

The Role of Fanzines in the (Re)production of Subcultural Capital. The Authenticity, Taste and Performance of “Coolness” in the Zines of the Subculture of Czech White Power Skinheads in the 1990s*

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Abstract

PROKŮPKOVÁ, Vendula: The Role of Fanzines in the (Re)production of Subcultural Capital. The Authenticity, Taste and Performance of “Coolness” in the Zines of the Subculture of Czech White Power Skinheads in the 1990s.

Taking a specific case of the subculture of the Czech “White Power skinheads” in the 1990s, this paper engages with the role of zines, zine-makers and other contributors (such as readers whose letters to the editors were published, or interviewees) in the (re)production of subcultural capital and the formation and reproduction of alternative hierarchies in the subcultural field. The author approaches zine-making as one of the fields of subcultural action within which inner hierarchies, as well as frontiers between “us” (the “true” skinheads) and “them”, were established as a result of articulatory practices. Based on the sample analysis of 80 Czech-language skinhead zines from the period 1992 – 1999, the author presents three alternative angles for approaching the concept of subcultural capital in zine analysis. The first approach presented focuses on claims on authenticity and the articulation of subcultural belonging. The author explores how the skinhead identity was articulated in fanzines in opposition to the antagonistic “other” substantiated by “inauthentic” skinheads, enemy subcultures and other “despicable” groups. The second example engages with the role of fanzine-makers and other contributors to zine content in moulding the shared knowledge of likes and dislikes. The author focuses on the White Power music scene that White Power skinheads were involved in and engages with the practices of shaping what was considered as “good” style and “good taste” in music. The third approach presented deals with zine-making as a valued set of skills and practices and the utilisation of the zine-platform for boosting the inner status of the individuals involved. The author explores how subculturists performed their “coolness” and “hipness” by exposing their photos, skills and stories to the broad skinhead-zine readerships.

Keywords: fanzine, subcultural capital, skinheads, right-wing subcultures, Czech Republic

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In 1995, American sociologist Sarah Thornton published a ground-breaking study of British club and rave cultures.¹ The contribution of her work rests in two main aspects. First, Thornton questioned the understanding of a subculture as a form of resistance against the hegemony of the ruling class, as advocated by the theoreticians of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Second, she introduced the concept of subcultural capital, which enables an explanation of the mechanisms of forming alternative hierarchies within subcultures and young taste cultures.²

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1 THORNTON, Sarah. *Club Cultures. Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Oxford : Polity Press; Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995.

2 Sarah Thornton defines taste cultures as crowds of people, who “congregate on the basis of their shared taste

Today, subcultural capital presents one of the key concepts in contemporary subcultural studies.³ Since the first edition of *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, the concept has been employed in a significant number of studies published in this field.⁴ The author of this manuscript employs the concept of subcultural capital in one particular area of subcultural research, the study of fanzines.

Using the specific case of the subculture of Czech “White Power skinheads”⁵ in the 1990s, this paper engages with the role of zines, zine-makers and other contributors (such as readers whose letters to the editors were published, or interviewees) in the (re)production of subcultural capital and the formation and reproduction of alternative hierarchies in the subcultural field.⁶ The author approaches

in music, their consumption of common media and their preference for people with similar tastes to themselves”. THORNTON 1995, p. 3. Club cultures are taste culture; taking part in club cultures involves socialisation into the shared knowledge of likes and dislikes, meanings and values. Thornton dismisses the understanding of the subculture as a form of working-class resistance against the bourgeoisie social forces as was taken up by the theoretical tradition of the CSSS. In her understanding, the defining attribute of a subculture lies in the consciousness of “difference”, in a distinction between a particular social group/culture, and the broader (dominant) culture, THORNTON 1995, p. 5.

3 BARKER, Chris. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 4th ed. London : SAGE, 2012; BERZANO, Luigi – GENOVA, Carlo. *Lifestyles and Subcultures: History and a New Perspective*. New York : Routledge, 2015; HAENFLER, Ross. *Subcultures: The Basics*. London : Routledge, 2014.

4 JENSEN, Sune Q. Rethinking Subcultural Capital. In *YOUNG*, 2006, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 257-276, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308806065820>; MOORE, Ryan. Alternative to What? Subcultural Capital and the Commercialisation of a Music Scene. In *Deviant Behaviour*, 2005, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 229-252, DOI: [10.1080/01639620590905618](https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620590905618); BRILL, Dunja. Gender, Status and Subcultural Capital in the Goth Scene. In HODKINSON, Paul – DEICKE, Wolfgang (eds.) *Youth Cultures. Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes*. New York : Routledge, 2007, pp. 111-128; LEONARD, Madeleine. Social and Subcultural Capital among Teenagers in Northern Ireland. In *Youth & Society*, Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 224-244, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0044118X08314243>.

5 The term “White Power skinheads” denotes the far-right offshoot of the skinhead subculture (for more information about the history of skinhead movement, see below). However, it is a term used by social scientists rather than the self-description of the subculture itself. The author of this text uses the category of “White Power Skinheads” as a synonym and aggregate term for white supremacy, neo-Nazi, and neo-fascist skinheads.

