

**Pride and Power -  
A Sociological Interpretation of the Norwegian  
Radical Nationalist Underground Movement**

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## Foreword

The roots of this research project go back to 1993, when I received a two-year grant from the Ministry of Children and Families. I began to study radical nationalists because the ministry wanted to finance a fieldwork study on racism, nationalism and National Socialism among Norwegian youths. The ministry contacted the Norwegian Centre for Youth Research in order to find a researcher, and I was recommended by youth researchers Willy Pedersen and Ola Stafseng.

This led to my beginning my fieldwork among radical nationalists in August 1993. In 1995, I finished a research report which concluded the two years financed by the Ministry of Children and Families. In the meantime, I had received 31/2-year grant from the Department of Sociology, University of Oslo, in order to extend the study into a doctoral thesis.

Throughout these years, I discussed my project with many people, and received helpful comments and perceptive advice from them. There are thus many people I would like to thank. There are others who I do not mention in this foreword, but who gave me important feedback.

First, I would like to thank the Ministry of Children and Families for leading me to carry out this study in the first place. Even though it has been a tough task, as well as frustrating at times, I am glad I had the opportunity.

I would also like to thank the Centre for Youth Research, where I had an office for one year when I was an MA student, and where I later worked for two years under the auspices of the Department of Children and Families. My colleagues at the Centre gave me free reins and much encouragement.

I owe thanks to Willy Pedersen, who has followed my work from the very beginning of the project, and who gave me invaluable support during my period of fieldwork. He has read many versions of my work, and has given useful comments.

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With his skill at cultural analysis, Tian Sørhaug has inspiringly provided feedback on my writings, and has helped me delve even deeper into the meanings one can read out of this material.

During the last 31/2-years of the project, the Department of Sociology gave me very free conditions for me to carry out my work, and go into theoretical depth. I was also spurred on by being given the opportunity to supervise several MA students in sociology. Reading and commenting on their work inspired me to go further with my own work. Teaching MA students and undergraduate students in qualitative methods was also inspiring. My colleagues at the institute were supportive when I needed them. I would like to thank Sissel Frøberg, Katrine Teigen, Marte Feiring, Masudur Rahman, and all my other colleagues for many inspiring chats in the coffee room. Arvid Fennefoss has read and commented on some in my earlier works of the thesis, and I am grateful for his wise comments. Pål Veiden invited me to write an article for a book that edited together with Rune Nilsen. It was a pleasure to write an essay in a book that allowed room for a form of sociology where we could free us somewhat more from academic conventions. Thank you for letting me be part of this, and for your comments to my contribution to the book.

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Heléne Lööw has provided me with publications and material on Swedish radical nationalists. This material has been important for teaching me more about the context which Norwegian activists act within.

Jeffrey Kaplan has read several of my articles. His good knowledge of the international connections of this scene has resulted in insightful comments.

Fredrik Engelstad and Ragnar Hauge read through all the articles, appendices and the introduction to my thesis in November 1998. They and my supervisors, Tian Sørhaug and Willy Pedersen, gave me the faith that I did not have much work left in order to finish this thesis. They gave me the strength to make it to the end. They both gave me interesting feedback. I owe them many thanks.

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Pål has been a good friend during all my study years. Our joint interest in the history of racism has led to several inspiring discussions. Pål even managed to imbibe me with some of his fascination with Foucault, although I will never become such a disciple and expert on Foucaultian perspectives as Pål is.

Hanne read my thesis with a very clear mind, and gave me the pertinent comments that I needed in the final stage of my writing.

During the last months when I went through my thesis for the last time, editing it for the last time, I was met by much tolerance by my new colleagues at Fafo, the Institute of Applied Research. I would like to thank them for letting me take the time to finish the thesis, although the deadlines I set for myself expired.

Cristina Pulido has proofread my manuscript, and I am very thankful that she so sportily did this during a very short period of time, so that I could be able to deliver my thesis before I had to dedicate all my time to new research topics.

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My family has been an important base, and were usually the first ones I turned to when I needed to discuss reactions to my study. I would like to give my warm thanks to my mother and her husband Hakon Kierulf.

In addition to sociological texts and other literature that I have read, I was inspired by my reading of the novels and essays of my grand-grandfather, Ronald Fangen. He was arrested by the Germans during World War II. Despite this, he believed that the solution to the developing totalitarian system was to be found in a humanist approach. Although he wrote in another historical period than the present one, many of his writings are very current and could as well serve as analyses of conflicts in contemporary society. Naturally my work is very different from his, but I still find ideas in the philosophical reflections in his novels and essays which I agree with. In his writings I find a tone that I also recognise in myself, a humanist's approach towards other people and towards the problem of National Socialist movements.

Finally, I must thank my dear partner, Erlend Pape Nordtorp. With his humour and warmth he has been the best companion thinkable and also a very insightful discussion partner regarding all of the topics of my study.

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## 1 Getting to Know the Radical Nationalists

I first made contact with the core radical nationalists<sup>1</sup> one evening in early August 1993. I had heard that they met once a month, at a pub near Youngstorget (a large traditional marketplace in Oslo, surrounded by the buildings of the Norwegian Labour movement). After a few hours at the marketplace, I finally saw two skinheads enter *Trappa*.<sup>2</sup> A few minutes later, I followed them in. About ten skinheads were gathered around a table by the window. They were chatting and drinking beer. I passed them, and ordered a beer from the barkeeper. I sat at the bar for a while, but since I felt them watching me, I took a deep gulp of my beer and went to their table. I asked 'Are you skinheads?' Apparently it was a stupid question to ask, because if one knows anything at all about skinheads, it would have been obvious that they were skinheads. However, I needed an opening line. My question made them smile, and the boy I had asked replied 'yes!' I told them I was going to write a book about skinheads, and asked if it would be all right if I sat down and talked with them for a while. 'Yeah, that's all right', the boy said.

This early August evening initiated my one-year (1993-1994) of fieldwork among Norwegian radical nationalists. It also served as a prelude to my reflective analysis by developing an analytical frame that might throw new light on the subjective and objective reality of these youths (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1993). This initial event illustrates how I related to the radical nationalists by remaining completely open to their interpretations of themselves. I told them that my goal was to write about them, and that I did not share their views. I wanted to make it possible for them to use their own words when talking about themselves, rather than finding themselves in an offensive position. Such a stance would lead to their definitions always being produced as counter-definitions to those imposed on them.

The complexity of this field has led me have to ponder a great deal about the ethical and philosophical aspects of researching and interpreting radical nationalist groups. This has made it most proper for me to use concepts and theories in a way that sets common sense in motion. Ethical questions that arose in my consciousness had an effect on the methodology and the research process in general. My aim was to get to know a way of life through dialogue and interaction with its adherents, instead of using givens as my starting point. As I wanted to grasp the communicative structures of the radical nationalists, I had to interact and converse with the participants, rather than merely observe their activities.

The radical nationalists had built up a network of groups. I was in contact with the leading figures of *Bootboys*, *Varg* (Wolf), *Norsk ungdom* (Norwegian Youths), *Anti-AntiFa*, *Einsatz*, and *Ariske brødre* (Aryan Brothers) during my fieldwork. I later interviewed leading figures from the groups that emerged after my fieldwork concluded. These people were first and foremost from the paramilitary group *Viking* and its female counterpart *Valkyria*. I have also met, and briefly talked with the leaders of *Forenede Nasjonalister* (United Nationalists), and I have interviewed former prominent persons from the non-parliamentary parties *Norsk Front* (Norwegian Front) and *Nasjonalt folkeparti* (National People's Party). I have also talked with some members of the Nazi organisation *Zorn 88*.

Among the radical nationalists there are activists who have committed murder, bombings as well as arson, shootings, and street-violence. Others have never committed any acts of violence. There are frequent clashes between participants in the radical

<sup>1</sup> See my definition of terms later.

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviation of Maria von Trapp (one of the main figures in the film *Sound of Music*).

nationalist underground movement and anti-Fascist youths. In Oslo, anti-Fascist youths are organised in a militant group called *Anti-Fascist Action* (AFA), which is located at the *Blitz*-house (a building in Oslo which houses various cultural activities for youth such as rock workshops, women's radio, etc.).

Some radical nationalists publish militant National Socialist fanzines and others do not write. A few of them hardly ever read. Some activists organise Nazi-rock concerts or weapons training. Others only participate in activities organised by the others. I have interviewed activists who represent all these different levels of activity.

I have interviewed nearly all of the leading figures and individuals who belonged to the core of the underground. I also interviewed some dropouts,<sup>3</sup> some tag-alongs, and some individuals who in some regards are marginal to this scene. Other people I interviewed were older 'anti-immigrants'. These men were people who are not part of the militant underground I studied, but who could be referred to as "significant others". I attended a meeting organised by some of these older people.

After my fieldwork, I have had informal conversations and interviews with some activists, including girls who started up all-female groups within this underground, and boys who began paramilitary groups. I have carried out life story interviews of four men from the underground. I also obtained information about the life stories of most of the participants who were active during 1993-1994. I have asked nearly all the core activists about their lives and their points of view. My aim has been to interview a diverse range of activists, rather than only interview people with the same orientation.

Forty people aged 15 to 35 were active during the year in which I carried out my fieldwork. About forty more were identified with the underground movement, but did not participate during this period. The movement later doubled its number of participants. During the past few years, I have carried out interviews with several of the newcomers, in order to capture the change of profile during these years (1995-1999).

Appendix 1, which deals with method provides an overview of the positions of my informants and includes an account of my fieldwork. Some of these people allowed me to use a tape-recorder. Others wanted me to take notes. I mostly took notes without even asking whether I could have used a tape, as I did not want to be viewed as a threat. Several individuals have met me a number of times in order to give me information about the milieu in general or about their own views and experiences in particular. When I met up with these youths at the pub, I never took notes. This was because we were in an informal setting, 'chatting and having a few beers', in contrast to the more formal 'carry out an interview'.

I was also invited to the homes of several activists, who wanted to talk with me. I did not find it appropriate to take notes then. This was also because several of the leading activists said that it was not a good idea to carry out too many interviews. They said it would be better I just followed the group. As long as I did not define our conversations as interviews, and by taking notes, we were able to talk about the same issues (life story, militant actions, contacts between different activists, etc.) we would have discussed in a defined interview setting.

In the early 1990s, the activists met each other on a monthly basis at the pub. They organised trips together, and there were frequent clashes with militant anti-Fascists in the streets. Street violence, meetings at the pubs in Oslo, trips to local pubs in areas surrounding Oslo, a trip to Sweden, as well as smaller gatherings at the homes of the activists were some of the ingredients I observed and experienced during my fieldwork.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See definitions in section 2.2.

<sup>4</sup> During trips I often played the role of driver. This led me to take a more active role than I had otherwise in my fieldwork. This was especially pronounced when I joined the activists on a trip to a Nazi concert in

I was a witness to the activists' violence, to their Fascist salutes, and to their brutal way of dancing, called 'stomping'. During the late 1990s, the underground has become more fragmented, more disciplined and more militant, than it was in 1993-1994. There are not as many joint activities for the activists. This is partly the result of serious personal conflicts and some of the activists being accused of being snitches.

The interviews, observations, fanzines, videos, and CDs provide the basis of my analysis of various aspects of what I call the radical nationalist underground. These aspects include ideology organisation, gender images, as well as the methodological features of my study. I present my analysis in seven articles, which may be considered the body of my thesis. This introduction serves as a clarification of the theoretical basis for the articles. In appendix 1, I make an account of my fieldwork. In appendix 2, I discuss the ethics of dealing with radical nationalists. Appendix 3 contains a detailed presentation of the many groups that have made up the radical nationalist underground during the past few decades.

## 2 Analytical Frames

Radical nationalists constitute a highly stereotyped group in Norway. Within the political field of the far-left, stereotyping is consciously used as a tool with which to fight the radical nationalists. It is possible that there are strategic reasons for using it as a political tool. However, it is not a valid analytical tool. In order to find out what kind of groups make up the radical nationalist underground movement, and why young people are attracted to these groups, we need to look beyond the stereotypes (cf. appendix 2). The best way to do so is to study these groups from different angles. This kind of eclecticism enables us to find the many layers of meaning embedded in the relations and practices of young people in radical nationalist groups.

The heterogeneity (Ricoeur 1978:115) of this field makes it more relevant to use heterogeneity of perspectives. The way in which Ricoeur argues for the healthiness of heterogeneity of a word's identity holds also for the heterogeneity of the totality of this thesis. As Ricoeur puts it, in order to grasp the diversity of human experience and the plurality of subjects of experience we need a system that is economical, flexible, and sensitive to context. Instead of giving rise to just one interpretation, we search instead for the variations of appropriate meaning.

Following this argumentation a bit further, there are, of course, many other entries to this field of inquiry. Another scholar would certainly be able to discuss other features than those I have examined, and other scholars have discussed radical nationalism before me from other points of entry. I wanted to study this field from the angles that inspired me the most. As a sociologist, such perspectives were naturally mostly sociological. However, the interdisciplinary quality of this field of research leads me to use analytical frames from other disciplines as well. My thoughts have been inspired and challenged by my reading of various sociological and anthropological studies parallel with my empirical findings. Most of the perspectives I have chosen fit into a broader meta-perspective of interpretative sociology and qualitative methodology. My study poses a contrast both to traditional historical and political science approaches to radical nationalism. This is the result of my combining fieldwork as the main *methodological* tool with interpretative sociology as the main *analytical* tool.

With my emphasis on a distinct sociological analysis of these practices, my study has perhaps more in common with the broader tradition of subculture research, combined

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Sweden, and had to deal with activists in several ambiguous situations, where I had no form of retreat. I have described this incident in 'Among right-wing extremists' (Fangen 1998a).

with various cultural sociological perspectives. This has been my main methodological guide also in my work (and partly writings) with psychiatric patients and the mentally disabled (Fangen 1987). It also applies to my previous study of anarchist, communist, and radical nationalist youths in East Germany (Fangen 1992).

Interpretative sociology includes different paradigms (semiology, constructivism, post-structuralism, social hermeneutics, phenomenology, etc.). According to these, the social sciences should aim to arrive at a method built upon communicative experience as well as focus on the meaningful aspect of action (Habermas 1984:109; Østerberg 1986). This makes it possible to study radical nationalist groups with an analytical gaze that extends people's common understanding of these groups. I do this by constructing an analytical frame through which I discuss the radical nationalists' practices. I *analyse* the radical nationalists' practices in relation to the cultural contexts they occur within, and the cultural contexts the activists produce through their practice. My aim is to explore the radical nationalists' social and linguistic construction of reality.

I do not discuss *facts* in the sense of *when* a particular act occurred or *who* carried out this act.<sup>5</sup> Neither do I to any great extent use diagnostic terms. My aim is to analyse the various practices and utterances of the radical nationalists, including their own interpretation and justification of these practices and utterances.

### 2.1.1 Understanding

The main method of interpretative sociology is *understanding*. As Giddens (1993) pointed out, this method is often misunderstood as a special method of entry to the social world which is peculiar to the social sciences. By viewing it this way, one disregards the fact that understanding is the ontological condition of human society. Social philosopher Mead (1934) (1863-1931) pointed out that 'taking the role of the other' is a fundamental feature of social interaction. To understand does *not* mean to repeat word for word what other people say, but to reproduce it in other words; i.e. to analyse it or interpret it (Østerberg 1986:37). Understanding is a method that focuses on the *communicative* more than the strategic aspect of action (Habermas 1984).

Some of the practices of the radical nationalists are strategic. An example of this is the lengths to which they go in order that their political adversaries, the press, and the police not learn where and when they will hold a rock concert. Moreover, they are strategic in the sense that they wish to achieve some counter-power. However, their way of achieving this is communicative in many ways. Their appearance, their symbols and salutes, their weapons training and violence, are all various practices that signal threat, provocation, power, and contempt directed at certain other groups or at the ruling 'system' in general. My focus is thus first and foremost on the communicative aspects of their practices.

Understanding, in the social science sense of the term, is not equivalent with accepting. This was stressed by Weber (1922), who is considered the 'father' of this perspective within sociology. Weber saw the bureaucracy as the greatest danger of his time. Nevertheless he pointed out at the same time that understanding bureaucracy on its own premises was necessary if we were to have any possibility of changing the development (Fivelsdal 1971). In the same way, it is possible to understand radical nationalists on their own premises without this meaning we accept their standpoints or their actions. In this context, 'understand' does *not* mean being sympathetic or excusing. As I see it, this is a fruitful approach to the ideological fragments and the ambiguous practices of the radical nationalists.

<sup>5</sup> By contrast, Bjørge (1997) wants to say something about the *facts* concerning Scandinavian right-wing violence in his study of 'patterns, perpetrators and responses'.

The concepts I use are a blend of concepts that are parallel to the manner in which my informants themselves would describe and interpret their experiences (experience-near concepts (Geertz 1983:57)<sup>6</sup> and concepts derived from social theory. The use of experience-near concepts is important, as it is essential that I become familiar with the activists' own constructions of meaning in order to reflect on them theoretically. However, merely using experience concepts is insufficient, as I want to provide a sense of meaning that extends to that inhabited by the activists themselves. Therefore, I also use theoretical concepts in order to highlight how macro-processes, such as excommunication (in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b), may be constraining the life choices of the individuals, at the same time as their reactions are active responses to such constraints. This means that I interpret from 'the actors point of view' (cf. Geertz (1983)) but at the same time, I discuss such actor-oriented interpretation up against existing theory.

### 2.1.2 Construction of Analytical Frames

The interchange between experience-near and experience-distant concepts means to continuously alternate between a deductive approach and an inductive one.<sup>7</sup> I rework concepts derived within contexts other than the one that I experienced during my fieldwork, in order to construct *analytical frames* that guide my reading of utterances, events, processes and life stories. In this way, I use the concepts of other scholars as analytical tools rather than straitjackets which the material should be forced into. Existing concepts are thus set in motion by creating analytical frames designed especially in order to understand my material. The point for me is not to use these concepts in exactly the same manner as proposed by the author, but to rework them. This may allow us to find something new in the social world of the radical nationalists.

As defined by Ragin (1994:60-66), an analytical frame is a detailed sketch or outline of an idea. Such frames help us constitute ways of seeing our data. The analytical frames I use are made up by theories and concepts I have found relevant through *continuous* investigation of what I have learned to know as central features of the reasoning and practices of radical nationalists. This leads to a dialectical interchange between the researcher (me), the agents (the radical nationalists, their practices and beliefs), and theory (the analytical frames I use).

Another way to put this, is to say that I use theories in a *sensitising* way, following Blumer (1954:7-8), by letting certain concepts 'suggest directions along which to look'. According to Blumer, it is wiser to work *with and through* the distinctive and unique nature of the empirical instance, instead of casting this unique nature aside by forcing the material to fit into already specified concepts. When concepts are used in a definitive manner, they lead to certain blindness. This often hinders more than furthers understanding, as the concepts function as hypotheses that *determine* what to look for. By contrast, when we rework the concepts in a sensitising way, we avoid using them as concepts to be imposed on the material. Instead, the concepts serve as working tools. When concepts are used this way, this has consequences for how we approach our theoretical perspectives.

<sup>6</sup> According to Geertz (1983:57), an experience-near concept is 'one that someone – a patient or a subject, in our case an informant' - might use naturally and effortlessly himself 'to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine', and 'which he would readily understand when similarly applied to others.' An experience-distant concept is one that specialists – analysts, experimenters, ethnographers, even priests or ideologists – 'employ to forward their scientific, philosophical or practical aims. 'Love' is an experience-near concept,' Geertz writes, whereas 'Object cathexis' is an experience-distant one'.

<sup>7</sup> This analytical mode resembles what Peirce (1990:237) calls *abduction*.

According to Ragin (1994:87-88), sensitising concepts are drawn from half-formed, tentative analytical frames which reflect current theoretical ideas. The sensitising concepts help start the research, but they do not straitjacket it. The researcher expects these initial concepts, at the very least, to be altered significantly or even discarded during the course of the research.

This lets us alternate between the words the actors themselves use and the theoretical concepts that cover some aspect of their practices. For example, one activist talked a great deal about the 'community' as the most important feature of the radical nationalist underground. This led me to use this as an analytical concept. I later derived related concepts from this, such as the aspect of 'belonging' somewhere. Other concepts I use, like 'tribe', 'honour', and others are used by the activists themselves. I have tried to analyse their understanding of these entities, as well as discuss their understanding in relation to theories of honour, etc. Then differences appear, for example, between the understanding of honour in traditional societies and in contemporary militant movements such as the radical nationalist underground. Finally, I use concepts that are not used by the activists themselves, but that I find express important aspects of their orientation, e.g. 'downward option'.

By bringing theory and concepts from the social and human sciences to the analysis, I intend provide a frame with which to understand the dialectic between the activist and his social environment in his construction of meaning. Another purpose of this frame is to grasp the activist's self-image as it is shaped through interaction and their more collectivised practices and ideas of the activists. (In 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a) I describe how individual activists attempt to reinterpret various events which challenged their status so that they can view them as honourable). Thus, this thesis explores the interactions and views of radical nationalists, and the interaction between the activists and their surroundings. I alternate between a focus on subjectivity (see 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b) and inter-subjectivity (see 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998b)).

In the next section, I will take my first step into the analytical frames. I began this introduction to my thesis with a description of my first meeting with the radical nationalists. At the time, I did not use any normative concepts (such as neo-Nazis, etc.). I thus left them open to define themselves in their own words. In the next section, I will discuss the experience-near concepts I found when the activists defined themselves, and develop these further by studying them in relation to social theory.

## 2.2 A Social Movement, a Tribe or a Scene

The first point I will discuss in this outline of my analytical frames is how we can conceptualise the radical nationalist underground in general. The underground is made up of several minor groups or cells, which each have a distinct name (see my presentation of groups and individuals in appendix 3). These groups differ in their degree of militancy and ideological consistency.

Although these groups act as separate units, they also form a network by their contacts with each other, and by having some joint gatherings, such as Nazi concerts. The groups overlap a great deal and most of the participants in the different groups within the radical nationalist underground have contact with individuals from all of the other groups. The number of participants varies greatly, as do their orientations. We therefore need a concept, which can embrace all of the minor groups that form the radical nationalist underground.

The minor groups thus make up a network, which is difficult to define in terms that cover all of the variations. It is impossible to define the underground at large as a

stringent *group*, in empirical terms. The radical nationalist underground is not one front with strict boundaries between members and non-members: inside and outside. In 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b) I argue that this underground movement consists of three fronts: the *ideological* front, the *paramilitary* front, and the *skinhead* front. However, such a typology only holds as a description of the underground movement at a distinct point in time. The movement may later develop into new factions. In appendix 3, I discuss some of the different factions the underground has been divided into since it emerged during the late 1960s.

In 'Skinheads in Red, White and Blue' (Fangen 1995)<sup>8</sup> I pointed out that there is no formal membership for the entire movement, nor is there any commonly accepted hierarchy between the different groups. The activists do not use one joint name within the underground. Some of them refer to themselves as 'radical nationalists' others call themselves 'national skinheads'. Most of them use the term 'nationalist', despite the Nazi elements in their beliefs. They are part of an international white supremacist subculture.<sup>9</sup>

Some of the activists are skinheads and refer to themselves as part of 'the skinhead movement'. However, the skinhead movement (or rather subculture) consists of incompatible layers: radical nationalists and anti-Fascists. There are also gay skinheads and politically neutral skinheads. The radical nationalists' version of the skinhead subculture is in fact a highly international movement, known as the *white power* movement. Anti-Fascist skinheads refer to this layer of the subculture as *boneheads* or *Nazi-skins*.

As the radical-nationalist underground might be seen as a political or ideological interest group, I have chosen to call its participants *activists*. This term is useful as it refers to the aspect of being active in some way or another in constructing a part of the radical nationalist underground. I call less active young people who do not participate actively in the ideological, militant or youth subcultural activities within this underground *tag-alongs*. Those who are even less active yet are termed *sympathisers*.

In some of the articles included in this thesis, I use the term *right-wing activists*, when naming the participants in terms of their ideology. However, some activists find the term right-wing<sup>10</sup> inappropriate, because they do not define themselves as being to the right of the political spectrum. In addition, part of their ideology does not fit well into what we use to think of as right-wing politics, as I argue in 'Living our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b).

Furthermore, the activists themselves are very much against being labelled Nazis. Several of them *have* adopted National Socialist ideas. Even so, they do not fully identify with all of the atrocities people have associated with this ideology since the Second World War. Most of the activists are also inspired by other ideologies. Few of them can therefore be seen as true adherents to Hitler's National Socialism. As some of them are opposed to important components of National Socialism, e.g. an authoritarian

<sup>8</sup> This research-report is not part of this thesis.

<sup>9</sup> The book *Nation and Race - The Developing Euro-American Racist Subculture*, edited by Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørgo (1998), gives an introduction to the shared characteristics of European and American far-right groups.

<sup>10</sup> Bjørgo leans on German social psychologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer, when describing the basic elements of right-wing extremism: an ideology of considering inequality between people to be a nature-given principle and acceptance of violence as a legitimate form of political action. Right-wing extremism is, as Bjørgo defines it, a broader phenomenon than racism. He defines right-wing extremism in contrast to everyday racism, the latter being a social practice, which does not necessarily involve elements of ideology or organisation.



state and persecution of Jews, I wanted to find a concept that would embrace these non-Nazi participants as well.

Considering the fact that an extreme version of nationalism was the only ideology which united all of the activists, I decided to use the term *radical nationalism*. This term still distinguishes the orientation of the people in this subculture from other more 'mainstream' orientations. They are *radical* in the sense that they go to the extremes in the methods they use, and in the kind of nationalism they propose. By 'radical nationalists', I mean participants in a counter-culture who are totally against immigration, and who support strong methods in their fight against proponents of a liberal immigration policy, including organised anti-racists.

The latter part of the definition thus distinguishes the participants of this subculture from elder politicians in various anti-immigrant parties and organisations such as *Hvit Valgallianse* (White Election Alliance), *Den norske forening* (The Norwegian Union), etc. These groups concentrate more specifically on immigration policy, and are not concerned with fighting anti-racist groups. Several of these elder politicians clearly believe that to focus one's effort on far-left groups is an unnecessary and an erroneous starting point.

The collective identity of the radical nationalists takes the form of a rhetorical structure, which is used outwardly. This image of unity covers a more fluid network, which is composed of several 'rhetorical' group identities. Not many of these groups work according to clearly-defined goals. Most of them are more loosely organised. The activists themselves prefer labels such as 'tribe', 'movement', and 'milieu'; i.e. labels that point to less clearly-defined entities.

These terms, 'tribe', 'milieu', and 'movement' are also analytical terms which might serve well to conceptualise this kind of entity. Other concepts are also relevant. In order to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the flora of concepts meant to cover this social formation, I will discuss the relevancy of some of them here.

### 2.2.1 *Social (Anti-) Movement*

A social movement is, according to Melucci (1989: 29), a form of collective action. The term, broad as it is, does not point to an easily delimited empirical instance. It points to a system of actions related to a *social conflict*. It involves, first, actors' mutual recognition that they are part of a single social unit. Second, this collective action is defined by its engagement in conflict, as it is opposed to an adversary who lays claim to the same goods or values. Third, the movement's actions violate the boundaries or limits of tolerance of a system. It pushes the system beyond the range of variations it can tolerate without altering its structure. A social movement is thus a rather transient social formation.

The radical nationalists contain these characteristics of a social movement. First, they recognise themselves as a social unit, although they are involved in groups with different names. Second, the bonds between them are strengthened as they are in a continuous ongoing conflict with militant anti-Fascists, who fight for the same values, but with the reverted prefixes (pro-immigration, not anti-immigration, anti-racism, not racism). Third, the radical nationalists violate the boundaries of tolerance for Norwegian authorities, as they use symbols associated with treason, and carry out militant actions which are illegal and which threaten the security of certain people.

Melucci (1989: 220-221), however, does *not* define nationalist and Fascist movements as social movements. He restricts his thinking of violation and alteration of the system's boundaries in terms of progressive social reformatory change. Wiewiorka followed up this limitation of the social movement concept by talking of such nostalgic

movements as *anti-social movements*. According to Wieviorka (1995:92-93:92) a social anti-movement is made up of the same key elements as a social movement, but the elements are shunted around and transformed.

In the anti-movement, the social identity of the actor is replaced by a reference to a being, an *essence*, and a nature. The actor identifies with a cultural, moral or religious category - the forces of good or justice - or, alternatively, with a mythical social figure, such as the working-class, when this latter either does not exist or does not in any way recognise itself in the discourse of the actor. The actors' image of a social adversary dissolves and gives way to a double representation.

The actor is ranged either against an enemy with whom he is implicitly at war or against an abstract, relatively indeterminate system, which is more or less mythical in nature. The anti-movement is not involved in a conflict shared by itself and its adversary. The actor is sectarian and warlike, and it denies the idea of structural conflict or a social relation. It closes itself off from all communication with the outside. In contrast to the social movement, the anti-movement fails a concept of social liberation, and is unwilling to accept internal tensions and debates.

This holds to some extent as a description of the radical nationalist movement. The social identity of this movement refers to nation, race, ethnicity, and other super-human concepts. Radical nationalists often speak of the world in an essentialist way by referring to their own practice as instinctual and natural. They are at war with militant anti-Fascists and 'the system'. The conflict is defined differently by the anti-Fascists and by the radical nationalists. Thus, the radical nationalists do not share the conflict with their adversary. They are sectarian, and have problems handling the tensions between them.

In other words, in most regards, they resemble Wieviorka's definition of the anti-movement. On the other hand, this description is equally applicable to their adversaries, except for the last criterion. This is because the anti-Fascists have an idea of social reform of the society, whereas the radical nationalists are nostalgic and idealise a mythical past. Despite this, the radical nationalists also see themselves as a kind of liberation movement.

Furthermore, these groups, nostalgic as they are, articulate a historical project which is another feature of social movements, according to Eyerman and Jamison (1991). They plead that social movements are not determinate 'reactions' to historical forces. They are influenced or shaped rather than caused (determined) by historical and contextual 'factors'. In this sense, we cannot find the 'causes' of radical nationalism. However, we can observe what contexts it appears in, and how radical nationalists construct their praxis according to the conditions set by their backgrounds, the political climate of society, and opposing groups.

Theories of *social movements* allow us to focus on the network of radical nationalist groups as processes in formation and follow the ongoing construction of *social identities* (Eyerman and Jamison 1991:2). In 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c) and in 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a). I discuss parts of the social identity of the radical nationalists. This view of a movement as a process in formation enables us to grasp the complex, fluid entity, instead of reducing it to one homogenous, unambiguous object.

Thus, in appendix 3 I present the different radical nationalist groupings and the changes in this landscape over time. This lets us see the ever-changing characteristics of the scene, and the contradictions between the participants, as the fascinating qualities of the material, rather than as disturbing inferences to the stringency of the data. As pointed out by Eyerman and Jamison (1991), this is the merit of the notion of social

movement. According to such a perspective, the heterogeneity (Ricoeur 1978:115) or polysemy (Ricoeur 1978:113) (a sign has multiple meanings) of the radical nationalist groups are something we will highlight especially, rather than an aspect we will disregard.

The notion of movement is proper when discussing the radical nationalists' international connections or otherwise discussing them from a macro-perspective. I mostly use the term movement in combination with the term underground, in order to make reference to the positioning of this movement in relation to the mainstream culture. I will also use the terms underground or underground movement, subculture, extra-parliamentary parties, etc. which all define the relation to mainstream culture.

### 2.2.2 *Underground Movement*

I mostly use the term 'underground'. This term is useful because it might capture more than one group. It also connotes *militancy* and *secrecy*, which are important characteristics of most of these groups. Naturally, some groups are not marked by militancy. Moreover, some groups are more open about their programme, such as the former *National People's Party*. However, most of the contemporary groups are marked by secrecy, and most of their activities take place underground.

According to sociologist Aubert (1965), an underground movement<sup>11</sup> represents exactly the opposite of a *total institution* (Goffman 1961). Goffman contrasts the notion of total institution with the notion of *underlife*; that is, the sum of secondary adaptations of the inhabitants in a total institution. The difference between a total institution and the underground movement has to do with the fundamental structural conditions for the emerging of a counter-movement: a situation where the decisive political aims cannot be realised legally.

In fact, this definition resembles the self-understanding of radical nationalists in contemporary Norway. They hold that their political views are censored, and they legitimise their violent actions accordingly as a means to fight for the 'truth'. By contrast, activists during the 1970s and early 1980s (see appendix 3 for an overview of this period) did not consider themselves to be an underground. Their aim was to work politically and legally as political parties, without the secrecy which was typical of some communist parties at the time. They looked upon themselves as organisations, parties, even a movement, but not as an underground.

Aubert (1965) writes that instead of being defined publicly as an organisation with a purpose, with personnel, and perhaps a territory as well, the underground movement can only be defined internally. Even this definition is only partly known to its members. As for the radical nationalists, they do not have a defined *territory*, no place they can call their own, and that mark the borders of their organisation. This makes it easier for them to hide their practice from the view of the police and their political opponents. Like a mafia, they can meet in private, and construct networks which take on a form, the extent of which is beyond even the activists, cf. (Fangen 1995).

According to Aubert (1965), *secrecy* is the most important weapon of the counter-movement. This applies particularly to secrecy about the movement's boundaries, and about the identity of the members. When dealing with society in general, the members of the counter-movement define themselves with other roles. In order to carry out their illegal work, it is necessary for them to maintain a social facade so that they appear to

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<sup>11</sup> Aubert's conceptualisation was built on his own experiences from the Norwegian counter-movement during the Second World War. However, as he himself points out, his analysis was not meant to be part of the writing of history. Instead, he wanted to reveal some general lines of underground movements.

be members of the legal society around them. In extreme, but not rare, cases this implies that one individual establishes two or more identities.

This is also seen among the radical nationalists. Most of them use pseudonyms, especially when writing in their fanzines. Charges therefore cannot be filed against them because of their writings. However, on a face-to-face basis, they use their ordinary names. They mostly keep the fact of their belonging to the underground from their colleagues at work. In some sense, all of the activists live lives marked by *multiple identities*.

This secrecy concerning one's own identity may have serious consequences. Aubert (1965) states that returning to normal life may cause great effort and strain. This is also seen among the radical nationalists. One of my informants committed suicide one year after having left the underground. He was incapable of maintaining a sense of coherent self and was left alone with his troubles.

In wartime underground movements, such as the one described by Aubert, the private identity of the members is often kept secret even from other members of the movement. This is not the case in the majority of the groups in the Norwegian radical nationalist underground. However, as will be described in appendix 3, there are some groups where secrecy is so important that the members do not know each other's real names.

In a wartime underground movement, members are the only guards of the boundaries of the movement. They are the only ones with the key to the gate, both in terms of entering and leaving. This resembles the characteristic of a *network* (cf. Handelman (1977)). It is made up of frontiers, so there is no distinction between outside and inside. There are no corporations. In the underground movement, there is an inside as well, but the boundaries of this inside are not clearly defined. It is thus possible to say, like the radical nationalists sometimes do, that one participant is 'internal', whereas another one is not. However, in retrospect it can always be said that a particular participant never was internal, as there are no membership lists, and no other proof of who was marginal and who was not.

By contrast, in a total institution (Goffman 1961) the borderline between member and non-member is clearly defined both physically (in the form of locked doors, big walls, etc.) and formally (in the form of journals stating who each individual is, etc.). Thus, the situation of entrance and exit is the opposite to the underground movement. Aubert argues that secrecy regarding membership excludes most normal mechanisms for recruitment to an underground movement. The accentuation of secrecy together with the personal character of the recruitment implies that loyalty, courage, and reliability are expected from the members.

The importance of these claims to secrecy is probably one of the reasons why the radical nationalist underground attracts young people. As one of its leading figures put it, mainstream culture is 'too boring'. For many the temptation to 'die hard', as he put it, is greater than living a conventional career life, he said. The radical nationalists thus construct an underground movement. This makes it possible to live in a state of war without any real war being fought in society.

Nevertheless, their way of organising themselves resembles a wartime underground movement, and makes their war real in its consequences. Their symbolic war becomes real to those involved. Common fate, danger, and hope are stressed in wartime movements (Aubert 1965). This is also the case within the radical nationalist underground. I therefore use 'underground movement' as my main concept, my most exact concept.

Several other (youth) subcultures or gangs share some of these features: secrecy, the feeling of being persecuted and watched, the identification of one's own in-group in contrast to various out-groups, etc. The radical nationalist underground resembles something our society does not want, similar to the subculture of long-term drug addicts, as described by Thomassen (1993). Radical nationalists constitute a superfluous category (cf. Bauman (1991); a group of people that break with the orderliness of society. As for the radical nationalists, they create their own view of the world, one that mainstream culture does not (fully) know. It is created as a conscious contrast to mainstream understanding of what the activists see as a 'boring' mainstream culture.

### 2.2.3 *Subculture*

Despite their emphasis on secrecy, and their nostalgic and sectarian beliefs, many of the radical nationalist groups are actually to a significant degree marked by exterior organisational marks. They have names, they publish their own fanzines, they wear certain clothes and they behave in certain ways (e.g. by giving Fascist salutes) which make them recognisable to outsiders. They previously also had their own meeting places at pubs in Oslo.

In this sense, some of these groups form a contrast to many criminal gangs, which are first named by the press and the police when they get caught for having committed crimes.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the radical nationalists strategically use their names and appearance in order to gain public notice. Thus, they combine the practice of secrecy with the practice of provocation. They seek the limelight in order to be recognised as a threat and a group with power in society.

When we use the word *subculture*, we point to the importance of style, appearance, music, and symbols. Subcultures are distinct from mainstream culture. However, they borrow (and often exaggerate, distort or invert) its symbols, values, and beliefs. This concept is of greatest use when we talk about general features, not direct encounters.

The prefixes 'sub' and 'under' mean the same, etymologically. They refer to something beneath the ground or beneath the mainstream culture. In one sense, then, these concepts are fairly identical. However, as it has been used in social theory, 'underground' usually points to social forms that cannot realise their aims legally. They thus operate below ground, underneath that which is visible. In contrast, a subculture, as the term is used in social theory, often points to a social formation that is *visibly* different from the mainstream.

The radical nationalists sometimes operate underground by arranging secret meetings, weapons training etc. At other times they operate in public by dressing in a conspicuous manner. It is those activists in particular who dress and act like skinheads, and who are occupied with the history of the skinhead style, who lead to this underground in some respects being equated with a radical nationalist skinhead subculture. They have contacts and exchange fanzines etc. with white power skinheads abroad, and are thus linked to what we could see as an Euro-American racist subculture (cf. Kaplan and Bjørgo (1997).

My use of the concept of subculture is primarily based on the conceptualisation of the researchers from the Birmingham school of cultural studies. They define subculture as 'a form of resistance whereby lived constraints and objections to the ruling ideology are obliquely represented through style' (Hall 1976). In fact, this description is very close to the way in which contemporary radical nationalists describe themselves (this forms a contrast to the way activists from the 1970s and 1980s saw themselves, and also a contrast to the way elder 'anti-immigrant' politicians see themselves, cf. appendix 3).

<sup>12</sup> This difference was pointed out to me by Norwegian criminologist Ragnar Hauge.

Many young radical nationalists see their own 'nationalist' standpoint as being in opposition to the multi-cultural hegemony in society. In other words, it is an objection to ruling ideology. This standpoint is *not* (again in contrast to the activists of the 1980s) put forward through political programs and discussions, but is communicated through their style.

Thus, a huge part of the radical nationalists' practice is *non-linguistic*. This is one of the main reasons why descriptions of the facts and patterns (Bjørge 1997) of radical nationalism is not sufficient. Rather, we must develop analytical frames which allow us to grasp the meaning the radical nationalists attach to their rituals and their style. These frames should preferably be developed after continuous investigation of the concepts and understandings of the activists, as mentioned. The Birmingham scholars theorisation of the *resistance* communicated through style partly resembles the way the radical nationalists understand their symbolic practices, including their use of Fascist salutes, as I will reveal in the section on ideology.

#### 2.2.4 *Cultic Milieu*

The fact that radical nationalists support beliefs that are seen as unacceptable in our society is an important characteristic of their underground. Another concept that focuses on this aspect of the underground, is Campbell (1972)'s *cultic milieu*. This is a concept Kaplan (1995) has reworked in relation to the American radical right. This concept is useful as it posits 'deviance from the beliefs of mainstream society as the key analytical factor' (Kaplan 1995:46). The concept is especially appropriate for grasping the fluidity of beliefs in radical nationalist groups, as it emphasises 'the difficulty of differentiating ideological appeals which have many common beliefs yet at the same time are bitterly divisive and competitive for the allegiance of a limited pool of adherents' (Kaplan 1995: 45).

The notion of *milieu* is useful because it embraces all the minor groupings. 'Group' thus becomes the proper term when we discuss a more specific entity within the larger 'milieu'. The term *milieu* points to a loosely-organised entity. *Social movement* is a better notion when we discuss more generally how this social entity is linked to similar entities in other countries, and to how it is linked to more formal parties and organisations. However, we need another concept to refer to more direct encounters of activists interacting on a daily base.

As conceptualised by Sørhaug (1984), a *milieu* is characterised by the members meeting each other frequently. Furthermore, its members know each others' faces, and to a varying degree their names and backgrounds. *Milieus* are marked by informal interaction. In addition, even though they might have a defined purpose (in the case of the radical nationalist underground, to fight multi-cultural society), for many participants in a *milieu*, the main purpose will be interaction with the other participants.

Moreover, *milieus* are less intimate than *gangs* are (cf. my comparison of these two concepts in (Fangen 1995)). A *milieu* is not dominated by commitment to the same extent. The individual uses the *milieu*, but is not friends with everybody in it. One of the most important activities is the exchange of information. There are certain cultural bearers and heroes, but seldom leaders. *Milieus* can have an extensive flux of individuals and very diffuse boundaries.

In some respects, the radical nationalist groups have these qualities which constitute a *milieu*. For example, 'the pronounced tendency of the adherents of radical right wing ideologies toward serial or simultaneous membership in more than one group or belief system' (Kaplan 1995:46). However, as with *gangs*, there are rules of inclusion and exclusion and some kind of leadership.

The notion of 'milieu' is applicable when discussing this social formation more from a micro-perspective, by looking at the relations and practices of the activists. Consequently, I sometimes use the concept milieu, especially when referring the activists' own utterances. However, I do not use the concept of gang. Despite this, in places I compare my material with other studies of gangs or use conceptions derived from such studies.<sup>13</sup>

Cultic milieu is a better concept than simply milieu, as it points to how the milieu is placed in relation to mainstream culture. Bourdieu (1992:145) criticises the concept of milieu of not saying anything about power hierarchies. However, this criticism consequently should not apply to the term cultic milieu, as this concept actually says something about the relation to mainstream culture.

### 2.2.5 Counter-Community

The radical nationalists' are not only positioned in contrast to mainstream culture, they are also positioned in opposition to their adversaries, the anti-Fascists. A dangerous situation occurs when these groups are put forward as antagonists in a war that is not only imaginary, as its consequences and tools are quite real. On the surface, our culture is a peaceful one, but beneath the surface a war is being fought that is real to those involved.

In one sense, the *community* of radical nationalists is tight and tender. They actually care about each other. On the other hand, there is a great deal of disagreement, intrigue, and internal strife. In my article 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a), I examine different aspects of this community.

There are Norwegian radical nationalists who dislike to the notion of community. They feel that it seems to point to a psychological need, the need to belong. It thus places less importance on aspects of rational choice and individual options in the choice of political adherence (see my discussion of this later). However, the term *counter-cultural* community, as proposed by Kaplan (1995:45) may be better, as it places this kind of community in relation to the society that surrounds it, and thus points to the aspect of protest that these activists express towards the world around them.

Certain radical nationalists say that they fancy the term *tribe*. In this way, they implicitly point to a sense of community. Other activists more openly use the term 'community'. They even say that this aspect, community between the men, is the most important reason why they remain within the underground. On the other hand, the strife between them is the most important reason they want to leave. Some activists go further in their conceptualisation of a male community when they use the notion *brotherhood*. This is a notion which also emphasises the closeness of their community and the us-them relationship they have with their adversaries.

### 2.2.6 Neo-Tribe

Male radical nationalists thus think of themselves as a kind of tribe or a brotherhood of men. In many ways, this notion overlaps with the concept of cultic milieu. Maffesoli (1996) has introduced the notion of neo-tribalism in order to point to the very typical search for *community* in our current society. Following Maffesoli, our world is a tribal world in the sense that it allows only tribal truths and decisions about right and wrong. On the other hand, our world differs from the tribal world in that our tribes are not like the original ones, tightly-structured bodies with controlled membership. In antiquity,

<sup>13</sup> There are many relevant insights which we could have made use of from the so-called Chicago school of youth research. However, I find the more current conceptualisations of the Birmingham scholars (which partly are further developments of the Chicago studies) more relevant, as they better grasp the complex interchange of ideology, style and the influence of class-related changes in society.

belonging or not belonging to a tribe was not a question of individual choice. It was a matter regulated by gerontocratic, hereditary, military or democratic agencies. By contrast, people today move from tribe to tribe. Belonging to a tribe is thus a matter of choice and preference.

Maffesoli (1996:139) points out that the constitution of tribes arises as a result of a feeling of *belonging*, as a function of a specific *ethic*, and within the framework of a communications *network*. The communications network of the radical nationalists is partly a secretive one. This further exaggerates their tribal feeling of belonging. According to Maffesoli (*ibid.* p. 16), the communal ethic of the tribe is warmth, companionship, and physical contact.

Such feelings are also important aspects of the radical nationalist underground, even though the feeling of warmth and inclusion often transforms into suspicion and internal strife. In my initial phase together with the activists, I was struck not by the uniformity of the participants, but rather by their *marginality in relation to each other*. The *lack of common base* may at times be so disconcerting that their feeling of comradeship is hard to maintain. In 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a), I analyse this balance between comradeship and care on the one hand and strife and honour-contests on the other.

All social groups include a component of shared feeling, says Maffesoli. This shared feeling gives rise to a *deferent morality*, which he calls an ethical experience. There it thus a link between communal ethic and solidarity. The ethic of the radical nationalists is, among other things, an *ethic of violence*, as they accept violence as a legitimate tool with which to fight their opponents. They call for loyalty from their fellow-activists, and idealise an us-them orientation. Their loyalty is based on shared feeling, but also a call upon a shared fate, as they share certain experiences as a consequence of being part of an underground which is disparaged by most people.

One aspect of the relationship between communal ethic and solidarity is the development of the *ritual*. According to sociologist Durkheim (III,4,1) (Østerberg 1983:162), the function of representative rites is to recall the past and make it present again. This results in a strengthening of the collective consciousness of the clan. These rites allow the group from time to time to evoke feelings of itself and its unity. The function of rituals is to confirm a group's view of itself.

This is a frame of understanding that fits well with an analysis of radical nationalists (even though I do not adopt the methodological collectivism of speaking of a group's view of itself). The radical nationalists use the Fascist salute as a ritual that they say serves to emphasise their community. In the article 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b:221), I discuss some of the variations in their use of this salute. The salute is a symbol of the fact that the radical nationalists have their own ethic, regardless of the impulses or beliefs that impel the individual. Furthermore, it shows that their ethic is far removed from the more conventional ethics of our society. Accordingly, it is one marked by an odour of secrecy, as it is not understandable to people outside their group.

### 2.2.7 *Scene*

A concept that covers some of the same aspects of style and dramatic performances (in this case often meant to shock) as the subculture concept is *scene*. This concept is useful because it points to the performative aspect of these activists' behaviour (cf. Habermas (1984) and Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective.). Furthermore, it deals with the transient places (pubs, homes, and streets) that replace the activists' lack of territory.



What makes this concept valid is the fact that the radical nationalist underground consists of individuals and groups who act out a dramatic performance through their style, their gestures, and their violence. I do not use Goffman's perspective in its totality, with its conceptual frame of front-stage, backstage, and so forth. Even so, we could say that on an implicit level, I try to study the radical nationalists' from their backstage arenas. When I first met them in the pub, I knocked on front-stage, and asked whether they would allow me to gain an insight into their back-stages. Among the radical nationalists, what is defined as front-stage, and open for public insight, and what is defined as back-stage, and covered from the outside world, might change continuously. The activists are suspicious even towards each other, and the limits of who should be allowed to all back-stage arenas and who should not are diffuse. They change between backstage arenas and front-stage arenas. Although I do not use all these conceptions in my articles, I study the impression management of the activists in various situations.

I use some of Goffman's conceptualisations also on an explicit level, in order to grasp the various meanings of the social encounters between the activists and their surroundings. In a written account of his life, one of the activists explicitly argued against the concept of scene. He preferred the term 'arena':

'Why arena? Why not 'side' or 'scene'? In a scene, every actor and participant has received a manuscript, where all of the speeches, movements and events have been written down. A stage is a place where an act is played. Every participant has a determined role, limited by the content of the manuscript. Everyone therefore plays, to a certain extent, on the same team. All of the actors know fairly well where everything is to happen, what everyone will say and what to do where and when, as well as who is who.

Politics is not a scene. Politics is an arena. Here, everyone fights everyone - within the limits of reason. Only the strongest survive. On the surface the collaboration is good, but underneath the surface, contradictions shine through. In its own way, this is not very strange, as it was precisely these contradictions that led to the fact that one became two, two became four, etc. in the organisation.

In the arena, everyone must watch out. 'Love thy neighbour' and 'turn the other cheek' are not valid mottos. There is great and good comradeship between individuals and within the collective, maybe better than within other so-called 'regular' political parties and organisations. The main reason is probably the ideology of the milieu and the violent way in which they were cast out from society. When one is seen as a cast-out group, the internal concord becomes greater. Even so, the arena is there.

A matador must always be vigilant by turning his cloak the right way. Otherwise an attacking bull will spit on the proud fighter. The gladiator must always parry strokes and kicks correctly and preferably give tenfold back. Otherwise this proud fighter will be crushed or mutilated by a pushy opponent. The coachman must always keep his reins in control and the passenger must struggle to keep seated. Otherwise yet another proud fighter will fall away in the curves. If one does not keep seated, one will fall and get squeezed underneath the powerful iron fitted wheels.

No, politics is not a kindergarten, nor a scene. If one had stopped quarrelling and backbite internally, and everyone had played on exactly the same team, then the situation would have been different. But until then, the multi-carriageway era will go on.

Until then, politics will remain an arena. ('Per' 1998)

This quotation mirrors the activists' feeling of being at war, involved in an arena full of tensions. It might seem like a metaphorical piece of poetry, but there is no doubt that the writer experienced his time within the underground more or less this way. He himself was one of those who fell off the wagon, and was no more a 'proud fighter'.

### 2.2.8 *The Difficulty of Conceptualisation*

As the quote above shows, the activists also use several different concepts to refer to their own groups. Their way of using concepts is again formed as reactions to terms others (newspapers, researchers, adversaries) use about them. This quote also shows that we could use other notions in order to understand this fluid and ambiguous entity. Several of these concepts overlap each other. The radical nationalists develop an underground with distinct values, codes, symbols, and beliefs. They thus construct a distinct culture.

This culture is a *subculture* in relation to mainstream culture. It is also a *counter-culture*, in the sense that it is consciously opposed to certain values, symbols, and beliefs within the mainstream. As they work against mainstream culture (e. g. the policy of the parliamentary political parties), they are automatically termed under, counter or subculture. The overlapping of the scope of the concepts leads me to use them somewhat interchangeably in the articles that make up the body of this thesis. However, when pointing to publicly visible activities, I usually use the terms *scene* or *subculture* (pointing to more visible activities).

On the other hand, as Per points out, scene is not very useful, as it points to a kind of state where the roles are pre-scripted.<sup>14</sup> When pointing to more secretive, ideological or militant activities, I mostly use the concept *underground*. The concepts of *tribe* and tribalism are useful in order to grasp the particular ethic of these groups, and their intensive 'us-them' categorisation. In 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a) I analyse these aspects of their practice, although I do not use the term tribe. Instead I use similar terms, such as community and brotherhood. When we study how these groups of young radical nationalists are related to other nationalist organisations and parties, and to opposing and similar subcultures, the notion of movement is more relevant.

The terms scene, subculture, and tribe all relate to that form of social action defined by Habermas (1984) as *performative action*. Underground, cultic milieu and social movement refer more to what he defines as *strategic action*. We thus might analyse both the dramaturgical performances and rituals of the activists, as well as their strategies, and goal-directed actions. I would argue that most of the practices of contemporary radical nationalists in Norway are characterised by more performative kinds of actions. Many of the analytical tools I use serve to cover those aspects that are related to its symbolic, ritual and communicative meaning.

I also use some analytical tools from the rational choice spectre of social theory, such as a discussion of costs and benefits of entering the underground. With the constitution of non-parliamentary parties with defined political programmes and regular meetings, we might argue that the radical nationalist movement in the 1970s and early 1980s was defined by strategic action to a greater extent. Also today, some of the groups within this movement are more strategically organised than others. The communicative aspect is still, however, a crucial one also in this part of the movement.

My point is that we need to use a plurality of concepts in order to arrive at an analytical frame which is flexible enough and can grasp the social formation from

<sup>14</sup> In fact, this is similar to Bourdieu's reservations about Goffman's terms 'role' and 'actor' - that they give the impression of human action as a result of learning to play pre-scripted roles, as if they had been written in advance (cf. Broady 1990:233-234).

several different angles. We must always use those concepts that are best suited to cover the aspects of this entity that we wish to discuss.

### 2.3 Counter-Knowledge and Fragmented Beliefs

As mentioned, militancy and secrecy are important characteristics of the radical nationalist underground. These aspects are linked to another important characteristic, which is ideology.<sup>15</sup> We therefore also need conceptual tools that enable us to grasp the reasoning and beliefs of the activists. Even though ideology seldom is the main aspect that attracts young people to radical nationalist movements, they learn to conceive the world in a way, which in many respects is defined in opposition to more dominant or mainstream comprehension.

#### 2.3.1 Stigmatised Knowledge

Radical nationalists conceive the world from a certain *conspiracionist* perspective, which the individual participant absorbs within the underground. This perspective naturally leads to a *paranoid* way of relating to the surrounding world. As Lemert (1962) points out, 'while the paranoid person reacts differentially to his social environment, it is also true that "others" react differentially to him'. Such reactions from other people generally involve 'covertly organised action and conspirational behaviour in a very real sense'.

The differential reactions of a paranoid person and people around him are reciprocal, and they appear to be interwoven during all phases of the process of exclusion which arises in this kind of relationship. As a result of the paranoid person acting suspiciously towards others, the others begin to distrust this person. They talk behind his back and exclude him from social settings because they are insecure about him. Such processes of exclusion are usually found in the way people relate to radical nationalists.

However, in this case, their exclusion is not merely a result of them acting distrustfully towards others. Their paranoia<sup>16</sup> is based on a real situation; their participation in a group condemned by most people. They are monitored by the police and attacked by their political adversaries, the anti-Fascists. To an extraordinary degree, the radical nationalists are on the alert and suspicious of people around them. They have good reason to be cautious. Their conspiracionist perspective thus confirms and fulfils their position within society.

In 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b), I describe the contents of their perspective in more detail. The radical nationalists view the authorities, who form part of a conspiracy against the Norwegian people, as suppressing the beliefs of the nationalists. According to one activist, it is obvious that their beliefs are true since the authorities are so afraid of them. This is well-known paranoid logic, and such a perspective is self-confirming. This logic mirrors the interplay of the activists in a subjective culture where all of the participants stand alone and distrust the people around them, including their peers.

Barkun (1998:61) calls such beliefs *stigmatised knowledge* (a concept he has developed further from Campbell's (1972) deviant knowledge, which is part of Campbell's theorisation of the cultic milieu). Stigmatised knowledge is made up of 'claims to truth that the claimants regard as empirically verified despite the marginalisation of those claims by institutions that conventionally distinguish between

<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, ideology is linked to the construction of identity, as seen in for example 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a) and 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c).

<sup>16</sup> The radical nationalists often talk of themselves as paranoid, cf. Egil's saying in 'nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c:37).

knowledge and falsehood - universities, communities of scientific researchers, and the like'.

Barkun lists five types of stigmatised knowledge. The kind of knowledge claimed by the radical nationalists resembles what Barkun (1998:62) calls *suppressed knowledge*: 'Claims that are allegedly known to be valid by authoritative institutions but are suppressed because the institutions fear the consequences of public knowledge or have some evil or selfish motive for hiding the truth'. The 'believers assume that since their ideas about knowledge conflict with some orthodoxy, the forces of orthodoxy will necessarily try to perpetuate error out of self-interest or some malign motive'. In this way, the 'partisans assert that power is employed to prevent the truth from being known'.

This is exactly how the radical nationalists tend to talk about the way the 'system' treats their beliefs. The harder the outside world condemns or persecutes the radical nationalists, the harder they believe that their own perspective must be the right one. Or, as Barkun (1998:69) says it: 'In the reverse world of stigmatised knowledge, condemnation is *prima facie* evidence of the truth'.

The conspirational perspective might be considered *movement specific knowledge* of the radical nationalists. According to Eyerman and Jamison (1991:58), such knowledge is created as the product of a series of social encounters within the movement, and between the movement and its opponents. As for the radical nationalists, their knowledge is shaped by clashes with anti-Fascists, and the way the media cover these clashes. Strides between the radical nationalists also appear because they react differently to the way their adversaries interpret them. Moreover, the individual learns the movement specific knowledge through the unpredictable and often unintended interaction between the activists, when they plan the future and reflect on past actions. Consequently, this knowledge becomes very *fragmented*, as is the case with the beliefs of the radical nationalists.

Following Eyerman and Jamerson, social movements are involved in the continual reinvention of *tradition*, and in the recombination of the values or interests of past movements. This recombination involves both the reformulation of concepts and projects as well as the reinterpretation of intellectual roles and practices. Using this perspective as a guide to what to look for, we must ask how the radical nationalists view other relevant movements of the past, such as the Nazi movement.

I discuss the extent to which they see themselves as inheritors of this or not in 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b) and 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c). The radical nationalists are very concerned with the preservation of culture and tradition. In other words, their very project is an essentialist one, built on the idea of a natural essence of our national culture. In 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b) and 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' I discuss the way they imagine themselves as rediscovering tradition.

### 2.3.2 *The Links between National Socialism and neo-National(social)ism*

Other studies than mine go into greater detail about the links between people from the wartime National Socialist movement and contemporary radical nationalists (e.g. Lööw 1995, 1996). Such studies provide insight into the changing organisations, ideologies, and networks throughout the years. Lööw's work provides a basis from which one can observe the actual outlook of different groupings, and details of their way of perceiving the world.

By contrast, I do not review history of National Socialism and its later reinvention as radical nationalism (or alternatively neo-Nationalism, as one of the initiators of this

movement in Norway call it) to a great extent. The person who has done this most thoroughly in Norway is former journalist, now editor, Bangsund (1984). In his book *The Inheritors*, he presents an overview of many of the individuals and parties at the very beginning of the emergence of radical nationalist groups in Norway.

In my article 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c), I make a comparison between the way the radical nationalists relate to the world with important components of Hitler's National Socialism. However, this comparison is not meant to serve as a detailed history of the programme and practices of individuals and parties then and now. Instead I compare the symbolic content of Hitler's version of Nazism with the ideals of the radical nationalists, as revealed in their utterances and as presented in their fanzines. In appendix 3, I present an overview of the various radical nationalist groups dating back to the late 1970s. This list serves as a map of all the groups that have existed during the period 1960-2000. It thus provides a more concrete guide to the groups and individuals I refer to anonymously throughout the rest of the thesis.

### 2.3.3 *Ideology, Partly Unconscious Thought*

In most of my publications, I take an interpretative approach to my analysis of the beliefs of the radical nationalists. This analysis of ideology combines the perspective proposed by Birmingham youth researchers (which is partly based on Althusser), critical theory, and Bourdieu's theorisation of doxa. All of these approaches share the assumption that people's beliefs are only partly conscious.

People in general do not recognise the ideological quality of their beliefs. We take the majority of our assumptions for granted. The perspective of the misrecognition or false consciousness of beliefs is thus only problematic if the analyst takes the position of seeing what people do not see themselves and, accordingly, does not examine his/her own position self-critically. I will return to this aspect of the analysis in appendix 2, when I discuss what it means to take a critical position.

In everyday language, the notion of *ideology* is often used to mean a consistent system of beliefs which distorts the picture of the world systematically. By contrast, in sociology, the concept points to a more general quality. Radical nationalists or even more specifically, Nazis, are not the only ones to adhere to an ideology. In the sense given the term by Althusser (1969), for example, ideology is not a distinct system of thought which is exclusive to specific groups of people. Ideology embraces society at large, and the term implies processes in which existing concepts and structures appear to be everyday relationships. These concepts and structures lead us to *take them as reality*.

'Ideology has very little to do with "consciousness." (...) It is profoundly unconscious. (...) Ideology is indeed a system of representation, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with "consciousness" they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men' (Althusser 1969).

In other words, we can speak of ideology as a form of cultural unconsciousness or as *doxa* (Bourdieu 1977). In Bourdieu's terminology, the doxa consists of all that is given without being formulated as a problem: the game, the investments, all the suppositions that we silently and unconsciously accept just by being involved. Ideology is therefore a-rational. It is imagination, rather than rational thought. It is not based on a systematic organisation of logically coherent assumptions. It is non-cognitive rather than cognitive, non-formulated rather than formulated.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Thus, according to this perspective, Bjørge's (1997) distinction between every-day racism (as non-ideological) and right-wing extremism (as ideological) is not very meaningful.

Ideology can be compared to an instinctual relation to the world. Ideology takes the form of unconscious habits and codes of perception. In fact, this is similar to the way a core activist of the radical nationalist underground conceptualised his views, as ethnic instincts, as described in 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b).

Ideology hides relationships of dominance and unequal opportunities. We might thus conclude, following Birmingham scholar Hebdige (1979), that ideology by definition 'thrives beneath consciousness', and that 'it is at the level of "normal common sense", that ideological frames of reference are most firmly sedimented and most effective, because it is here that their ideological nature is most effectively concealed'.

Hall, the leader of the former Birmingham research group, argues in a similar manner. He says that ideology is spontaneous, apparently transparent and natural, and it refuses to be made to examine the conditions on which it is based. Ideology is resistant to change or to correction, it has an effect of instant recognition, and moves in a closed circle. Consequently, *common sense* is, 'at one and the same time, "spontaneous", ideological and *unconscious*. You cannot learn, through common sense, *how things are*; you can only discover *where they fit* into the existing scheme of things'. The very taken-for-grantedness of common sense is 'what establishes it as a medium in which its own premises and presuppositions are rendered *invisible* by its apparent transparency' (Hall, 1977, italics in original document).

This perspective, however, ignores the fact that people also might consciously choose an ideology because it in some way or another is useful for them. Sometimes there might as well be a social pressure to take a certain political standpoint, as in cadre movements where the implicit norm is that 'either you are with us (without reservations) or you are against us'. People might even choose an ideology which is both stupid and evil, and at the same time be proud of it, because they dare to take a standpoint which people in general think is awful. Thus, when young people choose to become participants of the radical nationalist movements, such processes of choice are clearly involved, even though some of these youths seem to misjudge the extent of the implications of joining this movement.

### 2.3.4 *Rationality or A-Rationality in Radical Nationalists' Beliefs*

I partly disagree with researchers such as Ray (1972) and Bessant (1995), who argue that the ideas of 'neo-Nazis' are rational, given the way they perceive the world. Bessant's aim is, as is Ray's, to reveal the rationality in the young Nazis' thinking. However, their argument is tautological, as it says nothing more than that their way of reasoning is rational seen in light of the premises, they themselves use in order to justify their thoughts. From such a perspective, everything is rational.

Furthermore, one could ask how one can relate rationally to such an irrational set of values (with genocide as the extreme consequence). We could also ask how one can relate rationally to stigmatised knowledge which makes society excommunicate its believers, limiting the believers' future possibilities. Brustein (1996) argues that people who joined the NSDAP party in the 1920s and 1930s did so because the party solved their financial grievances.<sup>18</sup>

The situation for those young people who join the contemporary radical nationalist movement is the opposite. Joining the movement might delimit their financial opportunities because they find it difficult to get a job if their participation is revealed publicly. There are also few possibilities of their achieving their political goals. These are to remove all immigrants from Norway and, for some of them, to establish a more

<sup>18</sup> See also my reference to Brustein in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b).

authoritarian state. It therefore is not a rational movement to take part in, as they probably will never achieve their goals. They are conscious about this themselves.

In light of this, we could argue that many of the radical nationalists' arguments are alogical. We do not need to say this in relation to some allegedly universal standard of which thoughts are correct and which ones are false. Rather, we could argue in this way this because I think some of their arguments are inconsistent.<sup>19</sup> One example is their call for all people to have their own country and their view that people belong naturally to the place they originally came from. Based on this argument, it would seem irrational for them to sympathise with white South-Africans who suppress the (more original) black inhabitants. They should sympathise more with the Indians in South-America than with white supremacists who invaded their countries.

This implies that we must also look for the *unconscious* way in which activists go about with their ideas. We cannot grasp these dimensions of their cognition directly, though. As many of the components of the conspirational perspective are taken for granted by the activists, we need to "reveal" (interpret, acknowledge, make public) some of its contents through *critical analysis*.

Such an approach could take the form proposed by critical theory, as formulated by the so-called *Frankfurt school*. There is an ethical aspect involved when the analyst claims to be able to uncover the *false consciousness* of the people he studies. What I will do is look for the implicit way in which the participants treat certain views. This type of analysis would also be in line with Eyerman and Jamison's (1991) conceptualisation of social movements. They write that it is typical for activists in social movements to share certain basic assumptions which they take for granted. We therefore need to uncover such *hidden assumptions* of the radical nationalists.

### 2.3.5 Hidden Assumptions

Some authors, including Bourdieu (1993b) and Foucault (1988) are sceptical about the use of the concept of ideology altogether. This is because it points to something which is already recognised as a distorted perception of reality. The important point is that the most distorted is that which is misrecognised, that which does not represent certain views or interests.

Bourdieu introduces the concept of *doxa* in order to move away from a sociology which is based on a continuity between everyday knowledge and sociological knowledge. Doxa resembles the phenomenological notion of implicit knowledge. Doxa is that part of reality which is taken as given and which is held apart from discussion (Bourdieu 1977:164). It includes conceptions of reality produced within everyday life. To perceive the world in a *doxic* way means to see it as self-evident and undisputed - a world of tradition experienced as a 'natural world' and taken for granted.

According to Bourdieu, that which we view as objective is only a product of the fact that our schemes of thought and perception produce *misrecognition* of the limits of our cognition. In other words, we think that something is given objectively, and consequently do not see that our perception is limited in specific ways. We are therefore unable to recognise the fact that we construct this objectivity. Instead we see it as

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<sup>19</sup> This might be seen as a characteristic of all people, as discourse analysis has shown that people's utterances are much less consistent than what generally is believed. As a consequence, it is misleading to speak of attitudes understood as a permanent trait of the individual. By contrast, what people argue is always adapted to the context, for example to the person they address their utterances to, to this person's questions, and to the image they believe this person has of them (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Wetherell 1996) and (Burr and Butt 1992). I agree with such a constructivist view of people's beliefs.

something given by itself. Perception of the world is a cognitive act which involves principles of construction which are external to the object grasped in its immediacy.

Such principles of construction might, for example, take the form of the conspirationist perspective of the radical nationalists. This leads them to read between the lines of everything they see in a specific way. They thus continuously view everything they read or everything they hear as proof of their stigmatised knowledge. This way of perceiving the world specifically points to Bourdieu's (1984:471: 164) argument that perception is an act of *miscognition*, which implies an *absolute* manner in which one can recognise social order.

In other words, when we examine the ideology of the radical nationalists, we must both understand the way they *actively construct* their picture of the world, as well as have a distanced view, by searching for the implicit (doxic) quality of their beliefs. However, instead of pleading that they have a false consciousness or that their views represent miscognition, we could say that they construct a reality which is valid on its own. Everyday knowledge thus consists of fluid interpretations.<sup>20</sup>

When we analyse an underground movement, there are reasons not to take everything the activists say at face value, as the participants have interests in keeping certain things secret. Many of their sayings might be shaped by their knowledge that people outside their own groups disregard and condemn their views. Even so, the ways in which they legitimise their beliefs are interesting as a tool for seeing how they make doxa move, how they start questioning the unquestionable. When talking with each other, they may treat their views as doxa. When they talk with me, the researcher, an outsider, they must explain and legitimise. It is then that the doxic quality of their views seems to weaken.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.3.6 Essentialism

Essentialism is an important ideological technique. The word *essentialist* refers to the view of different entities as given naturally, rather than as socially constructed through agreements and disagreements between different agents about how words should be defined. When something is treated in an essentialist way, dialogue in Habermas' (1984) sense of the word, becomes impossible. In order to reveal the essentialism of a discourse, we look at what is withdrawn from discussion.

In any social movement, says Eyerman and Jamison (1991), implicit knowledge tends to be more important as a tool for guiding actions than the knowledge that is spoken explicitly. The radical nationalists do not often *discuss* race or nation, whereas

<sup>20</sup> From a positivist point of view, it is easy to talk about misconceptions, because this point of view allows one to talk of right and wrong. The problem with Bourdieu's notion of miscognition, is that it does not make room for partial or limited recognition of the symbolic power, as pointed out by Bjurström (1997:89). Bjurström sees Bourdieu's concept as a contrast to Freud's notion of the unconscious, which can be transformed to conscious thought, and the Marxist notion of a false consciousness, which can be transformed to a consciousness about the real or 'objective' social and historical situation of a class. However, both Marxist and psychoanalytic theory represent what (Ricoeur 1981) calls sceptical hermeneutics, as these are concerned with revealing what lies underneath the surface.

<sup>21</sup> I do not agree with Bjurström (1997), who says that Bourdieu's notion does not allow for the possibility of resistance. For example, Bourdieu (1992) has a very dynamic theory of struggles of defining symbolic capital. He writes about the constraints which face the newcomer, but also the importance of this position in forwarding heretics, which might challenge the orthodoxy. See also my section 2.3.7.

As argued by Willis (1977:175), the problem with structuralist theories of reproduction is that they present the dominant ideology (under which culture is subsumed) as impenetrable. Willis suggests, by contrast, that social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and partial penetration of those structures.



style and music may cause heated discussions. As their political strategies and their group identities are defined in terms of race and nation, it is clear that these are important themes.

As Bourdieu (1977:167) puts it, 'what is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*'. As for the radical nationalists, they do not need to dispute race and nation, since they treat these formations as naturally given, instead of as categories historically constructed by people. They thus have what Bourdieu calls a doxic relation to the social world. This means that they identify legitimacy in an absolute way by misrecognition of arbitrariness (Bourdieu 1977:168)

In one sense, the radical nationalists view the world in such a doxic and essentialist way. They do not ask "what is a race" or "how has the notion of race been constructed at different times, and what functions has this notion served in various epochs?" For them, race refers to qualities given by nature. From such an essentialist perspective, the expression "we must preserve our race", does not need to be legitimised.

On the other hand, the radical nationalists are aware of the need to justify their views. For example, they might say things like 'people are not ready yet to speak about race, so we must wait before talking openly about this subject. In the meantime we discuss culture, until we see that people have achieved the necessary insight'.

When they talk with outsiders, they have to reflect on their beliefs in a non-doxic way. When I analyse their movement by use of sensitive, fluid interpretations, their doxic assumptions might become reflexive and thus not self-evident (cf. appendix 2 and the article 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a). I have found that when I talk with activists, my questions trigger their more nuanced perception of the world. This accordingly makes them more open to differences between people.

### 2.3.7 *Contest of Beliefs*

The researcher is not the only one who can trigger such reflexivity within the movement. At times, younger radical nationalists criticise elder activists for their orientation. A newcomer cannot be too critical, though. This would lead to experienced activists expressing doubts about him. Newcomers pay for their commitment by acknowledging the value of the game and practical knowledge about the functional principles of the game (cf. Bourdieu (1992).

Newcomers may develop *subversive* strategies, but they can only do this within limits. They might be excluded otherwise. Therefore, the partial revolutions which take place within the field do *not* question the very basis of the game, its basic axiom, which is the foundation of concepts and beliefs upon which the game is built, argues Bourdieu (ibid.).

As for the radical nationalists, however, by their use of symbols and state of war, they question the dominant doxa of our society. Instead they create a world with its own distinct values. In relation to mainstream culture, therefore, they are the heretics. By contrast, within their own movement there are few opportunities for heresy.

Bourdieu (1992) says that those who have less of the required symbolic capital have a tendency to develop heretical, subversive strategies.<sup>22</sup> It is these heretics, this

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<sup>22</sup> Bourdieu proposes *social field* as the best notion to cover power hierarchies. We could thus see radical nationalists in Norway as actors in the field of far-right organisations, individuals, and magazines (cf. section 2 of the appendix). The young actors in this field can be seen to constitute a specific *sub-field* of the larger radical nationalist field. This is a sub-field with its own *symbolic capital*, its own interests, and investments, and they often stand in opposition to the goals and strategies of the older nationalists. The term capital points to all forms of value-creating objects. To become an actor in the field in 1993-1994, one had to be present at the monthly gatherings of the radical nationalists. I partly use Bourdieu's

heterodoxy, as a critical time of fermentation, often connected to a *crisis* within the field, with the *doxa*, which forces the dominant actors to accept the orthodoxy' (Bourdieu 1992). Such crises within the radical nationalist movement have occurred. However, the crises have usually been related to accusations that another activist is a traitor, rather than a contest of beliefs.

In fact, the radical nationalists accept surprisingly conflicting ideas within the movement, as the singular activist agrees upon the need to combat multi-cultural society (see a more detailed discussion of the conflicting directions within the movement in 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b)). They are only at odds with mainstream culture. As a consequence of the counter-cultural aspect of their own ideas, they cannot convert their own experiences from the field and use it in conventional society.

A part of the necessary *investments* a newcomer must accept when he enters the radical nationalist movement is, as already mentioned, the commitment to what they label 'nationalism'. Among the activists, this specific nationalism is defined as being against immigration and being proud of one's nationality. There are those who go further than this and label themselves racists. They talk about themselves as being part of the white race, which they are proud of, and which they define as in opposition to black people. (Few of them use concepts such as 'the black race', even though they do talk about 'the white (or Aryan) race').

Some of the activists claim that the white race is superior, whereas others do not. The latter group say that all ethnic groups should have their own nation, and remain there. Furthermore, many of the activists also adhere to the view of a Zionist conspiracy (ZOG) which works consciously against the preservation of all nation-states, and instead works for an internationalisation highly ruled by their own interest in ruling the world (see 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b) for a more detailed discussion of their views).

The cognitive praxis of the movement (the magazines produced within it, for example) guides the activists (cf. Eyerman and Jamison (1991:64)). This does not necessarily occur consciously or explicitly, since the radical nationalist movement, similar to other movements, according to Eyerman, do not have a written political programme. In 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b). I discuss the cognitive practice of the radical nationalists and how this practice (e.g. the production of fanzines) functions as a syllabus, which defines the proper way of conceiving the world for new recruits. Several of the radical nationalist groups have written programmes. Even so, there is a fluidity and variety of beliefs within the underground at large, which makes it more suitable to describe it as a movement rather than a political organisation.

The radical nationalist underground is made up of young men with different habitus; that is, different appearances, ways of acting, and ways of perceiving the world in political and ideological terms. Differences of habitus, as well as suspicion amongst them leads to strife within the underground. They often disagree as to whether an activist should be treated with respect or not (see my description of such strife in 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a)). Some of the men try to gain respect by being militant and define themselves as terrorists. Others say that style is more important, and reject the more political or militant aspects of the group image. Male activists compete with each other as to who is the most sincere, the toughest, the most ideologically schooled or the most skilled skinhead.

Within the group, disagreements are seldom played out directly between the opposing parties. Instead they are found as tensions which sometimes lead to outbursts between activists or to gossip and intrigue. No one ever seemingly becomes fully accepted in this setting. Even activists who have participated in the underground for many years experience periods of distrust and exclusion. From time to time some of the most militant boys have been accused of being traitors or been criticised because others do not like their strategies or ideas. Such criticism often comes from below, from younger participants who want to play a role in defining symbolic capital.

Even though there is such strife, the activists apparently 'agree' on certain basic views. They share common interests just by willingly being associated with this fluid movement. These interests are related to the existence of their field (Bourdieu 1992). These common interests lie beyond the antagonism between the activists. Their commitment to the field shows that they (apparently) 'agree' upon what it is that is worth fighting about, and what should be considered as given, and therefore remain *doxa* (Bourdieu 1992:45).

The radical nationalists agree that being a young 'nationalist' is not just a game or a fantasy. It is also a commitment that can cause bloody struggles. Some of them even say they are willing to die for the cause. However, when they say so they do not necessarily mean that they act in a manner which would lead to their death. Several of the activists who the anti-Fascists hate the most carry out security measures in order to avoid being wounded seriously.

The activists agree that it is important to gain respect within the movement and that respect is often linked to the extent to which they display courage, style or ideological conviction.

### 2.3.8 *New Racism and Nationalism*

The spoken arguments made by the activists are more explicitly *new* than traditionally racist ones. According to Barker (1981),<sup>23</sup> new racism is a theory of human nature. New racists stress that it is natural for human beings to form distinct communities, nations, which are conscious of their differences from other nations. The nations are not considered better or worse than each other. However, feelings of antagonism may arise if strangers are allowed access, and this will lead to serious conflicts.

This is the reason new racists give for being against immigration. The consequences of such a modified form of racism may be serious enough. As Gilroy (1987: 45) points out, the new racism 'specifies who may legitimately belong to the national community and simultaneously advances reasons for segregation and banishment of those whose origin assigns them elsewhere'.

If one merely takes into consideration some of the arguments they use most frequently, then the label *nationalist* is correct in relation to the radical nationalists. However, on other occasions they refer to race in a way which makes it evident that they really consider the differences between people to be naturally given, and that they think in terms of better and worse. In other words, when we examine their words, writings, and songs in more detail, we find them to be more racist than they openly admit to being.

Strategic factors appear to influence their choice to use the nationalist label. For example, sometimes they write that the time has not come to think of race. As a result, people will speak more openly about race once they have matured in their awareness. On the other hand, the self-evident way in which they appear to view nation and race

<sup>23</sup> See my discussion in (Fangen 1993) and (Fangen 1997a).

make them treat these subjects as doxa. There is therefore no need to discuss these subjects.

### 2.3.9 *Resistance towards the Nazi Label*

This brings us to the question of whether the actors lie or consciously try to distort the picture they present of themselves. There are researchers who state that when a boy who has dressed up in skinhead uniform combined with National Socialist symbols says he does so because it is cool, it is obvious that he is lying (Lööw 1996). However, as Ricoeur (1971:549) points out, we cannot say whether an interpretation is 'true'. What we can do, is to say whether or not it is *probable*.

When we study people, we must trust that the image they present of themselves are valid, unless they lie for strategic reasons. In order to judge whether the image the participants present of themselves is valid, we can carry out fieldwork among them. Few people manage to systematically distort the picture they present of themselves when one follows them over a prolonged period of time (Patton 1990).

Another problem with saying that an utterance is not 'true' is that no utterances are only true or only false. In social settings, we can only speak of degrees of truth (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 1994). When a boy says he uses National Socialist paraphernalia because it is tough, this is certainly true to some extent. He probably does think it is cool. On the other hand, he is probably well aware of the history of these signs. The question is whether his knowledge about the Second World War and its atrocities means that he is lying when he says the reason he uses symbols associated with National Socialism is that he thinks they are cool.

One can also ask whether it is not precisely because of his awareness of the horrifying pictures people associate with these signs which make it even more effective to wear them? According to a leading activist, the Nazi salute is a reaction to the fact that the outside world labels them 'neo-Nazis'. When everyone sees them as Nazis, no matter what their actual standpoint is, they give them 'tit for tat', by giving a Nazi salute (*Einherjer* No. 1, 1996; *Fritt Forum*, No. 1, 1996). These symbols shock i people, probably also the activists themselves. It is this non-linguistic effect which is the very purpose of their bearing these signs.

It is not possible to say anything final about what is true and what is false regarding the beliefs of these young people. Even the activists have a rather *fluid* picture of their own beliefs. According to one female, who had previously been part of the core but later left the underground, most of the activists do not stand for their Nazism wholly (Espenes 1998). They label themselves nationalists, in order to give themselves a better name, but in reality they are Nazis.

One of the leading male figures of the underground did not reject this view. However, he added that when most of them spoke with me (the researcher) one on one, in a sober condition, most of them did not express more extreme views than what he called 'nationalism light'. However, when drunk, most of them use Fascist salutes (stretching out their right arm) from time to time. Is it possible to say that their 'real' identity is revealed when they are drunk? Or could we rather say that their doubts and objections to the movement-specific knowledge are just as true, and that this is only revealed when talking to me without the others present, as such a situation forces the actor to live up to certain 'radical' beliefs? I suggest that we cannot talk of one of the versions as true and the other as false. On the contrary, this duality is a mark of their ability to live with plural identities.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> This is in accordance with Alvesson and Sköldbberg's (1994) views on the problem of a notion of truth in the sense of correspondence.

It is interesting to see how important it is for the Norwegian radical nationalists *not* to be labelled 'Nazis' despite their open flirtation with Nazi symbols and beliefs. This was a topic they brought up with me all the time during my fieldwork. One activist accused me of calling them all Nazis and Fascists the first time I met him. I replied that I had not called them anything at all (this was on the second evening of my fieldwork). I said that I was interested in learning what they called themselves. I later observed this activist give Nazi salutes. He also turned up in court wearing a Nazi T-shirt.

Another activist who publishes a militant National Socialist fanzine once had tears in his eyes while he talked of everybody calling them neo-Nazis. It seems that the issue is *not* that they in many ways are National Socialists, but that they are not Nazis in the sense that they support the German occupation of Norway or Holocaust. In 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b), I discuss the way they redefine what it means to be a National Socialist (they do not call themselves Nazis, as this is the stigmatic term attributed to them by outsiders). The article examines the ways in which they are influenced by National Socialist ideology, and how they differ from it.

### ***2.3.10 The Swastika – Empty Effect or Loaded with Meaning?***

It is thus particularly the radical nationalists' use of Nazi symbols which make them ambiguous. When they stretch out their right arm and shout *sieg heil* at the same time as they belch and make grimaces (cf. 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b:221)) they appear to be far from Hitler's well-disciplined soldiers. Using the sign this way allows them to create a confusion as to whether or not they stand for this fully, and leads us to ask if they merely are out to create noise<sup>25</sup> or whether they really mean it.

Birmingham scholar Hebdige (1979:116-117) has focused on the homology between the values and life-styles of youth subcultures (see more detailed on this issue in 2.4.1). He agrees that when we focus on a specific aspect of a style, this may cause problems for the picture of a homology. To illustrate this, he points to the punks' use of the swastika. He argues that this symbol was made available to the punks via Bowie and Lou Reed's 'Berlin' phase. It reflected the punks' interest in a decadent and evil Germany - a Germany which had 'no future'. The swastika was useful because it evoked a period which was redolent with a powerful mythology.

According to Hebdige, the swastika lost its 'natural' meaning – Fascism, in punk usage. The punks were not generally sympathetic to the parties of the extreme right. On the contrary, 'the conflict with the resurrected teddy boys and the widespread support for the anti-Fascist movement (e.g. the Rock against Racism campaign) seem to indicate that the punk subculture grew up partly as an antithetical response to the re-emergence of racism in the mid-70s'. Hebdige's conclusion is that the swastika was worn because it was guaranteed to shock. He quotes a punk who argued that 'Punks just like to be hated'.

Hebdige sees this as more than a simple inversion or inflection of the ordinary meanings attached to the object. Rather, 'the signifier (swastika) had been wilfully detached from the concept (Nazism) it conventionally signified, and although it had been re-positioned (as 'Berlin') within an alternative subcultural context, its primary value and appeal derived precisely from its lack of meaning: from its potential for deceit'. According to Hebdige, the swastika was exploited as an *empty* effect, and consequently the central value 'held and reflected' in the swastika was the communicated absence of any identifiable values linked to the symbol.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Hebdige (1979).

In order to keep up with his perspective of homology, Hebdige must consider the swastika an empty effect. However, the swastika is not, as he suggests, a useful symbol for youth rebellion because it lacks content. It is useful because, as a signifier, it has been removed from its reference and *repositioned* into another context. The symbol is thus given new meanings by being placed into a new situation.

The problem with repositioning the swastika is that it is not marked by lack of meaning. It is marked by a *surplus of meaning*, in Ricoeur's (1978:62) sense. The re-contextualisation of the symbol thus creates uneasiness. When young people use this symbol, outsiders start thinking; 'are they Nazis or are they only joking'. If one chooses to reply 'yes' to 'are they joking', one could ask 'is it legal to joke about Nazism?'

The punks managed to be the opposite of Nazis in so many ways that people outside their group believed them when they claimed not to be Nazis. In many respects, the punk style signified *chaos* (anarchy) rather than *order*. In other words, it signified the opposite of Nazism, being an ideology with extremely rigid requirements concerning order.

Young people in a Nazi march, on the other hand, do *not* use Nazi paraphernalia merely to joke or to signify 'no future' (the punks' slogan). Many of the National Socialist skinheads view the punk style (as well as the anarchist Blitz youths) as being too unorderly, whereas the skinheads have more *style* (i.e. more order). These young people imitate the Nazis in so many respects that when they make Fascist salutes and yet claim *not* to be Nazis (at least not in the sense an outsider perceives them), they meet disbelief. At times they do not appear to believe it either (that they are not Nazis). They devote a great deal of space to discussing whether or not they are National Socialists in their fanzines.

These youths also signify a form of rebellion and 'noise' in Hebdige's (1979:90) sense.<sup>26</sup> Hebdige contrasts noise to sound, by defining it as 'interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media'. According to Hebdige, a spectacular subculture has signifying power not only as a metaphor for potential anarchy but 'as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation.'

The swastika is useful for these young people for exactly the same reason it was useful for the punks. It is because acting rebellious and using Nazi symbols creates a shocking effect. This means that when young people make use of Nazi symbols this way, these symbols connote *noise* more than ideology.

This is also evident when we look upon the radical nationalist skinheads' own conceptualisation of their use of symbols. One leading radical nationalist skinhead wrote in his fanzine *Bootboys* (no. 9, 1990) that: 'The truth about skinheads is that they hate everybody'. In other words, instead of like being hated (as one punk claimed to be the case), the radical nationalist skinheads like to hate. In both cases, the swastika seems to signify 'hatred'. In *Fritt Forum* (1996), another leading activist writes that it is exactly because the symbol shocks that it is 'useful to us'.

This shows that for some radical nationalists, and then especially those who adhere to the skinhead lifestyle, it appears to be more important to create noise than to create a consistent political message. This also shows that it is impossible to separate the users of the symbols from their symbolic world. The swastika, for example, has no fixed meaning, regardless of the contexts within which it is used. Those of us who have followed these young people over a lengthy period of time have learned that it is difficult to take their use of these symbols literally.

<sup>26</sup> See also my use of the concept in section 2.3.11.

As I analyse the polysemy in the radical nationalists' practices, instead of reducing all of the different meanings to one coherent whole, the notion of *bricolage* is better than the notion of homology of style. The bricoleur, in Levi-Strauss' sense, uses signs that already have an inherent meaning, but combines them in a new way. The engineer uses empty signs, which can be filled with whatever he wants. There are some conventions about the meaning of things, e.g. the swastika. The swastika is filled with meaning, and is hard (or impossible) to re-figurate as a symbolic icon.<sup>27</sup> The radical nationalists try to invert the meaning of this sign by using it in a different context. However, this sign is not empty enough to do this. (Empty signs are e.g. signs such as X and Y. These signs may be used by the engineer, and may be filled with the meaning one chooses).

The radical nationalists use signs loaded with negative meaning, as these signs to a great extent signify 'enemy'. Consequently, they are sure of being hated by others. They thus have no freedom to put whatever they want into the sign. They do not think *with* the signs, instead the signs think *through* them.

It might be the case that these youths underestimate the force of Nazi symbols, though. Despite their statements concerning their use of the swastika to signify their hatred towards society, it is still representative of the Holocaust to most people. This shows that meaning cannot be separated from its narrative. The radical nationalists believe that they are free to govern over the symbols and the meaning they want to attach to these symbols. However, they soon realise that people in the outside world are not interested in the more nuanced explanations these youths might have concerning their use of Nazi paraphernalia.

These youths *create their own space* by using these symbols, a space which is *not visible or understandable* to people outside their group. Their interaction with the outside world thus has the form of a secret *anti-communication*, which on the other hand is a strong communicative action. They use signs that only have a minor degree of semiotic freedom. The swastika is too heavily bound up to a destructive meaning as a result of the Nazis having adopted the symbol.

We find a form of essentialism which hinders reflexivity when a sign is inevitably linked to one specific reference. This makes the dialogue which Habermas (1984) proposes impossible, because there is no joint stabilising comprehension of the sign. For the outsider, use of the sign means that its user praises the Holocaust. As some of the activists use the swastika, the Nazi salute, the Nazi uniform, and shout racist slogans, they appear to be greatly caught up in the definition of *being* Nazis. They find it difficult to view the activists otherwise.

The radical nationalists' human complexity vanishes because they become nothing but Nazis. In this sense, they appear to be homologous to outsiders. All of their expressions are interpreted in the light of their Nazism. To avoid this, some activists have agreed not to use Nazi symbols. These activists are thus more free to express their message in their own words. Nevertheless, as they participate side by side with activists who use Nazi paraphernalia, outsiders have difficulty (perhaps rightfully) in dissociating them from those activists who are National Socialists. The conclusion must thus be that there is a great deal of confusion. This also applies to the activists

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<sup>27</sup> As Levi-Strauss' (1966) myth-bricoleur, the performer of a subcultural bricolage is also, as pointed out by Clarke (1976b), limited by the existing meaning of the signs within a context. The objects that are used to create a subcultural style not only must already exist, they must also be bearers of the meanings organised in a system and sufficiently coherent so that their relocation and transformation can be understood as a *transformation*. However, there is no point if this new composition looks exactly the same and imparts the same message as the message that already exists.

themselves concerning whether they are National Socialists or not, and how they reflect this externally. In addition, those who claim that they really are National Socialists have problems legitimising their position, due to the atrocities that were committed in the name of National Socialism.

### 2.3.11 Noise

The Birmingham school of youth research, which produced a wide range of studies during the 1970s, has provided some useful concepts which deal with the connection between ideology and style. These scholars focused on the resistance to 'hegemonic culture' by subcultural style. For example, Hebdige (1979) sees subcultural style as a figuratively expression of 'a fundamental tension between those who have power and those condemned to subordinate positions and second-choice life'. Hebdige also conceptualises a distinct subcultural profile as a form of *noise* (ibid. p. 90), which makes up a challenge to the symbolic order. The radical nationalists certainly produce noise which challenges the symbolic order, by their use of Nazi paraphernalia and their use of violence. The terrifying content of this noise means that it cannot be overlooked, no matter how minor the group making it may be.

It is the *symbolic* communication of resistance, which is focused on when we discuss subculture *as* noise. When the resistance takes the form of Nazism, its content cannot be understood as a uniform continuation of Second World War Nazism. To shout 'Sieg Heil' in order to shock has a different meaning than shouting it as a greeting in a dominant system. There is nearly widespread acceptance of these people being 'condemned to subordinate positions and second-choice life' because of their use of such symbols and because of their practices. Naturally, their subordination might change over time, particularly if they break with the subculture, and publicly distance themselves from their former ideas.

