown photographic and video materials), and local restaurants. I spent about three years in the field, and I roughly observed two riding sessions per week, each averaging three hours, over nine months each year. This amounted to about 72 sessions and roughly 216 hours in the field not counting observations that took place out of riding.

Role theory as well as a long tradition of fieldwork studies emphasize the deep connection between the role assumed by the researcher, or ascribed to him/her by participants, in relation to the type and quality of information that he/she has access to (what he can ask, where he can go/participate in, who he can interview).

Subjects viewed me as a “buddy researcher” (Snow et al., 1986) which is a type of “researcher-participant109” (Gans, 1968) entailing a complementary combination of the responsibilities of researcher and friend. This stance is particularly successful in generating trust (Whyte, 1943).

Observations, recorded as fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 1995), were conducted not only across different settings but also, crucially, over many seasons. I discovered that Fall and Winter for example, were different from early Spring and Summer. In these last two seasons, a large number of riders from other towns visited, and many local riders went on tour to participate in national and international contests.

Real Names

Interviewees were informed about my project. Pseudonyms are not used for two reasons.110 One, riders are used to being in the spotlight; media of different kinds interviews them, and quite often. Second, following Duneier (1999, 347-349), providing real names of interview subjects increases accountability. If another researcher wants to talk to any of the people I interviewed, he/she can simply find them and get in contact with them. Because of the Internet, this is easier than it has ever been.

108 During my stay some were built, while others were taken down.
109 Also referred to as “participant as observer.”
110 I thank Serine Haghverdian, whose question about this matter during a seminar prompted me include this reference.
References


A doctoral dissertation from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Uppsala University, is usually a summary of a number of papers. A few copies of the complete dissertation are kept at major Swedish research libraries, while the summary alone is distributed internationally through the series Digital Comprehensive Summaries of Uppsala Dissertations from the Faculty of Social Sciences.