6 The subculture/movement of the White Power skinheads (in the Czech context also referred as “NS-skinheads”, “fascho skinheads”) in the Czech Republic has been the object of numerous studies across the field of social sciences and humanities. The topic has been elaborated by scholars in publications on political extremism (e.g. BARŠA, Pavel – FIALA, Petr (eds.) *Politický extremismus a radikalismus v České republice*. Brno : Masarykova univerzita, 1998; MAREŠ, Miroslav. *Pravicový extremismus a radikalismus v ČR*. Brno : Barrister & Principal, 2003; CHARVÁT, Jan. *Současný politický extremismus a radikalismus*. Praha : Portál, 2007), and has been an object of criminological research provided by IKSP – Institut pro kriminologii a sociální prevenci: *Extremismus mládeže v České republice*. Praha : IKSP, 1996; MAREŠOVÁ, Alena (ed.) *Kriminologické a právní aspekty extremismu*. Praha : IKSP, 1999). Besides that, there are studies in sociology, history, anthropology and other disciplines engaged with this topic, e.g. SMOLÍK, Josef. *Subkultury mládeže: uvedení do problematiky*. Praha : Grada, 2010; DANIEL, Ondřej. Kánon a alibi: anticiganismus postsocialistických subkultur. In *Slovo a smysl. Časopis pro mezioborová bohemistická studia*, 2013, Vol. 10, No. 20, pp. 260-271; NOVOTNÁ, Hedvika – HERMANSKÝ, Martin. Shared Enemies, Shared Friends: The Relational Character of Subcultural Ideology in the Case of Czech Punks and Skinheads. In THE SUBCULTURE NETWORK (eds.) *Fight back: Punk, Politics and Resistance*. Manchester : Manchester University Press, 2015, pp. 170-186; DANIEL, Ondřej. *Násilím proti “novému biedermeieru”: subkultury a většinová společnost pozdního státního socialismu a postsocialismu*. Příbram : Pistorius & Olšanská, 2016; POLÁK, Michal. “Věšme židy, komouše!” Sympatie k fašismu u mládeže v pozdním socialismu. In DANIEL, Ondřej (ed.) *Kultura svépomoci: ekonomické a politické rozměry v českém subkulturním prostředí pozdního státního socialismu a postsocialismu*. Praha : Univerzita Karlova, Filozofická fakulta, 2017, pp. 70-84; CHARVÁT, Jan. Boots, Braces and Baseball Bats: Right-wing Skinheads in the Czech Republic (1985 – 2015). In GUERRA, Paula – MOREIRA, Tania (eds.) *Keep it Simple, Make it Fast! An Approach to Underground Music Scenes (vol. 3)*. Porto : Universidade do Porto, Faculdade de Letras, 2017, pp. 39-48; CHARVÁT, Jan. Skinheads: permanentní soubor o jméno. In CHARVÁT, Jan – KURÍK, Bob (eds.) *Mikrofon je naše bomba. Politika a hudební subkultury mládeže v postsocialistickém Česku*. Praha : Togga, 2018, pp. 61-110; SMOLÍK, Josef – NOVÁK, Petr. Roots of the Czechoslovak Skinheads: Development, Trends and Politics. In *Human Affairs*, 2019, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 157-173, <https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2019-0013>; CHARVÁT, Jan. The Role and Importance of White Power Music in Shaping the Far Right in the Czech Republic. In BLÜML, Jan – KAJANOVÁ, Yvetta – RÜDIGER, Ritter (eds.) *Popular Music in Communist and Post-Communist Europe*. Berlin : Peter Lang, 2019, pp. 241-251; PROKŮPKOVÁ, Vendula. The Limits of Tolerance for Intolerance. Young Democracy and Skinhead Violence in Czechia in the 1990s. In *Europe-Asia Studies* (in press). Further,

zine-making as one of the fields of subcultural action within which inner hierarchies inside the subculture, as well as frontiers between “us” (the “true” skinheads) and “them” (the “inauthentic” outsiders), were established as a result of discursive (articulatory) practices.

Since the ideologies of Czech far-right subcultures have already been the subject of several earlier studies,⁷ the focus of this manuscript is more on the questions of style, taste and authenticity than on their political demands and extreme-right ideology. The aim of this paper is not to provide an elaborate list of possible operationalisation of the theory of subcultural capital in zine-research. Nor does it aim to formulate a comprehensive theory of the zine-making practices in the structuring of a subcultural field. Departing from the analysis of 1990s White Power skinhead fanzines, the author aims to suggest exemplary ways of approaching subcultural capital in the study of fanzines.

The structure of the text proceeds as follows: First, the selection of the case of the White Power skinheads will be explained and the data and methods presented. Second, the author provides a brief introduction to the theory of three forms of capital by Pierre Bourdieu and the related theory of subcultural capital by Sarah Thornton. The following part is a brief introduction to the early history of the racist branch of skinheads in the Czech Republic. The introduction of the analytical part of the manuscript focuses on the question of authenticity. The author deals with the question of how subcultural belonging was articulated through the delimitation of authentic/inauthentic in the texts published in the 1990s White Power skinhead fanzines. The second exemplary analysis engages with the role of fanzine-makers and other contributors to zine contents in moulding the shared knowledge of likes and dislikes. The author focuses on the White Power music scenes that far-right skinheads were involved in and concentrates on the practices of shaping shared knowledge on what was considered as “having good taste” in music, fashion etc. The final part engages with zine-making as a valued set of skills and practices aiming to utilise the zine-platform for boosting the inner-status of the individuals involved. The author explores how subculturists performed their “hipness” and “coolness” by presenting their photos, skills and stories to the broad skinhead-zine readerships.

Case selection, data and methods

Focusing on the case of the Czech White Power skinheads zines was motivated by several factors: First was the extent of the material available in the Český a slovenský Archiv subkultur archive.⁸ Second was the significance of zine-making in this selected subcultural field. One of the features of the White Power skins subculture was its decentralisation. From the late 1980s and early 1990s, local scenes

a popular history book by former skinhead Filip Vávra provides a thorough, albeit non-academic, insight into the history and lifestyle of the first generations of Czech skinheads, VÁVRA, Filip. *Těžký boty to vyřešej hned! Skinheads v Praze na konci 80. a začátku 90. let.* Praha : FIVA, 2017.

7 MAREŠ 2003; CHARVÁT 2017; NOVOTNÁ – HEŘMANSKÝ 2015; CHARVÁT 2018.

8 The collection of the extreme-right zines available in the archive was provided by Jan Charvát, Faculty of Social Science, Charles University, and Miroslav Michela, Faculty of Arts, Charles University.

formed in county towns and even small municipalities. Zines, which were marketed at concert venues or distributed through a network of P.O. Boxes,⁹ presented a medium consumed by skinheads across the regions. At the time, online communication was in its infancy, so printed zines presented one of the most important means of communication inside the subculture. With up to several hundred copies for each issue,¹⁰ zines played an essential role in the shaping and reproduction of the subcultural sense of the collective “we”. They carried articulations of skinhead-inherent norms, values and ideas as well as antagonistic divisions of who belongs to “us” and who does not.

The corpus for the analysis comprised 80 fanzines of Czech White Power skinheads published between 1992 – 1999. Besides the fanzines, the author used police and security reports and daily press and journals as additional sources of data. The author analysed the data using the method of qualitative coding.¹¹ First, the author coded the literary genre and thematic content of each zine by creating descriptive codes, and then, during the second round of coding, axial codes were created.

Cultural capital, social capital and subcultural capital

In the 1980s, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu introduced his novel concept of three basic forms of capital.¹² In doing so, he proposed an alternative to the traditional Marxist notion of class as a system of property rights and presented a more complex way of understanding class allegiance, taking account different forms of exchange. Bourdieu suggested that understanding the position of actors in the social space was based not only on their economic capital (possession of financial resources and property immediately convertible into money) but also on their cultural knowledge (cultural capital) and social capital, consisting of social resources.¹³

In Bourdieu’s understanding, cultural capital denotes a type of cultural knowledge which is acquired by education and upbringing. Cultural capital is closely related to taste and style preferences. It may acquire various forms and can also be embodied in the form of habitus.¹⁴ A typical example of embodied cultural capital is slang and manners. Cultural capital can also be institutionalised in the form of educational or academic qualifications or objectified in the form of various cultural goods, such as books, pictures, musical instruments or electronic devices. Cultural capital

9 In the early 1990s, it was also common for zine-makers initially to use their residence address as the contact address of the zine.