Because of the centrality of uniforms, gestures and symbols in the practices of the radical nationalists, we must analyse their dramaturgical performance (Habermas 1984:90)<sup>28</sup>, not only their strategic action when operating underground. This is the reason why subcultural theory provides a useful analytical frame for the study.

The Birmingham researcher's did not solely focus on 'noise' made by progressive youth subcultures. Most of the subcultures described by the Birmingham researchers were working-class, and many of them, including Teddy boys, bikers, skinheads, and the 'lads' described by Willis (1977), used Fascist symbols or proposed racist beliefs. Hebdige (1979) uses the skinhead subculture to exemplify noise. The skinheads use (verbal) noise and violence in order to be recognised.

Much of the noise produced within youth subcultures is non-linguistic, and thus difficult to translate. In the last section, I describe the problems translating the radical nationalists' use of the swastika and the Fascist salute. Another form of non-linguistic messages include tagging, which consists of individual cryptic messages which outsiders cannot possibly understand. The context, the place where the sign is inscribed, is what gives it its meaning.

Symbolic 'noise' is often intended to create chaos by mixing 'map and terrain'. In other words, it inscribes signs in a context which is the opposite of the original one. Racist graffiti often communicates much more one-dimensional messages than other forms of tagging. This graffiti often serves to express territory in the sense of 'you [e.g.

<sup>28</sup> From the perspective of dramaturgical action we understand social action as an encounter in which participants form a visible public for each other and perform for one another (Habermas 1984:90). Strategic action refers to two goal-directed acting subjects who achieve their ends by way of an orientation to, and influence on, the decisions of other actors (ibid. 87-88).



the immigrant] do not belong here'. The message is equally clear in racist violence: 'get out of my way'.

The radical nationalists use graffiti to signal the political groups they adhere to; for example FMI, the abbreviation of *Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring* (the People's Movement against Immigration). There are also painted messages which refer to distinct events, as when they painted 'aldri mer AKV'.<sup>29</sup> In the 1980s, some of them also smeared swastikas on Jewish gravestones. The purpose of such actions is not as clear as when they paint FMI, and thus signal that they are against immigration. They clearly signal a dislike of Jews, but at the same time do they say that the Holocaust was right?

### 2.3.12 *A World of its Own?*

The conspiracy beliefs of the radical nationalists and their use of Nazi gestures and symbols separates them from other young people who adhere to racist or extreme-nationalist ideas. Pedersen (1996), Brox (1991), Hernes and Knudsen (1989) have studied the spread of xenophobia or racism in among people (or youths) in general. These studies might serve as a context within which we might find answers to the question of how common some of the beliefs of the radical nationalists are, when we take into account broader segments of the population.

I will not make any conclusions as to how widespread racism, xenophobia or similar orientations are, with reference to these or other similar studies. The answer to this question depends on how we define these ideologies. Various studies in Norway, e.g. those mentioned above, have reached very different conclusions to how widespread racism is, for example. This is a result of their different methods and different definitions of the terms.

For my purpose, it is sufficient to conclude that some of the radical nationalists' beliefs definitely exist outside the underground. Examples of this are unwillingness to let immigrants into the country and scepticism towards various groups of 'foreigners'. However, the conspiracy theory called ZOG is definitely not found elsewhere. The radical nationalists learn this theory when he enters the underground. It is the conspiratorial way of perceiving the world, and acting towards it, that makes the radical nationalists different from other young people.

Radical Nationalism – Class Continuity or Contravention?

### 2.3.13 *Homologous with the Working-Class?*

Aspects such as Nazi paraphernalia, militant actions, and extreme nationalism are not features approved of by the majority of any class. The majority of young people with the same class background as the radical nationalists do *not* adhere to the same values as these activists. Information about class or other background aspects is not a sufficient explanation of radical nationalism.<sup>30</sup> Rather, their background experiences condition their habitus<sup>31</sup> in a way that makes their way of constructing their lives a possible alternative.

<sup>29</sup> 'Never more AKV'. The abbreviation stands for *Aker kulturverksted*, Aker Cultural Centre, the name they gave a warehouse they rented until anti-Fascist demonstrators demanded that they be evicted. They threatened the landlord, saying that they would destroy the building if he did not annul the contract.

<sup>30</sup> We cannot explain human behaviour in an absolute manner. Hence, no processes can be seen as mere *causal factors*. Human beings, including radical nationalists, are *influenced* rather than determined by their backgrounds. They are not passive victims to background factors.

<sup>31</sup> Differences among people in terms of their political beliefs and practice is partly an expression of their class *habitus* in Bourdieu's (1984) sense of the word. Habitus is a principle which is only partly acknowledged by the individuals themselves. Therefore, habitus is something other than the notion of identity, which is indeed defined out of the self-definition of individuals or groups. Habitus make up the

Another way to say this, is that there is a homology between their lifestyle and the social space within which they are positioned (cf. Bourdieu (1984). However, as I will argue throughout the following chapter, we must partly depart from an explanation of homology when talking of radical nationalists (at least the ones in Norway). The reason for this is that in most of the cases they are not homologous to their parents' lifestyle. In other words, their adherence to a militant underground in some respects reflected a break with their class habitus as incorporated through the social circumstances they grew up within.

On the other hand, this is not a very big break. Something in their social background makes the entrance to this underground a viable alternative for them. These aspects of their background might also make entrance to several other groups attractive. Thus, no background *leads* into this underground alone. There must thus be something in their habitus that make the radical nationalist actions, thoughts, and aspirations possible, appropriate and valuable and not impossible, unbearable, improper or contemptuous (cf. Broady (1990:236), yet at the same time these same aspects might also have made similar actions, aspirations, etc. possible. However, this connection to habitus cannot solely be related to class habitus, as there are some (although very few) radical nationalists in Norway who have a different class background than the others.

The habitus of some citizens is valued higher than the habitus of other citizens. The valuation of habitus can change from group to group. Capital includes all skills, relations, and properties that are acknowledged as valuable in the social world. Some forms of habitus can almost never function as capital at all or only as long as the individual moves within certain groups. The habitus of the radical nationalists only counts as capital whenever they move within their own underground world.<sup>32</sup>

A class explanation alone will therefore never explain *why* some young men and women are attracted to this kind of underground. Hence, the orientation of the radical nationalists cannot be explained by class habitus in Bourdieu's (1984) terms alone. On the other hand, Birmingham scholar Hall (1980) argues that while racism cannot be reduced to class relations, one cannot explain it independently of them (Solomos and Back 1996).

The Birmingham researchers have developed a theorisation of the link between youth subcultural style and class background. By combining of the concept of homology with the concept of *bricolage* (see my discussion of this concept in the

symbolic (through movement, taste and appearance) and direct (through speak) communication of the person towards his surroundings.

Habitus thus defines how the person will be viewed by others. In this way, habitus is thus an instance between the individual and his surroundings. It is the result of how the individual communicates with his surroundings. Nevertheless, Bourdieu points out that there is no automatic relationship between people as social categories and the surrounding society. His notion of habitus serves to illustrate the way in which he views the relationship between the individual and society. Habitus is a collection of relatively stable dispositions deeply rooted in the individual. When an individual reacts towards his environment, classifies it, says something about it or acts upon it, this behaviour is formed by his habitus.

Habitus is rooted in early experiences. It is formed as internalised impact from one's position in the social space (the social-economical field), and this internalisation is deeply stocked and mostly unconscious. Habitus is history transformed into nature, a past living further into the present and tending to extend into the future. A problem with the concept of habitus is that we can put almost whatever we want into it, and that it appears as if even the unconscious is rational.

<sup>32</sup> In unpredictable everyday situations during early childhood, within the family, and at school the individual's practical skills are formed. Social conditions are stored within us. Bourdieu has emphasised that history exists both in reified condition (in the form of buildings, institutions, laws, etc.) and in embodied condition. The theory of habitus is thus incompatible with a model that sees human beings as bearers of exterior norms or structures.

previous chapter) Hall et al. wanted to provide a systematic conceptualisation of *why a particular subcultural style should appeal to a particular group of people*. They asked 'What specifically does a subcultural style signify to the members of the subculture themselves?' (Hebdige 1979:114). This is a question I examine in 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a).

According to Hall and his colleagues, the answer is that the appropriated objects reassembled in the distinctive subcultural ensembles were 'made to reflect, express and resonate' (Hall 1976; Hebdige 1979:114) aspects of group life. The objects chosen were either intrinsically or in their adapted forms, *homologous* with the focal concerns, activities, group structure, and collective self-image of the subculture. They were 'objects' in which the subcultural members could 'see their central values held and reflected' (Hall 1976).

These researchers thus argue that youth subcultures are homologous with the class cultures they are rooted in. As Hebdige (1979:113) defines it, *homology* is 'The symbolic fit between the values and lifestyles of a group, its subjective experience and the musical forms it uses to express or reinforce its focal concerns'. Originally, homology means equality of form. In other words, the subcultures represent certain *core values* of the youths' parental culture. Hebdige thus uses the concept in a delimited form, meaning the equality between the values and the life-styles of a group, and, elsewhere, the values of youth subcultures and the values of the youths' (working-class) parent cultures.

### 2.3.14 *The Homology of English Skinheads*

Those of the activists who are more subculturally defined relate themselves to the images of English working-class revered in the skinhead lifestyle. Because of these activists' partly adoption of this style, it is interesting to see whether the Birmingham researchers' theorisation of this subculture is relevant also when analysing Norwegian radical nationalist skinheads. Therefore, I will go into some crucial points of the Birmingham scholar's analyses of the English skinheads.

These researchers stated that skinheads exemplified the principle of homology, as they thought the skinhead subculture was one of the most full-fledged expressions of working-class identity. Hebdige (1979:114) wrote that the skinheads only considered their boots, braces, and cropped hair appropriate and hence meaningful because this style communicated the core values of 'hardness, masculinity and working-classness'.

According to Hebdige, these qualities were expressed in every aspect of being a skinhead - their uniform, music, way of living, and attitudes. This lifestyle made up a 'meaningful whole' and represented what Hebdige (1979:55) calls a 'lumped' identity.' This lifestyle was based on a somewhat mythical image of the traditional working-class community with its classic focal concerns, its acute sense of territory, its tough exteriors (Hebdige 1979:55), and its 'odour of machismo' (Cohen 1972). Clothing,<sup>33</sup> appearance, language, rituals (beer drinking, watching football and street fights), styles of interaction (rough joking), and rock music (oi)<sup>34</sup> were symbols made to form a *unity*

<sup>33</sup> 'Cropped hair, braces, short, wide Levi jeans or functional sta-pret trousers, plain or striped button-down Ben Sherman shirts and highly polished Doctor Martens boots' (Hebdige 1979:55).

<sup>34</sup> Oi is the hard rock typical of the skinhead subculture. Oi rock grew out of the punk rock style, and has a great deal in common with it. However, many oi rock bands have ties to the so-called white power version of the skinhead subculture. They thus play songs with racist or National Socialist lyrics. Some of their favourite white power oi rock bands are *Skrewdriver*, *Brutal Attack*, *No Remorse*, and *Celtic Warriors*.

with the group's relations, situation, and experiences. Cohen (1972) wrote that these aspects expressed a 'caricature of a model worker'.<sup>35</sup>

Clarke (1976a) found that the skinheads' main focus was to recover the sense of territoriality and locality which had been prevalent in the working-class of the past. Former working-class quarters provided a sense of community which no longer existed because of the encroachment of speculators and city planners. The skinheads thus insisted on a sense of community, which commercialisation, professionalism, and speculation had made impossible. The lifestyle of the original English skinheads was thus their reaction to a class society in decline, and the break up of local working-class quarters.

Clarke (1976a) points out that the intense violence linked at the skinhead style was evidence of the *recreation of community* taking the form of *magic* or *imagery*. This is because it was created without the material and organisational basis for social control which characterised such communities, according to Clarke (1976a:99). The skinhead style represented an attempt to re-create the traditional working-class community through the 'mob'. Clarke (1976a) wrote that the social dynamic that preceded the skinhead style was the relative worsening situation of the working-class, during the second half of the 1960s. The rapidly worsening situation of the lower working-class was particularly important. This produced a return to an intensified *us-them consciousness* among young lower working-class people.

The skinheads felt *excluded* and under attack from a variety of places. The resources to deal with this sense of exclusion were found in images and behaviour which stressed a more traditional form of collective solidarity. The behaviour associated with the pub, the football terraces, and the street served as territories which could be linked to the collective. The skinheads thus re-established a *sense of community* by turning these places into 'their' areas, and defending them from intruders. According to Clarke (1976a), they inherited their images of territoriality, collective action, masculinity, and male dominance from their parent culture. The skinhead style was thus a 'magical recovery of community'.

Hebdige (1979) argues that *territoriality*, *collective solidarity* and *masculinity* are three interrelated elements, which may be understood as means used by the (male) skinheads in order to recreate the inherited imagery of the community. This happened at a time in England when increasing oppression led to a need for mutual organisation and defence. These three elements are important contents of many groups which value street-life. The two first elements, territoriality and collective solidarity might also be seen as integral parts of the constitution of communities in general and national states in particular. In the skinhead style the Birmingham scholars saw both the element of continuity (in terms of the content - of core values of the style), and discontinuity (in terms of its form), between the parent culture and youth subculture.

### 2.3.15 *The Lack of Homology among Norwegian radical Nationalists*

Norwegian radical nationalists similarly idealise territoriality and collective solidarity even though they have not experienced these social forms in the areas they grew up in. In contrast to the original English skinheads, they did not, experience the break up of local communities. They grew up in areas where social integration was already lacking. Most of them have not experienced the collective solidarity of the 'shop-floor culture', as discussed by Willis (1979).

Their idealisation of homogenous communities is thus *even more* based on a *magical* recovery than that of the original English skinheads. Their magical recovery of

<sup>35</sup> In the next passage we will discuss whether this style also reflects Norwegian working-class images.

community is also only partly linked to a picture of the working-class community. What is of even greater significance is their idealisation of various former cults of male bonding, including their image of the tribes of Viking men.

Even though some of them express an identity with the working-class, this identity less defined in relation to their occupational situation. The skinheads studied by Clarke talked of everyone who tried to boss them. Most of the radical nationalists work only occasionally or are permanently on the dole. Their verbalisation of the working-class is thus much more closely linked to a sense of being at the *bottom* of the social hierarchy, and standing 'at the back of the line' (see 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a)).<sup>36</sup> Their less outspoken working-class identity also has to do with the fact that Norway has never been as urbanised and industrialised as England. Historically, the peasantry has been a far more important class in Norway.

For want of a good model in Norway, those among the radical nationalists who are skinheads import a subcultural style originally created in England. As I argue in 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c), their sense of being working-class is a reinvention of the skinhead lifestyle as lived out in pubs, on the football-terraces, and in the streets. They idealise territoriality out of a sense of not having any local roots. They construct an *idealised* picture of the past.

The Norwegian radical nationalists are not homologous with any class faction of Norwegian society. They adhere to a lifestyle that *differs* from their parent culture both in its content (neo-nationalism or Fascism) and in its form (militancy, skinhead uniforms, violence).

### 2.3.16 *The Class Backgrounds of the Radical Nationalists*

Although the lifestyle and beliefs of the radical nationalists break with established conventions and are thus not typical of any class in Norway, class is an important analytical tool in my articles. The reason is that most of the radical nationalists come from similar backgrounds. Most of them come from families where the father carries out manual rather than intellectual work.

The fathers of the radical nationalists are painters, carpenters, tilers, bricklayers, road maintenance workers, etc. The father of one of the activists is a teacher. However, he teaches physical education (and is a boxing trainer). He is thus also occupied with physical strength rather than abstract knowledge. Most of the activists grew up in small towns, often rural areas. Even so, almost none of them have parents who are farmers.<sup>37</sup>

Several of the fathers own their own one-man businesses. They are thus marked by the competitiveness which is characteristic of the petit bourgeois; i.e. at the same time as they fail the collective solidarity of the traditional working-class.<sup>38</sup> They belong to the class of small capitalists and self-employed tradesmen. This class is marked by a combination of the interests of the bourgeoisie and the working-class. As these fathers perform manual labour, they are marked by an emphasis on qualities we could define as working-class, such as physical strength and masculine hubris (Willis 1977), and manual skills plays a superior role to abstract knowledge.

<sup>36</sup> This was also the case with several youths from Vennesla who committed violence against refugees. See Carlsson and Lippe (1997:6).

<sup>37</sup> In the 1930s, the peasantry gave the greatest support to the National Socialist Party in Norway. However, the predominance of working-class and manual petit-bourgeois background among the radical nationalists might imply that Lipset's (1960) argument that it is the working-class that tends to such ideas in the post-war era, holds also in Norway.

<sup>38</sup> The traditional thesis of fascism as a *petit bourgeois revolt* (Dahl 1972) is partly confirmed by my material.

In other words, nearly all of the activists are either working-class or petit bourgeois in terms of their parental background. Those who are petit bourgeois are mostly also adapted to a form of *working-class culture*, as their fathers generally carry out manual labour. According to Carlsson and Von der Lippe (1997:6), the mark of a strong working-class culture is that next generation does not educate themselves out of the class. In communities such as the one they studied, young people could find work after they had completed the mandatory nine years at school. Until the late 1980s, minor formal education gave access to work, income, housing, and goods for consumption. This road into labour life was for many blocked by the entrance to the 1990s. This has created frustration and insecurity in face of the future.

The radical nationalist youths do not educate themselves out of their class. On the contrary, some of them are downwardly mobile, as they work only occasionally, and have less control of their own work-place than their fathers. None of them own their own businesses. In terms of their *own* class-position, all of the radical nationalist activists belong either to the working-class, doing occasional labour or the lumped proletariat (they live on the dole). Only a handful of activists study at university or college. In other words, not many students who are Fascists,<sup>39</sup> if one takes the participants of the radical nationalist underground into consideration. There may be many student Fascists in other countries, but in contemporary Norway this is not the case, except for a handful of individuals.

The picture was a different one in the late 1970s when the 'neo-nationalist' movement emerged in Norway. Several of the initiators studied at university, and held meetings there. This shows that the link between adhering to this ideology and undertaking manual labour is not an inevitable one.

The more rowdy, militant version of this movement, especially in the form of 'nationalist' skinheads, has greater ties to the working-class or the manual part of the petit bourgeoisie. The activists are not typical petit bourgeois, almost none of them are upwardly mobile. They strive to stay where they are or are even downwardly mobile, as many of them refuse to work at all.

### 2.3.17 *Anti Middle-Class Consciousness*

Instead of saying that the radical nationalist movement resembles a transformation of working-class culture (as the Birmingham scholars say that the skinhead subculture does), we could say that some of the radical nationalists verbalise themselves in terms of an anti-class. A few of them talk of themselves as part of a working-class culture. For example, one activist replied to my question of whether he saw it as a paradox that they, the right-wing, met at pubs surrounding the marketplace of the Norwegian (Labour Party-governed) working-class movement. The boy I asked replied that this scene is 'the *real* Norwegian labour movement. They who call themselves the labour movement in Norway, the Labour party for example, are only corrupt capitalists'.

However, other activists view their radical nationalist lifestyle as a contrast to middle-class lifestyles. Their class consciousness is more like an *anti-concept*. Their protest is thus less class defined than that of Willis' lads. Instead of defining themselves with the working-class, they first and foremost define themselves as *a contrast* to office desk men. Their stigmatised identity is not only defined ideologically, it is also defined as a contrast to convention and, perhaps more importantly middle-class careers.

In this way, to the extent that the radical nationalists have a class consciousness, this consciousness is not primarily defined in relation to the actual job they have. Instead they adopt a style which is seen as a *contrast to middle-class lifestyles*. At times this

<sup>39</sup> Article in *Universitas* 1999.

anti-concept takes the form of envy towards those people who had everything handed to them on a platter.

An example of this is an activists who once talked about the snobs (*sossene*) in his class whose parents never let them do anything, and whose entire education was paid for by their parents. In contrast, he had to work at a bakery during his school years. In other words, he had to earn his own living from an early age, while others had great opportunities without doing anything to deserve them. On the other hand, they had to be nice and decent, whereas he was allowed to run wild.

The radical nationalists define themselves as a contrast to those people who only strive for personal achievement. Instead they set store by individual activists proving loyalty to the others. This means that if one (by accident) comes into a great deal of money, he should share it with the others. They thus have an almost *socialist* orientation. Some of them also claim, as mentioned previously that they are more left-wing than right-wing. This applies particularly to those who call themselves National Socialists, and emphasise the socialism of the term.

Traditionally, the Norwegian working-class has been associated with puritanism (not beer drinking and street fighting), doing a decent job, and not standing out from the crowd. Having a job is commonly seen as one of the most valuable things in life in Norway. However, doing a decent job is certainly not part of the life-world of many of the radical nationalists (although it is for some of them). Most of them only have occasional jobs, which are paid under the table.

The virtue of not standing out of the crowd, is well-known aspect of working-class culture in other countries as well (Bourdieu 1984). However, this aspect is often understood as typical of Norwegian culture, described by author Axel Sandemose in *Janteloven* (the Jante Law).<sup>40</sup> One of its tenets is 'you should not think you are better than others'. By looking different, skinheads certainly stand out. On the other hand, being one among many participants of the skinhead group, means being one of the mass. One does not emphasise one's individuality but remains loyal to the collective.

### 2.3.18 Stereotypes of the Norwegian Working-Class

The stereotypes related to the working-class in England differ in many respects from Norwegian stereotypes. In Norway, the working-class has become glorified, first by Labour politician Gerhardsen, later by communist politicians such as Trond Øgrim. One might say that the radical nationalists have chosen a *third way* of glorifying the working-class. They do this *not* by seeing it as the building stone of the welfare state, *nor* by seeing it as a revolutionary force against capitalism, but by seeing it as a prototype of an *instinctual* fundamental version of masculinity and the fight against the multi-cultural society.

However, some of the radical nationalists' construction of working-classness in the form of the skinhead lifestyle has little to do with any previous manifestations of the working-class in Norway. These members of the Norwegian radical nationalist underground strongly base their sense of masculinity on the ideals of the English skinhead subculture. This particular English vision of a proletarian identity appears to be more attractive to them than the local images of masculinity.

Apparently this style connotes toughness and a rough appearance in Norway as well. This lifestyle is a contrast to middle-class lifestyles, even though traditional workers do not dress and behave that way in this country. The radical nationalists' violence and xenophobia has thus more in common with various rural youth gangs, as described by Jørgensen (1994) and Eidheim (1993).

<sup>40</sup> Although Jante was a town in Denmark.

### 2.3.19 How Class Conditions Political and Lifestyle Preferences

Bourdieu (1984) has shown that people's lifestyle and political preferences vary systematically along social divisions. People's values and beliefs thus in important respects reflect their social backgrounds. Following Bourdieu's terminology, class background is incorporated into our bodies in the form of habitus. This is not to say that structures stand outside us, and determine what we will think and do. Rather, they work *through* us, as they are embodied in the way we act and react to our surroundings through socialisation.<sup>41</sup> Practice is the product of the meeting between a certain *habitus* and the social setting.

Our choice of political orientation is hence based on the values that are congruent with the schemes of disposition we already bring with us. Few people choose political directions that represent a total break with the class-related experiences they have incorporated into their way of being. However, the question remains whether this theory accounts for people who break with conventional ways of behaviour for people with the same class background. Bourdieu does not write about revolutionaries or other people who go to the extremes. He has referred to people who vote for Le Pen. However, this is more a conventional than a revolutionary trend in contemporary France. Bourdieu (1984:456) suggests that the extreme right recruits strongly from the *petit bourgeois*. According to him, repressive divisions are typical of small independent craftsmen.

As Fascism might be one expression of such a 'repressive divisions', Bourdieu's argument thus supports the traditional interpretation of Fascism as a *petit bourgeois* revolt (Dahl 1972). This is not to say that radical nationalists or anybody else, are totally determined by their class background. They, like everybody else, are social actors who are both influenced by, and themselves influence, their surroundings.<sup>42</sup>

There are many ways one can construct oneself as working-class or as *petit bourgeois*, as class cultures in contemporary society are not easily defined and the content of being working-class or *petit bourgeois* changes continuously. As many radical nationalists report that the radical nationalist underground was the first environment where they felt at home, there must be some correspondence between their class-rooted background experiences and the values of this underground. One feels at home when one's habitus is in congruence with one's social setting. Some of the young people who enter the radical nationalist scene clearly do not feel this congruence strongly enough, and leave after a while. Those who chose to stay, however, must feel that the values they already hold in some way or other match the stigmatised knowledge of the other activists.

Although there is an element of choice, the collective identities of the radical nationalist underground are more attractive to young people with particular backgrounds. The sense of homelessness and instability is often described as an universal condition of our time, (see section 2.8.2). However, the ability to cope with such conditions might vary, depending on the resources one has been given in one's social setting, as I have shown in *The New Youths of Germany* (Fangen 1992:93).

To grow up in an turbulent home might be a minor problem for a young person who lives in a local environment with many facilities for young people and other stable adults around who may provide some of the security and care one would receive at home in other circumstances. On the other hand, the sense of instability in young people

<sup>41</sup> Bourdieu's action theory moves beyond the dichotomies of subject and object, understanding and practical mastering, voluntarism and determinism (Solli 1996:21).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Helland and Krange's (1996:244-245) wise argumentation against social scientists who think all references to culture should be discarded.



who grow up in communities with few facilities might accompany a sense of resentment and hatred, and a quest for identity, respect, excitement and community. A disruption of the feeling of stability may lead to a need for strong us-them divisions in order to reactivate a sense of congruency. Surprisingly many of the radical nationalists come from local environments with few services for young people. However, there are exceptions to this picture. Local environments can therefore never provide an explanation of why young people enter the radical nationalist underground.<sup>43</sup>

### 2.3.20 Transformation of Contradictions in Parent Culture

A manner in which we can analyse radical beliefs that are clearly different from that shared by the majority, is by seeing them as pointing to more general conflicts in society. The extreme orientations of a minority might thus represent a possible chosen reaction towards a difficult situation; that is, a tendency that could be followed by others whose situation and background are fairly similar. Similarly, the Birmingham researchers argue that a subculture will ‘...express and resolve, albeit magically, the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture’ (Cohen 1972:82).<sup>44</sup>

We can thus read individual life stories, as I have done in ‘On the Margins of Life’ (Fangen 1999b), as possible reactions to the background experiences of these individuals. These background experiences partly reflect the class-based position of the parents. Although joining the radical nationalists and acquiring their stigmatised knowledge clearly is not a common reaction, this reaction might hence be seen as one of many possible answers to a background which is similar to that of these activists. This is how Bourdieu (1984) describes individual deviance.

Cohen (1972:82) states similarly that skinheads try to work out the basic problematic or contradiction which is inserted in the subculture by the parent culture, through a system of transformations. On a psychological level, this argument is similar to that of Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1984), who says that children might become delegates of the unresolved (and often unconscious) problems of the parents, they interpret and openly express conflicts their parents are not fully aware of.

None of the radical nationalists I have talked with idealise their parents.<sup>45</sup> They seem to have a somewhat distanced relation to their parents, and view them realistically, but without very strong affection. They also seem to be loyal to the parents in the sense that they do not want to share private details about them. This might also be a result of their self-perception as being part of working-class culture, as seen in ‘Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions’ (Fangen 1998c).

They might refer to their previous state as socially inhibited, but not talk about themselves as victims of an absent father figure. They do not mind that others interpret them in light of their previous membership in criminal gangs and their inability to

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<sup>43</sup> Some of the environments where radical nationalists have committed acts of violence have improved the number of services for young people after these events became publicly known. These communities have thus diminished the resentment and sense of exclusion of young radical nationalists who committed the acts of violence, see Carlsson and Lippe (1997) and my discussion of this in appendix 2.

<sup>44</sup> Some of these analyses of the Birmingham scholars are partly functionalist. For example, Phil Cohen argues that the *latent function* of the subculture is to solve unresolved problems in the parental culture. This kind of argument is clearly inspired by earlier work by criminologists of the Chicago school. I interpret the radical nationalists in what is perhaps a less functionalist manner than these earlier works, as I do not speak of the latent function of their subculture, nor do I view their practice as a uniform expression of class-culture.

<sup>45</sup> According to Adorno et al. (1950), to idealise one’s parents is a typical trait of the ‘authoritarian personality’.

manage school. However, they do not approve of being interpreted psychoanalytically as passive victims of repressed drives and needs, and of a traumatic parental upbringing.

Several of the radical nationalists react against the disintegration of their families. However, they do not blame their families. They blame the break up of tradition in contemporary culture. We could call their reaction *rebellious traditionalism*. They react against what they perceive as cultural disruption and decline. Such a situation might lead to hedonism or, alternatively, to emphasis on the small cultic unit, the brotherhood of like-minded men (see 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a)).

As only a few of the Norwegian radical nationalists have parents who themselves are or have been participants in radical nationalist groups, their transformation is not directly a transfer of group belonging or ideological conviction. In 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b), I discuss the extent to which there has been a transfer of ideas from parents to child in the lives of four radical nationalists. However, Cohen does not primarily discuss the transformation of ideological or political idea. He looks at the transformation of certain core values of the parent culture as reflected in the youths' lifestyle. Following his argument, could we then say that Norwegian radical nationalist activists transform their parents' core values or do they oppose these values, and produce opposite ones? Could we see the radical nationalist subculture as a solution to problems that are not addressed explicitly in the activists' parent culture? Some core values of the activists, such as preserving national culture, are represented in much of their parents' thought.

### 2.3.21 *Opposition to the Ideals of the 1968 generation*

The orientation of the radical nationalists is in opposition to the ideals of the so-called 1968 generation. Yet, only a few of them have parents who believed in the values of that generation (sexual liberty and the fight for peace). By contrast, the nationalist activists are concerned with the preservation of the family and with defence of the nation.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, for many of them, preserving the family is an idealisation rather than a reflection of what they experienced during childhood, as many of them have come from broken homes (like very many other young people their age). Some of them even join nationalist underground movements in other countries.

These young people express the frustrations of contemporary world in an extreme form. Contemporary social scientists<sup>47</sup> describe western societies as marked by rapid changes, a dissolution of norms and traditions, huge flows of information, large groups of people on the move between nations, the disintegration of national borders, pollution which may lead to disastrous changes in climate, and economic instability. This condition, whether we call it post-modern, late-modern or post-industrial, leads to a sense of an unpredictable future, ambivalence and multiple lifestyle choices (cf. Ziehe (1981)).

Not all young people take the advantage of such an unstable and insecure era. The radical nationalists' reaction towards this instability is nostalgia and idealisation of clear-cut us-them distinctions (cf. 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c)). They idealise the past and try to reverse the break with tradition by preserving it. Unlike many other young people in this era, they do not become fatalists and live an anomic lifestyle. They idealise discipline,<sup>48</sup> and react by trying to hold on to the past.

<sup>46</sup> In this regard, they are similar to members of the Mafia, who react against disintegration of their families and who also are very nostalgic.

<sup>47</sup> See section 2.8.2.

<sup>48</sup> Although many of them are unable to live disciplined lives in any sensible way. Instead they live with their destructive instincts.

The strategy of the radical nationalist subculture is *not* political activism (although this was the case of the extra-parliamentary parties that made up their precursors, see appendix 3). They do not hold demonstrations or make public speeches in order to explicitly address what they want. They address the problem in a much more non-linguistic and implicit manner. They shock, threaten, commit violence, and thus produce uneasiness in others. Their approach is thus understood as symbolic rather than political. It is a-rational (instinctual) rather than rational. It is performative rather than strategic.

This is also what sets the subcultural form apart from the more political and strategic initiative. Elder 'neo-nationalists' in Norway<sup>49</sup> criticise the contemporary flora of more brutal and disorganised radical nationalist activists of being unserious, and hindering 'the cause' rather than serving it. These elder 'neo-nationalists' (in their forties), are not out for excitement and provocation. They are politically involved out of what they conceive of as concern for their nation, its traditions, and roots. The young activists snort at the criticism from these elders. They argue that they do not want to gain legitimacy in broad segments of the population. In other words, their aim is to produce *noise* (cf. Hebdige (1979), rather than to work purposefully in the direction of certain political goals.

### 2.3.22 *Supermarket of Style rather than Subcultural Structure*

By focusing on the 'meaningful whole' and subcultural *structure*, the Birmingham researchers become blind towards the multiple and often contradicting meanings of youth subcultures, as pointed out by Bjurström (1997). For example, Hebdige (1979:113) argues that 'internal structure of any particular subculture is characterised by an extreme orderliness: each part is organically related to other parts and it is through the fit between them that the subcultural member makes sense of the world'.

This is a huge generalisation, as it is not self-evident that any subculture is marked by orderliness to such a strong degree. When young people adapt a certain style, they do this because the style seems to reflect some of their core values. However, it seems that contemporary styles are made up of much more fragmentation than Hebdige accounts for. It might also be that the youth subcultural styles of the 1990s are more fragmented than the youth subcultures of the 1970s, as studied by Hebdige and his colleagues. According to scholars of post-modernism (and similar directions), this is precisely the trend in contemporary western societies. Lifestyles are not as congruent and one-dimensional as earlier (Melucci 1989; Polhemus 1994; Ziehe 1981). Many youth subcultures during the past few decades have been marked by the tendency to put objects together in a disordered fashion (see Polhemus 1994). It is no longer particularly evident that they signal one-dimensional class-identities in an ambiguous way. Style in the contemporary western world signifies the rapid changing and fragmented feeling of a world which lacks strict boundaries. This is a world where identities change all the time, and where many young people become *nomads* (Melucci 1989) who can change from milieu to milieu without great difficulty. Polhemus (1994) calls these new trends of transgressing the boundaries the *supermarket of style*.

The supermarket analogy is useful since the radical nationalists have picked up fragments of ideology from different sources, and use elements of style with contradictory references. There are many particularities of this subculture that depart from a unifying logic. These elements represent breaks with the uniform impression rather than congruence with it.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. one of the core activists from Norwegian Front and Norwegian people's Party, see section 3.

This may be most evident when looking at Norwegian 'nationalist' *skinheads*. They have adopted and transformed a lifestyle in such a way that it makes up a bricolage of a whole range of elements derived from totally different contexts. These youths adopt different ideologies selectively. The end-product is a combination of fragmented stories. They incorporate elements of Nazism, the US south, Norwegian rural communities, and English skinhead subculture.

According to the Birmingham researchers, the skinhead uniform originally served to symbolise the English 'model-worker' (Cohen 1972). Still, no traditional model worker in Norway looks like a skinhead. A stereotyping of a Norwegian model worker would imply wearing overalls (or, when thinking of workers during the previous century, the *busserull* (a typical Norwegian workman's shirt) and the *vadmelsbukse* (frieze trousers)).

When we look at the Norwegian radical nationalist skinheads' style in terms of their definition of themselves as 'nationalists' we see heterology rather than homology. The skinhead activists talk of *conserving national tradition*. However, when asked what parts of Norwegian culture they wish to conserve, they reply 'the Viking culture' or 'the beer culture'. They seldom mention aspects often associated with Norwegian nationalism, such as nature, the national costume, music or other classical traditions. The skinheads place more importance on the 'working-class culture' or the 'homogeneous working-class society'.<sup>50</sup>

The skinheads activists do not see it as a paradox that they, as nationalist Norwegians, who want to conserve working-class culture, actually adopt both music and uniform from ideal-types<sup>51</sup> of English working-class subcultures, and in this sense are multi-cultural themselves. Other activists who do not approve of this 'non-serious' skinhead version of nationalism tend to focus more on Norwegian habits and language. They thus use more common nationalist arguments for why they oppose immigration and multi-cultural society.

The Norwegian radical nationalist skinheads are nostalgic, like the English skinheads, and they long for a community that they associate with the past. However, their nostalgia in terms of the era seems to be more homologous with their style and behaviour than their nostalgia with past working-class communities. Drinking, fighting, and behaving in a prototypically masculine way clearly resembles our images of the Viking culture, but does not to any great extent resemble Norwegian working-class culture.

### 2.3.23 Polysemy of Expression

For outsiders, the radical nationalists appear to be extremely homologous. However, when we study the utterances, uniforms, symbols, and practices of the radical nationalists in greater detail, it is the *polysemy* (Ricoeur 1978:113), the many possible meanings, of the style that is most apparent. The style is more heterologous than homologous.<sup>52</sup> A more proper focus would be to use Turner's (1967) metaphor of the *semantic fan*. Here, every part of the fan represents one homology, whereas the fan in its totality is not homologous. Different themes are related and have a common core. If we exaggerate the presence of homologies the deeper structure vanishes. Thus, in his emphasis on homologies, Hebdige rejects the polysemy (Ricoeur 1978:113) of things.

<sup>50</sup> In 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c), I discuss the way the Birmingham researchers view the skinhead subculture as a kind of recovery of an earlier working-class existence (Clarke 1976a). I point to aspects of the radical nationalist skinheads' style that might be considered homologous to this.

<sup>51</sup> In the sense of the word given by Weber (1922).

<sup>52</sup> Bjurström (1997) gives an overview of different uses of the notion of heterology. Bataille defines heterology as the science of the Other, which breaks against and is emitted from a homogeneous and unifying logic.

Bjurström (1997:78) criticises the Birmingham scholars as the distinction between the subcultural style and its bearers is rather fluid in their analyses. The reason why they found so many homologies may be that most of their studies are not based on ethnographic work. Instead they are 'readings' of these subcultures from the outside. When people talk about their own lifestyle, contradictions and inconsistencies often appear.

My focus is on the bearers of style, and their interpretations of their style, their practice, and their beliefs, not so much style as something on its own. This different focus may be the reason why I see heterology rather than homology. It is tempting to give a detailed description of all of the individuals of the scene, in order to describe the many available roles to be fulfilled in such a setting. Such a broad description would scotch the myth of the radical nationalist underground as a homogeneous group.

## 2.4 Concepts of Honour and Masculinity

### 2.4.1 Honour Codes among Male Activists

*Honour* plays an important part in the collective identity of male radical nationalists. By defining themselves according to larger units such as people, nation and race, they see themselves as honourable fighters for honourable aims. In very general terms, honour – which they often conceptualise in relation to their image of broad abstract entities such as nation, race, etc. – is the quality that counts among them. It defines what they find worth fighting for.

In other words, their underground is a form of *honour-based culture* (Bay 1989). Such cultures are often hierarchically divided, and men of less honour use different gestures to honour those of higher status. For example, a man of high honour might receive gifts and money from men of less honour. This is evident in many traditional cultures, like in the Mediterranean.

In male-dominated subcultures such as the biker subculture and the radical nationalist underground, the same features can be seen, for example, when a member of high status receives beer from less experienced members. I have described this type of confirmation of status in 'Death-Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a). I also show that, the positions within the milieu are not that clearly defined. Younger activists therefore often challenge the position and status of leading figures.

The participants say they fight for the honour of their nation and their own group. With militant anti-Fascists as opponents, they are able to live out their dream of being at war. They legitimise their own violence by past affronts from the anti-Fascists. The working-class identity of many of the male activists also shapes their specific view of masculinity as being linked to physical strength.

Some of the radical nationalists are fascinated by the skinhead lifestyle, and identify themselves in contrast to middle-class values and career choices. They do not see honour as gained through education and a career, but through physical strength, discipline, and a collective attitude defined by loyalty to one's group. Honour is the quality that guides the radical nationalists' actions. It is thus a core concept in understanding why young men and women join the radical nationalist underground.

### 2.4.2 Subcultural Capital or Ideological Capital

As the radical nationalist underground is not a political organisation per se, but rather of a form of ideological youth subculture, in addition to the focus on ideology we need a perspective which grasps the connection between ideology, status, and *style*. For some of the radical nationalists, ideology is subordinate to their interest in style. Even those who do not regard themselves as skinheads are interested in stylish matters.

Familiarity with stylish matters may lead to high status, and disputes regarding the appropriate style often implicitly serve as negotiations about status. For example older skinheads may shout loud remarks to boys whose hair is too long or who wear for example a scarf that looks too outlandish. Such comments function as inside jokes, and also set the tone for how one should look and act.

From the outside, radical nationalist skinheads look quite similar to anti-racist skinheads. In some respects their lifestyle resembles the lifestyles of bikers, football hooligans and Satanists. However, people who participate in these groups consider the differences between them to be of major importance, and small variations in the use of symbols and appearances are linked to distinctions of great value for them. To be able to recognise and act upon these differences is a matter of, if not life and death, then certainly a matter of their very self-definition.

These distinctions should not be confused, although they *could* be joked about. However, for these people, subculture is not only a play, it is related to their very identity. Style and symbols are crucial in distinguishing friend from enemy. Thus both the radical nationalists and the anti-Fascists publish detailed lists of the adversaries' use of symbols, so that they will be certain to beat up the right person when they meet him in the street. (cf. *Antifascistisk Aksjon* No. 8, 1996).

Much attention is also paid to style within radical nationalist groups. It could be said that there is an eternal dispute about the symbolic definition of the *subcultural capital* (to make a follow-up on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital). Some boys are clearly in a more authoritative position to define this capital than others are. Moreover, most of the boys are in a better position to define it than most of the girls. However, to some extent the girls develop their own style. Furthermore, they all take part in the general justification of the practices, merely by being part of the game.

Within some of the radical nationalist groups, those who score high on subcultural capital, are those who come closest to the leading roles. In other groups, those with the most ideological knowledge gain most influence. Ideology might thus serve as one form of symbolic capital. Among those activists who are skinheads, however, 'subcultural capital' counts nearly as much as 'militant capital' or 'ideological capital', if one could name it in this way. The leading figure among the radical nationalist skinheads is a person who was labelled by some politically neutral skinheads as the most serious of them.

The skinhead lifestyle thus has a life of its own. This means that political are often less important. Political activists who do not adhere to the skinhead lifestyle think that it is a serious problem for the nationalist movement that the skinheads are the most visible faction of this movement, and that their raucous behaviour tends to de-legitimise the nationalist beliefs rather than serving 'the national cause'. These more political activists thus have no intention of scoring high on subcultural capital. On the contrary, they would prefer that the radical nationalist movement organise itself as political parties, as it did in the 1980s, with a public political programme, rather than going underground.

### 2.4.3 Reputation

Honour, in the form of name or reputation, gives the right to trust among the radical nationalists. Following Bourdieu's (1977) terminology, it is the dominant *symbolic capital*<sup>53</sup> of this subculture. There is no automatic link between honour and reputation,

<sup>53</sup> With the term symbolic capital, Bourdieu (1977) points out that people can accumulate more than economic capital. They can accumulate a symbolic entity such as honour as well, and they can convert it into other forms of capital. This is seen especially clearly when honour is linked to the aspect of having a formal title or having written books. When honour only is linked to name and reputation, it is unstable

as reputation may be defined negatively. An example of this is when an activist has the reputation of being a heavy drinker.

A reputation may be honourable in the eyes of some activists, yet dishonourable in the eyes of other activists. For example, reputation might be linked to an act performed in the past, e.g. a bombing. Some activists admire those who have committed such actions, whereas others think individuals who commit such actions destroy the legitimacy of 'the national cause'.

To say that honour is linked to reputation means that honour is linked to the aspect of having a *name*. When honour is linked to the name of a person, it must be confirmed continuously. In contrast, when honour is linked to a title, it is more stable and less dependent of the person. An honourable man of the street or of the gang has to keep up with his name. He has to face challenges, as mentioned, and he has to show loyalty to his group, as described by Bourdieu (1977). This is also seen among radical nationalists. Loyalty to the group is the most powerful requirement, especially since defeat is an ever-present possibility.

In the case of the radical nationalist, the media makes sure that no one ever forgets what past actions each activists has carried out. In this way, the reputation of the single activist does not fade away, as would have been the case, if he had only been a regular gang member. This has positive results for the activist, as he is respected (although the respect is based on fear, not necessarily admiration). However, it is also negative, as it is a heavy burden to always be associated with the dreadful acts he committed previously.

In most of the cases, these activists lose control of how the media presents them. They get caught by a bubble they do not prick themselves. It is others who decide how dangerous their militant capital is. As a result, they often resentfully comment on the media's coverage of them. On the other hand, they are dependent on the media in order to being acknowledged as a powerful force, and this dependency is something the radical nationalists are very aware of. Some of the activists have therefore tried to guide the way the media covers them, in a more offensive manner. They make appointments with journalists they trust with information about special events like concerts or demonstrations.

To build up a certain reputation (whether a threatening one or an ideologically-schooled one) is important within the radical nationalist underground, both for the underground as a collective, but also for the single activist within it. The activists' perception of what actions serve to build up honour often guides their internal strife and their violence against adversaries.

#### 2.4.4 Honour Games

Honour is not a directly observable quality. However, when I studied radical nationalist males, I was able to observe indirectly who had more or less honour. I saw their honour games (I analyse such games in 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a)), and I heard their comments to each other. This taught me which activists had a good reputation, and which ones did not.

By listening to the kind of behaviour they addressed as negative, and the persons they associated with this behaviour, I understood why Tord, for example, received more respect than Arne. This explained why he was self-conscious when dealing with the group. Arne was known to get drunk and lose control. Tord, who was also known to be a heavy drinker, had greater experience within the underground, had been involved in

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and must, consequently, be confirmed repeatedly in specific encounters. The term symbolic capital is also useful when looking at a subculture in relation to the rest of society, as the participants of the subculture value other qualities than those found in mainstream culture.

more secret practices (planning militant actions, etc.), and was known to behave crazily. The latter aspect led the others to laugh at him behind his back. On the other hand, he was so amusing that he often loosened up the atmosphere when he turned up. He had a reputation of being both amusing and a good organiser, and thus received more respect.

This illustrates the argument that honour only exists in relation to people's image of it, as pointed out by Bourdieu (1977). The question of the *image* radical nationalists have of honour is also important. In their fanzines, they often write about honour, and they link this both to their vision of the Vikings and of skinheads. In many cultures where honour is the predominant symbolic capital, an honourable man is a man with several enemies, who give him the chance to prove his masculinity to others and to himself.

The best way to achieve honour is to be faced with challenges, and thus build up one's masculinity, according to Bourdieu (1977). Thus, to be attacked by adversaries is important, as it gives a chance to prove one's honour. This is evident among radical nationalist males. Their battles with the anti-Fascists make it possible for them to achieve honour.

The importance of such struggles related to their group identity is very evident, as both Swedish and American radical nationalists say they find it exciting to travel to Norway as they can experience real fist-fights in the street. They say that in the US, such battles are fought with weapons. Such direct confrontations with adversaries are more rare in Sweden as well. This type of confrontation might make it possible for them to live out their ideology more fully, as the combat then turns into a war with two parties, rather than a fight against a larger system.

Another feature that Bourdieu describes as being typical when honour is the dominant capital is that an insult towards the group is a challenge one is expected to meet. In fact, a man's own or his group's enemies are the ones who credit him or his group with the dignity of being a man or a group of honour, because only challenges which come from another of equal honour deserve to be accepted. The offender thus deems the other capable of playing the game of honour, and of playing it well. If he had offended another man incapable of meeting the challenge, he would dishonour himself.

The difference between worthy and unworthy revenge is important. As a consequence, we could say that merely by fighting the anti-Fascists, the radical nationalists show that they see them as equals. In other words, they see the anti-Fascists as capable of playing the game. We could also see the situation the other way around, that the anti-Fascists credit the radical nationalists with dignity merely by seeing it as worthwhile to fight them, although this is of course not the purpose of their fight.

Honour is also a public quality. A dishonourable man is a man who passes by unnoticed, says Bourdieu (1977). Furthermore, as Bourdieu describes it, this aspect of being noticed involves knowing *how to make oneself noticed*. This is an important virtue also among radical nationalists. Those of them who stroll along the street wearing the skinhead uniform and Nazi paraphernalia are sure not to be overlooked. This also implies that a possible exit from this underground might be experienced as a serious shock, when one becomes 'invisible' again. Even though 'everybody' hates radical nationalists, they feel that they, achieve a sense of importance by the negative acknowledgement from other people.

It is better to be challenged than to be overlooked, writes Bourdieu. This is seen *when the radical nationalists proudly refer to times where they have been beaten up by an adversary*. Several younger activists once told me that when somewhat older activists were beaten up seriously by an adversary, they always got up again afterwards, as if nothing had happened.



#### 2.4.5 *Fights as Contests of Honour*

There is a lot of drama involved in fights. Gilmore (1990:44-45) calls this a 'showy modality'. He states that it is almost an universal quality that a 'real man' is a man who stands up for himself as an independent and proud actor, who masters public areas, who holds his own when challenged, and who shows a courageous and stoic demeanour in the face of any threat. Gilmore points out that public places, crowds, and other open contexts are associated not only with exposure and sociability but also with risk and opportunity.

This is especially true of radical nationalists because they risk confrontations with militant anti-fascists when they go out in public. They are extremely alert when they are alone in public places. They always look around them in order to see whether any of their opponents are present. Many of them never take the train or bus for fear of being humiliated or beaten up by militant anti-Fascists. Some of those activists who are frequently involved in fights are known to be terrified of being confronted with a gang of their adversaries and without any chance of retreat.

When gathered as a group, they are more self-assured. Then they know they have a great deal of power in terms of physical strength and the ability to intimidate others. A radical nationalist might have more power than everybody else at a given time and at a given place, but has very little power in the long run. His honour is only recognised by members of his own group. Society at large provides him with no honour. Furthermore, if he becomes too old to fight, too much of an alcoholic or too generally burned out, the members of his own group might bestow less deference upon him than before. Then he has no title to fall back upon. Therefore, the career of these radical nationalists is a very precarious one. A highly respected activist at one time might become forgotten a few decades later.

#### 2.4.6 *Hegemonic Masculinity*

Hegemonic masculinity includes all forms of masculinity that are linked to higher positions of power than others (Connell 1987). It is typical of hegemonic masculinity that once one is established in a position of power it becomes naturalised, so that men's power over other men or men's power over women is understood *as given* (cf. essentialism, defined in the chapter on ideology). This hegemonic view of masculinity resembles the traditionalist view of male power as naturally given, since it is linked to physical strength.

Although hegemonic masculinity tends to become naturalised, it is neither static nor defined once and for all. On the contrary, there are continuous struggles for hegemony (Hall 1997:348), a struggle for the power to define how 'real men' should behave. The successful businessman, is perhaps more widely accepted than the macho man. However, the macho image retains a hegemonic quality as well. The symbolic value of this image is confirmed by its prevailing position in the entertainment industry. Fighting morale is also filtered to us through reports of wars in other parts of the world, and pervades popular fiction. Movies, comics, and novels confirm a dominance-based, performance-oriented masculinity. According to Brittan (1989:77), muscle-bound, destructive, over-achieving males replaced the anti-hero in American movies during the 1980s.

There are others who see such a view as obsolete in contemporary western society. According to sociologist Berger (1970), honour is replaced by dignity. As argued by Brittan (1989) the contemporary world provides very few occasions for men to be

heroes (if one overlooks the men who fight wars in Yugoslavian or elsewhere at present).<sup>54</sup>

Honour, as expressed by fighting morale (or 'showy modality'), definitely prevails as symbolic capital in male-dominated subcultures. Furthermore, the view of masculinity as defined by a man's capacity to win (through struggle) dominates far-right literature (Brittan 1989:79). Radical nationalists think of themselves as warriors fighting for the honour of their people.

Defining masculinity in terms of *physical strength* can be seen as an attempt to negotiate another kind of hegemonic masculinity than the one encouraged by the school system and other authorities. By linking strength and violence to a concept of honour and power, the radical nationalists counter-define the way school and other authorities define proper career choices. In one sense, then, the choice of a macho identity means opposing established norms. These forms of masculinity thus provide *alternative areas of power*. Ruling the street provides these young men with a sense of honour they otherwise would miss. Their status does not lie in their career or in their education, but in their machismo. In this way, their sense of honour is closely linked to their images of masculinity.

However, they do not only verbalise masculinity in essentialist terms, (although some aspects of the naturalisation of gender differences are prevalent there as well). Most of them claim that they have nothing against female leaders at the workplace, and that they accept female activists in their own groups, as long as they are 'serious'. This means that they know how to keep secrets, 'understand' the knowledge of the underground, etc.

#### 2.4.7 Protest Masculinity

Because of the prevalence of pro-feminist ideas among some of the radical nationalist males, their orientation partly resembles what Connell (1995: 109-112) calls *protest masculinity*. This mode of masculinity is a combination of a stereotyped male role, with respect towards women, egalitarian gender views, and childcare. This orientation might also include a sense of display that is more feminine than masculine in conventional terms.

We could cite Connell's (1995) words as a description of the radical nationalist males as well. 'The growing boy puts together a tense, freaky facade, making a claim to power where there are no real resources for power. There is a lot of concern with face, a lot of

<sup>54</sup> The argument that honour is an obsolete quality may be too simplistic. Honour might be considered a dominant symbolic capital in the business world, and in other career-oriented spheres, such as academic circles. As pointed out by Soerhaug (1996:37-38), the academic world has a tremendously strong impact on the personal dimension because one lives by one's name. The celebration of competence creates strong esthetical fields and personal alliances.

Bourdieu's (1992) illuminating description of the struggles within academia provides evidence for adding this culture to the number of honour-based cultures. Seen in this light, one is apt to agree with Gilmore (1990:1) that it is an universal trend that the state of being 'a real man' or 'a true man' is regarded as a prize to be won or wrested through. On the other hand, the question is whether these qualities are only aspects of masculinity, as women will be confronted with the same forces when they enter spheres where honour is of importance, such as in political life and in academia. Academic honour is maybe not gendered in the same way as traditional forms of honour.

Instead of arguing like Berger, that integrity, dignity, guilt, and shame in the modern world replace honour, we could rather argue that honour takes a different form in modern societies than in pre-industrialised ones. Seen in this light, Gilmore's argument that men all over the world have to confirm their state of being real men, men who fear nothing, who fight, who take risks, who dominate, and who succeed, is perhaps more correct than he has been given credit for. Even though the muscle man and the successful businessman may seem opposites, many of the same values might be at stake. Both of them have to prove their strength.

work put into keeping up a front'. As Connell points out, this orientation 'is not simply adopting the conventional stereotype of masculinity, as Willis (1978) perceptively noted in his case study of bike boys in Britain', as there is something frenzied and showy about it. The childhood experiences of these men is often marked by powerlessness which leads to an exaggerated *claim to potency*.

This is seen in the radical nationalist males' violence and their fascination with war games (paint-ball) and heavy weapons. Their exaggeration of masculine conventions is thus formed as a collective practice (cf. Connell 1995:111). Sometimes they also define these practices in terms of a contrast to the behaviour of middle-class men (cf. 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a)).

Egil, who I have described in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b) matches Connell's description of the biker Mal in many ways. Egil, like Mal, has a history of violence and a criminal record. When he was at school he refused to learn, was treated as disruptive, and was placed in a special class. He left school, without having learned to read. Egil has a son, and he has been denied access to his child at times because of his militant life. He says that he feels like crying every time he passes a kindergarten. This story resembles that of many of the radical nationalists. Many of them have children whom they are not allowed to see, but whom they adore.

The histories of the radical nationalist males are marked by violence, resistance to schooling, crime, heavy drinking, occasional manual labour. These are all qualities which are typical of protest masculinity, as Connell describes it. There are activists who hardly ever read books. One of them is almost illiterate. They are thus, in Connell's words, at a desperate disadvantage on the labour market.

#### 2.4.8 Working-Class Masculinities

The behaviour of the radical nationalists might thus, in one sense, be seen as a protest against a disadvantaged class-position. This kind of interpretation is in line with several other interpretations of class counter-reactions. Kaufman (1987) points out that working-class masculinities are marked by a *double quality*, as they are both a variant of hegemonic masculinity and as a counter-reaction or protest to hegemony. For a working-class boy, Kaufman says, the avenue of mastering the world of business, politics, the professions, and wealth is all but denied to him. For him, male power is defined in the form of *working-class machismo*, and the power to dominate is expressed in a direct physical form. Similarly, Bourdieu (1993b:4) sees masculinity as the fundament of the identity of (male members of) the dominated classes.

Willis (1977: 150) argues that manual labour becomes the embodiment of masculine power though it is stigmatised by society as a whole. The *counter-culture of the school* prepares the boys for a proletarian career, whereas theoretical knowledge is irrelevant for them. Willis (1979) describes the culture that develops among men on the shop-floor as a *cult of masculinity* which centres on physical prowess and sexual contempt directed at managers, and office workers, as being effete. The characteristic style of speech and movement among working-class men, even in the absence of females, always retains aspects of the masculine spectacle. Willis argues that the ability to take the initiative, to make others laugh, to do unexpected and amusing things, to naturally take the active role, are all profoundly masculine attributes of the culture, and *permanent* goals for individuals in it.

According to Willis (1977: 34-35), *violence* expresses important values of (male) working-class culture, such as masculine hubris, dramatic displays, and group solidarity. Willis thus appears to equate working-class culture with *male* working-class culture. He does not discuss what the eventual female core values of working-class

culture might be or whether working-class culture in general is defined in terms of violence, dramatic displays and masculine hubris by both men and women. As Willis describes it, group solidarity in the working-class does not include women. 'The lads' studied by Willis, have a tendency to see girls merely as sexual objects. Violence and joking are practices that bind the boys together in a male defined solidarity. Willis interprets the violence, racism, etc. of the working-class lads as a schooling in the life of the shop-floor worker. However, Willis seems to overlook the fact that there are a large number of styles and forms of behaviour associated with being working-class, as pointed out by Connell (1995).

The practices of my informants do *not* lead them into the labour market. They lead them *out of* the conventional labour market. However, it might lead them into an illegally paid, partly criminal labour market.<sup>55</sup> In addition, as mentioned earlier, they do not have as clear a working-class identity as Willis' lads. What they have is a clear anti-middle class perception of themselves.

#### 2.4.9 *Vulnerable Working-Class Boys*

In contemporary Norway, there is an increased demands for *success* within the education system. Pedersen (1996:336-337) argues that young working-class boys are more *vulnerable* in contemporary society than girls are. Girls' gender-roles are more up to date in relation to the demands our time makes on us, he maintains.

Pedersen states that Bourdieu's argument that the masculine position is linked to dominance, control, and symbolic violence no longer capture the contemporary western world. In Norway, studies by Pedersen and his colleagues show that girls in general do better than boys at school. The majority of students at university are female, they read more books than boys do, all in all, they have more cultural capital than boys.

Girls move out of their family home earlier, and they spend more time on their own before they move in with a future husband than their mothers did in the 1960s and 1970s. By contrast, boys live with their parents longer, and are not as good at managing on their own. In addition, girls have more friends, and better ones, than do boys; they are more strongly integrated with peers. Girls have someone to turn to in times of crisis, many young men do not. In general, men find it more difficult to cope with life than girls do.

Pedersen's findings are interesting to read in comparison with my material on radical nationalist males. They certainly do not have power in the sense of cultural capital. However, they dominate the street by threatening to use violence. They construct a stereotypical masculine façade, and thus fit Bourdieu's description of working-class men, whose identity lies in their masculinity (understood in terms of physical strength). Most of these men do not live long together with their parents. Many of them moved out at an early age. This makes them different from most modern Norwegian young men.

However, the male radical nationalists do resemble Pedersen's findings in that they have difficulty adapting to contemporary society. Their defensive strategies reveal a form of vulnerability when faced with the problems of today. They convert this vulnerability by developing 'a façade of steel', in Connell's (1995) words. Similarly,

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<sup>55</sup> In a study of some young people from the industrial community of Vennesla, Carlsson and Lippe (1997) find that Willis' theory might well account for the kind of values these young people adhere to. The young people this study describes are part of one faction of the radical nationalist underground, the faction lead by the FMI party. However, in contrast to many other young people in the radical nationalist movement, these young people come from a community with strong industrial traditions. This community thus resembles the kind of area Willis studied more.

Cohen (1992) says that current working-class masculinities easily convert into racism, as young working-class men are pushed to defend 'hardness'. They construct an omnipotent position, based upon their image of past working-class identities, and recovered through pride in their football club, their masculinity, and their class.

In these young men's world, 'the human race' is transformed from an abstraction to a concrete reality' (Cohen, 1991:10). Anything that threatens this unity must be destroyed. Although immigrants are a minority, they are threatening because of their strong ethnicity. They are 'different' and thus symbolise the 'enemy'. However, the picture of 'the Other' also contains qualities that are felt to be lacking in their society (the close-knit, coherent community). Cohen (1992: 90) has the following description of this duality: 'Envy is an ambivalent feeling; it has to do with the wish to inhabit certain idealised attributes of the other and simultaneously the wish to destroy them because they signify what is felt lacking'.

Some of these sentiments might be seen in Norwegian radical nationalists as well. They certainly idealise ethnicity, and want to revitalise the ethnic status of being Norwegians. Thus, many immigrant groups in Norway have precisely the qualities that radical nationalists call for: close-knit communities, strong traditions, family ties, etc. It is as if they are provoked at seeing these qualities in them, as it then becomes even more evident that such qualities have vanished in contemporary Norwegians.

Cohen interprets racism as a way working-class males construct an alternative sense of pride through identification with masculinity and class. This pride is constructed in the sense that it has not grown forth as a result of growing up in a clannish class community. Instead it is a symbol of the *lack* of such a community. Hatred against foreigners is thus partly linked to an envy of their strong ethnic ties. This kind of everyday racism has been a common feature in many male-dominated working-class youth subcultures where masculine toughness is the most dominant image. Hebdige (1979) mentions racism and even Fascism among Teddy boys in the Fifties.

Such views are also common among bikers such as Hells Angels. The working-class boys which Willis (1977) studied in a secondary school, also had outspoken racist views. However, we could also find many examples of the opposite, working-class youth subcultures that are multi-cultural. Rap, rave, and hip hop are among the current music trends and youth subcultures which celebrate multi-culturalism. Another example is the graffiti subculture, where anti-racism is one of the core values. Xenophobic views may be expressed by people of any class. The form these utterances take is different, though. The kind of racism that is prevalent in youth gangs of a higher class often takes a less visible form than working-class racism, which might manifest itself in street fights and racist graffiti.

## 2.5 An Interpretation of Radical Nationalist Violence

When it is difficult to achieve honour through conventional careers, violence may be an alternative form of expression. Violent groups reactivate ancient codes of honour. In the world of youth gangs, violence is linked to the loss and gain of honour. This is also the case in the world of radical nationalists. Successful fights provide the group and the individual fighter with honour, whereas when he gets beaten up, he is dishonoured, and must settle the score by taking revenge. Violence order the world, as it rules out ambivalence and by communicating us-them differences in absolute terms.

### 2.5.1 Differences between Gang Violence and Radical Nationalist Violence

As some of the radical nationalists organise themselves in militant cells which commit violence by use of explosives and weapons, their violent practice partly departs from

traditional gang violence. The violence we associate with youth gangs is typically street violence, either man to man or gang to gang. This kind of violence may be quite serious. In Norway there have been several instances of gang violence which have resulted in death. Several youth gang members also use weapons and take part in regular combat training.

It is thus not only in the confrontation between radical nationalists and anti-Fascists that one finds a life-and-death aspect. Some of the codes of honour involved in the radical nationalists' violence are similar to the codes that are at stake in many youth gangs. In many ethnic gangs, honour and revenge are the codes that guide the seriousness of the emotions which lead to violence (Larsen 1992). Fights are followed by hatred and aggression both in youth gangs and in the radical nationalist underground movement. However, when the violence is over, a kind of euphoria seems to emerge, as if their tension has been released. This resembles Willis' finding that the working-class boys he studied enjoyed fighting (see my discussion of this in 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a).

### 2.5.2 *Violence and Reputation*

Some of the aspects of status involved in the violence of the radical nationalists may thus call to mind traditional gang violence. For the working-class boys Willis studied, if refusing to fight is disastrous for their informal standing and masculine reputation. When one of them is insulted or intimidated, he is expected to fight. This aspect is also present among the radical nationalists. Some of them have a reputation as rowdies, and seem to keep up the violence in order to live up to their reputation.

However, at times the other activists find it unnecessary to use violence against an adversary merely because of an offensive remark. This occurred once when one of the leading activists kicked and beat up a boy who had passed them and said 'Well, well, look who's here. The Nazis!' Some of the other activists who watched, complained that this activist always reacted too quickly, and was unable to control himself.

To be known as a rowdy is sometimes constricting. As an activist is expected by the others or the media to act violently, he meets their expectations, despite the fact that he says he is bored with this role at other times. This is particularly true of the few activists who are known to have committed very serious acts of violence in the past, such as murder or bombings, and are always referred to in the media as XX, convicted of murder. Thus, these people are doomed to be viewed in terms of this past act. Some of these people use this image as a threat.

### 2.5.3 *Naturalisation of Violence*

The radical nationalists conceptualise their use of violence as an instinctual reaction. The view of violence as a natural quality was an important part of the National Socialism of the 1920s-1940s. However, this view is not exclusive to National Socialists. Studies of working-class youth gangs also reveal some of the same ideas, as shown in Paul Willis' well-known study (1979). The (working-class) lads he studied considered violence to be natural.<sup>56</sup>

The radical nationalists argue that they act according to their instincts. They say this makes them truer to their feelings than other people. They thus contrast themselves to conventional people, who suppress their own instincts by holding back their (natural) aggression and desire to defend themselves and their territory (cf. my description of these views in 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b)).

<sup>56</sup> One might criticise Willis for ignoring the fact that violence certainly not is considered natural in the working-class in general.

#### 2.5.4 *Authenticity and Peak-Experiences*

The radical nationalists' emphasis on authenticity is also understandable in light of the way some of them conceive working-class culture. For example, some of the activists think men from the movement are more genuine because they understand 'the real reality', defined as *the reality of the street*, as shown in one of the quotations I discuss in 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a). This expression shows that they contrast themselves to the conventional man, who only knows reality through movies. In their view, real men are men who have been where the action is. Moreover, these activists consider knowledge of street life a typical trait of working-class men: men who show who they are through action, not through words. A real (authentic) man is thus a man who takes part in the front-line.

In other words, it is the *front-experiences* (Lindholm 1990) or peak-experiences (Maslow 1976) they honour. *Peak experiences* are experiences on the boundary of something, the boundary between inside and outside, sanity and insanity. Violence confirms such boundaries between inside and outside, for example inside a group in contrast to the group's adversaries or between their own values in contrast to dominant values in the mainstream culture.

The peak experience makes one feel alive without pondering about how and why, as it makes reality 'pause for a minute', as Willis (1977) puts it. Many of the activists try to avoid thinking too much about existential questions. It might be painful to think too much about such things. Violence might be a way to stop thinking, if only briefly. The aspect of avoiding taking into account the seriousness of existence might also be involved in other peak-experiences such as those produced in many risk sports. Bungee jumping and rafting are two contemporary examples. Skårderud (1998) thinks the popularity of such sports today is a symptom that to risk being rejected is felt as more dangerous than to risk one's life.

#### 2.5.5 *Defence of Territory*

The radical nationalists see it as natural to defend themselves and 'their' people. They accordingly see prejudices against foreigners as being natural as well. Thus, their ideology sets the premises for their violent practice. However, as they cannot defend a whole nation, they sometimes define their territory on a minor scale. We could thus say that they chose a part which might symbolise the wholeness they are fighting for. For example, they might defend a building where they are holding a concert or defend a pub they usually go to. This building or pub might then function as a metonym for the nation.

One of the main goals of the Anti-Fascist Action members in the Oslo area is to scare the Nazis out of pubs (AFA-magazine January-February 1996), so that they find it impossible to consolidate themselves. As a result, the radical nationalists have an even stronger desire to defend the few places they still can at meet in public. The anti-Fascists look upon these pub fights as ideological fights, as their aim is to 'smash Fascism' (AntifascistiskAksjon 1996). The radical nationalists, by contrast, define such fights also in terms of access to certain places, making it a fight over territory.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> This is how I once described an incident where anti-Fascists and radical nationalists clashed outside a pub in Oslo. However, because of a certain lack of precision in the journalist's report, the anti-Fascists interpreted it as if I had said that also they were concerned with the fight for territory. This however was not my point.

### 2.5.6 *Defence of Traditional Masculinity*

The violence of radical nationalists might be seen as a wish to defend a traditional image of masculinity. In connection with this issue, it is relevant to make a comparison with Hebdige's (1979) interpretation of the 'queer-bashing' (beating up homosexuals) of the English skinheads of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Hebdige interprets this practice as the skinheads' reaction against the erosion of traditional stereotypes of masculinity, as reported by Hebdige. The skinhead operational definition of 'queer' included all those males who by their standards looked 'odd', for example hippies with frills on their trousers and long hair. Queer-bashing thus also included violence against hippies.

Those among the Norwegian radical nationalists skinheads who are skinheads react towards 'oddity' as well. Two of them commented on two girls who entered their pub once, because their trousers looked strange. They discussed whether these girls were cute despite their 'grunge' style, as the freak style was called in the mid-1990s. When one of the two boys talked about a shop which sold that kind of clothes, he said 'we should have blown that 1970s shop sky high!' However, the radical nationalists seldom commit such violent attacks against shops or people merely because they have an odd style. However, some of them have committed violence against homosexuals. This does not occur frequently among Norwegian radical nationalists, unlike such groups in other countries. As mentioned earlier, in theory they claim to be tolerant of gays.

It is more frequent that activists who break with the internal codes of style and appearance are satirised. These kinds of wind-ups delimit how they should look and act. They should be *orderly*, not outlandish, which they see as chaotic and dirty, along the lines of how they conceptualise the so-called *Blitz* youths. See my report *Skinheads in Red, White and Blue* (Fangen 1995).

### 2.5.7 *Defence of Ethnicity*

We can thus interpret violence and harassment of odd-looking persons as the radical nationalists' defence of a traditional image of masculinity. The same concern with toughness was also involved in another of the original English skinhead activities – 'Paki-bashing', according to Hebdige (1979). He interprets this violent practice as a ritual and aggressive defence of the social and cultural homogeneity of the community against its most obviously scapegoated outsiders. Hebdige writes that Asian youths were the main targets of the skinheads because of their particular visibility within the neighbourhood (in terms of shop ownership patterns, etc.) in comparison with West Indians. Another reason was their different cultural patterns (especially in terms of their unwillingness to defend themselves) – again in comparison with West Indian youth.

This argument concerning the difference between Asian youths and black youths does not resemble the way Norwegian radical nationalists relate to different ethnic groups. For some of the radical nationalists, the most important ethnic group to fight is the Jews. However, Jews are not visible outsiders in Norway. The few Jews who live here are well integrated into society and thus not visible as outsiders with different cultural patterns. The anti-Zionists among the radical nationalists do not commit violence against Jews. However, some of them have smeared swastikas on Jewish gravestones.

Many radical nationalists do not have much against Asian youths. Several of them have stated that Asian youths from Vietnam, Japan, etc. are not very different from them in terms of appearance. Some of them talk about skinheads from Japan, whom they exchange fanzines with. They are more opposed to Pakistanis, as the differences are more obvious.



There have been violent incidents targeted at Pakistani youths. A gang of radical nationalists once beat up a Pakistani man seriously. This man had no ties to any gangs or political interest groups. One leading activist in the radical nationalist underground told me later that the reason that this incident occurred was probably the result of some of the radical nationalists having been beaten up one week earlier by a Pakistani youth gang, and this was their revenge. It was clearly unimportant to them that their target had no relation to this youth gang. This confirms their tendency to think in absolute terms in relation to immigrants – when one immigrant gang does something bad, they blame all immigrants.

However, 'paki-bashing' is not a regular activity among them, and thus not a concept they use. Several of the activists have a great deal against Muslims. There are others who collaborate with Muslims in their fight against the alleged Zionist conspiracy. In their underground fanzines, Jews and black people are the main targets of their satire. Some activists have read studies that show that black people have less intelligence. They are also interested in dubious scientific studies of the interrelation between skull shape and morality or intelligence; in other words, old racial hygienic views. These activists are much more racist than the original English skinheads. It is much more difficult for them to relate to black people, even though many young black people are integrated into Norwegian society.

Although racist ideas are prevalent in the fanzines and utterances of the radical nationalists, violence against immigrants is not very frequent. They say that they are not against the individual immigrant. They are against immigration policy. Consequently, their main targets are anti-Fascists, anti-racists and, to some extent, politicians who are liberal towards immigration or buildings that house anti-racist or immigrant organisations. However, some serious violent acts against immigrants have occurred, as mentioned earlier.<sup>58</sup>

### 2.5.8 *Defence of the Collective*

The Birmingham scholars interpreted the chauvinism and violence associated with the skinhead subculture as homologous with the shop-floor culture of the working-class. Clarke (1976a) argued that football and especially the violence articulated around it, provided an arena for the skinheads' concern with a particular, collective, masculine image, which involved the identification of masculinity with physical toughness and an unwillingness to back down in the face of 'trouble'. The violence also reflected the mob's stress on collective solidarity and mutual support in times of 'need'.

We cannot adopt this model of violence as a transformation of the values of shop-floor culture when we analyse the violence of radical nationalists. Most of them are not rooted in such a labour collective. However, their concern with a collective masculine image (a brotherhood of men, according to my article 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a)) and unwillingness to back down when they are attacked by militant anti-fascists, for example display similarities to this model. Concern with the touch façade of men and defence of the male community was an integral part of former Fascist movements as well, as revealed in Theweleit's (1987) book *Male fantasies*.

<sup>58</sup> Most violence against immigrants in Norway is committed by local youth gangs. In Norway, Eidheim (1993) and Carlsson and Lippe (1997) have carried out research in areas where local youths have committed violence against immigrants. These studies provide important insight into the context within which such violence is committed, and how communities react when such actions occur. These studies are an important supplement to a study of the (more organised) radical nationalist underground movement.

The radical nationalists use violent occasions as means of reinforcing their sense of collectivism. They honour the individual activist who commits violence in order to defend the group, except when such violence is viewed as an unnecessary uncontrolled reaction. Past violent acts serve to strengthen the ties between them, and confirm their sense of a shared fate in confrontation with the outside world. Violent acts also confirm their sense of an us-them distinction in relation to their adversaries (first and foremost the militant anti-Fascists).

### 2.5.9 *Violence as Protest Communication*

On a more analytical level, we might interpret the radical nationalists' violence as a response to a situation where there are no other possibilities of expression. Following Østerberg (1993), we could see their violence as a production of statements and encounters for those who are superfluous and stigmatised.

Except for a few incidents of terrorism committed by foreign fundamentalist groups, radical nationalists are responsible for most of the episodes of political violence in Norway by use of bombs, firearms and arson. One reason for this militancy within the nationalist underground in comparison with the far left, might thus be that extreme nationalist views are excluded from the public to a great extent. Since some of the radical nationalists use Nazi symbols and justify national socialist views they have no possibility of being accepted in public debates.

As a consequence of their stigmatisation and excommunication by people outside the movement, radical nationalists build up a great deal of aggression and hatred. These are feelings which might lead them to commit acts of violence. It is possible they would not commit such violence had they been allowed to express their views in public.

This appears to be a valid interpretation when we compare them with radical leftist groups of the 1960s and 1970s, as far-left groups in Norway do not commit acts of terrorism. One reason for this may be that although communists experienced extensive police surveillance in the post-war era, they were not excluded from public debate. They were allowed to publish their newspapers, hold demonstrations and give speeches in public.

The far left had a huge impact, particularly within academia during the 1970s. The leaders of the two communist parties Red Election Alliance and the Workers Communist party actually refused help offered them by international leftist terrorist groups. These two parties were always conscious of acting within legal frames, although armed revolution was part of their political programme.

In this regard, these communists stand in contrast to extra-parliamentary far-left activists of the 1980s and 1990s, who in their fanzines and their anti-Fascist handbook explicitly supported the use of militant strategies including street fights, use of butyric acid and damaging the homes of Fascists (*AntifascistiskAksjon* 1996).

### 2.5.10 *The Motives Behind Violence Versus the Meaning of Violence*

From the perspective of the legal system, it is necessary to find the *motive* for violence. The sentence imposed is determined by the extent to which the perpetrator consciously planned and wanted to commit the act. However, interpretative sociology leads us to search for the (inter-subjective) meaning the actors put into their actions. Instead of *explaining* the causes of actions, interpretative sociology seeks to *understand* (interpret, analyse) (Østerberg 1986:7). From the standpoint of interpretative sociology, Østerberg criticises perspectives which lead to hypotheses about motives. He argues that no acts are the logical consequence of a motive or purpose.

In *Skinheads in Red, White and Blue* (Fangen 1995), I used the concept of motivations for violence. In his thesis, Bjørgo (1997) similarly searches for the motives

for racist violence, and uses terms like explanatory factors, rewards, and sanctions. My change of scope is mostly a result of increased awareness of the purpose of my writings. It is to interpret, rather than to 'make a fuss over causes', to paraphrase Ricoeur. To understand means rather to interpret many layers of consequences. My argument is that causal explanations do not capture the inconsistency and heterogeneity (Ricoeur 1978:115) of the radical nationalist underground well.

### 2.5.11 *The Violent Potential of Norwegian Radical Nationalists*

Radical nationalists are at 'war' with militant anti-Fascists. This violent confrontation between these two political layers have been an ongoing conflict since the radical nationalist movement emerged in the late 1960s. Thus, in their newsletter *Norsk Folkeblad* (Norwegian Folk's paper no. 2, 1981) the members of *Nasjonalt Folkeparti* (National People's Party) in 1975 wrote an article about AKP<sup>59</sup> members who attacked them, and ruined their first annual meeting. That year, Norwegian People's Party began weapons training and mapped their political adversaries.

Although a few years usually pass between serious attacks, the violent potential of the underground is always present. The potential for violence is partly defined out of earlier attacks committed by the activists, prior to their entrance into the underground movement, as well as while they have been participants within it. However, their militancy and violent actions might also take new forms, and the form of the radical nationalists' violence has changed over time, (cf. appendix 3).

Among the activists who have set the standard by their earlier attacks is an eighteen year old activist who threw a bomb at a May Day march in 1979. Another eighteen year old activist threw dynamite at the Muslim Nor Mosque in 1985. Two other eighteen year old activists killed two boys from their own militant group in 1981 because they feared that these boys would inform the police about a large weapons theft. In addition, one of the radical nationalists was involved in gang violence (prior to his entrance into the radical nationalist underground movement) which targeted Iraqi youths, as well as *killing and painting racist graffiti on the shop of a Pakistani man. During the mid 1990s, some activists have thrown bombs or other explosives at the anarchist Blitz house in Oslo (31 December 1992, 21 August 1994 and 9 November 1995). There have also been several shootings. On one of these occasions, the shots were directed right at the windows of the Blitz house (29 December 1993).*

In a way, all of the participants in the underground become involved in the previous violent attacks. Although an individual activist has not committed any such acts, the underground in general is associated with them. Those who freely participate passively accept that others carry out such actions. In (Fangen 1995), I discuss their view of the purpose this violence, what they want to achieve with it, and the limits they place on legitimate and illegitimate violence.

Many of the activists are fascinated by weapons. Most of them have weapons at home, including big knives, clubs, stones, pistols or shotguns. Some of the militant cells in the underground carry out weapons training. They also use toy weapons that look identical to heavier weapons, such as antitank weapons. This kind of training is known as paintball. The point is to simulate a war-time situation, and train themselves in shooting at imaginary enemies (other activists) as well as hiding and guarding. According to the activists, a second lieutenant from the army trains them in the use of weapons.

In addition to its highly real consequences, weapons training might be seen as a form of symbolic communication. When activists take part in such training, they display their

<sup>59</sup> AKP: *Arbeidernes Kommunistparti*; The Worker's Communist Party.

strength. They show that they are preparing themselves for the coming 'race-war'. The training takes place on a regular basis (usually once a month). It is expressive and repetitive. It is thus a ritual, in the sociological sense of the word. This ritual is sacred (cf. Durkheim 1968) as it is separated from everyday life. Such rituals bind the activists together in a kind of *secretive community*. They accordingly report intense emotions during training. When they participate in this training they become elated, as they know how extreme it is and that someone (for example the police) might stop them.

When the television or the newspapers show images of their weapons training, the activists are able to communicate their message to the outside: 'Look how dangerous we are, how well equipped we are, and how far we are willing to go'. Thus, the weapons training is no longer merely a secret underground practice, where the activists prepare for future armed attacks. It is also a communicative practice, which is intended to create power by representing a threat to their adversaries, or confirming for themselves that they are such a threat.

## 2.6 Female Radical Nationalists - Rebellion and Regression

In the preceding chapters, we have built up an analytical frame primarily around the activities and views of male radical nationalists. In this section, I will provide some additional frames for the analysis of radical nationalist females. Although the radical nationalist underground movement primarily is dominated by men, it is important to analyse the position and impact of women in order to see whether they merely adopt the men's agenda and practice or if there is such a thing as a distinctly female version of radical nationalism in Norway.

### 2.6.1 *Quest for Excitement*

Male radical nationalists are usually the boys who did not fit in at school. Many of them used to belong to criminal gangs and they have little to lose by entering the radical nationalist underground movement. By contrast, several of the radical nationalist females did well at school. One of them told me (as quoted in 'Separate or Equal' Fangen 1997b) that they did what their parents and teachers told them to do. In other words, they are *tired* of being kind and sweet. Now they want more excitement.

Their quest for excitement is shared by the boys. As I have mentioned elsewhere, one leading male activist even cited boredom with contemporary society as a main reason why many boys enter the underground. However, doing what they were told by parents and teachers in the past is not as common with the boys, who often were troublemakers.

### 2.6.2 *Style and Class Belonging*

The girls wear practically the same uniform as the men. Some of them wear army clothes, like the men. Others wear casual clothes such as jeans and T-shirts, also very similar to the men. Only a few of the girls, who are skinheads, wear a distinct female uniform, including a mini-skirt, etc. Several girls take part in weapons training together with the men, and most of them adopt racist and nationalist ideas already defined by the men.

In contrast to some of the boys, the girls do not talk about class belonging. It is not as important to them to construct a sense of working-classness. They aspire towards traditional female working-class jobs, but do not verbalise their participation in the radical nationalist underground in terms of counter-class reaction. Instead they define their orientation in relation to and partly in contrast to some of the main feminist issues of the post-war women's movement.

### 2.6.3 *Changing Modes of Femininity*

Earlier we discussed Connell's concept of *protest masculinity* as a fruitful point of departure in the analysis of radical nationalist men. To a certain degree, radical nationalist women also construct a form of protest to established gender stereotypes. In her analysis of military women from the nineteenth century, Wheelwright (1989) interpreted these as women 'turning into men'.

The same interpretation does not account for contemporary radical nationalist women. Although some of them wear men's military clothes and participate in activities such as weapons training organised by the men, they also incorporate some elements in their style and activities which are conventionally understood as distinctively female. For example, many of them have long hair, (some of them bleach it as well, in order to exaggerate the stereotypical Nordic look). Several of them also wear military sweaters with a long black skirt. Many of the issues they fight for resemble typical 'women's issues'.

We could interpret these girls' bricolage of style, values, and activities as an expression of what British youth researcher McRobbie (1994:186-188) views as the *changing modes of femininity*. McRobbie argues that we must ask what the dominant language of white female racism is. Some of the issues the radical nationalist females fight for may express what McRobbie calls white female racism. However, it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between male and female racism. Most of the components of the beliefs of the radical nationalist females are identical to those of the males. Several of the 'women's issues' are also part of the 'white-power' movement's agenda internationally. In other countries, they are therefore joint issues for men and women in these movements.

### 2.6.4 *A Nationalist Version of Women's Issues*

The radical nationalist females act as if they are in a supermarket (see my conceptualisation of this earlier) like the radical nationalist males. They take what they want and combine it in a manner which makes sense to them. However, the elements they use are somewhat different from those used by the men.

Thus, whereas the girls who label themselves National Socialists are concerned with distinct 'private affairs', such as the defence of the family, the care of children, etc., the boys who define themselves with the same label are concerned with the fight against ZOG and 'proof' of the existence of an alleged Zionist conspiracy. It might thus seem that the girls are less concerned with sophisticated conspiracy theories which are comparable to various thrillers and spy stories. The radical nationalist girls are perhaps more down to earth than the radical nationalist males, as they are more concerned with inter-subjective relations than with fantastic theories of evil forces.

The most important issues for the women of the radical nationalist movement are the fight against prostitution, abortion, and pornography. They are against pornography and prostitution because these practices turn women into sexual objects and create an unnatural view towards women. These two issues are not new as combat issues for women in radical nationalist groups. They were an integral part of the German National Socialist movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Women in this movement were opposed to all aspects of what they considered to be libertarian ideology (Koonz 1987). Women should be clean and stay within the home. Pornography and prostitution implied that the 'purity' of women was threatened.

Thus, there is nothing radical (in the meaning 'new') in the contemporary radical nationalist females' wish to combat pornography and prostitution. Their anti-abortion views are to a greater extent a new issue seen in relation to the 1920s National Socialist

movement, as abortion was not legal at that time, and thus not an important issue on the agenda. However, to fight against the legacy of abortion might also be defined as a reactionary orientation, as it means that they want to revive a state of affairs which was typical of an earlier era. They argue that abortion is in conflict with Mother Nature.

All three 'women's issues', anti-pornography, anti-prostitution, and anti-abortion, are well-known components of radical nationalist propaganda in other countries, and generally shared by the men as combat issues (Durham 1997). In Norway, by contrast, some of the men are high consumers of pornography, and have not put these issues on the agenda themselves. However, they seem to be proud that there are 'neo-feminists' in the milieu. They use the presence of these girls as evidence that their movement is not as male chauvinist as often assumed.

The 'radical' (understood as going to the extremes) aspect of the radical nationalist females' orientation thus only occurs in these women's desire to *fight* together with the men. With the fight against abortion and salaried housework as part of their 'women's issues', they create their own version of feminism, defined in contrast to the post-war women's movement. They do not aim at the equal status of women in society defined by more women in leading positions. However, they resemble the women's movement in their combat against pornography and prostitution.

As the girls have worked on these specific women's issues from time to time, and thus have an agenda which differs from that of the boys to a certain degree, they have constructed a distinct female version of radical nationalism, as I have shown in 'Separate or Equal' (Fangen 1997b). Their version consists of a distinct nationalist approach to particular traditional feminist issues, as mentioned above. They partly legitimise their claim that women should receive full wages for remaining at home with their children, based on their nationalist ideology. According to such an ideology, the childcare is important as part of the preservation of the nation. They view traditional women's work as equal to traditional men's work. Even so, their perspective is rather regressive, as their ideal is that women should stay at home or do traditional women's work. This is reflected in the occupations held by the radical nationalist girls. They are baby-minders, work in kindergartens or in cafeterias.

In Sweden, some of the women in National Socialist groups go one step further than the Norwegian radical nationalist women. They use a distinctly racist argumentation for women's responsibilities in terms of reproduction and childcare. Lööw (1992:557) refers to one woman who says that the women in the movement have a responsibility towards the reproduction of the race.

By contrast, one of the Norwegian females, who has a more explicit National Socialist ideology, says that she is not a Nazi in terms of the question of race. Furthermore, she has a son whose father has Asian blood. She says that she is not against inter-ethnic relations. Thus, her definition of National Socialism focuses more on childcare in general, and the presence of an authoritarian state.

The girls in the former Valkyria group define themselves as nationalist rather than National Socialist. However, their nationalism seems to be a combination of National Socialism *and* feminism. This is reflected in their symbol, which is a combination of the women's sign (used in biology and in the women's movement) and the Celtic cross (which was adopted by the German National Socialists in the 1930s).

Women who join the radical nationalist underground movement must pursue their goals by means already defined as acceptable within this movement. They may have their own political agenda, but cannot propose issues that conflict with those of the males. Still, they are allowed to have an impact on specific women's issues which do not appear to threaten the men's dominance. However, as there is no rigid definition of

ideology, in practice, newcomers have relative freedom – including girls. This holds for newcomers in general. They are not allowed to set their own agenda without first accepting the agenda of those already established within the field (cf. Bourdieu 1992).

### 2.6.5 *Images of Warrior Women*

The literature on female terrorists often asks why women use power strategies which are defined by men (e.g. Morgan (1989), who argues that women who want power must use *men's tools* in order to achieve it). The literature thus says implicitly that weapon use, violence, and war are men's way of using power. This (implicit) argument is not valid historically. In most eras there have been women (although not many) who have carried out violence or taken part in warfare. Several ancient myths also show that the *image* of the warrior woman was not a foreign one (although there were probably not many combative women in reality), e.g. the Greek amazons and the Nordic Valkyries. In some countries today, there are separate all-female armies, such as in Israel.

The radical nationalist women use the Viking woman as an image of the values they adhere to. Thus, a group of such women labelled itself *Valkyria* (after the Valkyries), whereas another all-female group of the underground was called *Embla*, after the first Viking woman. Also through their own practices, these girls construct an image of the fighting woman. They take part in militant activities (weapons training, street violence, etc.). They join in these activities in order to gain respect from the men, gain status as fellow-activists, and to ensure that they are not excluded from activities defined by the men. In fact, some of these girls fancied such activities even before they entered the radical nationalist underground, as was the case with two girls who learned to use firearms in the Home Guard.

### 2.6.6 *Females' Violence and Male Status Hierarchy*

A man's status and position within the group of males are important aspects of collectivised forms of violence. To some extent, this holds also for nationalist females. Some of them act within the same status hierarchy as the males in the underground when they are present during confrontations.

This is reflected in a remark made by one of the leading males, who said that some of the girls were better at staying calm and not losing control during conflicts than some of the boys. He said that some of the boys had a tendency to get totally out of hand in these situations. In other words, these girls gained status through the same criteria the men used to judge male activists. Others say that when the girls fight, they fight in a more brutal manner than the boys do. This view is also mirrored in the literature on female terrorists, which says that they are more unscrupulous and less rational than their male counterparts (Morgan 1989).

Nevertheless, both the men and women often referred to the girls' fighting in the underground in a humorous tone. It was viewed as something peculiar, something which was out of the ordinary. This shows that violence is perhaps primarily seen as a masculine practice.

### 2.6.7 *Responses to Male Dominance*

It is clear that some of the females' strategies are responses to the men's dominance and their defining of the girls in sexual terms. One girl said that the reason why some of the girls started their own group, *Valkyria*, was that they were tired of being excluded and being labelled 'mattresses' (symbolising sexually available objects). Such chauvinism is very common in youth gangs.

According to Clarke (1976: 190), sexual chauvinism among skinheads as one reason why the members cannot maintain their relation to this subculture once they enter 'adult

life', establish their own families, and take on a full-time job. He sees this as a contrast between working-class and middle-class subcultures such as the hippie movement with its focus on alternative housing and production. When a working-class boy enters into a love relationship with a girl, he must break his ties with the male-dominated subculture, argues Clarke. Girls might join the subculture as tagalongs, but not as partners. As I point out in 'Separate or Equal' (Fangen 1997b), this pattern is not as unequivocal among radical nationalists in Norway. Here, girls join both as partners and fellow warriors.

### 2.6.8 Women's Honour

Traditionally, women's *virtue* has been equivalent with men's honour. This is not evident in the Norwegian radical nationalist underground. The men define their honour much more according to their own degree of militancy organisational talents etc., and they define the women they respect along the same status lines.

On the other hand, we see that there is no specific female code of honour. The men define the culture of honour, and the women use the same categories for good and bad women as the men do. Women's honour also depends on their degree of *purity regarding sexual norms*, whereas this is not the case for the men.

Nevertheless, when first defined as a respectable woman, a female can to some extent be regarded as equally or even more serious than some of the men. Their status is then reckoned along the same lines as that of the men. In other words, if they are able to remain calm and controlled in emergencies, and if they manage to keep cover roles,<sup>60</sup> they are held in high regard.

It might be that the short period when the radical nationalist females established several all-female groups have had an impact on the radical nationalist males' view of their female counterparts. In 1995-1996, several all-female groups emerged,<sup>61</sup> whereas in 1998-1999, most of them had vanished. According to a leading male activist, the reason was that as the females now participated in so many activities together with the men was no more present.<sup>62</sup>

## 2.7 A Counter-Trend to Post-Modernity

### 2.7.1 Us and Them

By entering the radical nationalist underground, the newcomer becomes a 'nationalist' and adopts a lifestyle marked by activities, symbols and ways of reasoning, that previously was not part of his/her repertoire. Because of his or her new belonging, he has achieved a new and very potent identity. S/he can wake up every morning knowing that 'I am a nationalist'. S/he has acquired a new sense of him/herself and this new understanding implies that his/her possible shortcomings in other areas are of less importance. S/he is not any more striving for status within the education system or on the labour market. Instead, s/he now gains status, regardless of the negative valour it has for outsiders, by being member of the radical nationalist movement.

An important part of this new identity, is that s/he conceives him/herself as part of a collective, which is defined in opposition to certain other collectives, such as the anti-Fascists or people who a pro immigration. This kind of us-them categorisation is an

<sup>60</sup> Once one of the nationalist girls infiltrated their anti-Fascist opponents from the Blitz house.

<sup>61</sup> See my discussion of these groups in 'Separate or Equal' (Fangen 1997b).

<sup>62</sup> Today, there is only one distinct female division. It forms part of the National Socialist organisation Zorn 88. This group is called *Kvinnehirden* (The Female Guards). This is the same name the women's troop in the former Norwegian Nazi party *Nasjonal Samling* (National Unification) had.



integral part of the construction of an identity. However, this categorisation is stronger in a movement like this, which is marked by hatred and combat against certain groups perceived as enemies. These young people defend an ideology which is defined in terms of what they dislike. For some of the activists, the hatred of others is defined by their skinhead lifestyle. As one of the leading skinheads once wrote, 'The truth about skinheads is that they hate everybody' (Bootboys) (see also 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c)).

The identity concept is thus central for our understanding of young people's attachment to the radical nationalist underground. This notion might embrace most of the concepts discussed earlier, such as social movement, community, masculinity, class, ideology. When the contemporary young radical nationalists conceptualise the distinctions between their group and relevant other subcultures, they link style and ideology closely. It is within the landscape of youth subcultures that the participants define who they are in terms of social identity.

The original Latin definition of the word is *sameness* and *continuity*. In important respects, it thus resembles the notion of homology. Just as we can ask whether the lifestyle is homologous with working-class culture, we could ask whether it is identical with working-class culture. However, in the fields of psychology and sociology, identity is understood as a self-perception which is actively constructed by the individual, and which, according to constructivist perspectives, changes according to context. We therefore do not ask whether a person's practice is identical with something else. We ask whether or not he identifies with it. In addition to this, seeing oneself as equal to or part of something (e.g. a social class), the aspect of sameness and continuity can point to the inner qualities of the person. Thus one could ask whether one is in *continuity with oneself* or whether one looks upon one's own life as a congruent whole (cf. Giddens 1991).<sup>63</sup>

In sociology, Mead (1934) introduced the term *identification*, to point to the process which occurs when we place ourselves in socially-constructed categories. Thus, the radical nationalists label themselves 'nationalists' and indicate that they are part of a nationalist movement. Language plays a key role in this process. When we identify ourselves with something, we name ourselves accordingly, e.g. nationalists.<sup>64</sup>

Although theorists of identity often speak of self-identity, identification is always a social process. One cannot only identify with oneself. One must identify with certain categories. Identity is thus a self or group perception, based on divisions between groups, constructions of 'us' and 'them' and 'self' and 'other'; divisions that we receive from society (Wetherell 1996:202). Social or cultural identity is the definition of one's group in contrast to other groups. Self-identity, by contrast, as Giddens (1991) defines it, is the narrative (among many possible narratives) of the individual's life. Self-identity is thus clearly connected to the construction of an autobiography, a sense of congruence in one's own life story.

### 2.7.2 *The Homelessness and Fluid Identities of Post-Modernity*

The notion of identity has been criticised for its vagueness, as it does not point to anything concrete. Nevertheless, it conceptualises an aspect of orientation and self-

<sup>63</sup> Erik H. Erikson (1950) introduced the term *identity crisis* to point to persons (during World War II) who had *lost* a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity. He saw *youth* as an universal crisis period of potential identity confusion.

<sup>64</sup> Some authors seem to assume that there is an authentic self or identity behind the various masks which we present to others. For example, Goffman (1959) argues that even though people strategically try to present themselves in certain ways, in order to achieve certain effects on their 'audience', these presentations point back to how they conceive themselves, and thus their authentic self.

construction or self-objectivation that is highly relevant in contemporary western societies. Social scientists conceptualise the period from the 1960s to the 1990s in western societies as late modernity (Giddens 1991), post-modernity (Lyotard 1984) or merely modernity (Ziehe 1981).<sup>65</sup> These concepts point to societies marked by fragmentation, an overflow of information, rapid changes, etc. They all show that divisions such as class divisions and gender divisions are no longer important guides in people's life. Instead people now construct their own lives as a *break with tradition* (Ziehe 1981). Identity is no longer directly inherited from the previous generation. Today, identity is continuously negotiated and constructed in social situations. Many scholars consequently describe identity as a project (Giddens 1991) which is reworked continuously, and transformed according to the situation.

*Cultural identity* is formed as a result of the individual's attempt to negotiate certain representations of himself in relation to others (Wetherell 1996:225). Young people are thus set 'free' from any enduring attachment. They act like *nomads* (Melucci 1989), always on the move from milieu to milieu. They are *homeless* (Bauman 1991), as they do not belong anywhere, and they act like chameleons in the sense that they enter and exit different social environments. Young people combine elements from contradictory settings in their lifestyles and clothes. They pick and choose, as if they were in a supermarket, where the options are endless. (Cf. Polhemus' (1994) concept *supermarket of style*).

The fragmentation of society is also found at the end of the grand narratives, including the grand theory in science, totalitarian ideologies and grand novels, according to Lyotard (1984). Melucci (1989) similarly speaks of new social movements, which no longer try to change society, but are rather ad hoc and concentrate their effort on one single political issue, e.g. anti-nuclear weapons, anti-abortion or anti-racism. This is in contrast to the former Labour movement, which wanted a total revolution of society.

The same fragmentation is seen in the radical nationalists' version of national socialism. Those of the radical nationalists who use elements from National Socialism do this in a way which has little to do with the all-embracing program of Hitler. They do not believe that their efforts will ever result in a new version of the Third Reich. Thus, the all-embracing conception of the ideology is gone. Some of the radical nationalists even take an ad hoc approach to being anti-immigration, whereas those who adhere to the ZOG line are much less ad hoc.

### 2.7.3 Counter-Trend to Post-Modernity

The continuous growth of radical nationalist movements is a manifestation that these theories does not capture all of the trends in contemporary society. Certainly there are post-modern trends, but there are counter-trends as well that *idealise* tradition, and nostalgically look back to an era when (they believe) class, race, and nation were treated as absolutes. Adherents to counter-trends intensify such divisions, and believe in the *naturalness* of division between people. The radical nationalists thus insist on clear-cut identities, during a period when such absolute thinking is the exception, not the rule. They reject the idea that all people are free to construct themselves however they like. They believe that some identities (and environments) are natural for some people and other identities are natural for others.

<sup>65</sup> Ziehe's conceptualisation is in this regard the least precise one. He uses modernity when discussing changes of self-perception which have occurred after the Second World War. However, in regular social scientific usage modernity is a concept which (at least) embraces all of our century, and it is often used equivalent with the industrial period (and it thus reaches back to the 1600s).

There are also other social (or anti-social) movements in contemporary western society that call for absolute identities, e.g. fundamentalist movements. Such movements may be considered nostalgic solutions in an unstable world. These movements are regressive rather than progressive. Their adherents try to bind tradition, rather than breaking with it. They do not believe in the multitude of lifestyle choices. They call for one absolute truth.

In 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c), 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b) and 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a) I analyse parts of the collective identities produced by the radical nationalists. They portray themselves as white, working-class, and Norwegian. These are all broad, collective categories. They search for a homogenous sense of belonging, in an era when fluid and multiple identities dominate. Their antipathy towards 'the multicoloured community' may be read as a reaction against post-modern conditions, which trigger the growth of flooding and multiple identities (Bauman 1991). Violence and xenophobia are the products of the radical nationalists' self and group conceptions.

The radical nationalists choose the opposite project than the one described by Ziehe (1981), who focuses on the way in which young people creatively live out the ambivalence connected to the multiplicity of lifestyle choices in contemporary western societies. According to Bauman (1989), the main project of modernity was to assimilate all ambivalence. In contrast in post-modernity people live in a state of ambivalence (Bauman 1991). Both Bauman and Ziehe emphasise the extended tolerance of ambivalence in the post-modern era or in modernity, as Ziehe chooses to call our time. Instead of focusing upon the cultural and social construction of differences between people, radical nationalists call for 'the law of nature', and the instinctual and therefore righteous quality of their aggression and their defence of territories. They are almost anti-cultural in their call for the law of nature.

We could thus see contemporary radical nationalists in Norway as a counter-reaction to the ambivalence produced in our time (cf. Ziehe 1981). Their orientation points to an insecurity which has been experienced. This experience of insecurity is probably shared by many young people, although most young people find less 'radical' ways of coping with this it.

## 2.8 Life stories Marked by Stigmatised Careers

### 2.8.1 *Interpretation of Life Stories*

In short, a life story is the story (among many possible stories) an individual tells about his or her own life. There are two dominant schools in contemporary life story research. The more traditional one is the biographical approach, which provides an account of a life story in order to cast light on social processes and trace the connections between a life and a social structure. The narrative approach deals with the interpretative procedures people use when they construct their life story. I have analysed life stories by combining these two perspectives. In 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b) I have analysed the life stories of four radical nationalists in order to capture plausible trajectories that might make the entrance into the radical nationalist underground movement attractive.

The four life stories examined in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b) are presented as cases or stories that I have reconstructed from the fragments told me by these four men in numerous interviews and conversations. I have built up an abductive analysis of their trajectories into the scene. However, my analysis is intertwined with a discussion of classic interpretations of Nazism or radical nationalism. I also use these

theories more as sensitising concepts in Blumer's (1954) sense than as hypotheses to be tested. In other words, some common explanations, such as that of ideological heritage, class-background etc. provide frames of understanding within which I can discuss my findings.

My reconstruction of the life stories takes place first by a thorough analysis of all of the interviews I had conducted with each of the four persons, including more informal conversations as well as my fieldwork. When these men told me about their lives, they gave me access to the way in which they viewed their prior experiences. When I recount their stories, I present my own interpretation of a life story which they have already interpreted. In this sense, the life stories are interpreted by my informants and reinterpreted by me. In fact, this is the task of social scientists. We interpret an already interpreted reality. Giddens (1993) thus speaks of the social scientists' *double-hermeneutics*.

It is thus a mistake to assume, as Denzin (1989) does, that life stories consequently are always fictional. Naturally, the individual's tale will be based on his selective perceptions. On the other hand, these perceptions reflect how people perceive events that have happened earlier on in their lives. There are no definite answers to how these events 'really' happened, as events are always interpreted differently by the people involved. However, the manner in which an individual perceives events gives some clues to his material and emotional situation (Nilsen :149).

When we see these individual stories in a more general context of certain changes in today's society, the analysis can transgress the unique quality a pure *biographical* reading would have given. I sought to gain an understanding, to use Bourdieu's (1996:23) words, that was at once unique and general, of each life story. My analysis can be compared to similar analyses of other radical nationalists. This may lead to the construction of a theory of the recruitment to radical nationalist groups.

The four life stories I have described in (Fangen 1999b) may also show that there are no definitive answers to why some young people became radical nationalists. Such an analysis of life stories shows us the complexity of the individual's route into the underground. None of these stories are identical, but the stories might point to some features shared by most of the activists. Habitus is the product of the total biographical experience. This means that as there never are two identical life stories, nor are there two identical versions of habitus, even though there are classes of experiences, class habitus (Bourdieu 1992:33).

Another way to analyse these stories would be to focus the *linguistic* aspects of the life story (cf. Denzin 1989). I could analyse the construction of the narrative, following the guidelines of storytelling. As a result, I could point to the way these activists recount their lives in terms of a beginning, a turning point, significant others, and a conclusion. However, this kind of analysis requires the type of interview where the researcher does not ask questions. By contrast, I have asked questions about school, peers, parents, etc. This gave the activist guidelines for the type of information to provide. Moreover, an intertextual 'reading' separates the individual and his use of symbols from the context within which he acts and perceives. I therefore find that a one-sided semiotic analysis, which only focuses on the construction of meaning is too limited.

In 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b), I have taken the information I have received and used it to reconstruct chronological life stories. I have done this by following the same traditions of narratives: I focus specifically on background information in order to reveal the *themes of the life story* (Nilsen 1996) that may have been a factor in these persons' entrance into the radical nationalist underground. I thus focus specifically on events such as the first time they uttered racist beliefs at school,

how this was dealt with, disputes they have had with their parents about immigration and anti-immigration groups, and their involvement with violent or criminal gangs, etc. My primary aim is to point out certain experiences that reoccur in their accounts. I also discuss how my informants' react towards common interpretations of them.

### 2.8.2 Career Perspective

The main analytical frame I use for my interpretation of the life stories in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b) and the phases within the underground in *Skinheads in Red, White and Blue* (Fangen 1995) is a career perspective. This perspective stresses the subjective element; how a person constructs an interpretation of his life. Another important element of this perspective stresses how life stories point to social processes as the individual has experienced them.

Subjectively, a *career* is 'the moving perspective in which the person *sees his life as a whole* and interprets the meaning of his various attributes, actions and the things which happen to him' (Becker 1963:102) (my italics). Thus, when radical nationalists tell me about their life, we use the perspective of their life as a meaningful whole, and they find ways to verbalise the careers or trajectories their life has taken. The notion of career, following Becker (1963:24), refers to the *sequence of movements* an individual makes from one position to another. Thus understood, a career might include the step into school, the end of school, and into a circle of friends. It may also include the step into or the exit from a distinct organisation, subculture or the step into work life.

Furthermore, the concept of career includes the notion of *career contingency*; those circumstances which determine mobility from one position to another. Career contingencies include both *external* circumstances conditioned by social structure (class, etc.) and internal circumstances such as changes in the perspectives, moral limits, and aspirations of the individual.<sup>66</sup> For example, when a young boy enters the radical nationalist underground, he might adopt the ZOG theory after a while, and thus change his perspective of how the world is constituted. He might change his moral limits and begin to support the use of militant actions, such as the use of bombs and shotguns against adversaries. He might change his aspirations, and aspire to status in the underground movement, instead of try to find a job by which he can earn a living. Naturally these *internal* drives are *conditioned* by external circumstances through socialisation and one's environment. Thus, Becker's conceptualisation of career resembles our view of the radical nationalists as having been influenced rather than determined by class and other structural circumstances.

In 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b), I interpret my informants in light of their background stories, class-backgrounds, criminal backgrounds, and so forth. However, these stories reflect the complexity of the subjects' backgrounds. There is no particular background which might explain why an individual enters the radical nationalist movement. The choice to enter the movement is marked by coincidence, curiosity, and attraction to the practices and politics of this underground. On the other hand, most of the activists seemed to be looking for an alternative career rather than the conventional ones, regardless of whether this need was linked to failure at school or a need for power.

<sup>66</sup> I have slightly reworked Becker's theory. Instead of talking about external factors, which give the impression of an entity which could be isolated from other entities, I prefer to use the word *circumstance*, which gives the impression of a more complex entity interwoven with other entities. Instead of talking about motivations, I talk of *moral limits*. I do this in order to avoid the perspective of a causal link between purpose and action. Instead I will point to the broader transformation of morals which leads the individual to do things he previously would not think of doing. Furthermore, I talk about *aspirations* rather than desires to point to the changes in the way the individual relates to his future.

Several activists say that their entrance was the result of growing political awareness. This is particularly true of the activists who entered the underground between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. Some of them were motivated by an aversion to the growth of the communist movement, and the 'flow' of immigrants.

The concept of *career*, as used by Becker, is not normative.<sup>67</sup> The fact that a person follows a particular career does not mean that this process is combined with success. Neither does the notion mean that the individual only moves in one direction, for example that the radical nationalist becomes increasingly ideologically extreme or militant. A career can change its course, and an individual is strongly attached to the subculture during one period, can later follow a career route which leads to a more conventional life.

Careers may be conventional or may be in conflict with that which is considered legitimate in our society. The career model does *not* imply a one-sided process which inevitably leads an individual into the underground. I use the term as a reflection of a life story consisting of several careers. Furthermore, different careers might go in conflicting directions. This means that the individual will have to choose between them.

In other words, speaking of a *deviant career* does *not* mean that we are discussing a determined or casual process. Thus, during some phases, most of the radical nationalists are highly committed to the underground, and take part in all of its actions. During other phases, they loosen their ties to the other activists somewhat. This might be because they decide to take a course or because they get a more demanding job. Then they later talk with one of the other activists again and renew their bonds to the underground.

As I use it here, the concept of career is a combination of Becker's conceptualisation of *deviant career* and Goffman's conceptualisation of *moral career*.<sup>68</sup> Goffman (1963:45) conceptualises stigmatised persons' learning experiences regarding their plight and similar changes in concept of self as *moral career*. A *deviant career* 'is the developmental process of a set of deviant behaviours. This process can consist of 'a series of statuses (...) typical sequences of position, achievement, responsibility, and even of adventure'.

Thus, the radical nationalist might pass through a sequence of positions within the underground. He starts with the subordinate position of novice. Then, if he has self-confidence, a skill, an uncontrolled rebelliousness or another quality, he can achieve a position among the others. For example, he can take up the position of militant, ideologist, internet expert or whatever other position might fit into this underground movement. Of course, he can also achieve a status which is not marked by deference, as for example when he achieves the status of heavy drinker or uncontrolled fighter or other statuses which to a greater extent are marked by disgrace.

The concept of deviant career might be combined with *stigmatised career*, which is a social career that is marked by the achievement of a stigma. By combining these concepts we follow the perspective on radical nationalist ideology as *stigmatised knowledge*, (see Barkun's reworking of Campbell's concept of deviant knowledge) combines our perspectives on social careers with our analysis of ideology. This makes it

<sup>67</sup> Becker writes about the steps the individual passes through in order to become a user of marihuana. Similarly, in *Skinheads in Red, White and Blue* (Fangen 1995) I have shown some of the phases an activist usually passes through from the first time he contacts the radical nationalist underground, until he eventually leaves it (if he ever does).

<sup>68</sup> In Fangen (1995) I have analysed the career of radical nationalists within the underground in detail, using Becker's concepts as my analytical frame. However, as this report does not form part of this thesis, I will give a short summary of some of these findings here and discuss them in relation to Becker's and Goffman's theories of career.

possible to see the link between the achievement of a stigmatised ideology, and the experience of exclusion from conventional social settings, which is an experience shared by most radical nationalists.

### 2.8.3 *The Downward Option - The Class 'Choice' of Radical Nationalists*

Most of the radical nationalists consider themselves as people who have chosen their political standpoint voluntarily, because 'it is the truth'. In an article in *Fritt Forum* in 1998, two activists argued that they had entered the underground because of their growing political awareness, and that this choice had nothing to do with their quest for community. This surely holds for all people. Nobody wants to be merely seen as a passive result of his background or of his need to belong in a community. This is not the case anyway. Despite having a traumatic background, people have some choice and responsibility for their own lives.

Another activist verbalises his entrance as result of a 'calling' (similar to a religious one) to become a National Socialist (Rein in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b). However, yet another activist (Egil, *ibid.*) says that many of the activists, including himself, are 'victims' who were socially inhibited. He states that they had few contacts with girls, and had previously been associated with various criminal gangs. In fact, all four of the radical nationalists I discuss in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b) interpret their political adherence partly in light of class-rooted experiences and earlier experiences of exclusion. Except for Frode, none of them had felt at home in any of their earlier surroundings.<sup>69</sup>

Although the lifestyle of radical nationalists breaks with conventions, it is possible to view it as influenced by their position in society. Like everybody else, they are not determined by this position. To a certain extent they make a 'class choice' in the sense that they can, in terms of own occupational status, strive upwards, stay where they are or strive downwards. Cohen (1972) argues that skinheads in the 1960s and 1970s strove downwards. They made a *downward option*, as they chose to stay at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and they idealised the 'underdog'.

As many of the radical nationalists are downwardly mobile in terms of their social status, class mobility interwoven with many other processes is important. Many of these young men had a marginal position before they entered the underground movement. Most of them did not regard their own future as one that should be defined by a conventional career within the labour market or the educational system.

Thus, we could say that their choice of an underground life which might cut off future opportunities for them is based on a realistic judgement of their own situation. Their conscious choice of an orientation which makes people feel contempt for them more actively because of their political adherence is actually easier to bear, than not succeeding in the tough career world of the contemporary western world. Here, one is supposed to construct oneself successfully not only in terms of vocational career, but also in terms of appearance, physical shape and state of happiness.

The radical nationalist underground might provide an *alternative career* for people who suppose that they will not succeed in this contest of status or who do not want to try. This is a career marked by alternative codes of honour and achievement. There is more honour linked to being politically persecuted, as this appears to be a form of *martyrism*. Their failure is thus viewed as related to their stigmatised political belonging. The entrance of young people into the radical nationalist underground might be a response to an era when education and good grades at school are demanded,

<sup>69</sup> The activists themselves balance between voluntarism and determinism in their interpretation of their choice of political adherence and association with the radical nationalists.

regardless of the occupation one wants to pursue. Even the vocational schools which give training for traditional manual jobs place increasing emphasis on theoretical rather than practical knowledge.<sup>70</sup>

In 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c:33-36), I argue that Cohen's (1972) concept of *downward option* is relevant in our interpretation of the radical nationalists, as their lifestyle might diminish their chances on the labour market and in the education system. This argument is supported by the findings of other researchers on radical nationalists. Kaplan (1995:88)'s research has 'indicated cases in which right-wing extremists have been dismissed from their jobs following visits from representatives of watchdog groups'.

Similarly, one leading activist of the Norwegian radical nationalist movement of the 1970s lost his job after being interviewed on television. He subsequently sued his workplace for unlawfully dismissing him, but lost his case in court. The trade unions were unable to help him. Then he moved to Sweden and obtained a very good job, until some Swedish anti-Fascists realised who he was in terms of his political background, and hung up posters of him, accompanied by swastikas, all over town. He lost this job as well, but received support from the Swedish trade union. However, their efforts did not work, so he returned to Norway, and has lived on the dole since then. He says that in practice he has been forbidden to work for the rest of his life. Another activist (Rein in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b)) lost three jobs during his national service. He worked in a prison and in a kindergarten, but had to leave both positions because of his expression of racist ideas.

When they choose the radical nationalist underground, these activists take a risk that their future possibilities for a conventional career will be delimited. They thus 'choose' a downward option, in Cohen's (1972) sense. However, this choice is anyway not always made consciously by these young people. It is only after a while that some of them seem to realise that their participation might have such consequences.

The underground might appear to be more *attractive* to young people who in different ways have experienced *social exclusion*. To be expelled in advance makes the move underground less dramatic, as the individual already has little to lose. This is seen in Egil's story, for example, as I describe it in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b). A history of problems at school, participation in delinquent gangs and then either a conscious *decision* to join the underground together with some friends or an accidental meeting with members of the underground is common. Another possible path is that of the individual who has felt *different* from others and, who for some reason, has developed a world view in line with the underground (cf. Rein in (Fangen 1999b)). The step into the underground thereby changes his status from that of loner to participant in a collective movement.

#### 2.8.4 Moral 'Option'- The Achievement of Stigma

When young people enter the radical nationalist underground movement, they choose a lifestyle that might lead people to exclude them from the moral community (see appendix 2). Their choice is thus twofold, not merely in terms of social mobility, but also in terms of *moral mobility*. They move downwards in the moral hierarchy as they are condemned by people around them. On the other hand, this condemnation may lead some of these young people to *feel* more honourable. They then are condemned because of their ideology, not their eventual failure in conventional society. The terms *moral*

<sup>70</sup> Helland and Hegna's (1998:78) study of young people in Bergen, show that boys who have chosen vocational schools think the new school-reform from 1994 implies that it is 'too much theory' and that it is more difficult to fulfil the education than it was before the reform. See also Moe (1999).



*career* and moral mobility are thus useful when we analyse the stigmatisation of radical nationalists, as their stigma is related to concepts of morality.

It is often the case that stigmatised identities, such as blind or deaf people, have not chosen this identity. Instead they develop this identity when they learn that people perceive this quality as different (cf. Goffman 1963). Thus, in contrast to people who involuntarily develop a stigmatised identity, the stigma of the radical nationalists contains an element of *choice*. This choice is twofold. On the one hand, they choose a lifestyle that purposely evokes strong negative reactions in others. Young people may therefore choose such a loaded identity in order to shock, and thus demand a reaction from others. On the other hand, they choose a political or ideological adherence based on strong us-them categories, which make the world more predictable.

One phase of the socialisation process which is part of a moral career is when the stigmatised person learns and incorporates the way other people view his particular 'difference', and gains a general idea of what it would be like to possess a particular stigma. Another phase is when he learns that he possesses a particular stigma and what the consequences of this stigma are. Only a few of the radical nationalists learned in early childhood what it means to possess the stigma of 'racist' or 'National Socialist'. One activist says that since he rode his tricycle with a Gestapo poster on it, he has always been seen as the Nazi of the neighbourhood. Other activists talk about having been troublemakers all their life. They have always been treated as different. They have been stigmatised, but only as troublemakers, which is not as morally dubious as the new stigma they achieve when they enter the radical nationalist movement.

Becker describes the moment at which one realises that one is different, that one possesses a stigma, as a *crisis point* in the career of the 'deviant'. Such crisis points are produced by an antagonistic relationship between the 'deviant' (or stigmatised) subculture and its outsiders. These crisis points also shape the subculture and produce important 'career contingencies'. This is similar to Giddens (1991), who sees the ability to master lifespan changes and the identity crises they lead to as one of the most important skills in contemporary society.

Such crises should ideally lead to comprehension, but do not necessarily do so. The problem for many of the radical nationalists is that they do not have anyone outside their own secretive underground they can share difficult experiences with. They therefore have few options for using their doubts as elements of reflection and growth.

An example of the consequences this might have is the radical nationalist I mentioned above, who very early in his childhood 'chose' to become a Nazi, and continued to live up to this image. He chose a stigmatic identity, which led him to be recognised by others, albeit in a negative manner. He later left the underground because he felt that there was no real comradeship within it. One year later, he committed suicide.

He chose a stigma that was manageable as long as he was a child and as long as he was part of an underground of like-minded people. However, when he realised that this underground did not provide him with the loyalty and community he thought he would find there, he left and suffered a crisis of identity. His stigma became unbearable, as he no longer shared the stigma with anybody and was unable to let it go, as it had been a part of his identity for most of his life. For this activist, the crisis point in his stigmatised career thus came *after* he had left the underground.

There are other activists who experience serious crises of identity *while* they belong to the underground. This usually occurs once they realise that they are unable to leave it, and yet find it intolerable to cope with the frustrations of participating. In other words, young people's choice of this morally dubious kind of stigmatised identity may have

implications for their self-perception, as a great deal of ambivalence is involved. The world may look simpler in terms of the ideology, but the activists' image of themselves is not necessarily as straightforward.

The radical nationalists gradually learn how strongly they have become discredited, whereas many of them previously considered themselves 'normal' before. They thus lack the capacity to handle their new stigma. Lewin (1940) reveals that the ability to cope with a stigma must be learned. His discussion is linked to the experience of children who belong to minority groups in general, and the Jewish minority in particular. He argues that it is best if they learn from an early age that they are both ordinary, like all the other children, and unique, as they come from another ethnic group. This makes them better able to cope with stigmatisation and discrimination later in life.

The situation for radical nationalists is of another character, since their discreditation is linked to their adoption of a stigmatised ideology. They do not grow up aware of the stigma (since they adopt it later). They consequently do not have a background socialisation which makes them ready to meet the stigmatisation they experience with a sense of congruent self. As a result, they become angry when people attribute to them a whole range of discrediting qualities and destructive beliefs which they do not recognise in themselves.

The radical nationalists create a distinct universe of meanings, which consists of stigmatised knowledge in the form of conspiracy theories. At the same time, this knowledge comes back to haunt them. They create an image of the world as an *active project*. At the same time, they do not fully acknowledge the impact of this project on themselves in advance. We could thus say that their images of the world create them in turn.

### 2.8.5 *Costs and Benefits Related to Entering the Radical Nationalist Underground*

Brustein (1996) analyses people's entrance in the Nazi movement in the 1930s as result of a cost-benefit analysis. Most people entered the party because they thought it would solve their material grievances. As entrance into the radical nationalist underground might worsen the material position of the individual, as reported earlier, the same argument cannot be used here.

Instead we could say that the *benefits* of entering this underground are found on a psychological and symbolic level. Entrance into this underground may be seen as an *alternative career*. This career provides them with alternative ways of achieving a sense of pride (honour), power, and recognition.

Some of the *costs* of entering the radical nationalist movement are closely related to the benefits of entering. This makes it difficult to distinguish between these two dimensions. For example, we could say that the resentment of radical nationalists towards society has *given their rebellion direction*. It has become so important for them to show that they are not conventional citizens that they neglect the element of *despair* in the direction they have chosen. They do not clearly see that their us-them distinctions are too exaggerated. They reject more nuanced versions of other groups of people, as these feed ambivalence to their world-view. A great deal of effort goes into retaining a clear picture of the enemy.

This is in line with many of the people who joined communist movements in the 1970s. Many forgot the dogmatic aspects of the movements they joined because it was so important to take a critical stand towards bourgeois society and capitalism. They merely followed the implicit norm; 'are you with us or are you a coward?'

This implicit norm and the neglect of the element of despair are typical of any mass movement or charismatic movement (Lindholm 1990). It is also prevalent in cadre and elite movements, as these movements give little room for individual differences. The impact of such orientations is not merely political or social. It is also psychological. We must thus conclude that the psychological qualities which are relevant here are closely linked to social processes.

The *us-them consciousness*, the *despair*, and the *call for pride and power* do not emerge by themselves in the individual. Such sentiments may be linked to the sectarian quality developed by such movements, and the disclosure it triggers within the movement in relation to its social surroundings. The processes of *exclusion* that are fed by participation in the movement explain why the participants' feelings of resentment towards society become so strong and why such feelings lead to increased radicalism.

As already mentioned, the individual does not know the cost of entering in advance. A complete cost-benefit analysis is therefore probably not very common nor possible before individuals enter the underground. However, after having been a participant for a while, many activists begin to evaluate their new setting in such terms. They begin to think of it in terms of what it provides for them in relation to what they have lost on the way. This might be a stable relationship with the girl who gave birth to his child, as was the case with Egil. It could be a relationship with old friends, but who no longer want contact with him. It could be a job that was lost after it became known what political group the individual belonged to, etc.

Although most radical nationalists manage to live a more or less conventional life in addition to the time they spend together with their fellow activists, many of the most public figures experience problems when they try to find a long-term job, as mentioned earlier. Thus, the potential costs of entering the radical nationalist underground might include stigmatisation, social exclusion, imprisonment, exhaustion as a result of being the object of police surveillance over a long period of time, suspicion on the part of fellow activists, the threat of violence from anti-Fascists, and so forth.

The situation of contemporary radical nationalists is totally different from that of the people who chose to become members of the Nazi party in 1930s Germany. For them, this meant that they were *included* in a mass movement, which soon took over the hegemony, whereas the radical nationalists choose to be part of an underground, which is defined *in contrast* to the hegemony.

In light of the costs associated with taking part in this movement, the question of why they enter becomes more salient. In light of their militancy, one cannot say that they adhere to a political discourse similar to those who are legalised through the parliamentary system. Thus, the fact that three researchers in Norway received funding from the State to study this underground full-time in 1993-1998, is perhaps easier to understand. One becomes more eager to learn who these young people are, why they are there, and how they relate to the world when the costs seem to be more extensive for them than for people who choose other political orientations.

### **Accidental Events**

Young people's entrance into the radical nationalist underground is not understandable solely in light of prior (partly class-rooted) experiences which form a certain habitus. The life stories of the radical nationalists show that their entrance into the underground is partly a result of accidental encounters. They met people already acquainted with the underground, accompanied them to a gathering, and found it to be exciting and tough.

It might thus be seen as accidental that a young individual meets activists from the underground at a point in his life when he needs someone to lean on. For example, Egil

in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b) met a security guard who helped him find places to spend the night, and who introduced him to far-right ideas and to some militant people. These new acquaintances later introduced him to people from the radical nationalist movement. This is accidental in the sense that the milieu he entered depended on the type of person he met. The individual activist may later accidentally meet someone *outside* the underground, who makes him choose to leave it.

More than anything else, it seems that the quest for excitement, a collective identity, and a masculine community are important to these young men. Many young males in contemporary western societies might share such quests. The reason why some young men and women enter the radical nationalist underground, whereas most young people do not take this step is thus partly accidental, as all these other young people did not accidentally learn to know people from this underground. However, it is also clear that most young people find this underground extreme, and stay aloof of it because of its distasteful profile. The reason then why some young people enter this underground despite the widespread contempt with which people view it, is partly understood as a consequence of certain kinds of experiences of social exclusion. These experiences might make the belonging to this underground a possible alternative way to achieve the sense of pride and power.

### 2.8.6 Youth Subcultural Career, Militant Career, and Ideological Career

Such accidental meetings with young people who are attached to different groups may naturally lead an individual to drift in and out of several subcultures and gangs. This is often the case. However, the types of groups that have attracted radical nationalists vary. Some have always been attracted by various forms of militant groups. Others are led by an interest in subcultural style. Yet other activists are primarily interested in politics<sup>71</sup>. They thus have a background within other far-right or even communist groups.

A significant proportion of the activists began their career of rebellion in the Blitz house or in other far-left or anarchist groups. For some, an interest in both politics and style has led them into the various groups.<sup>72</sup> For others, a combination of a militant and political quest eventually led them to this underground movement. These activists call themselves revolutionaries. Several of them sympathise with revolutionary movements in other countries, including the IRA, the Palestinian Intifada and the PKK.

In *Skinheads in Red, White and Blue* (Fangen 1995), I called the career of those activists who had belonged to various other youth subcultural groups before they entered the radical nationalist underground a *youth subcultural career*. Moreover, those who drifted through various political organisations entered the radical nationalist movement as part of their *political career*. These activists usually find the other parties too liberal or too conservative. Many of the activists label themselves radicals.

I referred to the ideological career or militant career of those activists who had drifted through various non-parliamentary ideological groupings or had been led by their own solitary ideological interest as a means of making reference to the activists who had previously been involved in from militant or armed groups or had been led by their solitary interest in weapons. In reality, these different 'careers' often overlap each

<sup>71</sup> One of the activists entered the extra-parliamentary radical nationalist parties of the 1980s after he became dissatisfied with the increased liberal profile of the Progressive Party, in which he had belonged to previously. Other activists have previously been members of the Conservative Party, the Centre Party, and even the Norwegian Communist Party.

<sup>72</sup> Some of the activists who are concerned with stylish matters claim that one reason they left *Blitz* for example, and joined the radical nationalists instead is that they 'liked the skinhead style more' and that they felt more at home with radical nationalist beliefs.

other. There are individuals who have been led both by interests in style, militancy and policy. The terms must thus not be understood as mutually exclusive. However, most of the activists might be interpreted predominantly in terms of one of these different careers. There are some activists who drift in and out of the radical nationalist underground for a while, before they either establish a tighter bond to it or disappear without the other activists noticing.

### *2.8.7 Conflicting Careers*

An activist's career within the radical nationalist underground may come in conflict with his career in other parts of his life. This may include having a family, a stable job, etc. (see Aubert's (1965) conceptualisation of underground movements as described earlier). One of the most militant activists once had the opportunity to leave the underground and start a more conventional life with a girl who was pregnant with his child. However, he did not manage to leave, because his only friends were in underground, and he was unable to withstand pressure to remain there. As a result, he was denied contact with his son. He now sees his inability to leave as one of the biggest mistakes of his life. Another leading activist had a child with his girlfriend, who also participated in the underground. However, they had so many problems with the child welfare authorities that they decided to separate and only informally remain partners.

Some activists live a double life at work. They keep their participation in the radical nationalist underground secret from their colleagues. Thus, one activist was afraid that I would reveal his identity, as he knew that if it came out that he was a radical nationalist, he would lose his job (he worked at the storage-room in a post office).

Other activists do not hide their identity, and find that it does not matter to their fellows at work that they participate within the underground, as long as they do their job well. For example, one activist who was a ditch digger was well liked by his colleagues. I once talked with one of them, who said that xx 'is a good fellow', and referred to his political belonging by saying 'everyone has their weak spots. Another leading activist works as a roofer, and is known as a good-natured fellow among people in his home community. Some people think of him as a Jekyll and Hyde type, as they know how destructive he can be when he is with his fellow activists. In addition, some of the activists who are well known among the general public for serious acts of violence have trouble getting work. From time to time, some of them work illegally for the firm of removers of an older radical nationalist.

### *2.8.8 Relations to People Outside the Underground*

The same differences between those who manage to live with their identity as radical nationalist activists in their work life, those who remain silent about this identity, and those who do not manage to combine a work life with being radical nationalists, manifest themselves in other parts of the radical nationalists life as well. Several of the radical nationalists, especially those who live in Oslo, must always be on the alert in order not to get beaten up or verbally harassed when they are out in public. Others are almost treated as local heroes.

One leading activist says that he gets beer for free at his local pub. At night, the locals tap him on the shoulder and say 'keep up the good work', referring to his role within the underground. This activist states that he seldom hears negative comments from local boys. However, girls occasionally express their disapproval with his underground activities. One girl wanted him to go see "Schindler's List", the Steven Spielberg film about the Holocaust with her. He agreed to go, but the cinemas had stopped showing the film, so they never went.

Another activist lived on the dole, and thus usually got up late and then drifted around for some hours, before meeting his friends in the evening. He would try to get some of them or a stranger to buy him beers. He had friends among the football supporters and bikers outside the radical nationalist underground, and went to the pub of the football supporters. Yet another activist who lived on the dole spent most of his time alone, except for his meetings once a week with friends from the underground. He had no friends outside the underground, and thus spent a great deal of time at his lodgings. He had a huge collection of World War II videos. Then he began studying again so that he could complete his schooling and take further education. On a data processing course he met a girl. With her help he managed to leave the underground, but when the relationship ended, he committed suicide. It was not easy for him to find a new network after he left the underground. He did not have anybody he could speak to about his experiences.

Some of the differences between the activists in terms of their everyday life, have to do with whether they live a *double life*. Some activists have watertight compartments between the radical nationalist underground and their family and work life (cf. Aubert 1965). Others do not. The main difference is that some activists share a flat, and are thus involved in their relations to other activists almost all day long. Other activists live with their parents. After a while, their parents inevitably acknowledge their children's new sense of belonging.

Most of the activists learn to handle this interchange between conventional settings and underground life. The double aspect of this interchange is not as large for them as it is for participants in a wartime underground movement, as described by Aubert (1965). The greatest risk for a radical nationalist is that he might lose his job, be beaten up by adversaries, and receive angry glances from people who recognise him in terms of group belonging. Furthermore, the greatest risk is possible periods of doubts and frustration, and the lack of people with which he can share these feelings. Most of the activists report that they occasionally become tired of the entire underground movement, and wish to leave it.

### 2.8.9 *Leaving the Underground*

Leaving the underground is a very lonely and vulnerable process. Conventional life may seem dull compared to the excitement within the cultic milieu. Many doubts about one's past actions may arise, and the individual usually does not have anyone to share such feelings with (e.g. the boy who committed suicide one year after leaving the underground. In the meantime he had tried to write about his prior experiences, without really managing to put them behind him). Many of the radical nationalists feel an emptiness, and (naturally) have difficulty making their prior experiences relevant to a more conventional career of life.

The individual who leaves the underground has experienced what it means to be excommunicated. When activists leave the underground, they often have poor networks, and people generally react with disdain when told about their past activities. Those who only participated for a short period of time can interpret it as part of their youthful rebelliousness. It therefore does not cause them much trouble. However, many of those who have participated for years, see no way out of the underground, even though they are tired of it and want to establish another kind of life if possible.

### 2.8.10 *How 'Different' are the Radical Nationalists?*

The backgrounds of the radical nationalists are not always very different from the backgrounds of many young people today. It is thus impossible to think of a situation where one could determine in advance who might enter the radical nationalist

movement. Many young people today drift from group to group. This is also the case for many of the radical nationalists. A few of them entered this movement based on a political preference which they had already established. However, most of them could just have easily have joined another group with a different political profile, had they met other people. Thus, to enter the radical nationalist underground movement is just one of many possibilities for constructing an identity and group belonging which many young people today quest for.

The young people who enter the radical nationalist movement do not have an extraordinary need to belong anywhere. This need seems to be very widespread in an era where many traditional ties are broken up. The same argument would account for many radical nationalists lack of empathy. Instead of seeing this condition as a distinct behavioural disorder typical of these youths (Bjørge 1997), we could see the lack of empathy as a symptom of our time, which manifests itself in a more extreme form in some people than in others.

On the other hand, the views and practices of the radical nationalists are far from common among contemporary youths. Some of these practices, e.g. racist violence, have their counterpart in certain contemporary youth cultures or gangs. There are also political standpoints that have more commonsense expressions elsewhere. However, their conspiracy theories, their weapons training, their violence by means of explosives and shotguns, and their underground activities, are practices that keep them apart from the more conventional sector of society.

As individuals, the radical nationalists are not very dissimilar to other youths. However, they are different in terms of their group membership. It is in the way in which they interpret situations that they differ. The ideology they adopt within this underground makes them react different collectively in relation to their surroundings. Their self-exclusion is a counter-reaction to their surroundings. As Lööw (1997:129) puts it, 'Step by step, the hard-core activists have broken their remaining contacts with the surrounding society in favour of a life as outlaws'.

Although the strategies and views of the radical nationalists clearly are far out in relation to the practices and views generally approved of by young people, the activists who propose these practices and views are not notably different from many other young people. The radical nationalists are ordinary in the sense that they have grown up in contexts which are well known in our society. They are also ordinary in the sense that they not only inhabit hateful and aggressive instincts. They are also vulnerable and tender. They get hurt, confused, and insecure. They get angry, and they laugh and amuse themselves. To speak of them as inhuman is the wrong approach.<sup>73</sup>

Some of the radical nationalists are excluded from social networks in their local communities.<sup>74</sup> The most important part of the lives of some of them is lived within the radical nationalist underground. When acting within the radical nationalist underground, they write texts, use gestures, and express views which are extreme and far from the views and practices among most young people. However, the individuals who claim these views and take part in these practices are not nearly as different as people would like them to be.

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<sup>73</sup> My arguments here are similar to those of Campbell (1991:xiii) in her response to the critics of her book on American gang girls.

<sup>74</sup> This is, however, unlike the gang girls studied by Campbell.

### 2.8.11 *The Problem with External Explanations and a Diagnostic Approach*

The backgrounds of radical nationalists have been explained by the use of diagnostic terms (Bjørge 1997:121,205).<sup>75</sup> Diagnostic explanations are explanations from the outside in the sense that these young people do not use these interpretations themselves. Diagnoses that are not defined socially or developmentally particularly make up a very external form of analysis.

There are both ethical, methodological, and analytical problems with a diagnostic approach. The vast majority of young people who suffer from behavioural or personality disorders do not become participants of the radical nationalist movement. Furthermore, only a therapist who has given therapy to individual activists could with any certainty use diagnoses to explain their actions and character. Second-hand information is too tentative to draw any conclusions about behavioural disorders.

Although some activists might suffer from behavioural disorders, it is not possible to say in advance that such and such an individual is more prone to enter the underground. An implicit thought when explaining recruitment to radical nationalist groups by making reference to behavioural disorders is that it must be possible to solve the problem of violence and clean these young people's minds by putting them on a suitable diet or pill. Naturally this is not possible.

Instead of the diagnostic view of hyperactivity, on a symbolic level we could see street life as a continuous shift between the blunt and the hyperactive. One might say that radicalism and militancy are especially suitable for people who suffer from behavioural disorders. However, the disorder in itself cannot explain the *structures of meaning* that make up the radical nationalist underground and its participants.

The same problem occurs if we try to explain radical nationalism in terms of *personality disorders*. The study that has received most attention, although it has been heavily criticised, is *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). Bauman (1989:153) is sceptical to the authors' attempt to explain 'Nazi rule and ensuing atrocities in the presence of a special type of individual; personalities inclined to obedience towards the stronger, and to the unscrupulous, often cruel, high-handedness towards the weak'. Bauman thus somewhat ironically concludes that the triumph of the Nazis, from this perspective, 'must have been an outcome of an unusual accumulation of such personalities', as argued by Bauman. The problem with such a focus on personality disorders is that it eschews the exploration of all supra or extra-individual factors that could produce such personalities. He as well sees the problem in these authors' neglect of the possibility that 'such factors may induce authoritarian behaviour in people otherwise devoid of authoritarian personality'.

Milgram's (1971) experiments concerning obedience heavily encroached on the conclusions in Adorno et al.'s (1950) study. Milgram found that, again to paraphrase Bauman (1989:153), that 'while cruelty correlates poorly with the personal characteristics of its perpetrators, it correlates very strongly with the relationship of *authority and subordination*'. Thus, when a person of higher authority commands a person of lesser authority to do something, this increases the likelihood that he will do what he is told without making any objections. This system is at the heart of totalitarian

<sup>75</sup> Bjørge discusses several *factors* that might explain recruitment to radical nationalist groups, where behavioural disorders such as MBD, Tourette's syndrome and hyperactivity are among several explanatory tools. However, such a list of factors leads to a rather external picture. The complex background that predates an individual's entrance into this underground, as well as his calling, gets lost in such an external form of analysis. Bjørge's list of factors might serve as a survey of possible aspects to be considered. However, it does not serve as a frame within which to understand why a single individual enters the radical nationalist underground.



states such as the Nazi regime of the Second World War. However, it is not at the heart of less organised subcultures like the radical nationalist underground movement to the same extent. Some cells within this movement try to copy this hierarchical structure of command. However, most of them adhere more to the principle of *leaderless resistance*.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, Milgram's experiment shows that inhumanity is a function of *social distance*. This finding is supported by Christie (1972)'s study of concentration camp workers during World War II. His study reveals how prison guards managed to turn the prisoners into non-humans, and thus managed to continue treating them badly. However, a prisoner once learned Norwegian on his own, and began to talk to prison guards. They were unable to create the distance they needed in order to treat him as a non-human anymore, and the difference between guard and prisoner was blurred.

The conclusion we might draw from these studies is that people may commit serious acts of oppression if they are positioned within a hierarchy of command, and a superior tells them to perform an act. The radical nationalists are partly involved in a hierarchical structure in the cultic cells of the milieu. If they were integrated in local networks this might serve as a buffer against their will to join authoritative structures. Furthermore, we might conclude that the exclusion of the radical nationalists makes them more prone to commit acts of violence. The more integrated they are in their local communities, the less need they will have to act like outlaws.

The notion of personality (whether it might be asocial, authoritarian or Fascist) is wrong in the sense that it ignores this type of social and structural conditions in relation to violence and participation in cultic milieus. This conception leads us to think of these young people as Fascists, etc. in advance, and also incurably Fascist. An alternative way of viewing the situation is to see that they are in a setting which makes these actions and utterances (known as Fascist) meaningful and possible. It is the structural setting that makes the actions possible, not their personality per se. We therefore cannot stop treating them as humans because they are in this setting. Instead we must start treating them as humans in order to put them in a free position to decide whether or not they wish to remain in this setting (cf. my discussion in part two of the appendix).

In addition to its limited analytical value, there is also an ethical aspect involved in using diagnoses of behavioural or personality disorders. It is humiliating for an individual to be interpreted this way, as he is then seen as no longer *responsible* for his own life. For some people, this might be a relief, but most radical nationalists react angrily to being diagnosed, cf. *Fritt-Forum*, 1998.

Other external concepts often used to explain radical nationalists are 'social loser', 'asocial personality' and 'permanently impaired mental faculties'. These all function as stigmatic labels. These labels are parts of people's 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 1977:191) towards these young people. To interpret racists solely in terms of traumatic background stories is also a kind of symbolic violence, as Prieur (1995) points out in her review of Bourdieu and Accardo's (1993) *La Misère du monde*. Bourdieu's solution is to be very aware of the way people verbalise their backgrounds, and to try not to impose one's own prejudices onto the subjects when interviewing them. I have tried to follow this approach in all of my conversations with radical nationalists. In addition, I have tried to build up my analysis in accordance with the informants' own accounts.

In some way or other most interpretations represent a form of symbolic violence. It is difficult as a researcher to write about living individuals not to commit symbolic violence to some extent, as pointed out by Denzin (1989:58). Any research design that

<sup>76</sup> See 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b) and 'Leaderless Resistance' (Kaplan 1997).

moves beyond the 'experience near' and 'actor-oriented'<sup>77</sup> implies that when we make definitions and create categories of actors and their actions, we objectivate them as well. Relations of dominance then arise, as the actors do not have the same access to the interpretations as we do. Nevertheless, an experience-near approach might be equally dominating as an experience-distant one. Regardless of how 'near' one is, the actors are not on an equal footing in determining how they should be defined. An alternative for them may be to accept the definitions other people have of them or to exaggerate the appropriateness of these definitions by making them true, such as self-fulfilling prophecies.<sup>78</sup>

An important factor to keep in mind when we interpret someone's present participation in a militant scene in light of his previous experiences is that other young people who have not entered the same setting have had similar experiences. One has to see which general conflicts and dilemmas of contemporary society one can read into the unique story of the individual. Then one does not diagnose his story merely as a psychological story, but as a story which reflects general processes in contemporary society.

The emergence of radical nationalism and acts of violence against refugees are linked to complex social processes, and can thus never be explained by reference to personality or behavioural disorders alone. My project is *not* to look at individual psychiatry. I want to grasp how these young people *perceive* the world around them, and how this perception gives them meaning. Their world view may be one that is particularly attractive for people who suffer from certain behavioural disorders. Nevertheless, the disorders cannot explain these views.

The career perspective provides a better understanding of processes than the more static understanding which is the result of focus on the activists' eventual behavioural or personality disorders (e.g. Bjørge 1997).<sup>79</sup> An example of this is the processes of exclusion and stigmatisation the individual experiences when he enters the underground movement. The career perspective also fits the actor's own view, as it is based on his own account of the trajectories he has passed through during his life. A diagnostic approach gives a more external picture. A career perspective provides a distinctly sociological understanding of recruitment to radical nationalist groups. This perspective makes it possible to study the trajectories that has lead an individual into this kind of social setting, without making any stigmatising and external interpretations.

The concept of career is thus also useful when we discuss the backgrounds of radical nationalists prior to their entrance into the underground. In 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b), I use this perspective as an analytical tool for my analysis of the background of four radical nationalists. Even though I pay attention to the *background experiences* that these activists recounts in this article, I do not interpret these experiences as 'causes' that inevitably led them into the underground. As my discussion of the four life stories shows, there is no particular background that leads an individual into the underground.

### 2.8.12 Narrative Ethnographic Studies

There are other researchers who, like me, have used fieldwork as their method in order to study radical nationalists. One of these is Bessant (1995), who uses a *narrative* approach in her interpretation of her material. This approach implies that one treats the utterances of the participants as *texts* which can be read in certain ways, but without

<sup>77</sup> See Geertz (1973) and (1983).

<sup>78</sup> According to one leading radical nationalist, this was the case with him. See *Ikke Vold* no. 1, 1996.

<sup>79</sup> Bjørge is also concerned with stigmatisation, however, not as a leading perspective.

drawing any conclusions about features which are external to the text, such as class or gender or other kinds of analytical categories. The focus is on the narrative as such instead.

Such a discursive perspective is useful in many ways. In addition it is somewhat reductive, as utterances are seen as interesting only in themselves, not because they point to something external. The analysis thus implicitly suggests that every utterance is unique, and that it is not possible to speak more broadly about structures or contexts which condition the meaning of the single utterance. The utterances of radical nationalists are not only understandable as self-referential stories. They also (although ambiguously) refer to surroundings which are external to that which is said, cf. Alvesson and Sköldbörg (1994:260).

It is hard to interpret any expression before it is put into an *interpretative context*. Analytical frames give meaning, as they make it possible for us to see *relations between* different utterances, rituals or symbols. When we interpret symbols in some way or other we must show how these symbols point to a social phenomenon. I thus suggest that we discuss the activists' narratives in relation to analytical frames derived from social theory. The activists' production of symbols takes place *through* their stigmatised knowledge, identity, and social background, which all form part of their habitus, their way of reacting towards the world.

I thus depart from a pure narrative or discursive approach as I see structures as important, and I see the need to construct some analytical frames in order to be able to contribute more than a mere reconstruction of the primary conceptions of the actors. My approach has thus more in common with the outlines for *reflexive analysis*, as represented by Bourdieu (1993b) (see also Alvesson and Sköldbörg 1994:313-370).

I agree with Bessant (1995) that the more traditional ways of researching criminal behaviour do not specifically reveal the attraction of acting in particular ways nor what it is that actually draws people towards certain groups or certain ways of behaving. I also concur that when we recognise an insider's accounts as a valuable source of information, then many of the reasons why certain young people become Nazis may be revealed in detail. Bessant (1995) aptly points out that in order to access this information, we need to gain insight into the frameworks of knowledge that determine what is and what is not possible to think, say or do for a young Nazi through the medium of narrative.

Although I use narratives in the form of life stories in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b), I argue that it is not sufficient to analyse narratives. We must observe the collective practices of these youths as well. I also disagree with Bessant, who says she departs from approaches which maintain that 'structures' sit outside or above the individual and act upon us. Bessant (1995:104-105) states that such a structuralist perspective focuses on external conditions and produces explanations along the lines that membership of certain 'anti-social' groups such as 'street gangs' or 'neo-Nazis' is 'caused' by high levels of unemployment or that people are driven to commit crimes or acts of violence because they come from financially-deprived backgrounds.

Still, the use of class background or other structural aspects as a tool for analysis does *not* imply that we talk of anti-social groups or that we talk of casual processes. No one is determined to be a Nazi. As I show in 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b), there is always an element of choice involved. Bessant argues that we have to look *beyond* structural explanations in order to find the reason why young people join these movements. She maintains that approaches that overlook complex and often contradictory aspects (which are revealed when we study narratives) create an intellectual myopia. Research which uses categories (youth, male, class, etc.) in an

essentialist way disregards the fact that much of the motivation or attraction related to being identified as a member of a neo-Nazi group is common to all. It has to do with powerful moral emotions such as pride, honour, duty and courage (Bessant 1995:106-107). I agree that such emotions are powerful. It may be the most important reason why radical nationalist movements attract young people today.

Nevertheless, class and gender might be part of the ways these young people perceive honour, duty, courage, etc. Thus, in 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998c) and 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a) I show how they conceptualise pride in a sense of working-classness, and as a contrast to middle-class men. Thus, I do *not* use class as a determining factor. Instead I analyse the way the activists themselves *view* class. Accordingly, in 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a) and 'Separate or Equal?' (Fangen 1997b), I analyse the way male and female activists understand themselves and their own practice in terms of gender.

The analysis becomes too limited if we overlook the strong importance of structural issues such as gender and class in the 'texts' of the radical nationalists. They do not act independently of the society around them, and they do not construct their stories out of thin air. We thus need to take into account the way in which macro-structures such as class, gender, etc. are transformed and mirrored in the practice of the radical nationalists. Their tales reflect a construction of structures which already exist in society. These stories show how the radical nationalists perceive themselves within these structures. Their words oppose certain ways in which our society is structured, and they idealise alternative ways in which it could have been structured.

Bessant excludes the possibility of saying something about more general processes by merely interpreting the practices and views of the radical nationalists as *narratives*. By presenting it only as narratives, it becomes unique. When we instead discuss how these young men and women use codes of honour, we see that class and gender *are* strong components of their understanding.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.9 The Fruitfulness of Disagreement

There seems to be a relatively significant disagreement between researchers, on the one hand, and various political actors, on the other, as to how the symbolical marks, the ideology, and the militant practices used by the participants of the far right should be understood, and as to what strategies are best in dealing with these groups. According to Habermas (1984), research should strive towards a criterion of *agreement*. However, in this field this is relatively difficult to accomplish. The question remains whether we should reach an agreement with other researchers or political agents or whether we should judge our interpretation by the possible correspondence with the understanding of the participants.

In my case the radical nationalists say they find my analysis of their milieu to be pertinent, and they sometimes refer to my interpretations in their fanzines.<sup>81</sup> They seem to recognise themselves better in my interpretations than in those coming from researchers who use an external approach. This is no surprise, as I use concepts in close dialogue with experience-near concepts and with what I saw, heard, and experienced during my fieldwork among the activists.

<sup>80</sup> Then we might find, as I have, that their codes of honour are slightly different from that which is typical of so-called traditional honour cultures. Among the radical nationalists, the virtue of the women is not a part of the men's honour. On the contrary, as I show in 'Death-Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a), the men to some degree respect women along the same dimensions as used for the men; i.e. being serious, being militant, but also remaining calm, etc.

<sup>81</sup> *Fritt Forum* no. 1, 1996, *Einherjer* No. 1, 1996.

Instead of seeing disagreement as negative, we could alternatively see disagreement between researchers, and between researchers and political actors, as fruitful. I agree with Bourdieu (1993a:259) that a *tradition of conflicting perspectives* is more creative than a tradition of consensus, because the conflicts are there anyway. It is thus better to make them explicit and visible. When conflicts arise, the otherwise unconscious pre-understandings have a chance to express themselves. In the social sciences, the pre-understandings bind our thinking of the social world. Lyotard (1984:66) (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 1994:59, 191, 243) similarly points out that conflicts and power games are irreducible parts of dialogue, and fruitful for research.

Dissent is useful as it allows one to see and relate to the world in different ways and avoid closing oneself up. The aim of dialogue is not consensus but *paralogy*, a fruitful disagreement which undermines the ruling discourse (ibid.). Consensus can be based on the assumption of liberation or be a way for the system to function better. I use paralogy as my point of departure of when I point out differences of approach between my project and other research projects on radical nationalists and, in the appendix, between my project and the perspective of various groups of organised anti-racists.

There are always certain differences in approach between various research projects on any topic. This does not necessarily mean that there is any real disagreement. Instead there may be slightly different philosophy of science or methodological understandings, and slightly different ways of interpreting the research-object. In some cases, the differences are also related to the aspects of the object one focuses on.

Even though I have selected several angles by which I analyse the radical nationalist underground, they represent only a fraction of the themes which could have been discussed. In addition, I could for example have studied the relationship between the underground and the media, the relationship between radical nationalists and anti-Fascists, the occurrence of violence, etc. I have concentrated on those themes which seemed to grow out of my material, whereas I have discarded all of the themes which would call for additional material, such as the systematic reading of reports from the media,<sup>82</sup> the study of anti-Fascists, etc. My focus is on the radical nationalists - their actions, their utterances and their writings.

Other researchers have focused on other aspects of this issue. In this way, we could say that the various approaches to radical nationalism (or right-wing extremism, neo-Nazism, etc.) supplement each other, rather than compete for the 'right' perspective on the topic. For example, a historic perspective on this subculture is an important supplement to my approach.

## 2.10 How the Perspectives fit Together - A Semantic Fan

The analytical frames I have presented here might be seen as heterologous in relation to each other. At the same time, we can combine them, and thus create a new homology. The analysis then takes the form of a semantic fan (Turner 1967) where every one of the ribs has its own connotations, but it is not homologous with the other ribs; however, the fan as a whole becomes a new totality.

In this way, we could say that a *life story* perspective in many ways is linked to a *career* perspective. The constructions of *masculinity* among the activists are linked to the life story (becoming a man) and their *ideology* (ideal man understood as the white race-conscious hero), which again is linked to their idealisation of *honour*. When we

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<sup>82</sup> By contrast, researcher Lunde (1993) at the Anti-Racist Centre uses reports from the media as his main source of information. However, he does not use them as a basis for a study of how the media construct the pictures of these groups. Instead he uses them as a source of knowledge about the groups.

focus on the way they construct honour, through violence and physical strength, we also see a reflection of their *class* position. They have more *power* than anyone in the street (when they use physical force or combine force with the use of weapons). However, in the long run they have less power than everybody else, as their career choices within the legitimate channels of society (labour market, education system) are limited. Thus, when they grow older, their physical power and shock effect might also vanish, as has been the case with several extreme-right politicians in Norway.

In the chapter on violence and in 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998b), I show how the radical nationalists emphasise inner and allegedly *natural qualities*, such as being authentic to their instincts. Celebration of *authenticity* is thus a contrast to reflexivity. Instead of giving a rational argument for their violence, they refer to natural instincts. Violence is thus naturalised, as is their ideological 'nationalist' standpoint, as they claim that it is natural to defend one's own *territory* and one's own group or 'people'. The nationalist, as they conceive him, does not suppress his natural prejudices towards foreigners. They do not see their violence and scepticism towards foreigners as based in psychological drives, they see it as instinctual and sane. They believe that people who suppress these natural instincts are the ones who are insane. In a way, racism functions as a form of protection against reflectivity.

This *naturalisation of violence and of prejudices* is also a way to call for absolute identities, rather than identities which are culturally or socially constructed. In 'Death Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a), I argue that the rituals of the radical nationalist skinheads; i.e. their dance, drinking and violence, are occasions where they create their subcultural identity. We might see their attempts to ritualise and bind masculinity in light of their previous *lack* of identity. The radical nationalists conceptualise the identity they communicate in these rituals by reference to its natural quality, defined by their race, nation and ethnicity.

Their counter-definition of outsiders' interpretations is often linked to their understanding of their own practices as natural. An analytical interpretation of the same practices will often focus on their constructed quality or, on the other hand, try to explain these practices by making reference to the backgrounds of the activists. We could say that psychological interpretations 'castrate' the male activists or 'de-masculate' them. When others interpret them psychologically, their deeds no longer appear glorious. When somebody says they are shouting 'sieg heil' as a result of a tragic childhood, the heroic feeling associated with these gestures diminishes. In their eyes, they are brave fighters against an oppressive system, not against a lack of approval from their parents.

The problem with being interpreted as a person who acts out of one's own free will (as they say they want to be viewed), is that one must take *responsibility* for one's own actions. Actions that from outside appear to be expressions of pure viciousness, appear otherwise when analysed in light of life stories and other background information. However, traumatic backgrounds are no excuse for people's actions.

The radical nationalists present their rebellion as a reaction towards an underprivileged position in society, or, on a more abstract level, as a reaction against cultural decline and multi-culturality, not as a reaction against their parents. They do not focus on their parents' income and status. They are in conscious opposition to people who in their eyes only strive for career and success. Instead of following these conventional lines, they construct an alternative career with *alternative marks of status and honour*.

## The Articles

### Living out our Ethnic Instincts

The essay 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' discusses the various ideological components of the thinking of Norwegian radical nationalists. The following questions guide the analysis: What is the specific *knowledge frame* of the movement? Which are the *historical and international influences* on this interest? Which *intellectual practices* are carried out within the movement?

The *strategies* they use to achieve their goals are, for example, to 'scare the immigrants in order that they understand they are not welcome here'. They usually are most interested in stopping the anti-racists from making propaganda on behalf of the *multi-coloured community*. They may also (mainly by phone) threaten leading politicians who are pro-immigration. They call for an ideology that goes further than the lifestyles of self-improvement. Rather it is an ideology that rules out the self, because the only important entities are the collective ones: group, race, and nation.

### Binary Oppositions and Nostalgia

In the article 'Binary Oppositions and Nostalgia', I discuss the identity of the radical nationalists in more detail. They search for an ideology which makes the world ordered, clean, and unambiguous. This kind of construction of identity may be seen as the opposite of those described as typical of the post-modern condition. This is a condition which is marked by a sense of ambivalence and nomadic, flooding identities.

### Death Mask of Masculinity

The article 'Death Mask of Masculinity' examines the ritualised ways in which Norwegian radical nationalist skinheads construct masculinity. By using a discussion of masculinity, identity and modernity as an analytical frame, the construction of gendered practices within this underground is put into a more global context.

The article starts with a review of the Birmingham scholars' interpretations of the skinhead subculture. These researchers see the culture as a result of the dissolution of the traditional working-class collective. The skinhead subculture is constructed out of a bricolage of various elements seen as typical of the working-class. This view is contrasted with Ziehe and Giddens' view of individualisation and self-realisation as typical of our time, and serving to obliterate the importance of class. I focus both on the *magical recovery of community* (Jefferson and Clarke, 1976), and the elements which may be interpreted as an *image of machismo* (D. Hebdige, 1979).

### Separate or Equal - The Emergence of an All-Female Group in Norway's Rightist Underground

This essay discusses the importance of separate women's organisations in militant groups of the far right. The analysis suggests that the existence of a separate women's group has not only enhanced the respect the members feel for themselves, but has been successful in eliciting greater respect from their male counterparts, resulting in the women receiving greater responsibility in the organisation. The article assumes that the need for separate women's organisations in the rightist underground reflects a pre-existing dissatisfaction with conditions and opportunities for females in a highly male-dominated environment.

## **On the Margins of Life - Life Stories of Far-Right Activists**

The essay 'On the Margins of Life - Life Stories of Far-Right Activists' discusses the life stories of four radical nationalists. This essay is based on life story interviews, as well as information gathered through a year of fieldwork. This includes conversations with all forty participants of the right-wing subculture in 1993-1994, and in-depth interviews with all of the leading activists, except one.

I have discussed who these young people are in terms of group membership, ideology, and gender issues elsewhere. In this essay, I highlight their life prior to their entrance into the radical nationalist underground. I focus on the way they relate to common interpretations of them by outsiders, and the way they themselves argue in order to bring reason into their choice to join a group which is condemned by most people. I look for the features we can find in these life stories, and in the mechanisms of recruitment described by these four young men.

## **Among Right-Wing Extremists**

In the article 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a), I discuss the ethical aspects of interpreting radical nationalists. When people only describe these youths according to stereotypes, the paranoia within the movement increases and their stereotypes becomes real, like self-fulfilling prophecies. They become forced to recreate themselves within the image they are given. As a consequence, the movement may become more dangerous than it otherwise would have been. Stereotypes guide action. Stereotypes make it easy to act. They turn 'the other' into a category that we need in order to create images of good and bad. However, when stereotyping these youths makes us racists. We need these youths because they function as someone we can distance ourselves from. When we demonify them, we legitimise the actions we take against them.

In this article, I argue the importance of putting these youths into a context. By doing this, we see that they are not as unique as often expected. They are recognisable as youths with certain patterns of behaviour which can be recognised in other contexts: working-class youths, rural youths, drop-outs of various forms, local youths who constantly do the opposite of what they are told to do.

Some of the young people who enter the radical nationalist underground say that when they entered this movement, it made them feel welcome, for the first time. They experience a new kind of warmth and community. However, they seek respect within the underground. Paranoid identities easily develop within such an environment. This is particularly the case because their group identity has a forbidden quality in relation to the rest of society.

## **Ethical Considerations in the Aftermath of an Observational Study**

The essay 'Ethical Considerations in the Aftermath of an Observational Study of Right-Wing Extremists' discusses an event which occurred during my fieldwork. Subsequent to my account of this event in a research report, the anti-Fascist youth of the so-called Blitz house sent a request to the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social and Human Sciences to review the ethical aspects of my research. After describing the disputed event, I discuss some parts of the letter from the anti-Fascists, as well as the answers given in the reply by the committee. This is followed by a discussion of the ethical choices I made during my fieldwork, especially in relation to the question of whether one should report possible future acts of violence.



# 9

## Living Out Our Ethnic Instincts: Ideological Beliefs Among Right- Wing Activists in Norway

KATRINE FANGEN

### *Introduction*

THE NORWEGIAN rightist underground consists of three layers characterized by rather different lifestyles and ideologies: paramilitarists, National Socialist skinheads, and ideologists. This essay compares the beliefs of activists from these different layers by sorting out some of the main ideological dimensions that divide the underground: nationalism versus Germanism, culture versus race, and Right versus Left. The essay concludes with detail on the beliefs held by the National Socialists of the underground, including the way they relate to ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government) theory.<sup>1</sup>

*Nationalist* and *National Socialist* are the words used by right-wing activists in Norway to describe their views. A few years ago, it was

not important whether one was a nationalist or a National Socialist.<sup>2</sup> To avoid confusion, they all called themselves nationalists. After the emergence of paramilitary groups, which define themselves in contrast to the skinheads, tensions between nationalism and National Socialism increased. Nevertheless, the underground still acts together when arranging concerts and parties, because of the need to stand together in their fight against militant anti-fascists.<sup>3</sup>

The study is based on data gathered through my participant observations of the rightist underground in 1993 and 1994 and on in-depth interviews with right-wing activists in the period 1993–1996.

### *The Rightist Underground*

The National Socialist skinheads adhere to the white-power version of the skinhead lifestyle. The white-power trend emerged during the late 1970s in England. National Socialist skinheads in Norway are extremely aware of the international history of the skinhead subculture.<sup>4</sup> They typically enjoy white-power music and wear bomber jackets, Doc Martens boots, and jeans or fatigues. To call attention to their ideological identification, they wear jacket labels showing the Norwegian flag or a Viking ship, or they wear white-power T-shirts. Their lifestyle is based on pub culture, and many of them are fond of giving fascist salutes.

These activists are connected to groups with names like Bootboys, NUNS 88, and Norsk Arisk Ungdomsfront (NAUF).<sup>5</sup> Bootboys is a distribution network for white-power oi music and a record company; both are controlled by one person.<sup>6</sup> Previously, many of the participants of this layer lived in or near the house of this leading person. A few leading activists in this layer do not dress like skinheads and act rather autonomously within the underground. They are friendly to persons from different layers, and only through their lifestyle and ideology are they associated with the National Socialist skinheads. This layer contains at least four older activists (in their thirties), several of whom have committed serious political violence such as bombings and shootings. Groups such as NUNS 88 and NAUF, in contrast, consist solely of young people, mostly teenagers.

The paramilitarists are organized into local cells, each guided by a local leader. In Norway there are two such groups, Varg and Viking. Varg activists are skinheads, but they emphasize discipline and organizational hierarchies more than skinhead style and pub culture.

Moreover, they are nationalists, not National Socialists. Viking members take part in underground activities such as painting nationalist graffiti slogans, handing out leaflets, and violence aimed at fighting immigration and communism. They wear casual clothes because they want to remain anonymous, although during concerts or demonstrations they wear U.S. army caps, military shirts, black ties, and fatigues. They take part in weapons training, organizing camouflage courses, marching, and first-aid training.

A female group, Valkyria, also belongs to this layer. The Valkyria members join the paramilitary activity of Viking, dress in military clothes, and call themselves nationalists. Because there are so few of them, they do not organize their group as a hierarchy.<sup>7</sup>

The ideologists are young National Socialists who participate in Nazi marches or Nazi organizations such as Zorn 88 but eschew both the skinhead uniform and militant activities such as weapons training or violent actions. Their aim is to become schooled in National Socialist ideology.

Except among the ideologists, the emphasis is either on militant activities or on various youth subcultural elements. The somewhat loose ideology makes the younger activists different from the adult members of nationalist or National Socialist organizations.

The press often labels young activists "Nazis," contributing to the desire of parliamentary politicians who try to gain votes from broad segments of the population to stay aloof from them. For example, ten members of Viking who wanted to join the youth organization of the Progress Party were excluded after newspaper headlines announced "Nazi infiltration."<sup>8</sup> These activists want to have an impact on politics regardless of which channel gives them this impact. In sharp contrast to the skinheads, they are open to joining the established parliamentary parties.

The few remaining National Socialists who were members of the Norwegian National Socialist Party *Nasjonal Samling* (National Unification, NS) in the 1930s and 1940s do not want to be associated with the young activists. In a written answer to my question, the head of the Institute of Occupation History (the history of German occupation) states that neither their magazine (*Folk og land*), their publishing firm (Historisk forlag, Historical Publisher Ltd.), nor their institute "have had or have any connection with, or interest in these groups of people." Rather, they "publicly stay aloof from them."<sup>9</sup> In this regard the young activists stand in sharp contrast with the similar underground in Sweden, where the organization *Nordiska Rikspar-*

tiet (the Nordic Reich Party), which emerged in 1956, has functioned as a bridge between the prewar National Socialists and the young militant National Socialists of the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> In Norway there is no such bridge between adult National Socialists and the militant activists. Some young activists, however, do say that they sometimes attend the lectures held at the Institute of Occupation History, and some of them talk of this institute with great respect. A few of the older members of the new generation of activists have contacts with individual "old" National Socialists.

Even though there is not much contact between young and old National Socialists, there are contacts between some young activists and the nationalist politicians organized in *Den norske forning* (The Norwegian Association). Some members of this organization have provided communications equipment to enable the young activists to gather quickly in case of left-wing attacks on nationalist politicians.<sup>11</sup>

The usual practice of the right-wing activists is, instead of starting a political dialogue with other groups, to demand to have an impact on society through underground activities in the belief that although many share their views, their ideas are suppressed by the authorities and the press.<sup>12</sup>

The skinhead lifestyle until recently was a typical "investment" for entering the rightist underground. However, since the emphasis within Varg and Viking on paramilitary organization and discipline, many activists have adopted a more military look. The skinheads remain the largest component of the underground, however.

The Norwegian rightist underground is small in comparison with similar groups in other Western countries. In 1996 about forty males could be defined as part of the core, and there were about 200 peripheral activists.<sup>13</sup> The Swedish underground is considerably larger. Heléne Lööv reported that in 1993 there were between 500 and 600 activists—members and sympathizers.<sup>14</sup>

The peripheral members also play an important role. Many of them are not visible participants, but they help the activists. For example, a person working in the telephone bureau may give out secret addresses and phone numbers of opponents. Many also assemble when confrontations are planned or expected. There is also a rather large number of sympathizers who have not entered the underground. They write letters and ask for pamphlets, T-shirts, and so on, or they express their sympathy with the rightist underground on the Internet.

Except for a few leading figures in their middle thirties, most activists are teenagers. The identity of the underground as a youth subculture is perhaps somewhat altered as its oldest members approach age forty. However, many activists leave the underground when they reach their middle twenties. They want to concentrate on family and work instead of being full-time underground activists. Some leading activists are as young as twenty-two, whereas many sympathizers are as young as twelve or fourteen.

The core of the underground is located in eastern Norway. In addition, there are smaller cells of activists in other parts of the country; they have contact via letter and telephone with the core activists, and many move to live near them after a while. This underground has no strict central organization. Satellite groups may develop their own style and ideology, independent of the way central activists define their strategies. There is a widespread view that various groups and individuals can have different tasks and impacts, and that this pluralism is beneficial to the underground. For example, one local cell consists of youths, several of whom had criminal records prior to entering the rightist underground. Such backgrounds are useful because these youths know, for example, how to steal a car when one is needed in an emergency.<sup>15</sup>

The three layers differ in the degree to which they have guidelines for action or ideological convictions. The skinheads are loosely associated and have no written program. They define themselves as anti-authoritarian because they do not follow a leader. This "leaderless resistance" is an ideal in the white-power skinhead movement in other countries as well.<sup>16</sup> The skinheads' historical project is to revive the ideals of the Viking era, to recover the homogeneous unicultural society, and to preserve the purity of the race.

The paramilitarists, unlike the skinheads, believe in leadership and discipline. They have a written program to be followed by their members. Their ideology is defined as nationalist. A leading Viking activist states that he looks upon himself as a (Joseph) McCarthyite. His aim is to inform people through various actions that Norwegians do not live in a democracy, because all positions of power are held by communist-inspired leftists.

The ideologists do not believe that they ever will experience a National Socialist society. However, some of them have formulated political programs designed to present their views in a way that makes them appear reasonable to persons outside the underground.

All the activists relate in some way to an international rightist underground. They send letters and exchange fanzines, opinions on racial war, and so on with actors in England, Germany, Poland, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, as well as the United States. The Norwegian Anti-Antifa collaborate with the neo-Nazi Combat 18 in England by printing traitor and "wanted dead" lists of Norwegian anti-racists in *Blood and Honour*.<sup>17</sup> The Norwegian division of the international Blood and Honour movement was created in the autumn of 1995.<sup>18</sup> Norwegian activists join soccer matches, concerts, or Nazi marches abroad. Also, some activists have joined paramilitary nationalist forces in Lebanon, South Africa, and Bosnia.

England is the skinheads' primary interest because the skinhead style had its origin there and because their favorite rock bands come from England. The leading figure in this skinhead layer looked upon himself as a personal friend of the Skrewdriver vocalist Ian Stuart Donaldson (who died in a car accident in 1993). Their favorite white-power rock bands are Skrewdriver, Skullhead, and No Remorse—all British bands—and Svastika, Division S, and several other bands from Sweden. They also have formed three bands themselves—Vidkuns Venner, Norhat, and Norske Legion.<sup>19</sup> Musicians in white-power bands are conscious of their role to promote ideas of the white racial revolution, as Ian Stuart Donaldson once put it.<sup>20</sup> The incorporation of ideological beliefs into rock music and youth subculture is important because the political message reaches far more young people than it would if it merely was propagandized within an ideological organization. Concerts are the main arena for Norwegian activists to meet comrades from abroad. Here also fanzines, records, T-shirts, and symbolic material such as jacket labels and banners are sold.

To date, the Norwegian underground groups have had less influence on foreign groups than the other way around. Individual activists have some degree of impact internationally because of their previous terror actions or their organizational talents.<sup>21</sup> However, the organization of separate girls' groups in the Norwegian underground has attracted the interest of the international subculture. The girls from Valkyria say that they have met Swedish girls at concerts who are highly impressed by the militant outlook of the Valkyria girls. According to one Valkyria girl, the group received the nickname "Death Squadron" from their Swedish sisters. The Norwegian Valkyria group has also had an impact in Denmark. A Danish girl who

wanted to start up a group for female activists contacted the Norwegian girls first to get advice about how to proceed.<sup>22</sup> Historically, women in Norwegian far right movements have enjoyed exceptional equality with males in comparison with women in other countries. For example, Vera Oredsson, former leader of the Swedish National Socialist Nordic Reich Party, writes that the Norwegian National Socialist party during the war presented men and women as equals in their magazines, in contrast to typical practice in Sweden.<sup>23</sup> Even though the Valkyria members tend to act in accordance with premises set out by male activists, they also have an independent impact on the underground. They organize their own actions against prostitution and pornography, and they arrange study circles and meetings on their own. Leading females participate in strategic meetings with leading male activists, and they participate with the boys in weapons training. According to a leading Valkyria activist, about 50 percent of the girls want to fight in the front line, and the other half prefer taking care of other tasks. This activist maintains that in the clash with anti-racists during the short period when the rightist activists had their own house in Treschow's Street, it was the girls who exercised control in the house, demanding order from the males so that the situation did not turn into a raucous party. This rather self-conscious role of females is exceptional in an international setting.

Some paramilitarists and some ideologists dislike the skinhead lifestyle. They dislike the fact that the music and beer-drinking tend to overshadow the importance of ideological conviction, or that it is impossible to be taken seriously as long as people just see raucous drunken skinheads shouting "Sieg Heil."

### *Implicit Knowledge Among the Right-Wing Activists*

There is a range of ideological beliefs among participants from the various layers, but all participants are "100 percent against immigration" and want to fight "the communists"—all groups and parties on the political Left. It is not necessary for a member to be able to comment in a thoughtful way on issues of race and nation. It is sufficient to commit oneself to being a "nationalist" or a "National Socialist" and to express angry feelings against colored immigrants.<sup>24</sup> The activists seldom discuss differences of belief. Instead, conflicting viewpoints are hidden behind some basic assumptions to which everyone agrees.

In addition, the conflicts between the rightist underground and its leftist opponents from the Blitz house tend to shape and strengthen the attitudes of the right-wing activists. Some leading activists state that the more their opponents fight them, the stronger and more hateful their own views tend to be.<sup>25</sup>

There is no regular schooling of activists in this underground. Newcomers learn about the underground through their interactions with it. Some books are mentioned in the fanzines, but few read them. A large proportion of activists just read the fanzines; they almost never read books. All activists, however, read the self-produced and imported fanzines and pamphlets, making these the most important part of their documentary frame of reference. The most popular books are revisionist works about the Norwegian National Socialist party of the 1930s and 1940s,<sup>26</sup> saga literature,<sup>27</sup> and militant rightist novels such as *Hunter* and *The Turner Diaries* by William Pierce. To the degree that the rightist underground orients itself according to a documentary frame for its implicit knowledge, this literature is equivalent to such a frame. In this way, the syllabus is first of all presented and defined by those activists who edit their own fanzines. Among the Norwegian fanzines, *Einherjer* is considered by several activists as the most important reading on ideology. *Patrioten* also contains ideological material, whereas *Viking* is rather an internal paper with coded messages for the paramilitarists. The fanzines are the most important source of knowledge and serve to legitimize action, including violence.

The National Socialist skinheads maintain that to understand how the conspiracy works one has to read a certain amount of heavy literature. The more of this one reads, the more one is able to see through "the falseness of the system," and one thus becomes skilled in reading between the lines of the news. Some of the activists, seeing the need to attain a more systematic ideological knowledge, have in recent years organized small study groups to discuss the Viking era, research reports concerning the underground, and other topics of interest.<sup>28</sup>

There are differences in the ways the different groups express political and ideological beliefs. The National Socialist skinheads' discourse on race and nation is expressed through rumors, jokes, or comments. Their group identity is defined in terms of "race" and "nation." For them, "race" and "nation" are parts of their shared mythology. Many also call themselves Odinists. The former National Socialist pamphlet *Ragnarok* went farthest in presenting race-hygienic



thoughts. It contained pictures of the skulls of black people and satirical paintings of Jews meant to illustrate, respectively, the supposedly lower intelligence of blacks and Jews' supposedly typical malice and stupidity.

The activists of the paramilitary groups have a political orientation more in line with segments of the population who accept common nationalist arguments. Among these activists, beliefs such as certainty that Muslims will take over more of Norway if they are allowed to stay are simply taken for granted. Paramilitary groups are convinced that eventually Muslims will force their culture on Norwegian citizens, so that, as one female activist said, "In twenty years all women must wear veils." Another prevailing view among the paramilitarists is that all Norwegian power-holders uncritically support multiculturalism.

The National Socialist ideologists believe that there is a need for the strongest to rule. They seldom discuss the criteria that determine who is strong and who is weak, or whose interests will be served by the strong power-holders. However, since the emergence of the electronic database *Motstand!* (Resistance!) such discussions have in fact occurred.<sup>29</sup> The ideologists are not interested in questions about the details of how National Socialism should be practiced. Rather, they are interested in revisionism, and they like to think of a National Socialist society as orderly and good for all people.<sup>30</sup> The ideologists' views contrast with the more revolutionary views of the National Socialist skinheads, who do not believe in leadership because power corrupts.

When I interviewed some younger activists about their views, they answered in short sentences that served only to underline the a priori quality of their positions. They seemed to take it for granted that I already knew their ideas. They gave far more detailed reports of their political orientations when confronted by persons whom they to some degree respected but who were not participants in the underground.

One such incident occurred when I was visiting two activists at their home. During the interview, the girlfriend of one boy telephoned. Her boyfriend wanted his friend to convince her that immigration was bad. The friend took this task seriously by giving the girl a half-hour lesson about his view of immigration. The girl distanced herself by laughing all the time; she probably found that to be a better strategy than giving counterarguments. Convincing her

about the necessity of anti-immigration was important because it would be difficult to continue her relationship with the boy if she didn't change her mind in this regard.

Leading activists often acted quite differently. They could sit for hours telling me how the world really should be understood, trying to explain their views by citing ever newer proofs. Older activists are more schooled in ideology than are young ones and are better able to talk about it because of all they have read. Convinced National Socialists of the underground are often better read than less ideologically oriented activists and are thus able to verbalize their views.

Activists who do not believe in National Socialism find it problematic that the surrounding world views them all as Nazis. In their view, only 10 percent of the entire underground are National Socialists. The rest are nationalists. The reason why they all have received the label "Nazis" is that the most visible activists are those who give fascist salutes or who wear Viking symbols, which have been associated with Nazism since their adoption by the Norwegian NS party in the 1930s. Several activists have urged me not to write about them as though they all were "Nazis." However, the worldview of most skinheads is largely influenced by the white-power movement, which combines ideological beliefs from contemporary and historical sources, including German National Socialism.<sup>31</sup>

Some activists reject the Nazis. In practice, however, activists often make friends for reasons other than ideological orientation. Because they seldom discuss the subject, ideology does not play a primary role in establishing friendships. A leading Viking activist explains that it is not possible for him to know the details of every single activist's beliefs.<sup>32</sup> There might be some National Socialists among Viking's members, but that's their choice. Thus in reality there is no real division between nationalists and the National Socialists.

I once asked one of the older activists why there is no discussion of differences in ideology and politics. He replied: "This is not a sewing club, you know." Discussion is not for militants. Even so, it is inaccurate to say that they are all anti-intellectual. Many express great respect for intellectual activities. They seem to most respect nationalist politicians who are able to represent their views in an articulate manner, rather than the "vulgar racists" whose views are more extreme than those of some of the activists.

An obvious reason why activists of the different layers do not split the underground into factions is that no single segment would have

the power to organize actions to counter the anti-racists or to organize events such as concerts or to fight the anti-fascists. To minimize differences, it is best not to discuss them openly. However, activists tend to make fun of, or spread rumors about, their counterparts from other layers. This is a way to dramatize their differences in a manner less dangerous than a real confrontation. The catch-all function of the label "nationalism" is also a way to encapsulate all the underground's disparate beliefs. The label "nationalist" diminishes conflicts and brings together those whose hatred of Jews is sufficient to motivate them to collaborate with Muslim Palestinians living in Norway and those who hate the Muslims most of all.<sup>33</sup> The nationalist label is also used by the activists to avoid more severe, complex, extreme, or stigmatized labels, such as "Nazi" or "racist."

### *Ideological Distinctions*

Because of the relatively incompatible ideological and political standpoints of the activists, their arguments lack ideological consistency.<sup>34</sup> But consistency is not a goal of the activists. Instead, their purpose is to gather in a community that can encompass a variety of orientations, even ones that might seem incompatible. In the following sections, I describe some of these disparate ideological views.

#### NATIONALISM OR GERMANISM

Jens: The label everyone applies to himself is Nationalist.

Some have a touch of Nazism and some are more socialist, but all of us are nationalists and racists.<sup>35</sup>

In 1993 and 1994, almost all activists in the Norwegian rightist underground called themselves nationalists. During 1995 and 1996, more and more activists came to call themselves National Socialists. But even these refer to "the Nationalist milieu" and the nationalist skin-heads. "Nationalism" is the only label to which all of them feel some attachment. As these activists define it, a nationalist is one who loves his or her country and who is strictly against immigration.

In fact, few of the activists are interested in Norwegian folkloric traditions, and few of them are satisfied with contemporary society. The activists are in opposition to contemporary Norwegian society because it lacks nationalism; and when they talk about being proud of their country, they are primarily referring to their sense of how Norway once was, especially during the Viking era. They are

proud of the Viking era because, as a twenty-seven-year-old activist said, "then Norway was an empire."<sup>36</sup> From other periods of Norwegian history, he mentions with approval the Constitution of 1814, when people who were suppressed rebelled and "started doing something for ourselves." One should not let others trample one down, he says.

These two aspects—to be proud and not to let one's own people be suppressed—are frequently mentioned by the skinheads when they describe their own nationalist attitude. They admire the Vikings because they based their action on honor and loyalty to their own people. One leading activist, age thirty-one, talks about the need to have a community, and he idealizes "the good old days" when (he believes) neighborhoods constituted homogeneous working-class communities.<sup>37</sup>

In this regard, it is more accurate to call these activists localists rather than nationalists. This kind of neighborhood nationalism is similar to the one described by Phil Cohen: "[They] create imagined communities to replace real ones which have disintegrated; they offer a magical retrieval of lost inheritances, re-animating rituals of territoriality and public propriety, investing them with a renewed sense of omnipotence linked to real powers of social combination."<sup>38</sup> When the skinheads dominate the street through threatening behavior, they seem to be living out what they consider to be their natural territorial instincts. The thirty-one-year-old activist mentioned above explicitly refers to this lifestyle as "living out our ethnic instincts."<sup>39</sup>

But their "instincts" do not manifest themselves only on the local level. When attending white-power concerts in Sweden, Norwegian activists join a community of white nationalists from all over Europe. The belief that there is a slumbering racial instinct inside every human being is prevalent in the international white-power culture.<sup>40</sup> Referring to such beliefs as expressions of natural instincts is also a way to describe their violence as being reasonable and natural and thus, as Ehud Sprinzak points out, not needing to be justified or apologized for.<sup>41</sup>

Some of the Norwegian activists sympathize with Irish nationalists, especially the IRA. At the same time, the skinhead activists' favorite songs are those by the English white-power rock band Skrewdriver, one of whose songs is called "Smash the IRA." This contradiction in nationalist sympathies does not bother the activists. They often responded with a self-deprecating laugh when I pointed

out such obvious contradictions. Their own way of ideological reasoning seems to function on a common-sense level—that is, on a level based not on logical reasoning but rather on loose rumors and fragments.<sup>42</sup> Thus, although their beliefs are not meant to be taken literally, these beliefs are considered so serious that the activists are willing to die for them.

The paramilitarists are those who best fit the nationalist label. They frequently use the slogan “Norway for Norwegians,” and they refer to the so-called “boys in the woods” as their historical ideals. The latter is a reference to the Norwegian resistance movement during the war—that is, volunteers who fought the Nazis. Today, the paramilitarists say, it is not Germans but rather immigrants who are the intruders, and they must protect their country against them.<sup>43</sup>

A few of the skinheads, as well as the ideologists, use words that make it more accurate to call them “Germanists.” They talk about the need to unite all Germanic people. In this they are similar to one faction of Norway’s NS party of the 1930s and 40s, which historian Øystein Sørensen has labeled pan-Germanist (in contrast to the nationalists who were against the German occupation of Norway).<sup>44</sup>

In addition, there are some skinheads who would rather have “fought under the Nordic banner.”<sup>45</sup> They believe that it would be good if Charles the Twelfth (the Swedish imperialist king) were alive today, because he was a king who “fought together with his soldiers, in the front line.”<sup>46</sup> To many skinheads, the common heritage with the Swedes is very important, and they have nothing against paying homage to Swedish war heroes. Some of them even hold that people who live “up north” compose a distinct tribe, defined by their white identity.

#### CULTURE OR RACE

Egil: We are a little tribe far up north. We are a front against alienation, and the mixing of cultures. We step out and breathe life into our white identity. We are faithful to our roots, and we are in opposition to the lie which the welfare society is based upon, the lie about the “colorful community.”<sup>47</sup>

Even though many of the activists do not wish to be labeled racists, it is obvious that racist ideas lie at the heart of their movement. They

listen to music with aggressive white-power texts, and they express satirical comments when they see colored people on the street. Many of them insist that they do not want any kind of immigrants, either blacks or whites, but their antipathy is mainly directed to the colored or black immigrants.