10 An edition of the zine *Der Stürmer* was 300 copies, and for the zines *Patriot* and *The Hammer News* 500 copies each; *Extremismus mládeže* 1996, p. 30.

11 STRÜBING, Jörg. Grounded Theory und Theoretical Sampling. In BAUR, Nina – BLASIUS, Jörg (eds.) *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 2014, pp. 465-469.

12 BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1984; BOURDIEU, Pierre. The Forms of Capital. In RICHARDSON, John G. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York : Greenwood Publishing Group, 1986, pp. 241-258.

13 ANHEIER, Helmut K. – GERHARDS, Jürgen – ROMO, Frank P. Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu’s Social Topography. In *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1995, Vol. 100, No. 4., p. 860.

14 Habitus denotes “a system of schemes of perception and appreciation of practices, cognitive and evaluative structures which are acquired through the lasting experience of a social position. Habitus is both a system of schemes of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices.” BOURDIEU, Pierre. Social Space and Symbolic Power. In *Sociological Theory*, 1989, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 14-25.

is distinctive from economic capital, albeit possession of the valuable property and high income may correlate with high levels of cultural capital.¹⁵

The third basic form of capital – social capital – is made up of formal and informal relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. In other words, social capital is based on “whom I know” and “who knows me” and what kind of benefits and obligation our connection generates.¹⁶ According to Bourdieu, the volume of the social capital depends on two variables: the size of the network of connections one can effectively mobilise and the volume of the various forms of capital possessed by the individual actors involved in the network. Social capital may be, under certain conditions, convertible into economic capital (such as expedient contracts, job proposals), and it can also be institutionalised in forms of titles of nobility.¹⁷

In Bourdieu’s understanding, the character of all capitals is arbitrary. Their value is not inherent but relies on a societal recognition as a legitimate form of exchange.¹⁸ The legitimised or recognised form of capital is called symbolic capital.¹⁹ Despite its broad applicability, Pierre Bourdieu’s typology of three basic forms of capital does not present a comprehensive list of the varieties of exchange based on which the unequal distribution of power and recognition in each social field can be sufficiently explained. In his theory of capital, Bourdieu indicates the existence of various forms of exchange; however, their concrete form varies depending on the social and historical context.²⁰

As sociologist Sarah Thornton pointed out, one of the areas where the notion of cultural capital does not provide sufficient explanatory value is youth taste cultures and subcultures.²¹ In a subcultural environment, such as skinheads or punks, good manners and academic title will not necessarily guarantee good standing inside the subcultural hierarchy. Likewise, classical dancing skills or the possession of paintings might not be appreciated in the rave scene or other alternative taste cultures. In her study on the British club and rave scenes at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, Thornton introduced the concept of subcultural capital. Thornton was interested in the cultural mechanism that allows a person involved in a subculture to be recognised as “cool”²² and “hip”²³ and thus determines her or his standing within the subcultural hierarchy. Subcultural capital comprises specific knowledge, skills, patterns of “proper” conduct, tastes or belongings which “confer the status of its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder”.²⁴ Subcultural capital as

15 BOURDIEU 1989, pp. 17-21.

16 BOURDIEU 1989, pp. 21-24.

17 BOURDIEU 1989, pp. 21-22.

18 LAWLER, Steph. Symbolic capital. In SOUTHERTON, Dale (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*. Thousand Oaks : SAGE Publications, 2011, p. 1418.

19 BOURDIEU 1989, p. 17.

20 RŮŽIČKA, Michal – VAŠÁT, Petr. Základní koncepty Pierra Bourdieu: pole – kapitál – habitus. In *Antropowebzin*, 2011, No. 2, p. 130.

21 THORNTON 1995; THORNTON, Sarah. The Social Logic of Subcultural Capital [1995]. In GELDER, Ken (ed.) *The Subcultures Reader*. 2nd ed. London : Routledge, 2005.

22 Being “cool” denotes being “authentic” and genuine. “Cool” is someone who does not to exaggerate or is dependent on the meaning of others; cf. MOORE 2005.

23 Being “cool” and “be in the know”; cf. THORNTON 1995.

24 THORNTON 1995, p. 11.

a form of symbolic exchange comprises elements, based on which the subculture distinguishes itself from the outside world, and the insider status of each individual involved is defined.²⁵

Unlike cultural capital, subcultural capital does not necessarily relate to the concept of class. In her study of the British rave and club scenes, Thornton documents that an oversimplified division between the working class and the middle class became insufficient for understanding the structuring of these fields. Club cultures cannot be simplified as cultures of deprived working-class youth, and class allegiance does not necessarily influence one's position inside the inner hierarchy, as e.g. gender or age does. According to Thornton: "*Subcultural capital is the linchpin of an alternative hierarchy in which axes of age, gender, sexuality and race are all employed in order to keep the determinations of class, income and occupation at bay.*"²⁶

Subcultural capital is produced through struggles between groups or individuals involved in the subculture over what should or should not be considered as "good", "attractive" or "desirable".²⁷ It might be both objectified in form of owning "proper clothing", recordings, fanzine collections and other subcultural goods, as well as embodied, such as in the form of proper (but not exaggerated) slang, dance style, ability to use a synthesiser or play electric guitar. In comparison to cultural capital, subcultural capital may not be as easy to convert to economic capital; however, musicians, DJs, recording shop owners, music producers or, for instance, publishers of fanzines might profit from it.²⁸

The origins of the racist branch of skinheads in Czechoslovakia²⁹

The emergence of the first Czechoslovakian skinheads dates back to the mid-1980s. However, their style and ideology diverged from their western counterparts. The first generation of Czechoslovakian skinheads was born in the context

25 BERZANO – GENOVA 2015, p. 147.

26 THORNTON 1995, p. 105.

27 JENSEN 2006, p. 267.

28 THORNTON 1995, pp. 11-12.

29 The origins of the skinhead subculture date back to 1960s Great Britain. The roots of skinheads can be traced back to other working-class subcultures, the British mods and the terrace football hooligans, the boot boys, MARSHALL, George. *Spirit of '69: A Skinhead Bible*. 2nd ed. Dunoon : S.T. Publishing, 1994. The first skinheads had no original music style; they listened to American soul or Jamaican Ska. Through music and dancehalls, they stand in a close relationship to the rude boys' gangs from the West Indian Communities, from whom they also borrowed elements of their early style. With the arrival of glam rock, at the beginning of the 1970s, the ranks of skinheads significantly decreased; however, in the late 1970s the subculture experienced a new boom, HEBDIGE, Dick. *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*. New York : Routledge, 1991; MARSHALL 1994. The second generation of skinheads brought several significant changes. First of all, it was the progressive politicisation of the subculture, resulting in a crisis of its identity and split of the subculture into several feuding branches. By the early 1980s, in a context of economic downturn and increased immigration from Third World countries to the United Kingdom, a significant proportion of British skinheads became affiliated with the extreme right National Front and the British Movement, BROWN, Timothy S. *Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and "Nazi Rock" in England and Germany*. In *Journal of Social History*, 2004, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 157-178; COTTER, John M. *Sounds of Hate: White Power Rock and Roll and the Neo-Nazi Skinhead Subculture*. In *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1999, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 111-140. However, at the same time, many skinheads resisted the subcultural heading towards the extreme right. Following Brown, the efforts inside the subculture trying to reclaim the skinhead identity from the extreme right have been based on two primary strategies: the first emphasizing the multicultural roots of the subculture (by stressing the preferences for "black music" by the first generation of skinheads as well as their companionship with the rude boys) and the second pointing at the supposed apolitical origin of the subculture, by stressing the aesthetic dimensions of the style as well as the "skinhead way of life", BROWN 2004, p. 170.

of the repressive character of the real-socialist regime. It was shaped by the limited access to the Western markets and restricted information exchange with the West. Rather than be copied or assumed, the idea of proper “skinheadhood” was reconstructed from the scarce and often biased information from the communist party-controlled media, foreign broadcast or smuggled-in LPs and magazines.³⁰ Despite the fact that in Western countries there was a mutual animosity between skinheads and the “chaotic” and gradually commercialised punk subculture,³¹ this was not the case of Czechoslovakian skinheads and punks. Before the change of the regime in 1989, both skinheads and punks constructed their subcultural identity through the delimitation against the governing communist party and the “mainstream” substantiated by the late normalisation society.³²

Along with the first skinheads in real-socialist Czechoslovakia, the first racist punk and Oi! Bands, such as *Hubert Macháně* and *Orlík*, also emerged.³³ Soon after the 1989 revolution, *Orlík* enjoyed fast-growing popularity. Reaching the top ten charts and with successful recordings available in commercial distribution, the band contributed to the popularisation of the skinhead style and sparked the interest of young people (predominantly young men) in the “skinhead way of life”.

The emergence of new antagonisms accompanied the boom of the skinheads in the context of the young democratic regime. As a result, the subcultural identity was rearticulated. With the fall of the one-party rule of the Communist Party, both skinheads and punks lost their common enemy, the main objects of the subcultural resistance up to that point.³⁴ Moreover, the opening of the western border enabled subculturists to get in touch with their western fellows; they could shop for previously unavailable recordings, buy magazines and fanzines and translate them. Whereas many punks became attracted by anarchist ideas and the squatter movement,³⁵ most skinheads were heading towards the (far-)right.³⁶

Similar to the situation in the new states in Germany, where the racist branch of the skinheads predominated,³⁷ the first generations of the post-Velvet skinheads were linked to hate-motivated violence, racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism and even the misuse of extremist symbols and National Socialist (NS) and fascist ideologies.³⁸ At the beginning of the 1990s, anti-racist and non-political skinheads still represented only a minor stream.³⁹

30 PROKŮPKOVÁ (in press).

31 For instance MARSHALL 1994, pp. 67n.

32 HEŘMANSKÝ – NOVOTNÁ 2015.

33 For instance POLÁK 2017, pp. 83-84.

34 PROKŮPKOVÁ (in press).

35 HEŘMANSKÝ – NOVOTNÁ 2015; PIXOVÁ, Michaela. Český punk za oponou i před oponou. In KOLÁŘOVÁ, Marta (ed.) *Revolta stylem. Hudební subkultury mládeže v České republice*. Praha : Sociologické nakladatelství & Sociologický ústav AV ČR, v.v.i., 2011, pp. 45-82.

36 MAREŠ 2003; CHARVÁT 2007; DANIEL 2016; CHARVÁT 2018.

37 BOTSCH, Gideon. From Skinhead-Subculture to Radical Right Movement: The Development of a “National Opposition” in East Germany. In *Contemporary European History*, 2012, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 553-573.

38 *Extremismus mládeže* 1996; MAREŠ 2003; DANIEL 2016; CHARVÁT 2017.

39 CHARVÁT 2017.

According to political scientist Miroslav Mareš, the boom of the skinhead movement slacked off around 1992.⁴⁰ Many of those who remained active started to engage in political parties or various extreme-right organisations. Part of the skinheads moved their activities underground and became active in militant neo-Nazi groups. From that time on, at the latest, skinhead subculture began to intersect with political movement.⁴¹

During the first years after the Velvet Revolution, the racist branch of the skinheads divided into two main feuding streams: the racist-patriotic branch called Kališníci (the Utraquists) and the White Power skinheads, oriented towards neo-fascism and neo-Nazism. The roots of the Utraquist branch can be traced back to the band *Orlík* and the first generation of Czech skinheads, who were not influenced by the ideology of white supremacy⁴² promoted by the British band *Skrewdriver*⁴³ or extreme right skinhead organisations in Western Europe.⁴⁴ The Utraquists used the symbol of the calix as an emblem of movement allegiance. The calix referred to the historical Hussitism movement from the 15th century, which since the 19th century has appeared as one of the main symbols of Czech national resistance in Czech nationalist discourses. For the Utraquists, the calix denoted “*pure patriotism, free from Nazi symbols and ideologies*”.⁴⁵

The “Utraquist” branch organised itself around the new organisation Vlastenecká liga (Patriot League), which was founded in 1993.⁴⁶ The neo-Nazi and neo-fascist branch of the skinhead movement was represented by numerous organisations, such as Vlastenecká fronta (Patriot front, established in 1993), Bohemia Hammerskins (BHS, est. 1993), Blood and Honour Division Bohemia (B&HDB, est. 1996) and many others. In the early 1990s, a specific minor subbranch of the White Power skinheads, called „Sudetáci“ (Sudetenlanders), emerged in northern Bohemia. The Sudetáci referred themselves to the historical Sudetendeutsche Partei of Konrad Henlein and demanded the annulation of the so-called Beneš decrees. Similar to the relationship with the Utraquists, the relation between some regional groups of White Power Skinheads and the Sudetáci was tense.⁴⁷

40 MAREŠ 2003, p. 413.

41 Subcultures can, as the example of the skinheads shows, intersect with social movements. Social movements can be defined as “*a form of collective action which (i) invokes solidarity, (ii) makes manifest a conflict, and (iii) entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action takes place*”, MELUCCI, Alberto. *Challenging Codes. Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 28. The borders between subculture and the social movement are fluid; one of the main differences between a subculture and social movement is the relation to the existing social order. Whereas most subcultural actions are directed towards their own group, social movement focus their actions on policy and/or political change, PIOTROWSKI, Grzegorz. Social Movement or Subculture? Alterglobalists in Central and Eastern Europe. In *Interface: A Journal for and About Social Movements*, 2013, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 411.