Many of the activists adhere to cultural or economic arguments against "foreign cultural immigration." They have adopted the more legitimate racism that often is called new racism<sup>48</sup> but to a large degree is identical to what must be defined as nationalism.<sup>49</sup> According to such thinking, the idea of race is supplemented by the idea of culture as an argument against immigration. The main argument is that the national culture is threatened by the invasion of foreign cultures. Further, it is argued that conflicts will emerge between the national culture and the culture of other peoples. The activists share the assumption that confrontations between different cultures are bad and that foreign cultures will threaten the preservation of the Norwegian national culture. They adhere to an ideology that wants to avoid conflict by eliminating what is different. They all share the belief that there is a good reason for opposing the so-called multicultural society.

Another of their basic assumptions is that Norwegian authorities support the ideal of the "multicolored community" and can in many ways be seen as part of a conspiracy against the real interests of the Norwegian people. They often use the expression "persecuted minority" to describe themselves; the entities that persecute them are said to be the Special Branch, the mass media, and the parliamentary politicians.<sup>50</sup>

The activists also adopt economic arguments against immigration, stating that "we" should take care of "our own" people before giving something to others. They use all of the typical "new racist" arguments. Many of these arguments are quite common outside this underground. However, these activists have a more aggressive view and, in sharp contrast to the rest of the population, are willing to use violence and to build up a private army to fight immigration and multiculturalism.

Only a minority of activists are racists in the narrow sense of the word. Most maintain that they accept people from other countries as long as they are nationalists and "stay where they belong." Some say that it is cowardly to leave one's country when there is a war and that many of the people who are refugees are those best equipped

to fight in the wars being fought in their own countries. "To be a nationalist means staying with your country," a leading female activist stated.<sup>51</sup> Some activists also express sympathetic views of black people who are against integration. One activist said he would have been able to collaborate with Haile Selassie and parts of the Rasta movement because they were against the integration of black and white.<sup>52</sup> The activists often use the former Yugoslavia and South Africa as examples of the consequences of different ethnic groups living within the same territory. For them, the solution in such places is to constitute a national state for each ethnic group.

Activists who are racist in the narrow sense of the word argue that it is a natural instinct to defend one's territory.<sup>53</sup> They maintain that different peoples have their own natural territories and that it is therefore unnatural for black immigrants to stay in Norway. In their view, the multicultural society is against the "Law of Nature." It creates chaos and destruction instead of community and tradition, they argue. One leading activist states that it is good that white people took power in parts of Africa and South America because only tribal wars and cannibalism existed there before the white people came.<sup>54</sup> This activist does not argue that all peoples should have their own national state, but rather that white people are needed in order to maintain order.

Several activists agree that they are racist—that white people are culturally and mentally superior to other peoples. But even they seemed to modify their beliefs when I asked them in detail about their views on specific issues. One activist, who in his fanzine often presents drawings of skulls of black people as a proof of their inferiority, acknowledged that many black persons definitely were more intelligent than many white people. When I asked whether he thought slavery to be good, he answered quietly that no people should be suppressed. But after a while he added that black people were in a better condition under slavery than they are now, because now there are only tribal wars among them and this is proof that they are unable to maintain order themselves. This practice of making applicable to all black people generalizations that are based on the situation in some specific place (in this case Rwanda) is typical of the activists' rhetorical style.

There is a distinction to be made between those underground activists who are regarded as extreme because they explicitly rank different peoples and those who are not regarded as extreme because they offer only cultural or economic arguments against immigration.

## RIGHT OR LEFT

Most activists define themselves as right-wing. A leading activist from the Viking group considers strengthening right-wing politics more important than fighting immigration. Nevertheless, some skinheads define themselves as left-wing nationalists and regret that the existing nationalist parties in Norway are so closely tied to right-wing politics. Some say they belong to the Left because of their revolutionary attitude:

Rein: Technically we belong to the left wing in politics, because that's the revolutionary side. The right wing is reactionary and conservative, and we are not reactionary and conservative! Many people say we are extremely reactionary, and therefore we are called right-wing extremists. But we are radical and revolutionary—the true left! [The] ugly communists have stolen the left wing, and claim themselves to be the only left wing, while we then are seemingly those on the right.<sup>55</sup>

One activist who defines himself as right-wing argues that he sympathizes with the socialists in Norwegian politics because they at least are idealists. Some activists call themselves moderate or liberal. To them, *liberal* means “tolerant toward other people’s attitudes” and nonviolent. Other activists apply the term *moderate* to themselves but define it as being apolitical, being a democrat, and having no sympathy for Nazism. Several activists call themselves liberals because they are open to talk with the Blitz youths, whereas the Blitz youths are not tolerant because they refuse to talk with the right-wing activists. About ten activists of the rightist underground were previously connected to the Blitz house. Other activists had once been associated with other leftist youth subcultures. Nonactivists drift the other way, from the nationalists to the Blitz youths. The path into Blitz seems to be closed for youths who have been associated with the “Nazis.” Activists who previously were Blitz youths report that they went over to the nationalists because of their political views. One says that he considered himself to be a nihilist then, but now he has more discipline and considers himself a National Socialist. Some other activists joined Blitz because they became skinheads, then found out after a period of time that their nationalist views were not popular inside the Blitz house.

Nevertheless, several activists have said that they see similarities



between themselves and the Blitz youth because both sides are oppositional and radical. The main difference between the Blitz youth and the right-wing activists is that the Blitz youth call themselves anti-racists and anti-fascists. In reaction, some of the rightist activists have started to use the slogan "Rasist, javisst," which means "Racist, yes, indeed." After several years of claiming to be nationalists, not racists, some now seem to accept the definition of Blitz youths as anti-racists and themselves as racists, although they do this in a somewhat ironic way.<sup>56</sup>

Some activists call themselves revolutionaries. Their eventual revolution will be directed against a conspiracy that they perceive in Norwegian politics. Their conception of revolution is something other than the traditional Marxist understanding of class revolution. Revolutionaries in this subculture have a conservative attitude: they talk about preserving traditions, defending strict state borders, and having a well-equipped military.

Activists from all of the layers talk of the need to fight communism. Some even define the Labor Party as communist, despite the fact that the Labor Party led a comprehensive campaign, including the use of the Special Branch, against communists in the 1970s.

In many ways the activists from the various layers do not fit into a left/right political dichotomy. Nevertheless, largely because of the Nazi elements in some of their beliefs, they are often considered to be located on the far right.

#### NEO-NAZISM

In Norway, the term *National Socialist* is strongly associated with the term *traitor* because of the German occupation of Norway during the Second World War. *Quisling*, the name of the leader of the Norwegian NS party, is a postwar synonym for *traitor*. Some nationalists in Norway call all persons who are liberal toward immigration traitors.<sup>57</sup> After the postwar treason trials, *patriot* and *Nazi* became, as Tore Bjørgo points out, incompatible terms.<sup>58</sup>

Most Norwegian rightists do not identify themselves as National Socialists. In contrast, in Sweden many activists in various groups of the far right call themselves Nazis. In the song "Säggra eller dö" (Win or die), by the white-power rock band Division S, the chorus goes: "We are Nazis, and that is good, a beautiful day, we will win."<sup>59</sup> The reason why among rightist activists in Sweden there are fewer constraints on using the term *Nazism* is probably that during the Second

World War Sweden was formally neutral and thus neither tried Nazis nor banned Nazi organizations after the war.<sup>60</sup> The first European Fascist International after the Second World War was initiated in Malmö in 1950.<sup>61</sup> Many of the young Nazis in Sweden have both parents and grandparents who were members of the National Socialist Party during the war,<sup>62</sup> whereas among the Norwegian rightist activists there have been only a few persons with Nazis among their closest relatives. Another difference between the Norwegian and the Swedish undergrounds is that in Sweden some National Socialists who were active from the 1950s to the 1980s actually joined the new generation of race ideologists.<sup>63</sup>

Norwegian activists' resistance to being labeled "Nazis" may be due to a wish to gain broader acceptance. Norway's postwar rejection of Nazism explains why these activists, without considering themselves to be Nazis, can take part in an international underground where Nazism is highly prevalent.

Some of the young people who do call themselves National Socialists stress that they sympathize with the policy of Norway's former National Socialist party from the period before the German takeover of the Norwegian government in 1940. Others are openly sympathetic toward Nazi Germany. There also are some young activists who claim that they use Nazi symbols only because of their wish to shock and to show their disgust for contemporary authorities.

There are also variations in the viewpoints given by those who call themselves National Socialists. Some use anti-Semitic arguments, whereas others are not at all concerned with what they call "the Jewish question." Some say they like National Socialist morality with its emphasis on family and discipline. Others are most sympathetic to the authoritarian state associated with National Socialism.

Still, none of these activists like the term *Nazi*. Their reason is that persons outside their groups define *Nazi* negatively to mean someone who is "contemptuous of humanity, glorifies violence, is evil, or supports gas chambers and dictatorship."<sup>64</sup> According to the editor of the militant magazine *Einherjer*, this is not how they themselves understand National Socialism:

We support national solidarity, comradeship and justice; the right of nations to independence and to be free from the race chaos of today! . . . We believe in the good, the noble and the pure blood; this means love of our own people, and respect for other people's rights.<sup>65</sup>

These sentiments are typical of the arguments given by National Socialists from both the skinhead and the ideological layers.<sup>66</sup>

One feature of Nazism that does not characterize the skinheads is the leadership principle. These activists define themselves as anti-authoritarian, meaning that they do not want to follow a leader. Their understanding of being a skinhead is that one does not follow an ultimate leader. Rather, skinheads follow the principle of comradeship, in conscious knowledge of the masculine bonding this word denotes. The paramilitarists, in contrast, hold discipline and defined hierarchies in high regard. But, as they themselves rightly note, the fact that they worship militarism does not mean they are Nazis. National Socialist ideology is based on military organization and the principle of blind obedience. Therefore, National Socialist skinheads in many ways are a paradox because of their obviously undisciplined lifestyle.<sup>67</sup>

Another component from which some activists distance themselves is the principle of "the right of the strongest." Many of the activists seem to dislike such an attitude because they do not view themselves as "strong." The skinheads in particular are proud of their working-class backgrounds and refer to the skinhead subculture as offering a way to consciously live a proletarian lifestyle.<sup>68</sup> They say that they prefer a real Labor Party, which supports small farmers and companies, and a welfare state, which takes care of "weak groups," such as people with handicaps, older people, and the unemployed. They also give this argument as evidence that they do not support the ideal of the will of the strongest and also are opposed to market liberalism. However, in their view the state should spend money solely on people from their own nation, not on people from other nations and cultures. They are not willing to view immigrants as "weak" groups who need assistance from the state. According to one activist, the correct attitude is to be "strong to the strongest, and considerate/mild to the weakest, that is, the opposite of the principle of the right of the strongest."<sup>69</sup>

Nevertheless, the skinheads' attempts to exert control in pubs and on the streets can be understood as an exercise of the principle of the right of the strongest. The strongest ones, then, are those who are physically strong or those best able to form a group. According to that criterion, however, the anarchists (the Blitz youth) until recently were the strongest. But in 1995, this seems to have changed after a large influx of new recruits and improved organization and discipline inside the rightist underground. Within the past few years the skin-

heads also seem to have become far more willing to use weapons, so the need for new recruits is less pressing. By undergoing weapons training, they prepare themselves for a war that in fact is possible only if the Blitz/Antifa (Anti-Facist Action) youths are willing to fight them. Until now, the Blitz/Antifa group has not used shootings or bombings, so the cells within the rightist underground that carry out such actions are in some sense the strongest. The skinheads themselves argue that their only possible way to fight back against pressure from Blitz/Antifa is with weapons in hand. Some of the rightist activists actually seem to enjoy being attacked by the leftist youths because they then are able to live out their ideal of men at war, which they could not do without an opponent.

To avoid being labeled Nazis, the rightist activists agreed in 1993 and 1994 not to use the swastika. By 1995, this rule had been abandoned because some of the younger activists were using swastikas on clothes and on banners. Many activists also use the fascist salute.<sup>70</sup> Some of them maintain that this salute dates from the Viking era and signifies loyalty to one's own.

Some of the activists give fascist salutes only when they have drunk a lot. Then the gesture seems to be an expression of frustration with life in general and is likely to be followed by belches and grimaces. At other times, especially during concerts or marches, activists salute as an expression of great pleasure. On both occasions, it is implicit that the person is well aware of the salute's history and knows that it will provoke or horrify outsiders. It thus is a source of power.

Moderate activists apologized to me after performing "Sieg Heil" salutes. They were afraid that I would perceive them as Nazis. They explained the gesture as being a mark of their community and a sign of their hatred of society. If others consider the salute provocative, the activists have achieved what they wanted. Other activists see the salute as more than a provocation and say, "We all know history, and some of this we also agree with."

Many of the activists are impressed by mass gatherings such as rock concerts and marches with drums and banners. These gatherings have effects similar to those of the Nazi gatherings of the 1930s. An important difference, however, is that these youngsters do not pay homage to an ultimate leader, and they do not blindly obey anyone's orders. They are more like a mob than a well-organized group of Nazi soldiers.

Concerts and other occasions where everyone gives fascist salutes

seem to lower some activists' barriers against Nazism. This attitude change is intensified by media descriptions of them as Nazis. They gradually start reading revisionist books about the war and start to reconsider: "the victorious side always writes the history books"; "not everything was that bad under Nazism." Slowly their doubts fade away. They say that only bad things are written about Germany, whereas much of what England and the United States did was equally wrong—for example, the bombing of Dresden at the end of the war. They say that under Nazism everyone had work, for Hitler solved the problem of unemployment. They start to play down the fact that many groups of people were not regarded as worthy of benefiting from the welfare system and were instead killed in the camps.

There are not many Holocaust deniers in the Norwegian rightist underground. But there are a lot of activists who are ambivalent about the Holocaust, saying that they are not able to judge how many people were killed and that they will not take a stand about whether "about six million Jews" were murdered.<sup>71</sup> Those who call themselves National Socialists have to take a stand on the Holocaust, because being a National Socialist after the Second World War means that one must either say that the Holocaust was necessary or say, as some German neo-Nazis I interviewed in 1990 did, that "such things always happen when there is a war, however, the Communists kill masses of people also in peacetime."<sup>72</sup> The only other alternative is to deny the Holocaust.

The point for the Holocaust deniers is that, to follow Jeffrey Kaplan's excellent summation, "if respectable academicians could be convinced that claims of Nazi genocide directed at Jews were exaggerated, then the seamless garment of Jewish claims would unravel and the public would at last see the Jew as does the revisionist: a master conspirator engaged in an age-old Manichean battle with the beleaguered forces of righteousness."<sup>73</sup> The Holocaust deniers in the Norwegian underground hand out pamphlets written by American revisionists. They also frequently refer to an American "engineer" who has "proved" that it is impossible to kill people in the German concentration camp gas chambers.

Only a few activists explicitly state that they are against democracy, as the Nazis were. Many maintain that democracy is "definite[ly] [the] most justifiable system," because when people themselves get power, the system becomes less corrupt. Others say that they want a state that is more authoritarian than the one we have

today, and they express approval of systems such as apartheid. One activist (age twenty-seven) argues that conditions under apartheid were better than conditions now, because now there is "just anarchy and chaos at all levels." In other words, authoritarian systems secure order.

Many of the activists maintain that Norway today is not a democracy but a "demoncracy." By this they mean that Norway is part of an international conspiracy that propagandizes the ideology of the "colorful community."

#### THE ZOG THEORY

The most explicitly anti-Semitic views are those held by the National Socialist skinheads who believe in the so-called ZOG theory. According to this theory, the ruling power elite of the world is ZOG (the Zionist Occupation Government), consisting of Zionists and their lackeys, who control most of the levers of power in the world. The alleged goal of this elite is to spread perversion, cruelty, and destruction. The National Socialist skinheads in Norway have adopted the ZOG theory from the former Swedish Vitt Ariskt Motstånd (VAM), who themselves adopted it from the American White Aryan Resistance.<sup>74</sup> In Sweden this discourse seems to be held with much greater seriousness than it is among rightist activists in Norway.

Norwegian activists often use ZOG and *Jews* as metaphors or internal codes for corruption and the misuse of power. Consequently, it is not necessarily the case that all power is exercised by the Jews and their lackeys. One twenty-four-year-old National Socialist described ZOG in this way: "We call it ZOG, and the Blitz activists call it 'the system.' (But do you mean that it is the Jews and their lackeys?) Jews and Jews. Simply said, there are some ass holes who rule society, and they do not rule to our advantage, therefore they must disappear."<sup>75</sup> As used here, ZOG is a synonym for "system of power," and *Jews* is an arbitrary synonym for corrupt power-holders. It is understood that the speaker does not really mean that various politicians, regardless of their actual religious affiliation, are Zionists. Rather, *Jew* and *Zionist* in the internal discourse of this activist function as synonyms for everything he does not like. When watching American films on TV, this boy shouts "Jew, Jew" every time a black man appears on the screen!

Many of the National Socialist activists use ZOG to blame "the system" and in addition to glorify heroes with the magic of a mar-

tyr's death. For example, a leading skinhead activist said that Ian Stuart Donaldson was killed by ZOG, not in an ordinary car accident. He used a similar explanation to describe the death of Rudolf Hess, who in his view did not commit suicide but was murdered by ZOG.

When talking to outsiders, some activists seem to take an ironic view of their own belief in ZOG. One activist answered my question about ZOG by laughing, as if to excuse himself, and saying, "I know it sounds crazy, but it is actually true!" Others reacted with withdrawal and grave silence when asked about ZOG. They did not want me to focus too much on this. It is difficult to say how many activists believe in this theory, because so many describe it in a joking way and so many have a pragmatic view of it.

Some older activists emphasize that ZOG theory is true but say that it is difficult to comprehend and not everyone is able to understand it. It is, in other words, an esoteric theory. Only after long and intensive study does it become clear. Everything that some of these activists read in newspapers or learn from other sources can be understood in light of this theory. These ideological activists have collected a range of examples as evidence for ZOG theory. They order books to which they have found references in international National Socialist pamphlets. One of them makes a point of saying that he reads books written by Jews, in which they themselves describe the vast scope of Jewish power. One book, for example, described the contribution of Jews to the building of the modern banking system. This activist also reads the Talmud and finds quotations there that, according to him, show how perverse Jews are.

These activists accept parts of the race ideology of Nazism. They use the expressions "Aryan race" and "Jewish race" and believe the distinctions between these groups are rooted in both psychology and biology. They talk about the need to conserve the purity of the Aryan race. Some of them also believe Jews to be responsible for everything "evil" and relate this belief to political ideologies such as communism, capitalism, and liberalism, and to the Mafia. Others have a more diffuse hatred of Jews.

By adopting ZOG theory, new activists show their determination to persevere. When newcomers after some time begin referring to ZOG, they show their determination to sacrifice much for the movement.<sup>76</sup> They take the "step out" and "live out their ethnic instincts," in the words of one leading activist.

ZOG theory seems to be attractive to activists mostly because it

offers relatively sophisticated explanations for their feelings of political persecution. They are watched, excluded, and attacked not because of the falseness of their views but because the evil conspirators know that they are right and are determined to fight them and their correct view of the world by all means possible. They regard themselves as brave fighters who want to defend the community and preserve morals, whereas the enemy attempts to lead us all into destruction by internationalism and sexual perversions.

ZOG theory simplifies the world and also legitimates and motivates action. For those activists who believe in it, ZOG becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In many ways, ZOG is equivalent to what Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie has called "a good enemy."<sup>77</sup> A good enemy is so diffusely defined that you never know exactly who or where he is. ZOG has the same function as what Max Weber described as *Hinterwelt*, a world with its own logic, acting behind the real world.<sup>78</sup> ZOG acts like a magical netherworld; it is the factor behind everything.

The rightist activists produce an abstractly defined collective identity that is highly international, based as it is on ideas that are prevalent in the rightist undergrounds of many Western countries. Common to all participants in this discourse is the reference to broad, collective categories such as nation and race. This is a countertrend to various postmodern movements that emphasize the inner self as a road to a better life.<sup>79</sup> The rightist activists search instead for an ideology that subordinates the self to more vital collective entities such as the group, the nation, and the race.

## NOTES

1. I want to thank the following persons for their advice in relation to this article: Jeffrey Kaplan, Heléne Lööw, Tian Sørhaug, Willy Pedersen, Arvid Fennefoss, Tore Bjørge, and the participants at the workshop "Brotherhoods of Nation and Race," New Orleans, December 1995.

2. I will refer to the subculture as "the rightist underground" because this concept is broad enough to include all of the disparate participants in the far right. When using *underground*, I refer solely to the young generation of participants. Many older exponents of the same views are not "underground" in the same sense, for they take part in parliamentary politics. The term *right-wing* is somewhat inaccurate, because some of the participants adhere to leftist views. However, because the majority consider themselves to be right-wing, I find *right-wing* to be the best term available. This is es-



pecially so as these youngsters are in constant conflict with explicitly left-wing youths, such as the anarchist Blitz youths and the communist Rød Ungdom (Red Youth). For a discussion of the main components of right-wing extremism see Tore Bjørgo (ed.), *Terror from the Extreme Right* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 2–3.

3. Militant youths from leftist movements and their opponents from the rightist underground have fought each other constantly since the late 1980s. The conflict escalated after the so-called Brumunddal clash in 1991. This event is analyzed by Frøydis Eidheim, "Hva har skjedd i Brumunddal" (What happened in Brumunddal), *NIBR-Report 20* (1996).

4. I have described the content and history of the skinhead subculture in Katrine Fangen, "Tysklands nye ungdom. DDR-ungdom i overgangen til det kapitalistiske samfunn" (The new youths of Germany: DDR-youth in the transition to capitalist society), *UNGforsk Report* (Oslo), no. 5 (1992), and Fangen, "Skinheads i rødt, hvitt og blått. En Sosiologisk studie fra 'innsiden'" (Skinheads in red, white and blue: A sociological study from the "inside"), *UNGforsk Report*, no. 4 (1995).

5. NUNS 88 stands for Norske unge nasjonalsosialister heil Hitler (Young Norwegian National Socialists, Heil Hitler); Norsk Arisk Ungdomsfront is the Norwegian Aryan Youth Front. Group names change rapidly within this underground, and persons drift from one group to another. Thus what I describe is connected more to different trends within the underground than to specific group names.

6. This person is Ole Krogstad, whose control of the record company is a key source of his influence. In keeping with the movement's anti-authoritarian ethos, he does not lead any particular group.

7. I analyze the position and impact of girls in the underground in the article "Separate or Equal—The Emergence of an All-Female Group in the Norwegian Rightist Underground," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9:3 (1997).

8. The National Socialist skinheads in fact dislike the market liberalism of the Progress Party. They would rather vote for Fedrelandspartiet (Fatherland Party) or for Stopp Innvandringen (Stop Immigration). Some say what they really want is a Labor Party that is against immigration.

9. Letter dated 25 March 1996.

10. Heléne Lööv, "The Cult of Violence: The Swedish Racist Counter-culture," in Tore Bjørgo and Rob Witte (eds.), *Racist Violence in Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

11. I learned of this agreement at a meeting organized by a local division of Den norske forening in March 1994.

12. Several activists expressed this view in interviews. Some even said that their main political aim was to make people see how much they were persecuted for their rightist views, and that this issue, to show that there is no democracy in Norway, was more important than fighting immigration.

13. Interview with leading Viking activist, 24 April 1996.

14. Lööv, "The Cult of Violence," p. 62.

15. Interview with leading Viking activist, 24 April 1996.

16. The leaderless-resistance concept originated with the American Ku Klux Klan figure Louis Beam and was popularized in William Pierce's novel *Hunter*. See Jeffrey Kaplan, "Leaderless Resistance," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9:3 (1997).

17. See Combat 18's *International Redwatch* issue no. 1. The leftist underground has also printed "wanted dead" lists of rightist activists. See *Smørsyra* 4 (1992).

18. *Fritt Forum*, no. 2-3 (1996).

19. The Friends of Vidkun (Quisling), Northern Hatred, and Norwegian Legion.

20. Interview in *Stomping Ground* 2 (1993). *Stomping Ground* was a Norwegian skinhead fanzine. It was mostly apolitical, but when political views were present, they represented nationalist or racial discourses.

21. See also Jeffrey Kaplan, "Religiosity and the Radical Right," selection 5 in this volume, regarding the impact of the Zorn 88 leader Erik Rune Hansen internationally.

22. Interview with leading Valkyria activist, 9 March 1996.

23. Vera Oredsson, "Jämstalldhet—en nationell produkt?" (Equality [between the sexes]—A national product?), *Nordisk Kamp*, no. 3-4 (1994), pp. 4-5.

24. The fact that ideological proficiency is not a necessary condition for being accepted in the underground was also characteristic of militant left-wing groups such as the Italian Red Brigades of the 1970s, as described by Allison Jamieson in "Entry, Discipline and Exit in the Italian Red Brigades," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 2:1 (Fall 1990), p. 3.

25. See, for example, Ole Krogstad in *Ikke Vold* (Nonviolence, the magazine of the Norwegian section of the War Resisters International) 1 (1996), p. 11. (The Blitz house is a house offered by the municipality to squatters who call themselves anarchists. Various rock groups and cultural organizations are based there.)

26. Nasjonal Samling (National Unification, NS). The Norwegian National Socialist party constituted in 1933 by Vidkun Quisling was the only legal party during the German occupation of Norway. Membership after 4 September 1945 was illegal. I use the term *revisionist* here to point to Norwegian historians who have rewritten the history of the Norwegian NS party. One book that many of the activists have read is Øystein Sørensen, *Hitler eller Quisling. Ideologiske brytninger i Nasjonal Samling 1940-1945* (Hitler or Quisling: Ideological conflicts in national unification, 1940-1945) (Oslo: Cappelen, 1989); another is Hans Fredrik Dahl, *Vidkun Quisling* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1991).

27. From the Viking era, they read mostly primary literature, such as Snorre Sturluson, *Kongesagaer* (The king's sagas) (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1970), and the Eddas. See, for example, Snorre Sturluson, *The Prose Edda* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1914). They also read various books from the international white-power underground, which specifically include Holocaust revisionist material.

28. Some study circles have also been organized for the rightist activists

by the philosophy student Andreas Winsnes, who was employed by the Norwegian branch of the War Resistance International.

29. For an example of such a discussion between two activists see *Patrioten* 5 (1996), p. 16.

30. My description of the belief of these young people is based on my conversations with a few Zorn 88 members and on a meeting with some other National Socialist youths, of whom some were members of Zorn 88, in April 1996, in a study circle arranged by A. Winsnes.

31. Tore Bjørge, "Militant Neo-Nazism in Sweden," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5 (Autumn 1993), p. 36.

32. Interview, 23 April 1996.

33. Bjørge points to a contrast between those activists who believe in a Muslim conspiracy and those who believe in a Jewish conspiracy. According to Bjørge, there is a difference in the degree of radicalization between these two layers of activists, but the main lines of argumentation and the practical conclusions drawn from them are similar. Tore Bjørge, "Extreme Nationalism and Violent Discourses in Scandinavia: 'The Resistance,' 'Traitors,' and 'Foreign Invaders,'" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7:1 (Spring 1995), pp. 205–206.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Interview, 22 January 1994.

36. Interview, 26 October 1993.

37. Interview, 27 August 1993.

38. Phil Cohen, "Monstrous Images, Perverse Reasons: Cultural Studies in Anti-Racist Education," *Working Paper*, no. 11 (London: Centre for Multicultural Education, Institute of Education, University of London, 1991), p. 14.

39. Interview, 27 August 1993.

40. Heléne Lööw, "Racist Violence and Criminal Behavior in Sweden: Myths and Reality," in Bjørge, *Terror from the Extreme Right*, p. 127.

41. Ehud Sprinzak, "Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegitimization," *ibid.*, p. 22.

42. Cohen, "Monstrous Images, Perverse Reasons," p. 13.

43. Bjørge analyzes this sort of rhetoric in detail in "Extreme Nationalism and Violent Discourses."

44. Sørensen, *Hitler eller Quisling*.

45. *Ung Front* (Young Front) 2 (1992). This nationalist skinhead fanzine existed until 1995.

46. *Ung Front* 2 (1992).

47. Interview, 11 August 1993.

48. Racism is often strictly defined as "the connection of biological dispositions in humans with moral dispositions." In the old sense, racism is a belief in the superiority of one particular race, and prejudice based on this conception. Racism is also a theory that human abilities and other characteristics are determined by race. In the course of the last ten years this strict definition has usually been supplemented by "new racism," "cultural racism," or "symbolic racism." Martin Barker introduced the term "new racism" to describe prejudices that do not explicitly assume the superiority of one race but rather support the view that immigration is bad because it will

lead to cultural conflicts. See Martin Barker, *The New Racism* (London: Junction Books, 1981).

49. Robert Miles, *Racism After "Race Relations"* (London: Routledge, 1993). See also Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 65.

50. Phil Cohen, in his study of British racist youth, gives a quite similar description: "They imagine themselves to be a beleaguered and oppressed minority victimized by this all-powerful conspiracy between the white liberal establishment and the various immigrant communities." Phil Cohen, "It's Racism What Dunit: Hidden Narratives in Theories of Racism," in James Donald and Ali Rattansi, *Race, Culture and Difference* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1992), p. 90.

51. Interview, 9 March 1996.

52. Interview, 11 August 1993.

53. Here they are very much in line with an international trend within white-supremacist movements—to speak of the ethnically homogeneous community as being defined by the "Law of Nature" and to believe that a racial instinct is slumbering within every human being. See Lööw, "Racist Violence and Criminal Behavior," p. 127. The Norwegian activists seem to have picked up this discourse through various sources, both from their Swedish comrades and from their reading of international white-power fanzines or other similar documents.

54. I have described these perspectives in a report on the history of racism; see Katrine Fangen, "The History and Prehistory of Racism," *SFDH-Report* (Sogndal, 1993).

55. Interview, 26 February 1994.

56. Another reaction along the same line is Ole Krogstad's advertisement that states that he rents out a flat in a guaranteed "racist zone" in Hokksund. This is a counterreaction to leftist youths' declaration of several schools and local communities as "anti-racist zones."

57. This is thoroughly analyzed by Bjørge, "Extreme Nationalism and Violent Discourses," p. 190.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

59. Division S, "Sågra eller dö," *Classic Swedish Oi* (Ragnarök Records, 1995).

60. Lööw, "The Cult of Violence," p. 63.

61. Anna-Lena Lodenius and Stieg Larsson, *Extremhögern* (The extreme right) (Stockholm: Tiden Förlag, 1991), pp. 92–95.

62. Lööw, "The Cult of Violence," p. 125.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Einherjer 1* (1996), p. 16.

65. *Ibid.*

66. The following discussion of the varying degrees to which the activists correspond to Nazism is based on the Norwegian philosopher Harald Ofstad's categorization of the different components of Nazism as they are expressed in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. See Harald Ofstad, *Our Contempt for Weakness: Nazi Norms and Values—and Our Own* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1989).

67. Interview with leading Viking activist, 23 April 1996.

68. Some of the activists who are members of the Viking group, however, have upper-working-class or middle-class backgrounds, and a couple of these activists also educate themselves at the college and university level.

69. *Ragnarok*, no. 11. This militantly anti-Semitic fanzine presented "facts" about Jews and poems from old Viking sagas. It has been replaced by *Einherjer*.

70. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957; reprint, New York: Paladin, 1972).

71. Interview with Valkyria girl, 9 March 1996.

72. Interview, 5 December 1990.

73. Kaplan, "Right-Wing Violence in North America," in Bjørgo, *Terror from the Extreme Right*, p. 70.

74. According to Tore Bjørgo, Swedish neo-Nazis used the term ZOG for the first time in the skinhead magazine *Vit Rebell* in 1989, whereas in Norway it appeared for the first time in the skinhead magazine *Bootboys* in October 1991. See Bjørgo, "Extreme Nationalism and Violent Discourses," p. 216. The ZOG discourse was developed and disseminated in the late 1970s and 1980s by several American racist and Christian Identity organizations. See Sprinzak, "Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective," p. 26.

75. Interview, 26 February 1994.

76. Jamieson, "Entry, Discipline and Exit in the Italian Red Brigades."

77. Nils Christie and Kjetil Bruun, *Den gode fiende. Narkotikapolitikk i Norden* (The good enemy: Drug politics in the Nordic countries) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985).

78. For a discussion of Weber's *Hinterwelt* concept, see Tian Sørhaug, *Fornuftens fantasier* (The fantasies of the reason) (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1996).

79. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (London: Polity Press, 1991).

# *Right-wing skinheads Nostalgia and binary oppositions*

KATRINE FANGEN

The right-wing of the skinhead subculture has been well-known in Europe and the US since the late 1980s. The skinheads' militant appearance, endorsement of violence and Nazi gestures make them representatives of the worst qualities imaginable to people outside their group. In the aftermath of the atrocities of the Second World War, it is difficult to understand why young people join such a movement.

The skinhead subculture of the far-right, however, is partly constituted of elements that emphasise the contrasts to Second World War Nazism. This, then, is a subculture with a symbolic meaning which places an emphasis on differences from the organised Nazism of Hitler's regime. The right-wing skinhead does not simply promote an ideal of the Nazi life-world. Rather, it makes sense to understand this right-wing skinhead subculture as a bricolage consisting of elements with contrasting connotations. Fascist symbols and gestures are combined with rebellion as signified in the skinhead uniform. The subculture is similar to Nazism in that aggression is directed towards specific ethnic and political groups, but it differs from Nazism in its oppositional attitude towards authority and in the way its members regard the role of a leader.

As did the Nazis in the Second World War, right-wing skinheads stress binary oppositions in their definitions of themselves and others. They divide the world rigidly according to 'us and them', friend and enemy. Bauman (1991) provides a relevant terminology for the discussion of such identity formations. According to him, modernity differs from pre-modern societies in that the category of strangers is undetermined, and it is thus more difficult to label friend or enemy. This presents a problem as to how resolve the indeterminate, ambivalent position of strangers within an ideal of equality as represented in modernity.

The demarcations of difference here are the distinct youth subcultural elements and the skinhead's rebellion against authorities. The skinhead style originally grew out of the need to recover a positive symbolic value as a member of the working-class. Clarke (1976) classifies this as a distinctive 'down-ward option' and a recovery of the 'magical working-class community'. According to Clarke, the difficult situation of the working-class in England at the end of the 1960s strengthened the longing for

community, and sharpened the 'we-them' consciousness of working-class youths. These youths felt both attacked and excluded. The skinheads to whom Clarke refers clearly expressed this feeling. Their view was that everywhere someone is trying to boss them, someone who believes he is better than they are.

Clarke's skinheads worshipped traditional forms of group solidarity. They emphasised their inclusion in the proletariat by making fetishes of their heavy boots, jeans and checked shirts. Their focus was on territoriality and presenting a tough appearance. The skinheads' idea of the working-class community was mythical, as they imitated parts of the working-class community as seen on the football terraces and in the pubs. In choosing this lifestyle, skinheads made a 'down-ward option', Clarke argues. They symbolically communicated this option through what Hebdige (1979) calls the 'working-classness' of the style.

I will here discuss the social identity of the right-wing skinheads<sup>1</sup> by employing a combination of the analytical framework of the so-called Birmingham school in youth research (the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies, CCCS) and Bauman's theory of modernity.

In my comparisons with the Nazis of Hitler's regime, I will primarily use Ofstad (1989) as a frame of reference. Ofstad has analysed the different components of Nazism as expressed in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. As Ofstad argues, Nazism is an ideology consisting of a range of different components, and must therefore be defined in more than one sentence. A person or group can represent Nazism in some of its components, but can at the same time differ from Nazism in relation to other equally central components. This perspective is useful when analysing contemporary groups of aggressive and militant right-wing skinheads. In some respects, it is correct to label them Nazis, in other respects the term is not applicable.

This essay draws some tentative conclusions regarding the contrast between present-day right-wing skinhead subculture and Nazism, analysing the skinhead subculture as a nostalgic identity solution wherein the skinheads reactivate what they believe to be the past working-class and Viking codes of honour.

## Recovery of the magical working-class community

In most subcultures the definition of insiders and outsiders is crucial. There is often a definition of what the 'real' participant should be like, in contrast to various forms of 'hobby' or 'semi' members. This is also the case with the right-wing segment of the skinhead subculture. In order to be considered a 'real' skinhead in the right-wing underground, one must not only wear the proper clothes, one must also have the correct sense of the history of the skinhead subculture. In the words of Hebdige, their style communicates the desired qualities: 'Hardness, masculinity and working-classness' (1979). In this way the 'the symbolic objects - dress, appearance, language,

ritual occasions, styles of interaction, music - were made to form a unity with the group's relations, situation, experience'. There is a complex balance between the right-wing skinheads' identity as plain boys from the working-class who enjoy drinking beer together, and the fantasy world of men of honour at war with real and imagined enemies. This fantasy world with its warrior-like images and proletarian style, seems for some members to be more important than the political standpoints or the ideology.

However, the ideology is homologous with their notion of a potent manly image, as are the other parts of the nationalist skinhead package, which they project by focusing upon a uniformed way of dressing, a distinct type of rock music (oi), certain common activities (drinking beer and fighting anarchists) and a typical mode of communication (rough joking). All these aspects are part of the homology of their style. These young men do not achieve status by following conventional career routes in the labour market or through the education system. Rather, they express their status through body capital or through manifesting abilities in style, ideology or in the planning/execution of militant strategies.

When Norwegian right-wing skinheads gather in public, they use *finlandshetter*, black stocking-hats covering all of their face except for eyes and mouth. Although there are minor differences, the appearance of the group members seems highly uniform to outsiders. By looking alike, they feel they are a group, and can act accordingly. The same group dynamics are involved when the NS soldier dressed in military uniform looks and acts like one of the many, instead of being an individual perpetrator and fully responsible for his own actions. The difference is that the right-wing skinhead has the view that he is fighting the system, not acting on behalf of it. In practice, he is an anarchist, acting like part of a militia, intervening in situations he thinks was the responsibility of the police, but since the police does not do its job, he has to do it for them.

The subculture of right-wing skinheads in Norway originated in a situation different from the original English skinhead subculture of the 1960s. Nevertheless, these Norwegian skinheads are aware of the history of the style, and they emphasise the proletarian significance of being a skinhead. Their presence in this subculture actively diminishes their possibilities of a traditional career in the educational system and the labour market. In this sense, they have chosen a clearly 'down-ward option' (cf. Clarke, 1976). The 40 persons who were active in this subculture when I did my fieldwork were pupils, apprentices, welfare clients, manual labourers and one person who worked as a journalist in his own nationalist monthly. Bjørge's (1997:85) data based on the information given by 73 right-wing activists arrested by the police in 1995, confirms the patterns found.

The construction of idealised images of past communities is a strong component of the social identity of these skinheads. They value the times when people lived in small, tightly-knitted communities where tradition made clear distinctions between right and wrong. In other words, they idealise the anti-pole of our current pluralist,



'post-modern' society. But the community of the skinheads is not merely an imagined community without any real basis. It is an actual community based on face-to-face contact, tied together by the social identity of the 'white power movement'. Concerts offer the most important occasions to manifest their sense of community. These concerts are often situated in areas far away from settlements. For the most part policemen are gathered outside the fence of the area. Within the area the skinheads are dressed in the prescribed uniform, some young men wear Nazi costumes. They all look more or less alike. When the band plays, they either stand without a movement, watching, or they stretch out their right arm, and shout *sieg heil*. Some of them explained to me that I must not think they are Nazis because they make Fascist salutes. They claim that the salute is meant only to underline their sense of community, and to show their contempt of contemporary society. If others perceive their use of symbols as shocking and provoking, they have achieved precisely what they want to achieve.

'Norway was at its best during the Viking era', one of the skinheads explained to me. 'At that time Norway was an empire and a leading nation of seafaring people'. The skinheads look at the Vikings as proud warriors who defended their land and their people. They pay less attention to the fact that the Vikings also met other cultures with curiosity and that they brought back home new and previously unknown goods.

Skinheads do not want to break with tradition. They laugh as if revealed when I point out the incongruity of their claiming to be nationalists, but at the same time adhering to an English lifestyle. But even so, they regard themselves as promoters of both Norwegian working-class culture and the values of the Viking era. They idealise collective deeds rather than individual ones. Conservative, they worry about breaks with tradition instead of celebrating the loosening from all kinds of ties.

In his description of 'late modernity' Ziehe (1989, 1991) emphasises the break with tradition and with the commitment of family. In this respect, the right-wing skinheads' attitudes resemble what Ziehe calls neo-conservatism. They do not celebrate ambivalence and the multitude of identities. They are oriented towards the realisation of the collective rather than the realisation of the self. The right-wing skinheads' contempt for other ethnic groups goes hand in hand with their nostalgic longing for exactly those qualities some of these groups represent; strong ethnic identity and family commitment. Strong family ties, and the feeling of honour related to one's own ethnic heritage are exactly those ideals right-wing skinheads claim are lacking in contemporary society. In this regard, one could see the way they relate to immigrants as a kind of love-hate relationship. When skinheads talk about putting their ethnic instincts into practice, it seems as if immigrants serve as their model (Fangen 1997).

## The definition of self, and the definition of the other

Egil: Some of us are patriots, some are National Socialists. All of us are white comrades. Those who do not have enough courage must leave us. Our milieu is hard. Everyone is morally against us. The Blitz youths receive both economic and moral support. The immigrants and all the political parties are against us. We are a persecuted minority. We have all the people against us, so we ought to be sceptical. I trust my family, nobody else. I have a standpoint, and that provides me with a lot of enemies. Many participants in this milieu are paranoid; we are persecuted by everyone. It's not an ideal situation. What we want is to solve the problems of the streets. It's a race war out there. The best thing would be a non-violent, democratic change, but this will not happen. 'They' make themselves so strongly countable. The violence is a result of the decay of the system. Conflicts arise, and lead to violence. I am against blind violence. Those who dominate the streets are stabbers, Blitz youths, criminals, and immigrants. Immigrants have taken over more and more, and Norwegians feel set aside. The immigrants are big spongers. They are bare-faced cheaters, stabbers. It's those we are against. The cities are besieged by betrayers and traitors. It is the view of the system that Nazis are traitors. To go from passivity to active resistance and to mark oneself as being against the colourful community is sufficient in itself to get into trouble. But this is the struggle of nature. We work through political campaigns in order to spread counter-information. The skinhead culture is not connected to any political party. It's bullshit that skinheads search for a leader.

The skinheads' tendency to define their own lifestyle in opposition to that of other subcultures in contemporary society is a shared characteristic among members of most subcultures. This phenomenon of ingroup-outgroup boundaries - resentment directed at certain 'others', that eventually leads to struggles between antagonistic groups or gangs - extends the notion of a racist subculture. Less chauvinist-profiled groups also take part in the same dynamics of gang feuding. However, as pointed out by Bauman (1989: 65), what sets racism apart from the more common orientation of xenophobia or contestant enmity is the fact that racism manifests the conviction that a certain category of human beings cannot be incorporated into the rational order, and that this category should be removed from the territory occupied by the group it offends.

This is the view shared by the right-wing skinheads. As regards the Second World War, they plead that they are against gas chambers and extermination, but that deportation would have been the right solution. The skinheads differ in their definition of outgroups, and also in how drastically they claim one should react against these outgroups. For some, the real enemy is an alleged conspiracy of Jews, for others, immigrants in general and Muslims in particular are the groups who deviate most from Norwegians, and are thus precisely the groups that should be excluded from Norwegian society. The viewpoint quoted above - that immigrants represent cheaters and spongers - is typical. They are looked upon as competitors for the scarce goods of society, competitors who receive resources which belong to others.

Using Bauman's (1991) terminology, one could say that those skinheads who want to exclude Muslims are those who are most afraid of the people who are overtly different, people who would metaphorically represent what Bauman calls the *enemy*. By contrast, those adhering to the complex conspiracy theories constructing Jews as

the dangerous 'Other', are afraid of the *stranger*. According to Bauman, anti-Semitism grows out of the fear of ambivalence, the uneasiness produced by the difficulty of determining to which category 'the Other belongs'. It is the 'enemy in [their] midst' (cf. Bauman, 1989:65) which produces their fear. This is seen when the anti-Semites among the skinheads say that the problem is that you never know whether or not a person is a Jew. In other words, you never know whether or not a person represents 'the conspiracy' (defined as ZOG, see Fangen 1997). By associating Judaism with various stigma, it is constructed as otherness, strangeness. As Bauman sees it, the very function of the Nation State is to deal with strangers, not enemies. Nationalism is then an ideology of friendship, proclaiming that natives are friends. The problem of foreigners in this ideology is that they are indeterminate, it is impossible to know whether they are friends or foes. In this sense, the foreigner who comes as a visitor and then leaves is easier to relate to than the foreigner who comes in order to stay. This is the reason why minorities such as Jews and Gypsies have posed such a problem to the nationalistic ideology of nation states. In his book about the Holocaust, Bauman (1989) discusses the stigma of strangeness as applied to Jews. It is the universality of Jewish homelessness which make Jews into a special case of the 'foreigner in our midst' for people believing in absolute categories.<sup>2</sup> This paranoid view projected on Jews also has its more realistic counterpart; the fear of traitors within their own ranks is a real threat which most of the right-wing skinheads have at one time or another experienced.

Rival groups confirm their division of the world into friends and enemies, but a traitor from their own ranks confuses the picture. This way of reasoning might be defined as typical of modernity, according to Bauman (1991). A traitor is a kind of stranger, he seems like 'one of us', but in practice he is not. He is the enemy from within, the one who confuses the categories, who takes an ambivalent, undetermined position.

Ambivalence means that a situation might be interpreted in many different ways, and in modernity we are continuously confronted with a wide range of alternatives, which make it difficult for us to choose. Ambivalence therefore, means, more than anything else, indeterminacy. Indeterminacy means that one finds oneself unable to define certain situations, and this leads to discomfort and existential anxiety. The right-wing skinhead's need to define the world according to a rigid friend-enemy polarisation reveals a need to reduce the complexity of contemporary society by idealising the homogeneity of the past.

An interesting process occurs when the National Socialist faction of the right-wing skinheads create themselves into enemies in the eyes of people outside their own group. By their use of Fascist salutes and symbols, they voluntarily participate in making the profile which causes their political opponents, the media and other institutions to stigmatise them. One could claim that right-wing skinheads have chosen their own stigma, that of being identified as a 'neo-Nazi' in the eyes of their

opponents: They have voluntarily and knowingly entered a group where Nazi symbols are used.

The most important outgroups for Norwegian right-wing skinheads are the various groups and organisations of anti-racists, as well as politicians with liberal policies regarding immigration. From time to time, skinheads direct violence at persons or buildings associated with these groups of people. A minor group within the anti-racist movement, the Anti-Fascist Action, also fight right-wing skinheads by means of violence. Immigrants are only a secondary target for right-wing skinheads; according to them it is immigration policy, not immigrants, they are fighting. Immigrants should not be beaten, because they only make use of the possibilities 'the system' gives them.

Both anti-racists and immigrants serve to define the negations of the right-wing skinhead: they are the anti-poles of what right-wing skinheads want to be. Another such pole is defined as middle-class people and authorities in general. For right-wing skinheads anti-racism and its ideal, multiculturalism, represent chaos. Here again, we see right-wing skinheads idealise order, which according to Bauman (1991) would represent the very quest of modernity. Anti-racist youths, and perhaps especially the so-called Blitz youths in the Norwegian setting, could with Bauman's terminology be seen as representing a post-modern identity solution, as they idealise anarchism (which could be seen, as the right-wing skinheads see it, as the very representation of chaos) and multiculturalism (which could be associated with pluralism, ambiguity, or alternatively the celebration of ambivalence). But looking more closely at the identity solution of the two groups, they do not consistently represent two obvious opposites. Both of them create images of the enemy, and through their war against each other, they plead for a strong categorisation of each other, and thus a strong 'us-them' division. Anti-racists are by their own self-definition identified as a negation, they are defined by the name of their enemies.

Identity is also defined by what one wants to be like. For right-wing skinheads, their view of working-class culture and the Viking era provide two distinct sources of identification. Common to both these views are that they are imagined as representations of homogeneity, community and honour. In other words, working-class culture and the culture of the Vikings here represent negations of today's society: multiculturalism, breaks with tradition and one-dimensional communities, and the lack of honour - an honour that once was considered an integral part of the uneducated working-class.

## To rebel or to obey

The same binary way of defining the world was, of course, typical of the former Nazi life-world. The greatest difference between contemporary right-wing skinheads and the former Nazis has to do with another feature, namely the way the group itself is organised. The Nazi soldier was strictly placed within a hierarchy of leader and

follower, the leader's authority being absolute. In the life-world of right-wing skinheads this is far from the case. They honour certain past persons by giving them symbolic value. However, there are no claims for absolute obedience in their own groups, some of which have defined leaders but most which have not. This is in itself an important norm for right-wing skinheads. This is especially true for those who call themselves skinheads and who claim anti-authoritarianism as their norm, defined in conscious contrast to the common understanding of them as 'authoritarians', a term used by Adorno et al. (1950) in their post-war study of ethnocentrism.

This anti-authoritarian attitude is not a trait exclusive to Norwegian right-wing skinheads. The so-called 'leaderless resistance' is a main principle in the international white power subculture (Kaplan 1995).<sup>5</sup> There are similarities between the leaderless resistance trend and the tendency within the German youth movement at the beginning of this century, where anti-authoritarianism was the acknowledged ideal (Becker 1946). The so-called roamers (*Wandervogel*) expressed their anti-authoritarianism as a form of opposition to adult bourgeois life. Even so, they honoured the leadership principle, and the passionate subordination to a charismatic leader. The Nazis adopted several of the traditions of this youth movement, but perverted them at the same time. For example, the Nazis transformed the charismatic leadership principle into one of blind obedience (Becker 1946). The present right-wing underground more resembles the romantic yearning for charismatic non-authoritarian leadership, seen in the earlier voluntary youth movements, than the hierarchical principle of Nazism. However, there are also differences. The roamers discussed potential leader figures in their magazines (Becker 1946), but in the fanzines of the right-wing skinheads, there is no similar plea for a potential leader. However, in their discussions of various past heroes, they honour the same kind of leadership that was esteemed among German storm-troopers (Lindholm 1990) in that they emphasise these leaders' abilities to fight together with their soldiers on the front-line.

The kind of community right-wing skinheads create also has similarities with earlier quasi-military organisations like those mentioned above. The skinheads enthusiastically talk about gatherings in front of the campfire, first aid, camp-training in the woods, and war games such as paint-ball. They also talk of their 'brotherhood', a term which gives association to pre-Fascist male associations in Germany. Right-wing skinheads explicitly idealise volunteers fighting on an equal footing in the frontline on the basis of their strong patriotism more than the organised military service.

## Male heroes

Paradoxically, right-wing skinheads revere various male heroes in their fanzines and at the same time they abandon the principles of leadership. However, this construction of heroes seems mostly to function in setting the norms for how ideal warriors should

behave, and thus it creates the images which give their combat a sense of glory. They talk about violence, strength and heroes' sacrifices. Two men they use to construct such images are the former Nazi leader Rudolf Hess and former Skrewdriver vocalist Ian Stuart Donaldson. Both these men died mysteriously, and white power skinheads see their deaths as martyrdom in honour of 'the cause': 'A race-conscious man, who dares to stand up, but the accident hits and he dies'; Ian Stuart Donaldson, 'You gave us your life' (One for all – all for one)<sup>4</sup>. The ideal, as portrayed in this song, is to be 'race-conscious', courageous, and willing to die for the cause. This illustrates a point given by Lööw (1993:70) that the 'cult of martyrs' '...strengthens members in their ideological beliefs, and confirms the idea of the ongoing racial war'. By identifying themselves with such male heroes, the skinheads feel a part of something much bigger than themselves, a war which, 'demands sacrifices, but also gives activists a chance of martyrdom' (Lööw 1993:76). In the international white power subculture, the cult of heroes and martyrs is of vital importance (Lööw 1993).<sup>5</sup>

Even though they do not arrange Nazi marches in the celebration of Rudolf Hess, as Danish neo-Nazis do, or are as one-sided Nazis as some of their Swedish counterparts, there are Norwegian skinheads who idealise Hitler:

Egil: I am against leadership and authority in general. But I like a leader who does something more than those who are corrupt. That's what I like about Hitler. He was a man who was not a hypocrite. He meant what he said and he helped all Germans.

Hitler being a man who was not a hypocrite means, as I read it, that he was a man who dared to speak his hatred right out,<sup>6</sup> a man who was proud of his own aggression. A man who was so 'honest' and who has been so 'misunderstood' in his brave motives afterwards, demands celebration. It seems that some skinheads picture the 'real man' as an aggressor<sup>7</sup>. Some males burst into tears or get highly excited when they see a video with Hitler speaking, a condition almost identical to sexual arousal:

Ragnar: When we watch Hitler on TV, some of the men nearly have an orgasm. In order to understand this, you can't view Hitler as a politician. It is more like viewing him as a Messiah. You need to understand the magic of it.

Why does the celebration of such a leader lead to these sentiments? According to Reich (1972), the psychological function of the male leader is to provide his followers with some of his aura. This is the same function as a rock band has for its audience. By celebrating it, the audience becomes excited and feels part of the aura the band, or the leader, produces. In the white power subculture, the *Führer* is replaced by the band and the vocalist, who are paid homage by a noisy audience stamping their feet in the aggressive way of dancing typical of skinheads (Fangen 1995: 27, 34-35; Lööw 1997). They are not a highly disciplined group, but they become enthralled by an atmosphere based on hatred of mainstream society. This atmosphere has several parallels to that created at Nazi mass gatherings.

The ideal type of charismatic leadership is, according to Weber's (1922) classic

description, leadership according to an affectionate devotion to a ruling person and his gifts of grace, especially his magical abilities, his heroic acts, the power of his spirit or his words. He is therefore obeyed only as long as he retains these qualities. When his grace leaves him, he loses his heroic force or the masses' belief in his leadership qualities, and his power will disappear. The rock star, personified in the figure of Ian Stuart Donaldson, clearly fits this picture. However, what is lacking among the skinheads is the will to obey. They honour Donaldson because he was one of them, he was a fellow comrade, not an absolute leader to whom they pay tribute.

It is, however, an open question what would happen if a really strong leader were to appear. So far, no one has united right-wing skinheads in any country. Yet, Ian Stuart Donaldson has been honoured within the white power subculture in many countries. In other words, it is the rebel, who attracts them as an ideal, but to obey his rules blindly is an inconceivable thought. Rather, it is Donaldson who is honoured because he managed to produce this specific blend of youth subculture, rock music and rebellion, within the idea of white supremacy.

Thus, the ideal is an image of aggressive youths not suppressed by authority, choosing to act as voluntary warriors in the fight for white supremacy. This view is linked to their belief in the superiority of the white race, which has been a part of imperialism throughout history. Among right-wing skinheads, however, this view is conceived as revolutionary. The fighting image redefines other possible interpretations of them when they are examined as individuals rather than as members of the group. But it is their belonging to the group that provides them with their sense of power and meaning. In this way authoritarian ideas of white supremacy provide them with a sense of power. They are powerful not because of their own personal qualities, but because they are part of a group, which reinforces the ideal of them as defined by their race, which per definition is powerful. This authoritarian view is combined with the idea of rebellion and a community of aggressive masculine young men. In some senses they idealise authoritarianism, in others, they oppose it since they regard themselves as rebels who do not follow anybody's rules, but only their own instincts. They are rebels who enjoy 'peak experiences', often in the form of violence and underground actions (Lindholm 1990).

According to Norwegian right-wing skinheads, it is important to respect and support those with the most experience, but not to obey them blindly. Young, inexperienced skinheads greatly admire the underground's 'eldest'. It is not uncommon for a young participant to proudly tell another group member that 'I have shaken X's hand', thus expressing that merely having done so makes him feel important.

Sometimes their own leading figures might be explicitly honoured in the fanzines. This occurred for example when one of the leading skinheads fired a shot against a crowd of anti-fascist youths who had thrown stones against the windows of the apartment where right-wing skinheads had gathered. The perpetrator managed to hide himself from the police for a couple of months after the episode. The fanzine *Patrioten* (The Patriot) (No. 5, 1996) addressed him as 'a hero of freedom' and

described his shooting as pure self-defence on the part of the group. His use of violence and his ability to escape and hide from the police gave him a persona to which the others deferred. They addressed him as 'hero', although such labels are seldom applied to their fellow-members, no matter how experienced they are.

One of the leading males argues that those who are fit to fight 'in the front-line' should be treated with greater respect, and receive more support than other skinheads. However, he stresses the need for guidance more than the need for obedience:

Guttorm: There are many frustrated and immature people within this movement. I feel I have to be there as a mentor for the youngsters, I have to make them conscious. The rebellion has to have a direction, it can't spread in all directions, that's too chaotic. The whole movement is too unstable... The youths need to (...) become more idealistic. They must learn to take the step from rebel to politically aware idealist. It is important to be conscious of the dark sides of one's own nature. It is important to mature ideologically, and to get to know one's ethnic instincts, instead of taking up false surrogates like hip-hop culture.

This guidance should lead the rebellion in a certain direction, defined by the ideology of the experienced. A part of leading the rebellion in a proper direction is to stop unnecessary internal quarrels. A skinhead once put an end to a meaningless quarrel which had gone on for the whole evening among two younger skinheads. One of them had spent the evening criticising his friend because a former girl friend of his had later become involved with a black man. The offender called this girl a 'nigger-cunt', and accused his friend of not being a nationalist because he had been involved with such a woman. The accusations became more and more desperate as the night progressed and the offender became more drunk. Finally, the leading skinhead intervened, shaking his fist at them. This threatening gesture was enough to calm them down, and the conflict was brought to an end before it turned into a fight.

This incident illustrates how the mentor role functions in practice - not by gentle guidelines, but by force. There are also occasions when leading skinheads try to rule younger skinheads by threatening to spread rumours about them. Despite the brutality of this picture, there is agreement among skinheads that they do not condone absolute leadership.

In Nazism, the feeling of self is transformed into the sense of being one with the Nation, and the person discovers himself in his leader. Because of this, he regards himself as a defender of the people's property - the Nation. At the same time, the follower can feel disdain for the masses, and put himself above them, considering himself to be an individualist. His identification with his genius leader is so deep-rooted that he forgets his own insignificant role as follower (Ofstad, 1971:76). The bonds with the leader are similar to the bonds with a father figure. It is the belief that the father will 'fix it all' that makes the power of the dictator so great. The follower expresses a naive belief that the leader, like a comforting father, will be able 'to put it all in order'. The follower believes that the leader is infallible, and that the future is safe in his hands. On the one hand, then, the leader has much greater stature than his subordinates but, on the other, he needs to embody elements with which the



masses can identify. The more helpless a person, the more eager he will be to identify with the leader. Nazism was authoritarian in the sense that its leaders could claim absolute obedience. It was brutal in the sense that it required its followers to carry out acts that would often harm others. It was, in other words, an aggressive principle of authoritarianism. The follower was expected to show happiness by acting responsibly (*Verantwortungsfreude*), while the same time, all individual responsibility was excluded. The follower was expected to blindly trust his superior's orders in the same way that Abraham was expected to blindly obey God (Ofstad, 1971:52-53).

Nazi soldiers were expected to show blind obedience. Among the right-wing skinheads, there are no such demands. The guiding norm is loyalty, an ideal they associate far more with the Vikings than with Nazism. They are expected to show loyalty not only to the group, but also to their people, race, or Nation. The threat against loyalty to the group is treachery. On some occasions, central activists have served as informants for the police, or they have told journalists things that should have been kept secret. On other occasions, people who appeared to be friends and like-minded, turned out to be infiltrators. Informers and infiltrators are therefore a constant threat to the subculture, and in this way exaggerates the intense desire to distinguish between friend and foe.

Despite their urgent need to stand together and join forces, right-wing skinheads often express dissatisfaction with the lack of comradeship in the group. The reasons for this lack of solidarity are various; the subculture consists of fairly different personalities and ideological orientations, its members are constantly exposed to attacks, and they are often under supervision. Therefore they become frustrated and suspicious, and transfer some of this frustration and suspicion to one another.

## Distance versus closeness to victims

The erosion of responsibility in Nazism was in part induced by a mechanism which Ofstad calls 'distance to the concrete' (1971:56). The principle that the person with most power should make decisions was synonymous with the person who had least contact with those who bore the consequences of the decisions. Furthermore, those who executed the decisions had no power of their own. In this way, Hitler could decide to kill without even using the word 'kill'; the context in which he said it, made it obvious what he meant. He could merely tell Himmler to 'get rid of them, I don't care how'. Himmler had to make some decisions about how to accomplish this, but did not have to plan it in detail. The person under him in the hierarchy had to work out the details, and those working in the concentration camps led the victims into the gas chambers. Ofstad (1971:57) stresses the fact that the principle has been the same in other wars. Thus, the President of the United States was able to maintain a feeling of moral righteousness, even though he had been the one who ordered the dropping

of napalm bombs over the people of Vietnam. There were, however, also Nazi soldiers with no distance to the victims. The storm-troops of the SS exercised direct and brutal power on people.

The violence produced by the skinheads is concrete and experienced as highly real. Paul Willis (1988/1977) has described the joy working-class lads find in fighting. Street violence makes reality pause for a minute. According to Willis, the violence expresses important values of working-class culture, such as masculine hubris, dramatic display and group solidarity. He (1977:34-35) observes that it is disastrous for the lads' informal standing and their masculine reputation if they refuse to fight. When they are insulted or intimidated, they are expected to fight. Willis also finds that it was often the ability to fight that gave status based on other grounds: masculine presence, being from a famous family, being funny, etc.

The same values are highly prevalent among right-wing skinheads. They do not value the distant and bureaucratic violence of imperialistic wars but set store by the intimate violence in the streets. They hold that violence is legitimate when carried out between two equally big gangs, or when motivated by the need for revenge, and they often refer to the Vikings when describing their own values concerning violence.

The Nazis pictured the world as being a state of war between 'the strong' and 'the weak': the strong would survive, the weak would not. The strong were those who were physically stronger than the others, and who were able to turn the weak into slaves (Ofstad, 1971). Those who lost would always be the weak no matter who they were. 'The Aryans were strongest, even if 'Aryans' included people who were not German, and even if they were beaten by others. Another definition of 'the strongest' was the people who were the biologically best-equipped; in other words, people with diseases or handicaps were reckoned as 'weak'.

The Nazis secured their own sense of being strong by forcing others to obey. This gave them opportunity to feel contempt because the others permitted themselves to be forced upon. The ability to use power was an evidence of strength. Harald Ofstad (1971:46) has convincingly shown how identification with power was closely linked to contempt for weakness. Identification with power was linked to disgust for anyone who was physically weak, sick, or who surrendered in combat. The contempt of weakness was linked to anxiety concerning one's own weaknesses.

The right-wing skinheads' celebrate strength, but as rigidly opposed to weakness as it was for the former Nazis. The skinheads more often refer to the notion of honour than to the notion of strength, and they conceptualise this by idealising the Vikings. In their view the Vikings fought together for the honour of their people. According to the skinheads a man must face his fellows and be ready to stand up to his rivals<sup>8</sup>. One activist described the Vikings as men of blood and honour<sup>9</sup>. The norm the Vikings based their solidarity on was 'you shall always be a friend to your friend but no man shall ever be a friend to a foe's friend'. This sentence appeals to right-wing skinheads because it expresses their sense of joining forces against those who are against them. They must defend each other, but at the same time they must always

be aware of possible enemies wanting to split, supervise or attack them. Therefore, they never become friends with foes or their friends, and are always aware of the risk of infiltrators or traitors.

A factor which otherwise would inhibit their violence is their claim that 'law and order' is important in society. Despite similarities in the acceptance of violent strategies, this attitude conflicts with that of their opponents, the anti-fascists. The latter are anarchists in the sense that they actively oppose the police, whereas some right-wing skinheads talk about friendly discussions with policemen. I once heard one of them say to a policeman 'we are really on your side, you know'. They see themselves as defenders of order, and if things were the way they wanted them to be they would fight with the police against the anarchists.

But they do not approve of policemen who work in the Special Branch. They argue that the higher policemen are placed in the hierarchy, the more they are part of the 'conspiracy'. Thus, again an anti-authoritarian view, or as they say, 'power corrupts'. In their view the Special Branch is part of the corrupt conspiracy. As they are under the surveillance of the Special Branch, the skinheads' identity as a revolutionary force is confirmed. Thus, they are not delinquent outsiders, they are a revolutionary group working for the true interests of the nation. I once said to a skinhead after he had told me of a theft he had committed, 'you're a criminal, aren't you?' His response was 'No I'm not, I am a revolutionary. However, the conspiracy regards my standpoint as a criminal'. Thus, they look upon themselves as revolutionary rebels, who claim law and order in society. This double-sided image in many respects invalidates the picture of them as solely authoritarian.

## A world apart

The fantasy world that right-wing skinheads create is one that is relatively closed to outsiders. In order to understand what attracts young men to this subculture, one has to understand their participation not only as a political protest or the result of inadequate personality development. Rather, one should take into consideration how the relations between them form a world of excitement and community, and how their commitment is strengthened by the constant negative confirmation of outsiders. The need to be noticed by others, of experiencing the extraordinary, and of belonging somewhere, are recurrent themes among these right-wing skinheads.

Even though their community has its internal threats, these men become addicted to a blend of adventure and excitement. This is the reason the community becomes so important to them, providing them with a sense of importance and commitment they would not experience with the same strength anywhere else.

In this respect the right-wing subculture provides them with a feeling of power. Through underground actions and street violence they are taken seriously as a threat by the outside world. They present themselves as a blend of plain men from the working-class and warriors in a 'race war' in which the protagonists are both 'the

system' and the anti-racists. In this way, they define themselves as existing in a world of strict us-them boundaries. They call for collective identities that no longer have the same 'natural' function as in the past. As pointed out by Bauman (1991:69), collective identities must now be artificially produced, and this is precisely what the right-wing skinheads are attempting. They claim that race, nation and subcultural belonging is what really matters, and they blur the constructed quality of these entities. In their ongoing war with the militant part of the anti-racist movement, their sense of collective identities takes real form, it becomes a feature with real consequences. This war therefore confirms their conspiratorial picture of the world.

They nostalgically long for the modern working class community, and reject the post-modern order of multiple identities. But their movement could be regarded as a post-modern nomadic movement defined by their anti-immigration position, rather than an ideology or image of society.

In real life, their identities could also be seen as post-modern. Many of them are unemployed, non-belonging (nomadic), ambiguous, coming from divorced families, but in their ideals they are modern and they celebrate clear-cut categories, traditions and tightly-knit families. As Bauman writes, the nightmare today is to be denied identity. And it is exactly this fear, the failure to find an identity, which leads young people into the right-wing subculture, and compels them to insist on rigid us-them categories.

## Notes

1 The essay is based on material gathered through participant observation during 1993-1994, interviews from the period 1993-1997, and written material from right-wing skinheads. During my one year of participant observation among these skinheads, I achieved first hand knowledge of how they themselves reason: how they legitimate their ideology, their violent actions, and the reason why they entered this subculture in the first place. This method has given me unique access to the skinheads' interpretations of their own participation. A method like this makes it possible for me not only to discuss the events and attitudes of these people as seen from outside, and thereby to test various forms of explanations from the outside. I have also had the opportunity to generate theories of right-wing extremism by using the interpretations these people make of themselves, and to use various analytical tools in close conjunction with the data.

For a more detailed description of my fieldwork, see 'Blant høyreekstremister - utsnitt av et sosiologisk feltarbeid', *Sosiologiske fantasier*, Oslo: Ad Notam, 1998.

2 Bjørge (1997) has discussed the difference between anti-Islam conspiracy theories and anti-Semitic theories in more detail.

3 The concept of leaderless resistance originated with the American Ku Klux Klan figure Louis Beam and was popularised in William Pierce's novel *Hunter*. (Kaplan 1997) gives a detailed overview of the origin and development of the leaderless resistance concept.

4 A song by the Norwegian white power rock band *Norske Legion*; Norwegian Legion.

5 Their heroes are almost exclusively men, since the organisation is dominated by men. 'The cult of the heroes and martyrs perpetuates the mythology of a "brotherhood in arms", in which extreme manliness retains its centrality to group identification'. So far, we have not seen

marches in honour of certain heroes in Norway, nor is it common among Norwegian activists to celebrate the birthdays of Hitler, Robert Matthews or Norwegian war heroes. The few vagu trials that have taken place in Norway have mostly ended up in tragicomic circumstances, lik the time three people went to Quisling's grave in order to honour his birthday. One of them ha announced the occasion to the Norwegian telegram bureau beforehand, but on the day, onl two of them dared to go. They had forgotten to bring with them flowers or anything whic would have turned the event into a ceremony. When participating in Nazi marches in Swede or Denmark, Norwegian activists generally get drunk, and do not contribute to their Nordi fellow-activists' attempts to make these events into highly-disciplined gestures of power. A a consequence, the picture neighbour countries often have of the Norwegian activists is on of jolly comrades who are not serious. In recent years, some activists have actively opposed thi picture, acting soberly and disciplined on such occasions.

6 In his analysis of Nazism, Ofstad (1989: 55-56) points out that the trend was rather that Hitle never was explicit. He never gave the order to 'kill all Jews', rather he spoke of the '*Endlösung*'. According to Ofstad, the responsibility for decision-making in the Nazi system was marked b 'distance to reality', which would be the opposite of actually 'saying it right out'.

7 Another example of this is the saying in *Bootboys* No. 1992 that the truth about the origina English skinheads was that 'they hated everybody!'.

8 Their idealisation of maleness has also qualities similar to the male images typical of Nazism. Within Nazism, men should be strong, they should have courage, and they should be able t fight. Men should be unsentimental, demanding, and creative. A real man could not have an deep contact with women. Real men should only have contact with men, as in the SS and othe male Nazi groupings. Real men were bound together by comradeship and by loyalty to thei leader. In this sense, being Nazi, meant being strong and male. For a more detailed discussio of the construction of masculinity among right-wing skinheads, see (Fangen 1998b).

9 *Blood and Honor* is also the name of a militant skinhead magazine, started by the forme Skrewdriver vocalist Ian Stuart.

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## **A Death Mask of Masculinity -- The Brotherhood of Norwegian Right-Wing Skinheads Katrine Fangen**

At a party arranged by the right-wing skinhead subculture in Norway, a band is playing, and young men gather in front of the stage. Some men are drunk, and have difficulty standing upright. From time to time, the men stretch out their right arm in a salute to the band. Some men bang their heads, and others hold their arms around each other. One boy pushes another into the mass, stumbles and falls, and is stamped on by the others. A friend pulls him out of the mass and he stands confused. Later in the evening, several boys remove their T-shirts, revealing their bare upper bodies, tattooed with Vikings and nationalist symbols.

At the first glance, this symbiosis of community and violence might seem like a dislocated and archaic construction of masculinity. For example, Clarke (1976) talks of the skinhead subculture as the magical recovery of past working-class community. Willis (1977), on the other hand, sees racism and violence as distinct parts of working-class young people's counterculture in school. It is common for both of these writers and the other researchers from the so-called Birmingham school of youth research (CCCS: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) to see racism and violence as distinct parts of the "shop-floor culture." They say that the original working-class communities have been broken up, and that working-class young people reconstruct different features of what they imagine to be typically working-class by their subcultural participation. Such subcultures constitute a bricolage where elements from different origins are brought together to produce a new unity, expressing a protest against society, but at the same time reproducing core values of their own class. According to the CCCS researchers, class is still a major structure which serves to distinguish people, and they show that protest subcultures might express conflicts hidden in contemporary society, especially processes of unequal opportunities for young people.

The thesis of class as a major structuring principle in the selection of who will succeed within the school system, and who will not, is supported by the extensive quantitative research of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) and their colleagues. The claim to take responsibility for one's own life, which opens up many possibilities, might in many respects be considered a myth rather than a reality. There are still considerable class differences in the range of possible choices, the school often being more important as the very institution that selects the already privileged from the already excluded, than as an institution supporting equal opportunities for everyone. This holds true for more clear-cut class societies like France and the UK, but as shown by Jørgensen (1994), some of these processes are highly relevant also in Norway. Young men who act aggressively, who drop out of school, and who commit violence or express antagonism against foreigners might be understood also, as shown in the studies of Willis (1977) and Hebdige (1979), as constructing an image of working-class masculinity.

This thesis stands somewhat in contrast to the way Giddens (1991) and Ziehe (1981) describe the processes of individualization and self-actualization, as being typical of late modernity. Ziehe uses the term individualization to point to the current emphasis on the responsibility of the individual to construct an identity. As Ziehe describes this process, tradition and class no longer determine the identity of young people. They become responsible for their own choices more than ever before. This

leads to an intensified vulnerability in young people, but, on the other hand, it provides them with a hitherto unknown freedom to choose their own lifestyles. According to Ziehe, this process might be achieved by cultural experimentation, that is, using the modern to create something new. Another solution is to become neo-conservative by idealizing the past. Here, Ziehe's argument is parallel to the CCCS researchers' interpretation of skinheads as recovering a class identity that no longer has a material basis, and therefore must be communicated in a symbolic way. The skinheads idealize a lumpen identity (Hebdige, 1979) and they create what Clarke (1976) interprets as a magical recovery of community.

Giddens (1991) does indeed see class as a structuring principle in late modernity, although in his discussion of self-identity and the consequences for the individual of modernity, class seems to be less important. According to Giddens, the uttermost consequences of modernity hit us harder than ever before. Our era is defined by a heightened risk and at the same time a threat to the feeling of ontological security and trust. Identity is not something passively inherited from one generation to another, but rather it has the quality of being a project which continuously must be constructed and reconstructed during the life-span. Since changes between life-phases are no longer regulated by ceremonies, an important task of the individual is to tackle the identity crisis that life offers. The popularity of self-therapy books and courses are, according to Giddens, a mark of the centrality of this aspect of mastering such threats to the feeling of a congruent self and the feeling of ontological security.

Ziehe, like Giddens, rejects the view that we are living in a postmodern society. According to Ziehe, modernity creates a horizon of possibilities, as the individual is expected to choose and form his or her own life and identity. This also leads to insecurity. As with Giddens's focus on the individual working toward self-actualisation, Ziehe pays most of his attention to youths who creatively (in the aesthetic sense of the term) use the diversity of lifestyle choices in their cultural experimentation. A failure in the discussions of both Giddens and Ziehe is that they do not focus much on the importance of class in defining who is profiting in this rapidly changing and highly pluralistic era.

Class still plays a major factor in distinguishing between those who successfully profit from the break with traditions, and those who are more directly hit by the insecurity of our time. Bourdieu shows that the view that school and education are democratic institutions that provide all youths with equal opportunities, is totally wrong. On the contrary, the education system is the very system that serves to select those already privileged, from those who already were excluded from the dominant classes. This finding is supported by ethnographic studies from the CCCS, such as Willis's study of counter-school-culture, and by Norwegian studies like Jørgensen (1994).

The problem with studies such as the one by Willis is not the failure to recognize the significance of class, but rather the failure to recognize the complexity of masculinity, and how class today is constructed in diverse ways. As shown by Connell (1995), working-class boys may often come from more postmodern families, in the sense that the mother is the breadwinner, than do middle-class boys, and boys with almost equal backgrounds may construct their "working classness" in a multitude of ways, many of them breaking with traditional expectations of what it means to be working class.

In Willis's study, racism is seen as one important quality of the proletarian "shop-floor culture". Connell shows that many other qualities are present in the various ways through which working-class identity might be constructed. Deterministic



socialization theories fail to show the more paradoxical expressions of class. Also, as pointed out by Connell, many working-class boys today do not orient themselves toward a future on the shop-floor. Many of them face a future marked by unemployment, and therefore they stay within their subcultural lifestyle project which gives no hope for future working-class jobs, or they orient themselves toward educated middle-class jobs. Racism might of course be prevalent in all classes, but is perhaps most directly expressed within the working-class. A study by Pedersen (1996) shows that working-class young people express more prejudices toward foreigners than do middle-class young people. It is possible, however, that the racism of the middle-class is not shown up in a survey.

According to Bauman (1991), racism is a feature of modernity, whereas postmodernity is marked by tolerance. The project of modernity is to rule out ambivalence, and within such a project the Holocaust was the most tragic expression of the modern world. The modern idea of equality means that everything which is not equal must either be assimilated, deported or exterminated. Bauman, in contrast to Ziehe and Giddens, is talking of current society as being postmodern, but at the same time he says that modernity is still with us (p. 270). In Bauman's view, what is new in the current era, is that we are now able to look at modernity from a distance, discovering the impossibility of modernity. In these terms, racist youth subcultures such as the community of right-wing skinheads represent those who still believe in modernity, those who do not want to accept the possibility of living with ambivalence. By celebrating a rigid division between us and them, right-wing skinheads actively reject the more "postmodern" identity projects of individuals who accept the diversity and ambivalence of multiple belongings.

My analysis is inspired by Connell, Wetherell and others who see masculinity as something men negotiate in ongoing situations. A boy is not passively transformed into a man. Rather, *all through his life he has to construct and reconstruct his sense of maleness as resolution to dilemmas concerning expectations from others (both men and women) and concerning the power relations he enters.* According to Connell, masculinity is a set of choices about what to wear, what to look like, and how to behave in social situations. Even though females constitute about a third of this subculture,<sup>1</sup> it seems that, in many ways, it is male-dominated and defined. Since I have analyzed the social project of right-wing females elsewhere, to reveal the gendered quality of the identity project of these skinheads, I will now analyze how the male participants of the subculture verbalize the aspect of being a "real man," and I will present an interpretation of certain situations in which they actively construct their versions of masculinity.

By using this analytical frame as a guide for what to look for, I will ask what signals right-wing males give to the outside world by the clothes they wear, by the way they relate to each other, by the way they walk, and more explicitly by the words they use to define themselves in contrast to other men. According to Connell's terminology, right-wing skinheads might be considered a version of marginalized masculinity. In another essay, I discuss the life histories of some of these young men. They come from the working class or the lower part of the *petite bourgeois*. In terms of their own occupation, they are all either working-class or unemployed, living on the dole. They are quite similar to the men discussed by Connell under the heading "live fast and die young." Like such men, they have no expectation of the kind of stable employment around which working-class family life earlier was organized. In this way, they differ from "the lads" described by Paul Willis: they do not participate in a violent, racist counterculture as a preparation for a work-life on the shopfloor, rather

they participate because they see no future in the working market. Their participation in a counterculture provides their life with the excitement, community and feeling of honor that they cannot find elsewhere.

My aim is to find out what kind of masculinity they are negotiating, and more generally how a right-wing skinhead male is "made." What should he look like and how should he act, in order to fit in with the others? The way these young males construct their social identity as white "nationalist" men is simultaneously a response to the way people outside their own collective define and react to them. Identity is always defined in contrast to those one does not identify with. However, as pointed out by recent social constructionist writers, most persons belong to many different social categories, and might often feel contradictions within themselves as a result of diverging constraints that their manifold belongings lead to.

When putting some of these lines of thought together, we could say that in the course of modernity masculinity has been questioned, partly as a result of the critiques put forward by the women's movement. At the same time, the working class has continuously been changing. The orientation of people has evolved from collectivism toward individualism. The ritualized version of masculinity among right-wing skinheads is one possible solution to modern dilemmas. The skinhead part of the right-wing subculture can be understood as one typical example of the crisis within masculinity, described by several authors. Connell (1995) speaks of a crisis in the gender order as a whole, with implications for masculinities. This crisis may provoke attempts to restore a dominant masculinity. Theweleit (1987) interprets the sexual politics of Fascism in this way. Gibson (1994) has described similar processes in his study of "paramilitary culture."

In other words, ritualized, dominant, violent forms of masculinity can be interpreted not only as ancient masculinities, displaced in modern society. Rather one can see them as distinct solutions to the dilemmas of modern societies, and the processes of individualization leading to ontological insecurity and the need to cope with the threats against a congruent self-feeling. Such ritualizations are seen in the skinhead dance, drinking, pain, and so on. In this way, a feeling of ontological security is created, which partly takes the form of being a feeling or experience of having an identity. It is the feeling of the lack of identity which leads to various attempts to ritualize and thus bind masculinity. These attempts might take perverse forms, and thus lead to a death-mask of masculinity.

This article examines the ritualized ways in which Norwegian right-wing skinheads construct masculinity. The analysis is based upon material gathered from one year of participant observation during 1993-94, interviews from the period 1993-97, and written material about right-wing skinheads.

## **The verbalization of an archetypal honor ideal**

### **Images of skinheads vs. middle-class men**

The clear-cut division between us and them is seen in the way that right-wing skinheads define their own subculture:

The skinhead movement emerged among white, national workers in England -- not among international students and "self-haters"! Skinheads represent white pride and -- in contrast to punks, most skinheads have ordinary work. The styles

are also different, as the punks look like a ... Christmas tree ..., whereas skinheads dress like militant workers! Workers that are neither communists nor anarchists (*Einherjer*, No. 1, 1996).

In this way, the skinheads link honor to the social categories with which they define themselves, and invert other categories into representing self-hatred. Thus, being white, being working-class, being militant, being national, and -- as might be seen as an internal contrast to some of the former -- being ordinary, are all aspects of being honorable. This contrast being being something else, militant rebels or warriors, and at the same time being ordinary, one of the people, is typical of the way in which right-wing skinheads present themselves. Broad categories, such as race and nation, provide them with honor, and make them winners (warriors), rather than losers (victims). By being aggressors, they are assured of not being victims. This self-identity is contrasted to their definition of men with education and international experience. The latter have an ethos more different from themselves than anyone else. In addition, such men are those who have the power to define right-wing skinheads negatively, for example in terms of social inability. To redefine the power of these men becomes crucial for right-wing skinheads. Therefore, they invert the aspect of being international and educated into being a self-hater, being a man who suppresses his instincts. Middle-class men in this way are identified as weaklings, whereas working-class men represent true masculinity.

The problem of people today is going from words to deed! What right do they have to criticise and judge us, these pigs [de svina] who only think of filling their stomachs! It is the foremost men of action who are really free and alive! ... What people in general only slightly dare to admit to themselves we shout out in the street! In the street, we must fight because that is where the real reality is! A reality which the politician pigs and the couch potatoes think only exists in movies! People accuse skins of being rowdy, but we only claim our right: WHITE POWER! (*Ragnarok*, 1993).

This quotation also redefines true men as men who act and who fight. Men who always stay inside, middle-class men, are unable to contest their status to know anything of "the real reality," the reality of the street. This is in line with Bourdieu (1993) saying that masculinity, defined in terms of physical strength (body capital), is the ground pillar of the identity of the dominated classes. These young men exaggerate their abilities in the sphere of bodily action because their power to define is lacking. To tackle the vulnerability they feel as not fitting into the hegemonic areas of society, the feeling of bodily management (Giddens, 1991) becomes crucial.

The emphasis on the warrior image might, however, seem to be a kind of dislocated masculinity image in today's Western societies. However, as pointed out by Morgan (1994, p. 165), the warrior, despite far-reaching political, social and technological changes, still seems to be a key symbol of masculinity, as shown in its central place in films. Dominating the street by means of physical force is a way to achieve power and dignity. "TV-slaves" represent femininity only partly because they do not partake in the contest of masculinity which is played out in the street. The association of "men of action" with the street indirectly defines the antithesis of the street versus the home; the latter is distinguished as the feminine sphere, and thus men

who stay at home (even though they watch TV rather than cook) are unmanly men. This point is also highlighted by Back (1994) in his study of racist youths in Britain. For them, he argues, the home symbolizes the feminine sphere and a social boundness. It is important to add here a point made by Nancy Cott (in Brod, 1994, p. 88) that such constructions of geographically separated male and female spheres are ideological constructions, not distinct physical sites.

### **The Vikings - or the ethos of real men**

Another way that right-wing skinheads conceptualize the ethos of “real men,” and thus legitimize their own brute masculinity, is by referring to the conduct of the ancient Nordic Vikings. The Vikings serve particularly well to illuminate the link between brute masculinity and honor:

Fighting today costs, and everyone must sacrifice something. Those who are at the front-line must receive all the support they need! WE MUST STAY TOGETHER; OUR BROTHERHOOD IS HOLY! We are hated and loved, comrades. We live like real Vikings at any rate! Stand up and continue the fight. Sooner or later we will be strong! (*Ragnarok*)<sup>2</sup>

To fight, to be hated by others, and to stay together in a tight brotherhood -- this is their image of how the Vikings behaved.<sup>3</sup> In their view the Vikings were strong because they stayed together and supported each other, because they fought their enemies, and because they sacrificed their personal interests for those of the group. Left alone, even a Viking might be vulnerable. Together with his comrades, however, he will (sooner or later) be strong. According to one skinhead, writing in the skinhead fanzine *Bootboys* (1992),<sup>4</sup> the moral rules of Hávamál are as current today as they were “for our ancestors during their era.” Hávamál serves as a guide for how real men should behave:

For one’s friend, one shall be friend; for him and his friend, but for the foe’s friend, no man shall ever be a friend.<sup>5</sup>

This is a brutal image of the world. Others are either friends or enemies, there are no categories in between. Seeing the world in this way, it becomes crucial that friends stick together and support each other. If one cannot trust one’s friends, then one cannot trust anybody. The threat of one’s own friends cheating is therefore the worst threat of all, as the only thing one can be sure of is that enemies are enemies. That friends are friends, however, is not always true, and must, accordingly, be demanded again and again, as in the earlier quotation stating that “we must stick together.” Joining forces against those who are against them means diminishing personal differences and disagreements between them. This is in line with the way Bauman conceptualizes the differences between the categories friend, enemy and stranger. There is a logical interdependence between the first two categories: “There would be no enemies were there no friends, and there would be no friends if not for the yawning

abyss of enmity outside” (Bauman, 1991, p. 53). This point is very significant for right-wing skinheads. One of them once told me that he did not count any of the other skinheads as friends, but in his fanzine, he often refers to the importance of comradeship within the movement. In other words, there are no real friendships between them, and the only way their comradeship can be realized is by joining forces against their enemies. This is also in line with Bauman (1991, p. 54), who points out that enemies are called into being by the pragmatics of struggle.

As a consequence, the most respected skinhead is the one who joins the ongoing combat with their enemies, who defends the others if attacked, and who is constantly aware of possible enemies wanting to split them, spy on them, or attack them. One ideal among right-wing skinheads is the militant who knows how to handle weapons, and who lets his militant actions be guided more by his ideology or strategic considerations than by his emotions. The headless fighter who is constantly getting beaten up because he is incautious is not an admired figure among them. In contrast, they admire those who manoeuvre underground beyond the view of outsiders, hide from the police, or escape when caught. Actions aimed at the whole group should be secretive, such as when a leading skinhead arranges a secret meeting or a trip without the police or the anti-fascists getting to know when and where it will take place. To master various aspects of secret behavior is important. In this way, right-wing skinheads achieve honor by being invisible, by being able to hide.

### **Behavior in public - messages to the outside world**

Traditionally, men achieve honor through being visible to the gaze of others (Gilmore, 1990). Right-wing skinheads by their very outlook are very visible to the gaze of others. This gaze provides them with a sense of honor, even when it is marked by contempt or fear. Skinheads moving together in a group, walking straight down the middle of the street, are signalling that they “own” it. By behaving like this they are looking the enemy in the eye, confronting him in the street, and standing up to his insults. Using physical force is a way of ensuring that such face-to-face interactions with opponents are resolved honorably. In fact, even to get “beaten up” is in a sense honorable, as skinheads use such events to prove that they can take it like a man.

When the skinheads defended their house in Treschowsstreet against the police and the demonstrating anarchists in 1995, they wore skinhead uniforms, used Norwegian flags, and gave fascist salutes. This backdrop was clearly created in order to communicate certain messages to their outsiders. Their aim was to shock and provoke, and, more generally, to produce a contrast, a frightening image. They managed to be recognized by others, as the press gave them extensive attention. As participants in the underground, they are sure to get negatively defined attention, marked by fear and contempt rather than admiration. Nevertheless, this provides right-wing skinheads with self-confidence and a sense of being part of something important.

### **The importance of combat**

In public situations, combat situations or collective scenes, right-wing skinheads act with self-confidence and pride. By contrast, when gathered in private, with nothing particular happening, just sitting together waiting for the next “peak experience” (Lindholm, 1990), they look bored, lacking in confidence, generally unpleasant. It is

combat that provides them with honor -- outdoors is the only place where they can prove their manliness. This view of masculinity as being defined by the mastering of the street is a view consciously taken by the ideologists of the underground, as shown in the earlier quotation of the contrast between middle-class and working-class men. In the streets the ideal of the fighting hero can be reconstructed, and all the other established rules (or hegemonic masculinities) (Connell, 1987) are set aside. A rich man with a wife and powerful position is not in command of anything when he walks down the street and meets an angry crowd of skinheads. Right-wing skinheads adhere to a lifestyle which provides them with power comparable even to the real men of power in society, because they know that if they wanted to they would be able to control these people in the reality of the street.

## **A lifestyle of intimidation**

### **Uniforms and group conformity**

To enter the right-wing underground is to take up a lifestyle based on a threatening appearance. Although there are minor differences, the appearance of the group members seems highly uniform to outsiders. External conformity protects the individual participants in the same way that any uniform does, by hiding their individuality, inner feelings and thoughts. By looking alike, they are a group, and can act accordingly. Thus, when attacking others they can rely on the morality of the group, without taking into account their own private moral standards. Being part of the underground means that the barriers against which actions the single person may commit are moved many steps away from what would have been the case prior to participation.

The dress itself has connotations of brutality. Shaven skull, heavy Doc Martens boots, "bomber" jackets, camo jeans, Viking symbols and tattoos; all these elements serve to build up an aggressive version of masculinity. The skinhead style also connotes working classness (Hebdige, 1979). Those participants who dress like skinheads are aware of this. They point out, for example, that Doc Martens boots are not military boots, as often described, but working boots made to last. Some wear studded "killing boots" which make them extra dangerous in fights.

The shaven head, either completely shaven, or with just a couple of millimetres left, also connotes brutality. They use the completely shaven head as a mark of aggression. One leading figure who usually preferred to leave a slight crest of hair on his skull once showed up with his head shaven to the bone. I asked him why he had done it. Looking angry, he just said "as a reaction." The impression he gave was one of much more hate than usual. From what he said, I gathered that to shave the head entirely was a reaction against things in his life at that time, which were hard for him to handle. Right-wing skinheads are often called "boneheads" by their opponents, because they shave their heads more than left-wing skinheads. Shaving the head gives a more brutish look and leaves nothing for an opponent to grab hold of in a fight. Some skinheads associate long hair with femininity. They tease the few right-wing activists who have long hair, and call them "girls".<sup>6</sup>

Tattoos are a part of the style meant to communicate masculinity. Merely being tattooed is seen as being tough. As a leading right-wing skinhead explains, the pain which comes with being tattooed marks the barrier one has to cross, reflecting that one is willing to remain loyal to the underground in the future. Belonging to a skinhead

group is a conviction which lies in your heart, he said, and which you have to stand for later in life as well. Tattoos are marks of commitment; they cannot be taken off like items of clothing. According to this man, being a “real skinhead” means that “you can’t just wear the boots when you go out with your skinhead friends.” If you are a skinhead, you are a full-time skinhead, and this aspect is assured by the use of tattoos. To have large parts of the body covered with tattoos is also a mark that one has been a member of the underground for a long time. Leading skinheads have most parts of their upper body covered in tattoos. In order to show off the tattoos to the other men, it is usual for them to remove their T-shirts during concerts. The musicians themselves remove their T-shirts. Doing this may be understood as a ritual greeting from man to man, letting the body confirm their commitment through its tattoos, and also through its muscles, serving as a proof of manliness.

### **The beer culture**

Another aspect of the skinhead lifestyle is what the skinhead calls “beer culture.” Meeting comrades at the pub is, in his eyes, an integral part of the working-class lifestyle. When drinking a lot, skinheads become more excited, and late at night noisy quarrels are common. Some skinheads accept the fact that one is more easily provoked when drunk, and may initiate fights more frequently. The ideal, however, is that one is able to drink a lot but still control one’s body. The man who “gets pissed” is not reckoned to be manly by right-wing skinheads, and those who frequently lose control through drunkenness are ridiculed by the others. Drunkenness also often leads to exaggerated sentimentality. For example, one of the leading skinheads, when he is drunk, tells others how much he likes them, and exaggerates the content of his message so much that it borders on the pathetic. This kind of sentimentality is also seen in right-wing males watching Second World War movies with huge parades, as they sit weeping together because of how great it all was.

Some right-wing males have less sense of this kind of drunken sentimentality, honoring instead the ability to stay sober and disciplined. In their eyes, drunken skinheads are not serious, and might bring harm to the underground by their uncontrolled, raucous street violence. Committing violence without it being noticed is in their eyes more honorable than fighting the enemy eye-to-eye in the street. Some skinheads take the opposite view: they consider fighting bare-fisted facing an opponent to be more honest and just than underground acts committed out of the sight of others.

### **The lack of empathy -- “horny on violence”**

Ray (1972) states that Australian neo-Nazis lack the ability to show empathy with -- and, moreover, the feeling of pleasure regarding -- the pains of others. This tendency is also prevalent among Norwegian right-wing skinheads. Ray considers that this feature is prevalent among most people, and he uses the faces of the audience at boxing matches as proof. However, what defines the fascist, according to Ray, is his acceptance of these sentiments, even taking a pride in them. Similarly, Theweleit (1987) has produced an illuminating report on men in the German storm-troops describing their enormous desire to see blood flowing. Seeing the result of a massacre

aroused pleasurable feelings, and the will to act violently may be due to the fact that the violence itself produces desire.

Such sentiments are clearly present among some right-wing skinheads. A female activist once explained a severe violent act committed by two male skinheads as the result of their being “horny on violence.” I have seen skinheads laugh and amuse themselves when seeing people suffer from hunger on television. On the other hand, the skinheads do not dwell on the result of their own violence. There is a code among them that when a victim falls to the ground they must stop kicking him. This is not always the case. Sometimes only one skinhead attacks, but there are also incidents where several others follow the initiator, collectively hitting and kicking one person. Usually, they kick an enemy until he falls, and then run away, giving no consideration to the long- or short-term injuries they have inflicted upon him. The consequences of their violence become diffuse for them.

On the few occasions when they have had to face their victim afterwards, they do not show much empathy. Once when they had beaten up a person from their rival group, the police immediately afterwards caught them and confronted them with the victim, who was to point out which of them had beaten him. Afterwards, a skinhead retold the event. “He was so badly injured, he couldn’t even point,” he explained. With a grimace, he tried to illustrate how the victim sat there trying to point with his arm, but unable to do so. Apparently, the event did not arouse any feelings of empathy for the pain the man must have felt. On the contrary, he found it amusing.

### **Revenge and rebellion**

However, for the skinheads, the injuries and pain inflicted on their victims even out, as they frequently get beaten up themselves. They define their own violence as revenge or self-defense, depending on the situation. To participate in a gang fight is almost always interpreted as being just and therefore honorable, probably because they are then acting as a group, and on behalf of the group. Revenge might be defined in a very broad sense. When, for example, a politician participates in anti-racist campaigns, this is seen as an initiative on the part of the system directed against right-wing skinheads. Hence, to attack the house of this politician is another version of revenge. Most acts of violence against political opponents seem to be defined as legitimate and honorable among them. However, they also have ideas of what kind of violence they do not approve of. They do not define beating up single persons or “innocents” (people who are not politically involved) as being honorable. However, if this should happen despite the norm, they often reinterpret it afterwards as a sad result of the effects an oppressive system has on its brave fighters:

Egil: Our rebellion is a product of the system. We occasionally attack people on their own, but this is a result of the politics of the system ... Terror is all the violence carried out by the system, which we don’t even notice. That’s terror, the rest is a struggle for liberation.

To be a rebel or a revolutionary who opposes the very system seems to be the most honorable profile, as this quotation might illustrate. In accordance with other kinds of terrorists, right-wing skinheads equate their more severe violence with a struggle for



liberation and not as terrorism. In this way they explicitly counteract society's common definitions of them, and present alternative interpretations. They prefer others to see them as victims of destiny rather than as evil authoritarians. In this way, they can neutralize their violence as a production of the "system" -- its class-structures, bad environments and so on. In contrast to common people, they dare to fight the unjust Authorities. Here we see an association between violence and honesty. To live out the hatred means being honest, being authentic. They do not suppress their aggression against the suppressing structures; in contrast, they live it out. Violence in this sense is a free-floating energy. This is interesting in the light of Reich's (1972) theory of fascism as a blocking of sexual energies. In the self-interpretation of right-wing skinheads, it is the blocking of the aggressive energies of the common people which is pathological. Hence, in their eyes, to live out violent drives is something desirable (Theweleit, 1987). This feature is described in several studies of youth violence (Willis, 1977), and is also acknowledged in group psychology (Le Bon, 1896): "When individuals come together in a group, their individual inhibitions fall away and all the cruel, brutal and destructive instincts, which lie dormant ... are stirred up and find free gratification."

## **The avoidance of femininity**

### **Masculine ideals**

It is indeed a brute masculinity that attracts young boys into the right-wing underground. Their masculinity is brutish, as they describe "real men" as those who act rather than those who speak, and those who fight rather than those who move aside. This image of masculinity stands in contrast to their understanding of softness, weakness, or sometimes more explicitly, femininity. A gentle attitude is something skinheads regard with suspicion, whereas force is something they respect. For male skinheads this underground world dominated by masculine ideals is a safe island in the sense that it provides them with self-confidence. One leading activist reports that a trend is for the boys have few or no contacts with girls before entering the underground. It is the male community that fascinates them and leads them to join it. The accepting attitude of older males, and their willingness to give the young newcomers positions of responsibility, lead newcomers into ecstatic enthusiasm in the first phase of their participation. Several male skinheads have told me that this milieu was the first one in which they felt really welcome. It was here that they developed a sense of importance. In the first phase, it is the feeling of being included by elder, well-known activists which is important to them. Later on, most males try to establish their own agendas within the underground, and in more or less overt ways oppose the dominance of the eldest activists. In this latter phase, they are usually more self-confident, making contact with the girls participating in the underground and being more prepared to engage romantically with them.

### **Relations to women**

In some respects, then, these male skinheads seem to fit the picture Theweleit (1987) draws of fascist men who participated in the free-corps in Germany prior to the Second World War. According to Theweleit, these freebooters feared women and accordingly idealized the male community based to a great extent on brutality. One conclusion we can draw from Theweleit's extensive analysis, is that when men lack the ability to relate to women in an equal way, the way they dare experience intimacy is more one-sidedly brutal. Therefore, the way the men relate to women is an important measure of their degree of brutality.

In the Norwegian right-wing underground, some male skinheads espouse the view that women ought not to participate in the underground, because they destroy the combat by their sensitivity. At events such as concerts and confrontations, some male skinheads tend to exclude their partners. Often, women remain in the background area at such events, so that the area in front of the stage or the front-line during attacks is occupied solely by males. Norwegian male activists change between total acceptance of the women, saying they are willing to include them in all actions, even saying that some of them are more serious and reliable than many of the men, *and* dividing women uncritically into the Madonna/whore icon. They divide "their own girls" into those who are "straight," and thus suitable as love partners and fellow-combatants, and those who are "mattresses" and thus only suitable as sexual objects and as tagalongs. Most of the leading males have established love relationships. In the original English skinhead subculture, according to Clarke (1976), establishing a love relationship usually meant breaking ties with the male-dominated skinhead community. Girls therefore could only function as tagalongs, the males treating them with extreme chauvinism. In some regards, then, the Norwegian male right-wing skinheads are more pro-women than the original skinheads described by Theweleit. They do not operate with as strict a distinction between the all-pure, almost asexual nurse-sister, and the dangerous sexuality ascribed to their hate object, the proletarian woman, who is not even worthy of serving as a "mattress." They do not demand that their partners should be all-pure idealized objects staying out of the battle. In this regard, they are more similar to the communist men described by Theweleit, in that they can become fellow-combatants by behaving in a masculine manner. The men accept women as long as they are able to live up to the ideals of staying calm, controlling their feelings and being able to deal with weapons.

### **The combative woman**

In the anthropological literature, honor is usually described in terms of competition between dominant men and the passive subordination of women (Lindisfarne, 1994). Typically, women are not felt to be capable of protecting their own honor. Consequently, men must protect women's honor. A common trend is that women's honor is defined solely in terms of sexuality (as a contrast to purity). There are indications that female virginity is important in the Norwegian underground, as both male and female activists tend to divide their fellow females into either straight or mattress. A woman activist has to be straight in order to be taken seriously. There have been occasions when a male skinhead has knocked another one down for kissing his girlfriend. Usually it is not the girlfriend who has offended her partner, but rather the other male. In other words, honor can be achieved only between men.

However, as Lindisfarne argues, the picture is often much more complex than this, and usually several roles are available for both men and women. Right-wing

subcultures are usually interpreted as extreme areas in regard to these features. Yet, it is not the passive, pure, subordinate woman who is pictured in Norwegian right-wing fanzines, but rather the female fellow-combatant who acts aggressively. The boys idealize various types of combative women (Fangen, 1997). The women themselves idealize the image of the combative woman, and accept the male, militant values of the underground. In other words, they do not provide a feminine impact that would diminish the underground's brutal potential. These women also want to achieve power through militancy, and undergo, for example, weapons training along with the men (Fangen, 1997). Therefore, the women also construct the picture of a community dominated by aggressive masculine ideals. Nevertheless, they also contribute with a distinctive feminine impact, by defining certain "women's issues" as being important to them, such as fighting prostitution, abortion and pornography, and "securing the future for our children and for girls in the movement" (*ibid.*)

### **The link between homosexuality and neo-Nazism**

The right-wing women support militant practices, but so far have taken part "in the front-line" only to a minor extent. Therefore the movement does not differ much from the traditional view that "combat and military experience separate men from women while binding men to men" (Morgan, 1994, p. 166). When talking about community and comradeship, these right-wing men most often think in terms of male community and male comradeship. The way they conceptualize their heroes is in many ways an idealization and romanticization of maleness, and it is the male hero they pay homage to. The way these men behave at concerts, standing tightly together, sometimes even holding their arms around each other, pulling off their T-shirts, standing with their naked upper body, has led outsiders to question whether the community of these young men is based on homosexual desires. Second World War Nazism has been interpreted by several authors in this way (Reich, 1972; Mosse, 1985; Theweleit, 1987; Nissen, 1946; Becker, 1946). The issue of the existence of a congruence between neo-Nazism and homosexuality has been made plausible because some male leaders of neo-Nazi groups, like Michael Kühnen, have been homosexuals. In Norway, one of the leading figures of the 1980s neo-Nazi movement was a bisexual. The neo-Nazi leader Michael Kühnen (who died from AIDS) openly argued that homosexuals were especially useful for the movement, because they did not quit as a result of developing a relationship with a woman (Husbands, 1993).

Aware of the plausibility of such a view about their community, the link between homosexuality and Nazism was one of the first issues that right-wing skinheads brought up and tried to explain to me when I started my fieldwork in August 1993. Their response was that the issue was relevant, and that in the Norwegian underground too there had been homosexual participants. Some of the skinheads were still befriended by them, but in another setting they could just as easily beat up a homosexual. Several of the males emphasized that "I have no such tendencies" and "I like girls." When I asked if they had something against homosexuals, they either said that "no, most of the guys in this milieu are tolerant" or that "we like neither gays nor lesbians. Homosexuality is against the Law of Nature." They recited some cruel jokes about homosexuals, and some of their fanzines include satire on presumably homosexual participants of the underground.

Using homosexuality as a way to weaken the Other is a mode well-known in all hypermasculine communities like outlaw motorbike-clubs (Bay, 1989), and was also

an integral part of Nazi ideology and practice. When used in this way, the homosexual has the quality of being a stranger in the sense Bauman (1991, p. 55) gives this term. You cannot know whether or not your friend is homosexual, and accordingly, you do not know whether or not your enemy is a homosexual. It is exactly the indeterminant aspect of homosexuality that makes it threatening to a community ruled by the friend/enemy dichotomy.

### **Teasing as confirmation and intimidation of masculinity**

The association with homosexuality is threatening to the right-wing skinhead community because it weakens the connotation between masculinity and strength.<sup>7</sup> Male skinheads associate homosexuality with femininity, which again is associated with weakness and deviance. Being a fag is understood as being the opposite of a real male. Male skinheads call another man "fag" to dishonor him.<sup>8</sup> Once a skinhead who was well acquainted with the underground, but who did not play a leading role within it, was teased by a younger activist who had just entered the group. The younger man said to the other "You look like you enjoy being fucked in the ass." The other one replied "Yes, I do, but I enjoy being taken in the front even more." "But you," he added, "you look like a girl, with that long hair!" "No, it's not girlish to have long hair," replied the younger man. "Oh yes it is," added one of the younger man's own friends. The younger man became irritated and launched a long tirade of insults against the older skinhead, calling him fag in all sorts of ways. The older skinhead did not deign to respond. He just left the table and began playing billiards. He was the winner anyway, as the younger man's friends had supported him, so there was no need to continue the quarrel.

In contests such as this, one could say that the men sexualize each other. This kind of "kidding" is interpreted by Frøberg (forthcoming) as relation-work between men. It might also be interpreted as an honor game (Bay, 1989).

### **The honors and dishonors of the brotherhood**

#### **External and internal threats**

The community among right-wing skinheads becomes a tense, aggressive unit against the outer world. The worst threat to this unity is not attacks from the outside -- on the contrary, these attacks are necessary if the solidarity among skinheads is to remain strong. The real threat is that this community consisting of many aggressive, bitter and frustrated men (this description of them was used by a leading skinhead) will split up as a result of internal strife. A split in their community is far more threatening than being attacked by rival groups from the outside.

This is also the reason why "traitors" are a continuous threat to their community. Several times leading skinheads have been accused of serving as informants for the police. Usually they try to reaffirm their innocence, but there are also incidents of some having this reputation for years without trying to prove otherwise. Such men, however, generally tend to loosen their bonds with the core of the underground in order to escape the pressure upon them.

Splits in the community occur, however, not just in such cases as police cooperation. Internal strife is frequent, often due to competition for status and respect, or by differing opinions on strategy. Although comradeship is the most worshipped ideal among them, the intimate comradeship based on mutual trust is more the exception than the rule. On the one hand, male skinheads say that the comradeship is the most attractive feature of the underground, and that they have never felt as accepted anywhere else as they have here. On the other hand, they say that the worst thing about the underground is the quarrels and strife.

### **Emotional tensions**

Directing aggressive feelings outwards is necessary if the antagonism which always lurks beneath the surface of the skinhead community is to be suppressed. Their community is not based on bonds that have grown naturally from a base of mutual sympathy and friendship. Rather, many of the men have entered this underground on their own initiative, without any prior knowledge of those associated with it. They do not have much in common, despite their mutual situation of being attached to an underground which makes people outside their community despise them, attack them, or spy on them. Partly because of pressure from the outside world, and partly because of their community being formed on grounds other than friendship, there is a lot of tension between them, and the ideals of comradeship are hard to realize. They often transform their frustration and suspicion of the outside world into frustration and distrust toward other skinheads. These tensions in turn sometimes lead to physical or verbal feuding between the men. They name-call each other in negative terms, or shout at each other. During the course of a single evening, laughing comrades often turn into silent strangers.

The way skinheads express comradeship often serves to show superiority of status. They commend each other by including one another in important events, praising each other in front of others, or by buying each other beer. However, as Bay (1989) points out, buying somebody a beer underlines the subordination of the recipient of the beer. The man who receives the beer is not supposed to reciprocate the action, and that would amount to challenging the status of the other. For example, a younger self-confident skinhead once borrowed money from one of the leading skinheads. When this older and more experienced skinhead later asked for his money back, the younger one merely bought him a beer, turning his back on him as if there were nothing more to discuss. Although the beer was worth only a fourth of the amount he owed, by acting in this manner he clearly opposed the leading status of the other man.

### **Comradeship and subordination**

This episode is understandable in light of the fact that an experienced skinhead might often ask others to buy him a beer. The alacrity with which the other does or does not do so reflects the degree to which the other skinhead accepts the experienced one as a person rightfully deserving of respect. Consequently, very young and inexperienced skinheads would feel honored by being asked to buy the older skinhead a beer. By contrast, more experienced skinheads would question the authority of the elder, answering his question with a laugh, or by ignoring it, and turning their backs on him, or by later demanding that he return the gesture.

Physical expressions of comradeship might also carry symbolic messages of subordination; for example, when one skinhead pushes another skinhead's head or nudges his shoulder. Skinheads who have more highly placed positions of leadership, despite the norm of equality, can be more physical than the others. One of the leading skinheads becomes quite intimate when he is drunk. He kisses and hugs the other men, puts his arm around them, or pulls their hoods over their heads. The others just shake their heads, look elsewhere, push him away gently, or look a bit sheepish when he puts his arm around them. The reactions of the others reflect the fact that these friendly approaches of his also contain an element of subordination. He confirms that he is the initiator, the one to make contact, the father figure, and his actions show them that they are of lower status. A younger skinhead with less status would not have approached the others in such a direct fashion. It is the leading skinhead who can transgress the boundaries. These actions of the leading figure might be seen as status rituals in the sense Goffman (1972) gives the term, the leading figure confirming through his behaviour that the others must defer to his status. The others more or less passively accept his conduct. By not accepting it too explicitly, they express some of the resentment or ambivalence with which they regard his authority.

### **The skinhead dance**

Another situation that reveals closeness, and at the same time subordination, is the skinhead dance. The dance is a blend of "stomping" (as the dance also is named) and "banging," as the men stamp the ground and bang their heads against each other. The dance looks like a fight, and can become very rough. It may be considered a way of being close without showing tender feelings. In this way, togetherness and intimacy can be simultaneously linked to aggression and masculinity. This kind of male interaction is a safe island for them, the rough way of expressing intimacy being easier to handle than other more gentle forms. Often a participant is wounded if he stumbles and falls and is stamped on by the feet of the other men.

This was the case when one of the younger skinheads linking arms with his friend, a leading skinhead, dragged him into the chaotic mob. The man being dragged stumbled and fell with the pressure, and was trampled on. Finally, someone managed to pull him out, but without his bag. Hunting everywhere for it, I later told him that he had lost it when he was drawn into the mass. This tale amazed him. He seemed proud that his friend had pushed him into the crowd, although he had been badly injured by the episode. This again is a case of a friend acting in a physical manner, but in a way which also pushes the other one down. Even though this skinhead was the one who was pushed down, he was happy about it. He accepted the injury because the event served to build up his masculinity. It was a manly way of being physical, a way that marked inclusion, and at the same time an expression of power.

This kind of brutal intimacy serves as an award, letting the other skinhead prove he can take the pain associated with the insult without any sign of weakness. Instead he is proud because he can take it with a smile. Back (1994) shows that it is expected that the person who is exposed to so-called wind-up rituals will take part in the laughter afterwards. In another situation he will be the one doing the winding up. The function of these rituals is to produce a common identity and to contest and modify the friendship. By not being offended by a wind-up, a skinhead implicitly shows that the other's play with him does not threaten the deference shown to him.

On other occasions younger skinheads might question the authority of an older skinhead more explicitly. A young skinhead once told an older one that "no one in this milieu respects you." The older skinhead promptly wanted to knock the younger one to the ground, replying, "I'll whip you with a chain." Such threats of violence between skinheads are not usually followed up in practice. Their function is to show in certain terms that the other should not dare to push the boundaries of authority any further.

These two examples also illuminate the ambivalence with which younger skinheads view the authority of their more experienced elders. For the most part, they have to subordinate themselves to the authority of the most experienced, but to even out the resentment this produces, on other occasions they try to oppose their authority. As Lindholm (1990) puts it, parricide seethes beneath the surface of abjection.

### **A collective response to the ambivalences of modernity**

The right-wing skinhead subculture provides an atmosphere which is attractive to young boys who long for acceptance and the feelings of honor, power and excitement. In this context, violence and intimidation are made possible as a distinct part of a lifestyle constituted by a stylized version of masculinity. Violence becomes a way of claiming and asserting masculinity. Even though the kind of masculinity constructed among right-wing skinheads resembles the hegemonic masculinity portrayed in Hollywood movies and in the propaganda of the military and war, the expression of such masculinities among young working-class men is a manifestation of what Connell calls the assertion of protest masculinity. Protest masculinity is a response to the feeling of powerlessness; it is an exaggeration of masculine conventions. This protest is a collective practice, and not a quality within the individual person. As aptly put by Connell (1995, p. 111), through interaction within this milieu, young men put together a tense freaky facade, making a claim to power where there are no real resources for it. "There is a lot concern with face, a lot of work put into keeping a front." Even though there are individual variations in how this is done, it is the group which is the bearer of masculinity. Without the group, many of these men would be at a loss (Connell, 1995, p. 107).

Typically, those who enter this environment have little to lose by entering it. They have problems in achieving the same feeling of honor by their performances in other more conventional areas. The right-wing community provides them with the warmth of the brotherhood, which also gives them the sense of being part of something of great importance, something that extends their own vulnerable selves. In so doing, this subculture breaks with the individualization trend described by Ziehe. It also breaks with the self-actualization trend described by Giddens as the typical quality of today's identity projects. Rather, one can see these young men's version of masculinity as a collective response to the feeling of ontological insecurity, as described by Giddens. The group makes these men feel omnipotent; left alone, they feel vulnerable, and worth nothing. They feel secure within the group, which provides them with a collective protective cocoon, and with a collective defense against the threats of the outside world. The war between their own group and its opponents gives their fears a concrete object. Without this, a more generalized anxiety attached to the ambivalence of modern everyday life, would be more complex to handle. By constructing a rigid division of us and them, the world becomes ordered and easily defined. And their own role is transformed from being an individual nobody to being a hero among comrades.

However, the warm brotherhood has its limits. The feeling of distrust in relation to the outside world with all its possible enemies leads to a feeling of distrust between the skinheads as well. Many of them are better in dealing with power than in dealing with intimacy, hence there is only a thin layer between comradeship and intimidation. Their uniforms, their lifestyle, and the way they relate to each other are factors serving to create an atmosphere that makes violence more a regularity than a disruption. To be attacked or to attack are the only possible occasions which provide them with a sense of in-group solidarity, and a feeling of being honorable.



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<sup>1</sup> In a previous essay (Fangen, 1997), I asked what role and impact girls in the right-wing underground had. The role of the girls is important, for they are a minority in an underground dominated by ideals traditionally understood as masculine. However, this does not mean that the role and impact of boys in the underground is unambiguous.

<sup>2</sup> *Ragnarok* is a militant national socialist fanzine. In 1996 it was replaced by *Einherjer*.

<sup>3</sup> This image might hold some truth. However, as historian Gunnes (1993, p.178) describes it, another side to the Viking male contests for prestige was their "undimensioned exaggerations, a childish desire to impress, and to hold one's own." This description might even hold for today's right-wing activists.

<sup>4</sup> Fanzines are journals edited by an individual or a group. They comprise reviews, editorials and interviews produced on a small scale and as cheaply as possible (Hebdige, 1979, p. 111).

<sup>5</sup> Hávamál, Verse 43, quoted in *Bootboys /Ragnarok*, 12 (2) (1992).

<sup>6</sup> In other words, they do not try to copy the Viking man in their appearance. The connotation between hair and gender was probably the opposite among Vikings, as some of the best known and legendary Vikings had long hair, and on one occasion even hair that continued to grow after the man had died. Harald Hårfagre (Harold with the fair hair), presumably one of the bravest and most masculine of Vikings, letting his hair grow until he had conquered the whole kingdom, personifies this view.

<sup>7</sup> Fags might be experienced as competitors and intruders in a male community like the right-wing underground. According to Nissen's (1961) analysis of such features male communities are marked by an outwardly directed tendency to combat. In a male community based on homosexual sentiments, this competitive attitude might be directed inwards as jealousy between the men.

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<sup>8</sup> Feminine and ethnic attributes may function to lower another man's status, to provoke, or tease him. This means that femininity, homosexuality and being from an ethnic minority are all qualities which the activists consider negations of real masculinity, defined in terms of the white, race-conscious front-soldier.

# Separate or Equal?

## The Emergence of an All-Female Group in Norway's Rightist Underground

KATRINE FANGEN

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This article discusses the importance of separate women's organizations in militant groups of the far right. The analysis suggests that the existence of a separate women's group has not only enhanced the respect the members feel for themselves and each other, but has been successful in eliciting greater respect from their male counterparts, resulting in the women receiving greater responsibility in the organization. The article is based on participant observations and on interviews with activists in the militant far-right underground in Norway. It assumes that the need for separate women's organizations in the rightist underground reflects a pre-existing dissatisfaction with conditions and opportunities for females in a highly male-dominated environment.

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### Introduction

The history of extremist political activity reveals several cases of all-female groups. The women in these groups are distinct from their male colleagues not only in having a separate organization, but often in developing a very different political agenda. Intriguingly, the motivation for women to form all-female groups seems to emerge from different sources depending on their political orientation. Women in far left groups tend to be given responsibility when they work side by side with the men in a single organization; when leftist women create all-female groups, it is usually to pursue a particular objective, generally of a feminist nature. By contrast, in the far right, women tend to be given a subordinate position in mixed-gender groups. By creating their own organizations, women on the far right have a chance to voice their opinions, develop leadership skills and gain self-confidence. Thus the presence of all-female groups on the far right indicates the dissatisfaction women feel with their opportunities in a male-dominated hierarchy.

What drives women to become involved in militant groups? Are there any general differences between leftist and rightist militant women? Do women have any common issues that transcend ideological differences? Do they function as auxiliaries to the male groups, or are they autonomous? These are some of the questions we will be exploring. Because of problems

raised by using material from various sources, our conclusions will be tentative. However, we can develop a framework in which it is possible to make some generalizations – or, alternatively, identify points of uniqueness – that characterize women in the Norwegian rightist underground.

I will highlight these issues by focusing on the position of women in the Norwegian rightist underground before and after the emergence of the all-female group, Valkyria. I will establish a context for this phenomenon by comparing the roles Norwegian rightist women play with those of women who take part in similar groups in other countries. The article is primarily descriptive, as it is based upon my participant observations in the rightist underground during 1993–94, on in-depth interviews and conversations with central activists in the period 1993–96, as well as on the analysis of documents, world wide web pages and fanzines.<sup>1</sup>

## **Women in Militant Groups**

### *Some General Reasons Women Join Militant Groups*

Militant women are often considered a paradox, insofar as they run counter to traditional expectations of differences between the sexes. As Robin Morgan puts it, '... all women share the cross-cultural burden of being viewed as the repositories of (male-defined) morality. Therefore, women must never be wrong-doers. To encroach beyond the present boundaries ... is a far more crucial act for a woman than for a man'.<sup>2</sup> From this standpoint, women who join militant movements with more caring goals, such as animal liberation or environmental or anti-abortion movements, are more easily comprehensible. Women are often more numerous than men in such groups. From her experiences among militant animal liberationists, Eileen MacDonald observes that in most groups women were not merely members but effectively leaders as well. While the men did a lot of talking and planning, it was the women who turned up late at night in order to carry out the group's actions.<sup>3</sup>

Women also tend to join progressive movements more often than reactionary ones. In a study by Weinberg and Eubank, fewer than 10 per cent of Italian women terrorists over a 14-year period were affiliated with neo-fascist groups. When they did join neo-fascist groups, women were, moreover, dramatically under-represented in positions of leadership. One reason for their subordinate positions may be the fact that they were relatively young: 60 per cent of them were aged between 15 and 24 at the time of their arrest. By contrast, left-wing terrorist women were somewhat older: 60 per cent were aged between 20 and 29 when they were arrested.<sup>4</sup>

*Women in Militant Groups: Divisions along Ideological Lines*

An examination of rightist and leftist groups reveals an interesting division along ideological lines. When compared with women in militant rightist groups, militant women on the left tend to be treated by their male colleagues with greater respect and given more responsibility; leftist women have thus seemed to feel the need for separate organizations; less urgently than their rightist counterparts. For example, even before they had gained the same rights of citizenship as men, women occupied prominent positions in the Russian revolutionary movement; indeed, they participated in the assassination of several authority figures, including Tsar Alexander II. Interestingly, the matriculation of these leftist women into the broader revolutionary movement stemmed from their frustration with the inefficacy of the all-female group, called the Fritsche Circle, in which they had begun their radical career: though motivated strongly by feminist concerns, they believed that women's rights could not be realized in any meaningful way until the peasants and the working class were emancipated.<sup>5</sup> Thus beginning with an all-female organization, they ultimately merged their efforts with a male group in which they remained surprisingly – considering that women were almost invisible in political life at that time – influential.<sup>6</sup>

A century later, in the 1970s, women continued to occupy prominent positions in militant leftist groups, and remained fully involved in leftist terrorist activities. In the modern era, most of these women became involved in these groups through a relationship with a male terrorist,<sup>7</sup> leading some analysts to suggest that leftist women were abandoning feminist principles in favor of a traditional female orientation, becoming followers of dominant male leaders.<sup>8</sup> Members of the German Red Army Faction (RAF), male and female, suggest otherwise, however. One of the prominent female members of the RAF thought that the main reason there was such a large proportion of women in the group was that 'German revolutionary women were convinced that if they had had a voice during Hitler's time, many of the atrocities would not have happened'.<sup>9</sup> In many respects, women were key figures in the RAF. According to a leading male RAF activist, had it not been for the fact that most of these women were already involved in partnerships, they could have performed all of their terrorist actions on their own.<sup>10</sup> Some of the later RAF women were also highly engaged in feminist issues; and there have been two women's groups within the RAF: the Militant Black Panther Aunties,<sup>11</sup> and Red Zora. The latter group specifically bombed sexist targets.<sup>12</sup>

Even though women who become involved with militant leftist groups may not have been consciously motivated by feminist reasons to do so, it seems that their sense of rebelliousness is stimulated by the 'oppression'

they have experienced as a consequence of being women.<sup>13</sup> This is particularly true of women who join terrorist groups in countries where emancipation of women has occurred only recently. For example, the Middle East has produced female terrorists of exceptional sacrificial devotion and fanaticism, as Alison Jamieson points out. Here, in fact, an all-female group, the Fatima Brigades, has played a central role; Jamieson calls them 'the valkyries of the Islamic revolution'.<sup>14</sup> There have also been prominent women within Palestinian terrorist groups, the IRA and the Italian Red Brigades. In the last organization, several women's groups were formed, groups that usually concentrated on targets of special relevance to the feminist cause.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to women in leftist groups, women who join right-wing groups often find themselves in an ambivalent position since ideologies of the far right often tend to define women solely in terms of motherhood. As a result, far-right women activists often have to formulate agendas that differ slightly from those of the men in the same groups. This was definitely true of the women who entered the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s: the major organization was so clearly defined in terms of manhood that the thought of women joining it was unthinkable; however, some women pleaded for the right to build a separate women's division of the Klan, and finally received permission to do so. According to Kathleen Blee, financial opportunism and intra-Klan conflict, not concern for women's rights, was the precipitating factor that pushed the male Klan leaders to create a women's Klan.<sup>16</sup> The men wanted the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) to be an auxiliary of the men's order. In practice, however, this was not the case. Women rejected the notions of the vulnerability of white women. They wanted to challenge male political and economic dominance.<sup>17</sup> They praised women's rights organizations, the participation of women in the temperance movement and women's suffrage. The Klanswomen also celebrated women who 'made it' in traditionally male workplaces.<sup>18</sup>

Women who joined Nazi organizations in Germany in the 1920s were somewhat less engaged in issues of women's equality. Claudia Koonz reports that many women became Nazis because they feared that Weimar liberalism would lead to the degradation of women. One reason was that they feared that liberal policies would lead to more prostitution, so that women would be valued merely as sex objects. Another fear was that women would feel humiliated when entering the male world of production. Frightened by the uncertainty of the time, women 'accepted the premise of second-sex membership in Hitler's movement in exchange for the hope of preserving their own womanly realm against male interference'.<sup>19</sup> Their main motivation was, in other words, the need for safety. Nazi women dreamed of a future in which women were equal, but different.<sup>20</sup> But there

were also women who wanted a more equitable position, and who saw themselves as revolutionaries.<sup>21</sup> In the initial phase of the Nazi movement, women were in fact allowed to participate side by side with the Nazi men; but when Hitler came to power, they were forced back to the family sphere. Koonz points out that it is typical that women have equality as long as the movement is in its initial phase, but descend to a subordinate role as the movement matures. For example, even when women educated themselves in traditional occupations, ultimately they still could achieve status only within the hierarchy of their fellow women. In Hitler's division of society into male and female spheres, this was indeed the only logical consequence.<sup>22</sup> They were at no stage allowed leading positions, control or political influence,<sup>23</sup> and in this regard they never were – and never could be – equal. Thus, although there were several women's organizations in Nazi Germany, their particular mission was to contribute money and moral support to the men. A women's group called Rote Hakenkreuz, for example, 'established rest homes for SA men, collected money and clothing for them, and prepared food for Nazi families without income'.<sup>24</sup>

It is interesting to note that the experience of Nazi women of the 1920s, and the organizational developments that grew out of that experience, are striking precursors to recent evolutions within the modern Norwegian right: In the 1920s, the organization of a separate Nazi women's group, as Koonz argues, was allowed to occur by the very fact that women were perceived as insignificant by the broader movement. However, once the women's group was created, it engendered consequences both unintended and unforeseen:

Because they were deemed so unimportant, women were unintentionally given the opportunity to organize their own relatively independent associations, edit their own newsletters, pamphlets, and broadsides, proselytize other women, and discuss their views on the 'woman question'.<sup>25</sup>

As we shall see, a similar course of events has recently transpired among women of the Norwegian right.

There have been tendencies to create separate women's groups in other racist and far-right groups. Several examples of neo-fascist women's groups have occurred during the past 25 years. A subdivision of the German ANS, called the League of Hamburg Women, emerged in the late 1970s.<sup>26</sup> In 1984 a very small group called Deutsche Frauenfront (DFF) emerged. This group had originally begun as the women's division of Freiheitlich Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (FAP). It later split off from the ANS, and several other women's groups joined in. Many of the leading women in DFF are partners of leading men from other national socialist organizations.<sup>27</sup> DFF prints the journal *Der Madelbrief*.<sup>28</sup> A women's division of the DNSB



(Deutsche National Sozialistische Bund) and a women's group of stormtroopers (Sturm Abteilung, SA)<sup>29</sup> have recently emerged, and in 1991 several females created Skingirlfront Deutschlands.<sup>30</sup> There is also a group called Women for Aryan Unity, with divisions in Germany and the Netherlands, among other countries.<sup>31</sup> In the US, there are some smaller women's organizations, such as the Aryan Women's League.<sup>32</sup> A few fanzines for female rightist activists are also published in the US, including *White Sisters*, *Today's Aryan Women*<sup>33</sup> and *Right as Reina*. The last presents information on the female side of the nationalist skinhead scene in the US.<sup>34</sup> All these 'zines are meant to unite female white power activists. In Italy, a group has emerged called Unione Skinhead Girl Italia, consisting of 15–20 young 'NS skinhead girls'.<sup>35</sup> In Britain the Patriotic Women's League publishes its own fanzine, *Valkyrie*.<sup>36</sup> There are no separate organizations for women in the British Young National Front, but there are a few cases of women as leaders of local groups.<sup>37</sup> In 1994 in Sweden, there emerged an organization of national socialist women called Kristine Gyllenstjarna, which is a subdivision of Riksfronten (The Reich's Front).<sup>38</sup> In fact this organization already existed at the end of the 1920s: at that time, the name referred to several women's organizations within the various national socialist parties.<sup>39</sup> In Denmark, a small group called DANSK (Danish Aryan National Socialist Women) emerged in the autumn of 1955.<sup>40</sup> Most of these women's organizations do in fact function as auxiliaries to the male organizations, and they are not very visible on the international scene. As we will see, the women's groups in Norway are striking in the ways and extent to which they differ from this typical pattern.

### Political Violence in Norway

In comparison with other European countries, Norway has seen few incidents of political violence and terrorism. During the 1970s, the Special Branch of the Police focused their surveillance mainly on Marxist-Leninists, Maoists and Trotskyists. However, after an 18-year-old right-wing activist bombed a May Day parade in 1979, the Special Branch was criticized for paying insufficient attention to right-wing extremists. Other violent incidents occurred as well. In 1981, two 18-year-old rightist activists committed a double murder, killing two men who had participated in a weapons theft with them; the killers feared that they would inform the police. There was another bomb attack in 1985, this time against a Muslim mosque. All three of these acts were carried out by people with connections to the rightist underground, which, at that time, existed in the shape of the political (but non-parliamentary) party, Norsk Front (the Norwegian Front), and later as the Nasjonalt Folkeparti (National People's Party). As a result

of these events, the Special Branch refocused its attention from the leftist to the rightist underground.<sup>41</sup> Two more bomb attacks have occurred since 1985, both directed against the anarchist Blitz house in Oslo.<sup>42</sup> The 'terror group' Vaepnede Ariske Celler (Armed Aryan Cells) claims to be responsible for both of these bombings.<sup>43</sup>

This is far from a complete list of right-wing violence, but it does cover the most severe actions. The kind of indiscriminate terrorist violence typical of the far right in Italy is almost absent in Norway.<sup>44</sup> So far, only the right wing has carried out bombings or shootings. That is not to suggest that violence is the exclusive domain of the far right: the anarchists connected with the Blitz house also exercise political violence, by beating up and throwing eggs at nationalist politicians, as well as beating up neo-Nazis in the streets.<sup>45</sup> The militants from the Blitz house are organized in the group Anti-Fascist Action, with the aim of confronting 'the Nazis physically or ideologically'.<sup>46</sup>

Among the anarchists, women participate in the front line on an equal footing with the men. They have their own group within the Blitz house, the so-called Blitz Women's Group. As we will discuss in detail below, women within the Norwegian right-wing do not usually participate in the front line during attacks. However, they take part in weapons training and ordinary self-defense training (such as kick boxing) together with the men, so that they are able to protect themselves. Right-wing women tend to be more militant than the anarchist Blitz women. In January 1995, the most militant among them created a separate organization, called Valkyria, and since then they have become more ideologically oriented and even more militant. It is symptomatic that the rightist women have chosen to call their group Valkyria, since the mythological figures, the valkyries, were women who were combative and feared.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Far Right in Norway**

The Norwegian rightist underground consists of several groups with constantly changing names; some of the current ones are Viking, the militant cell Anti-Antifa/Vaepnede Ariske Celler, and NUNS 88<sup>48</sup> as well as the women's group, Valkyria. The number of people within this underground varies, but usually includes no more than 40 activists and 200 sympathizers.<sup>49</sup> Activists contribute to the underground through their specific tasks, which include editing fanzines or writing articles for them, planning or executing violent actions, distributing information or playing in white power bands, of which there are three in Norway: Vidkuns venner (The Friends of Vidkun), Norhat (Northern Hatred) and Norske legion (the Norwegian Legion).

These various organizations are headquartered at different places around Norway. There are also local cells within the same organization, as is the case with both Viking and Valkyria. Yet the situation is not so fragmented as it may seem: the ongoing conflict with militant anti-fascists has provided an informal basis for ideological unity. Without this, the rightist underground probably would have split into separate parts; but for now, some sense of common identity and solidarity remains despite differences in lifestyle, strategy and ideological orientation.

The dominant political theme that drives rightist activists is the fight against the idea of the multi-cultural community. Most call themselves nationalists, which they define as being against immigration and defending one's country. How individuals define themselves in terms of this struggle is related to their age; because the age of participants has changed during the past three years – in 1993, most participants were aged between 18 and 32, whereas the current age range is considerably narrower, with most participants being aged between 15 and 20 – members' perceptions (and hence labels) for themselves have evolved to fit the new demographics. Thus over the past two years, some participants under the age of 20 have come to refer to themselves as Nazis. Some older activists, aged between 25 and 34, call themselves national socialists. The decision of different groups of participants to distinguish themselves respectively as nationalist, Nazi or national socialist is obviously to some degree a mark of differing perceptions of these names, their meanings and their values. It is symptomatic that only very young men claim themselves to be Nazis, completely without reservation and fully aware of how provocative this is; whereas activists who are closer to their 30s feel the need to justify their views and thus try to present their views as 'national socialist', and as legitimate and reasonable. Those activists who claim to be nationalist, rather than national socialist, are more often opposed to the raucous behavior of the young persons claiming to be Nazis than to the actual ideology connected to the term,<sup>50</sup> yet feel the need to distance themselves from the term nonetheless.

Zorn 88, the only formal Nazi organization in Norway, at one time had only two youths among its membership. But a growing number of young people are now allowed to join this organization. There is almost no contact between the former NS members from the 1930s and 1940s and the young Nazis. However, some young activists have been in contact with the anti-immigrant organization Den norske forening (DNF, the Norwegian Union),<sup>51</sup> and DNF has occasionally sponsored the rightist underground. The reason for their decision to support the young activists was that some members of the DNF were attacked by Blitz youths when making public speeches. They have, therefore, chosen to exchange financial support for physical support.<sup>52</sup>

All of these components go into the rightist underground in Norway, which may be considered part of an international white power underground.<sup>53</sup> Their contacts with Swedish activists, whom they visit every time they arrange concerts or marches, is the most extensive form of contact. In addition, the Norwegian Anti-AFA collaborate with the neo-Nazi 'Combat 18' in England by printing lists of Norwegian anti-racists – 'traitors' and 'wanted dead' – in *Blood & Honor*.<sup>54</sup> The Norwegian division of the international Blood & Honor movement was created in the autumn of 1995.<sup>55</sup>

Norwegian activists exchange information with right-wing activists from a wide range of European countries, as well as from the US. Prior to 1995, Norwegians met representatives of foreign right-wing groups at international gatherings held in other countries, such as Sweden. But in the summer of 1995, the first white power concert in Norway brought right-wing activists from Germany, England, Denmark, Sweden and the US to Norway for the first time.

### **Females in Norway's Extra-Parliamentary Party-Dominated Underground Prior to 1992**

In 1970, a new generation of activists began to emerge as the dominant power in the Norwegian right. From that time to 1992, women could be seen to differ markedly from men in the underground along three important lines: men had a virtual monopoly on positions of leadership; no men participated only as partners of activists; and only women (though not all women) defined themselves as politically neutral. Indeed, until 1994, all but one of Norway's rightist women in the modern era joined the underground because they had become affiliated with a male activist; whereas none of the males joined because of partnership with a female.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly, this pattern echoes that found by Weinberg and Eubank among Italian terrorists – but it represents a departure, in some respects, from the more independent path some rightist women had taken in the past, particularly in Norway, where there have been women who have figured prominently in the rightist underground throughout the years. This was true even for the separate organizations for National Socialist women (such as *Kvinneherden*, the women's storm troopers, a subdivision of the NS storm troopers; and the *Women's NS*, a subdivision of the National Socialist Party) in German-occupied Norway during the Second World War. According to Swedish national socialist Vera Oredsson, the Norwegian NS was, in comparison with its counterparts in Sweden and Germany, unique in its views on women, seeing both sexes as equally worthy and portraying them side by side in party documents.<sup>57</sup> Some of the female NS members

have remained active in the post-War years. Similarly, as Claudia Koonz points out, in the 1930s several women joined Nazi organizations independently of their husbands.<sup>58</sup> This might be due to the fact that, at that time, there were several women's organizations to join – a possibility supported by the fact that, after the emergence of a separate women's group in the rightist underground in Norway, women began to join the underground directly, without being affiliated with a male activist beforehand.

But at the end of 1970, a new generation of rightist activists emerged to dominate what I discuss here as 'the rightist underground',<sup>59</sup> and the opportunities for women in the movement declined dramatically. By the 1980s, only one woman in the numerous extra-parliamentary rightist parties held a prominent position: she was editor of the magazine *Nasjonalisten* (the Nationalist), and served as an executive member of the Norwegian Front (NF). In her view, she was meant to be 'the women's alibi' for the Norwegian Front, and the leader of NF wanted her to start up a separate women's organization.<sup>60</sup> However, NF's membership included no other women (ten of the eleven women's names on the roster were fictitious), so a separate women's organization was never really possible. Because she remained editor of *Nasjonalisten*, however, she wrote articles on both ideological and women's issues.<sup>61</sup>

In general, women were in scarce supply in right-wing parties in Norway in the 1970s–1980s, and such women as there were seemed unlikely candidates for leadership roles. *Nasjonalt Folkeparti* had a couple of female members, at least one of whom joined because of ideological motives rather than because of a relationship with a male activist. Neither of these two women ever fully identified with the nationalist skinhead part of the underground movement, which began to emerge in Norway in the late 1980s; yet for a while, both were partners of males from this movement. Later on, they developed more independent roles at the periphery of the skinhead-dominated underground, one of them becoming involved with the *Asatru* society,<sup>62</sup> the other participating in Nazi marches from time to time.

More women began to join in the movement after a huge confrontation between racists and anti-racists in Brumunddal in 1991, an event which precipitated the overall growth of the nationalist part of the skinhead movement.<sup>63</sup> But still, most of these women entered the movement because they were following male activists with whom they had romantic relationships.

### **Females in the Skinhead-Dominated Underground, 1993–1994<sup>64</sup>**

The women who were part of the rightist underground during the early 1990s played subordinate or passive roles. For some women, this was a

result of a lack of self-confidence, which generated a passive acceptance of a secondary position in their relationships with men, whether those relationships were personal or organizational. But for other women this was clearly not the case: the subordinate role was not something easily tolerated. These women were explicitly dissatisfied with the actions of the men, in terms of both where they were taking the party and how the men treated women. The men labeled these women 'neo-feminists'. Some of these women exited the militant underground, but continued to play an ideological role by writing for the nationalist monthly, *Fritt Forum*.<sup>65</sup> Others stayed within the underground but reluctantly resigned themselves to a subordinate status, minimizing their participation or accepting a less visible role. Some women began talking of the need for a separate women's group. At the time, these women – even those who called themselves feminists – considered themselves to be 'not particularly interested in politics'; but they felt a need to preserve their national culture from the influence of foreign cultures, and agreed with the right-wing men that immigration was bad.

It is interesting to examine the style of participation of women in the right-wing underground prior to their establishment (in 1995) of their own separate organizations. Within the male-dominated groups, even the more reflective women, who had identified specific practices they disagreed with, acted rather passively in comparison with the males. While the men ran group meetings, women often talked privately in the background, or, if they sat together with the men, they laughed at what the men said or did. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber discuss the problems connected to the interpretation of gang women who act passively, and suggest that what men often consider to be 'giggling' is a way for women to counteract a situation which is dominated and defined by men.<sup>66</sup> This notion seems to fit Norway's rightist women. Whereas young and inexperienced males often played a passive role upon initially entering the organization, they quickly felt comfortable and soon played a more active role. By contrast, women would continue to play passive roles even after they had participated in the group for years. Their less frequent participation in the underground's monthly pub meetings suggest that women felt less important to the movement, or did not identify themselves actively with it. Some women even said openly that these gatherings were of little value to them. Thus, women clearly understood the underground as being dominated and defined by its male membership.

One reason contributing to the subordinate role of women in the underground was that they were much younger, in general, than the leading male activists. In 1993–94, for example, there were several partnerships between women aged 16–18 and men aged 30–32.<sup>67</sup> Most of the females were aged between 16 and 24, whereas most males were aged between 16

and 34. (Over the past two years, 1995–96, several young men have joined the underground, so the age difference between the sexes has become somewhat equalized, yet the women are still generally younger than their partners.) The low age of women in far right groups is, as mentioned previously, also prevalent in other countries.<sup>68</sup> Some of the inequality between males and females must therefore be interpreted as being more the result of difference in age than in gender.

The way in which male and female members viewed their love relationships also reflected the men's dominance of the right wing in the 1970s and 1980s. For most of the men, loyalty to the underground outweighed loyalty to their partners. Men were willing to withdraw from their partners or end the relationship altogether if the women talked too much or opposed their actions.<sup>69</sup> Men also broke up with women who flirted with other men, even though men retained the right to flirt with other women.

Whereas men predicated their relationships on the necessity of their partners not interfering with their work in the movement, women during this period predicated their participation in the movement on the existence of their relationship with their partners. Few women remained in the underground after the breakup of their partnerships. Men, on the other hand, very seldom left the underground because of the breakup of their partnerships. (The few men who did leave the underground because their partner, unaffiliated with the underground, disapproved of their participation in it, generally did so because they wanted to leave the underground anyway and needed their partner to help them break the connection.)

Most couples split apart under the pressures created by outside attacks, police surveillance and frustration within the movement. Nevertheless, there are a few couples who live together, and a few couples who have children. Some couples have broken up, though, leaving a few single mothers within the movement. The fathers of their children are males within the underground, except for one female who became a mother long before she entered the rightist underground.

Even though women in these organizations are, in theory, subordinated to the men, they often defy the men's commands. For example, on one occasion, the women went to a skinhead concert in Sweden despite the fact that the men did not want them to go because they thought there might be fighting and all of them would be arrested; the women found this exciting and wanted to take part regardless of the consequences. In another instance, the women were the only ones successfully to attend a counter-demonstration against anti-racists in Oslo: all of the men were stopped by the police, a fact which proved no deterrent to the women, who passed the police unnoticed.

Women from rightist organizations, knowing that they are less exposed to police raids, sometimes carried weapons such as sticks and stones in this period. This seems to be typical of militant groups where women are present; historically the pattern has shown up during the Second World War in American youth gangs<sup>70</sup> and in Nazi organizations, where women were tasked with keeping and hiding weapons.<sup>71</sup> The film *Battle of Algiers*, based on Saadi's *Memoirs*, details the use of women as weapons carriers.<sup>72</sup>

During the early 1990s, rightist women had very different experiences in the degree to which they were or were not treated as equals with rightist men. Some of them talked about not feeling oppressed by the males: 'there is total equality here', they said.<sup>73</sup> Others held that the men were indeed dominant, but asserted that they were 'no worse here than in other gangs'. Some women, on the other hand, felt oppressed by the men, and felt the need for women meeting outside the presence of men so that they might gain more self-confidence.

### **Female Roles in the Norwegian Right, 1993–1994**

The differing degrees to which individual women viewed themselves as equal to the men reflected the differing roles they themselves played in the underground. Even before the emergence of all-female rightist groups, there were some tough and extroverted women within the underground; whereas others played passive roles, either because they were simply resigned to this status, or because they willingly accepted the fact that in this movement the men were the active ones.

Some short profiles of a representative sample of these women will illustrate the different ways they interpreted their position in the underground.

One of the most active and tough women in the Norwegian underground during the early 1990s was Verena, aged 24. She enjoyed high status among the men, especially because of her broad knowledge and experience regarding skinhead style. Since she had been involved in the skinhead subculture previously when she lived in Italy, and since she was the partner of a man who led a skinhead gang there, she had much greater familiarity with this particular lifestyle than any of the Norwegian men. This, in turn, lent her great self-confidence among them. She had come to Norway because of her husband, the football supporter and racist skinhead Magnus. Since he was a member of the Capital Football Supporter Club, she also joined it, and quickly felt comfortable there – she said she appreciated the rough male atmosphere. In 1994 she still lived with Magnus, even though by then they were officially separated. With her former partner, Verena published her own skinhead fanzine, *Stomping Ground*. Each issue had an



interview with an oi-band and usually an interview with other females who published skinhead fanzines. The rest of the 'zine contained pictures of skinheads from all over Europe, and drawings she herself had made of skinhead females.

Verena maintained that the female version of the skinhead uniform was both feminine and tough. She played with this ambiguity herself by acting offensively, almost aggressively, but at the same time wearing a mini-skirt and a great deal of make-up. She was proud of showing her muscles, and had tattoos on her upper arm. Verena told me that she once met a male who was surprised that she was a skinhead female because she was so attractive: he believed that skinhead females were masculine and, therefore, ugly.

Verena told me that she preferred male friends because she did not like the competitiveness and jealousy which often developed between women. She trusted men more than women. Despite this, from time to time she found it sad that so few females were active in the movement.

Yet even though Verena clearly was much more self-confident and extroverted than many of the men, she accepted, and acted in accordance with, the men's definitions of appropriate female behavior. As she told me, she was especially careful about keeping a good reputation in terms of sexual norms. She realized that many of the men were not monogamous, and changed partners frequently. According to Verena, the men considered themselves 'playboys, and that is [considered as] good!' A woman, on the other hand, was stigmatized if she became associated with a new man after ending a relationship. Verena found this unfair, but was nonetheless even more strict about adhering to the role ascribed to 'straight girls' (i.e. girls who did not sleep around) than many of the other women in the group. She said that because she had been the partner of one man from the underground, she could not become affiliated with any other man from the same milieu; if she wanted a new partner she would have to find him outside the underground, otherwise her reputation of being 'straight' would be jeopardized.

Though Verena was tough, and though she commanded a certain amount of respect from the men by virtue of her expertise on skinhead style, she was given no influence over the profile and actions of the underground movement. In fact, she accepted that the men defined the organization. For example, she said that the role of female skinheads was to support the males' fights, but not to fight themselves. (As we shall see, this contrasts with the Valkyria women of today, who actually *want* to take part in the front-line battles.) Verena was a woman who enjoyed watching violence, but saw violence itself as a male activity. 'There are some violent females' gangs in other countries', Verena said, 'but this is not the general trend'. In contrast to some of the other females, she liked the skinhead film *Romper*

*Stomper* greatly, especially because of the violent scenes. She had no interest in becoming more active politically. She said that the important thing for her was being a skinhead, and she was not that interested in politics. One of the males told me that she sympathized with the MSI, the current fascist party in Italy,<sup>74</sup> and she herself told me that she was more right-wing than left-wing. However, she repeated over and over that she had nothing to do with Nazis. She also told me that she was not racist, and that she had nothing against spending the entire evening talking with a black man. The fact that she did not want to be defined politically reflects the general trend among Norwegian racist women at that time. In terms of her vocational career, Verena was – as were most of the other rightist women – rather traditional: she worked in a hospital canteen.

Tyra, aged 20, was another woman who acted aggressively, and who, in her own subtle way, defied traditional roles prescribed for females. Before she joined the rightist underground, she was involved in a group with Satanist affiliations. She smoked marijuana and listened to death metal music. None of these activities was popular among rightist males, because 'skinheads are 100 per cent against drugs', and because they wanted to remain aloof from the satanic subculture: after all, rightist activists viewed themselves as 'fighting for a good cause', whereas Satanists 'celebrated evil'. Tyra also violated other norms defined by the males. On several occasions she outdid the males in extremism in her use of symbols, such as the time she painted swastikas on the walls of houses on Constitution Day (17 May);<sup>75</sup> she was also known to give the Nazi salute, even in public areas. By contrast, the males were usually reluctant to use such symbols in the city center. Tyra was also the only woman in 1993–94 who liked to wear fatigues. (Today, fatigues are the dominant fashion among Valkyria women, who have a rather militant appearance.)

Tyra's humor was explicitly antisemitic. Once she sat in the back of my car with some of the males. They amused themselves by calling each other Jewish names like Silverman, Goldschmidt, etc. When it was time to come up with a name for Tyra's partner, who was sitting beside me in the front seat, she said, 'No, he is mein Fuhrer'. Her partner Agnar replied, 'Yes. You finally realized that.' This may be construed as her playing up to Agnar, making him feel superior. But observations of their relationship on other occasions make it more possible that this was a statement of her ambivalence regarding traditional sex roles: her labeling of Agnar as her 'Fuhrer' was rather an ironic comment.<sup>76</sup>

The perceived significance of the antisemitic content of her humor should be balanced against a clear understanding that it was not rooted in a consistent national socialist ideology. She was not an activist who read a lot. Her comments and her use of Nazi salutes seemed less dogmatic than

deliberate provocations, signals of her loyalty to the underground, and emblematic of her willingness to go to extremes.<sup>77</sup>

Tyra's desire to provoke by violating common norms was further revealed in the way she talked about sexual matters. Once she spoke freely to one of the males, Frode, about her sex life with Agnar. Agnar, who was standing beside her, seemed to feel good about this, adding details to her stories. Among other things, she told Frode that Agnar took her wherever he wanted: on the safe, in bed or in the kitchen. She also told him that Agnar could watch pornographic videos for hours. Frode said, 'You are a nymphomaniac, aren't you?' 'Yes, I am', she replied. 'Couldn't you go around the corner and do it with yourself?', he asked. 'Yes, I could', she said, 'but I need more time than that; I need at least twenty minutes'. Here again, she played out her ambivalence about traditional gender roles: despite Agnar's traditional macho role, 'taking her' wherever and whenever he wanted and watching pornographic videos, it is she who is the storyteller active in creating the theme of their relationship. And it is she who is the nymphomaniac, that is, the woman who enjoys sex – she who takes, rather than the passive object that is only 'taken'. McRobbie and Garber, in their article on women's participation in youth subcultures, interpret similar kinds of behavior as a way women can react aggressively to male dominance: the young women use their sexuality in order to confuse men and their authority. In this case, Tyra's reaction took the males' prevailing image of women as 'mattresses' – i.e. useful only as sexual partners – and exaggerated it to a degree confusing to men, thus retaining her power. By contrast, Verena was doing all she could to avoid such an image in the first place.

Tyra's job was as a day-care worker; she wanted to become a midwife when she grew older. It may seem paradoxical that a female who wanted to become a midwife – someone who plays a role in the creation of life – plays with symbols of Satanism and Nazism, the symbols of death, in her free time. Her rebellion is, indeed, two-fold:<sup>78</sup> by wearing masculine, military-looking clothes, by using provocative, chauvinistic symbols, she defied all images of how a decent woman should act. She also defied 'the system' by using the most offensive symbols of all. Yet her choices of work and education reflected the traditional caring roles of women.

Hilde, aged 18, was one of the women who most explicitly disapproved of certain male practices. She viewed many of the men as lacking self-confidence, and thought many of their actions resulted from a need to prove themselves strong and dangerous. She also viewed some of the other women as untrustworthy. Among other things, she told me that some of them had stolen cosmetics from her when they were at parties at the home she shared with her partner, a leading male activist. She said she felt that she

differed from the other women. She particularly did not like the free manner in which Tyra spoke or acted. Hilde was skeptical about female activists who acted in too vulgar a manner. Unlike them, she was more careful in how she expressed herself.

Like Tyra, Hilde was involved with other youth subcultures before she joined the rightist underground. Hilde had previously been a 'synther', a subcultural style similar to the German *grufties*,<sup>79</sup> dressing in black and listening to depressing music. She could lie on the floor for hours with the lights off, listening to monotone synth music. She changed her style when she became involved with one of the older male rightist activists.

Yet Hilde was often annoyed by things her partner, Sverre, did, and said that she became very angry with him on certain occasions. Once when they were driving past one of her former synth friends, he shouted 'bloody anarchists'; this infuriated her because synthers are not anarchists, even though they resemble the anarchist youths from the Blitz house. On another occasion, I sat with her and Ragnar at a table late in the evening.<sup>80</sup> All of the participants in the underground had previously gone to see the film *Romper Stomper*, a film in which women have a clearly subordinate role, particularly the female partner of the main (male) character, who is badly treated by him. The female activists found the film annoying. Hilde explicitly indicated that she did not like the film because of the way the main character treated 'his' woman. Hilde then despaired of her own partner, because when he was drunk he either ignored her or would engage in what she deemed 'mental abuse'.<sup>81</sup> This meant primarily that he ignored her and left her on her own, while he ran off to battles. However, when he was sober, he would take care of her and listen to her opinions. Her ambivalence toward Sverre was displayed the night everyone saw the film when, at its conclusion, the right-wing activists fled because they feared the Blitz youths would attack them: Hilde became separated from Sverre, and grew agitated because she did not know where he was, and because he had been so vulgar earlier in the evening. She criticized Ragnar for not calming Sverre, who had been thrown out of the cinema because of his raucous behavior. She said that it was not good to be around Sverre when he was drunk. Ragnar tried to calm her down and said, 'I have known Sverre longer than you. He is just like that, but you don't have to worry about him. I know him.' Hilde replied, 'But you do not share his bed, like I do!'. She said he was unpredictable when he was drunk. This time he had run away without telling her where he had gone, and she felt lost.

Hilde was one of the prime movers who, along with some of her closest friends, initiated the first attempt to create an all-female Norwegian rightist group. When her friends left the underground because they thought it too raucous, she was left to defend her critical attitudes alone. Her response was to participate less frequently than she had previously.

Hilde was not very interested in politics, though she told me that both her mother and her friends at school shared most of the attitudes of the right-wing activists. Also they could grin 'bloody nigger' when seeing a black man. She was resigned that they claimed not to be racists, even though their views were no better than those of the underground's members. She herself used expressions which suggested her adherence to explicitly racist views. For example, she talked about her cat having 'race consciousness' because it acted proud and uninterested when meeting wild cats. In 1996, she has been speaking of her need to become better schooled in ideology. This felt need is also prevalent among Valkyria women, and marks a shift from the lack of interest in ideology women manifested in 1993-94. Yet, in contrast to women from Valkyria Oslo,<sup>82</sup> Hilde still does not call herself a nationalist; though she does not openly call herself a national socialist, she does not reject this term.

Sigrun, aged 27, was older than most of the other women, yet was not the most extroverted. She appeared satisfied with the male dominance of her milieu, in which women were accepted only at the fringe. She was particularly interested neither in style nor in ideology, and she had no wish to participate more actively, she said; she found it exciting merely to be around, because 'something always happens'.<sup>83</sup> To share in the excitement produced by the men was sufficient for her. She also appreciated the attention she received from the men. However, she complained about the small number of women in the underground. She said she had become a nationalist because so many male immigrants had accosted her. She was unemployed, taking care of her son full-time. She had been involved in relationships, none serious, with some of the men. Later, she became involved with one of the leading male activists for a longer period. When this relationship came to an end, she continued to participate in the movement as an independent woman. The men esteemed her, apparently because she was more mature than the other females, so that, despite her minimal involvement in activism, and despite her previous involvement with more than one of the men, she was treated with respect.

Three 16 year old females became involved in the rightist underground without previously participating in other youth subcultures. They supported militant nationalism and joined the weapons training program of the Home Guard's youth division. These women were fond of parties, and they thought it was fun to be part of the underground. They found the various ideas and actions of the males amusing, and could speak with great pleasure of things the men had done. On a trip to Sweden, they went with me in my car. They talked about how they often found the males paranoid. They talked about one incident at a party at Sverre's place, when they suddenly heard some rumbling sounds from the cellar. Sverre stood up and cried, 'It's the Blitz youths!' But

then it turned out to be just the washing machine. They also told me that once, when they had been at Ragnar's place, Ragnar had played a practical joke on Reidar: he called him at the pub and shouted 'Fifty Blitz youths are coming, get out of there!' Reidar was frightened, but before he managed to escape, Ragnar called him again and said, 'I was only joking'. The females told me that afterward, Ragnar did not dare visit the pub for a week because Reidar was so furious. The females found this very amusing.

In 1995, these three women, together with some others, created the group Aryan Sisters. One of the Valkyria members<sup>84</sup> has said that this group name was mostly meant to catch the attention of the press, and that today there is no such group. Nevertheless, the women behind the name are still active within the underground. In contrast to the Valkyria women, they drink more and are known to be fond of giving Nazi salutes. The Valkyria women deem this frivolous behavior and assert that if the women are to be taken seriously they need to drink less and act less vulgar.<sup>85</sup>

### Rightist Men's Views of Rightist Women, 1993–1994

Before women established their own groups, most men indicated that they had positive feelings toward the idea of women taking part with them 'at the front'; however, they asserted, the women seemed to lack the necessary fighting spirit. Many male leaders had even less favorable views, feeling that women had no place in the conflicts that comprised the so-called nationalist milieu. Back in 1992, for example, the nationalist fanzine *Bootboys* declared that, 'Remember: Women and children should be kept out of the battle. We are not cowards like the Blitz youths who attack these'.<sup>86</sup> In this view – a view which predominates in rightist undergrounds everywhere – the battle was only for men. This is not surprising: the emphasis within militant neo-Nazi groups on machismo and confrontation leads one to anticipate their almost exclusively male character, as Christopher Husbands puts it.<sup>87</sup>

Egil, one of the most prominent members of the Norwegian rightist underground to espouse the view that the nationalist milieu should be reserved exclusively for men, argued that

It would be best if there were no women in the movement at all. They destroy the feeling of comradeship. A woman always wants to own you, and they feel too much .... Women can be aggressive as well, but there are not many idealistic women amongst us. Most of them are partners or sympathizers, tag-alongs.<sup>88</sup>

The concept of 'comradeship' was frequently invoked by male activists. Often they based their sense of this concept on the virtues of the Viking era.

Egil was particularly fond of talking of the Viking spirit, which he said was based on the rule that 'To a friend you shall always be a friend, but to friend's foe no man shall ever be a friend'.<sup>89</sup> In short, this is a world of men fighting other men. The concept of comradeship accordingly excludes females, Egil said. Women were a divisive element in the community of men. He used the film *Romper Stomper* as an example. The female partner of the main character (who was, of course, male) reports a murder as a means of revenge against the man for having broken up with her. This was a typical female trait, according to Egil. He also argued that women could engage in disastrous actions during their menstrual period. In his view, female terrorists produced more severe actions than men. When women first unleashed their aggression, they lost control entirely. Women are extremely volatile, he said, whereas men are like sociopaths in their callous indifference to feeling. This activist had an essentialist view of gender differences: women are by their nature sensitive and emotional, whereas men by their nature are able to control their feelings. It followed, thus, that women could participate only at the periphery of the movement, as partners and sympathizers, but not as activists.<sup>90</sup>

Other male activists were more open to female participants. They said that they wanted tougher women in the movement, women who could participate with them in the front line. They used the anarchist Blitz women as an example of a type of woman they would like to have in their own movement. Such women were even more aggressive and hateful than the men, they said. Yet it is noteworthy that this opinion rested on the same essentialist view of gender differences – women are more emotional than men – despite its pro-female orientation.

Men who spoke of the need to have tougher, more aggressive women did not consider such women to be 'turning into men', as members of male groups often feel when women enter their domain.<sup>91</sup> Rather, these men considered this kind of combative woman to be exciting and attractive. A lead male activist said he was secretly attracted to Blitz women. Another man, who was highly preoccupied with skinhead style, said he thought women who shaved their heads were 'cool'. Still another man, who openly called himself a national socialist, said he found the valkyries as they were represented in the Wagner opera *der Ring des Niebelungen* extremely tempting.<sup>92</sup> Yet another male activist favored some women he saw at a white power concert in Sweden: they wore black nazi caps, white shirts, black ties and long black skirts, and had long blonde hair. 'These women turn me on', he said.<sup>93</sup> These women all represented, in their varied ways, different images of the combative woman.

But even men who said they wanted more active women in the movement usually excluded their own partners from consideration. Women

in the abstract appear to have been attractive prospects as partner-combatants; but to these men, the real women they actually knew 'spoke too freely' for their taste, and therefore could not be trusted. For the same reason, these men often excluded women members from important events such as concerts and strategic meetings. The men also forbade women from joining in events, e.g. as trips to Sweden, because such trips usually ended in altercations or arrests: the men said that it was part of the game to be knocked unconscious, whereas women could not cope with this. In other words, they used their concern for the women as a way of arguing against women's participation. Another argument – never expressed openly but nonetheless evident – is that concerts and clashes constitute events which, in an extreme way, bond the community of males. This is especially obvious at white power concerts where hundreds of young men greet the vocalist and fight each other in front of the stage.<sup>94</sup> Women disturb this picture.

For the few males who disliked this kind of rough male atmosphere, the presence of women could have a positive effect. One male activist, aged 24, argued that 'If many girls participate there will be fewer conflicts, because the males are actually a little diffident. They pretend not to show their feelings; like if you have feelings you are through. But most of them become a bit soft when girls are present.'<sup>95</sup> Yet this kind of argument was uncommon, and typically it was used by an activist who was uncomfortable with a movement that was becoming increasingly raucous or militant. This particular individual eventually left the underground for this reason.

This man wanted women in the movement to have the role of calming the males. Women are frequently given this role in male-dominated gangs or movements, often in the form of nurse or mother.<sup>96</sup> From time to time there have been women in the Norwegian rightist underground who wanted to reform the males, making them less militant and extreme. They adopt the traditional female role of saving their man from the bad influence of his friends, a role equivalent to the 'good girls' defined by Anne Campbell.<sup>97</sup> Such women usually stay within neither the rightist underground nor their partnerships with male activists. One 30 year old male told me that he had broken up with such a woman; she wanted him to grow his hair and stop making trouble. 'I cannot be in such a relationship', he said, because 'the cause comes before everything else'. Another activist of the same age recounted that he had many relationships behind him which fell apart because of 'the cause'. Yet another male left the group because his partner became very upset every time she heard that he had been with his nationalist friends. He chose the woman and rejected the group because, as he said, his partner was the only thing of true value in his life. These days, he joins the skinheads only when she is out of town for a few days. The role as reasonable mother, in other words, does not function in this underground.



Another role permitted for women in such movements everywhere is to be sexually accessible. This kind of female role pattern seems to be more typical than the 'mother' in the Norwegian rightist underground. The males call such women as 'mattresses' or 'field mattresses'.<sup>98</sup> According to the males, such women participate only in order to sleep with the men. Such women are no good for the movement, as one leading male activist says: 'Some females are first with one male, then with another and then with a third, and when that comes to an end, they leave the movement and betray us. It is only natural to take revenge when one has been deceived. But point is that the females are not sworn nationalists, they are in it only to be with the males.'<sup>99</sup>

Categorizing women as 'straight' or 'mattress' is not a practice confined to the males; the 'straight' women tend to define other women of the underground as 'mattresses' as well. Typically, males who changed partners often were not labeled in a comparably negative manner. Rather, their comrades spoke of them with a mixture of amusement and admiration, as when one man said that his friend probably had a lot of sons all over town because he had laid so many women. But another male activist was highly conscious of the fact that it probably was difficult to be a woman among such men. He was angry at his own friend who treated females according to what he called the 'use and catch' method. He said to me that females are to be treated with respect, and became furious when talking about men who rape women or commit incest. There should have been a death penalty for such injustices, he said.<sup>100</sup>

Despite the tendency of male activists to dominate women, most of them were proud of a few women whom they labeled 'neo-feminists'. They used the presence of such women as proof that their movement was not so chauvinistic as other male-dominated subcultures. A 23 year old activist drew a comparison with bikers. For them, the bike and the club come before their partners. The nationalists, on the other hand, wanted women to participate on an equal basis, he declared.<sup>101</sup>

The use of pornography and chauvinistic jokes was, nevertheless, frequent among male activists. However, they tended to engage in such behavior when women were not present. As Ulf said, 'It is like that when guys sit alone. When we watch TV, one of us says 'that girl looks pretty', and then we just start joking further along that line, and at the end there is a lot of dirty talk. Of course you don't talk like that when girls are present.'<sup>102</sup> Some men used the label 'male chauvinist' as a negative term for other male participants, and thus placed themselves higher on the 'soft' masculine scale. This shows that although the males construct a rather prototypical sort of masculinity, they also try to adapt to modern demands on the male role. Most of them expressed that they had nothing against the equality of men

and women in society, and were accordingly open to the equality of females in their own movement.

### Separate Women's Groups

The wish among female rightist activists grew out of their feeling that 'they were being stigmatized by the men, and their dislike of being excluded. They felt that it was easier to express themselves when the men were absent. Moreover, they wanted to create something on their own, and thereby gain more respect from the males.

By the early 1990s, women were feeling considerable dissatisfaction with the underground. The most dissatisfied left the underground because, as one of their friends told me, they were tired of the vulgar profile of the skinheads, and they wanted to work more ideologically. Some of these women occasionally wrote articles for the nationalist monthly magazine *Fritt Forum*, and were titled co-editors. Other females, more convinced of national socialism than most of their peers, began to act independently of all of the underground's groups, though most retained personal contacts with leading rightist activists. Interestingly, what determined these independent women in favor of maintaining their national socialist ideology remained radically different from what motivated the rightist men. One woman, for example, said that for her the most important factor is national socialist morality: she views national socialism as a private affair, as it deals with family life, the upbringing of children, and the prohibition of abortion, prostitution and pornography, and emphasizes an anti-materialistic lifestyle. In other words, her concerns seem to be the same as those of women in Nazi organizations, as described by Claudia Koonz.<sup>103</sup> By contrast, young male national socialists speak more often of the need to fight the 'Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG)', the need to maintain the purity of the race or the desire for a more authoritarian kind of state government.<sup>104</sup>

Despite their loyalty to the ideology, several of the more ideological women left the underground after a while because they disliked the prevailing raucous skinhead lifestyle. These women speak of the underground and its participants as being 'non-serious'. They have an especially negative view of many of the underground's youngest women, considering them 'cheap' and immature, and too passively accepting of their underprivileged position in relation to the men.<sup>105</sup> Until recently, ideologically convinced women seemed to have only two alternatives to the underground: they could work with the editor of *Fritt Forum*, or they could cultivate contacts with older nationalists or national socialists. A third route that later became available was to join the newly established Asatru society.

In 1993, a new option emerged with the first initiative toward starting a

separate women's group. The very name of the group – Skall – 'Shell' – underlined the women's sense of needing to protect themselves from the domination of the men. At the first and only meeting they had, the members discussed, among other issues, how much they should open themselves toward me as a researcher without threatening their own integrity. For the men, such issues were relevant primarily in relation to the surrounding world of enemies. For the women, it was also an issue of how the men would react to what they told me.

The male activists were positive toward the initiative. One of them was willing to help the women with practical matters, such as the printing of a fanzine and the creation of a logo. The Skall group was, however, suspended because the leading woman was removed from the movement by her mother(!).<sup>106</sup>

In January 1995, some of the females formed a group on their own: Valkyria. They wanted to escape the label of 'mattress' and gain more respect for being serious. 'It feels safe to be within an all-female group, and not having boys around you all the time', one of the initiators explained.<sup>107</sup> By starting on their own, they gained respect and felt safe. One Valkyria member stressed this point:

No men shall decide for a girl's group. We can manage by ourselves! But this does not mean that we do not want to collaborate [with the men], or give each other advice and moral support .... In mixed groups there is no equality [between the sexes]. The boys have a tendency to neglect the girls' potential and talents. The inner circle of boys usually becomes a pure boys' club and the girls feel overruled.... Girls never get the chance to show what they are good at! If they don't get the opportunity to become schooled, and are allowed to participate only at parties, no one can expect them to have great political knowledge. We demand respect and we will not let ourselves be put upon.<sup>108</sup>

This statement shows that the females were no longer satisfied with being merely a passive audience for the males' actions. The reason women wanted their own group was not because they disagreed with the political views held by the males, or with the males' militant actions. Rather, they wanted – in line with Morgan's interpretation of terrorist women – to make the men's combat their own. However, in contrast to classical militant women, they also developed their own actions and agendas with issues different from those of the men.<sup>109</sup>

## The Valkyria Group

Even though Valkyria is a separate organization, it shares many activities with men from the Viking group. They share the same post box address; and Valkyria is defined as Viking's 'sister' on Viking's home page on the Internet. In Viking's fanzine, also called *Viking*, the Valkyria women have a page of their own, where they write short articles signed *Jeanne D'Arc*. Leading members of both groups take part in the same meetings, where they plan future actions, camps and training. Weapons training is organized jointly for the two groups.

The Valkyria group is not organized as militarily as the Viking Group.<sup>110</sup> There are no formal leaders of the Valkyria group. Still, there are more experienced women who tell less experienced women what to do. One of these more leading women explains that 'We have requirements. If you give youths clear messages, they do what you ask them to do. People need more clearly defined rules to follow.'<sup>111</sup> This trend for some women to put forward rules for less experienced women to follow is completely new. The notion that there are certain definite requirements of how women should behave is also new. Valkyria is organized in several local cells. The main part of the group is located in Oslo, with about ten members; another ten women are distributed across four other cells located at smaller places surrounding Oslo. The Oslo cell often organizes its own actions, which makes a ten-woman membership practical, because they fit into two cars, as a leading activist from the Viking group puts it.<sup>112</sup> The Oslo women may be considered the inner circle of Valkyria women. However, all the women meet once a month. The main purpose of this meeting is to come together and create a sense of being a group, but they also plan actions and discuss ideology. Sometimes the Valkyria women organize their own training camps in which like-minded women from other countries also take part.

Valkyria's long-term project is to build up groups all over the country. The intention is for each local cell to have its own leader, and for all the leaders to meet once a month in order to discuss common strategies. This group of leading female activists is called Frigg.<sup>113</sup>

Until recently, there was a separate Valkyria cell in Drammen, which had little contact with the Oslo cell. The Drammen group emerged in the summer of 1995, but dissolved in March 1996 because its leader left the underground. A woman from the Oslo cell asserts that the Drammen women were more fond of pub life, whereas the Oslo women are more militant and demand that their members drink less.<sup>114</sup> Another difference was, according to her, that the Drammen women tended to be more ideologically extreme, by not distancing themselves from national socialism as the Oslo women did.

The Valkyria women created their own symbol, which combined the Celtic cross, the women's sign and the circle. One member explains: 'The women's sign because we are women, the Celtic cross because we are nationalists, and the circle to symbolize the unity and solidarity between us'.<sup>115</sup> They recently dropped this sign because the Celtic cross is often associated with Nazism, and these women prefer to be considered nationalists. They therefore use only the Norwegian flag and the official symbol of Norway, the lion, because these symbols are purely national and have no Nazi connotations.

Valkyria women recruit new members through leaflets and by recruiting the friends of friends.<sup>116</sup> This is in distinct contrast to the situation prior to the emergence of a separate women's group, when (with the exception of one woman who joined because of ideological motives) the sole route into the movement for women had to do with their relationships with men, a pattern that matches the findings of Weinberg and Eubank for both leftist and rightist militant women.<sup>117</sup> However, nowadays some women have initiated direct contact with the Valkyria group without having been involved with the underground men's group beforehand. These women join the underground partly because they find it exciting. Some also cite political motives for entering, such as the frustration they feel after having been assaulted by foreign (Muslim) men. One woman recounts that she entered the Valkyria group after having read one of their leaflets: when she 'saw the content of the leaflet, I was so glad there was somebody else who believed the same things as I do'.<sup>118</sup>

After a probationary period, a newcomer is allowed to meet all of the members of her local Valkyria cell.<sup>119</sup> One woman from the local group is responsible for taking care of the newcomer, and is bound to secrecy concerning any problems the newcomer wants to discuss. This mentor relationship is meant to last until the other members fully trust the newcomer, when she is allowed full membership.

There are no initiation rituals which the newcomer has to pass, a pattern, for example, of the women's KKK in the 1920s.<sup>120</sup> But there are some standards for admission. A trustworthy member of Valkyria is to handle information with discretion, not drink much, practice kick boxing and shooting, not give Nazi salutes, be a true nationalist, wear military clothes when needed but in daily life dress in casual clothes and, last but not least, live 'straight', i.e. not change partners often. Some women have been denied membership, usually because they drink too much. This is especially true of a few Satanist women who wanted to join Valkyria. However, according to a leading Valkyria woman, the Satanists were too fond of pub life and Nazi salutes; Valkyria members should conduct themselves more seriously. More formal requirements are that all members are bound to keep

information secret and, most important of all, not give away the identity of other group members. They are not allowed to discuss information or mention names on the telephone because 'we know that the Special Branch is very interested in everything we do, and in the identity of our members'.<sup>121</sup> Members are forbidden to discuss internal issues with outsiders, because 'there are a lot of opponents who work full-time to map us, but without our help they will never obtain information of any significance'.<sup>122</sup> However, members are permitted to discuss the general guidelines of the group and give examples of their common activities. Some members function as media spokespersons.

Even though the Valkyria group, according to its instruction manual, is a militant nationalist group, the newcomer does not have to prove ideological proficiency or excellence in shooting or fighting.<sup>123</sup> Rather, the new recruit has to prove herself capable of following certain procedures concerning appointment-making, alert behavior and discretion. This feature is quite similar to the procedures followed in more well-organized and militant groups such as the Italian Red Brigades.<sup>124</sup>

Only women over age fifteen are allowed to be members.<sup>125</sup> The reason for this is that the members often enter into serious conflicts with teachers, parents or even the Child Welfare Authorities after joining Valkyria. A leading Valkyria member reports that 'Many of the girls received high grades at school and were nice, sweet girls. Then one day they come home wearing army caps and boots. Their parents say 'you are not allowed to go out any more'. But the parents calm down after a while. They become resigned when their kids reach the age of 18.'<sup>126</sup> This shows that participation in this group means opposing the traditional roles for females of being nice and living up to the expectations of parents and teachers. These women want to break with such a subordinated role; they want to be valued as tough.

The Valkyria women receive letters from women in many different countries, some of whom have already organized their own all-female groups; others want to establish groups and need advice from an existing organization. For example, a Danish women's group was organized in the summer of 1995, after its founder had contacted the Valkyria women asking for information. The Valkyria members also exchange letters and information with women in Germany. In addition, some other nationalist female groups have emerged in Norway recently.<sup>127</sup>

### **Stylistic Distinctions Between Valkyria Women and other Female Activists**

With the emergence of Valkyria, two different styles now exist for women activists. The women of Valkyria wear fatigues and US Army caps every

time there is a concert or a counter-demonstration. The Valkyria women look so ultra-militant that some of their Swedish acquaintances have labeled them the Death Squadron.<sup>128</sup> Some of the women outside Valkyria, a few of whom are organized in NUNS 88, wear the typical female version of the skinhead uniform: miniskirt, fishnet stockings, Doc Martens, black white power T-shirts and bomber jackets. These women also have the typical skinhead woman hairstyle: head cropped close to the skull with a blonde fringe of bangs above their foreheads.<sup>129</sup> Some women have tattoos: one woman has a tattoo picturing snakes crawling up her upper arms.

In other words, women from both NUNS 88 and Valkyria copy many elements from masculine uniforms. However, the Valkyria women counteract these elements by their long hair, which they sometimes bleach in order to look more Aryan;<sup>130</sup> the NUNS 88 women do so by wearing skirts and fishnet stockings. According to one Valkyria woman, the NUNS 88 women think the Valkyria women are too rough.

The ideal image of female activists in these groups is not the traditional feminine negation of the macho image. An ideal which is widespread – among men and women alike – is the tough woman who does not fear fights, though she does not take part in them.<sup>131</sup>

### **New Female Role-Patterns, 1995–1996**

In 1996, there are some new role patterns visible for women in the Norwegian rightist underground. Young and inexperienced women still play more passive and subordinate roles. However, the new trend is that there also exist women who take part in all actions. These female activists are militant nationalist women,<sup>132</sup> and they are mainly organized in the Valkyria group. They are involved for political reasons, and are active in all kinds of actions. For example, they join strategic meetings with the males, take part in weapons training and organize their own study meetings and underground actions.

Another newly established role is found among the national socialist skinhead women,<sup>133</sup> some of whom are members of NUNS 88. The Valkyria women label these latter women non-serious because they drink a lot and give Nazi salutes; they are also, according to a woman from Valkyria, most likely to be labeled 'mattresses',<sup>134</sup> a status which renders them (in the eyes of militant Valkyria members) unacceptable as activists, yet still acceptable as friends, a pattern Campbell has often found elsewhere in youth gangs.<sup>135</sup>

Both the militant nationalist women and the female nationalist skinheads may be considered activists since they partake in major actions of the underground. In addition, there are sympathizers; that is, women who do not participate directly in underground activities. They sympathize with the

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'nationalist milieu' – which is the name activists use to refer to the rightist underground – and they make their first contacts with the underground because of political ideas (such as opposition to immigration), because of their attraction to a male activist and/or because of the excitement connected to such a secretive and potentially dangerous movement.

Activist women apply the same distinctions between those who drink a lot and like to give Nazi salutes and those who drink less and act more disciplined to both men and women. Still, they apply the category 'mattress' only to women; they never categorize men as sexual objects. This shows that, even though the existence of a separate women's group has led to greater prominence and self-confidence for women in the underground, sexist views still tend to serve as guidelines for their actions and, to a large extent, are uncritically adopted even by the female activists.

### Violence

The participation by Valkyria women in weapons training leads one to ask if this is motivated by a genuine wish to carry out political violence or by a sense that taking part in such activities provides access to a distinctly male kind of world, as Wheelwright reports from her study of amazons and military maids at the beginning of this century.<sup>136</sup> The latter interpretation seems the more plausible, especially when one listens to what the women say themselves. One soon sees, for example, that weapons training is motivated partly by the strong sense of comradeship that it engenders:

We gain a 'we' feeling among us. It becomes a part of your life. This is much better than being mere rowdies in the streets, shouting 'sieg heil'. We make a fire and eat hot dogs and have a lot of fun. The police have turned up once, but we move from place to place every time, so they can't find us.<sup>137</sup>

There is, of course, a lot of excitement connected to the weapons training, both because the police try to locate and stop it, and because it has an aura of secrecy and extremism. In one sense, then, the weapons training is an advanced kind of play for adult kids. One female activist referred to this underground as parallel to the situation described in the novel *Lord of the Flies*: they are like the males in that book, isolated and with no one to correct them.<sup>138</sup> However, the training is not just play. It is also motivated out of a genuine feeling that they are in real danger of being severely wounded in attacks by anti-fascists, and that use of weapons is the only possible way to fight back. One female activist states that 'If it should come to civil war between racists and anti-racists in Norway, we would not hesitate to use weapons to defend what we believe in'.<sup>139</sup>

Still, not all the females want to fight in the front lines. Up to now, they have withdrawn to the background when there have been violent clashes. One Valkyria woman claims that

it is a question of courage. We [the Oslo Valkyria women] are more militant than the women from Drammen. They only have these courses in Norse mythology; whereas we try to gain more courage by practicing kick boxing, training with dogs, and learning communication techniques. When we have enough courage, we will also fight in the front line. We prepare for war, and we learn camouflage. A second lieutenant from the army is training us. About 50 per cent of us want to take part in the front. Some women say they do not dare to take part in the front line. That's no problem; they can contribute by taking care of other tasks.<sup>140</sup>

This Valkyria activist argues that they will take part in militant actions because their hatred is growing. This hatred is connected to their feeling of being politically persecuted. They agree with the view held by the males that Norwegian politics are governed by the pro-immigration left wing and, accordingly, the hate targets of these women include both the official authorities as well as militant groups on the left: 'At school we [all women] are taught to be kind, sweet girls and vote for the Labor party. But our [the Valkyria women's] hatred is growing, and we want to get revenge [on the left-wing youths]'.<sup>141</sup> The women maintain that they are afraid of being attacked by Anti-Fascist Action. All of them carry mobile phones, so that they can reach males if necessary. They carry tear gas or wear shoes with steel caps to protect themselves. If they are attacked, they want to fight back, they say. Once a woman from the AFA group threatened a Valkyria woman; then three Valkyria women went together to get the AFA woman.<sup>142</sup> Such all-female fights are rare, however.

Some women have a few reservations about the militant profile of the rightist underground. In particular, they dislike the weapons training and the violent actions. Nevertheless, they see the need for protection and want to know how to defend themselves against attack.

But most of the women support militant strategies. This attitude among the women is remarkably new in the Norwegian rightist underground. Instead of being hesitant concerning the militant actions of the men, they now actively support such policies.<sup>143</sup>

### **Ideology and Politics**

Having started their own groups, rightist women are now more eager to talk politics. Many of them express more extreme views than they did

previously. It may be that they had the same views before, but now verbalize them more – they ‘come out’, so to speak. Another new feature is that women now tend to enter the group for political reasons, not just because they have relationships with men in the underground. One newly recruited member of Valkyria says that it was ‘especially Valkyria’s views on immigration that attracted me. As a nationalist,<sup>144</sup> I will definitely fight’ with all the means necessary to make Norway a better country to live in.’<sup>145</sup>

First and foremost, the Valkyria members are against immigration. They say that they are scared by the way many immigrants (i.e. Muslims) view women. One woman claims that

It scares me to see Norwegian women with veils. It is a big step back for emancipation. In Norway women are used to wearing miniskirts; if the Muslims come to power we won’t be able to do that anymore. I have read the Bible and the Koran. The Koran does not fit our beliefs. Muslim men are allowed to strut their women inside their houses, and hit their wives if they do not give birth to sons. Most of us have girlfriends outside the nationalist milieu, and they say the same things we do.<sup>146</sup> They are also skeptical when Muslim men try to pick them up.<sup>147</sup>

This woman uses arguments which can be categorized as nationalist or new racist.<sup>148</sup> That is, she does not talk explicitly about the purity of the race, but instead of the fear of Muslim culture becoming too dominant. Other women are more openly racist in the narrow sense of the word. One woman asserts that ‘There are only 8 per cent of us whites in the world; therefore we have to protect the white race. Mixed marriages lead to a gray race...’ Yet another woman declares that ‘The white race is genuine, and it needs to be attended to. I have met an immigrant who maintained that all people of her color should mix with us whites in order to destroy our race. We won’t put up with that!’<sup>149</sup>

A small number of women are sympathetic to portions of the Nazi ideology. One woman says that

There were many things in Hitler’s ideology which were good, but unfortunately everything went overboard in the end. We especially keep a distance from the persecution of Jews. Hitler was a national socialist; we are only nationalists. We want to defend the Norwegian character, and to protect the white race by stopping immigration and preventing the dilution of the race.<sup>150</sup>

However, a leading Valkyria activist states that the Valkyria group is not open to Nazis:

Many of us are called Nazis. But we do not belong to the group that goes into the street and shouts 'Sieg Heil'. Approximately 90 per cent of those who take part in the milieu are not Nazis. Then there is a group called NUNS 88. They are Nazis. But they have a rather low IQ. There is a woman in that group as well. We used to call them Nuns on the run, because every time there is trouble, they run. The leader of that group even cooperates with the police. ... It is impossible to unite nationalism and national socialism. Nationalism means staying with country, whereas national socialism means your country is where national socialism is. That makes a big difference. ... The Second World War was fifty years ago. The ideology of Hitler is obsolete. The point about 6 million Jews is an issue on which we cannot take a stand.<sup>151</sup>

Nazism becomes an important issue for these women because outsiders tend to think of them as being Nazis, and because these women adhere to an international subculture where Nazi elements are highly prevalent.<sup>152</sup> One of the Valkyria women tried to sort out what separated militant nationalism from neo-Nazism, and learned, after having interviewed researchers, journalists, politicians and right-wing activists, that they saw nationalists and neo-Nazis in practice as more or less the same thing. Thus despite wanting to be considered nationalists, these women realize that because they participate side by side with neo-Nazis, they must accept being considered Nazis as well. This insight seems to have made them somewhat less anti-Nazi than they originally wanted to be. They have become resigned to the situation, and say they don't care if some activists are Nazis.

But even though they are no longer openly anti-Nazi, they certainly remain anti-Communist. One woman asserts that

Fighting Communism is important to us. Communism makes us freeze. There is no help voting for the Progress Party as long as the Labor Party is in power. The Blitz youths are only Gerhardsen's storm troopers. We're all anti-Communists. But except for that, there is a broad range of opinions.<sup>153</sup>

The Valkyria group arranges study meetings to 'heighten' its members' 'political, cultural and historical consciousness'<sup>154</sup> and to protect Norway and Norwegian culture. At the meetings, the members discuss the Viking era, the history of the Norwegian national socialist party during the 1930s and 1940s, 'our historical roots' in more general terms, immigration policy and nationalism. The most experienced women see their role as being to teach the other women, but also to have an impact on people who disagree openly with their views. Their main goal is to 'heighten the girls' consciousness'.<sup>155</sup> One woman claims that 'I was born in Norway, and I am

proud of being Norwegian. Proud of Norwegian culture and history. If others do not agree with me, I will do everything I can to convince them.<sup>156</sup>

Despite the Valkyria members' outspoken stand against immigrants, they do not usually carry out leaflet actions, violence or harassment against foreigners. According to a leading male activist, the reason for this is that these actions are 'taken care of' by male activists, so that the women do not see the need to engage themselves in this way.<sup>157</sup> Instead, they carry out their own actions on issues which do not engage the men as much.