42 The adherents of this ideology believe that white people are superior to other races and should dominate over them in all aspects of social life.

43 Skrewdriver was initially a punk-rock, later a White Power music band, which became a figurehead in the Rock Against Communism campaign initiated in 1979 by the Young National Front. The frontman of the band was Ian Stuart Donaldson (1958 – 1993). He and his band are regarded as being responsible for inventing White Power music and using it to construct an informal international skinhead network, COTTER 1999, p. 118.

44 MAREŠ 2003, pp. 413-414; CHARVÁT 2017, p. 87.

45 Co nevíte o skinheadech. In *Kalich*, 1994, No. 3, p. 11.

46 Zrádná organizace – V. L. In *Národní boj*, s. d., No. 2, p. 29.

47 PROKŮPKOVÁ (in press).

(White Power) skins, “fashion skins”, Utraquists and claims on their authenticity

Back in the 1980s, it was neither the bomber jacket nor shaved head that caused the first Czechoslovakian skinhead to emerge. Thus, as the revolt could not exist without the “norm” and “order”, and the “underground” without the “mainstream”, there could have been no skinhead without the presence of the “others”, without the dull greyness of late normalisation society. After 1989, it was the “others” comprising a broad chain of enemy identities, such as punks, anarchists, S.H.A.R.P.s, junkies, the Romani minority and/or civil right activists, against whom the identity of the “white patriotic skinhead” was constructed. With the foundation of Vlastenecká liga in 1993 and the separation of the Utraquist branch of the Czech skinhead movement, the identity of Utraquist skinheads was also articulated in the position of the “other”, the enemy of the White Power skinhead.⁴⁸

Pursuing, performing and judging what is authentic and what is not, who is “true” and who is a “poseur” stands at the core of most subcultural experiences.⁴⁹ The imagined authenticity and the supposed distance from the mainstream, other subcultures, or other “despicable” groups are what the claims to subcultural capital are based on. Thus, the distinction between the authentic and inauthentic plays a substantial part in these processes, during which an inner hierarchy (inside the subculture, within the local scenes), as well as frontiers between the “us” and “them” (“insiders” and “outsiders”), are constructed. Authenticity is claimed through the division between what is considered as “cool”, real and genuine, against the lame, false and fake nature of the antagonistic “other”.

The meaning of “authentic” is neither universal nor definite. The division of the authentic and inauthentic is always context-dependent and a product of articulatory practice. Whereas, for instance, in 1990 almost every skinhead proudly possessed *Orlík*'s first album, later on, the band had lost its cult status in the eyes of some. In an interview for the second issue of the skingirlzine *Freya* (approx. 1994 – 1995), musicians from the skinhead White Power band *Vlajka*, for example, stated to the prejudice of this band, that “*the only skinhead in the skinhead band Orlík was the singer, Daniel Landa*”.⁵⁰

Critical essays, reports, codes of “right conduct”,⁵¹ funny cartoons, readers’ letters and/or jokes published in the 1990s skinhead fanzines carried articulations of what the “proper white patriotic skinhead” is, and what it is not. Despite some variation regarding, for example, the extensive consumption of the alcohol, which was sometimes celebrated, other times condemned as an attribute of the “poseurs”, there was one particular dichotomy repeatedly occurring in the analysed

48 LACL AU, Ernesto. Subjekt politiky, politika subjektu. In LACL AU, Ernesto. *Emancipace a radikální demokracie*. Praha : Karolinum, 2013, pp. 87.

49 HAENFLER 2014, pp. 83-85.

50 Vlajka. In *Freya*, s. d., Vol. 2, p. 8.

51 The “code of honour” regulating the right conduct of the *Bohemia Hammerskins* supporters was reprinted in BHS-affiliated zines such as *The Hammer News*, *Patriot* or *Der Stürmer*.

corpus of the Czech White Power skinhead fanzines. This was the distinction between those (skinheads or renees⁵²) who were “conscious” and truly (ideologically) committed and those who were not (such as Utraquists, “fashion skins”, “pseudoskins”, S.H.A.R.P.s). In the seventh issue of the White Power zine *Skinformátor* (approx. 1996), the anonymous writer appealed to the (in his eyes) disunited skinhead movement: *“The true skinhead should possess a certain scale of values he should follow, and through it to belong to the elite of our nation.”*⁵³

Another writer introduced in the second issue of the White Power skinhead zine *Národ* (approx. 1992) the local scene in the small town of Šumperk, where he contrasted the “good” and “loyal to ideals” group of local skinheads who fights for their ideals against the “bad renegades”: *“The beginning of the [skinhead] movement in our city dates from the years 1988 – 1989. It was a fast-rising wave, which soon faded away. After that, new people joined in, who remained loyal to their ideals and are still active until today. Over time, some joined us; some left. These were people with a bad reputation, who did not know much about the movement. Still, the same crew have remained. A crew of people, who know what they want and still fight for their dreamt-of goals and ideals.”*⁵⁴

According to the author of the essay, recognition belonged to those who remained involved in the scene, and not those who just “came and left” with the latest fad. The commitment to the political goals and ideals of the movement was defined as a criterion of respectable standing.