### Women's Issues

We want to create a future for our children and for girls in the nationalist milieu.<sup>158</sup>

The Valkyria members are concerned with several contemporary women's issues, such as their stance against the emergence of brothels, and against pornography and prostitution. In this regard, they resemble their female opponents from the Blitz house more than their male counterparts from the rightist underground. Women from the Blitz house have frequently organized demonstrations against brothels. According to the Valkyria women, a problem with these demonstrations is that they have not managed to create financial loss for the brothels. They also claim that so-called 'red stockings', i.e. left-wing feminist women, only want higher wages, whereas the Valkyria think that women should receive full wages for working at home. Several of them want to remain home with their future children, rather than sending their children to kindergarten. At present, only a couple Valkyria women have children.

In this way, the Valkyria women tend to distance themselves from parts of feminist policy. They tend to think that emancipation in some ways has gone too far. Hence, they are quite in line with the idea common among Nazi women of the 1930s who wanted women to be separate but equal; that is, that they contribute through different tasks in society, but wish nevertheless to be judged as equal.<sup>159</sup> Many of the females are interested in equal rights for men and women, and view Viking women as female ideals because they were strong and combative.

Yet even though Valkyria women define themselves partly in opposition to left-wing feminism, they remain curious regarding the policies and knowledge of women on the left. According to one Valkyria member, they would like to find out more about what various leftist groups stand for, and would like to do so by actually joining their courses. They once contacted women from Rød Ungdom in the street, and asked whether they could join their communication courses. According to this Valkyria member, the

communist women refused to answer the question, and seemed furious to be asked. She asserts that 'The Blitz girls are scared to death that we will say, "Hi, we are tough girls who want to study with you". They are scared because we are tough girls like they are, but still stand for something other than for what they do.'<sup>160</sup>

Heretofore, the Valkyria women have not organized their own anti-brothel demonstrations. However, they have organized actions to stop men from using prostitutes. They did so by walking the streets where prostitution occurs, so they could see for themselves how it happens. To prevent it, a Valkyria called the men up, saying 'We do not want this to happen again'.<sup>161</sup> Prostitution pollutes women's nature, she said.<sup>162</sup>

The Valkyria women are also against pornography, as are the left-wing women. This is further proof that female participation in the rightist underground must be viewed in a context outside of male participation, especially since many of the men are high consumers of pornography.

One other instance of male attitudes rejected by these women is that statement by politician Jack Kjuus that all adopted children should be sterilized.<sup>163</sup> This view, which is equivalent to the racial hygienic views that were widespread in the 1920s and 1930s,<sup>164</sup> have no appeal for these women.

In addition to their activism against the oppression of females, the members of Valkyria take part in volunteer work for elderly people.<sup>165</sup> This is in no way a common trend among young women in Norway. They are similarly nonconformist in their choice of traditionally female occupations at a time when it is more the norm for women to pursue longer educations than men, and when more and more women are entering traditionally male spheres of production. One of the Valkyria women works in a kindergarten, another in a day-care with dreams of being a mid-wife. Others work in shops, and some go to school.

This combination of females supporting the males' militant practices and studying ideology while at the same time practicing exceptionally traditional female roles is prevalent in rightist undergrounds in other countries as well. The same held true for women in Nazi organizations in the 1930s.<sup>166</sup> However, in line with women of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s, the Valkyria girls also support several women's rights issues. Therefore, the Valkyria's view of gender roles is, as Blee has pointed out regarding the Klanswomen, 'neither uniformly reactionary, nor progressive'.<sup>167</sup>

### Current Male Views of Female Activists

The emergence of the Valkyria group has changed the picture of how males within the rightist underground view the females. A leading activist from

the Viking group states that there is no problem having women taking part, and he disagrees with the view that women's emotions are a problem when it really matters.<sup>168</sup> According to him, the hatred that women feel after being attacked is much more intense than what males feel when they get beat up. Such intense hatred is useful to the underground, he says, because it strengthens the will to fight. He says that the main issue is not whether a participant is a woman or man. What matters is that the person is able to think and remain calm under pressure. Women who are able to think and stay calm during attacks are worth more than a man who is a rowdy and acts without thinking, he states. Such women may be given leadership tasks if they have the ability and courage to fulfill such a role. However, women who are 'mattresses', drink a lot and give Nazi salutes are no good to the movement. This kind of skinhead style may work in London, but it doesn't work in Norway, he says. According to him, skinheads are a variation on football hooligans, and are not the easiest people to handle. He therefore prefers more disciplined youths.

This view is common among other male activists. As far as I can tell, all the men are sympathetic to the fact that women organize themselves. The dominant attitude is that men and women can fight side by side. In this regard, this underground is not very typical of rightist undergrounds elsewhere, where the macho community is far more idealized. For example, the British National Front tends to portray women from their own movement as mothers or housewives, even when these women are in fact political activists.<sup>169</sup> The Norwegian rightist underground thus seems comparatively more modern. This difference between Norway and England also reflects general differences in the situation of women in the two countries. Norway is often considered to be one of the countries with the most far-reaching emancipation in the world, with a large proportion of women in positions of leadership, especially in the political and public sectors. In Norway, women militants both on the left and on the right have all-female groups and participate in major activities with the men. It seems evident that the prominent position of females is a result of the self evident equality of participation of men and women in Norway. The pro-female views of the male right-wing activists shows that the far-reaching emancipation of women in Norway has also permeated underground groups on the right.

Yet the male activists tended to view the females differently before the emergence of Valkyria. There is certainly a dialectic relation between how the women behave and how the men view them. The situation predating the organization of separate women's groups was to some extent similar to that which led to the organization of separate women's groups among German Nazis in the 1930s and among American Ku Klux Klan members in the

1920s, namely, that women were allowed to organize their own groups precisely because they were deemed unimportant. Nonetheless, the consequence of an all-female group in the Norwegian rightist underground is that the women become more visible, more confident and, therefore, are accorded a more prominent position by the males. So when the women develop a group on their own, with their own identity and strategies, the males also tend to respect them more.

### **Men and Women Side by Side**

The fact that there were so few women within the rightist underground previously seems to be a strong indicator that the role women occupied within the movement was not sufficiently satisfying to attract or retain female members. Women wanted to do something on their own, and not merely serve as audience for the men. Thus the principal motivation behind the formation of the all-female group was the women's sense that they were unjustly subordinated. This is probably the reason separate women's groups seem to occur less frequently among militant groups on the left: since women in leftist groups are more frequently allowed leading roles, they feel the need for separate organizations less urgently. In the rightist underground, the ability of women to win responsible roles is a consequence of their formation of a separate women's group, a result they previously could only dream of. The leading women of Valkyria are now a part of the inner circle, and even take part in meetings where strategic underground activities are planned. However, it is still the male activists who establish the main tenets of the underground; and even the leading Valkyria women ask principal male activists for advice before giving interviews.

By establishing their own organization, rightist women create their own loyalty to the movement. They organize their own actions, with emphasis on certain 'women's issues' not shared by the males. To a greater extent than before, women make contact with the movement on their own initiative, not merely because they are involved with one of the males. The creation of women's groups has also led to more women becoming attracted to the movement. And, more than before, they seem to be remaining with it. This has led to an increase in politicization. They have also become more militant. Thus women are taking part in the movement not only because they are attracted to tough, militant far-right men, but because they themselves want to be tough, militant and far-right. In this regard, they are now the men's 'equals'.



## NOTES

I owe a special thanks to the assistant editor Joan Witte who helped me rewrite the final draft.

1. I intend to discuss methodological aspects of my study in a forthcoming article. The literature on the specific problems connected to the study of far-right groups is scarce. However, some authors have given reports which highlight important aspects of such studies. See, for example, Kathleen Blee, 'Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan', *The Journal of American History* (Sept. 1993).
2. Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover. On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (London: Methuen 1989) p.195.
3. Eileen MacDonald, *Shoot the Women First* (London: Fourth Estate 1991) p.1.
4. Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank, 'Italian Women Terrorists', *Terrorism* 9/3 (1987) pp.254-7.
5. Barbara Alpern Engel and Clifford N. Rosenthal, *Five Sisters. Women Against the Tsar* (NY: Schocken Books 1977) pp.xxiv, 28.
6. For example, Vera Figner was responsible for the preparation and the keeping of the bomb and was a central figure behind the assassination of the Tsar. In 1880 she was chosen as the foreign correspondence secretary of the People's Will. She was also responsible for coordinating the effort to woo foreign opinion. See David C. Rapoport, 'The International World as Some Terrorists have seen it: A Look at a Century of Memoirs', in David C. Rapoport (ed.), *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (London: Frank Cass 1988) p.37. See also Engel and Rosenthal (note 5), p.43.
7. Considerable data indicate that many women join terrorist groups because they have become affiliated with terrorist men. Leonard Weinberg and William Lee Eubank studied the biographies of 451 women who were active in Italian terrorist groups, both rightist and leftist, between 1970 and 1984, finding that in two-thirds of the case stories, the women had become involved because they were married to terrorist men, and in most of the other cases the women had become involved via a male sibling. A significantly higher proportion of the women had prior blood or love ties with terrorists, as compared to the men. For the few men who were involved because of family ties, the connections were fraternal or paternal rather than marital or romantic. Furthermore, the men had a history of political involvement predating their terrorist activities, whereas most of the women did not. In other words, men had a greater tendency to become involved in terrorism because of politics, whereas women more often became involved because of men. Interestingly, of the women studied, only 7 per cent held positions of leadership and participated in major terrorist operations such as kidnapping and assassination. See Weinberg and Eubank (note 4), pp.253, 255. See also Morgan (note 2), pp.203-4.
8. This holds true even for the leading women of the Red Army Faction (RAF): Eileen MacDonald (note 3), p.202, confirms that RAF women did not join terrorism because of feminist motives. Since they identified the interests of their male comrades as their own, Robin Morgan (note 2, p.207) argues that they were in practice followers whose orientation were not feminist but traditional female.
9. MacDonald (note 3), p.201.
10. MacDonald (note 3), p.205.
11. MacDonald (note 3), p.210.
12. MacDonald (note 3), p.200.
13. A leading woman within the Red Brigades says that 'Women remain enemies of any type of power whatsoever; they have a feeling of real hostility toward it. ... It's a rebellion, though more than a rebellion; it's a conviction that the power of one individual over another is a source of disaster and injustice'. 'Interview with Adriana Faranda', in Alison Jamieson, *The Heart Attacked. Terrorism and Conflict in the Italian State* (London: Maryon Boyars 1989) p.273.
14. *Ibid.*, pp.64-5.
15. *Ibid.*, p.67.
16. Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan. Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University

- of California Press 1991) p.42.
17. Ibid., p.41.
  18. Blee (note 1).
  19. Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London: Jonathan Cape 1987) p.55.
  20. Claudia Koonz, 'Women in Nazi Germany', in Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (eds), *Becoming Visible. Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1977) p.450.
  21. Ibid., p.451.
  22. Ibid., pp.459, 464–5.
  23. Ibid., p.448.
  24. Ibid., p.454; see also p.463.
  25. Ibid., pp.448–9.
  26. *Demos Newsletter*, No.24 (1993).
  27. J. Mushaben, 'The Rise of Femi-Nazis? Female Participation in Right-Extremist Movements in Unified Germany', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 31 Aug.–3 Sept. 1995, p.25.
  28. Heléne Lööv, 'Tant brun – man och kvinnor I vit makt världen och i de nationella laden 1937–1992' (Aunt Brown – Men and Women in the White Power World and in the Nationalist Parties 1937–1992), *Historisk tidskrift* 4 (1992) p.559.
  29. Mushaben (note 27), p.24; *Demos Newsletter*, No.40 (Feb. 1996).
  30. Mushaben (note 27), p.24; *Demos Newsletter*, No.24 (1993).
  31. Mushaben (note 27), p.24; Internet information.
  32. Internet information.
  33. Lööv (note 28), p.559.
  34. *Fritt Forum*, No.5 (1996).
  35. Ibid.
  36. Heléne Lööv, 'White Power Rock 'n Roll. A Growing Industry', in Jeffrey Kaplan and Tore Bjørge (eds), *Nation and Race: The Developing Euro-American Racist Subculture* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, forthcoming 1998).
  37. M. Durham, 'Women and the National Front', in Luciano Cheles *et al.* (eds), *Neo-Fascism in Europe* (London: Longman 1991) p.276.
  38. Heléne Lööv, 'Rasistisk undergroundkultur' (Racist Underground Culture), in *Rapport till samordningskansliet för brottsförebyggande åtgärder*, Stockholms Stad.
  39. Lööv (note 28) 'Tant brun', p.554.
  40. *Demos Newsletter*, No.40 (Feb. 1996); *Faerelandet*, No.11 (1995).
  41. See *Lund-rapporten (The Lund Report)* regarding the Norwegian Special Branch. Document No.15 (1995–96), the Norwegian Government.
  42. In 1981, several punks and freaks invaded a house in Oslo as squatters. They were later thrown out by the police but were, however, offered another house instead, which is now known as the Blitz house. Most of the users of this house call themselves anarchists; various rock groups and cultural organizations, as well as the women's radio station *RadiOrakel* are based there.
  43. *Fritt Forum*, No.4 (1995).
  44. L. Weinberg and W.L. Eubank, 'Leaders and Followers in Italian Terrorist Groups', *Terrorism and Political Violence* (hereafter *TPV*) 1/2 (April 1989).
  45. See *AFA Magazine*, No.2 (1996) for an account of their actions during 1995. *AFA Magazine* was first published in 1995. Anti-Fascist Action was established in 1994. It is organized as a network of local groups, which in turn cooperate with other anti-racist groups such as SOS-Racism.
  46. Ibid.
  47. According to Norse mythology, the valkyries served Odin. They led battles and chose which warriors fell in battle. During battle, the valkyries would wear helmets on their heads and carry shields. The Vikings feared the valkyries because they thought them to be bad omens.
  48. NUNS 88 stands for Young Norwegian National Socialists 88. The number 88 is used in white supremacist groups as a code for 'Heil Hitler'.

49. The number of active individuals varies, making it difficult to decide whether to count them as participants or not. According to a leading activist from the Viking group, 200 is probably the maximum number of people they would be able to gather if everyone connected to the underground turned up today; whereas forty persons are active on a more regular basis. (This section is based upon a tape-recorded interview on 24 April 1996.) A leading activist from the national socialist skinhead part of the underground reports that at a concert on New Year's Eve in 1995, they gathered 130 persons, to date the maximum number of persons gathered from the Norwegian rightist underground. (Interview, 17 Aug. 1996).
50. I have described the substantial differences among these various rightist groups in Katrine Fangen, 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts. Ideological Beliefs among Rightist Activists in Norway', in Kaplan and Bjørge, *Nation and Race* (note 36).
51. Rhetorical differences between 'anti-immigrants' and young right-wing activists are discussed by Tore Bjørge in his essay, 'Extreme Nationalism and Violent Discourses in Scandinavia: "The Resistance", "Traitors", and "Foreign Invaders"', in Tore Bjørge (ed.), *Terror from the Extreme Right* (London: Frank Cass 1995).
52. I received this information when this agreement was put forward at a meeting at *Den Norske Forening* in March 1994.
53. See Kaplan and Bjørge (note 36).
54. Combat 18's *International Redwatch*, No.1 (1996).
55. *Fritt Forum*, Nos.2-3 (1996).
56. According to my observations, and my discussion of the issue with both male and female activists.
57. Vera Oredsson, 'Jamstalldhet – en nationell produkt?' ('Equality [between the sexes] – a National Product?'), *Nordisk Kamp*, Nos.3-4 (1994), pp.4-5. Vera Oredsson is probably the only woman ever who has, for a period of time, been the leader of a National Socialist party (with both male and female members); see Löow (note 28).
58. Koonz (note 20), p.451.
59. See my discussion of the term in Kaplan and Bjørge (note 36).
60. Per Bangsund, *Arvtagerne. Nazisme i Norge etter krigen* (*The Inheritors. Nazism in Norway after the War*) (Oslo: Pax forlag 1989).
61. Especially interesting, perhaps, are her articles on homosexuality, considering that, according to several activists who were active at that time, she later separated from her husband because he had a male lover.
62. Asatru is from the Norse mythology.
63. The so-called Brumunddal Clash is described and analyzed by Froydis Eidheim, 'Hva har skjedd i Brumunddal? Bygdesamfunnet i motet med de fremmede og seg selv' (What has happened in Brumunddal? The Local Community Confronted by the Foreigners and Itself), *NIBR-report*, No.20 (1993).
64. The period when I carried out my field-work.
65. *Fritt Forum* ('Free Forum') is, according to its outlines, a free forum; that is, it is open for all persons and groups of the far right. The magazine does not allow explicit Nazi articles to be printed. However, it distributes fanzines and other issues with Nazi content through its distribution network, *Nor-Effekt*. The editor is 29 years old, and his co-editors are all young people. The magazine is, however, sponsored by a fund (also called *Fritt Forum*), made up by several elder nationalist politicians.
66. A. McRobbie and J. Garber, 'Girls and Subcultures', in Stanley *et al.* (eds), *Resistance through Rituals* (London: Hutchinson 1976).
67. The statutory age for sex in Norway is 16 years.
68. Weinberg and Eubank (note 4).
69. In some militant leftist groups, romantic relationships within the movement are viewed as a problem. See Alison Jamieson, 'Entry, Discipline and Exit in the Italian Red Brigades', *TPV 2/1* (Spring 1990) pp.1-20.
70. Anne Campbell, *The Girls in the Gang* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers 1993).
71. Koonz (note 19).
72. See also David C. Rapoport, *Assassination and Terrorism* (Toronto: CBC 1971).

73. *Fritt Forum*, No.4 (1995).
74. The current Fascist party in Italy, with Mussolini's grandchild as a prominent female representative.
75. Tyra, like many of the other youngest women of the underground, fits Anne Campbell's description of the typical 'gang girl'. As Campbell puts it, 'Like the boys ... they enjoy excitement and trouble, which break the monotony of a life in which little attention is given to the future.... They admire toughness and verbal "smarts". ... Authority, in the shape of school, parents and police, is the enemy, but a welcome one since it generates confrontations and livens things up.' Campbell (note 70), pp.7-8.
76. McRobbie and Garber (note 66).
77. cf. Jamieson (note 69), p.8.
78. McRobbie and Garber (note 66) see the two-fold rebellion of 'gang girls' as defined both by their gender and by their lower class position. Actually, several women terrorists and revolutionaries have mentioned that the fact that they are women makes a double reason for joining the combat. See, for example, Engel and Rosenthal (note 5), p.xv. Julie Wheelwright discusses the problem of a woman who rebels against traditional gender roles by joining the British organization National Fascisti in 1924. As her involvement with the fascists demonstrates, her rebellion did not translate into a broader analysis of oppression; 'Rather, she allied herself with the most hierarchical and authoritative ideology of the day, embracing an extreme of masculinity'. Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids. Women who Dressed as Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora 1989) p.11.
79. For a description of 'Grufties', see Manfred Stock and Philipp Muhlberg, *Die Scene von Innen. Skinheads, Grufties, Heavy Metals, Punks* (Berlin: Links Druck Verlag 1990).
80. Field notes from 11 Aug. 1993.
81. I have heard of only a few instances of men in this movement hitting their partners. However, from time to time some males can act very dominantly, and order their women to come with them or to be quiet.
82. Interview, 9 March 1996.
83. Cf. Wheelwright's description of 'Colonel Barker'; Wheelwright (note 78), p.10: '... she joined not so much from patriotic motives as from the spice of adventure it introduced into life. The spice it lent to Barker's life included running the boxing programme designed to whip members into top physical condition to combat "the reds and the pinks" - and participating in the Sunday afternoon disruptions of Communist Party meetings in Hyde Park.' See also *ibid.*, p.13: 'The male world became accessible in an exciting way.'
84. Interview, 9 March 1996.
85. Cf. Blee (note 16), p.80.
86. *Bootboys*, No.11 (1992).
87. Christopher Husbands, 'Militant Neo-Nazism in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1980s', in Luciano Cheles *et al.* (eds), *Neo-Fascism in Europe* (London: Longman 1991) p.103. See also *Demos Newsletter*, No.40 (Feb. 1996) p.108. The trend is very much the same in Norway, although there are no statistical data available on the gender differences regarding racist and neo-fascist violence.
88. Interview, 11 Aug. 1993.
89. 'Havamal', Verse 43, in D.E. Martin (ed.), *The Havamal: with Selections from other Poems of the Edda Illustrating the Wisdom of the North in Heathen Times* (Cambridge: CUP 1923), quoted in *Bootboys/Ragnarok 12/2* (1992).
90. There are several stories written about the differences between male vs. female terrorists. According to the head of the Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution, women terrorists are more dangerous than men because they trust solely their emotions, whereas men rely on their logical reasoning. Women, therefore, tend to act without thinking, whereas men hesitate before they act. See MacDonald (note 3), pp.222-5. Jamieson (note 13), p.67, argues in her study on the Italian Red Brigades that female terrorists may be rawer, more acute and more passionate than their male counterparts.
91. See Wheelwright (note 78) on the meaning of women who enter typical male worlds in order to become like them.

92. Field notes, and interview, 14 May 1994.
93. Field notes, 30 April 1994.
94. I have analyzed this event in Katrine Fangen, 'Skinheads i rodt, hvitt og blatt. En sosiologisk studie fra "innsiden"' (Skinheads in red, white and blue. A sociological study from "inside"), *UNGforsk-report*, No.4 (1995) pp.27, 34-5. See also H. Lööw (note 36).
95. Interview, 5 July 1994.
96. Mushaben (note 27), p.20.
97. Campbell (note 70), p.7: '...her aim is to save him from his rowdy friends who are clearly a bad element, bringing out the worst in him'.
98. The term 'mattress' is used as a metaphor for sexually accessible women. The woman is thus pictured as a passive object, lying on the floor. This categorization of the women is, not surprisingly, similar to those found by John Clarke among British skinheads, and by Joyce Mushaben among German fascist skinheads. The skinheads described by Clarke talk of 'good girls' in contrast to 'slags' and 'scrubbers'; John Clarke, 'Style', in Stuart Hall *et al.* (eds), *Resistance through Rituals* (London: Hutchinson 1976) p.190. Joyce Mushaben reports of German neo-fascists that they apply the term 'Unterlagen' to young women who embrace secondary and subordinate roles, among others, as easily accessible sexual objects; Mushaben (note 27), p.20. In other words, they use a term almost identical to that used by participants in the Norwegian rightist underground. These categories place certain women in subordinate and passive roles, regardless of how these women view their presence themselves.
99. Interview, 25 Jan. 1994.
100. Interview, 15 Sept. 1993.
101. Interview, 14 Aug. 1993.
102. Interview, 28 Jan. 1994.
103. Koonz (note 19).
104. I have described the males' views in more detail elsewhere: see Fangen (note 50).
105. Anne Campbell (note 70), p.9, discusses the problems 'gang girls' are confronted with no matter what role they choose to play: 'These types of roles tend to suggest a no-win situation for gang girls. As Sex Objects, they are cheap women rejected by the other girls, parents, social workers, and ironically by the boys themselves. As Tomboys, they are resented by the boys and ridiculed by family and friends who wait patiently for them to "grow out of it".'
106. In fact many parents try to remove their children from the rightist underground. It is therefore not unusual for females to be commanded to leave the underground by their parents. However, many defy these commands, and therefore have to move out of their parents' house at an early age. There seems also to be a trend that males defy their parents' demands more than the females do.
107. This argument was also common among Nazi women who started their own groups in the 1930s; see Koonz (note 20), p.450.
108. *Fritt Forum*, No.1 (1996). Cf. the emphasis of the Klanswomen that the WKKK was an organization for women, of women and by women, which no man should exploit to his individual gain: Blee (note 16), p.28.
109. The same was true for women who started a women's division of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. As Kathleen Blee (note 16), p.2, clearly points out, 'their activities and ideologies differed sufficiently from those of the Klansmen that an examination of the women's Klan changes our interpretation of the Klan as a whole'.
110. The fact that militant women tend to organize themselves less militarily than militant men seems to be a trend throughout history. For example, the female militants involved in the Russian Revolution did not put much emphasis on discipline and command hierarchies before they merged their all-female circle with a male group; see Engel and Rosenthal (note 5), p.28. Some exceptions do nonetheless exist. The Women's KKK adopted the militaristic hierarchical style of the male KKK, and both organizations used a strict command hierarchy; see Blee (note 16), pp.35-6.
111. Interview, 9 March 1996.
112. Interview, 24 April 1996.
113. Frigg was, according to Norse mythology, Odin's wife.

114. Interview, 9 March 1996.
115. *Fritt Forum*, No.1 (1996).
116. According to Blee (note 16), p.29, the female KKK members expanded the impact of the Klan since they consciously used their families and personal networks to recruit new members.
117. Weinberg and Eubank (note 4), p.256.
118. *Fritt Forum*, No.1 (1996).
119. Valkyria's Instruction Manual.
120. Blee (note 16), pp.37-8.
121. Valkyria's Instruction Manual.
122. Valkyria's Instruction Manual.
123. Cf. Jamieson (note 69), p.3. Similarly, the KKK women supported militant patriotism, but tended not to be involved in physical violence; see Blee (note 16), pp.34, 40.
124. Jamieson (note 69).
125. Valkyria's Instruction Manual. According to Norwegian law, youths above the age of 15 are allowed to be members of political organizations, whereas youths above the age of 18 are of age and are allowed all citizens' rights. In the Women's Klan of the 1920s, sixteen was the lower age limit; see Blee (note 16), p.30.
126. Interview, 9 March 1996.
127. These two groups, Embla and Jenter for Norge (Girls for Norway), have not yet presented themselves in the underground; but they are supposed to receive a broader presentation in the next issue of the main information magazine of the underground, *Fritt Forum*, No.5 (1996).
128. Interview, 9 March 1996.
129. Cf. Mushaben (note 27), p.26.
130. *Ibid.*, p.20.
131. Cf. the picture of a skinhead woman kicking a black man portrayed as an ape in *Bootboys*, No.7 (1988). See also Lööw (note 28), p.560.
132. Mushaben (note 27), p.23, has observed rather similar female role-patterns among German neo-Nazis. The militant nationalist women are similar to those to whom Mushaben refers as the 'recruiters of the fighting front'; 'In contrast to Fascho-Brides who willingly confine themselves to the sidelines of the movement, members of the "fighting front" reject passive, eternally feminine images of women in favor of self-determined active roles'.
133. Cf. those women whom Mushaben categorizes as Fascho-Brides; *ibid.*
134. Interview, 9 March 1996.
135. Campbell (note 70), p.9.
136. Wheelwright (note 78), p.13.
137. Interview, 9 March 1996.
138. Tore Bjørge, 'Entry, Bridge-Burning and Exit Options: What Happens to Young People who join Racist Groups - and Want to Leave?' in Kaplan and Bjørge (note 36).
139. *Det Nye* (a magazine for young women), No.10 (1995).
140. Interview, 9 March 1996.
141. Interview, 9 March 1996.
142. This event was described independently both by a leading male activist from the Viking group (interview, 24 April 1996), and by a leading female activist from the Valkyria group (interview, 9 March 1996).
143. There is a trend for women in far-right groups to be a minority compared to men in regard to violent acts with neo-fascist or racist motives. According to data presented by Christopher Husbands (note 87), p.103, females made up 4 per cent of the suspects of punishable offenses with neo-fascist features in Germany in the period 1977-86. Of the persons actually convicted of relevant punishable offenses with neo-fascist motives, only 5 per cent were female; while only 2 per cent of the persons involved in various acts of planned or actual violence with such motives were female. Between 1/4 and 1/3 of the approximately 40,000 right-wing extremists in Germany are women. However, few women are present at party gathering, and almost none of them participate in street-fights.
144. 'Nationalist' is commonly defined by the activists as 'being proud of one's country, and

being 100 per cent against immigration'.

145. *Fritt Forum*, No.1 (1996).
146. According to Kathleen Blee (note 16), p.3, women in fact make racist organizations more dangerous, because they spread the ideology through their family, their personal networks and local contacts. This makes women's influence often more extensive than the men's. My analysis suggests that this might also hold for the Valkyria women since, according to my observations, they have much more contact with friends outside the milieu than the men do.
147. Interview, 9 March 1996.
148. Martin Barker, *The New Racism. Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America 1982).
149. Both women interviewed in *Det Nye*, No.10 (Oct. 1995).
150. *Det Nye*, No.10 (Oct. 1995).
151. Interview, 9 March 1996. For a discussion of the way male activists deal with the Holocaust, see Fangen (note 50).
152. Kaplan and Bjørge (note 36).
153. Interview, 9 March 1996. Rune Gerhardsen, Labor Party politician. Head of Oslo Town Council.
154. Valkyria's Instruction Manual.
155. *Det Nye*, No.10 (Oct. 1995).
156. *Ibid.*
157. Interview, 24 April 1996.
158. *Fritt Forum*, No.1 (1996).
159. Koonz (note 20), p.450.
160. Interview, 9 March 1996.
161. *Ibid.*
162. This argument was also commonly used by Nazi women in the 1930s: see Koonz (note 20), p.449.
163. Jack Kjuus is the leader of *Hvit Valgallianse* (White Election Alliance).
164. I have described the history of such views in Norway in the report '*Rasismens historie og forhistorie*' (The History and Prehistory of Racism), *SFDH (Sogn og Fjordane College)-report*, No.1 (1993).
165. At times, the Women's Klan portrayed itself as a social welfare organization. Some chapters collected food and money for the needy (typically Klan families), and others ran free day-nurseries and homes for wayward girls; see Blee (note 16), p.40. Similarly, Nazi women collected money for poor national socialist families; see Koonz (note 20), p.463.
166. Koonz (note 19).
167. Blee (note 16), p.3.
168. Interview, 24 April 1996.
169. Durham (note 37), p.279.



# On the Margins of Life: Life Stories of Radical Nationalists

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## ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the life stories of four radical nationalists. It is based on life story interviews as well as information gathered through a year of fieldwork. This includes conversations with all forty participants of the Norwegian radical nationalist subculture in 1993–94, and in-depth interviews with all the leading activists, except one. Elsewhere I have analysed the identities of these young people in terms of group membership, ideology and gender issues. In this essay, I highlight the radical nationalists' lives prior to their entrance into the radical nationalist underground. I focus on the way they relate to common interpretations of them by outsiders, and the way they themselves argue in order to bring reason into their choice to join a group which is condemned by most people. I look for the common features we can find in these life stories, and in the mechanisms of recruitment described by these four men.

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## 1. Introduction

People ask 'Why?' more frequently when young people join radical nationalist groups<sup>1</sup> than when they join the radical groups on the left. This is easily understood as a consequence of general attitudes towards the radical nationalists' support of armed violence, and their use of the disgraced Nazi symbols.

There is much literature available on the backgrounds of people who joined the National Socialist movements of the 1930s. Some of this literature discusses recruitment to National Socialism in terms of class background. Other texts discuss the psychological outlook of the Nazi recruits, including the leading figures of the Nazi regime. There is less literature available on the types of people who join neo-Nazi or radical nationalist movements. This essay is an attempt to fill this gap.

This essay presents and discusses the backgrounds of four radical nationalists in relation to their peer groups, families and schools. It

examines the gradual transformation of values from the parents to their children and these activists' relationships with authorities. It also reviews the radical nationalists' interpretation of their own entrance into the radical nationalist underground movement. Examining these life stories makes it possible for us to identify the processes at stake when young people join one of the various groups of this movement. It is only when we study their stories that we fully see the complexity of the routes that might lead young people into an exceptional setting such as this.

The essay is based on material gathered during one year of fieldwork, as well as during life story interviews and conversations with four radical nationalists. During the fieldwork, I noticed the huge ideological, personal and social differences between the activists. I do not view any individual activist to be representative of all activists. The four individuals I will present here had all participated in the underground movement for ten years or more. During



various periods of their membership, they had all held positions of leadership or semi-leadership within it. Thus, they had ties to the core of the movement (one later left the underground). This means that they were among the forty most active individuals. These four men thus knew each other. They have been connected to various groups within the movement, such as *Riksfronten*, the National People's Party, Bootboys, AAFA and Norwegian Front. They have also been involved in violence directed at refugees and anti-Fascists, and they themselves have been beaten up by anti-Fascists on numerous occasions.

## 2. Stigmatization and excommunication

Although the male radical nationalists in this study have slightly different family backgrounds, there are some aspects that appear to be common to most of them. To facilitate analysis of the particular social processes involved in the social careers of young people who enter the radical nationalist underground movement, I will give a brief introduction to several useful concepts.

Certain class backgrounds and local environments (for example, those marked by scarcity of resources and facilities) make the move into this underground movement more plausible than other backgrounds. Class and other structural factors condition rather than determine the move into the underground because this step is always made voluntarily by the individual. There must therefore be something that makes the underground especially attractive to him. As entering this underground movement tends to diminish such people's chances in the labour-market, we might interpret the step into this setting as an *alternative career move*.

According to Becker (1963:24), the notion of *career* refers to the sequence of movements an individual makes from one position to another. Career movements may thus include the step into school, the end of school or the entrance into a circle of friends. A career may also include the step into or exit from a distinct organization, subculture or work life. Furthermore, the concept of career includes the notion of *career contingency*, those factors that determine mobility from one position to another. Career contingencies include both external circumstances conditioned by social structure (class, etc.) and internal circumstances such as changes in the

perspective, motivations and desires of the individual. These internal drives are *conditioned* by external circumstances such as social context and environment. Thus, Becker's conceptualization of career resembles our understanding of radical nationalists as conditioned rather than determined by class and other structural circumstances.

Becker's concept of the deviant career might be combined with Goffman's (1963) concept of the *stigmatized career*, since entrance into the radical nationalist underground implies embracing a stigmatized identity. It is often the case that people with stigmatized identities do not choose this identity. Some blind or deaf people, for example, have been given their stigmatized identity at birth, as the result of an accident at birth or otherwise. In contrast to people who have a stigmatized identity without having contributed to this state themselves, far right activists choose their stigma to a much greater extent. People do not enter the underground passively.

The choice made is twofold. On the one hand, there is the choice of a lifestyle that purposely evokes strong negative reactions in others. Young people may therefore choose a loaded identity in order to shock and thus demand a reaction from others. On the other hand, there is the choice of a political or ideological standpoint, which is defined by Barkun (1998) as *stigmatized knowledge*. People who make such choices view the world in terms of strong 'us-them' categories. These categories make the world more predictable. Although there is an element of choice in entering the underground, a world view so fixated on 'us-them' appears to be more attractive to young people of particular backgrounds more than others.

To stigmatize is to ascribe certain negative attributes to individuals or groups on the basis of one discrediting attribute – a stigma (Goffman 1963; Fangen 1997b). Other people stigmatize a person when they reduce their perception of him/her as a whole person with many qualities to a contentious, subordinate one. When we talk of the radical nationalist, stigmatization takes on a distinct meaning. Such a person stigmatizes certain 'others' (immigrants, homosexuals or other 'others'). When he begins to use Nazi symbols, he enters into a practice condemned by most people and is thus stigmatized by people outside his own circle of fellow activists. Once others start to see him as a Nazi, they attribute to him a wide range of attitudes



and goals, many of which may be quite far from his actual beliefs. People ignore this person's other, more important qualities. He is thus *excommunicated* instead of included. Over time, he may either choose to exaggerate the content of his messages or to find sophisticated means by which to legitimize his views.

Stigmatization comes into play the moment the young boy first makes use of or manifests sympathy with racist symbols, beliefs or practices. He may sometimes experience his stigma as a positive quality. It is this stigma and the condemnation it feeds that provides him with a sense of standing outside conventional society and being within his own unique community. However, from time to time this stigma causes stress and depression. It is not possible to meet contempt day after day without feeling some pain. The pleasure of being hated is not a very stable emotion.

Young people who join radical nationalist groups are often confronted with questions about the type of traumatic adolescence they must have had, since they ended up in such a marginal and commonly condemned setting. When I carried out my fieldwork among Norwegian radical nationalists, I experienced these youngsters' various attempts to counteract these common misconceptions. They did not deny that certain aspects of their backgrounds might have led them into the underground. However, they were sceptical towards purely psychological, and especially psychoanalytical, interpretations. Some of them agreed that they were victims of the system or, more concretely, products of homes with few resources, where their schools and other authorities were unable to deal with their needs. What they did not accept was being seen as victims of their own suppressed emotional needs, suffering from the lack of a father figure. Neither did they want to be seen as lacking in self-respect as a result of their vulnerabilities. Such interpretations provide another way of stigmatizing these young people.

Stigmatization is related to another process: excommunication. This is a process whereby teachers, parents or others of significance exclude these youngsters (from the moral community) as a reaction to their disgraceful behaviour (e.g. violence, painting swastikas, teasing other pupils, etc.). Excommunication involves more severe processes of marginalization than stigmatization does. We find both processes at work in the lives of the radical nationalists I will discuss here. However, they

take different forms. For some of the boys, processes of stigmatization have been most powerful. For others, stigmatization has always been intertwined with processes of excommunication.

### 3. Four trajectories

#### *Frode: 'I thought that it was tough'*

Frode grew up in eastern Norway. He refers to his background as a 'real working-class background, many generations of working-class people'. However, his father has his own one-man business; he could be categorized as belonging to the *petit bourgeoisie*. 'It's no big business', says Frode. It is important for Frode to underline that although his father has his own firm, it is a small firm with no employees. He thus emphasizes his low mobility status. During his years at school, Frode sometimes worked for his father at weekends. His mother is a data-processing operator. 'It's routine work', he says. Frode wants to be considered working-class rather than *petit bourgeois*. The reason seems to be that he rejected further education for himself. He legitimizes this choice by identifying positively with being a worker with statements such as, 'If I wanted to, I could have been where you are now, but I left school after upper secondary school'. In other words, he views his working-class status (in which he works as an occasional labourer) as a choice he has made freely.

Frode's current predilection for heavy drinking and a rough lifestyle is in accordance with the behavioural patterns of both his father and his grandfather. Frode says that when he was a child, his grandfather lived in the same house as the rest of his family. His grandfather sometimes invited Frode down to the basement, where he kept his liquor, and would offer him a drink. It was mostly Madeira and wine, 'stuff that boys of fourteen don't like', according to Frode. He said 'thanks' anyway, and drank the liquor. At one point, his grandfather commented on another boy 'not being much of a man' because he drank too little. In other words, as Frode understood him, his grandfather taught him that in order to be a tough guy, it was necessary to drink. Frode thus views being 'tough' to be in line with the behaviours of his father and grandfather. He views his 'toughness' as a quality he learned from them.

Frode labels himself a 'nationalist' rather than a 'national socialist'. Even so, he often gives Fascist salutes and paints swastikas. He

used to be a member of a skinhead group with a relatively high Nazi profile. Despite this, he does not want to be labelled a Nazi. None of Frode's relatives were Nazis. However, Frode's father seems to share some of his son's anti-immigrant attitudes. While Frode was still in school, he once brought many FMI (the People's Movement Against Immigration) pamphlets with him home to his parents and urged them to read them, which they did. According to Frode, they agreed with some of the content. Frode has an aunt on his father's side who adopted a girl from Thailand. Frode calls her 'such a little banana'. Neither Frode nor his father wanted to go to her baptism, because they did not want any contact with this part of the family after the Thai girl had become a member of it. Frode's father used work as an excuse not to go, because he often works at weekends. Frode's mother went. She said 'Somebody from the family has to go'. This little girl is now sixteen. She tries to speak to Frode on the phone, but Frode is rude to her. He calls her names, swears, and makes racist remarks.

Another incident that might illustrate Frode and his father's shared beliefs is a story he told about the deputy director of his school, who once took part in an anti-racist campaign in order to stop the repeated violent racist crimes that Frode and his comrades had committed. Frode and his father accidentally bumped into the deputy director later when they went shopping. They greeted him with ironic politeness, while the deputy director turned his back on them and hurried out of the shop. Here, we again see how Frode viewed himself and his father as being a unit in joint opposition against school authorities and their power to condemn.

We might thus assume that Frode has adopted his disapproval of foreigners from his father. Frode says that his father understands that being part of the radical nationalist underground movement is part of being young. He says 'Dad understands this skinhead idea, because he was young himself'. Frode's father was a scooter boy when he was young. The scooter boy subculture is one of the inspirations of the skinhead subculture. Frode, who is deeply involved in the skinhead lifestyle and its roots, obviously feels that his father was part of something similar. His raucous behaviour and excessive drinking also appear to be in line with this family's traditions. Frode considers drinking, fighting and being an anti-foreigner to be part of working-class behaviour.

There are elements of the radical nationalist underground movement that have more to do with National Socialist ideology and appearance, which Frode does not support fully. He therefore shelters his parents from knowledge of this part of the underground. For example, Frode's friend Rein dresses and looks differently, more like the well-dressed Nazi ideologist. Frode will therefore not introduce his parents to Rein. Rein also often talks a great deal and is unashamed about letting others know about his extreme attitudes. Once when Rein went to visit Frode, Frode sat looking out the window, because he knew his parents would be stopping by with food. He ran down to meet them, as he did not want them to meet to Rein. In contrast, Frode's flat-mate Gunnar, who looks like a skinhead and is not particularly talkative, has met Frode's parents once.

Frode has 'no big conflicts' with his parents. He visits his parents now and then and he celebrates his birthday with them. On the other hand, he does not have much contact with his sister. She does not approve of Frode's former participation in racist violence.

Except for his participation in a local gang, Frode has not belonged to any other subcultures apart from the radical nationalist underground movement. During his school years, Frode met his friends at the gas station after school. For several years, they committed acts of violence directed at local immigrants.

Frode became acquainted with the right-wing underground when a leading politician of the far right made a public speech in Frode's community, and there was a party afterwards. Frode was especially attracted to the skinhead style. During the course of that year, Frode became one of the most eager exponents of skinhead style in the radical nationalist underground.

Frode got average marks at school, as well as some good ones. In 1993-94, he was one of the few activists who had completed all twelve years at school, not only the mandatory nine years. In addition, he studied carpentry for one year at a technical college. During his last year at grammar school he became more raucous and provoked the teacher by drawing swastikas on his exam paper. He says that he did it because he 'thought that it was tough', but today he sees that 'it wasn't'.

When Frode compares himself to those pupils at school who did well and who now are well off and live in decent areas, he does so in a sad voice. This often happens when he is drunk.

For example, he once spoke about a girl who now is married and lives in the most upper-class neighbourhood in Oslo, although she is from the same town as Frode. Today, Frode lives in a rural area near the town he comes from. He partly admires and partly envies the people he once knew who have moved to urban areas and are mastering city life.

Frode has worked periodically since he left school, as a baker, as a guard at concerts, as a carpenter, and now he works at a factory, cleaning meat. He mainly takes jobs that are paid under the table. 'It's easier to get those jobs when you belong to criminal gangs. Straight people like you don't get those jobs', he tells me. Frode implicitly refers to himself here as a delinquent. He is proud when he tells me of various offences he has committed. For example, he orders mail-order goods under a false name and does not pay for them. In addition, he receives and sells stolen property.

When he works, he earns a good deal of money, since he does not pay taxes. He only has short-term jobs, however, so he is unemployed most of the time. Frode wants to work and has tried to find employment (in contrast to some of the other radical nationalists). The meat-cleaning job led to his having to pay taxes for the first time in his working life. Unlike many other radical nationalists, Frode does not choose to stay out of the labour-market. Also in contrast to many of his fellows, he does not define himself as a rebel. He offers no objections to working for 'the system'. Quite the contrary, he is proud of once having worked for the 'terror police' (National Police Security Service).<sup>3</sup> This event occurred while he was doing his military service. He helped the security police during one of their training sessions. Payment for this favour was a hundred rounds of ammunition, which he was able to use at the rifle range. According to a friend of his, Frode respects the authorities. He is polite in his dealings with the police and says that he has met police officers that agree with his views.

Frode strikes a balance between loyalty to the authorities and conscious counter-reaction. The violence he committed prior to his entrance into the radical nationalist movement was directed against those male immigrants – Iranians – he saw as competitors at the youth club. In contrast, he considered the Vietnamese people in his hometown to be all right. They were friendly and did not invade his territory.

Many of Frode's actions may be viewed as attempts to retain power both to define and to

control others. When he orders mail-order goods in the names of people who have defined him negatively, he inverts their symbolic power and has a comparatively equal negative impact on them.

Frode was not stigmatized or excluded by his parents. Although he committed crimes that made the school authorities treat him with contempt, his father diminished the content of the authorities' view by seeing Frode's actions as linked to the actions of youth. Local authorities and other pupils at school labelled Frode a racist. His response to this label was to exaggerate its content, by shouting 'siege heil', making grimaces and belching. He thus ensured that others would continue to react this way to him and label him. Frode was never expelled from school. However, he committed violent acts targeted at refugees and provoked the school authorities. As a result, he was excommunicated by means of angry glances from or the ignorance of the people in his hometown.

#### ***Gunnar: 'People always had something against me'***

Gunnar grew up in a rural district about one hour's drive from Oslo. His parents moved there when Gunnar was a child. They originally came from Oslo's East End. Both Gunnar's parents and grandparents came from that part of the city. During World War II, Gunnar's grandfather was a member of the NKP (the Norwegian Communist Party). Some more distant relatives of Gunnar's were members of the Norwegian National Socialist Party.<sup>4</sup> They were peasants in eastern Norway. Gunnar's parents vote for the Labour Party. Politically, his father does not approve of 'anything right of the Left (Party)'.<sup>5</sup> Gunnar's father runs a printing business, while his mother is a housewife.

Gunnar was a troublemaker at school. He says that he was 'not actually very bright'. He did 'all right' in history sometimes, but did badly at 'the rest'. He went to school for the mandatory nine years. During these years, he was a member of various delinquent gangs. He says that he was a rebel in different ways and usually 'did things people don't appreciate'. During the first, second and third grades he was a rowdy; he even 'stole a little here and there'. The pinching became 'good business', as 'people bought cheap tobacco'. The neighbourhood he lived in had 'a reputation for breeding rowdies', and Gunnar was member of a heavy metal gang 'with lots of belts, rivets and all that'. When he was in lower secondary school, there were 'older

people who feared us, although we didn't do anything to them'.

Gunnar never felt really comfortable in any of the groups he belonged to during those years, including a group of communist youths. 'People always had something against me', he says. On his own initiative, Gunnar attended the mass meeting in Frode's local community. He quickly felt more comfortable with the people he met from the radical nationalist underground than with those he had met previously in his local gangs. At the party following the mass meeting, Gunnar met Frode and they became friends. Frode later moved into Gunnar's flat at his parents' house.

Gunnar feels respected at work. He believes this is why he has only had to change jobs twice over a period of twelve years. His first job was a so-called 'job-for-welfare'.<sup>6</sup> Then one of the workers there quit and Gunnar was able to take over his job. It was at a factory. 'I have always been damn lucky with work', Gunnar says, 'Six months is the longest period I have been unemployed'. Over a period of twelve years, he has only had three jobs. He lost a job as a driver because he drank too much. While laughing somewhat self-ironically, he says that the year he had that job, he drank till eleven every night, then went to work at six in the morning. His driver's licence was suspended for seven years. Now he works as a sweeper. He has been doing this for the past fourteen years.

Gunnar is often the first one to go home after a party. In contrast to many of the other radical nationalists, he has a position of responsibility and he does not want to lose his job. Although he often gets heavily drunk at night, he always knows when to go home.

Gunnar says that his parents do not approve of his politics. However, they let him do what he wants. Frode adds that '... his parents haven't got anything to say about it. He is twenty-seven, after all'. At times Gunnar, or his friends who are visiting, argue with his mother. As Gunnar lives in a flat in his parents' house, his mother interferes in his life quite often. She phones him and asks, 'Are you sitting there drinking now? Don't forget that you're going to work tomorrow'. Sometimes she finds an excuse to go upstairs. Once she came upstairs while I was visiting Gunnar and Frode. She said to me 'Are you a racist, too?' 'No', I replied. 'She's writing a book about us', Gunnar added. 'A book about these boys!' She was excited and began discussing immigration policy. Frode disagreed with her views. He said

that the immigrants who came to Norway were people who had money and other resources and that they were well off already, whereas those who were in hunger and in pain did not come here. 'We should care better for our own rather than for people who move here', he said. Gunnar's mother argued that we have to take care of those who suffer, that we have to show solidarity and that the immigrants can contribute positively to our culture. She added a few critical arguments against immigrants, but her attitude was mainly positive.

The way in which Gunnar's mother spoke about her son was partly in his defence and partly critical. She made a point out of the fact that Gunnar had been the only one who had participated at a local demonstration on Constitution Day, the year before, without hiding his identity. She argued that if a person wants to take a stand, he should not pretend to have other views. If not, he is weak.

Gunnar is sometimes very rude towards his mother. Sverre, another radical nationalist, told me about one occasion when the boys were gathered at Gunnar's place and were getting noisy. Gunnar's mother went to hush them. Gunnar shouted at her 'Piss off, you whore of a Jew!' Apparently he is angry about his mother's interference and does not like her to tell him how to behave.

One of Gunnar's sisters has changed her name because of Gunnar's well-known association with the radical nationalist group. She does not want to be associated with him. He has another sister who is ten years older than him. 'She doesn't mind', says Gunnar. 'She is so old that it doesn't matter'.

An important part of Gunnar's identity is that he 'usually did things people don't appreciate'. In other words, he has been an outsider, an individual who has not been viewed positively by others. At the same time, doing bad things has gained him entry into a group that made him feel welcome.

Gunnar did not do well at school. However, at his workplace and in the radical nationalist underground, he is respected as a loyal person. He is not marginalized from the labour-market. His experience of being excluded has partly been a collective experience, as his neighbourhood was 'known to breed troublemakers'. However, he also recounts feelings of being alone within the collective. He says that it was among the radical nationalists that he first felt included and dared to speak his mind. For the first time, he also felt that he was respected. Gunnar has

not been excluded from his family. However, as he continues to live in his parents' house and thus experiences his mother's interference in his own life, he retains the status of not being fully an adult, not completely able to behave in the manner expected by the radical nationalists.

### **Rein: 'Predestined to be a National Socialist'**

Rein comes from a rural district near Oslo. He declares that 'I come from a stalwart old family of workers, a proletarian family'. His father is a carpenter and lumberjack by profession and has worked for the highway authority 'for almost thirty years'. His mother, who died of cancer when Rein was fifteen, had attended a business college in her youth and subsequently held a tradesman's license. 'Mum and Dad have voted for the Labour party all their lives', says Rein. However, 'politics was never a topic at home'. Rein's grandparents on both sides also voted for the Labour Party. His paternal grandfather was a caretaker at a home for elderly people, while his maternal grandfather drove a tank. One of his grandfathers was incarcerated at Grini<sup>7</sup> during World War II. Both his grandmothers were housewives.

Many of the stories Rein tells of his childhood and youth reflect how he felt different from others and how he met with strong reactions from others because of his appearance, statements and actions. In a letter to me, he wrote that

I always knew I was different from the other kids in the neighbourhood in some way. I was not exactly willing to travel two kilometres just to fool around playing football or whatever childish nonsense these kids did, and I had well-known radical political opinions – well, as I've said before: I spent most of my time by myself, not by being excluded but by choice.

Rein writes about himself that 'Subsequently, Rein was what the rest of us would have called 'a loner'. He began early to contribute actively to his being different. One episode seems to have helped to start his voluntary loner career by providing him with an identity as Nazi. This occurred when he was aged five. His parents gave him a police uniform, which he became very fond of. He consequently dressed up in his uniform and rode around on his tricycle with a poster with the word 'Gestapo' written on it, shouting 'sieg heil'. This event seems rather astonishing, given the fact that his parents did not sympathize with

National Socialism at all and had not influenced him in that direction. He says that he had just read a comic book set in World War II. Apart from that, he believes that he was 'predestined to be a Nazi'. During his entire schooling he was known as a Nazi. He was the only one in the neighbourhood.

When Rein was in the fourth grade and was asked to write his name and grade on the cover of his notebook, he drew Adolf Hitler's face and wrote his name instead. In the ninth grade he wrote an essay on immigration policy. He got an average mark. In his own opinion, he was graded unfairly, because he believed he had written a good essay. He usually received very good marks for his essays. The headmaster wanted to have a serious talk with him after this, and Rein received a reprimand because of his intolerant attitudes. Rein says that he was an average student in other subjects. He did the mandatory nine years and then studied for six months at a commercial college.

Rein's mother seems to have had more of a counter-impact on her son than Rein's father. She disapproved of her son's attitudes, whereas Rein's father was less bothered by them. This is reflected in the fact that Rein put off joining the NF while she was alive.

My mother died of cancer when I was fifteen. This may be of interest to a psychoanalyst, because one month later I joined the NF.<sup>8</sup> I had an NF poster on my door at home. My father didn't like it much. But the Norwegian flag was all right, he didn't mind that. We don't discuss politics at home.

Rein entered the radical nationalist underground as soon as it was possible for him to do so. He was only fifteen years old at the time. Despite his youth, he was soon given responsibility within the NFP,<sup>9</sup> and obtained a leading position. He looks back at that period with pride but also with self-irony, as the party had very few members then and his high position did not mean much.

During his school years, Rein's strong interest in National Socialism served to make the gap between himself and others more sharply defined. The radical nationalist underground was the first environment in which he was surrounded by like-minded people. However, there also he held the status of being different, as he was not a rowdy or militant like many of the others were during the early and mid-1990s. According to one of the leading figures of the underground, Rein was 'never really part of the core'.

Rein has never worked except for the year in which he completed his national military service. He refused to enrol in regular military service, but completed non-military conscription instead. His reason for refusing was not pacifism, as he was very supportive of the military system. He told me that he did not want to travel to northern Norway and not be able to do as he pleased. However, there must be another formal reason as well or he would have been forced to enrol in regular service. During his non-military conscription, he first worked in a kindergarten and then in a prison. His friends say that he was less of an extremist during that period. According to them, when Rein does not work he sits by himself watching World War II videos and does not see anybody, except at weekends, when he visits his friends. Rein says that he does not want to work for 'the system'. Despite his attitude, he liked his jobs both in the kindergarten and in the prison. However, he was forced to leave both these jobs because of his expression of racist ideas. In 1993-94, he was not interested in further studies. On the other hand, if he could choose freely, he said he would study to be a biologist, specializing in measuring the skulls of people of different races. This statement may be interpreted as part of his rather satiric sense of humour. In 1997, after he had left the radical nationalist underground, he changed his mind regarding education. At the age of twenty-seven, he was attending upper secondary school, in order to be able to study Political Science at university.

Rein has written an autobiographical account of his time within the radical nationalist underground. There he tells how his father did not allow him to talk for long with any of the other radical nationalists when he called them on the phone. When Rein first went to meet one of the leading activists in the 1980s, his father just raised his eyebrows and uttered a 'hem!' He later added 'Now, be careful what you get involved in'. Rein has no serious conflicts with his father. On the other hand, they do not have a close relationship. Rein only goes home to celebrate birthdays or Christmas, and his father seems to be resigned to Rein's extreme views and his belonging to a militant subculture.

***Egil: 'He has always been searching for meaning and belonging'***

Egil grew up in a suburb of Oslo, often considered to be the suburb that produces the most welfare clients. Egil's mother was a shop

assistant, but is now on the dole. When he talks about his grandparents, Egil proudly says that his grandfather was a fisherman: 'He was a real worker, a man of honour. I'm proud of him'. Egil's parents divorced when he was four. Egil remembers that they quarrelled a lot. He has no contact with his father. He hasn't seen him since he left. At different times, he has lived with his mother, his grandparents and at a boarding house for children with behavioural problems. Egil says that his mother had many lovers and remarried once. In conscious opposition to the thesis of Nazism as a reaction to a failing father, he says that 'It's because I don't have a father that I have to look for a *Führer* (laugh). No, really, I'm against leaders and all that stuff. I trust my family, nobody else. They support me'.

Swedish film producer Susanna Osten made a film about a neo-Nazi who almost by accident goes to visit a Jewish therapist and channels his hatred towards his father onto the therapist. At the end of the film his hatred diminishes or vanishes because of the therapy. Egil dislikes this film intensely. Rather than others interpreting his views as being the result of repressed needs, he wants others to see them as a choice made freely. At the same time he describes himself and many of the other activists as 'victims of destiny'.

Egil states that his grandparents 'had no sympathy for the Germans during the War'. According to Egil, his mother is apolitical, but she shares some of his sceptical views regarding the authorities. This might be a reaction based on loyalty, as her son has often been at odds with the law. Egil says that 'I have always done what I wanted to do. Mother didn't like that, not that political stuff, although she sees through the falseness of the system'.

Egil talks of his mother and grandparents with respect. He does not say anything critical about them. He often points out that heritage is more important than environment. The environment he grew up in was not the best. Egil was 'in and out' of school and took part in the activities of delinquent gangs at an early age. He reports that such gangs were common in his neighbourhood. In primary school, Egil was 'considered problematic' and was therefore transferred to a boarding school for children with behavioural problems. However, he did not fit in there either. He says that the others teased him. From an early age he lived on his own. He slept in doorways as well as in a squatter's house.

Egil spent some time in prison after being

convicted for committing a gross act of violence. He later went to upper secondary school and took the *Examen philosophicum*, an introductory course in Philosophy, at the university level. When he was in prison, he did some manual labour. However, now that he is not in prison, he lives on the dole. He visits a psychiatrist so that he can avoid having to work, while still remaining on the dole. He says he does not want to work for 'this traitor system'. Instead, he gets up late every day, often going to bookshops to look at religious or anti-Semitic books. In the evenings he visits friends. He also reads, writes and publishes a fanzine with anti-Semitic content.

Although many young people are trouble-makers and participate in delinquent gangs for a period of time, Egil's life course is not a common one. His involvement in militant groups and actions makes his life story a contrast to more widespread tales of delinquency and mischief. His life-long rebellion may in many ways be seen as a revolt against the many barriers he was confronted with during his childhood and youth and his lack of a stable environment.

Egil labels himself a Christian mystic. He often speaks about his views as truths that are not for everyone to understand. He is fascinated by religion. He is familiar with various religions, including Pentecostalism and Zen Buddhism (despite his support of militant strategies and terrorist movements). Today he labels his former interest in these religions as 'one of my many failures in life'. He also uses religious arguments when describing Zionism and Jews as 'evil'. He often reads the Talmud and uses quotations as evidence of the perversion and destruction of Zionism. However, he sympathizes with Hinduism and says that the reason that this religion is good is beyond the understanding of other radical nationalists. One of Egil's friends attributes the unusual path of Egil's life to the fact that 'he has always been searching for meaning and belonging'.

Egil says that already in early childhood he supported all sorts of 'liberation movements', such as the RAF, the IRA and the Palestinian Intifada. He has considered himself to be a revolutionary since the age of sixteen.

I was a punk for a while too. I came into the punk scene at the beginning, when it came to Norway in the seventies. It was before the squat (in Oslo), but many of the same people were there. I was about fourteen. I know many of the *Blitz* youths<sup>10</sup> from that time. When I meet them walking alone down

the street, we greet each other, although we knock each other down at other times. I can do this because I know how to distinguish between a person and a cause.

Egil later met some militants and through them joined the radical nationalist underground. During his career within the underground, he also made friends with bikers and football supporters. For him, the most important thing is to live within what he conceives as working-class culture, which he primarily defines in terms of meeting friends at the pub and fighting in the street.

To a much greater degree than any of the other radical nationalists Egil was a trouble-maker throughout his whole childhood. He did not fit in anywhere. It was not until an older friend introduced him to a militant group that he felt at home. Here his behaviour was valued, in contrast to all of the more established settings (school, boarding school) he had been forced into earlier. In this new environment, someone like Egil could achieve status and a sense of honour. Egil himself interprets his previous inability to fit in as a result of his difficulties in controlling himself. He says that maybe today he would have been diagnosed as hyperactive. When he entered the underground, he was, according to his own account, socially inhibited and had almost no contact with girls. In his new environment, however, he achieved self-confidence and gained better social skills. Once included in this circle, one is accepted, no matter how insecure one is. Egil thus gained status as a militant. This led him to gross violence as well as aggressive ideology and behaviours.

Egil's story, then, is a tale of participation in delinquent settings, of being a school dropout and of behaving in a way which necessarily results in sanctions from society. Egil has not only been marginalized; he has actively excluded himself as well.

#### 4. The experience of being excommunicated

There are no background factors (e.g. negligent father, divorced parents, being a school dropout, etc.) that are common to all radical nationalists. Neither are there any absolutes that inevitably lead an individual into the underground movement. However, there is one aspect that most activists seem to share. This aspect has to do



with the fact that joining the underground movement can constrain one's opportunities in terms of education and career, as pointed out by Bjørge (1997). Most of the young boys and girls who enter the radical nationalist movement have little to lose by taking part. This is because they were already in a marginal position before they entered it.

Excommunication can take the form of expulsion from school, being forced to move out of the parents' home, being ignored, being reprimanded, etc. In general, excommunication involves processes whereby an individual is excluded from and denied social rights and participation in the economic, socio-cultural and political life of society. The most serious kind of exclusion a young person can experience is the total exclusion of being imprisoned or put into a locked juvenile institution. He then becomes alienated from more conventional settings. Another process of exclusion commonly experienced by these youngsters is that of being on welfare. The state of being a welfare client means that he must be grateful for what he gets. He cannot demand anything because he does not contribute anything to society.

The four stories narrated here represent different modes of marginality and experiencing exclusion. Rein received reprimands at school and from his mother because of his attitudes. His behaviour cost him two jobs. Rein says that he chose to be alone because he thought the other children were childish. Rein thus viewed himself as a 'voluntary loner', not a victimized one. Rein takes on the analyst's role and discusses himself in the third person, saying that 'Rein reached adulthood a little earlier than the average youth'. He does not assert that he was excluded by others. On the contrary, he chose to stay on the fringe because he did not want company.

Apart from this, processes of stigmatization have played a prominent role in Rein's life. He was seen as a Nazi already from early childhood, and he saw how others reacted strongly towards him. Perhaps these reactions became their own incentive, no matter how negative they were. Rein's way of describing the reactions of others seems to confirm this interpretation. He is very good at telling funny anecdotes based on people's reactions to him. He often exaggerates how correct their view of him is, rather than justifying himself. He says that the fact that he was a loner was something he chose freely, rather than a situation he was forced into. He felt different from others and therefore rejected

their conventional ways of behaving. He voluntarily excluded himself from their company. He thus blames no one else for his marginal position. On the contrary, he reinterprets it as something he is proud of. In this way, his marginal position gives him his very identity.

Egil has experienced social exclusion to a much stronger extent. There were periods when he was unable to live with his mother. He was 'in and out' of school. He was placed in a boarding school. He lived on the street. He committed gross violence and went to jail. As an adult, he lives on the dole. Stigmatization has also been an important issue in his life, especially his adult life, where he has constantly been labelled as representing evil. The only place where he feels respected is within his family and within the rightist underground. From early childhood he learned that it is possible to gain some sense of esteem by behaving in a threatening manner. This has become his main life strategy.

In many respects, Egil's biography fits the story of the wayward kid (Stierlin 1974). His quest for importance points to what he experienced earlier in life: neglect and rejection. He comes from an unstable home. He has learned everything about the street. He learned what was good and what was bad, not at home, but from his comrades in various gangs. He has seen and experienced a great deal of violence and knows everything about surviving on the street. His lifestyle is a way of survival, a solution to his lack of relations with people other than those who form part of his street life. His morals are the morals of the street. In his eyes conventional morals are false and full of lies about life. He has succeeded within the reality of the street, but has no experience surviving in any kind of conformist setting. However, Egil feels a deep loyalty towards his mother and grandparents and views them as the only people he can trust, no matter what happens.

Despite his bonds of loyalty, Egil has 'always done what I wanted to'. This is identical to 'doing your own thing', which, according to Stierlin (1974:160-161), could almost be called the credo of the counterculture. As Stierlin also argues, to do one's own thing often implies that other people's things are hurt. The counterculture advocates an authentic, non-competitive life (as pointed out by Stierlin, but also as Egil describes it). The participants in the counterculture are driven to stand out and catch the limelight. To do this they need to have values and act in a manner antithetical to the



values and behaviour that bestow prestige and importance in mainstream culture. This is evident in Egil, who has earned deference because of his uninhibited front-figure actions in violent confrontations with his opponents. Another side of the coin of the worship of comradeship and togetherness in the rightist underground is the glorification of power and violence, as seen in Egil's identification with terrorist movements. Egil knows that everyone is afraid of him, even his own comrades. He is very quick to hit people who offend him. On the other hand, he is afraid of being beaten up himself and is therefore always on his guard.

Frode has experienced excommunication in the form of anti-racist campaigns in his hometown. He was placed in the category of racists and eventually chose to leave in order to live with his friend from the rightist underground. He has been to jail for petty crimes and has experienced the treatment of school authorities that tried to ignore him.

### 5. The route to the radical nationalist underground

The four life stories described above reflect different routes into the radical nationalist underground. There is little similarity in the stories told by these informants in terms of how and why they entered the underground. This variety illustrates the problem of using simplified psychological explanations for radical nationalist recruitment. Furthermore, biographies of former Nazi party members show diversity rather than uniformity (Abel 1938; Billig 1978:46).

Rein contacted the underground on his own initiative, based on an already established ideological adherence. Rein suggests that a psychoanalyst would have interpreted his entrance into the rightist underground as a reaction to his mother's death. However, another possible interpretation is that his mother managed to keep Rein from developing his ideological interests any further while she was alive. It might also be that he waited to take the final step because he did not want to upset her while she was ill.

Gunnar also contacted the underground on his own initiative. In contrast to Rein, however, he was not previously a National Socialist. He defined himself as a left-wing nationalist. He also differs from Rein in that he soon became

part of the collective of activists, whereas Rein always saw himself as different from the others.

Frode was part of a local gang that collectively joined the rightist underground when a racist politician held a rally in his hometown. He went on to become a more active participant in this movement than the gang members from his local community.

Egil became acquainted with a man who often helped him find a place to live, and he was influenced by the reactionary views of this man. Through him, Egil was introduced to young men who were interested in weapons. Later on, people from the rightist underground contacted him because of his knowledge of firearms.

### 6. The quest for belonging, acceptance and importance

The need to be noticed by others, to feel important and to belong somewhere is present in all four stories. Gunnar says explicitly that acceptance and belonging was what he was looking for in all of the gangs he joined. Rein describes himself as a 'voluntary loner' during the years following his entry into the rightist underground and speaks with enthusiasm of the confidence he gained when he obtained positions of responsibility within the right-wing underground. The underground made him feel competent. Egil says that he did not fit in anywhere before entering the underground. One of his friends more clearly addresses the need to belong and find a meaningful direction as being guiding principles in Egil's life. Frode was already part of a gang before he entered the underground. However, it was within the underground that he specialized as a skinhead. This made him feel he was part of something bigger than the local gang which, in the meanwhile, had become seriously stigmatized within the local community.

### 7. The experience of being underclass

National Socialism has been analysed as a middle-class phenomenon. For example, Lipset (1960) points to the middle-class votes obtained by the NSDAP. Regarding the support of the lower middle-class towards Nazi movements, Lipset asserts:

The petit bourgeois of these sections not only suffer deprivation because of the relative decline of their

class, they are also citizens of communities whose status and influence within the larger society is rapidly declining. From time to time, depending on various specific historical factors, their discontent leads them to accept diverse irrational protest ideologies – regionalism, racism, supra-nationalism, anti-cosmopolitanism, McCarthyism, fascism.

Billig (1978:53) criticizes this argument because it rejects the fact that the Nazis attracted votes from all sections of society before 1930. However, the postwar National Socialist movements have mostly attracted people from the working classes. This is in line with Inglehart (1971), who maintains that the working class is likely to lean towards the right rather than left in advanced industrial societies. Furthermore, current analyses of the connection between class and racist beliefs show that such attitudes are most prominent in the working class. However, the problem with all class explanations of adherence to Nazism or any other ideology is that not all people from the lower middle-class or any other class become sympathizers with this ideology (cf. Brustein 1996). Class is therefore part of the explanation, but can never be the only explanatory tool.

Brustein (1996) interprets people's joining the Nazi party in the 1930s as a result of their rational calculation that the party could address their material grievances. He says that the Nazi party's success was due to its ability to serve as a reservoir of hope for people who felt injured. Brustein claims that other authors pay too much attention to the Nazi followers' *passive* response, while ignoring the point that individual support to the Nazi party was due to their desire to improve their material conditions. However, he agrees that the Nazi party did not offer solutions to all social classes. Thus, people from certain classes of society were more prone to vote for the Nazis than those from other classes. A theory about the social origin of Nazism must be able to explain why workers, independent peasants, shopkeepers, artisans and academics joined the Nazi party instead of other parties and why the Nazi party did not draw equal numbers of members from all social groups.

Many authors have seen support for the Nazi party as a protest vote, arguing that individuals voted for the Nazis because of a state of need and the feeling that the more mainstream parties had deceived them. Brustein (1996) argues that the Nazi party received so much support that it cannot be interpreted solely as a protest vote. According to Brustein,

proponents of the thesis of the Nazi appeal to irrationalism have ignored how it appealed to people's material interests and have underestimated the degree to which the Nazi party received support from people with strong institutional ties. He says that although the outcome of the Nazism, the Holocaust, was irrational, we cannot overlook the point that individual sympathizers behaved rationally. Rational behaviour includes choosing alternatives that appear to be relatively favourable in order to achieve certain goals. Seen this way, the collective rationality of Nazism is the result of numerous rational calculations made by different individuals. Because people's perceptions of costs and benefits are formed by the extent and form of the information they receive, their choice of political party program will often depend on their factual interests. Associating oneself with the Nazi party implied a high personal risk of public boycott. Brustein argues that an initial condition for becoming a member of a high-risk party is the belief that it offers solutions to people's grievances. He says that it is often supposed that members of extreme movements make up a distinct subdivision of followers, and that their fanaticism predisposes them towards physical confrontations and a desire for martyrdom. There is no reason to doubt that zealous and fanatical people were among those who joined the Nazi party. However, most of those who joined did so as a result of a cost/benefit calculation, argues Brustein.

This explanation might hold for voting patterns, but it is not sufficient to account for youths who enter a stigmatized and militant subculture. The costs of entering are too high and there are no material benefits. The benefits are solely on the symbolic level: honour, importance, excitement and a sense of community.

Class divisions are not as evident in contemporary Norway as they were during the period of high industrialization, and the financial situation is not one of decline. Furthermore, not many people perceive themselves as belonging to a particular class. It is therefore interesting that many radical nationalists stress the class to which they belong to such an extent. This tendency seems to match a broader tendency in contemporary Norwegian society for racism to be most prevalent in the working class. Pedersen (1996) shows that ethnic prejudice in Norway tends to be most overtly expressed among young people who have fathers who are manual labourers.

I found being working-class to be a central

part of the radical nationalists' group identity when I conducted my fieldwork. Egil once even said that 'we are the real working-class movement in Norway'. Subjectively, they feel working-class, and they link this sense of belonging to certain types of behaviour (drinking, street fighting, etc.) whether these patterns of behaviour are typical of the Norwegian working-class or not. Many of the right-wing activists viewed themselves as providing a contrast to an intellectually defined middle-class culture. They considered the act of analysing something psychologically to be typical of middle-class people, whereas being working-class meant acting rather than discussing and analysing.

Being at the bottom of the hierarchy is thus a strong component of how these activists view themselves. Many of them, like Rein, use the term 'underclass' rather than working-class to refer to themselves, to show that they define themselves as standing 'at the back of the queue'. From the outside, it may seem that they have chosen this status voluntarily. By saying 'I do not want to work for this system', Egil seems to refer to unemployment as a matter of free choice. However, such a choice might be a way of rationalizing their inability to fit in with work life. This seems to be the case with Egil, anyway. He has been a welfare client for a long time; the path into work life may therefore seem frightening. Working means beginning a totally new life, one which is alien to him. Gunnar is the one of the four young men here who says most explicitly that he was not bright and therefore had problems at school. His colleagues at the fire station, however, value him as loyal and responsible. Gunnar's competence has thus been proved by his ability to do a good job. These youngsters stand in contrast to young people who are upwardly mobile. They are not oriented toward the future, but rather to a picture of how good everything was in the past. Their essential faith in tradition, 'the law of nature' and working-class community of the past (Fangen 1998) and their celebration of rituals is understandable, to quote Bourdieu (1984:111), 'because the best they can expect from the future is the return of the old order, from which they expect the restoration of their social being'.

Their view of themselves corresponds with their being interpreted as part of a culture that lacks resources. In their eyes, being part of an underground movement and mastering street life is an alternative path to the more conformist

and boring route of pursuing middle-class careers.

## 8. Loyalty to parents

According to Egil, several activists are 'victims of destiny'. Dysfunctional families are common. However, the activists were sensitive to this issue and said that they did not want me to focus too much on private matters. Some activists made ironic interpretations of their own backgrounds that they said should interest a psychoanalyst. The way they made these remarks made it clear that they did not like being interpreted this way. Previously in this essay, we saw Rein suggestion that his own entry to the underground one month after his mother's death would be of interest to a psychoanalyst. On other occasions, he ironically stated that the violence of his fellow activists might have something to do with their inability to achieve orgasm, thus explicitly taking up the hypothesis of Wilhelm Reich. He probably had not read *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, but had heard a reference to this type of interpretation on some occasion.

The radical nationalists' rejection of or self-deprecating remarks regarding psychological interpretations seem to be partly a reaction to psychological interpretations of them by others (the outside world). They are used to being labelled; they have been called morally stunted losers. Others have referred to them as suffering from the lack of a proper father figure. Yet others have branded them as having behavioural problems and being sexually inhibited. Their rejection of psychological explanations of their orientation and lifestyle is a form of defence against those who condemn them. In order to defend their culture they avoid psychological interpretations.

The activists do not explicitly rebel against their parents. Gunnar is the only one who appears to do so from time to time. He seems to be unable to live up to the expectations of his family. However, he receives some support from his mother. She says that, in contrast to other rightist activists, although the family disapproves of his participation, he dares to stand for his beliefs without hiding his identity. The four radical nationalists do not describe their parents' individual qualities. On the contrary, there is a sense of distance in how they talk about them. At the same time, they refer to their parents and grandparents with respect and say that they do not have any major conflicts with

them. Of the four men, Frode is the only who appears to be attached to his father.

According to my interviews and observations, it appears to be a general trend that Norwegian rightist activists do not identify very strongly with their parents. They identify more generally with their families' class background.<sup>11</sup>

In 1993–1994, the majority of the activists were secondary school dropouts. None of them attended school in a conformist manner. Some of them provoked the teachers with their attitudes; others were troublemakers. I asked twenty-five of the forty activists within the underground in 1993–94 about their current occupation. Four of them were still at school, one was involved in further education, four were permanently unemployed, one worked periodically and the other fifteen held typical working-class jobs. Among them were two girls who only worked part-time.

Since childhood, most right-wing activists had been involved with gangs that had committed crimes, mainly lesser offences. Most of them had taken part in street fighting, but some had not. There is no pressure to take part in fights. There are other, equally successful modes of achieving status. However, most activists practice kick-boxing, paintball and weapons training. They say that they do so in order 'to know how to defend ourselves'. A few participants, including some of the four men described in this essay, have been convicted of bombing, murder, violence or refusing to complete their military service. As for racially-motivated crimes, they have made threats against anti-racists by telephone, painted National Socialist symbols on and written slogans outside the homes of anti-racists. Some younger activists have been thrown out of the army for making racist remarks. Crimes that are uncommon or even absent among the activists are all related to drug use due to their strong stand against drugs. However, a few of them have been convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol.

Most of the boys were involved with other provocative or delinquent subcultures before they entered the rightist underground. Some of the skinhead activists were previously anarchists, either as *Blitz* youth or as punks. Typical of these boys is their great interest in specific aspects of subculture, such as music and style of dress. They say they feel more comfortable with the skinhead style because it is more orderly than the punk or anarchist style. Some of them

were thrown out of the *Blitz* house because of their racist attitudes. For some activists, joining the rightist underground may be seen as part of a life-long spiritual or ideological quest.

Some activists certainly have extraordinary life stories. Their participation in the militant underground movement from an early age has marked their lives to such a degree that the transfer into an established adult life would be difficult to achieve.

## 9. Lack of ideological heritage

These stories also show that, at least at first glance, it is not possible to speak of an ideological legacy from parents or grandparents to the activists. As we see, none of the four right-wing activists described here has grandparents or parents who belonged to the National Socialist party during World War II.<sup>12</sup> However, the activists themselves flirt with National Socialist ideas and symbols. Rein and Egil are both influenced by National Socialism. Egil, however, distances himself from the non-Christian elements of the ideology. Gunnar and Frode do not admit openly to being National Socialists, but they do use Nazi salutes in order to provoke.

This finding is interesting in light of the fact that almost none of the activists expresses any feelings of rebellion against his own family. However, as we currently see in Norway, people are drifting from the Labour Party to the anti-immigrant Progressive Party.<sup>13</sup> In other words, being a Labour Party voter, as many of the parents in this study were, does not necessarily mean being pro-immigration. Therefore, the gap between the attitudes of the parents and their children in this regard is not necessarily large. This point is even clearer when we focus on their attitude towards immigrants rather than on Nazi symbols and ideas. All four men regard the fight against immigration as their most important task, as do the rest of the right-wing activists in Norway. When we focus on this issue, we see that there is no conflict between the youngsters and their parents. Frode thus does not interpret his own violence, racism and membership in a militant group as being a form of rebellion against his parents. He perceives his own anti-immigrant views as corresponding to those of his father. By viewing the situation this way, he seems to feel less guilty about his actions. The fact that his father confronted the deputy director of the school, his negative view of Frode and his racist actions has particularly

served to ease Frode's guilt. Frode says that his father does not object to his participation in the nationalist skinhead subculture. In other words, when Frode commits acts of violence or calls people names, his father views these actions as adolescent behaviour rather than as particularly bad. Frode thus confirms his father's attitudes, although he takes them further.

## 10. Revolt against authorities

Radical nationalism might be considered a form of youth rebellion. A relevant question to ask is whether this rebellion is targeted at parents or at the authorities. In the presentation of the young men's stories above, we saw that they are not in opposition to their parents. However, they express considerable resentment towards 'the system'. All of these men are working-class in terms of their own employment histories, and some of them do in fact belong to the 'lumpen' proletariat (unemployed, welfare clients, etc.). Egil is an example of the latter. He explicitly labels himself as a revolutionary and regards all authorities with deeply felt scepticism, as he reckons them all to be part of a conspiracy. He views himself as a person who reacts against unjust social structures, not against his mother's failure to provide him with safe surroundings. He blames 'the system', not his own caregivers. He is very critical of the unequal distribution of resources (money, etc.), and is almost hateful when talking (and writing in his fanzine) about the power of middle-class men to define people like himself and his fellow activists. We see in him a reactionary disposition, which reflects the threatened future of people from his class. He maintains a sense of pride by idealizing the past, as seen in his conceptualization of the Viking era (Fangen 1998; Fangen 1999a).

Other activists, such as Frode and Gunnar, have a petit bourgeois background. According to Bourdieu (1984:456), the petit bourgeoisie typically have a deep-rooted respect for the authorities, which limits their revolt. We see this attitude most overtly expressed in Frode. He does not refer to himself as a rebel, and is proud about the time he helped the police security service. However, his attitude is ambivalent. He commits petty crimes, although he argues strongly in favour of law and order in society. Gunnar is ambivalent as well. He sets store by doing a decent job. He is always the first one to leave the pub on work nights. He says there are

many nice cops who agree with them on certain issues. On the other hand, he loves to provoke and scare others by using nasty symbols. As with Frode, his opposition is toward the mass movement. It is by conforming to the appearance and values of the subculture that he lives out his resentment. This collective form of revolt resembles the pro working-class attitude of both Frode and Gunnar. It is not by standing out, by being unique, that they rebel. It is by joining the ranks, by being one of many in the right-wing movement.

There are many reasons to believe that the resentment these men feel towards 'the system' is something their parents have passed on to them. Egil's mother has 'seen through the falseness of the system', Frode's father 'knows what it means to be young' and supports Frode in his conflict with the schoolmaster. Gunnar's mother is proud because her son dares to stand up for his beliefs in public. Rein's father does not care, as he 'is not interested in politics'.<sup>14</sup>

## 11. Conclusion

When young people enter the radical nationalist underground movement, they choose a lifestyle that leads to exclusion. Their choice leads to downwards social and moral mobility. This is in complete contrast to those who chose to become members of the Nazi party in the 1930s. For them, their choice meant that they became part of a mass movement, which soon achieved hegemony. However, the radical nationalists choose to be part of an underground, excluded from the rest of society.

We see that there are no factors that automatically lead an individual into the underground movement. Indeed, a variety of processes may be involved. Both material constraints and psychological aspects contribute to an individual finding a certain milieu attractive. They also play a part in what kinds of political beliefs he adopts. It is possible that psychology plays an even bigger role when the group one enters and the ideology one adopts is marked by hatred and stereotyping of certain 'others'. However, hatred and its accompanying attitudes are closely linked with social processes, such as exclusion and stigmatization.

As defined earlier, a deviant or stigmatized career consists of both internal drives that attract an individual into the movement, as well as structural or environmental processes that make the route into the underground

easier than it otherwise would have been. The radical nationalists say that their quest for importance, acceptance and belonging attracted them to the underground. For some of them, the underground gave them the warmth and acceptance they did not experience at home. The underground also provides them with a kind of pride (or, alternatively, power) and collective solidarity. It is possible that this new environment partly reflects ideals they have internalized at home. They therefore only have to take these ideals a bit further and make them more explicit. Some activists may resolve certain conflicts within their families by entering the underground.

The radical nationalists take part in an underground world guided by norms and actions, which are in sharp contrast to the norms of most young people. Even so, they also live lives outside the underground. Moreover, the underground opens up parts of the black labour-market to them. This is seen in Frode's narrative, but is generally known among radical nationalists. Some of them still have relations with other people (family, peers or colleagues) outside the underground, but many of them hardly have contact with anybody other than other activists. They therefore live solely in an underground world with its own values far removed from those of the rest of society. Thus, they have placed themselves (as they also have been placed by others) firmly on the margins of conventional life.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I call them radical nationalist rather than 'neo-Nazi', as some of them stay aloof from the Nazi content prevalent in certain parts of the of the movement. I therefore talk of the radical nationalist underground movement, which is made up of several groups. These groups differ in terms of ideology, strategy, militancy and style. The entire underground movement consists of about 100 people. See my more detailed description of this underground in my thesis *Pride and Power – A Sociological Interpretation of the Norwegian Radical Nationalist Underground Movement* (1999b).

<sup>2</sup> I have changed some of the information about them in order to make it less easy to recognize them. In addition, I have left out details that are central to their life stories, but which would make them recognizable. In particular, I omitted data about criminal offences, prison terms and the roles they occupy within the underground. This might be construed as a failing of this discussion. However, my intention was to focus more on their backgrounds than on their later roles.

<sup>3</sup> A branch of the police specially trained to deal with armed groups in tense situations.

<sup>4</sup> NS, *Nasjonal Samling*, the national socialist party that existed until 1945.

<sup>5</sup> The so-called 'Left Party' in Norway is a liberal party situated in the middle of the political spectrum.

<sup>6</sup> 'Job-for-welfare' is work that is paid for by the Job Centre. The employer thus receives labour without having to pay for it. The workers receive a very low salary, but this is better than merely receiving unemployment benefits. The idea behind this scheme is that the 'job-for-welfare' will provide the employee with qualifications for future work or, if his current employer is satisfied with him, with a regular job with his current employer, once the period of work sponsored by the Job Centre is over.

<sup>7</sup> Grini was a prison in Oslo where people working for the resistance movement were held during World War II.

<sup>8</sup> NF: Norwegian Front, an extra-parliamentary National Socialist Party that emerged in October 1975 and was dissolved in 1979. In July 1979 it was replaced by *Nasjonalt Folkeparti* (National People's Party), which was dissolved in 1991.

<sup>9</sup> National People's Party.

<sup>10</sup> *Blitz* youths: young people connected to the so-called 'Blitz house', a culture house for left-wing youths. A minor group within this house is the *Anti Fascist Action*, a group known to use violence as a tool for fighting Fascism, as associated with the right-wing activists.

<sup>11</sup> The parents of most of the activists I interviewed in 1993–94 were manual labourers. The activists themselves were proud of what they considered to be the working-class traditions of their families. Since 1995, having a petit bourgeois background has become more frequent within the rightist underground. Leading figures in the underground still report that the parents of these young people from well-off families also mainly do manual work. For example, some have their own plumbing firms. Most of these young people view themselves as being part of the working-class culture, in contrast to a middle-class lifestyle based on education and office work.

In 1993–1994, the majority of the activists were secondary school dropouts. None of them attended school in a conformist manner. Some of them provoked the teachers with their attitudes; others were troublemakers. I asked twenty-five of the forty activists within the underground in 1993–94 about their current occupation. Four of them were still at school, one was involved in further education, four were permanently unemployed, one worked periodically and the other fifteen held typical working-class jobs. Among them were two girls who only worked part-time.

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Some activists certainly have extraordinary life stories. Their participation in the militant underground movement from an early age has marked their lives to such a degree that the transfer into an established adult life would be difficult to achieve.

<sup>12</sup> In Norway, only one of the forty right-wing activists who were active in 1993–94 had parents or grandparents who had been members of the National Socialist party (*Nasjonal Samling*, NS) during World War II. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, it was more frequent for young right-wing activists to have an NS background. According to one person who, at the age of 20, started the *Nordisk ungdomsfront* (Nordic Youth's Front) in 1969, half of the young activists were of NS heritage (Bangsund 1984). The underground then had much stronger ties to the 'old' National Socialists. This path was therefore more plausible than it is today, where the 'old' Nazis do not want to have anything to do with the militant youth groups (Fangen 1997a). Since 1995, some children with an NS heritage have entered the rightist underground. Even so, at present right-wing activists in general do not have close relatives with NS sympathies. In Sweden, by contrast, several right-wing activists have fathers or grandfathers who belonged to the National Socialist party during World War II (Lööv 1993). There are even cases of families with three generations of National Socialists.

<sup>13</sup> A restrictive attitude against immigration might be seen more as a common trend in Norway than as an atypical feature, considering that the Progressive Party, whose immigration policies are restrictive, became the second largest party in Norway following the 1997 parliamentary election.

<sup>14</sup> Among the forty activists participating in the movement in 1993–94, a few had severe conflicts with their parents because of their attitudes. However, it was more common that parents either chose never to discuss political issues with their children, or that they (more or less actively) shared some of the attitudes of their children.

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## Extracts from sociological fieldwork among the far right<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, US journalist Bill Buford published the book *Among the Thugs* (Buford 1991). Using a traditional journalistic approach, the book provides a look into the most violent faction of British football supporters. According to the back cover of the Norwegian edition of the book, Buford 'witnessed frightening street fights, brutal harassment of the local population, the deaths at Heysel and Hillsborough, knifings, and extreme acts of violence...' Above all, 'he experienced up close what it was like to be caught up by group psychosis, madness, violence.'

In 1993, I began my fieldwork among people from the Norwegian far right. I entered the field as a doctoral candidate, and am writing about my experiences within an academic frame of interpretation. However, this type of fieldwork entails more than academic analyses. It comprises a number of stories, presented as my recollections of events which created contradictory impressions in me.

As a sociologist, I was surprised by Buford's almost sarcastic portrayal of the 'thugs' he had followed over a period of time. At the same time, I was fascinated by the amount of detail in his style of writing. Another thing I noticed is that he ploughs through a number of strong impressions, and refers casually to his own participation both in acts of violence and in other areas. Considering the good reviews Buford's book has received, this leads me to believe that it is easier for a journalist to ridicule people and describe events in an extreme manner without having to make ethical decisions and be responsible for finding a framework within which the reader can interpret his words. The reason for this is probably the fact that by being presented with an unflattering view of the actors, the reader yet again finds a reason to react negatively towards the subjects of his text.

I wanted to present some of my experiences within the field in a journalistic manner, but including a certain number of academic reflections. This essay deals with my first meeting with the far right, as well as one period of fieldwork which made a significant impact on me: a trip to Sweden on the night before 1 May 1994. In the conclusion, I will return to the difference between a journalistic and a sociological approach to violent male groups. I will end by explaining why I believe that an approach based on the social sciences is more conducive to arriving at ways in which to deal with these people.

### My first meeting

I first contacted the far right in August 1993. I had heard that they met at a pub by the Youngstorget (square in downtown Oslo) on the first Saturday of each month. After wandering around the area for a couple of hours one Saturday afternoon, I saw two skinheads go into a pub on the upper side of the square. I summoned courage and followed them. Right away I saw a gang of skinheads sitting by the window. I went to the bar and ordered a beer, and noticed that the men were staring at me. I took a sip of my beer and

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of the article 'Blant høyreekstremister. Utsnitt av et sosiologisk feltarbeid', published in Pål Veiden and Rune Nilsen (eds.) *Sosiologisk fantasi*, Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1998.

walked over to them. I told them that I was writing a book about skinheads, and asked if it would be all right if I joined them. One of them smiled and said, 'Sure'. They were in a party mood, and were quite jovial.

They were quite welcoming, and surprisingly disinterested in my political opinions. I told them, 'I'm definitely not a racist'. One man, who had been quite friendly up to that point, looked displeased when I said that. He remained silent and disapproving for a while. During later periods of fieldwork I learned how vulnerable they were to labels such as 'racist' and 'Nazi'. The point is not that they do not have ideas that can be called racist or Nazi. They feel that ideas are often attributed to them which they do not identify with. This kind of frustration is found again and again amongst different groups of people who are presented in the tabloids. For example, a group of immigrant women that Bredal (1993) studied told her, 'You think that we are different, but we're not different the way you think; we're different in another manner!' Marginalised groups may thus want the general public to gain a more complete picture of them, for better or for worse. This appeared to be the main reason why the men of the far right decided to let me in.

I have found it very difficult to find a label which includes them all, and which does not stigmatise them. In 1993-1994, they called themselves nationalists. However, this is not a very good concept in many contexts, as many of them clearly follow a transnational ideology. The terms 'racists' or 'national socialists' appear to be more suitable. Furthermore, it is preferable to use labels which provide clear associations to this type of blend of youth subculture, militant methods, and inconsistent ideologies. More recently, I have used the term 'far right', but this has not been satisfactory either, as many of these people define themselves as being left-wing. There may be some degree of truth to this. Despite the difficulties inherent in such a label, I have chosen to use it in this essay, for lack of a better one.

The far right wanted to be portrayed in a more nuanced manner than they generally are, as articles in the tabloids are not based on inside information. They basically wanted 'the truth' to come out. Naturally, the idea that it is possible to present such a complete picture is an illusion. However, participants in primary groups often have a positivistic belief that if only the researcher is shown everything, s/he will write the truth. It is not always clear to participants outside the academic sphere that the researcher has no choice but to pick extracts, make interpretations, and place them within a context. At least that was the case with the people from the far right. They said that they wanted me to go everywhere with them, because that was the only way I could learn what they were really like.