In another sample extract, this one from the fourth issue of the zine White Power Skinhead zine *Nový řád* (approx. 1992/1993), skinhead Martin describes the scene in his hometown of Brno. Again, the author’s delimitation against “inauthentic” skinheads who disrespect the “right” ideals or do not show enough commitment (and drink rather than get involved in political activities) is present in the text: *“Brno is a beautiful city and since 1990 another beauty has been added, the skinheads. In the beginning, these were foremost former punks and university students, but as we might expect, they left the movement very soon, which is a pity. [...] Today, the skins have turned to the right, which is not surprising regarding the situation in our city. Some people tried to establish a great [political] organisation, but there are still many of those who rather fight with alcohol. There are also the so-called »pseudoskins« occurring here to a great extent, who vilify our ideals. Therefore, our fight is also directed within our own ranks.”*⁵⁵

The last example shows an extract from an interview with the White Power Band *Reichenberg* published in the first issue of the Czech neo-Nazi zine *Final Solution* (1999). *Reichenberg* answered the question of what their favourite brands were:

52 Renee is the denomination of the skinhead girl. The subculture of the Czech White Power skinheads in the 1990s was a predominantly men; however, there was at least one skinhead girl zine at the time (*Freyja*). The activists around zine *Freyja* founded a Czech chapter of the international extreme right women organization Women for Aryan Unity.

53 Jsme jednotní? In *Skinformátor*, s. d., No. 7, p. 5.

54 Šumperk Skinheads. In *Národ*, s. d., No. 2, pp. 14-15.

55 Brno. In *Nový řád*, s. d., No. 4, p. 10.

“We know that fashion brands like Lonsdale, Fred Perry etc. belong to the cult of skinheads. But, the current commercialisation and advertisement force out the essence of these brands. We remember times when guys in coniferous-camouflage suits and leather jackets chased Gypsies on the streets. Their combat boots were better for kicking than any polished Dr. Marten shoe. This does not mean that we condemn this fashion, we just do not see much sense in it. Moreover, two, three winter seasons in our northern region will force you to buy a flannel shirt instead of a polo shirt.”⁵⁶

In the interviews, the *Reichenberg* members dismissed the importance of “stylish” appearance as a source of authenticity. Again, the “commitment” and “being active on the street” was stressed over style and appearance (“it doesn’t matter what you wear, but what you do”).

Zines(makers) as Tastemakers: Nazi-rock is more than mainstream

In parallel with the ideological shaping of the racist branch of the skinheads in the first half of the 1990s, their music preferences were refined. Just as the first hierarchic-structured militant neo-Nazi organisations started to substitute unrestrained juvenile skinhead gangs, the first skinhead racist and patriotic Oi! bands were replaced by far more radical musical projects. As former skinhead Filip Vávra (2017) documents in his biographical book, at the beginning of the 1990s it was still not exceptional for skinheads and punks to attend the same music events with Oi! and punk music.⁵⁷ However, the subcultural life of the White Power skinheads soon became centred on their own White Power music scene(s).

During the 1990s, tens of new White Power bands emerged in the Czech Republic, and some of them remained active for more than a decade.⁵⁸ Moreover, with the opening of the western border, Czech skinheads became more familiar with the production of White Power music abroad, such as with the latest releases of NS white power bands like *Störkraft* (Germany), *Skullhead* or *Skrewdriver* (both from the United Kingdom). Furthermore, foreign stars of the White Power music started to visit the Czech Republic. The 1996 security report ratified by the Czech parliament points out that the Czech Republic had become the most attended place of White Power music events in Europe.⁵⁹

Around the mid-1990s, the biggest shows with foreign interpreters were being organised by the Bohemia Hammerskins (BHS). The BHS was established in 1993 as the alleged Czech chapter of the US-based militant neo-Nazi organisation Hammerskin nation. BHS profiled itself through allegiance to the ideolo-

⁵⁶ Reichenberg. In *Final Solution*, 1999, No. 1, p. 11.

⁵⁷ VÁVRA 2017, pp. 62-69.

⁵⁸ To the most known Czech White Power bands from 1990s belongs *Buldok*, *Diktátor*, *Vlajka*, *Hlas Krve*, *Zášť 88*, *Valašská liga*, *Conflict 88*, *Excalibur*, *Agrese 95*, *Útok* and *Apartheid* (e.g. MAREŠ 2003, pp. 418-420; CHARVÁT 2019).

⁵⁹ *Parlament České republiky, Poslanecká sněmovna. Zpráva o bezpečnostní situaci na území ČR v roce 1996 (ve srovnání s rokem 1995)*. Praha : Parlament české republiky, 1997, <http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1996ps/tisky/t021100a.htm>.

gy of national socialism; its programmatic core was based on the “14-word-slogan”⁶⁰ which was defined by the member of the US-based white supremacy terrorist organisation The Order, David Lane. From its very beginning, the membership and organisational structures of BHS were built in a highly conspiratorial way. The organisation set strict criteria for membership with a two- to three-year-long probationary period for applicants.⁶¹ With incomes reaching from tens of thousands of Czech crowns for a single event, the organisation of concerts of White Power music posed one of the main sources of funding of BHS.⁶² Besides that, the BHS operated as a label for selected Czech White Power music bands. One of the platforms used for the promotion of the music events was also fanzines published by BHS members and supporters.

Around 1996 the role of main promoter of concerts of White Power music was overtaken by the newly founded Blood and Honour Division Bohemia (B&HDB), which operated through several independent regional sections. During the 1996 – 1999 period, B&HDB controlled the publishing of the most important NS-skinhead music zines,⁶³ organised mass attended concerts and released recordings of White Power Music bands.⁶⁴ The expansion of the underground activities of the B&HDB terminated in February 1999, when in cooperation with the domestic intelligence, the police succeed in uncovering part of its structures, which temporarily paralysed the movement.⁶⁵

Whether affiliated to BHS and B&HDB or not, the skinheads who edited, wrote or otherwise contributed to the making of zines presented a vital element of the fast-growing White Power music scene in the Czech Republic. They recommended which recordings to buy and advised on which were a waste of time to listen to. They reported on which concerts were great, whether the promotion of an event was bad and which bands play well live and which don't. They also evaluated the power of the political message communicated through the music.

The delimitation between the “good” and the “bad”, what we like and dislike and, eventually, what we wish to ignore are what taste (or manifested preferences) is based on. According to Bourdieu, tastes are *“the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference. It is no accident that when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively by the refusal of other tastes.”*⁶⁶

The comprehension of shared knowledge of likes and dislikes is one of the central preconditions of being recognised as a respected member of a subcultural scene.⁶⁷ However, as the example of the skinheads shows, the maps of meaning that subcultures share,

60 “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” Bohemia Hammer Skinheads. In *Impérium*, s. d., No. 1, p. 13.

61 Hammerskins – zákoník cti. In *The Hammer News*, s. d., No. 3, p. 3.

62 In mid-1990s, the entry reached up to 200 crowns for a single event. Events with international White Power music organized by BHS attracted 500 – 800 skinheads (e.g. *Koncerty*. In *Národní Boj*, 1995, No. 3., p. 23-26)

63 For instance *Blood an Honour Division Bohemia*, *Phoenix* (after 4th issue), *Nová Evropa* (after 3rd issue); MAREŠ 2003, pp. 418-420.