I considered my first contact with people from the far right to be successful. They took the offensive role in their contacts with me. I had more than enough to do, talking to those that spoke to me first. However, I received three 'gatekeepers': the three boys I spoke to first, and whom I interviewed the week after. They held different positions within the far right. One of them held a prominent position, and was in charge of the militant faction. The second one was a boy who was sceptical to parts of the community, because it was too violent. However, he had been part of the far right for a long time and was an extremist, from an ideological point of view. The third one was a sociable person, who often organised gatherings. He was known to be a heavy drinker, and interested in the skinhead style.

During the initial stage of my fieldwork, I had to try out different outfits in order to find out which one I felt most comfortable in. I realised that it was an advantage to play down the external differences between my informants, and myself in order for our communication to take place on a relaxed level. They primarily reacted by snickering and by making comments if I dressed too differently from them. However, I felt that it was important that I not look like one of them either. I tried dressing like them once, and they reacted by whispering amongst themselves. They knew I wasn't one of them. That was why my copying part of their uniform seemed strange.

The first time that I met people from the far right, I was unsure how I would be received, and particularly felt the need to reduce the distance between us. This was why I ended up wearing an outfit that was so similar to their skinhead uniform as possible, without having to buy new clothes. I wore jeans, a black T-shirt, and a blue-grey winter jacket which resembled their bomber jackets. I gradually came to feel more secure in my role, and thought it was important to show them that I was an individual as well. This is why I turned up in a somewhat 'ladylike' outfit the next time I saw them – an outfit I had worn to work. This time I noticed an activist sniggering as we walked down the street. I asked him if he reacted this way because I clearly did not look like one of them, and he nodded. From then on, I wore an outfit that was a compromise between looking like them and looking different. I generally wore jeans, a T-shirt, and some sort of shirt. This outfit made it possible for me to be myself and to fit in with them. As I presented myself as not being one of them, either by sharing their attitudes or in action, it was a good idea to make this point with my outfit as well. At the same time, it was best that I not stand out so much that it became comic.

At times, I had to place limits on our contact. For example, I told them that they couldn't visit me at home. I was primarily an active listener, who wanted to learn who they were and what they believed. This would allow me to be present and earn their trust without our relationship turning into actual friendship, with the mutuality that this entails. It was seldom difficult to turn down requests for more intimate contact in a friendly manner. I responded to such overtures by saying that this wasn't possible. I pointed out the fact that I was spending time with them in order to write about them as a researcher. Even though this was clear from the very beginning, I had to remind them of this many times during my fieldwork. The distinction between a potential partner and a researcher was not as great for them as it was for me.

Much can be said about the fact that I, a middle-class woman, on a good career path, entered into an environment of relatively marginalised men, without many career opportunities. I primarily gained the impression that they were proud of the fact that I spent time with them, and that I was interested in keeping in contact for such a long time. There were times when it appeared that they disparaged themselves, when comparing themselves with me. For example, they would say to me, 'this can't be of any interest to you, these boys must be on a much lower intellectual level than you!' Other times, they would say, 'Didn't *you* know that? You, who have studied for so long?'

I felt sympathetic towards some of the participants, particularly in situations where they opened themselves to me completely. Some of them displayed extreme vulnerability. I

believe that their uncontrollable aggression in other situations was the other side of this coin. I heard them express attitudes which I strongly disagreed with. However, this did not affect the degree of sympathy I felt for them. After all, I had known what sort of attitudes they had to begin with, and later discovered the people behind the masks. I believe that when I become acquainted with a person whom I later define as my friend, and then hear such attitudes, this creates a much stronger sense of indignation in me. I was able to feel sympathetic towards these men because I did not define them as my friends, but as informants, whose opinions I wanted to learn as much about as possible.

When dealing with outsiders, for example parents, more elderly anti-immigrant activists or foreign brothers-in-arms, the participants often had to explain that I wasn't one of them. In such cases, they often referred to me by a different title than 'researcher'. At the beginning of my fieldwork, they kept presenting me as a journalist. Other times, they merely said that I was going to write a book about them. The profession of 'researcher' was clearly too distant. Usually, though, they did not introduce me as being anybody particular. This meant that when journalists entered the environment in order to carry out interviews, they thought I was a participant like the others.

Every once in a while, I heard that certain individuals were sceptical about my presence. I discussed this issue with one of the leading figures. He said that I couldn't expect anything else. He stressed the fact that the community was a paranoid one. He added, 'even I have been accused of being a snitch'. I asked him what I could do to reduce people's scepticism. He said that as long as I went to all of the joint gatherings, it wouldn't be a problem. Another requirement was that I participate in excursions outside of Oslo. I learned that part of the scepticism was due to the fact that I had not wanted to participate in a trip to Sweden nor attend a private party which was held during the first autumn that I carried out my fieldwork. One of the leading figures asked me why I did not want to attend private parties. I told him that I was afraid that somebody would rape me or beat me up. He found this very amusing, and I later heard that this story about me was often told in the environment. I asked this person how they wanted me to behave at these parties, and he said that everything would be fine as long as I did not sit sober, in a corner and observe them.

Going to Sweden with them was clearly proof of my courage and my goodwill. These trips usually last a whole weekend, and involve a great deal of drunkenness, street fights, and not infrequently the Norwegian gang being jailed. The reason for these trips is to participate at demonstrations, concerts, and parties together with their Swedish brothers-in-arms. By going on one of these trips, I would be given a chance to see more of the truth that the people from the far right wanted to come out; in other words, situations where they were on home ground, in contexts where they were the only ones around. My being invited to participate was clearly an honour. Another reason why it was so important was the exposure effect; i.e. going on such a trip would force me to prove that I was able to handle extremely close contact with them.

During the last six months of my fieldwork, I attended private parties and travelled with them outside of Oslo. In order to avoid feeling stuck in these situations, where I didn't have the same options for making a retreat, as I would at a pub in downtown Oslo, I chose to drive. That way I could remain sober and I could leave if I wanted to. This was a good

solution. The only problem was that there generally weren't enough cars to transport the participants during these excursions. As I was driving, I immediately became the designated driver. I didn't mind. I had more problems with the fact that my car (a Volvo station wagon) was filled with 7 or 8 skinheads each time. There would have even been more of them if I hadn't told them clearly that I couldn't take any more of them. These were fairly difficult trips. I was confronted with threats in a more direct manner. There were also a couple of occasions where two of the participants came very close to fighting while I drove. At such times, I discarded my passive role, and clearly told them that that was enough. They actually listened to me, and backed down.

### **A difficult trip**

I found the trip to Sweden to be the most difficult part of my fieldwork. I had been asked if it would be all right that three girls from southeast Norway could go with me. I said yes. I therefore picked them up, and we took the ferry across the fjord and began driving towards Gothenburg. The girls spoke animatedly during the entire trip. They mostly ignored me, while they discussed everything from parents to boyfriends to their impressions of some of the leading figures of the far right. I would ask a question every now and then, but mostly chose to keep a low profile during the trip. The girls said that they belonged to the youth patrol of the Home Guard. They were proud of the fact that they got to run through forests with a Mauser in their hand. One of the girls had a lot of problems with her parents, and had recently moved into an apartment where she could barely afford to pay the rent. Another one of the girls said that her parents had no problem with her participation. Her father was a sailor and said, 'I guess you'll want to hand the Norwegian flag on the wall now, but make sure that it hangs horizontally, and not aslant'. The third girl was only going to Sweden since she was a friend of the other two. She said that she was neutral politically, and that she had only come along because she thought that it sounded exciting and because she felt that she needed to look out for her friend. She clearly did not think that her friend was able to take care of herself.

When we arrived in Gothenburg, it turned out that the demonstration downtown had just finished, and the girls didn't know where everybody had gone. We ended up asking the police, who gave us directions to the concert area. The concert was to be held at Sollebrunn, a godforsaken place far out in the woods. When we got to the place, we met a police roadblock, and I had to present my driver's licence and my registration certificate. The police looked sceptically at the three young girls and me but waved us on. I could hear now that we were on the right road, because the rock music made the ground shake. There were police officers all around the concert area, which had been fenced off.

I parked my car, and we walked to the entrance. A skinhead with an angry expression sold us tickets, and let us through. The girls asked if I wanted to join them at the beer tent, so I went with them. We saw one of the leading Norwegian right-wing activists there. He had been very eager for me to go to Sweden earlier, but now he ignored me completely, and only greeted the girls. Already by then I began to feel uneasy.

I bought a beer and went to sit alone. It didn't take long till another of the Norwegian boys, a young football supporter and supporter of the Progressive Party came to join me. He greeted me in a friendly manner, but added, 'You are aware of the fact that you aren't

welcome here, aren't you?' This gave me a bad feeling, and replied that I didn't understand why, because I had been criticised earlier for not having gone to Sweden. I also told him who had invited me this time. An older activist who I knew the young boy respected had invited me.

We sat arguing for a while the issue of whether I was welcome or not when a Swedish skinhead staggered over to our table. He fell over the table, which had many beer bottles on it, and swiped all of the bottles off the table with one hand, saying, 'I'm so pissed off'. The Norwegian football supporter greeted him and told them that I was going to write about them, and that I was a reporter. I quickly corrected him, saying that I was not a journalist, but that I was going to write a book. 'You write a book?' said the Swede. He then added 'Give me the name of one writer who has ever written anything positive about us'. I thought about his question, and remembered a Swedish photographer called PO, who had followed the Swedish environment for two years, before putting together a photo book about them, as well as making a documentary. I knew that some of the Norwegians really like the book, which is why I mentioned him. 'PO!!!' shouted the Swedish skinhead. 'He's a Jew!' This statement showed me that there was no point in continuing the discussion with this person. He ended the conversation himself by telling me to send him a copy of the book when I was finished. He then said to look around, so that I would have a good idea of how many people would be against me if they didn't like the book. I mumbled that that was all right, and took the note he gave me with his address on it. The Swede then disappeared into the crowd in front of the stage, and the Norwegian boy left shortly after. I sat alone for a while until a leading Norwegian activist, who was going to buy a beer, suddenly saw me. He grinned as he greeted me with a 'sieg heil'. I had never been greeted that way before. It was a very clear way of marking the fact that I was on their territory now. At the same time he smiled mockingly. It turned out that he was smiling that way because he was very pleased with the events of the day. He proudly told me how hundreds of skinheads and 'nationalists' had marched with drums and flags. He added that 'they had put the residents of the town in a state of shock' He said that he would have achieved his goal once they held the same type of demonstration up the main boulevard in Oslo, Karl Johan's gate. He disappeared into the crowd after telling me this.

One of the girls came and asked if I wanted to come watch the band. I nodded, pleased that she had asked. So far I had felt that everybody wanted to get rid of me, which was an unpleasant feeling. I was the only outsider there, surrounded by aggressive and drunk skinheads.

The band was playing deafening rock music. I noticed that I felt the same sinking sensation in my belly that I had had at other hard rock concerts. However there was a new undertone to this sensation. Between the band and me was a compact group of grave young men with fixed gazes and shaved heads. They were either wearing the skinhead uniform or military clothes. A few girls were sitting on the fence behind me. Apart from them I mostly saw boys, as well as an older man who appeared to be at least as involved as they were. Some of them kept their arms straight up and ahead the whole time. Others merely stuck out their arms and shouted out heils at a beat. I stood facing the band passively, but every once

in a while stole a glance to the side. I was much more interested in the audience than in the band. I glimpsed the occasional familiar face from the Norwegian far right.

*No Remorse*, a well-known Nazi band from England was on stage. They were obviously popular. People pushed their way to the front. One of the leading Norwegian activists became quite a hero when the band dedicated a song to him. I turned and looked at the lucky recipient of the dedication. He stood at an angle behind me, looking happy. His eyes were shining and he was grinning.

Another leading Norwegian activist, who was the one who was the one who had had the least to do with me, now stood close by. At first he didn't seem to see me. However, once our eyes met, he came over, said 'Hi', and kissed both of my cheeks, then pulled away. When I eventually looked at him, I saw that he was standing there passively while most of the others responded to the band's call for a joint 'sieg heil'. Quite some time later, when he had probably forgotten about me, I saw him heiling as well - i.e. with his arm sticking straight up and ahead.

The leading skinhead, who had ignored me earlier, now tapped my shoulder. When I turned around he heiled right in my face three times in a row. He then disappeared into the crowd in front of the stage.

The girl who had taken me to the stage stood further away now. She looked around before heiling once, cautiously. She did not appear to be entirely convinced as to whether she felt comfortable doing this. Perhaps she felt inhibited by my presence. A few years after this trip, another girl told me that the girl in question and some of the others from her hometown were very fond of heiling. The other girls therefore considered them to be frivolous.

The boy who had earlier told the angry Swedish skinhead what my role was came over now. He smiled, took my hand, and pulled me into the mob in front of the stage. It looked like he wanted to make up for having been so unpleasant to me earlier. I let him pull me into the crowd but realised that this was not somewhere to stay - not in the midst of all these tottering male bodies. I therefore snuck out of the crowd as soon as the boy loosened the grip on my hand.

When the band finally finished playing, the crowd broke up, and most of the people there went looking for their friends in order to hitch a ride to the places they were staying at. All of the Norwegians were spending the night at the home of a Swedish skinhead. They had been driven to the concert in a huge bus, and some of them were on their way to the bus. However, several others came and asked whether there was space in my car. With the three girls, their boyfriends, and a few other boys who had asked for a ride I substantially exceeded the car's legal number of passengers.

The lucky activist who had had a song dedicated to him staggered over to us. He came straight to me and said, 'You're sleeping with me!' I said, 'No. I'm spending the night at a different place.' 'You're sleeping with me!' he repeated. He then asked for a ride. I replied 'There are five or six people already.' 'Six', he said. 'Six, six, six.' His eyes shone, and I understood what he meant. He was not talking about the number 'six', but the word as it was pronounced in Norwegian: 'sex'. I said, 'No, not sex'. 'Okay, let me show you what I'm going to do with you,' he replied. He grabbed firm hold round the waist of a girl that was

standing there, and picked her up and took her with him to a bush, not far away. He soon came back, wearing a smile of satisfaction. 'I can do to you too what I did to her', he announced.

(I later asked the girl what he had done to her. She said that he had merely thrown her down in the bushes, then gone back. However, at the end of the trip, and I was about to drive on, with the same boy as one of the same passengers, he crowed at her 'I could have raped you!' When she replied angrily, 'That would have been awful', he laughed coldly.)

As I walked to my car from the concert area, the boy called out after me, 'Come here!' 'Come here, yourself!' I shouted back. He ambled over and said, 'Don't be so difficult!' Some of the others caught up with us, and the situation calmed down somewhat until we reached my car. Suddenly a large group of people tried to get into the car. Some of the boys lay side by side in the boot. In the back seat, people were both sitting and lying on top of each other.

The boy sat next to me, and a girl sat on his lap. Even more people wanted to get in the car, but I said 'No. That's enough. I can't take more than this.' I was about to drive away when the boy sitting beside me said, 'Wait! We've got to make sure that we've got everybody.' I asked why, since there was no more space in the car. He said that we had to make sure that nobody was left behind. I asked why, since we wouldn't be able to take anybody along anyway. His reply was 'This is something you know nothing about. We're not leaving anybody behind.' Even though he was determined, he gave in when I told him that the people driving the buses would manage to pick up the stragglers, and that it would be more natural for them to wait. I then drove away. I had to honk constantly in order to get the hordes of skinheads who had gathered in the parking lot to move. I wondered whether I would have any trouble getting through the police's roadblock, but we had no problems. The boy sitting next to me said, 'They're just glad to get rid of us.'

We were on our way to the place where the right-wing activists were going to spend the night. I was driving, and looked forward to dropping off my drunken passengers and spending time on my own. I stopped at a petrol station to ask for directions. When I got back to the car, I found the boy who had been sitting next to me lying sprawled over my seat. I pushed him back into an upright position and got into the car. 'You're at our mercy now,' he mumbled. I felt a chill come over me, and my muscles tensed. None of them had ever spoken to me that way before. I remained silent, and drove towards the place they were staying at. Not long after, the boy sitting next to me fell asleep. I breathed a sigh of relief. The back seat was silent. Nobody said a word. The atmosphere in the car was charged.

When we arrived at our destination, I parked the car, and everybody that had been sitting in the back jumped out and started walking towards the building. The boy next to me woke up and asked, 'Where are we? Are we in Oslo?' 'No,' I replied. 'We're in Gothenburg. This is where you're going to spend the night'. He responded by saying, 'I want to go home! I want to go home! I want to go home!' I told him 'No, you're not going home yet. Now get out of the car. We're going into the building here'. He repeated that he wanted to go home. I then asked one of the others for help to get him out of the car. He merely mumbled 'Can't we just leave him there?' He appeared to be worried about the prospect of getting into a



fight with the boy, who was now in a dangerous mood. I gave up, and went inside with the people who were looking for a place to sleep.

The apartment was full of skinheads. I felt ill at ease. I was not happy about being in an apartment on the outskirts of Gothenburg together with a horde of right-wing skinheads who were drunk and who had had little or no sleep during the past few days. I realised that this was no place for me to be. Furthermore, I wasn't going to be able to sleep here. One of the Norwegian skinheads began making out with the one girl who had been in the car. The others began watching a bad movie on TV. The movie was about a conservative man who fell in love with a radical environmental activist. The boy who had been most interested in seducing the girl came to see what the others were laughing at. Right then they were showing a scene from a town meeting where banners had been hung up reading 'No to nuclear power'. The boy asked me in an aggressive tone what sort of protest it was. I told him that it was an anti-nuclear protest. 'That's alright then,' he replied. His remark made the girl and I laugh.

Some of the boys were interested in the host's tarantulas, which lived in a huge aquarium in the living room. I shuddered at the thought of these huge, grey, hairy, and poisonous creatures. I wondered whether the host's affection towards these creatures might not be due to the fact that they symbolised something risky and uncontrollable.

A little while later, the rest of the Norwegian group arrived. One of the leaders looked at me coldly. His look made me feel like a traitor in the midst of enemy territory. However, one of my three gatekeepers lit up when he saw me and appeared to be happy to see me. This did not compensate for the sensation of being in the wrong place. Then, when I heard that the boy who had been left in the car was dancing around the car shouting, 'Drive, damn you!' I decided to leave. I told the girls who had driven to Sweden with me. 'Can't you wait fifteen minutes?' asked one of them. I said, 'no, I don't want to wait fifteen minutes. If you want to come with me, you must leave now'. She replied, 'Okay, give me five minutes.' I said 'Fine. But not one minute longer'. Then I went into the hall to put on my shoes. The football supporter who had told the Swedish skinhead about me saw me and asked if he could come too. I said yes.

Thus two of the girls, the football supporter, and I went back to the car. As we had heard, the boy was staggering around, completely disoriented. He said, 'Where are we now? I want to go home'. I told him where we were and told him that I had offered to take him to the apartment, but that he hadn't wanted to go. He obviously did not remember any of this. He only remembered that he was very pleased with the demonstration through the streets of Gothenburg the day before.

When he got in the car, he continued to ask where we were and to tell me to drive him home as quickly as possible. 'If we don't get home soon, I'm going to kill myself,' he said. 'Kill the driver instead', said the boy in the back seat. I parried their comments by saying, 'Why not just burn the whole car?' Most of the trip took place in silence. I drove fast. I wanted to get home as soon as possible myself. As we crossed the border into Norway, the boy sitting next to me said 'I have a bomb in my pocket. I'm going to detonate it now'. I said, 'You're a nationalist. Why set off the bomb now that we're in Norway? Why didn't you set it off in Sweden?' He laughed sheepishly, clearly surprised by my reply. I then said to

him that he ought to be pleased with the May Day parade that day, since the main slogan was 'No to the EU'. 'Really?' he asked, surprised. He then settled down to the thought that there was no point in setting off any bombs.

When we got to Oslo, a police car followed us. I wondered whether there would be any problems because of my passengers. However, the police car stopped by some dark-skinned people standing at a tram stop downtown. 'Cool,' said one of my passengers. He was obviously pleased with the fact that the foreigners would have trouble with the police instead of him. The football supporter got out of the car downtown. I then drove the other boy to his home. 'I live here!' he announced, in a happy tone of voice, as if giving me a vote of confidence, as a way of thanking me for having survived the trip.

I was left behind with the feeling that I had been exposed to a number of extreme emotional strains. Based on the way I had handled them, I could conclude that I had passed the test. A few weeks, later the boy I had driven home gave me a call, and asked if I wanted to chat over a beer. I said 'yes', and we met at a bar downtown. His upper lip was split. He grinned, and proudly told me that his girlfriend had hit him with a frying pan. I didn't ask what had made her so angry. After the trip to Sweden a few weeks earlier, I had fresh memories of how difficult it was to be in close contact with men like him. He said that he had heard that he had said that he wanted to blow up my car, but that he didn't remember having said this. I replied, 'You didn't exactly say that, but you said a lot of things'. He smiled, pleased, and appeared to be proud of having blacked out and of having made such extreme statements.

I was not up to discussing the trip with him. It was clear that we had both experienced the trip in a different manner. For me, there was no positive 'peak experience' (Maslow 1976); in other words, a situation where one experiences a high by acting on the borders of what is legal or on the border of what one dares to do. Granted, the experience was far removed from what I usually do. However, it did not give me a positive 'kick'. On the contrary, it had given me a more shocking view of how fine the balance is between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour and between games and seriousness in this environment. I had felt extremely vulnerable. Unlike my sessions of fieldwork in Eastern Norway, I felt that nobody had been looking out for me. On the contrary, they were all trying to test me. Except for a session of fieldwork in the town of Eidsvoll on Constitution Day, when I spent the entire day watching videos with three local skinheads, and except for a meeting at a pub in Oslo, this trip resulted in my winding up my fieldwork one month earlier than planned. I had had enough, after one year with the people from the far right. After the trip to Sweden I no longer felt that I had the strength to participate in other difficult field trips.

### **Mudraking or analysis**

In this essay, I have presented some of the most gruelling experiences that I had in my encounters with the objects of my study. I have not focused on our more positive meetings, where they displayed self-irony, vulnerability, good manners, and doubts. Neither have I described the many aspects that help bond each individual to the environment. I have presented those of my experiences within the field which made the greatest impression on

me. During this trip I visited the right-wing activists' own arena. This is a place that is hidden to the public. It was very important to them that they show it to me, as it allowed me to see them from their most potent side, in their own view; in other words, in an area where they felt proud and omnipotent. They have all power here, in contrast to when they find themselves in arenas where other persons also operate. Here, they are always at risk of being harassed by their opposers, who insult them, or at risk of being threatened by those who are tougher than they are. When I entered their arena they treated me differently than previously. Their behaviour was intended to show me that they were stronger than I was. In order to form a counterweight; I had to use their language to a greater extent than earlier. I had to show my strength more actively, whereas this had not been necessary before.

My report from the trip to Sweden focuses as closely as possible on the same aspects that Buford discusses in his book. However, unlike Buford (I believe) I am searching for the people behind the masks. I am more fascinated by the germs of vulnerability and humanity I glimpse behind these masks, no matter how repulsive my informants may be. I want to show what it is that leads these men to set such store by physical strength and shock effects: a particular desire for respect, pride, and a sense of community. Behind the acts of violence and the sentimental tribute to indefinable quantities such as race and people lies a desire for camaraderie, importance, and community.

In his study of football hooligans, Buford observes pale-faced fat men who consume an immeasurable number of hamburgers, hot dogs, and fish and chips. He sees them burp, vomit, and commit acts of unprovoked violence. He describes the football supporters in minute detail, and yet always in a manner which confirms the way they are presented in the tabloids. There is very little humanity in his portrayal of these hooligans. A Norwegian football supporter that I spoke to said that he did not like this book. He said that it was typical that an American journalist had written it. I have no problems recognising a great deal of what Buford describes. I have also seen football supporters and people from the far right burp, hit, tussle with each other, and beat up those that go against them. However, I do not find these acts interesting in themselves. I am more interested in learning what it is that makes a young person act in such a manner, what it is that fascinates him and helps him find meaning in such an environment.

A writer that I believe has managed this, unlike Buford, is (Willis 1977). This author has analysed working-class boys who have used repeated acts of violence, rowdy behaviour at school, racism, and male chauvinism to create an anti-school culture which in many ways prepares them better for their future job in a factory than school can. Without idealising their racism, chauvinism, and their violent behaviour, Willis manages to show how such an anti-school culture can arise, and how this functions as a counterreaction to the disciplining of class-based society. This book may thus provide a clue as to how to deal differently with working-class pupils in school and to provide teaching which suits their needs better. This may make it less necessary for them to pick on their classmates or turn their anger on other oppressed groups. Similar tendencies are found in Willis' analyses of bikers and hippies.

I wish to point out in this essay that social scientists have a greater contribution to make than merely describing how repulsive, disgusting, ugly, terrible, and violent football hooligans or people from the far right are. By contributing to a 'reading', or an interpretation, of these persons' actions, we may learn more than by reporting their actions

in an unflattering light. A sociologist with much to contribute to the interpretation of the provocative actions of such groups is (Goffman 1961). For example, his term 'secondary adaptation forms' helps understand how a person in a subordinate or otherwise vulnerable position can invert the power others have to define him. An illustration of this term is the smirk a subordinate greets his superior with when the superior turns his back. (Bourdieu 1992)'s analyses of social fields, where actors with varying degrees of power fight for the world-views which are to apply, is relevant as an analytical framework for their way of being. I believe that this type of analytical approach encompasses a vital element which is missing from tabloid journalism.

When people from the far right heel me to my face they use a brutal way of recovering power and the way they are defined. They are very vulnerable to being categorised and defined as Nazis. And yet they openly use the most well known Nazi symbols. They demand that they be treated as 'different', but want to determine the terms of that difference themselves. They have categorical views about various groups of 'others', but they feel extremely vulnerable when other people stigmatise them. The threats they make are calculated to awaken a reaction. They then turn around and act as if their threats were jokes, amusing rituals. Their senses are dulled so that they no longer see the moral implications of their actions. The border between what they view as deadly serious and what they consider to be boyish fun is strangely fluid. They speak warmly and often of the camaraderie they share. However, the way in which they demonstrate closeness is often identical with oppressing the other.

Their contradictory behaviour and their use of symbols can be seen as an attempt to recover power and dignity, and rewrite their position in society - from being boys who (for different reasons) cannot manage to or do not want to follow conventional career routes. Such a person is therefore sanctioned because he does not fit in, and is often labelled a 'loser', 'person with behavioural problems', 'authoritarian', 'a person with permanently impaired mental faculties'. They wish to be labelled as warriors on the front line, fighting a brave battle for causes they think the people believe in, but which 'they can barely admit to themselves'. They fight against anything foreign and different. Perhaps even against themselves and their own vulnerable position.

A mutual vulnerability was expressed in our meetings. I felt more physically vulnerable than ever previously in my life. I felt at the mercy of their physical strength. It was only their 'mercy' which meant that in strained situations, they took no further action than to make threats against me. My informants are vulnerable to my power to define them, to interpret them in a negative manner, as they are used to being interpreted negatively by others. As long as I was in their arena, I was in their power. However, in the long-term, I probably have greater power. I can withdraw and ponder who they are and how to understand their world. The understanding I present will in many ways be different from how they view themselves.

I approached them as a fellow human being, and wish to present the information they have given me about themselves fairly, based on the trust invested in me. I do not want to be another representative of those who dominate in society, those who label and thus oppress. At the same time, I think little of the viewpoints of my informants, and wish to use

the knowledge I have accumulated to contribute to the work of fighting violence. My approach is a humanistic one, one which I have long searched for words to express. When I read Thue (1997)'s account of the meeting between philosopher Arne Næss and the man who tortured his best friend during World War II, I found a form of expression. Næss says that he can never judge another person. He can condemn acts, but never other people.

Based on such a view, one takes on a much heavier ethical responsibility when describing other people. I feel that when describing people of the far right in the manner in which I have done in this essay, I do not do them justice, in that I am not presenting a framework of interpretation which allows one to understand why they behave the way they do. To provide such a framework would take much more space than allotted me in this essay. However, such an analysis would need to focus on the present career society and the enormous pressure placed on pupils to achieve good grades, and the corresponding loss of respect for work within the crafts, work which requires more practical than theoretical training. The actions of the objects of my study can be viewed as an extension of Willis' description of an anti-school culture, as a conscious protest against a way of being and a way of learning which working-class students know will not provide them with future prospects. Instead, as (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) shows, this contributes to divide those that already hold positions of power from those who will never obtain similar positions, because they have the wrong habitus.

In order to be noticed, people of the far right use those symbols which have the greatest power to evoke negative reactions, and therefore frighten and shock. The symbols therefore have the potential to be instruments to counter power. The reasons that lead them to heal and use swastikas are fairly far from the motives which brought certain people to join National Socialist movements during the 1930s. As (Koonz 1987) writes in her comprehensive analysis, many of those who joined National Socialist organisations were motivated by a fear of liberalism and the disintegration of traditional (moral) values. Following the gruesome acts which took place during World War II, one cannot state that the adoption of this totalitarian ideology is motivated by a corresponding bourgeois fear that progressive values will destroy traditional culture. Although right-wing ideology is clearly nostalgic and glorifies tradition, it is also provocative, as a form of protest against authority and discipline. One cannot equate it with a tribute to dictatorship.

People of the far right are full of paradoxes. They are stigmatised and shunned, but not because of any involuntary qualities or because they belong to a particular group. Their stigma is one they have chosen themselves, and is based on the fact that they categorise and label others. One might state that they therefore can also choose not to carry out such labelling in their own environment, and that they have themselves to blame for the stigmatisation of others as long as they stigmatise themselves. However as Arne Næss points out, one cannot say to another person 'you are bad', and thus stress the fact that 'I am not bad'. When a torturer is sent to prison following a war, and he complains about the soup he is served, one cannot say to him, 'What sort of soup were the people in the concentration camps served?' The fact that another person has carried out despicable actions can never justify treating that person despicably.

## Ethics in an Observational Study of Radical Nationalists<sup>1</sup>

Trust and loyalty are necessary conditions of participant observation. Trust is required in order to obtain access to a group, and loyalty is required in order to get future access to information. Furthermore, loyalty in the form of confidential treatment of personal information is an important premise of research ethics. The Data Protection Act covers this area. When we study groups that commit crimes, these ideals hold a unique position. When gaining unique access to encounters otherwise closed to public views, researchers (or journalists) are confronted with the ethical dilemma of protecting the anonymity of their informants and following up the trust and access to information they have achieved, or following their civic duty by informing the police about violence that has been committed or planned. On the other hand, covert participant observation has been criticised in the literature of research-methods. Such research is less common today than it was in the 1950s and 1960s. It is even less frequent that the researcher plays the role of police informer to the people s/he studies.

I have studied radical nationalists by means of participant observation. The project has actualised the question of whether I should maintain my role of observer, or whether I also should take on the role of informer. This fieldwork led to many ethical considerations, as I studied a group that was in an ongoing violent conflict with another group. Moreover, the group I was studying was a hot potato politically, as a result of the participants' use of symbols and phrases which turn them into successors of the Second World War Nazis.

In this essay, I will highlight the ethical dilemma of whether a researcher should inform when witnessing the prelude to possible violent actions, or whether one should maintain one's role as an observer to the events. I will discuss a situation that occurred during my fieldwork in 1993-1994 among radical nationalists in Norway. I have mentioned this incident in my research report *Skinheads in Red, White, and Blue* (Fangen 1995). Later, the anti-Fascist group 'Blitz' sent a letter of complaint to The Norwegian Committee for Research Ethics in the Social and Human Sciences (NESH) because of my portrayal of this event. After describing what happened, I will discuss the main points in the complaint from Blitz, and in NESH's reply to Blitz. I will then discuss my way of resolving this ethical dilemma.

### 1.1 An Ethically Ambivalent Situation

In the days between Christmas and New Year's Eve 1993, I heard that a party was going to be hosted in the Nite Rocket radio station (see my description of this radio station in appendix 3). The radical nationalists would first meet at their regular pub. Not many activists were present when I entered the pub, but most of them arrived after a couple of hours. I noticed that some of them did not drink beer. When we somewhat later went towards the radio station, I was told that the reason was they expected a new attack from the anti-fascist Blitz youths that evening. During the preceding months, the militant part of Blitz (the so-called AFA group) had attacked the radical nationalists several times. Tonight, the radical nationalists planned to be

<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of the article 'Fangens dilemma'. The Norwegian version was printed in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift*, no. 3, 1998.

ready to be attacked and then hit back. In the evening, a leading skinhead activist would be interviewed on the radio. They were therefore fairly certain that the Blitz youths would react.

At the radio station, most of the radical nationalists sat down on the sofas that encircled the only table present. Two of the boys had brought a bottle of Hooch, which they passed round the table. They complained loudly about those who did not drink deeply enough. Some others had brought bags with beer, and started drinking. The people sitting around the table turned the situation into a regular boozy party. I stayed with them. I had never been to a party with the radical nationalists before, and was rather elated by the situation, and by the fact that I was more at their mercy than ever before, when I had been with them at pubs in Oslo.

On the outskirts of this scene, another reality developed. A leading militant had put on a motorcycle crash helmet, and reeled about with a stick in his hand. Another of the leading skinheads had a shotgun, which he hid underneath a list on the ceiling. Several other radical nationalists stayed in the hall, and I understood that they were keeping guard in case of an attack.

Late in the evening, a leading skinhead was given airtime. However, since he consequently uttered comments such as 'I'd like to send a message to Stein Lillevolden [a leading figure in the Blitz group]. I hope he gets AIDS', he was soon taken off the air. He was thus only allowed to choose which music was to be played, and to introduce the songs. It appeared as if the two radio reporters were afraid that more messages of this kind would intensify a possible attack. They were probably afraid that the radio station would be destroyed during a confrontation.

Meanwhile, no attack seemed to take place. A few activists had gone outside to see if there were any enemies approaching the studio, but the only people they had seen were people who appeared to be narcs. The activists suddenly became hectic, and I understood little of what was going on. Everybody was being very secretive towards me. When I asked them flat out, they told me that they were going to the Youngstorget square, and that there was no place for me in the cars. However, a few of them were going to walk, so I went along with them. A boy in this group, whom I had never spoken to previously, said to me that 'It's probably not good for you to be seen with us'. I said that 'It's not a problem. I have been seen together with you many times before, and people know what I am doing'. He did not respond to my comment, but continued walking without saying anything further. I thought that perhaps he did not like my being there, since he had not talked to me before. I thought that since there had not been any attacks, we would now go to some of the regular pubs, as the activists usually did when they met with each other.

When we arrived at Youngstorget, all of the others still sat in the cars, and one of the leading activists seemed to shrug when he saw me coming. I began to realise that they did not want me to be there. Another leading activist who had never wanted to have anything to do with me earlier, except ask me who had sponsored my research, now got out of the car and announced that 'You should go home now'. 'Yes, maybe you're right, but what's happening?' I asked. He merely replied, 'Well, I don't know'. I was a bit insecure, and mumbled 'That's okay', and walked away, feeling their gazes at the back of my neck.

I had an idea that something was going to happen, but I did not know exactly what. The day after, I read in the newspaper that 20-30 radical nationalists had thrown Molotov cocktails and one of them had fired a shotgun against the Blitz-building. The

police had soon after entered the place and demanded the names of all persons present. However, some of them had already managed to escape, and took the weapons with them.

## 1.2 A Letter from the Blitz Group

After having read my description of this event in a research report, then discussing it at a meeting arranged by SOS Racism, the anarchist Blitz group responded by asking NESH to evaluate the ethical aspects of my research. Among other questions, they asked whether my neglecting to report the prelude to the attack could be justified out of concern for the research objects. If so, they wanted to know whether it is more important not to destroy the relationship of trust than to stop the loss of human life. They also posed the question of one can justify carrying out long-term participant observation in a violent Nazi-environment, where one will repeatedly be confronted with such moral dilemmas.

This question is worth examining. On the one hand, all research on violent groups will face this dilemma. Do the Blitz youths believe that this dilemma intensified because radical nationalists were the ones committing the violence? Or do they believe that the moral dilemma would be equally serious if another violent group were to be studied; for example their own group?

## 1.3 NESH's Evaluation

In their reply to Blitz, NESH points out that the committee does not have a judiciary powers. They can make recommendations and give advice in concrete cases, but they cannot judge whether a researcher has acted rightly or wrongly and they do not hold hearings. NESH's answer therefore takes the form of a discussion of the pros and cons of relevant aspects of this concrete case, but without making any conclusions; merely presenting a general recommendation to the researcher.

Point 18 of the NESH guidelines says that: 'A researcher must avoid becoming a party to illegal acts, although this may benefit the research. Without regard to confidentiality, the researcher - like everybody else - has a legal duty to deter particularly serious prospective crimes by, for example, informing the police. ... In exceptional cases the researcher might let his concern for the protection of individuals - for example children - count more than the claim of confidentiality towards one's informants'.

It is therefore not the case that the researcher, to the same extent as priests or psychologists, can remain silent about illegal acts s/he learns of. Section 139 of the Norwegian Penal Code states that one has the duty to report crimes one becomes aware of. In other words, the Penal Code covered my case, and NESH therefore had no authority to judge whether or not I had broken the law.

Despite this, point 18 of the NESH guidelines clearly states that a researcher cannot abandon the laws of society. The relation of trust between a researcher and his/her research objects must not be of greater importance than avoiding the loss of life. If we only takes NESH's discussion of this point into consideration, the conclusion seems clear: I should have reported the event to the police.

On the other hand, there are several reservations - of which some are also underlined by NESH - which imply that the answer is not that simple. First, it is not clear what NESH means by being aware that an crime would be committed, and what



one can do to prevent the crime from occurring. NESH mentions two extremes. On the one hand, having reliable knowledge about serious crimes that have been committed, and which with great certainty will be repeated. On the other hand, NESH mentions cases where a researcher is a witness to desires or incitement to commit crimes, at the same time as it is hard to know how seriously to take such desires and incitement. According to NESH, there will be a greater duty to report crimes, the closer one is to the first of these two extremes. As I see it, this amplification also gives room for several interpretations in a specific situation. When studying violent groups, one is apt to witness violence, and it is implicitly understood that the danger of recurrence is great. Should one, then, from the very beginning report all use of violence one observes?

Blitz was not preoccupied with crimes which had already been committed. They focused on the prelude to a serious act of violence. I had no certain indications of what was going to happen, only a diffuse knowledge that something was brewing. Here, NESH discussed the question of whether or not it is possible to prevent a crime. They said that if reporting does not have any practical implications, there will be a decrease in the duty to report. In my case, the question is, whether running to the nearest phone booth and calling the police would have allowed the police stop the radical nationalists before they started throwing molotov-cocktails, and before they began firing the shotgun. On the other hand, it is also unclear how the police would have reacted to such a call. I could not tell them anything more than that the radical nationalists were probably planning something; that they had brought a shotgun with them, and that they had been at Youngstorget when I saw them last.

What NESH means by 'practical implications' is also open to interpretation. Does NESH mean the consequences a report would have in the long run? In this case, one could say that to prevent this particular act of violence would have had little significance, since the attacks between radical nationalists and anti-Fascists have continued, independent of this specific event. The acts of violence committed by the radical nationalists against the Blitz-building since then have also been of a more serious nature. They have used bombs, instead of Molotovs and shots. If I had averted this event, it would probably not have any practical implication for the further spiral of violence.

In addition, NESH is concerned about the well being of the researcher. They write that 'the evaluation of action alternatives will also depend upon the eventual probability of revenge the researcher put himself into by reporting, also play a role. One cannot request unlimited personal offer in order to ward off illegalities'. If I had reported this could have led to violence against me.

Another reservation NESH discusses, is the question of who will be hit by a prospective illegality. They argue that 'when the researcher moves in milieus with violent tendencies, e.g. groups that stand in a constant antagonist relation, the implication of possible threats must to some extent be evaluated differently'. This reservation seems to be clear in this case. This case concerned the prelude violence against another party who stood in a constant antagonist relation to the attacker, and both parties had committed violence previously.

NESH states that when the violence is directed against an innocent third party, and they especially mention violence against kids, the demand to report gets stronger. This was not the case during this event. My own reactions to several situations during my fieldwork also seem to illuminate that what strikes a party who is not involved in the

ongoing conflict is more morally inflicted. During the year of my fieldwork, there was a lot of violence from Blitz to the radical nationalists. Consequently, I did not react equally strong when a radical nationalist attacked a blitz youth. On the other hand, a couple of times I witnessed radical nationalists, name-calling immigrants in the street. These were unpleasant experiences. Fortunately, nothing else happened, but I found it hard merely to overhear the comments, as I guess that psychically, comments can be perceived as equally harming as strokes. It is no good taking injuring comments only because one has another face-colour. If I had witnessed street-violence against immigrants, I think I would have carefully tried to resolve the situation. It might have been possible to call on one of the not-violent activists to go in and stop the violence.

Blitz also asked whether one should have long-during fieldwork on groups where one knows one will meet such dilemmas at all. As NESH indicates, this question will hit a long range of criminological research. Even so, they conclude that it might be unreasonable to do long-during fieldwork in criminal groups if this leads to loyalties that come in conflict with the general social concern and respect for human worth. Such a claim is also relevant to a long range of sociological, anthropological, and criminological fieldwork, at any rate fall if not observing violence without reporting it means breaking the norm of respect for human worth. Nevertheless, NESH adds that this claim must be weighed against another concern, namely that it is important for society to achieve knowledge of how criminal or violent groups function in practice. In the future, such knowledge can find the best ways to make these groups less dangerous. In other words, there are several factors to be considered. As NESH concludes, there are no standard answers to such a dilemma. They therefore end their letter with a recommendation. I will return to this later.

Another question posed by Blitz, which NESH also deals with, is how important the relationship of trust between researcher and informants should be, as well as the duty of secrecy, balanced against the citizen's duty to prevent crimes. Regardless of the position one may take, it might be necessary to provide a more detailed account of the relationship between my informants and me. Before returning to my argument of the pros and cons of this particular case, I will describe my initial contact with the radical nationalists.

## 2 Trust and Access Versus Scepticism and Concealment

I contacted the radical nationalists during the summer of 1993, and followed them as an observer until the summer of the following year. It was surprisingly easy to get in contact with them. They were obliging, and already by the first evening I met three boys who later became my 'gatekeepers'. They had different positions within the underground. I thus regularly heard from various individuals with relatively different views on ideology and practice. During my year of fieldwork, I spoke with practically everyone who participated in the underground. Most of them contacted me on their own initiative, and I had many conversations with the leading and most militant individuals within the underground. I received their telephone numbers, and was able to phone them and learn where and when they were to meet next. The oldest activists often told me more secret things than the younger ones. This was probably because they had no one to answer for. Younger activists risked being criticised for talking too frankly.

Some activists were sceptical towards me, and chose to keep a distance between them and me. I had the impression that there was some debate amongst them as to

whether or not to include me in everything. On one occasion, an activist expressed himself very openly about morally dubious matters. He said that he wanted to kill one of his rivals. Then another leading activist pulled him aside, and whispered a few words in his ear making it obvious that he shouldn't have said such things in front me.

As I was about to study a field which is not usually examined from the 'inside', the exploratory aspect of the study was an important one. The approach to such a study is not set in stone from the very beginning. The questions of how to write about the field and what issues are to be at the crux of the matter will change during the course of the study. This flexibility is an important trait of qualitative research and makes it impossible to give the participants a clear idea of what to expect to read in my study. One therefore cannot obtain fully informed consent.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I interviewed four boys. I had follow-up interviews with them later. The questions I asked dealt with their general beliefs, their views of their adversaries, and of their own environment. I then asked detailed questions about their upbringing. After a few weeks, a leading skinhead told me that it would be better if I attended their gatherings as much as possible, instead of carrying out interviews. He believed that I would learn more from observing than from asking questions. I also received the impression that people reacted negatively when too many questions were asked. Another leading activist told me that the boys did not like it when I was too curious. He suggested that I ask few questions, and that instead I spend as much time as possible around them. I would thus still gain access to a great deal of information. This turned out to be a good strategy. It was particularly important that I not appeared too inquisitive when they were discussing sensitive issues such as access to firearms, acts of violence that had been committed earlier, who ran the militant cells, etc.

Practically everybody answered my questions about their background, how they had entered the environment, and similar topics, as long as I did not call our conversations interviews. However, quite a few of them were paranoid. For example, when I searched my pockets and handbag for money, they would ask me, "What are you doing? Are you turning on a tape recorder?" Moreover, when I gave a ride to a boy, and he was unable to open my glove compartment, he thought that I was hiding a tape recorder there. Because of their active scepticism, I never carried a notebook on me during my sessions of fieldwork. I did not want any of them to rifle through my notes. I would therefore always write down my impressions after I had come home at night, and would then work on my notes the day after.

Radical nationalists have many secrets, and are used to handling sensitive information with care. They are also used to outsiders trying to gain access to information about them in order to attack or break up the environment. In order for me to be able to relax, and gain access to information, I needed to gain their trust. I needed them to relax around me, and not consider me an agent of the police, political opposition groups, or the tabloids. I have never been a good actress. It was therefore a condition that I speak the truth when I answered questions about whether I was playing a double role or not. They had no problem with the fact that I worked for The Norwegian Youth Research Institute. I told them that the institute financed research on drug abuse by youths, leisure habits, awareness of environmental issues, and many other areas. This pleased them. They seemed to view these areas of research as positive and neutral ones, and were therefore not part of what they considered "the conspiracy."

I did not have to utter words of approval in response to their statements or say that I agreed with their acts. They appeared to accept me as long as I was honest about the differences between them and myself. I think that they would have been more sceptical, if I had given the impression of being one of them. They told me that they took it for granted that I would never have received financing for such a project if I had shared attitudes like theirs. They seemed to be less sceptical of women who did not share their political views than they were of men. However, they felt that it was important that they impart every single detail of their views. I did not feel like they were trying to convince me, merely that they wanted me to gain a complete understanding of how their minds worked.

When discussing my fieldwork with other people, I have found, to my surprise, that the people I speak with take it for granted that I have infiltrated the environment. It is obvious that many people think that the only way in which one can gain access to the far right is by lying about one's identity and purposes. In my case, my being honest about who I was and what I believe in helped earn their trust and gave me access to information. One needs to remember that this community consists of people with a great deal of experience in exposing snitches and infiltrators. They therefore become sceptical of people who pretend to be one of them in case one can prove that their doubts are well founded.

Apart from this, neither my place of employ, my attire, nor my views on politics and lifestyle played a part in whether I earned their trust or not. The most important factor was the way I acted in my dealings with them. For radical nationalists, trust is about keeping one's mouth shut about crimes that have been committed, about not spreading rumours within the environment, and not carrying lists of phone numbers and addresses of brothers-in-arms. Trust is as much about not taking action as it is about taking action. I could not promise to behave in a trustworthy manner. I had to prove that they could trust me by not telling others what I had been told in confidence. A number of events took place during the year that I followed the radical nationalists that were not reported in the media. This in itself was proof that I did not run off to journalists with information. Furthermore, it showed that I was not collaborating with the police. If I had, the authorities and the media would have learned about a minor case that year. The more I saw and heard without this having any visible consequences for them, the more of their confidence I gained.

I never earned their complete trust, and I often wondered why when one of the participants of the far right seemed to be too brusque or evasive in their contacts with me. I asked the leading activists about this, and they told me that a number of people were sceptical about me. They also said that this was not unusual because everybody in the environment was fairly paranoid. One of them added, "Even I have been accused of being a snitch". This person said that he thought I would earn their trust if I joined them on trips outside Oslo and went to private parties. One reason why it was so important that I do this was for them to be able to test my reactions in controversial situations where I was unable to make a retreat. In fact, exposing me to morally ambiguous situations was something they often did on purpose, in order to see how I reacted. In the article 'Extracts from sociological fieldwork among the far right' (Fangen 1998) I have described one trip to Sweden, which clearly had such a function.

There were also cases where the participants trusted me more than they did each other. For example, it was easier for them to confide in me concerning their doubts

about participating in such an environment than they could in each other. Some participants contacted me frequently on a private basis, and wanted to chat over a beer. They were often much more open with me during these conversations than they were when I met them together with the others or when I met them for a scheduled interview.

One of the dilemmas of dealing with people that did not know that I was a researcher was that they were unable to keep me from learning sensitive information. Those who knew who I was could avoid telling me certain things or leave when I was present. However, rumours about my role spread quickly. This allowed me to relax; knowing that all of the people present had been informed. The situation which most clearly reflected the dilemma of my receiving information from people who did not completely understand my role was when I attended a meeting held by a local group of the Norwegian Union (Den norske forening). The older members of the Union entered an agreement at this meeting concerning a transfer of equipment to the young radical nationalists. I later learned that leading figures within the Union were angry about the fact that I had written about this episode. However, the people present at the meeting were told that I was not a participant, and that I was writing a book about nationalists. They therefore could have asked me to leave the meeting.

Following the radical nationalists for such a long time provided me with access to information about their private lives. Some people worried that I would misuse this data. Such information was important to me, as I wanted to learn more about how the participants managed to balance a 'normal' life with an unsafe and stigmatised environment. In order to calm people's fears, I mainly replied that yes, I did learn a great many intimate details about them, but that I would focus on treating such information confidentially and anonymise any details that would allow anybody to recognise them.

### 3 Ethical choices

After I gained access to the environment, I was often confronted with ethically ambivalent situations. I observed street violence, and heard people talk about how to cover for each other in case of a trial. These people discussed the cover story they had agreed on. I gained a fairly strong idea of who controlled the groups that carried out militant acts, I received information about who published the militant magazines, and eventually understood who the key figures were in planning acts of violence, meetings, and trips. I watched the prelude to a serious act of collective violence. The dilemma in such a situation is whether I should step outside my role as a researcher in order to take on the role of police informer.

I discussed this dilemma before beginning my fieldwork, when I attended a conference about racially motivated violence in England in 1993. I met a man from the Swedish Security Service, and asked him what his opinion was concerning the fact that some researchers on neo-Nazism co-operate closely with the Security Service while other researchers had no contact with them at all. He said that he believed that researchers and the Security Service ought to work independently. He also said that the Security Service read the writings of researchers in detail, and thus used their analyses in their work. This man's reply fit in with my view of the relationship between the Security Service and researchers. His reply has also contributed to my feeling secure in the belief that my approach to later ethical dilemmas has been a sound one. Neither the Norwegian National Police Security Service nor other police

or prosecuting authorities have ever contacted me in order to attempt to obtain information about individual people or cases. When they did contact me in 1997, it was in order to ask for a general analysis of the environment as a whole.

It is easy to believe that a person who studies radical nationalists in an attempt to understand who they are and how they reason, and who carries out such fieldwork over a long period of time is bound to become one of them. The fact that I carry out research on radical nationalists and attempt to provide a more nuanced picture of them than is found in the tabloids results in my often being viewed as in opposition to the anti-racists. As I see it, one must not view this type of fieldwork in such a reductionist manner that it becomes a simple question of "whose side are we on" (Becker 1971). Although I act in accordance with the trust I have built up in relation to my informants I am *not* one of them. Nor do I present myself as a champion of their causes. It is possible to be loyal to their trust and at the same time retain my critical view of the environment my informants are part of. There is little value in reducing the ethical dilemmas to a simple position, i.e. to condemn or to defend. Such a view is as useless as the categorical view that "either you are with us or you are against us." Fieldwork that allows itself to be subject to such short-term answers to ethical dilemmas (stop this one act of violence) will not be able to obtain substantial knowledge about how this act of violence is played out, legitimised, and structured over time.

Another important aspect of the choices I made in relation to reporting the actions of the far right was my sense of obligation towards my informants. They gave me information and allowed me to observe their activities, based on our agreement that the information would only be used for research purposes. To report to a public authority would have been a betrayal of the role I had said that I was willing to play. I had presented myself to my informants as a person they could trust and had used different strategies in our interaction and in introducing myself to them in order to corroborate this picture of myself (see a similar discussion in Norris 1993). If I had suddenly stepped out of this role by reporting the prelude to an act of violence or an act of violence which had already been committed, my informants would have considered this an act of treachery. They probably would have reacted more strongly to being turned in by me than they would have to a person who had entered their ranks under false pretences. I had been open about my differences from them, and yet they had given me access. This was a significant declaration of trust on their part. They often told me, "No outsider has ever seen as much of our world as you." This implicitly conveyed the message that a betrayal on my part would be perceived as much worse than if it were committed by one of their own. They would not feel that they had done such a person any particular favours in the past and would therefore lose face. However, as they saw it, by letting me in, they had done me a favour.

A condition for participant observation is confidentiality. It is well known within the field of research on gangs (e.g. Jankowski 1991) that the objects of a study consciously expose the researcher to sensitive information or to situations where the researcher becomes a witness to actions which are illegal or which are morally reprehensible. The more information that a researcher receives of this kind without misusing it, the greater the degree of trust between the researcher and the informant. The researcher will thus receive more sincere information during their next encounter.

On the other hand, one can – like the Blitz youths – ask whether such obligations ought to be more important than stopping serious crimes, which in the worst case can lead to somebody being killed. However, it is unclear whether they ask this question

in general or whether they find this particularly problematic since the objects of my study belonged to the far right. Would they have found it as difficult an issue if the objects of the study were anti-Fascists or other youths who use militant methods, such as animal rights activists? If it is the case that the worldview of a person who carries out acts of violence is unimportant, then all research from within violent environments is impossible. There are a number of studies of violent communities and of people who use brute force in their contacts with others. The main conclusion in publications I have found which discuss this problem (Hopper & Moore 1990, Jankowski 1991, Lundgren 1992, Norris 1993) is that the researcher chose not to report the acts of violence. In the key book on 'dangerous fieldwork' written by Raymond M. Lee (1995), he only mentions projects where the researcher did not report the acts. Mitchell (1991), Williams (1990), Hopper & Moore (1990), and Campbell (1990) all observed the use of firearms. Many researchers (Hopper & Moore 1990, Jankowski 1991, Patrick 1973) have been the objects of acts of violence themselves. Jankowski was attacked because a gang member suspected him of having informed the police about their activities. Patrick (1973) published under a pseudonym in order to avoid ethical problems related to the violence he observed. Wolf (1991) was confronted with a potentially dangerous situation because of his work. According to Adler & Adler (1993), many researchers carry out auto-censorship because they are afraid that their informants will react in a violent manner.

Most of these researchers have gone even further than I did in order to earn trust and gain access. Some of them (e.g. Hopper & Moore 1990) participated actively in the environment in order to gain access and consciously omitted to tell the environment about their opposition to militant acts because they believed that it would be too dangerous to express their views openly. Many male researchers write of how they had to take part in acts of violence in order to prove their strength and thus earn the respect of the others (Buford 1991, Jankowski 1991, Patrick 1973).

The radical nationalists tested me by allowing me to hear secrets and observe illegal activities. Jankowski (1991) claims that in order to carry out research on criminals, one must be able to be neutral towards behaviour, which is defined as criminal by society. Jankowski believes that if one is not able to do this, neither can one research violent gangs. If one carries out observational studies of such environments by avoiding situations where one may witness violence, then the research will lack information about a very important aspect of gang behaviour. I did not feel that it was necessary for me to be neutral towards criminal activities. I could state my views about such activities but still point out that although I was writing about the more shady aspects of the environment, I would ensure that the information could not be traced back to the perpetrator.

As the literature on the far right discusses the extensive use of violence, fieldwork where one does not observe any acts of violence will appear to be fieldwork where one has not had sufficient access to the field (see Jankowski 1991). I was aware from the beginning that I would observe acts of violence and with such foreknowledge I entered into vows of anonymity and promises to treat sensitive information in a confidential manner. Thus, I could not change my mind at a later stage when I was confronted with such acts. The people funding this project wanted this environment to be studied by means of participant observation. This implicitly meant that I would probably witness acts of violence due to the very nature of the study.

My choice was to treat the night I observed as any other night of observation. I would write about it and use the example as part of my analytical presentation of the environment (compare with Norris' (1993) discussion of his choice not to report police violence). I thus did not break the promises I made to the informants, I did not manipulate the data, I did not have to leave the field (or enter into an existence in anonymity or in exile), nor did I have to interrupt my fieldwork after it had progressed halfway. However, this meant that the radical nationalists managed to throw Molotov cocktails which set the Blitz building on fire, and they managed to use a shotgun to shoot out the windows of the building before the police arrived on the scene and stopped them. If I had called the police, they might have managed to stop the radical nationalists before they had got that far.

NESH writes that long-term fieldwork in communities of criminals and of violent people can provide useful data. I believe in this firmly. As I see it, one cannot discuss what it is that brings young people into these environments, and how these groups function in practice with any authority unless one has followed them from the inside. Regardless of this, I believe that the type of information I am able to provide is a supplement to the different desktop studies of the same type of environment. Youth-club workers, teachers, and other people who meet radical nationalists in their work have confirmed my impression regarding this. They need to discuss what type of environment this is and how one can contact the participants in such environments in order to help minimise the danger inherent in such environments. I have carried out extensive information work targeted at these groups of workers. I have received positive responses that the type of insider information I am able to provide is of great help to their work, and is information that they have wanted for some time. NESH writes that the researcher should carefully evaluate the consequences of his/her projects and I believe that the consequences of my project have been positive.

NESH differentiates between having concrete knowledge that a crime will be committed and overhearing comments, which may take the form of bragging or wishful thinking. In reality, it is difficult to classify such statements as either bragging or serious encouragement. In this type of environment, such statements always have serious undercurrents, even when they take the form of jokes. During the year that I followed the far right as a participant observer, I heard statements such as "It's time to kill a leading figure in the Blitz group", and "It's time to bomb Blitz". Sometimes these statements were made jokingly. Other times they were voiced in a grave tone. Such declarations are practically everyday matters within the far right. However, they must be taken seriously as an indicator of what people in the environment consider legitimate acts. The words are true enough, and the people that utter them are believers to such an extent that they are fully capable of doing what they say.

Another question is whether I should have reported acts of violence that I witnessed. I was present during acts of street violence on several occasions. The violence was usually targeted at a Blitz youth. Alternatively, Blitz youths acted violently towards radical nationalists. On a few occasions, I witnessed five or six radical nationalists attacking a Blitz youth together. They beat him till he lay on the ground, then ran away. I also saw the same thing happen to a person who was not involved in the ongoing battle between the two environments. This was when a man said, "Get rid of those pigs," when a gang of radical nationalists entered his local pub. Should I have reported either one of these events?



The case of street violence between two opposing groups is so special that there may be less reason to report it. According to NESH, one should weigh the importance of violence and threats differently when dealing with environments with violent tendencies which are in a constant state of antagonism. One can thus arrive at the conclusion that the Blitz youths must take responsibility for having carried out acts of violence against radical nationalists and thus the risk of being attacked themselves. NESH writes that the dilemma is much greater when one observes relatively clear signals that an act of violence is in the planning. In my case, it was not a matter of ordinary street fighting but a more extensive attack. It could be said that I should have turned my informants in.

No matter what conclusion one chooses it is clear that NESH did not give any clear orders or guidelines. Neither did they provide an unambiguous answer to the question of whether I acted right or wrong. A committee such as NESH cannot, also according to themselves, define in advance how a researcher must behave in ethically ambiguous situations. As the case I have discussed shows, the choices are not obvious. It is therefore impossible for NESH to add to their guidelines that "when a researcher observes the prelude to a gross act of violence s/he must report the case and attempt to stop the act of violence." There may be many factors that do not allow one to make such a decision, and the situations that a researcher encounters are too complex for one to standardise the choice of action.

Academic conventions are also ambiguous. They therefore do not provide a standard for the researcher to follow. Within the field of sociology, there has been a great deal of discussion about how to carry out research in practice in order to meet the requirements of ethics and science. Furthermore, one particular methodological guideline can be followed in many ways in a complex situation. A problem is that an increasing amount of research takes place at the desk. This means that there are fewer researchers with expertise and experience from dilemmas in the field. I believe that it is difficult for researchers who have never carried out long-term fieldwork to assess such dilemmas.

NESH writes that the responsibility must not only be borne by researchers, but also by the institutions they are employed by, who have assessed the project and who also possibly commissioned the project. According to NESH's guidelines, it is also the responsibility of the research community to defend researchers from attacks in the media. In the next section, I will take a closer look at some of the positive reactions I have received from other researchers.

#### 4 Reactions from the research community

One of NESH's recommendations to 'the researcher' was to obtain good supervision and support in the research community. I have attempted to follow this guideline. In fact, I also tried to follow it before NESH gave me this advice. In addition to the assessment of the case by NESH, I discussed it with my colleagues. Several researchers have also commented on the case without my contacting them about it. For example, in an interview with Norwegian newspaper *Arbeiderbladet*, Professor Anders Bratholm, and researcher Tore Bjørgo said that it was their opinion that I had carried out balanced and sound fieldwork. They believed that it would not have been right for me to report to the police in cases where I witnessed the prelude to serious acts of violence.

I contacted a colleague from the US who had been taken to court because he had not given information to the FBI about Nazi networks and possible acts of violence. This case has never been closed. However, my colleague has always stated that if he had passed on the information he had, it would have led to an increase in the acts of violence, not the opposite. A Swedish colleague told me that she always stuck to the requirements about data protection concerning her informants.

Criminologist Guri Larsen was interviewed on the radio concerning the NESH case. She talked about her own study of violent gangs of immigrants. She emphasised that the prime goal was to obtain access to the best material available, and to be able to publish. She also focused on the importance of being loyal towards the people one writes about. Acts of violence and killings have also taken place in the environments she has studied. Larsen received information from both parties to the conflict. She overheard the youths talking about hurting others. They demanded that she not write anything that could intensify the conflict between them. Larsen therefore chose not to go public with the information. She discussed the matter with other people in the research community. She also talked with the youths and tried to get them to desist. She believed that the tense situation between the gangs would change over time. She felt intuitively that what they had talked about would not happen. Luckily, she was right.

On the same programme, sociologist Fredrik Engelstad – head of NESH – emphasised that it is important for researchers to carefully consider such issues before beginning research. He also pointed out that it is impossible to predict such events. He said that, in general, one could not be both a researcher and an informer. Yet, situations *may* arise where one must put aside one's research. Examples he gave of such cases are situations where people's life and health are in danger, particularly when one learns about sexual abuse of children. Engelstad stressed that hearing loose talk about a person saying that they would like to commit an act of violence or that somebody should be killed is to listen to vague dreams and fantasies which do not provide any grounds for reporting to the authorities. However, if a researcher receives concrete information that a crime will be committed, the Norwegian Penal Code stipulates that s/he must give this information to the authorities. Engelstad also stated that the situation when two environments use violence against each other is quite different from when an innocent third party is to be attacked. He added that by reporting the matter, the researcher is drawn into the conflict. Such an action must be weighed against the benefits from research, which provides knowledge about the spiral of violence in society.

I contacted one of the attorneys with the Norwegian trade union for researchers myself. He said that it would be unnecessary to require me to report possible attacks against the Blitz youths as Blitz was an environment which is in a general state of readiness, due to the fact that they participate in constant violent confrontations with radical nationalists. In addition, the police continually monitored the activities of the radical nationalists. To whatever extent one can carry out research on more bizarre youth environments, one cannot report possible or actual acts of violence to the police. This will result in the researcher gaining less access the next time. He added that it is the responsibility of the police to monitor firearms training and dangerous situations. He told me to make sure that I had space to think and to write, and had an independent role, regardless of the accusations levelled at me.

My supervisor was particularly concerned with my safety while I was carrying out my fieldwork. At times, he was worried about me. We discussed how I should act in relation to the violence I observed and the statements that I heard concerning the acts of violence that the participants wanted to carry out. We concluded that I should not be too curious about such information. Should I chance to overhear such information anyway, we agreed that I would remain passive in relation to this information.

According to NESH, supervision and support during every stage of the process will serve as a counterweight to the loyalties that are created through the fieldwork. This was my experience as well. The fact that I was always able to discuss my experiences in the field with colleagues, supervisors, friends, and family made it possible for me to establish a good platform. It also allowed me to process emotionally draining episodes, and to discuss how to behave in relation to the many pressures of this job. Talking about my work with so many different people has also helped me maintain the necessary analytical distance to my informants and their world. This means that although I am loyal to them by not exposing individuals or by ridiculing them, I still have a distanced relationship with them. I am therefore able to assess them with the detachedness, which is required by a more scientific analysis.

### 5 Observer but not reporter

This is a discussion of a particular case; one that may appear marginal in comparison with the dilemmas most researchers meet in their work. However, one can also say that this kind of discussion should be of interest to research in general. The reason for this is that it illustrates the problem of what type of knowledge researchers should produce and where the limit is between research and related fields of activity, such as police work and welfare work. As I see it, there are no simple answers to such dilemmas. My standpoint has always been that if I had received concrete information about a person that was going to be killed at a specific time, I would have actively taken measures to stop the killing or I would have contacted the police. However, I also knew that I would probably never hear such information. I touched on this topic with my informants, who themselves pointed out that the participants in the far right prefer to know as little as possible about future serious acts of violence. Bombings or other serious crimes are usually planned by the militant cells of the environment. This information is not passed on to anyone other than the people involved. I therefore knew that I would never hear the names of people who were going to commit specific acts of violence and I would never learn when these crimes were going to be committed.

The case that led Blitz to file the complaint about me with NESH belongs to a grey zone. This is in the sense that I knew that something was going to happen, but I did not know what. The answer to this particular dilemma was much clearer to me than someone on the outside might think. I do not believe that my filing a complaint with the police would have led to less violence by the radical nationalists towards the Blitz youths in this particular case. Another decisive element was the fact that the Blitz youths had carried out a number of serious acts of violence against the radical nationalists that year (1993-1994). I therefore viewed the violence between the two parties as part of an ongoing conflict, which would not be resolved by my reporting an individual act of violence. The reason why this situation is an ethical dilemma is not only because I use participant observation in a violent environment and because I witnessed what turned out to be the prelude to an act of violence. The moral

ambiguity of the situation is also demonstrated by the fact that the people I was observing belonged to a stigmatised environment.

Nazism represents a worldview, which is the furthest from my own worldview than anything else. If there is one thing that particularly frightens me, it is a Nazi society, which uses the tools of persecution, segregation, deportation, and even the murder of certain groups of people. I believe in a democracy where everybody is respected, regardless of politics or ethnicity. In order to fight Nazism one must work to counteract the distance and inhumanity that is required in order to be able to commit crimes against others (cf. Christie 1972, Bauman 1989). Unilateral criminalisation contributes to the opposite effect.

The violent event that I have discussed in this essay took place halfway through my fieldwork. The most useful information that I have received is information that was given to me after this event, during late December 1993. I am glad that I managed to fulfil the last six months of my fieldwork. These months were the most emotionally draining ones. I would not have been able to describe Nazi concerts, firearms training, or relations between leading figures had I not carried on for the last six months. Neither would I have the continuous access to information from the environment, which I have at present. The radical nationalists still trust me, and I do not need to feel threatened by them. This makes it possible for me to say a great deal in public about how I believe one can best fight violence and stop youths from developing intolerant attitudes. I can speak out in ways that are clearly counter to the views of the far right, and yet hear that they still respect me, because I am honest in my dealings with them. I focus on the patterns and the relationships that contribute to create, maintain, and possibly destroy these particular forms of interaction, which are found in right-wing groups. I believe that such an approach is of most importance to those who wish to receive input on how to deal with the hazardousness of this environment in the best possible manner.

We will never be able to agree on what produces the right decision in a particular case. There is no academic consensus as to which response is the proper one in a specific situation. However, I hope that by discussing the ethically difficult aspects of our research, we can initiate a more open and pertinent debate on fieldwork. There will always be a risk that moralising in the light of hindsight turns what are confusing and ambivalent decisions into matter-of-fact choices.

### 5.1.1 Literature

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From: "Thomas Strzelecki" <strzelec@online.no>  
To: "Katrine Fangen" <katrine.fangen@fafo.no>  
Subject: Veiledning  
Date sent: Mon, 31 Jan 2000 13:58:00 +0100  
Organization:

Hei Katrine. Er det mulig å ta en "teori" veiledning en gang i begynnelsen av neste uke? Jeg har skrevet en del siden sist, men sliter fortsatt med teoretisk perspektiv og synes dette virker noe hemmende i prosessen. jeg kan eventuelt sende noe jeg har skrevet + en oversikt over hva jeg har tenkt å skrive/har begynt å skrive, samt hva jeg har tenkt om bruk av teoretiske perspektiver. Hva synes du?  
Nina

## 1 Appendix I: Field-Account and Interviews

### 1.1 Choice of Method

I studied the radical nationalists during one year of fieldwork. I also interviewed them and had conversations with them over a period of six years. I found this to be the best method to use, since my aim was to find out who the radical nationalists are, how they reason, and how they act within their own arenas. Other methods could have provided me with other types of information. For example, I could have studied the way in which the media discusses the radical nationalists or I could have studied various (municipal, political, etc.) responses to radical nationalism. The radical nationalist movement consists of groups that exist in many local communities (the members of the groups do not live at the same place). Therefore it is not possible to carry out a classically ethnographic study in the sense of studying the whole local community: the interchange between its social outlook and the interaction between inhabitants from different social groups (see Eidheim's (1993) study of Brumunddal). We must study groups that are located in many different communities, and which thus operate in a context which is less easy to delimit.

I could have conducted a content analysis of the fanzines of the radical nationalists or a study of their use of Nordic mythology. I could have conducted a statistical study of the frequency of violence committed by radical nationalists or I could have sorted my qualitative material in a manner which would allow for a statistical analysis of it. I could have focused my attention on other groups, for example on the 'old' National Socialist; i.e. people who were members of the National Socialist party during World War II, and who today are involved in the Institute of Occupational History.

Another possible focus would be to study the 'old' nationalists - people who belonged to the resistance during World War II and who today are organised in anti-immigrant organisations (such as Norwegian Union or FMI). These people say they want to prevent Norway from a new 'foreign occupation' (as they define immigration). However, the task I was initially given by the Department of Children and Families was to study *young* people who were associated with racist, nationalist, and National Socialist groups. This naturally limited my scope. Other groups and organisations, as well as other focuses, thus serve more as a background with which I compare my analysis and my material.

My choice of method and my choice of analytical frames exclude other possible focuses. However, they provide insight into a part of the radical nationalism previously studied in Norway by use of other methods and perspectives than the ones I have opted for.

### 1.2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork implies that the researcher participates with the people s/he wants to study over an extended period of time. S/he establishes a role based on mutual trust, and develops an understanding of the situation of the participants (Silverman 1985). I found that one year was a necessary time-span for me in order to conduct such a study. In most respects, I followed the usual guidelines for how fieldwork studies should be carried out. It is characteristic of research in the field that one study people in their own contexts, and use multiple methods (interviews, observations, analysis of documents, conversations, etc.).

I studied the radical nationalists in those arenas where they had their joint gatherings in 1993-1994. During this period, this meant that most of my field-encounters with these activists took place in pubs, except for a few occasions when we met at people's homes or at a concert in Sweden. I used multiple methods, in the sense that I both chatted with the activists one to one, talked with them on the phone, interviewed them, interacted with them, watched them, read their writings, watched their videos and listened to their music.

The field researcher typically analyses and gathers his/her material simultaneously, and the analytical questions grows forth all throughout the research. This was also the case with this study. I have combined my reading of theory and my analysis of the material gathered with a continual collection of new material through interviews, examination of fanzines, and new encounters with individual activists since the very beginning of my study.

One of the goals of qualitative research is that when the researcher presents the results, the informants should be able to recognise themselves in what has been written. This might function as a control of validity. This has also been an important goal for me. I have had made my informants read drafts of my papers. They have often expressed that this is a very good account of the milieu in 1993-1994. Those who participated during the year I studied the underground recognise themselves, whereas younger participants who entered the underground after I concluded my fieldwork do not recognise the 'milieu' as they know it. The reason for this is that the movement has changed a great deal since I finished my fieldwork; i.e. 1994-1999. In order to include the changes to the underground, I have interviewed participants and the leaders of some of the new groups that emerged after my fieldwork. I have also conducted interviews of a couple of the older leader figures in order to obtain information about the new groups.

In qualitative research, the researcher is a part of the research-process, s/he is the medium through which s/he makes the interpretations. Thus, what I observe and what I ask is governed partly by my selective perception, I note some actions, and ignore others. This is not necessarily a conscious process. No one is able to recognise everything that happens. I have been interested in the interaction between participants, their status games, the language they use, their way of conceptualising themselves, society, and other groups of people, how they legitimise violence, and their style. My theoretical interest plays a role in this process, although I have not allowed myself to be ruled by theoretical hypotheses. I have tried to keep my mind fairly free during encounters with activists, so that I should be able to grasp whatever happened, without being restricted by my own presuppositions.

Thus, my interest has thus been led by theory more on an implicit level than on an explicit one. I was not out there in order to test hypotheses. However, I had earlier conducted a three-year study among East-German youths, and then interpreted my material according to theories on youth subcultures, construction of identity and gender, and national identity. Naturally, I still carried such a focus in me. Six months before I began my fieldwork, I wrote a report on the history of racism. During my fieldwork I was thus concerned with the ways in which the radical nationalists verbalised their 'anti-immigrant' views.

It is typical of qualitative research that the concepts form part of the research process. This was also the case for my study. I often tried out certain theoretical perspectives by asking leading activists if they agreed that this was a useful way of viewing them. For example, I asked whether the perspective of fictive group pressure was prevalent among them, in the sense that they all think they have to behave



violently, whereas most of them individually wish that there were less violence. This activist admitted that such processes were important.

In qualitative studies, individuals are not chosen in order to be representative of a group. On the contrary, it is a goal that they represent the diversity of the unity to be studied. Thus, I tried to talk with activists who had different positions within the underground. I talked with leading activists who had different roles, as well as fringe members and individuals who had left the underground for various reasons. I also talked with young people who had only accompanied their friends, who were activists.

Qualitative research is in-depth study of a limited number of people. As I studied the entire radical nationalist underground movement in 1993-1994, the figure was naturally limited by the number of people who participated during the period of my fieldwork. I talked with most of the participants from this period; i.e. participants from Hokksund, Eidsvoll, Sørumsand, Jessheim, Oslo (including downtown Oslo, Lambertseter/Ekeberg, Skøyen and Groruddalen), Bærum, Tønsberg, and Brumunddal. I did not conduct formal interviews with all of these participants. However, I asked most of them the same questions I asked those who I invited to formal interviews.

I later increased the number of informants. I included interviews with a few of the individuals who entered the underground later, as well as people who functioned as 'significant others' (cf. Mead 1934) to the underground. In other words, individuals whom some of the activists collaborated with or knew personally.

Qualitative studies must necessarily follow the actors' premises. The actors could have told me to leave if they had decided that they did not want me to follow them any longer. I was dependent on their giving me access to their encounters, and to information. The aim in qualitative research is to grasp the participants' way of understanding the world. This means taking an open approach. It also requires that one participate in their setting.

Much of what went on between the activists took place on a non-linguistic level, and was thus difficult to verbalise. It thus took a great deal of effort to put words to what I saw and heard, and to my own reactions to the events around me. There were too many impressions and they were too complex. I was often in high spirits when I was in the field. However, the day after, I usually felt totally burned-out. Consequently, I found it exhausting to write down what I had heard, seen, and experienced. The reason I was so debilitated the day after a session of fieldwork was also that I had had to relate to young men who changed behaviour all the time. They often reacted with scepticism or vulnerability to matters that surprised me. Despite the non-linguistic quality of many of my fieldwork experiences, I will try to verbalise some of them here, in order to describe how I acquired my material, and to make room for methodological reflections on my study.

### 1.3 An Easy Entrance

In the first section of the introductory part of this thesis, I described my first meeting with the activists. I stressed how I approached the activists in a manner where I did not define in advance who they were in political terms. I wanted them to define themselves without being led by my pre-conceptions. By approaching them openly I apparently triggered a more open attitude towards me. I did not insult them. They therefore had no need to defend themselves by attacking me verbally or physically. I told them that I had conducted a study of German nationalists/National Socialists, anarchists and communists earlier. They applauded this, and were surprisingly positive about the fact that I had studied left-wing groups as well as National Socialist youths.

I was worried before I made contact with the radical nationalists in August 1993. Would they accept me, would they ignore me or worst of all, would they shout at me or hit me? The public presentation of these people makes one think they are only capable of hatred and violence, and that they have no inter-human communication skills.

When I realised that they had nothing against my contact, I was relieved. I was drawn in by their quick and joking communication. I found myself laughing and smiling a lot as a response to their way of being. This was probably exaggerated by the fact that I had been somewhat anxious in advance. I was astonished that the 'neo-Nazis' were so high-spirited and joked all the time. In fact, I enjoyed my first session of my fieldwork. There were other occasions when I was carrying out my fieldwork that I went home feeling almost euphoric. I caught myself thinking 'What is this? I go see them, and I enjoy it!' I began to prepare myself mentally before going to meet them, so that I would be more conscious of being there in order to collect impressions, rather than focus on my own 'peak-experiences' (Maslow 1976) (see also my use of the concept in 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a)).

My experience of high spirits might provide a clue to the mechanisms that make an underground like this one attractive for young people. There are certainly young people who join such movements because of political attitudes, and an already established hatred of 'strangers'. However, for some, the curiosity and longing for excitement might be more important when they move into the underground. It is clearly possible to join this kind of movement without having an especially strong ability to hate and be chauvinist. Yet, most of those who join this movement as participants tend to develop hatred as a result of being part of this movement. They feel under attack and watched by everyone. This leads them to begin to believe in the conspiratory theories of the other activists.

In addition, some young people join the underground just because they have a friend within the movement. Those who join this way, especially the girls, never adopt a conspiratory view in of the outside world. They do not even join in the feelings of hatred towards people from other cultures. It is evident that this movement is also attractive as a youth subculture and that it produced some kind of community which in fact also had its positive sides.

This quality of the movement was why I occasionally enjoyed myself despite the fact that I was only a participant observer. One reason why I had so few problems getting in touch with the radical nationalists is that I was in the middle of their age group. I was older than most of the activists, but younger than some. At the time when I carried out my fieldwork (1993-1994), I was 27 years old, whereas the activists were between 15 and 35. I could pass for a mature girl. I was welcome company for some, since I always was an avid listener. I did not get annoyed, and I was reluctant to pass on sensitive details to others in the group or to join in the gossip.

I seldom said much about my own life. Nevertheless, I answered the few questions they asked me. They were more interested in giving an impression of themselves, than finding out about my life. I have been asked whether I am engaged, whether I have a boyfriend, which party I voted for in the elections, what my views on immigration are, who finances my research, and whether I was Jewish. The latter question was put forward almost as a joke, probably to rule out the awkwardness of their asking. I answered these questions without making a fuss.

From the very beginning, the radical nationalists told me that the worst thing I could do when joining them at a party, was to sit in a corner stone sober. The first time I met them, they commented that I drank too little. They were astonished that I, after drinking one beer ordered a Coke. 'I have never ordered a Coke in a pub'; one of them told me

later. In other words, they demanded that I be a participant in the sense that I join the social setting (drinking beer, chatting) and not merely observe. When doing fieldwork it is difficult to only observe. One must participate in order to gain access to the world of the people one studies (see my discussion of Habermas (1984) concerning this issue in appendix 2).

The radical nationalists operate in a field with strong polarities. Even so, they did not require that I take a stand. I said I wanted to learn who they were. I also said that I did not agree with their views. They said that as long as I described them fairly, and as long as I followed them for a longer period, there would be no problem. Some of them read my pre-doctoral thesis (a study of three youth groups in Eastern Germany in 1990 - anarchists, communists and nationalists / National Socialists). Norwegian radical nationalists who read it thought that it written from a neutral position, although they saw that I had made most friends among the anarchists. Consequently, they gained more confidence in me after having read it.

Not all of the talk of the radical nationalists centred on political issues. They spent much time chatting. However, already on the first night, I observed a great deal of nicknaming and joking with racist undertones. One of the activists was especially eager to tell me that the Jews had always had power, but were unwilling to admit this. He argued that the Jews worked against the maintenance of national states. One activist (a football supporter) made casual remarks about 'niggers'. He was upset that 'Norway's best runner' was a black man. Another activist made cruel jokes about lesbians and the new Partnership Act, which is an Act that makes it legal for homosexuals to register publicly as partners.

A few activists went further and expressed more extreme thoughts than the others, also according to the activists themselves. They addressed one of the boys present as the extremist among them. One boy told me that they used to address him as 'mini-Hitler'. He did not appear to be the only one attracted to National Socialist symbolism. Every time a new activist turned up, he was greeted by a tiny lifting of the hand, which would be almost unrecognisable to outsiders, but clearly a toned-down version of the Nazi salute (arm stretched out).

Even so, they were interestingly enough not one-sided in their views. For example, this was reflected in their relationship with the clients of *Trappa*, the pub they met at back then. The owner of the pub owned another one near by; a gay club. I asked one of the activists about this, as I wondered how they coped with this proximity to homosexuals. I took it for granted that they were homophobic, as this is a natural part of racist or National Socialist ideology. The man I asked, who was one of the leading figures, replied that 'most of these guys are tolerant towards gays as long as they stay in their "closet."' He reported that some gays even had been part of their milieu. He said that they are attracted to this milieu 'because they think it is decadent and perverse'. His views were similar to one I often heard in relation to immigrants. They said that they were not against the individual immigrant (or gay). They were against immigration and homosexuality being legitimised through public policy. In other words, it is all right as long as they 'stay where they came from' (immigrants) or remain discrete - 'in their closet' (homosexuals).

One of the boys present was a football supporter. He asked whether I had read Bill Buford's *Among the Thugs*. I said 'yes' (see my comments on this book in (Fangen 1998a)). 'This book is typical of the distorted picture the media has of football supporters', the boy said. 'They think that we are always looking for trouble, and that we are malicious. That's a typically American picture of supporters'.

Four boys talked extensively with me that first evening. I asked them if they would be willing to give me an interview during the next few weeks, and they all agreed. They also told me that they were going to the cinema the following week to see the Australian skinhead film *Romper Stomper*. They asked if I wanted to go with them. I said 'yes'. 'The Blitz youths will probably go on Tuesday', they said, 'because they will be showing *Clockwork Orange* which is a cult film, on the same day'. 'There are always twice as many Blitz youths as us, and they bring clubs', added the boy (Frode). I then asked him 'don't you use weapons as well?' 'We use what we have at hand to defend ourselves with' was his reply.

So, what did they have at hand? One of them had a flick-knife. Most of the others did usually not carry weapons - they usually fought with their fists. From time to time, some activists carried tear-gas spray. On occasions when they expected to be attacked, they carried knuckle-dusters and even pistols. I later learned that they brought clubs when they expected confrontations. On one such occasion when they expected to meet the Blitz youths, they brought stones, catapults with steel-bullets, and a shotgun (see my discussion of this event in 'Ethics in an Observational Study' (Fangen 1998b)).

#### 1.4 The Interviews

During the following two weeks, I carried out life story interviews of four of the boys. In most of my articles, I have named them Egil, Frode, Rein, and Gunnar. I talked most with these four activists during my fieldwork, in addition to two other leading activists, whom I have called Audun and Sverre. The boys eagerly told me everything I wanted to know during the life story interviews. They seemed happy with a situation where they had an interested listener. Some of them were clearly not used to talking about their lives. One of them, however, had had much experience with the welfare services, with imprisonment, and therapy. Consequently, he was used to talk about himself. I was astonished at how openly he talked to me about his life, about periods when he lived on the street, etc.

When I interviewed the radical nationalists about various stages of their lives, they mostly used their participation in the 'nationalist milieu' as their *problem focus* - to use a concept developed by Nilsen (1996:19-20). Although they live lives outside the underground as well, when they narrated their stories, they focused their account in order to stress their identity as 'nationalists'. Hence, it is not their *self-identity*, in Giddens' (1991) sense, that they try to conceptualise. Rather it is their *social identity* (or position), which is the subject, (cf. Fangen 1992). This was a result of their knowing why I wanted this information. They wanted to give me what I needed. In addition, I understood that, independently of the effect I had on them as a researcher, they often asked themselves these questions as well. They pondered the issue of why they had ended up in the radical nationalist underground. Some of them asked themselves what had led them to commit serious acts of violence (bombings, shootings, arson, etc.).

Their problem focus was thus how their lives could be read in light of these later acts. In other words, they did not solely see their violence as instinctual and legitimate responses to a destructive society, as they often described it ideologically. On an individual level, they tended to ponder much more about why. This meant that they at times were less doxic (see the introduction to the thesis) when they thought about their actions.

After I had interviewed these four boys once each, I was exhausted. I did not plan to meet them again until the next 'first Saturday of the month' meeting. However, one of them called me the next weekend, and asked if I would like to buy him a few beers. During the first stage of my fieldwork, I accepted such initiatives in order to become

better acquainted with the activists, and gain increased access to information. I later realised that I had to be more restrictive, in order to have time to reflect on my impressions, and recharge my batteries before the next meeting.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that some of these individual meetings with leading activists gave me useful information which I could not have obtained at the general meetings with the activists. These one-to-one meetings allowed me to see the 'person behind the mask', as the activists were not equally eager to appear tough when they met me alone. At times they expressed insecurity and doubts as to their activities. The form of these meetings was somewhere between informal talks and interviews. As in all other settings during my fieldwork, my role was to prompt what the other person said, and accordingly say very little about myself.

In order to make my informants feel comfortable, I let them choose where we would meet for interviews. They mostly chose to meet me at cafes in Oslo, usually 'neutral places', that is, pubs they did not usually frequent. We often had to move from cafe to cafe, because every time another person sat down at the table next to us, the informant wanted to move on, so that outsiders should not hear what they said. The few times I interviewed activists who did not mind whether other people heard what they said, I felt uncomfortable. The activists expressed views that I did not want to be associated with. I did not want other people, even though they did not know me, to think I had the same views as my informants. I found it easier to relax and concentrate on what my informant said when we sat apart from other people.

I also carried out interviews at the homes of my informants. My informants were generally much more relaxed, as most people are, when they were in their own homes. It was often the case that when I met them at their homes they provided me with the most 'sensitive' details about their participation, how certain militant cells functioned, other activists, and other matters they did not want to discuss in front of other people. These encounters provided me with additional information about those parts of the activists' lives that were not primarily defined by their 'underground' life. However, the homes of some activists were full of underground paraphernalia, such as posters for the former Norwegian Front party, Norwegian flags, uniforms, Nazi propaganda pictures from World War II, etc.

After I concluded my fieldwork, I conducted interviews with leading figures of the new groups that emerged after 1994. I have also interviewed older individuals who once played a central role in the radical nationalist movement, but who now are detached from it. The table below is a list of the people who provided me with information. Research colleagues from other countries are mostly very interested in the names of my informants. The reason is usually that their focus is on *mapping* this movement, in terms of who collaborates with whom, etc. My interest is sociological. It is therefore less important to me who says what or who does what, and thus less necessary to reveal their real names. It is more important for me to analyse their practices in general terms. The table below is thus a list of the positions of the radical nationalists who provided me with information.

Editor of <i>Fritt forum</i>
Former leader of <i>Nasjonaldemokratisk Union</i> (National Democratic Union)
Leader of <i>Bootboys</i> records, former leader of the youth division of Norwegian Front
Some skinheads associated with the <i>Bootboys</i> name
Some independent militants
Some activists who led militant cells like <i>Anti-Antifa</i>
Leader of <i>Viking</i>
Former leader of <i>Varg</i>

Former leader of <i>Nasjonalt folkeparti</i> (National People's Party)
Leaders of Aryan Brothers
2 members of football supporter club in the capital who were also radical nationalists
2 members of <i>Riksfronten</i> , who had previously been associated with Norwegian Youths and Bootboys
Several former core members of <i>Norsk Front</i> (Norwegian Front) and <i>nasjonalt folkeparti</i> (National People's Party)
Founder of former <i>Nasjonal Ungdomsfylking</i>
5 young <i>Zorn 88</i> members
Leader of Patriotic Unionist party
1 independent National Socialist girl, former member of <i>Zorn 88</i>
Skinhead girl, former publisher of <i>Stomping Ground</i>
Leader of <i>Valkyria</i> (all-female group)
2 other members of <i>Valkyria</i>
2 girls from Aryan Sisters

Some activists wanted me both to refer to them by their full names, and to print pictures of them. Other activists wanted to remain anonymous. I have thus only referred to them in accordance with the groups they belong to. Among my informants are a couple of individuals who do not consider themselves to be part of an *underground*. One of them has collaborated with some of the young activists of the underground. The other one was part of the movement back when it still had the form of more publicly known extra-parliamentary parties.

### 1.5 Relations between the Informants and Myself

When I attended the monthly gatherings of the activists I mostly talked to those who came to talk to me on their own. I was usually approached by so many people that I would go from one informant to the other without having to initiate contacts myself. However, sometimes I would talk to an activist who usually wanted my company, only to find that he turned his back on me. I assume this meant that contact was not always convenient. I therefore usually sat down beside one of the two or three who always wanted my company, and let the others contact me when they felt like it. This meant that I never had to 'plan' the evening. I could just go to the pub and be part of whatever happened.

Compared with other fieldwork on secretive and potentially dangerous groups (see e.g. Lee 1995:49-51), I gained surprisingly good access. Lee reports of researchers having had to play a covert role or to present themselves as potential sympathisers or members. Having a covert role when studying violent groups may lead the researcher into huge ethical dilemmas. As reported by Mitchell (1991:106), who studied a group of paramilitary survivalists by means of covert participant observation, researchers who play covert roles 'must do more than confirm the action, they must contribute to it'. In other words, as reported by Lee (1995), if one is not to be excluded, one must talk and act in ways that are acceptable to those under study, even if they are at variance with one's personal values. For example, Mitchell participated in a conversation in which the participants were expected to propose violently homophobic measures.

As I was open about my research, I could listen to such discussions without having to express agreement. It would be difficult to study the radical nationalists if I were to continuously upbraid them when they made chauvinist remarks, as they do so repeatedly. Yet, there were times when I told them what I thought. On such occasions, my informants looked at me angrily and left the table. If this happened during our private conversations, they would argue back.

Still, my informants have not been particularly interested in the details of my beliefs. I have not encouraged them to be so either, as I did not want my presence to prevent

them from uttering *their* beliefs. I wanted to listen to what they said, in order to grasp the content of it (cf. Foucault 1972).

If I had continuously argued with my informants, they would not have given me as good access as they did, and they would have withheld more information. This would have hindered my possibility to learn about these people (cf. my argumentation in appendix 2, section 1.3.3). Back (1994) carried out a study of white working-class youths in London. He reported that when he overheard racist insults, he chose to openly say that he disliked these utterances. This is not something I have done. When asked, I have said that I do not support such views, but I have not commented on their use of language without being asked. My opinions were not the important ones here; theirs were. I did not want them to avoid me because of my objections to their utterances. This meant that I had to listen to long monologues on, e.g. how cruel Jews are. I accepted their stories as stories that were true for them. My role was not to argue against these stories.

As the activists knew I was 'not one of them', it did not bother them that I did not share their attitudes. They said that they knew that no one with their beliefs would ever receive financial support in order to carry out research on them. Whyte (1981, orig. 1943) argues that the researcher should not cross his own moral boundaries. He says that a field worker should not only learn to live with the participants he studies, he should continue to live with himself. Unless the field worker can carry a reasonably consistent picture of himself with him, he is likely to run into difficulty. This question is especially prevalent when studying groups where there is morally problematic behaviour. It was thus important for me from the very beginning, to be open about the fact that I had different views than my informants, rather than try to hide them.

On the other hand, the contrasts between us were seldom verbalised. Both sides could therefore repress them to some extent. This enabled me to participate by drinking beer with my informants, for example, and chatting with them at the pub. At times, I had to participate more actively. For example, if I was driving the car and the activists in the back began a fight, I would have to order them to calm down. On other occasions, I had to participate actively in negotiations with boys who wanted intimate contact with me.