64 MAREŠ 2003, p. 483.

65 *Zpráva o problematice extremismu na území České republiky v roce 1999 (ve srovnání s rokem 1998)*. Praha : Ministerství vnitra České republiky, <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/extremismus-vyrocní-zpravy-o-extremismu-a-strategie-boje-proti-extremismu.aspx>.

66 BOURDIEU 1984, p. 56.

67 THORNTON 1995.

the collective apprehension of what "having good taste" means, is never definitive. Zine-making poses one of the fields of subcultural action, where the various articulations of what is considered as having "good taste" in music, fashion, etc., are contested. Similarly as Thornton describes the historical role of DJs as "tastemakers" or "moulders of musical opinion", zine-makers and other contributors to zines participated in the shaping of the taste preferences of the scenes they were involved in.⁶⁸

The following example is an extract from a review of the album *Triumph* from the Czech White Power band *Buldok* published in the first issue of the zine *Blood & Honour Division Bohemia*: "No one has ever played anything like this before. *Buldok* kicked the asses of all the commercial bands, fashion waves and also the critics conforming to the regime. Now, men from Rock & Pop just write about the »stupid skinhead bands« (*Reflex/97*),⁶⁹ you've probably never heard before [!]. This is the true rock resistance [...] There is no need to write more about the lyrics; they were always a strong side of *Buldok*. They are just extraordinarily open."⁷⁰

The author of the review presented *Buldok's* album as an absolute "must-have". The music of *Buldok* was said to stand out for its musical quality as well as the message carried in the lyrics. In contrast to mainstream rock stars, *Buldok's* music was presented as a truly authentic sound that the mainstream/media is unable to appreciate.

Another writer described in the first issue of the White Power zine *Nový řád* (1992) a failed music event which took place on 3 July 1992 in Uherské Hradiště. The series of failures was completed by the performance of the band *N.D.R.*, which played a song borrowed from *Orlík*, a band that initially was credited for the popularisation of skinhead subculture but later did not meet the shared preferences of the far more radicalised White Power scene: "We came around three o'clock to help with the preparation of the concert. Some enthusiasts even took a day off their job. When we arrived, they replied to our question about where the sound system was by saying that they didn't have one. They drove the sound system from Bzenec around seven o'clock. Meanwhile [the bands] arrived. I guess, when they saw the equipment, they probably asked themselves whether to laugh or cry. [...] After that, the band *N.D.R.* with a »borrowed« drummer started to play. This band just brought shame on itself. When they played the song »*Bílá liga*«, they just woke up the skins, who did not know any of the other music."⁷¹

Another author reviewed in the second issue of the White Power zine *Skinhead zone* the concert of White power bands that took place in Prague on 19 March 1994. On the day of the concert, *Vlastenecká liga* called a meeting in a remote city, so many skinheads faced the decision of whether to travel to Prague or to join the *Vlastenecká Liga* rally. Moreover, the show was accompanied by violent excesses of the concert visitors. The attention of the mainstream media made the concert one of the most notoriously known White Power music events in the 1990s. In the following extract from the concert report published in the second issue of *Skinhead Zone* (1994), the author praises one of the performers, inspired by the legend of the German

68 THORNTON 1995, p. 62.

69 The author of the Zine referred to an article from the Czech weekly magazine *Reflex*

70 Czech CD of This Issue. In *Blood & Honour Division Bohemia*, s. d., No. 1, p. 19.

71 Zpráva o koncertu v Uherském Hradišti. In *Nový řád*, 1992, No. 1, pp. 15-16.

White Power music *Störkraft*: “*ÚTOK performed as the second band in the line-up. Together with the band S.A.D., this was the greatest surprise of the evening. I was seeing them for the first time, but their fast and striking sound interested me immediately. The inspiration from Störkraft and the German OI! scene was notable here, but there was no shame in it. A great talent of the Czech White Power scene has introduced itself and, there is nothing else to do but cross our fingers for them.*”⁷²

As evidenced by further interviews and concert reports, the band *Útok* from Brno soon became an integral part of the Czech White Power scene. Besides the reports and reviews (of concerts, albums or zines), interviews or biographical essays present other examples of do-it-yourself (DIY) publicist genres, which carried the articulation of “good taste”. Almost all the interviews with White Power musicians, zine-makers or neo-Nazi activists contained a question about favourite music and zines. The musicians were usually asked which bands influenced them most, or who their idols were in the history of the NS-movement. Sometimes questions about favourite books, movies or fashion brands were also included.

Zines as status boosters: Zine-making and the performance of “coolness” and “hipness”

Finally, fanzines present a platform where the subculturists might perform their “coolness” and “hipness”. As will be further argued, fanzines can be utilised to attract publicity within the scene (in a negative or a positive sense) and to reproduce so-called celebrity capital. Celebrity capital denotes a form of symbolic exchange which rests in the recognizability resulting from media visibility and which is not reducible to symbolic capital or recognition.⁷³ Subculturists can use fanzines to manifest the possession of valuable contacts and transform their social capital into subcultural capital. At the very least, fanzines present one of the platforms which enables, under certain circumstances, the conversion of subcultural capital into economic capital (in terms of promotion of goods and services, etc.). At the time in question, most Czech households did not have an Internet connection, and even the slow connections in the Internet cafés and schools did not allow scans and pictures to be shared easily; thus, fanzines presented a unique platform for someone to make their name visible for the rest of the decentralised scene and to display their insider status.

Pictures from parties and concerts represented an inseparable element of the 1990s White Power skinhead zines. Photos of musicians were scanned and attached to interviews. Some early zines even contained whole pages with poor quality pictures of stylised skinheads and renees in polo-shirts, bomber jackets and Dr. Martens boots or their drunken fellows sleeping in a funny position on the table (not necessarily with a negative connotation). Some early zines contained lists of the top ten songs rated by the friends and readers, complemented by the name and photo of the reviewer. For young musicians or beginner zine-makers in particular, an interview

72 White Rock Prag. In *Skinhead Zone*, 1994, No. 2, pp. 2-6.

73 DRIESSENS, Olivier. Celebrity Capital. Redefining Celebrity Using Field Theory. In *Theoretical Sociology*, 2013, Vol. 42, No. 5, p. 351.

or review in a widely read zine could help them attract attention within the scene and propagate their music or fanzines.

The first page of many zines usually reprinted the contact address of the publisher(s) of the zine (mostly the address of a P.O. Box, earlier also the full name and the address of the publisher). In some zines, the first page was also used to send a greeting or a “thank you” to friends of the zine-maker or other contributors to the issue. An example of a thank you list, which was printed on the first page of the sixth issue of the Hammerskin zine *Fénix* (approx. 1993), contains a list of several names: “*Thank you: Bob (Nordic Thunder USA), Roland (Skinhead Fanzine), Legie Nenávisti [band], Karel and Hroch from Krkonoše, Peter from Kežmarok, Mário (band Diktátor), Korec siblings, Milan Kocourek from Brno, journal Dnešek.*”⁷⁴

Based on the theory of subcultural capital, there are two likely explanations for the role of the greetings and thank you notes. First, to make someone’s name visible, to affirm and perform his/her insider status (she/he is a friend of the zine-makers, she/he is one who is known, and thus she/he belongs to the scene) and to eventually highlight his/her contribution to the production of the fanzine. Departing from Bourdieu’s theory of social capital, we can assume that the more popular the zine or, the higher standing of the makers of the zine inside the subculture was, the more potential benefit for those whose name or nickname appeared on a greeting or a thank you lists.⁷⁵ Second, through the thank you and greeting lists, the zine-makers could display their real or alleged contacts to the people enjoying good standing and recognition inside the subculture. The greeting and salutes were devoted not only to the members of the local scenes but also to zine-makers, musicians or friends from abroad.

By manifesting the “what I know”, “what I have seen and done” or “what a cool person I know”, the subculturists contributing to the zines performed their “coolness” before the eyes of their readership. Reports from spectacular White Power music shows, experiences from travels abroad, heroic stories about conflicts with the police or stories of brawls with political opponents and minorities presented a further integral part of the White Power skinhead zines. The following example presents an extract from the story of a brawl between skinheads and a group of Roma in Broumov. The story of the brawl, which happened in summer 1995, was published in the third issue of the White Power skinhead zine *Imperium* (1995). The narrator heroically depicted himself and his friends: “*...20 Gypsies were waiting for us at the rail station. There were pretty armoured with meat-cleavers, machetes, knives, iron sticks, etc. Their numbers had grown very fast. When they were around 50, they dared first to attack. A friend of mine took a brick and threw it at their heads. This is how we managed to defend ourselves against their first attack. The second attack came immediately, and they threw a knife, which narrowly missed me and stabbed my friend in the thigh. He pulled the knife out of his leg, and blood started to spurt around, the knife had cut his artery. All this happened on the platform. Afterwards, we ran after the Gypsies; the friend with the cut vein lost consciousness. But because the Gypsies were still afraid of us, they didn’t dare try one last attack.*”⁷⁶

74 Děkujeme/Thanks. In *Fénix*, s. d., No. 6, p. 1.

75 BOURDIEU 1989.

76 Broumov. In *Imperium*, 1995, Vol. 3, p. 15.

Finally, zine production is nevertheless a form of valued subcultural activity (requiring distinct abilities as well). Being known as an active zine-maker may impact the standing of the persons involved (see the dichotomy “active/bystander” discussed above). The concept of subcultural capital enables us to explain why subculturists engage in such time-consuming activities like the zine-making, despite the fact that no financial profit is guaranteed.⁷⁷ In other words: the making of zines is a form of subcultural activity which may pay off. If not straightforward in the form of money, then at least in the form of accumulation of subcultural capital, eventually social capital of the persons involved.

Conclusion

Using the specific case of the subculture of the Czech White Power skinheads in the 1990s, the author has suggested three alternative (but not exhaustive) angles of approaching the concept of subcultural capital in the study of fanzines. First, the zines as a field of subcultural action, in which the division between the authentic and inauthentic is articulated. Second, the role of fanzine-makers and other contributors to the zine in moulding the shared knowledge (i.e. the discourses or maps of meaning shared within the subculture) of likes and dislikes. Third: zine-making as a source of subcultural capital; zine-making as a valued set of skills and practices and the zine as a platform of performance of individual/group coolness and hipness.

The delimitation of the authentic “insider” against the inauthentic, false and lame nature of the “other” is a substantial condition for any subcultural belonging. The author approached the 1990s White Power skinhead fanzines – a medium consumed across decentralised local scenes – as one of the fields of the subcultural action, inside which inner hierarchies, as well as frontiers between “us” (the “true” skinheads) and “them”, were constructed as a result of discursive (articulatory) practices. Critical essays, reports, readers’ letters and interviews are examples of DIY-publication forms, which carried an articulation of who is a “white patriotic skinhead” and who is a bystander.

A qualitative analysis of the corpus consisting of 80 White Power skinhead zines from the 1992 – 1999 period points at the recurrent articulation of the “authentic” skinhead as someone who was conscious, committed to the ideals of the movement and actively pursued them (e.g. taking part in street fights against opponents or exerting activities in one of the movement organisation). The notion of authenticity was articulated as the opposite to a “mistakenly convinced”, “unfaithful to ideals” and politically inactive “poseur”.

Along with the ideologisation and politicisation of Czech skinheads in the first half of the 1990s, their tastes were refined. Around 1993, the first Neo-Nazi organisations emerged from the skinhead environment and the subculture/movement diverged into two feuding streams: the racist-patriotic Utraquists and the branch of the neo-fascist and neo-Nazi skinheads involved in the White Power scenes. Again, fanzine-making represented a field of subcultural action, where contesting articulations of what is considered as “having good taste” collided. Zine-makers were tastemakers, moulders of shared musical opinion. By evaluating the musical skills or

⁷⁷ There were also examples of profiting zine-makers who made use of the zine-platform for commercial purposes, such as promotion of goods purchased by mail order.

lyrics, sharing own preferences and musical inspirations, fanzine-makers and other contributors to the zine content (re)articulated the subcultural knowledge of shared likes and dislikes.

Finally, zines may function as status boosters. They present a platform, which enables someone to make his or her name visible in the eyes of other members of the subculture. Through the display of knowledge, experience or possession of valuable contacts with people recognised within the subculture (such as foreign musicians), the zine-makers perform their “coolness” and “hipness”. Moreover, zine-making, if it meets the expectation of a readership presents a valued subcultural activity. It is the performance of one’s commitment to the subculture/movement. The set of skills and abilities needed for the production of a zine is nevertheless a source of subcultural capital. Although some skinheads may have profited financially from the publishing a zine or utilising a zine as a platform for the promotion of mail-order trade with subcultural goods, the production of fanzines did not necessarily bring a financial benefit. However, approaching zine-making as a set of skills and practices generating subcultural capital enables comprehension of it as a form of subcultural activity, which is rewarded in form of status and recognition.

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