In contrast to many male researchers who have studied such violent groups, my informants did not demand that I relate to them as 'one of them'. I was not exposed to violent 'tests' (see e.g. Jankowski 1991) to the same extent. A male student (Winsnes 1998) who, subsequent to my fieldwork, carried out participant observation among the same activists as I did, both had to express agreement with some of their views, as well as participate in weapons training and other activities. He changed his identity from that of a pacifist to a militant during his three years of fieldwork, whereas I did not undergo any comparable change of my identity. Jankowski (1991) reports that he was 'only seriously wounded twice' in the gangs he studied. He says that his own youth-gang background and karate abilities were of great use to him during his fieldwork. Similarly, Winsnes (1998) reports that some debt collectors had the task to beat him up (this has been denied by the activists themselves - see *Fritt Forum* No. 1 1999).

Instead of testing my physical strength or my openness in relation to militant actions, the activists tested my 'limits of humour and forbearance' (following Lee 1995:22). When researching potentially dangerous groups, there is an element of play involved. I will be accepted if I am willing to play. If not, I will be excluded. I was surprisingly seldom forced to respond to racist jokes. My informants were more than pleased if I laughed at their everyday comic remarks. In fact, their less morally dubious comments were often very funny, and I laughed a great deal during my fieldwork. There is no

doubt that my sense of humour gave me better access to the radical nationalist underground.

### *1.5.1 Contacts with the Leaders*

My easy entrance into the scene was made easier because the leading figures welcomed me. My contact with the leaders was certainly important, as they seemed to have an ability to look upon their own movement from an analytical perspective. They could often confirm my interpretations of the social mechanisms within it. The usefulness of letting leaders provide the researcher with new insights and confirm his/her own, is described by Whyte (1981, orig. 1943, p. 301-302). Whyte's key informant and even collaborator, told him that as long as Whyte told others that he was a friend of his, nobody would bother him. The same thing happened to me. As long as the leaders accepted my presence, there were no objections to my being there.

One of the leading activists I met that first evening, I later learned represented the most militant line of the movement. I asked him for an interview the following week and he willingly agreed. During this interview, I was astonished and amazed by his frankness. He was very forthright about his life. He came from a turbulent home, had an absent father, and was deeply loyal to his mother and grandparents. He said he had 'been in and out of school'. He had been sent to a boarding school where he 'did not fit in'. He became acquainted with the militant scene aged 15 year. In his earlier years, he drifted in and out of many different groups, including various religious groups, a squatter group, and a group of drug addicts.

During my second meeting with him, his sociability, his heartiness, and his directness startled me. I also observed many of his hateful views. Somehow, I found them incongruous with his honest and fair behaviour socially. It seemed to me that his views gave him a way of dealing with a life, which to an unusual degree was lived at the margins. In a sense, after a while I felt that I 'understood' him. His views and previous actions were far from mine. At the same time, they were his way of handling a world, which in itself made no sense. I understood him, but found no way of excusing him. I also sensed that he did not want to be excused. Yet, he desired intensely to be understood.

I met another activist, who was a leader of the skinhead part of the underground, when I met the radical nationalists for the second time. He approached me directly, shook my hand, and said, 'Hello, my name is [xx]. I hear you are going to write a book about us. You should visit my home when I host a real skinhead party. It is only then that you will get to know what we are really like. You can phone me if you like, I'm in the phone book'. This leading activist suggested that I spend much time with them, instead of interviewing. 'You will receive much more information that way' he claimed. This is another important aspect of field studies. By being there, listening to people talk, learning how they interact, you learn much more than by merely asking questions. Whyte's key informant said that asking why, when, what, and where too much would make people suspicious. You learn the answers to those questions by just hanging around (Whyte 1981:302, orig. 1943).

In addition, I came to know three other leading figures (plus two others after I concluded my fieldwork) who played different roles within this network. One of them was my key informant, in the sense that he has read drafts of almost all of my publications, and provided me with further information as necessary. This kind of alliance between researcher and informant is not one-sided. As he once said, many of the participants in the underground enter into relations of dependency with journalists,



researchers or even policemen from the Special Branch. These relations take the form of a give and take of information.

For the participants, these contacts function as channels through which they can reflect upon their own participation in a marginal setting. For example, in addition to his contact with me, he has contact with three journalists. Two of them are from the two main tabloid newspapers. One is from the state-run television network. These are the only journalists he trusts, as they always give him something when he offers them information. The same give-and-take feature occurred in his relationship with me. I mainly gave him insight into my writings, and invited him to participate in interpreting it. This form of working is in line with proposals made by Smith (1987), among others.

The reason why core activists approached me more frequently than people lower down in the system is probably that it was more important for them to tell me their version of the underground than it was for others. Apparently, many younger and less experienced activists were not that certain as to what kind of information I was supposed to have access to. The older activists spoke most openly about sensitive information. They were probably more confident about this because they were also more free to set the rules. They did not have to fear reprimands from others when they spoke with me, to the same extent. They also had much more experience sorting out how to present information without risking too much.

I was sometimes astonished at how freely they gave me secret information, which probably would cause serious problems if it became publicly known. I merely listened on such occasions and did not comment on the flow of information. I had also learned that they were particularly conscious of my questions on sensitive matters (such as their prior offences, contacts among the leaders, the way in which the militant cells were organised, where they had hidden their weapons, etc.).

Instead of asking too many questions, I found it better just to prompt them. I have thought about why so many of the older members told me so much. Their motivation seems to be either a desire to impress, to shock (and test my reactions), to put other activists in a bad light or, as quite a few of them said themselves, they wanted me to write the whole story: 'the truth'.

One younger activist was astonished that I had so much contact with the core activists, because they usually were the most sceptical ones. I think that those who approached me also wanted to tell me what things were like. Moreover, this desire may increase for those who have participated for many years, without much contact with persons on the outside. It takes a great deal of energy to contain secret information in the group all the time.

As leaders play a more independent role than other activists do, in a sense they are also more marginal than the others are. Thus, I surprisingly often heard core activists express their dissatisfaction with the scene, and even their willingness to leave it. One of the core activists said that he was 'fed up' with the scene, and would leave if he found a girl to settle down with. He has not left the scene yet. It certainly becomes more difficult to leave after a long time.

Another of my main informants, who was somewhat younger, seemed to grow increasingly dissatisfied with the underground during the latter part of my fieldwork. He repeatedly told me that he was not 'that interested in politics anymore'. After I concluded my fieldwork, and some activists participated in a bombing against the Blitz house, I talked with him again. He told me that he was not very active anymore. He did not explain why he was disenchanted with the scene. However, I received the impression that his many talks with me had enabled him to see the scene from a distance. Still, in his case, this did not endure. During the year I carried out my

fieldwork, he distanced himself both from the militant parts of the underground and from the Nazi elements of it. Now, many years on, he has joined one of the most ideologically extreme groups of the underground. Thus his orientation changed. When they find out that it is difficult to leave the underground, some activists, like this one, tend to become even more attached and committed to it.

For a group which is closely watched by the Police Security Service, letting outsiders in and giving them access to sensitive information is quite a risk. As one leading activist put it, 'Even I have been suspected of being a traitor at times. Since you are going to write about us, of course they will be suspicious of you at times'. The high level of suspicion had an impact on me in that I was eager to gain the confidence of the activists. The activists wanted me to experience their lifestyle, rather than gather information through interviews. Some of them said that they wanted me to write the 'true' story about them, both the positive and the negative aspects of it.

### *1.5.2 A Female Researcher in a Subculture Dominated by Men*

As a female researcher, I probably had an easier entrance into the radical nationalist underground than I would have if I had been a man. I have spoken with male researchers who have had great difficulty in making contact with far-right activists. A female colleague reports that she experienced the same thing as I did, namely that the radical nationalist males were not troubled by her presence. I have the impression that it is easier for a female researcher to gain access to a group that is so dominated by men, than it is for male researchers. Typically, in radical nationalist groups, men who are not one of them are met with suspicion and are tested in various contests of strength. As a woman, I was not exposed to such contests.

After I concluded my fieldwork, a male philosophy student (Winsnes) managed to enter the radical nationalist underground. However, his first period of fieldwork was marked by much greater testing of him than I ever experienced during the year I participated as an observer. The activists told me that they actually demanded that he leave the underground for good once they decided that they did not trust him anymore.

The reason why I was not tested as much as my male colleague was probably that females are not perceived as threatening to radical nationalist men. All men who enter this arena are enemies in some way or other, and must be included as participants. If not, they cannot join them in their more secretive arenas. A man is either friend or enemy. Women are usually somewhere in between, as they are much more used to having girlfriends hanging around, without them being defined as 'internal' members, with the same political convictions.

The most important test of me was whether I was sexually available. This kind of test is reported by many women in the field (Warren 1988), (Bell, Caplan and Karim 1993). As documented by Lutkehaus (1986) (and referred to in Lee 1995), early male anthropologists even cited the likelihood of sexual assaults as a reason for excluding female anthropologists from field research.

Kleinman and Copp (1993) points out that the field worker often feels grateful to participants for letting her follow them and so she feels humble rather than superior to them. On the other hand, although women might feel more vulnerable due to their often being exposed to sexual assaults, the distance which our role of researcher gives us often allows us access to information from male participants, as Horowitz (1986) reports from her study of Chicano gangs. Members perceived her as a female who deserved respect. *They consequently told her things they would not tell the women they usually spent time with.* However, after a while, members began to think of her as a

peer, a sexually available woman who could be treated as badly as their girlfriends were.

During my fieldwork, I experienced the opposite. My informants treated me more or less as one of their own girls during the first phase. I learned that two of the participants quarrelled about who would have sex with me first. I often had to negotiate the issue of whether or not I was available as a partner. However, my informants eventually understood that I was unavailable to them this way. The boys who had originally quarrelled as to who would have sex with me first began to treat me with great respect.

An incident which might illustrate the way some of the boys related to me during the first phase of my fieldwork, occurred after I interviewed one of the activists. He walked with me, without saying a word. I was puzzled, as I knew he was going the opposite way. I asked him, 'but aren't you going to take the train from here?' He seemed surprised, as if he realised that he had misunderstood something, and stuttered 'oh, yes, I suppose I am'. When I later told a friend of his about this, his friend said, 'In his world, if you have a beer with a girl, the next step follows naturally'. I replied 'But he knew this was not an ordinary date with a girl. It was an interview'. His friend countered, 'It makes no difference to him'.

In the following phase of my fieldwork, I had much contact with some of the boys. They phoned me often, either just to chat or to ask if we could go out for a drink. These relationships were not clearly defined. Were we friends or was it a researcher-informant relationship? I made some rules which limited these relationships from becoming friendships. For example, I never invited the activists to my home. Neither did I go see my informants with my friends. This reflected that we had a researcher-informant relationship. Winsnes, the student who entered the underground after me, did not separate the role of researcher from his private life, like I did. He became friends with the activists and spent a great deal of his time together with them. For a while he lived with a girl who was involved with some of the older people in the underground.

Another incident might illustrate how my relationship to those boys who misunderstood my role in the beginning, had changed by the end of my fieldwork. When I went to visit one of the boys who had been the worst chauvinist of all at first, he was very proud that I had finally gone to see him at his home. He did not want me to leave, so every time I got up and said that I had to leave, he grabbed my arm and said 'no, no, you must listen to this record first'.

At 3 am, after having listened to many of his records. I said 'now I want to leave, no matter what you say'. He agreed, but in the doorway he said 'You thought we were going to rape you if you went to a party with us, but I don't rape anybody'. He then gave me a hug, and became close to tears. He added 'maybe I won't see you again' I said that I might attend one more pub gathering, and that surely we would talk again. When I drove home, my whole body trembled. I was so relieved that I had finally gotten out of the house. At the same time, I was touched by the intensity of his desire to keep in touch and his sadness at the same time.

This was a kind of a 'boundary situation', as described by Jaspers (1934). The intensity of such situations comes from the fact that these feelings cannot possibly endure. At the same time, the intensity is produced because you get to share the situation with a person with whom you have very little in common. Such situations show that you can reach an inter-subjectivity where you sense the humanity of the other. This situation is a situation which might produce a change in the other, as it allows for reflexivity about fundamental existential questions. The boy who was defined as a male chauvinist both by his comrades and by me recognises that my experience is important to him, and that he will miss me as a fellow human being. He finds himself in a

situation where he is fully able to rape me. Instead he learns that this is not something he would do; he is not that type of man.

For the first time in my life I experience that I am in a situation where I am physically forced to stay somewhere when I explicitly say that I want to leave. At the same time, I achieve a sense of inter-humanity with the other person. This shows that this is possibly his way of experiencing and showing intimacy, and that it is his most explicit way of showing me respect. I am a guest and he wants me to stay. It is a compliment. Yet, it is unpleasant. I experienced the same kind of double bind on other occasions when activists confided in me. I have described one of these situations in 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a).

### 1.5.3 *Social Asymmetry between my Informants and Myself*

Some female researchers report that they feel subordinated when they study male subjects. I never experienced this. This may partly have been because the difference between my informants and myself in terms of cultural capital (education, etc.) was relatively vast. My informants often reflected respect or even envy in terms of this difference in our contacts. One of my informants, Frode, said that if he had continued studying after upper secondary school, he could have been in a similar position as me. On another occasion, Audun, a leading activist, asked me 'isn't the intellectual capacity of these boys too low for you?' In other words, the activists considered me to be brighter than them. Another time, one of them asked, 'don't you know this, having studied for all those years?' What I did not know was what the *vettene* in Norse mythology were. This was not part of my education, but this did apparently not matter to the activist. He believed that having studied meant knowing much about everything, including Norse mythology.

I tried to reduce this social asymmetry between my informants and myself by listening closely to my informants during our talks (see Bourdieu 1996:19). According to Bourdieu (1996:23), this attentiveness and openness to one's informants (one that people seldom meet in everyday life) is, an essential condition in order to achieve comprehension. Most people appreciate it when others are pleasant and interested in them.

This experience clearly was of even greater importance to the radical nationalists. As they belong to a group which is disgraced and despised, they are often met by others with disdain - not politeness or positive interest. The friendly way in which the radical nationalists welcomed me probably mirrored my own friendly approach to them. Audun said that no other person from outside their milieu had been allowed the kind of access I received. He thought that this had to do with my 'way of being', as he put it.

This may be a more general experience for researchers who enter gangs or groups that normally only receive negative attention. Criminologist Campbell (1991:ix) reports similar experiences when she entered Puerto Rican female gangs. She tells that they were flattered and interested to find themselves on the receiving end of outside interest.

Most of the male activists approached me in a playful and direct manner. One could perhaps say that they have a simple way of communication. The radical nationalists did not analyse much. Their lack of intellectual schooling made their form of communication more direct and glibber than I was used to. Their interaction was a huge contrast to the academic milieu, where everything you say is consciously weighed and analysed. In a way, I enjoyed the direct and rough communication of the male activists.

Although I had studied longer and held a higher position in terms of occupational status than my informants, they seemed to perceive me as equal as well in some respects. One leading activist said that he saw me as an outsider. At times he verbalised

this outsider status as having to do with being a person who went his own way, no matter what people around him said. He probably saw some of these individualistic qualities in me.

## 1.6 Studying Violence

### 1.6.1 Attacks and Peak Experiences

When the radical nationalists were gathered as a large group, they knew that people around them viewed them negatively. They also knew that some people, like the organised anti-Fascists, hated them and would attack them at any opportunity available. Their 'war' with the anti-Fascists in fact produced a great deal of excitement among them. They never knew whether the anti-Fascists would attack them or not a particular evening or whether one of them would beat up an anti-Fascist. Violent confrontations often produced a state of euphoria among all those present. Events that would be frightening otherwise resulted in high spirits.

Thus, when I was with the radical nationalists, I could never be sure that the evening would pass by without frightening events or harm targeted at me. I became elated by the feelings of excitement and potential danger. The activists commonly share similar feelings. However, for them it is not only the urgency and the danger that produces excitement, but also what Lindholm (1990:96) calls a *front-experience*: 'repeatedly undergoing the heightened emotional experience of attack and violence, [they] had found in the intensification of battle a kind of mystical ecstasy'. Such experiences are common among soldiers in war. This is also found in most processes of gang violence.

The radical nationalists talk of the adrenaline kick they experience when someone attacks them. The fight was a dramatic event. An attack lasts for four-five minutes, there is much shouting, and then everything is quiet. The wounded people lie on the ground, and some of the activists might try to help their fellows stop the flow of blood. This was the case once about thirty Blitz youths attacked the radical nationalists in their pub.<sup>83</sup>

I observed also an occasion where several radical nationalists kicked one of their rivals until he collapsed on the ground, and then ran away. They did not seem to take the harm they inflict on the other person into consideration (see my discussion of how they relate to victims in 'Death-Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a)).

Violence and threats within the movement were seen negatively. Frode told me about another activist who had said that he wanted to kill some of the activists present. He was not very popular after that. 'He therefore does not dare to come here tonight', said Frode. 'He cannot get out of jail and think he can boss the rest of us. There shall be no leaders among skinheads'. Some other kinds of violence were also viewed negatively, especially violence that was viewed as unnecessary and non-serious. In my report *Skinheads in Red, White and Blue* (Fangen 1995), which is not part of this thesis, I discuss the radical nationalists' verbalisation of legitimate vs. illegitimate violence.

I observed street fights and pub fights during my fieldwork. Except for once, there were always two parties involved - both fighting each other. During my research, I never saw my informants beat up an immigrant, a gay or a handicapped person, which are actions that are often reported in connection with radical nationalist skinheads in other countries. The violence I observed was directed against the anti-Fascists (*Blitz* youths) or vice versa (attacks on radical nationalists committed by *Blitz* youths). In other words, I observed violence that was part of the ongoing confrontation between

<sup>83</sup> The newspaper VG covered this event on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1994.

two antagonist groups; not violence carried out towards individuals who were not involved in this conflict.

As I have argued in (Fangen 1998b), my role was not to report these events, but to understand their sociological meaning. This choice seems to be a common one in research on criminal and violent activities. As Patton (1990: 213) puts it, researchers are generally more interested in the truth than in criminal proceedings.

### *1.6.2 Threats and Insults*

From time to time, activists met me with an angry glance. It was not always possible for me to understand why they were suddenly angry. Sometimes I wondered what consequences their anger could have. After my first meeting, I was told that I had laughed too much. My laughter was probably my way of defining the situation as friendly and easy, and to avoid recognising the implicit anger in the unfriendly looks from those who did not join in the easy mood.

Two or three boys seemed to feel uncomfortable with my presence. They sat and glared at me. One of them, Karl, looked particularly angry. I tried to smile at him, but he just stared back. He later told me that he had wondered 'who the hell' I was. He thought that I stared too much. He was 29 years old and, as some of the boys told me, not representative because he was hundred percent National Socialist. When he first started talking about his hatred towards Jews, he could go on for hours. He had a Nazi flag on his wall at home.

By and large, I only experienced their anger at me indirectly, through angry glances, their turning their backs at me or threats. I was usually more worried when activists I knew well turned their backs on me, than when activists that I did not know well expressed anger. The anger was usually stronger when it came from activists I knew better.

When threats were made against me they usually took the form of warnings, such as 'if you write this, I will kill you' or 'I know how to break another person's legs'. Sometimes I was told that an activist wanted to harass me by telephone. When I asked why, I was told 'he thinks you don't like him'. One activist said 'some of them do not like you being with us, but I will support you'. I was never sure who wanted to 'smash my face'. One older activist was always sceptical of me. Several young football supporters also kept a distance from me. After having asked me the initial questions about who I was and what I wanted, some of them did not continue the conversation. Even so, they exchanged words with me occasionally, just so that I should be sure about their standpoint. As the core accepted my presence, other activists could not object. They also pointed out that it was natural for some of them to be sceptical, since I was writing about them. They often tried to comfort me by saying, for example, 'No one else has ever been invited to spend so much time with us so much as you!' In addition, the sceptics told me that they had never let other outsiders as far into the scene as they had let me.

Although some were annoyed from time to time, I never experienced the whole group as being against me. I was only asked to leave once. This was when they were going to attack the Blitz house. (See my essay 'Ethical Considerations' (Fangen 1998b)).

Audun read what I wrote about the activist who said he would kill me if I wrote this. He was worried about me, and asked who had said it to me. He relaxed when I told him, and said that there was no problem. He said that if it had been a certain other person, he probably would have done it. I know that the person he was thinking of had few

inhibitions in terms of violence. Nevertheless, I never seriously feared that one of the activists would kill me. On the other hand, a few times I was afraid of being beaten up.

Depending on the person and the situation, I reacted to threats either angrily or by silence. I told the boy who said he would kill me if I wrote what he just had told me 'all right, I won't write what you don't want me to, as long as you tell me what it is'. I said this at the time, but later found that I did not want them to censor my writing. I have written what he told me, but in such a manner that I do not reveal him or concrete facts.

I analyse sensitive data on strategies, plans, and contacts in a way that explores them as social processes, rather than investigate them as specific criminal cases. Criminal investigation is not my task. (Cf. 'Ethical Considerations' (Fangen 1998b)).

They mostly wanted me to join them more often than was possible for me. I never went to their parties or trips outside Oslo during the first six months. I heard this disappointed some of the activists. In the beginning, I discussed my worries about going to their parties with an older activist. He asked me what it was that worried me. I said 'that someone wants to rape me or beat me up'. He found this very funny. This initial fear of mine became one of many stories told about me.

When I first began to go on trips with them, I participated several times a month. Nevertheless, I wanted to keep open a possibility of retreat. The solution was to drive my car. Therefore, I did not drink. By not drinking, it was easier to claim that I wanted to go home that same evening. These trips gave me new kinds of data, since I had to interact more closely with the activists. I was usually one of a few drivers. As I have a big car, I had to take many passengers with me, usually many more than is legal. My car contained seven or eight activists on several occasions. They sat and lay in the front and back. On these trips, I sometimes had to step out of my passive role.

Once I had to actively mediate a conflict. If I had not, the situation could have become dangerous. Two boys started a fight in the back of my car while I was on the motorway. I received the impression that my handling of this event and similar situations led some of them respect me. I became more confident that it was possible to take action in possibly dangerous situations.

On one occasion, however, I felt vulnerable because I did not feel I controlled the situation. I have described this event in 'Among Right-Wing Extremists'. After having read the article, one leading activist who did not go on this trip told me that what happened at the concert in Sweden could have turned into a dangerous situation. If I had been a boy, I would have been beaten up seriously, but this did not happen since I was a girl. He said that if I had gone to Sweden with boys in my car rather than girls, there would have been no problem. The boys would have protected me by saying 'she's with us' if anybody had any objections to my being there.

### *1.6.3 Humour as a Way of Countering Violence*

Humour might serve to counter a potentially dangerous situation. I have used it in order to escape from situations where I felt threatened by an activist. I have also observed how outsiders have responded to threats from the radical nationalists by use of humour.

I was once walking down the street late at night with a band of radical nationalists, when two North African boys strolled in the opposite direction. One of the leading radical nationalists shouted nasty remarks. The two boys paused for a second, and then spontaneously stretched out their right arms and shouted 'Hitler, Hitler, Hitler!' It was an awkward reaction and, consequently, some girls who stood there, including me, started to giggle. The leading activist who had insulted the two North-Africans looked at us, then hesitated, before a big smile came across his grave face. He said 'okay, okay' to the two boys, and then just passed them, with the other activists in tow. It seemed as

if he had praised the two immigrants for their playful ability, and their non-provoking courage in a dangerous situation.

However, one can never be sure that counter-humour will be taken this way. I usually managed to counter situations with angry activists by using humour. Once, however, I misread an activists' sense of humour, and was instead met with a blow to the head.

#### 1.6.4 *Curiosity vs. Discretion*

A comment I received early on was that I should not be too curious. I tried not to be too eager for 'sensitive' information (about who had contact with who, the organisation of militant cells, past criminal acts, the emergence of new groups, etc.). I found that I got surprisingly much of what I wanted without really trying. When I was with them, I drank beer, and did not ask too many questions. When sensitive information came up, I listened and simply prompted them. I had the impression that the activists were relaxed with me in this role. After a while, many of them told me things they would not even tell other people in the group.

Audun told me 'you are very active, you gather a lot of information'. He seemed to find it positive. He said that he thought it good that I focused that much on the milieu as a whole rather than being interested in individual people, as I had done in my thesis on East-German youths (which he had read). I asked him whether it was true, as I had heard, that many of the activists in the milieu did not like me. Audun replied 'yes, there are those who think you are too interested in times when things happen, and who it is that make things happen'. He said these (less active) persons thought I should write more about the situations when nothing happened. They were worried that I would only write about their clashes. He also said that some of them were afraid that I called the Blitz house every time I had talked with one of the leading activists. He thought it was obvious that I was in contact with some of the journalists who usually wrote about the milieu. He said that if he had been me, he would have. I asked him to try to see the situation from my perspective. 'I do not think I can manage that', he answered. I responded 'I do not just give away information that way, and risk losing all of the trust I have obtained'.

Some activists may have found it particularly inconvenient that I received a great deal of information about tensions and disagreements within the movement. Issues that remained unresolved and unspoken among the activists had a tendency to come to the fore when I was present. On one occasion, shortly after an article about the Anti-AntiFa group, a militant group inside the activist scene, appeared in *Klassekampen*<sup>84</sup>, several radical nationalists, including one from the supporter club, sat around a table late in the evening. The football supporter said, 'that (to start an Anti-AntiFa group) is really going too far, I do not support it at all. We have to talk about this, but nobody says a word about it!' The others around the table did not say anything either in favour or in disfavour of the Anti-AntiFa. I took their silence to be implicit support of the Anti-AntiFa. Due to my presence, they probably did not want to defend it openly.

The people that were the most sceptical towards me were the football supporters. I interpreted this as a signal that they were in an in-between position. They had much to lose from the link between them as members of a football supporter club in the capital and as participants of the far right being publicised. The more details I gave about the ideologically extreme and militant sides of the 'nationalist milieu' (as they called it), the more trouble it would cause the football supporters, in relation to the supporters who were not involved with the radical nationalists. Moreover, the football supporters were

<sup>84</sup> *Klassekampen* is a Norwegian communist newspaper.



the ones to angrily tell me not to write a book about ‘Nazis’, and who clearly stressed that they were not Nazis themselves.

My impression was that these participants were more racist on an everyday basis than other activists, in the sense that they used racist names when they referred to ethnic minorities. However, they did not verbalise any race theory. On the other hand, these participants were less anti-Semitic than other radical nationalists were. One of them had a Jewish friend. Moreover, they were not very much in favour of militant actions through arson, firearms, and explosives. They were more in favour of classic street fights.

### 1.6.5 *The Claim to Confidentiality*

It has been important for me to have the opportunity to write whatever I have seen or heard, as long as no individual person is recognised. I respect the desire to remain a private person. A young activist, who was also a football supporter, complained several times about my presence. He thought I was ‘poking my nose into people’s private lives’. I understood his uneasiness. I replied that this was not the case. He said ‘no okay you don’t, but you cannot avoid hearing a lot about us, and about our private lives when you spend so much time together with us’. I said that this was true, and asked what he wanted me to do about it. ‘Well, you cannot do anything about it, but I just think about the fact that you know my name, and you know where I work. If you write that ... (his name) who works at... (his workplace) did this or that, then I will get into trouble at work. They will probably fire me, because it is in the public sector, and they do not want anyone belonging to this group to work there, because of our reputation’. I replied that I made the people I wrote about anonymous, so this would not be a problem. He accepted this, but later repeated his fears about my role.

He once told me that if I wanted to become one of them, it would be all right, but that I had to stop writing about them. However, if I was going to write about them, he had a problem with that. I replied that of course I was going to write about the radical nationalists and that he knew that. On another occasion he complained that I just sat and listened, without saying anything myself. He directed his angry feelings towards the *Women’s Front*<sup>85</sup> at me. He accused the *Women’s Front* of having a double standard, because they want Muslims to come to Norway, although the Muslims demand that women be their subordinates. He ended his speech by asking ‘what do they actually want, do they want to suck me or strangle me?’ I replied, ‘I don’t know, maybe they want both’. He had no response to this. Puzzled, he turned away from me, and began to interact with some of his friends.

## 1.7 ‘Not One of Us’

All the activists knew I was ‘not one of them’. Even so, some of them occasionally tried to convince me. When they shared their views with me, they were grave and often stressed that ‘this is the truth’ (see my conceptualisation of such a way of conceiving the world in the introduction). They believe that people who do not understand this are stupid. Some of them even said that they knew these subjects better than I did because they had read more than I had about these specific issues. (For example how Jews in a conspiratorial way rule many of the biggest companies in the world). If one reads enough about this, one will understand, they argued.

My role was not to discuss these matters with them, but I sometimes pointed out contradictions in their thought. Then they either categorised me as stupid, someone who

<sup>85</sup> A radical women’s rights group in Norway.

did not understand, as a person indoctrinated by the conspiracy or they laughed at themselves, as I revealed paradoxes in their views. My aim was not to change the activists. I sought to learn how they reasoned. I therefore seldom expressed my own views.

In fact, none of the radical nationalists acted manipulative when talking about their views. They accepted that I was different from them, and that I saw things in a different fashion. Only once did I have a talk which was very unpleasant in the sense that I felt I was told things in a dictatorial tone, and that the other person did not accept the fact that I had my own perspective. However, this was not a conversation with one of the young radical nationalists. It was with an older man, who has contact with some of the young activists, and wanted to influence their way of organising and thinking.

### 1.7.1 *'If you have a racist friend...'<sup>86</sup> - The Problem of Identification*

In most ethnographic research, the researcher should ideally develop close ties to the people s/he studies, but at the same time retain distance from them (Kleinman and Copp 1993: 27). Goffman (1989) argues that the field worker should repeatedly subject him/herself to the participants' life circumstances. The difference between a participant observer and the participants s/he studies, however, is that the observer can leave at any time, whereas the people s/he observes are primary actors embedded in the circumstances which surround them. Goffman thinks that the researcher should act as if s/he cannot leave and try to accept the desirable and undesirable features of these people's life. The researcher will thus become angry when the participants feel threatened, feel hurt when they suffer losses, and experience joy when they receive good news (Kleinman and Copp 1993).

Field workers who say that they like or admire the people they study are seldom accused of having the wrong standards (Patton 1990). It is difficult to carry out successful fieldwork without sympathising with the individuals one is studying to some extent. When one follows people over time and gets to know them in different situations, they no longer merely represent a category. They are visible as individuals with different personalities and backgrounds. Moreover, most people in some way or another can be understood, when one experiences them in their own context.

On the other hand, those who find faults with the people they study or admit that the fieldwork was not a good experience risk being accused of not viewing the natives from their perspective or of being ethnocentric. This also holds when we study underprivileged and marginal people. However, when a researcher studies Nazis, for example, the ideals seem to be reversed. When researchers who study Nazis report their relation to their subjects, they generally stress negative experiences. Koonz (1987) says she had a vision of herself strangling her informant when she realised that the informant did not regret her actions during the Second World War. Such feelings are understandable for one who meets a woman who has no remorse about her leading position within the Nazi regime.

However, I believe that it is important, even when we study people who have committed the most horrific actions, to also approach them as fellow human beings. (See my description of the philosopher Arne Næss' meeting with the man who had tortured one of his fellows from the resistance during World War II in 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a)). It is important that we researchers also reflect upon the sympathetic feelings we have towards individuals who evoke feelings of hatred in people.

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<sup>86</sup> From the song 'Racist friend' by the anti-racist skinhead band The Specials

During my fieldwork, I came to know a radical nationalist who is often portrayed in Norwegian media as the incarnation of evil. I learned to know him as a person, a vulnerable boy and in many ways a boy with many positive features. He had a good laughter, and he had good social skills. I was fascinated by his intense behaviour. He was always on the move, always ready for something to happen. On the other hand, I was a bit disturbed by his mood swings. At one moment, he would be playful and full of laughter, entering a pub and immediately raising the spirits of all present. A few hours later, he would be grave and introverted and refuse to have contact with anybody other than one particular person he could exchange rapid comments with. It was obvious that his inner life was marked by strife and resulting mood swings.

I knew him for two months before I actually understood who he *was*. Fifteen years earlier he had been convicted of serious acts of violence. It is perhaps typical that you never think of the people who commit the most heinous crimes to actually be living people. It never occurred to me that this good-humoured boy could be that person, so often mentioned in the press. When I first realised that this boy was xx, my spontaneous reaction was deep sorrow. This was also exaggerated by the fact that a colleague of mine told me about his childhood and adolescence, giving me insight into a person on the shadow side of Norwegian society.

I have had to deal with the question of identification all the time. When I sometimes felt sympathy for racist persons, I wondered if I would turn out to be a racist myself in the end. This shows that researching racists by means of participant observation is a morally precarious project. Their racism can be contagious, because some people believe that merely having talked to a racist makes you a dubious person. Some of my informants shared the thought that talking to them over a period of time could turn a person into one of them. One of them said to me 'you can't be with us that long without getting influenced'. Sometimes the activists also identified me with themselves. One of my key informants once told me 'soon the police will take you in too!'

However, as I have always have been interested in other cultures and see foreign influence as a welcome supplement to Norwegian culture rather than as threatening, there was little chance of my becoming a racist. Yet, my sympathy towards some of the individuals I came to know within the underground confused me occasionally. I had reached enough access to experience what Goffman sees as an ideal, as mentioned. I felt that I had been harmed when they were harmed. However, this was not because they were Nazis (or whatever they were) but because they were people I knew, and because I do not like people I know to come to harm. One could say that I became blind to the importance of fighting these people. I see it otherwise. I have seen from the inside that confrontation and exclusion do not make them less dangerous.

Norwegian social scientists Ottar Brox (1989:206-207) and Fredrik Barth once discussed the problems of studying racists in one's own country. They held that a fieldwork study of racists was needed. However, they said they understood why nobody had dared to do so in Norway, as field researchers are usually identified as sympathisers of the group they are studying. The problem is that no one wants to be identified as potential sympathisers with racists. In their view, this is a pity, because such a study could provide important data that could prevent against the escalation of conflicts.

Brox and Barth's assumption that an inside study of racists in Norway would lead to others identifying the researcher with the informants has become true in my case. Organised anti-racists have identified me in various ways as acting (either consciously or unconsciously) on behalf of my research subjects. I published a report on the radical nationalists in 1995, which met with heavy criticism from the anti-Fascists from the

Blitz-building.<sup>87</sup> They claim that a sociological analysis of such groups implies an apolitical view on a phenomenon that ought to be seen in political terms (Wengshoel 1998). At times it seems as if political activists think that none of the requirements for respectable qualitative research should be followed when studying radical nationalists. They believe that they should be investigated using a covert identity (if the fieldwork approach is used). Even better, they should be studied from the perspective of the office desk, as one of the researchers at the Anti-Racist Centre does. Talking to such people is in itself obscure, it seems. Academics and social workers, on the other hand, see the need for inside knowledge about the radical nationalist underground.

### 1.8 'This is the time for your friendship to end' – Break-Up Phase

When some of the informants heard that I would not be following them any longer, they called me, and seemed somewhat upset. These talks were not solely positive ones. Frode once called because I had sent him some magazines and a book I had borrowed from him. We chatted for an hour. Somewhat later, he called me again. He was considerably drunker this time. Several times he asked me not to write that he is a Nazi. As this was an unpleasant conversation, I wanted to end it. He then wondered whether I was a communist, as I did not want to talk to him anymore. 'If you are not a communist, what are you then?', he asked me. I said that I had difficulty labelling myself. He replied that his parents did not know what to call themselves either.

Then Frode spoke of another leading activist who had recently had a daughter. He now stayed home every night, and never drank more than two beers. He gave the impression that his fellow activists disappointed him, that he was dissatisfied, and that he was anxious as to how I would describe him.

He told me that when Rein had heard that I would not follow them anymore, he had begun to cry, and said that he would miss me. 'What is she going to do?' he had asked. Frode told him that I was 'going on holiday' and that I would then just 'stay home'. This was how he conceptualised the end of my fieldwork, and the fact that from now on, my job would be to write about them, not to join them.

After having ended my fieldwork, my tendency to identify with some of the activists declines. When I meet the informants now, their world appears to be in sharp contrast to the life I am living. I felt this especially when I met one of my key informants six months later, and he was proud of the acts they had committed since I left them. They had bombed the Blitz house and a newspaper revealed that they had an infiltrator among the anti-Fascists at the house. He smiled and asked me what I thought. He seemed to want me to say something along the lines of 'Great! Keep up the good work!' Instead, I asked 'what do you want me to say?' As was the case many times before, my answer was a compromise. My role was not to tell them that I found their actions bad. In general, I seldom displayed moral disdain. I mostly kept my reactions to myself.

During my fieldwork, I consciously tried to lessen the difference between the activists and myself. Now, on the other hand, I am much more eager to keep my

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<sup>87</sup> The result of the publication of some of my findings before my PhD dissertation might be seen as accidental. Things happened that I was unable to predict. It therefore was not possible for me to control every aspect of the research process. These accidents led to new unexpected links. The positive impact of this process is that I can view my material in a different way, even though the material as such has not changed. The reactions especially increased my interest and reflection on the ethical aspects of our interpretation of people whose standpoints we do not accept. These ethical dilemmas have become the driving force of my work. In some way or other, it pervades all of my writings about the radical nationalists.

distance. I have therefore turned down invitations to enter their field later, e.g. by joining them at their concerts, weapons training or other places. My life is very different from that of my activists. I have no wish, as certain researchers in other fields have, to incorporate my informants into my circle of friends. I need to keep the distance in order to be able to analyse. In order to be able to see what they take as given, I need to keep the distance. In addition, I would probably have great difficulty dealing with the views of these activists if they were my friends.

### 1.9 Dialogue with Informants about Interpretations

When we write about living persons, it is important to ensure that we do not produce interpretations in which our research subjects cannot recognise themselves. A way to avoid this is to send interview transcripts and drafts of research reports to the informants, following Smith (1987). This gives them an opportunity to comment upon the researcher's reasoning.

I have tried to do this, but have been mostly disappointed by the scarcity of remarks I have received from my informants. There is a overwhelming gap between the view I once met from critics that my research is a 'pawn in the game of the neo-Nazis', and the minor impact they actually want to have on my writing. In a way, they seem to be too humble to tell an academic that his/her interpretation is wrong or that it should be written in a different way.

One of my informants gave me detailed comments regarding factual events. However, he did not remark on my interpretations and analyses, except to applaud me when he thought I had scored a bull's-eye. He particularly thought I had provided revealing documentation of the milieu in my report *Skinheads in Red, White and Blue* (Fangen 1995) and in the article 'Death-Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a). After having read 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a) he e-mailed me 'interesting to read this. The section on the trip to Sweden was especially chilling!' As for two of my articles, 'Ethical Considerations' and 'Nostalgia and Binary Opposition' he said that they were more challenging to read, as they took more of an outsider's approach. He had to change his perspective in order to understand them. There is more theory in these two articles than in most of the other ones.

Other activists told me 'this happened in 1990, not in 1991' or that a person I describe technically was not Nazi because he is a Christian. An important comment from one person who read his life story (see 'On the Margins of Life' (Fangen 1999b)) was that, in his early years, he had indeed been a loner, as I had written. However, he added that he had been a loner voluntarily. He later sent me his autobiography, where he (among other things) wrote down his first impressions after having met the other 'neo-Nazis' for the first time in 1985. 'I left the meeting with mixed feelings. I cannot actually call it paranoia. However, it was a strange feeling. I had never spent much time in the city before. Nor had I ever had much contact with "neo-Nazis" or so many other people, for that matter'. This is how he conceptualised his loneliness.

This informant even took part in the interpretation work by sending me a letter where he wrote further details of his life in the third person, in order to fill in the gaps in my essay. He did not disapprove of any of my interpretations. However, his response to being analysed was self-ironic. He gave me more information about himself and provided a somewhat humorous distance to his own life. This may be his way of not letting reality hit him hard. Seen this way, his humour was part of a depression he did not want to recognise fully. The reason why I think this might have been the case, is that this young man committed suicide a few years after he left the radical nationalist underground.

It was obviously important for this activist to report his life. This not only held for him; it became evident to me that other activists also had a need to interpret and recount their prior experiences in order to construct a sense of reason of their lives. Outsiders are not the only ones who seek explanations of why young persons join militant and racist groups like the radical nationalist underground. The participants themselves also look for answers to how and why they have made their way into this marginal group.

### 1.10 Methodological Self-Reflection

In qualitative research, the researcher is the most important tool. S/he gathers material based on his/her perception of what is important, and interprets the material from the perspectives s/he finds applicable. Other ways of collecting and interpreting could also have been possible. How can the reader know whether these interpretations are true? The global understanding of the researcher in the hermeneutic situation can only be tested piece by piece. It cannot be examined in its totality, argues Habermas (1980/1990). He thinks the solution to the dilemmas a performative attitude brings to the fore is that the researcher not only analyse the informant's actions critically. S/he must also reflect critically on herself, her own attitudes, and her relationship with central informants. A critical perspective must include the researcher's self-criticism. Without this, the research merely objectivates the participants. It does not liberate them.

I have no clear ambition to liberate my informants. However, I want to balance objectivation with participation. This is what Bourdieu (1993b) calls participant objectivation, as described in the introduction to this thesis. Bourdieu (1993a) argues that unless the researcher objectivates him/herself by analysing the way in which s/he projects him/herself into the object, his/her analysis of the object will merely be his/her projection of his/her own relationship with that object. The objectivation of the object must therefore be followed by the researcher's self-reflexive introspection. This type of self-objectivation is not a form of intellectual narcissism. It has real scientific consequences. The important thing is that the researcher must not project his/her relation to the research object onto the object. To avoid that such projections might remain non-analysed, the sociologist must also objectivate him/herself, by objectivating his position in the world of cultural production. For example, Bourdieu reflects on his own relation to the university as an anti-institutional attitude.

As a university staff member and a person who does not belong to any political group, I stand outside the conflict between radical nationalists and anti-Fascists. Neither am I an immigrant. I am thus not involved because the issue affects me personally. I am thus detached from the real consequences of the conflict. I have been struck by it personally in that I have been worried about being the target of violence. Nevertheless, I have not been struck by it as an involved party. To be on the sidelines of the conflict may be an analytical advantage. It might as well be a faulty in the sense that my version might become too detached. On the other hand, I think such a detached view is an important supplement to the loaded descriptions of the antagonist parties. I am politically concerned with the issues of evolving racism and recurrent violence. Still, as will argue in more detail in appendix 2, my solution to these problems is not polarisation and antagonism. My solution is less radical in terms of condemnation and violence, but it may be more controversial (it has been interpreted this way by the press) in terms of the humanisation and endowing of responsibility on young people who serve as our contemporary folk devils.

## 2 Appendix II: Demonisation vs. Humanisation

### 2.1 Anti-Racism or Racism in Reverse

#### 2.1.1 Folk Devils

In light of the atrocities of the German National Socialists during World War II, it is understandable why such hard measures are used against young people who use Nazi symbols and adopt parts of National Socialist ideology. In Norway, National Socialism is not only associated with the execution of Jews and other groups of people, it is also equivalent with treason, because of the German occupation of Norway. 'Nazi' is consequently one of the words with the worst connotations in the Norwegian language. Few of us would like to sit back and watch Nazism unfold again.

However, in this appendix I critically question those who use demonisation as a tool to combat the new emergence of National Socialism as put forward by radical nationalists. I will then compare my study with those of two other social researchers who have studied the Norwegian radical nationalists. In the latter section, I discuss my perspective, which is to make the radical nationalists responsible as fellow human beings as an alternative to such demonisation.

Because of the subject, this discussion is thus more political and controversial than the other parts of my thesis. In Britain, researchers have been actively involved in the discussion of anti-racist strategies. As Solomos and Back (1996) point out, of all the public debates on race and racism at the present, one of the most controversial ones is the question of what strategies are necessary in order to counter the influence of racism. In Norway, criticism towards the rhetoric and strategies of anti-racism has been put forward by many researchers, (Lien 1998), (Brox 1991), (Bjørge 1997), (Skirbekk 1993), (Eidheim 1993). In Britain, some of the most trenchant critiques of the political rhetoric associated with anti-racism (Gilroy 1987), (Cohen 1992), (Solomos and Back 1996), (Rattansi 1992), as Solomos and Back (1996:103) point out, has come from researchers on the left.

Cohen (1992) and Rattansi (1992) criticise the *moralism* in anti-racist strategies. Cohen (1991) argues that to give racists a human face is more useful than to create a demonology which turns them all into evil monsters. According to Cohen (1991:21), the best strategy is to construct a space where racist youths can give voice to other, more complicated songs with a broader register. My argument is very much in line with Cohen's view. In section 1.4.2, I discuss what such an approach might imply.

In many ways, the radical nationalists function as a group that everyone in our society can define him/herself in contrast to. In this sense, it seems to be needed as a kind of *folk devils* (Cohen 1972) (see also Frykman's (1988) case study of such panics in Sweden fifty years ago. His study is a good illustration of Cohen's conceptualisation). Cohen developed this concept when he studied mods and rockers in the 1960s. He observed how the media systematically built up a panic around the alleged danger that these youth groups represented. The newspapers reported 'facts' about the increasing clashes, and made these youth groups visible precisely as dangerous deviants. They opened their columns to worried parents and wise experts, and they reported from meetings and rescue actions. It was important for the media to keep an eye on the actions. This implied that they rode the panic wave and also assured them that it was worth surfing.

Within this mixture of news and debate, the public was made aware that such behaviour could not be tolerated, and that something had to be done about it. Such moral panics follow a predictable pattern. The objects shift, but it is mostly youth subcultures that provoke such reactions. Parts of the young generation (in this case the radical nationalists) are chosen as folk devils. They are labelled; i.e. ascribed an identity which is assigned them externally and which says just as much about those who have given this label. In this construction of *jablons*, it is written in clear text the trends to blame. Newspapers exaggerate these trends, and make them appear threatening.

This picture of threat becomes not only a deviant and dangerous identity for the young who are associated with it. Weight is attached to it by saying that it is an attack on the many good youths around. The rebels not only disturb the environment. They are also said to challenge fundamental values of the society we all live in. The media use loaded names when describing what is to blame. An atmosphere of panic may then be produced by a few words, which evoke everything we fear.

McRobbie (1994:204) has summed up such processes with reference to Young (1971). She says that a form of behaviour may be condemned and stigmatised, and those involved become marginalised from the rest of the community. According to Young, this process increases the likelihood of further deviance. The media appeals to public indignation, particularly where there is a scarcity of accurate information.<sup>88</sup> Young thus argues that it contributes to social problems. When young people are segregated from their community, this creates a greater risk of long-term social disorder<sup>89</sup> since 'a society can control effectively only those who perceive themselves to be members of it' (Young 1971:39).

The radical nationalist youths have all the qualities needed in order to serve as folk devils. Not only are they associated with National Socialism, they are also understood by many as a real threat. Consequently, there might be a great interest in our society to stigmatise the radical nationalist youths as being pointedly different. We can observe such interaction between the media and other non-conformist groups in our society as well, as with violent youth gangs, etc. However, these processes are seldom as strong as when we have to do with young people who use Nazi symbols and support militant practices such as arson and bombing. The point here is not that we such trends should not be taken seriously, the point is that to react towards such trends with panic, and to segregate the youths who evoke the fears, might make them more dangerous.

American criminologist (Hamm 1993:7), who has studied white power skinheads in the US,<sup>90</sup> similarly points out that the shaping of public opinion on these skinheads has taken place within a generally hostile atmosphere. He says that 'the social imagery of the skinheads is built on research that is often misinformed, typically incomplete and unbalanced, and invariably simplistic.

These ill-derived stereotypic characteristics have, in turn, raised the threat potential of the skinheads to the point at which a sort of moral panic has ensued'. Consequently, social control agents and community activists have been led to 'drastic actions to send the skinheads into a tailspin of decline and disarray'. 'Put simply', Hamm says, 'everybody loves to hate the skinheads, but nobody wants to spend the time, energy or

<sup>88</sup> When we deal with social phenomena there is mostly a scarcity of information.

<sup>89</sup> Young thus talks of social disorder and deviance, which are two concepts I would not use myself. Despite this limitation, his perspective on moral panics is useful.

<sup>90</sup> Some of the US white power skinheads are far more militant than the Norwegian ones.



money to figure out why these youths have turned out to be so magnificently deviant to begin with.<sup>91</sup>

Hamm here points out the importance of finding out more about these young people. Researchers should not exaggerate the tabloid images of the radical nationalists, they should rather find out why and how young people are attracted to such groups. This is an impossible task if the researcher does not take the time and energy to meet them and talk with them.

### 2.1.2 *Anti-Racist Essentialism*

The problem that occurs when we label another person a racist or a Nazi is that he is turned into an entity which is only capable of cruelty. If you call another person a racist, he is not allowed any other qualities than this. Then you treat him in absolute terms. These strict categories catch up with these young men. Words such as Nazi and racist are associated with too much misery. These young men try to maintain some distinctions, distinctions that the rest of society does not want.

Michael Billig points out that it is possible to detect a converse mythology among the opponents of Fascism. 'The assumption of uniqueness is retained and it is implied that there is a distinct type of person who is by nature a Fascist or potential Fascist. In its crudest form, this belief appears like a modern version of the doctrine of original sin, and the essential evil of the individual Fascist is stressed. Perhaps there is a general tendency to believe that one's opponents are unalterably different from oneself; under certain circumstances, this might make the task of opposition more comfortable. However, such a belief simplifies social psychological and political analyses to such a degree as to make them almost redundant. A complex social phenomenon is reduced to a simple moralism about the goodness and badness of individuals. There is a resulting tendency to overlook the simple, but painful, fact that many ordinary people have been attracted by fascism' (Billig 1978:48).

To interpret another person this way is also a form of *essentialism*. In other words, if racism is a person's essence, he necessarily has certain qualities. These qualities are the real ones that lie behind that which is observable on the visible level. An essentialist view of the other is to view him as a person who inhabits a definable nature or a personality, which is given by biology or by environment.

When racists and anti-racists confront each other, they treat each other in an essentialist way. Anti-racism confirms the existence of racists. By its very name it becomes the racist position reversed. When radical nationalists and anti-Fascists treat each other on an essentialist plane, nothing new can come out of the situation. Both parties know how the other one conceives them. Every action from the other confirms the stereotypes which have already been established. This is the logic of many wars.

As pointed out by Eidheim (1993)<sup>92</sup> in her study of Brumunddal, polarised labels such as 'racists' and 'anti-racists' may cover other, more important, cultural distinctions between antagonist groups in a local community. In Brumunddal, the label racists was used to describe youths who talked the local sociolect, who took vocational training or who began to work at an early age and who came from the working-class. They rarely participated in organisations or societies but were interested in tinkering with old cars or riding motorbikes. The anti-racists, on the other hand, resembled those youths who were straight, successful, and well-adjusted, who talked a sociolect which resembled official

<sup>91</sup> I find the conception of 'deviance' problematic, as some of my discussions in the introductory part of the thesis will show. However, Hamm's description of the need for research that must break with the hostile and stereotypical pictures holds despite this reservation.

<sup>92</sup> See also Pedersen's (1996) summation of it.

Norwegian, who attended secondary school and who were often active in youth organisations.

The distinction between these two layers of youths was known as *sossene* vs. *bøgene* before immigrants came to Brumunddal (see also my description of Frode in the introductory part). However, after the immigrants arrived, and the first group became involved in violence against them, the two youth groups became known as racists and anti-racists. The latter became an indication of a morally respectable position, at the same time as it communicated and reproduced distance to an already disdained part of the adolescent population. As Eidheim points out, these labels only serve to cement the further disdain towards this expelled youth group. It is not very useful when we want to move to solve the polarised conflicts in such a community.

### 2.1.3 'Smash Fascism'

The AFA (*Anti-Fascist Action*) members argue that 'if a Nazi is continuously met with invectives, spit, blows, and is hassled in other ways, it will not be too tempting for him to show up in town again' (*AFA-handbook*). In their handbook they claim that 'Nazis should be isolated and frozen out at schools', and that 'all methods could be used in the fight against Nazis'. 'Smash Fascism' is the slogan used by AFA. Their position is that there is no place for participants of the far right within a moral community. One should excommunicate these people. They are not worthy of reciprocity within a human society. This response to radical nationalists becomes like a stimulus-response reaction. They lash out when they see a Fascist.

British sociologist Paul Gilroy sums up this anti-Fascist strategy this way: 'the strategic consequence of this position can be spelled out. Racism was there to be smashed, and the activity involved in smashing it was neatly counter-posed to the passivity of sitting back and watching it unfold' (Gilroy 1987: 122).

Gilroy (1987:133) criticises the British AFA, named Anti-Nazi League (ANL), for locating 'the political problem posed by the growth of racism in Britain exclusively in the activities of a small and eccentric, though violent, band of neo-Fascists'. He also criticises the strategy connected to the slogan 'Let's kick racism out of town', as it 'creates a view of racism as an autonomous ideological force, readily extricable from other dimensions of social life. Who will do this kicking out? Where will those people or ideas thus kicked relocate themselves? The choice of the verb 'kick' raises obvious additional problems in that its connotations of physical brutality may not be wholly compatible with the task of winning broad popular support for the struggle against racism, particularly where blacks are already seen as a volatile and violent group.'

Hewitt (1994:45) criticises that ANL's narrow focus on opposing the National Front and other groups of far right, tied it too closely to a politics of confrontation which many young people, and especially those with black friends, wished to avoid. Hewitt also tells that none of the white adolescents he interviewed who had black friends (in his study of inter-racial friendships) belonged to the ANL. Most of them said that they would rather not wear an ANL badge because they did not want to provoke the hostility of other whites. Some also said that their black friends would not like it, and that the ANL was 'just as bad as the NF' at causing street violence.

In Norway, Blitz International Group, a group of immigrant youths who frequent the Blitz house, have similarly criticised Norwegian anti-racists for acting on their behalf, instead of including them. They say that they the anti-racists never ask us anything. Only white people make decisions in the fight against racism. They thus point out that 'We are human beings who are directly involved in this fight', but that despite

this, the decisions are made by 50-60 Norwegian people (*Anti-Fascist Action Magazine* No. 2, Vol. 7, January-February 1996).

The 'war' is thus fought between radical nationalists and anti-Fascists. Immigrants are only given a small role in this confrontation. Andersson (1995:23) uses Bauman's (1991) distinction between *friend*, *enemy* and *stranger* in order to conceptualise this interrelationship between anti-racists, Fascists and immigrants. She argues that 'the other' or 'the stranger' appears as someone who stands on the sideline. According to Andersson, this might imply that the discourse expresses a social contest for power, 'which more has to do with the relation between the friends [the anti-racists] and the enemies [the Fascists] than about their relation to the stranger respectively'.

Both anti-Fascists and radical nationalists maintain strong us/them distinctions, and they avoid more nuanced versions, where the distinction friend/enemy becomes blurred. However, I often found that the radical nationalists were not hostile to my comparing them with the anti-Fascist youths from the Blitz house. They agreed that there were many similarities in appearance, strategy, etc. They claimed that they had originally not been against the Blitz youths. However, since the Blitz youths constantly fought them, a relationship of antagonism developed. Some of them nostalgically recalled the late 1980s, when they could still have a beer with Blitz youths without this leading to fights. Now the radical nationalists demonise the anti-Fascists, who do the same with the radical nationalists.

By excommunicating each other this way, they have no access to the life-world of the people they fight. In a sense, they are part of the same life-world, as they agree that it is worth fighting each other, and they use many of the same tools.

#### 2.1.4 *Similarities between Radical Nationalists and AFA*

There are thus some obvious similarities between the radical nationalists and their main adversaries, the militant anti-Fascists (AFA). Billig's (1978) comparison of extreme groups both of the right and the left holds as a conceptualisation of some of these similarities. Both groups develop or maintain their own counter-culture<sup>93</sup> which they protect against the encroachments of everyday reality. 'In this extreme left and extreme right groups share a common situation'. Both groups seek to immunise their members from the effects of the mass media, and provide books and magazines which explain the 'truth' behind the everyday images. New members are taught to distrust conventional sources of information and to become immersed in the atmosphere and presuppositions of the counter-culture. This in itself leads to the anti-democratic nature of such groups.

Andersson (1995) similarly points out that both anti-racists and racists tend to draw limits and to objectify the other party. In other words, they both excommunicate and stigmatise each other. According to Habermas (1968), to *excommunicate* is to place the other person outside a *moral community*. In other words, he is not included in considerations of his rights, and he is not allowed a minimum standard of fair treatment, as he is not morally worthy of it. To excommunicate means to expel, condemn, and isolate the individual from the social community. Any action against him thus becomes legitimised.

According to Bauman (1991:67), *stigmatisation* is when an observable feature of a certain category of persons is interpreted as a visible sign of a hidden flaw, iniquity or moral turpitude. The person who bears this trait is thus easily recognisable as less desirable, inferior, bad, and dangerous. The essence of stigma is to emphasise this difference: and a difference, which in principle is beyond repair, and hence justifies

<sup>93</sup> Which is counter in relation to mainstream culture.

*permanent exclusion*. In other words, we could say that excommunication is to put stigmatisation into complete practice.

Those anti-Fascists whose strategy is to excommunicate radical nationalists from their local communities use the same social hygienic practice as the Fascists, only with reversed prefixes. When they plead that any tool is legitimate against Fascists, they do unto them what they criticise the radical nationalists of doing towards other groups of 'others'. It is a paradox that political activists who define themselves as the negation of the Fascists use a discursive practice which resembles that of the *social-hygienic discourse* (including Fascism) of the 1930s (Dingstad 1992; Fangen 1993). The way the AFA activists relate to the radical nationalists, as stated earlier, implies that they see the radical nationalists as dirt that needs to be removed. The anti-Fascists want to remove radical nationalists from society, whereas the radical nationalists are social hygienic because they want to remove the immigrants. As revealed by Bauman (1989) and Schmidt and Kristensen (1986), this kind of hygienic rhetoric (to rid the streets of all of the categories that destroy the sense of order) has permeated the entire twentieth century.<sup>94</sup>

In contrast to the radical nationalists, however, the members of *Anti-Fascist Action* are not excommunicated or stigmatised by society. They are allowed to write articles in the newspapers. They are not met with contempt because of their ideology (except by the radical nationalists). Their name, anti-Fascists, gives them moral legitimacy. They are thus protected from public criticism to a much greater extent, although some of their practices involve the infliction of pain on others, and the use of anti-democratic means.

The radical nationalists and the anti-Fascists hate each other, but share the same perspective on exclusion. Their emphasis on the importance of ethnicity is also similar. Guillaumin (1995:94) criticises anti-racist movements for adopting some of the same rhetoric as that of the racists in their claims of a 'right to cultural difference'. This belief is linked to a focus on 'groups as having some eternal essence, rather than accepting that it is relationships, which make groups'. Andersson (1995:23) also compares 'anti-racists' and 'racists' in that they both focus on ethnic identity.

Some Norwegian anti-racists call themselves nationalists or patriots (Wengshoel 1999 (forthcoming)), and say they will defend their own country. However, they place more emphasis on people's right to be different and live in Norway at the same time, whereas the radical nationalists support other people's right to be different while remaining in their own country.

In fact, some nationalist groups in other countries are supported both by Norwegian anti-Fascists (*Smørsvyra*<sup>95</sup> No. 8, 1990:19) and by radical nationalists, such as the Palestinian Intifada. Some anti-Fascists call themselves anti-Zionists (not anti-Semites) and are highly critical of the state of Israel (*ibid.*). A faction among the radical nationalists collaborate with Muslims in their combat against 'ZOG' (Zionist Occupation Government). These radical nationalists, similar to the anti-Fascists, call themselves anti-Zionists rather than anti-Semites. However, the important difference between the anti-Fascists and the radical nationalists in this regard is of course the latter's conspiracy theory, and their partly use of National Socialist argumentation and symbols.

### 2.1.5 *Inclusion Instead of Exclusion*

There seem to be few possibilities for us to reverse the spiral of violence between radical nationalists and anti-Fascists, as this spiral continuously confirms established

<sup>94</sup> Schmidt and Kristensen reveal how micro-bacteriology was linked to social politics.

<sup>95</sup> Fanzine published by youths from the Blitz-house.

images of enemy. The excommunication of the radical nationalists means that outsiders have no access to their life-world. They become isolated and their conspiracy theories are reinforced. They feel persecuted, but this feeling is not paranoia in the clinical sense, as it is based on experience and insight. Many people *are* against them. As pointed out by Carlsson and Lippe (1997:62), the presence of an external enemy integrates these groups, as the need for support from one's own group against the enemy increases. As long as the radical nationalists are turned into folk devils, they will remain dangerous.

A better way to prevent a society from destructive conflicts based on violence, exclusion, and stigmatisation is to include those who adhere to intolerant views in social settings. It is first when people dare to relate to them as fellow humans they disagree with, and argue against, instead of exclude, that the spiral can be broken. To systematically exclude some people from a moral community, like some anti-racists do, is an oppressive practice, no matter what prefix the ideology leading one to do so has. Such a practice often leads those who are excluded to become more hateful. It confirms their conspiratory theories (see Fangen 1995).

We could learn much from the various social scientists who have analysed Second World War Nazism. A long range of studies<sup>96</sup> of this era has concluded that the best way to counter oppression is to fight the *structural conditions*, which are necessary for oppression to occur. The structural conditions which are necessary, are the creation of a situation based on authority and subordination (Milgram 1971), as well as the removal of the human qualities of the other so that one does not need to consider him as a fellow human being (Christie 1972). To stigmatise and exclude Nazis is thus not a good strategy in order to counter the emergence of Nazism.

Both Christie's (1972) study of concentration camp workers in Norway and Milgram's (1971) obedience experiments show that the ability to inflict pain onto another person depends on the *distance* between perpetrator and victim. Alternatively, closeness makes it more plausible that one recognises the humanity of the other. Another kind of violence might occur between people who know each other, e.g. domestic violence. Knowledge thus does not prevent violence. However, the violence performed by anti-Fascists towards radical nationalists is made possible because they deny the human qualities of the other party. Studies like that of Carlsson and Lippe (1997), show that instead of increasing the exclusion of the radical nationalists, like the anti-Fascists do, increasing their inclusion makes it less easy for radical nationalists to continue performing acts of violence - whether against anti-Fascists or against immigrants.

Zimbardo's (1973) study shows that the dehumanisation of both perpetrator and victim, e.g. put forward by the use of masks, makes it easier to carry out oppression. Similarly, when anti-Fascists and radical nationalists wear ski masks, it is easier for them to inflict harm onto each other than it would have been if they had confronted each other face to face. Direct recognition of the other makes it less easy to inflict violence and harm.

The Anti-Fascist Action members stress in their handbook that when the individual activist attacks a Nazi, he should avoid eye contact or a conversation with him. Again, the reason is that the establishment of inter-human contact makes it more difficult to carry out acts of violence.

<sup>96</sup> E.g. the empirical and moral theoretical works of prominent social scientists like Milgram (1971), Zimbardo, Haney and Banks (1973), Bauman (1989), and Norwegian ones: Christie (1972), Arne Næss in Rothenberg (1992), and Ofstad (1989).

### 2.1.6 *Anti-Racist Criticism of the Interpretative Perspective*

With social science as a point of departure, one must move beyond the images of demons. Such studies might blur the polarisation between anti-Fascists and radical nationalists. Thus, an important task of social scientific studies is to reverse established images (Habermas 1980 / 1990). The nuances might ideally break down the one-dimensional picture constructed by anti-Fascists and radical nationalists alike. Thus an utopia would be that research might break down the polarisation and thus remove the fundament on which both movements are based. This possible potential of research might be the reason why anti-Fascists are so afraid of an analytical approach, which focuses nuances of the other group instead of triggering stereotypes. As the radical nationalists are the 'folk devils' of these two parties, they are more interested in focusing on nuances. They are too used to simplistic accounts. By contrast, the anti-Fascists are interested in conserving the images of the enemy. They thus criticised my research and the use of fieldwork as a tool to study radical nationalists (in their AFA magazine and in newspaper articles).

The anti-Fascists claim that sociologists in general are far too apolitical in their work (Wengshoel 1999). They say that this holds particularly for me. Apparently, anti-racists do not see the need to go behind the stereotypes, the sensational, and the emotionally-laded descriptions of the radical nationalists. Their orientation seems to be equivalent to the one Campbell (1991) found when she studied gang girls in the US. This is an orientation marked by 'the desire to isolate and control without benefit of understanding'. Thus, the tool used by many of those who want to fight racism may actually intensify racism instead.

In the last part of this appendix, I will show the critical potential of my research. However, I will first compare two other studies of the Norwegian radical nationalists with my study, in order to discuss degrees of participation and objectivation, and the consequences this might have.

In one of the AFA articles (*AFA-magazine* No. 12, 1997), they argue that Bjørgo, Winsnes, and I have studied radical nationalists in Norway, formed a conspiracy, a three-headed beast, as they call it. This article was accompanied by a painting of the three of us as demons. Demonisation is thus the tool they use when they disagree with something, including researchers. We could say that two different life-worlds confront each other. Political far-left activists use demonisation, satire, and stigmatisation when they write about radical nationalists, whereas researchers analyse and describe. The way researchers design their studies may vary greatly.

Although Bjørgo, Winsnes and I agree on the way one should approach radical nationalists (inclusion instead of exclusion), the way we analyse and write about them, and the way we gather our material varies. In the next section, I will elaborate on some of the differences in our approaches. At the end of this appendix, I will discuss the critical and political potential of my approach.

## 2.2 **Participation vs. Objectivation**

When we observe, we take the position of a person standing at the sidelines, looking at our research-object. When we participate, we are in the middle of the action, and experience the events as one among others in a primary situation. Political activists (in this case, anti-Fascists and radical nationalists) are naturally in the middle of the action. However, researchers who carry out fieldwork among them are also drawn into the action, although they are not primary participants. As participant observation combines two opposites – participation and observation – it is confronted with several paradoxes.

When we study people who are members of a group, we must participate among them in order to understand 'what the hell they are up to', to use anthropologist Geertz' (1983) well-known phrase. However, in order to analyse, we must create enough *distance* so that we are able to extend the perspectives of the primary participants. This makes it possible for us to see more than they can, because in contrast to them, we can switch between the role of participant and the role of observer.

Norwegian philosopher Skjervheim (1974, orig. 1959) once typologised the different ethics of the participant role and the observer role in his essay *Deltakar og tilskodar* (Participant and Observer). In the following discussion, I will use this typologisation in combination with Habermas' (1984) development of some of these outlines, and Bourdieu's concept of participant objectivation, in order to compare my project with two other studies of Norwegian radical nationalists. These other studies are philosophy student Winsnes' (1998) insider study published in his book *Terror eller dialog* (Terror or Dialogue) and Bjørge's (1997) outsider study, published in several books and articles, as well as in the thesis *Right-Wing Violence in Scandinavia*. My goal is to use the three studies as a background for a conceptualisation of the continuum between total participation and total objectivation. All three studies fall somewhere in between. However, they might exemplify three different positions (or ideal-types cf. Weber 1922).

### 2.2.1 Participation

In his book *Terror eller dialog*, Winsnes (1998) examines the radical nationalist underground movement as a participant. He tried to obliterate the distinction between himself and the radical nationalists. As he writes in his book, he became involved with one of the girls, and he helped some activists to conceptualise their radical political program. By being this kind of participant, he gained unique access (in a very literal sense) to the life-worlds of the people he studied, and became a potential member himself, to paraphrase Habermas (1984). He did not work to gain a distance, which would make it easier to analyse. Instead, he tried to rule out the distance between himself and the nationalists. He says he partly adopted their views (ibid. p. 168) and he mirrored himself in them. Winsnes thus tried to describe (to the degree that this is possible) his experiences without any filter at all, except for his own selective perception.

His account is consequently an insider's account more than a study. Yet, it is not an insider's account in a primary sense, as he was never viewed as a participant on an equal footing as the other radical nationalists, as showed by the comment on his study in (*Fritt Forum*, 1999). However, Winsnes' own person is very central to his book. He reads his own experiences into the field he studies. Thus, in a sense, this is not only a book about the radical nationalists, it is also a book about him.

### 2.2.2 Participant Objectivation

Instead of living with and through the field of the radical nationalists, as Winsnes does, I also objectivate them, in the sense given the term by Bourdieu (1993b). This means that I try to show the circumstances surrounding their actions. I also strive to make the tools (the analytical frames) I use in the interpretation work accessible to the people I have studied, as well as others. Bourdieu conceptualises such a strategy as participant *objectivation* (cf. Broady 1990) rather than merely participant observation. I both observe, describe my observations, *and* develop an analytical frame through which I interpret them. This means that I reflect on my observations within the underground in light of sociological theory.

This provides me with an *understanding* which expands on the knowledge radical nationalists take as given. I am thus both an insider (as I have been there) and an outsider (as I do not belong). I do not view what I see in a primary fashion, but in an analytically detached way. I have carried out a study from the inside in the sense that I have been there. I have talked with the people and seen their ways of acting myself. However, I have never been an insider in the sense that I have adopted their position. In other words, I did not 'go native'.

My position is thus to combine my inter-subjective experiences from my field encounters with more analytically distant phases. The understanding I achieve as a researcher thus extends the implicit understanding of the radical nationalists in their primary situations. Although I seek to study the underground on its own terms, I do not take the perspective of the actor, because I see it in a cultural context, and analyse it in relation to theoretical concepts. My goal is to show people how these young people think, and how their thinking is structured by the social and cultural context they act within. Furthermore, I want to show how their thinking structures the way they act, and people's responses to their actions.

In one of my articles ('Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a)), as well as appendix 1, I have primarily focused on my own experiences. There is an advantage associated with making our voice more audible. This can often contribute to a sharper picture of the people whose life-world we want to describe. I experienced this after publishing the above-mentioned article. Others told me that this article, where my role is made visible, created a clearer image of my informants.

Thus, when we add our own voice to a text, it is easier for the reader to follow the argument, because s/he can learn the details of the experiences which produce our interpretations. We do not describe a detached factual, non-personal phenomenon, but relations and the interaction between living subjects. My informants appear as human beings, not as dehumanised objects.

By describing them this way, their vulnerability and their shortcomings become visible. In short, their human qualities become visible. Then they no longer appear merely as brave heroes or as strategic political actors. They become, like all other human beings, visible as persons with complex feelings. We recognise that their behaviour is not only oriented toward strategic goals, but also to present themselves in a certain manner. We also see that this is partly a response to the images they are used to having projected onto themselves by others.

According to Habermas (1984), entering into a dialogue means that the social scientist has to draw on a competence and knowledge that s/he has intuitively at his/her disposal as a layman. This was what both Winsnes and I had to do when we entered the radical nationalist underground as a field of study. That we managed to do so may be partly due to our competence in communicating with marginal others. Before I initiated this study, I was especially committed to entering into communication with people who are in a very different position than me. My main interest while I worked with mentally retarded people, and with psychiatric patients was how I could reach a sense of inter-personal understanding with them, despite our many differences (both in social position and in ways of perceiving the world).<sup>97</sup>

<sup>97</sup> I once discussed this matter with Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim, who has written much on inter-subjectivity and the need to enter into a dialogue with the subject of one's study. I referred to how Habermas said that in a sense it is even possible to enter the level of the other, and thus even in a sense enter into communication with a stone. Skjervheim said he had not thought of whether or not it was possible to enter the level of a mentally retarded person in order to reach an inter-subjective understanding, but he thought that it was an interesting subject.



However, when I wrote down what I experienced during the field encounters, and later, when I analysed my material in relation to theory in contrast to Winsnes, I extended my competence as a layman, while I drew on my competence as a sociologist. Then I carried out what Bourdieu (1993b) calls participant objectivation, as I also set into motion concepts developed within another context (an academic one) than the one I participated and observed within.

### 2.2.3 Objectivation

Bjørge, on the other hand, has not 'been there'. He has not seen how the activists act on their own arenas, except from the perspective of an observer. This means that he takes the perspective of a person on the outside looking in, as he did in Brumunddal, during the clash between racists and anti-racists in 1991. His main method has been interviews with activists, police, and social workers who have had contact with these youths. A more external approach like this makes it more difficult to grasp the life-worlds and the meaning of the symbolic expressions of the activists. To paraphrase Habermas (1984), other people's life-worlds and symbolic expressions are only accessible from *the inside*.

Interviews might give access to inside points of view. One does not necessarily need to use fieldwork as a tool for achieving an internal perspective. According to Habermas, what is important is that we do not gain access to the life-worlds of the people we study by merely taking the perspective of the office desk, as people's life-worlds are symbolically pre-structured. Such a reality is hermetically sealed to the view of observers, who are incapable of communicating. Thus, researcher Lunde (1993) at the Anti-Racist Centre, who studies the radical nationalists through second-hand sources, primarily reports in the media, will never be able to analyse their life-worlds. We must enter conversations with radical nationalists in order to understand the *meaning* of their utterances. Moreover, we cannot gain access to their life-world through observation alone; we must participate by talking with the people we study.

Bjørge talks with the radical nationalists. However, he does not participate with them. His perspective is thus methodologically more on the outside than Winsnes' and mine. Moreover, his conceptualisation is also more external, as he to a larger extent (but not exclusively) uses concepts that are not created in dialogue with the activists' own conceptions. For example, he uses diagnoses like Tourette's syndrome etc. As he used a more external approach to study this field, there are more opportunities for him to avoid becoming 'dirtied' by the people he studies.<sup>98</sup>

What distinguishes Bjørge from Winsnes and myself, is that he has never experienced the atmosphere produced when radical nationalists meet out of the public eye. Accordingly, he has not had to deal with the 'dirt' in the sense of being confronted with dilemmas as to whether to report crimes to the police. I have described how this was the case with me in (Fangen 1998b). Nor has he been in dangerous situations where he might have been beaten seriously or raped, as I feared during a trip to Sweden (Fangen 1998a). However, he has been in greater danger in the sense that some of the radical nationalists at times might have been more angry with him, as he has uttered more directly about singular activists to the media without having talked with these activists beforehand.

<sup>98</sup> Widerberg (: 134) has pointed out that to construct 'the other' as subject allows for ethical dilemmas which hamper that which can be said openly: it is therefore a "dirty" business'. Her argument is that researchers who do not include a description of the situation and the relations through which one's information was gathered may avoid many ethical dilemmas. Nevertheless, they do so only by constructing an air of objectivity. The story *appears* to be more true, when the conditions for its production are hidden.

To a larger extent Bjørgo adopts an *objectivating* attitude. This means that he takes the position of a third person, who observes the underground from the outside and makes statements about it. Winsnes, on the other hand, plays the role of a first person and enters into an inter-subjective relation with a second person. He thus adopts a non-objectivating, *performative* attitude. Winsnes is thus performative, and only to a minor degree objectivating. My position is to alternate between these two positions. I alternate between what anthropologist Geertz calls experience-near and experience-distant concepts, what Skjervheim calls an objectivating attitude and what Habermas calls a performative attitude.

The main dimension that separates my research from Bjørgo's is that it is rooted in my fieldwork, rather than merely interviews and individual observations. I focus more on *meaning*, than on the eventual causes of the phenomenon.

Both Bjørgo and I use theoretical perspectives, but the kinds of theories we use are different. Despite these differences, the use of theories allows us to move beyond the life-world perspective of the actors, following Schütz. While we as participants in a life-world enter into we-relations, the social scientist breaks with this performative attitude and takes a position outside his/her own or the informants' life-world. Even so, the scientist establishes contacts with the people s/he studies as fellow human beings.

Bjørgo, Winsnes, and I all accept the necessity of a *dialogical* approach. Both Bjørgo and Winsnes do this by taking an explicitly *reformatory* approach. In one sense then, we could say that they enter a dialogue without listening. They are not interested in the stories as such, rather they want to change them. Bjørgo has made an exit network of former activists, in order to draw young people out of these groups, while Winsnes organised study circles which were originally meant to make them change their views. He later seemed to change his scope, to help them find better arguments to legitimise their beliefs or let the best argument win, as Winsnes puts it.

My approach is *not* an action-oriented one as the ones of both Bjørgo and Winsnes do (at least originally). My aim is to analyse discourses and practices rather than to explicitly try to change them. This approach is more in line with Foucault's methodology, as described in Foucault (1977) and Foucault (1972). However, an action-oriented scope might be produced with the knowledge I have published as a base of entry. For example, this happened when a youth club had a project to work with local right-wing youths, and my work helped the youth workers find out how to reach out to them and what to communicate with them about.

Bjørgo, Winsnes, and I are actor-oriented in that we have used our research subjects as suppliers of knowledge about themselves. This gives the informants the status of expert on their own experiences. By adopting this perspective, the people we study are no longer the 'objects' of our study. They become the *informants*, as I have chosen to call them. When we use informants as suppliers of knowledge, we also partly avoid the problem of one-sided objectification.

During certain periods of my research I chose to give my informants the role of fellow analysts. I gave them drafts of my publications in order to see whether they recognised themselves in my writings or whether they would interpret themselves differently. I have thus allowed them to contribute actively to my analysis of them. In some of my texts, I have included their reactions to my interpretations and to other people's interpretations of them. Their self-understanding has thus been brought into the analysis. By this, I try to avoid being just another expert who imposes my analysis of these young people's lives on them. Instead, I highlight their own interpretations of their lives, and their reactions towards common interpretations of them. This is similar

to how Foucault (1972) relates to discourses of the past, by listening to them rather than to criticise them.

However, as I include theoretical conceptions as well, I alternate between objectivating the people I study and treating them as fellow subjects. In this way, the informants are present both as objects *for* me and as subjects *with* me. As pointed out in 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a), the joint feeling of genuine human acknowledgement is important in order to understand another person.

### 2.3 Going Beyond the Stereotypes

It is difficult, but not impossible, for researchers to maintain a balanced position when we deal with a field which to such a strong extent is governed by eruptive categories, by strong either/or categories. As argued in the introductory part of this thesis, a social scientific study must move beyond the images of enemy and stereotypical constructions. This does not imply that research cannot be political in the sense that it is critical. The way in which I analyse the practices of the radical nationalists is a form of critical analysis. It has a perspective, which to some extent resembles a combination of the methodological outlines of Habermas (1984), Bourdieu (1993b) and Foucault (1988b).

Habermas is the only one of the three scholars who is usually placed under the heading 'critical analysis'. Nevertheless, these three scholars have inspired me, as they take three different positions in relation to the researcher's relation to his research object. Moreover, all of them include some kind of critical potential, although Foucault would not label it as such. Habermas represents the optimist of these three, as he thinks the goal of social research should be the liberation of people from the frozen features in which they are caught. Bourdieu is a bit more pessimist than Habermas, as he thinks social inequality reproduces itself in a more or less unconscious manner through people's bodies. However, he underlines the importance of criticism and self-criticism in research, which ideally would lead to a kind of socio-analysis, as a sociological equivalent to psychoanalysis.

Foucault thinks that to criticise cannot lead to liberation of one's research subjects, as the criticism will merely be another manifestation of the difference in power between researcher and research subjects. The work of an intellectual is not to shape other people's political will. Through the analyses carried out in the field, it is to repeatedly question what is postulated as self-evident, to upset people's mental habits, to dispel that which is familiar and accepted, to re-examine rules and institutions, to participate in the formation of political will (Foucault 1988a:265). This is indeed a form of critical analysis, although in a somewhat other form than that of Habermas.

#### 2.3.1 The Critical Potential of My Research

What I do is to analyse, in the sense that I examine the parts in order to grasp the whole processes of the radical nationalists' practices. I try to reveal the way they verbalise their practices and views. From this perspective, it is not relevant whether I share the assumptions of my informants. I do not want to rise above them and define my view as better. Neither do I discuss whether the standpoint of my informants is *unfit as a critical standpoint*, which would be the method according to critical theory, (cf. (Habermas 1980 / 1990).<sup>99</sup>

For example, I could have said that although the radical nationalists use the Nazi salute to signify rebellion, this is not a proper way of criticising contemporary society,

<sup>99</sup>This might be ethically problematic. Many of the analyses of the Frankfurt school build on the premise that everybody else is alienated, whereas the researcher rises above *the false consciousness*. Habermas, who represents the third generation of Frankfurt scholars, has a more modified view.

as they symbolically replace the oppressive structures of our social democratic society with structures that are even more oppressive. Some activists argue for the rights of the strongest, although they are not strong themselves in most indicators of strength in our country (having cultural or economical capital, maintaining a dominant position within the labour market or having political power). Some of them may think they would have gained power in an authoritarian state. In such a state, other indicators, like mastering theoretical knowledge, being smart, etc. are not as important. However, we would then find it more appropriate for these young men to criticise the way a social-democratic society oppresses people like themselves, rather than glorify a state that naturalises rigid divisions between legitimate and non-legitimate people.

Another point we could have criticised is their justification of their actions with the view that Norway is not a democracy, as the decision-makers persecute people like themselves because of their political beliefs. At the same time, some of the radical nationalists support systems where censorship and persecution are used to a much stronger degree, such as apartheid, National Socialism and McCarthyism. Thus, their project to make people aware that Norway is not a democratic society, does not seem convincing when they support anti-democratic policies at the same time.

In this way we could follow Habermas' ideal of criticising the *premises* from which actors act.<sup>100</sup> However, I am not certain whether I, as a researcher, should play such a role. According to Foucault (1972), to argue against informants is yet another form of oppression, not liberation and revelation of ideology, as Habermas sees it. Foucault is especially critical of a view like that of Habermas, that criticism of the premises should be followed by an understanding of people's actions in light of the constraints that their background and situation place on them.

Bourdieu is also critical to interpretation of people solely in terms of their traumatic backgrounds. In 'On the Margin of Life' (Fangen 1999b), I discuss four activists in light of their backgrounds. However, in order to avoid them being defined as passive victims of their backgrounds, I try to reveal their own active interpretation of their backgrounds, and their active reactions to the way they have been treated by people.

An account of the radical nationalist underground is *not* critical in Habermas' sense if it merely cements tabloid conceptions about the radical nationalists. Such an approach would only confirm prevailing suppositions uncritically. According to critical theory the ideal is rather to *reveal ideology* in order to free the actors from its iron grip.

Habermas' (1984) way of doing this would be by a stringent argumentation, a dialogue (in its very ideal sense) with the standpoints of the other. This ideal form of dialogue is carried out by listening to what the other says, and then almost confirming the content of the utterance, before challenging the content of the other's utterance by criticising it from various perspectives.

Winsnes (1998) tried to use this strategy when organising study-circles with radical nationalists. If we read between the lines of Winsnes' book, we see that the result of these circles was that he became more influenced by the radical nationalists than the other way around. This confirms another remark by Habermas, that when the researcher takes a performative role (which he must in order to understand), he enters a position of

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<sup>100</sup> How the activists act, in turn, says something about they perceive themselves. They often do not act in accordance with what they say (this holds, however, for most people from time to time). Thus, we cannot take their utterances as a clear indicator of the actions they might carry out. They often commit more acts of serious violence which are more serious than those they claim to find legitimate. For example, they might beat up an immigrant or a homosexual, despite saying that they do not have anything against immigrants ('only immigration-policy') or homosexuals ('it is okay as long as homosexuality is not legalised').

mutual criticism. Within this position, it is not possible to say in advance who will learn from whom.

Moreover, we can never know in advance that disclosing ideology will lead the participants to free themselves from its iron-grip. In addition, it is not certain that the researcher is revealing information that was not already known by the participants. My point is that a tabloid or stereotyped account of the radical nationalists is very predictable. We do not learn anything new about the radical nationalists when we describe them this way. Neither do they learn anything new about themselves either. When we instead try to have a detailed discussion of how these activists verbalise their views themselves, and in addition reflect on this by use of sociological theory,

We construct an analysis that might remove the doxic quality of these nationalists' beliefs. What we cannot do is say in advance that they will free themselves from the iron grip of their ideology because of their reading of such an analysis. However, they have ordered copies of my writings, and have discussed them in their study circles. When they discuss such analyses of them, this might make them more free to emphasise their less absolutist qualities. However, in the end they must always be free to choose whether to depart from their former beliefs or not. No one can force anyone else to change his or her views about the world. Habermas' perspective is also that the researcher should never force another party to think otherwise.

A possible change of perspectives in the other must be the result of his wish to change it. In many cases, as I have seen during my work with radical nationalists, they may want a change of perspectives. On the other hand, they have difficulty making this happen because the restraints that surround them remain the same. They are embedded in a network of underground relations, and set apart from relations to more conventional networks. Thus, although they want to change, they have serious problems in doing so.

I have sometimes found that communication between my informants and myself has taken the form of a *boundary situation*, (cf. Jaspers (1934); see also my discussion in 'Among Right-Wing Extremists' (Fangen 1998a)). Activists have come to me with their doubts and their openness towards beliefs which are far from representative of the underground. However, this is followed by a plunge deeper into the activities of the underground. This shows me that they do not find any way of using their doubts and ambivalence creatively. The easiest way to solve their feelings of insecurity is to further strengthen their commitment to their milieu. This also shows that in order to break off relations, they need an alternative network that they really feel part of, unless the way out is too difficult.

One example of this is one of my main informants, who I met again five years after my fieldwork. I had sent him a draft of the first part of my introduction. He talked very openly about feeling that this kind of life was no longer very giving, but that he did not have enough friends outside the underground. He told me about a Jewish man who had contacted him and asked if they could talk. The man wanted to know what made the activist want to take part in the activities of the underground. The activist told me that this meeting had been a pleasant one. He seemed to be open to having a critical view of the underground. However, I later saw him photographed while greeting leading European Nazis.

This shows that even though ideology is revealed in the sense that activists in certain situations might become open to view their movement specific knowledge in a less absolutist way, this does not lead them to change their life-world if there are no other networks they can join. Thus Christie's (1972) point about closeness which might prevent against oppression is only a situational prevention. When the conditions are reverted and distance is re-established, oppression might reappear. Thus, as long as no

stable change occurs, e.g. a change of network, nothing will change. To change one's network might seem almost impossible to activists who have participated for ten years or more. Nevertheless, a change of network is still possible for younger participants. We therefore have an ethical responsibility to make these activists free to choose whether to stay or distance themselves from their former commitment.

Research can contribute to this process without being explicitly action research by consciously focusing on heterology which is already present in the radical nationalists' beliefs, instead of merely ignoring the contradictions in their movement in favour of an apparent uniformity. As I concluded in the introduction, it has been important for me to reveal inconsistencies, paradoxes, heterology, etc. rather than the opposite. Thus, in 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998c), I point to contradictions in their beliefs. In 'Death-Mask of Masculinity' (Fangen 1999a), I show the ambiguity of the comradeship of the male activists, as the hierarchy between them is always contested, and none of them are merely with simple respect. Thus, I show that even though the male community, the brotherhood, is an ideal, it is an ideal more than a reality, as distrust and contests of honour are more the norm than comradeship which is pleasant and where they trust each other.

This shows that it is only by moving so close to how the activists actually react towards each other on their own arenas, that we can possibly look beyond the tabloid descriptions of the group. We then see the heterogeneity of their practices and values, instead of the apparent uniformity when one only sees them when they act in public. We can thus say more about what their practices mean to these activists, than merely what slogans they shout when they confront their adversaries. This gives us access to the heterodoxy, doubts, and ambivalence of the activists. It is here that one finds the potential for liberation. As mentioned earlier, the point is to give voice to a wider register of thoughts, not to cement the absolutist or doxic view of the world. We must use tactics which are opposite to those used by the militant anti-Fascists, namely to focus the heterology which is already found among the activists, rather than to confirm existing stereotypes.

The potential for reform in my approach is thus both defined by my focus on heterology, and by the manner in which I relate to the radical nationalists. I meet them openly by making them free to define themselves in their own words, rather than use words about them which limit their own ability to say who they are. In addition, I consciously treat them as fellow human beings.

In this way, I also voluntarily open myself to criticism. As Habermas points out, when the researcher participates in communicative actions s/he is no longer immune to criticism, whether it comes from the informants or from laymen. Instead, s/he enters a process of mutual criticism. My interpretations can thus be criticised by my informants, as was the case with an article by two activists in (*Fritt Forum* no. 1, 1998). Those of my activists who did not like my interpretations were activists who entered the radical nationalist underground after I concluded my fieldwork. My interpretations can also be adopted, as has also been the case (*Einherjer* no. 1, 1996, *Fritt Forum, Patriotene*). Since my informants thus have actively responded to my writings, we could see this as the realisation of the dialogue between them and me.

In addition, my interpretations may be criticised by anti-Fascists. This has occurred several times. The anti-Fascists criticise me for having communicated with these people face to face. In other words, they associate me with these nationalists because I have participated in communication with them, and because I focus on how they describe themselves rather than reveal what they mean by using words they do not use about themselves. This illustrates Habermas' (1980 / 1990) point that when we participate in

first hand communication, instead of merely sitting at an office desk, we are more exposed to criticism. Then we enter a dialogue not only with our informants but also with other laymen embedded in primary situations. We could argue that such an approach based on first hand communication is more relevant as an actual description of what 'the hell these people are up to', again paraphrasing Geertz' slogan.

A focus on the more complex sides of these activists is not apolitical, as the anti-Fascists claim. Neither does it naively say that these people are only good, as insinuated by sociologist Lunde at the Anti-Racist Centre (article in *Klassekampen*, November 1995). Such a study is highly political, in that it gives rise to a distinct way to deal with radical nationalists. Norwegian sociologist Løken (1970:133) points out that the sociologist must take part in the process which increases people's possibilities for psychological, social, and political liberation. In this sense, he says the sociologist is a politician.

Consequently, my aim is to increase the options available to radical nationalist youths in order to free themselves from the antagonistic and polarised positions they are put in (both by themselves and by their adversaries), and thus make them responsible, as fellow human beings. The implications of my research are that we must include them rather than exclude them, and thus enable them to use a wider register of their thoughts than those which are available when they are merely met with condemnation and excommunication. A similar reformatory potential is seen in several studies of local communities where racist violence has occurred, as well as studies specifically on the radical nationalists (Eidheim 1993), (Carlsson and Lippe 1997), (Bjørge 1997).

The constant struggle to define how one should react towards racism shows that research on this topic is highly political. The reason why so many researchers are criticised by highly active political agents on this arena - the organised anti-racists and anti-Fascists - is that these researchers take a different approach than the one chosen by many of these political actors.

### *2.3.2 Sceptical Restraint towards Dominant Institutions*

Critical theory does not explicitly say what the basis of criticism should be, whether it should be based on our own political views or whether we should base it on a specific theory. The main thing, following Habermas (1980 / 1990), is to have sceptical restraint towards dominant institutions and ideologies. In addition, one should adopt a self-critical gaze as to which specific interests one puts forward as a researcher.

I have sceptically viewed some of the ways in which radical nationalists have been met. I have seen with my own eyes what such excommunication does to these people. It does not have a positive effect. It exaggerates the cultic quality of their movement, and triggers a hateful view of their surroundings. Consequently, I think that a better strategy is to meet the radical nationalists as whole people. This means that we treat them as subjects on an equal footing. We may disagree with them, though. Furthermore, such an approach would mean that they had to take responsibility for their acts of violence or other crimes.

Habermas argues that social science cannot remain neutral towards social phenomena. It is most important that we be apprehensive to the fact that what we study and how we present our results can either confirm or criticise existing social conditions. I therefore criticise certain strategies used towards radical nationalists. I critically question the one-dimensional way in which they are often presented. I want to focus on heterogeneity in order to provide alternatives to merely living up to the demonised pictures.

According to Habermas (1980 / 1990), the aim is to question existing conditions, and in the next phase pull one's weight to liberate the actors from the possibly frozen quality of the social patterns they reproduce. To achieve such a goal completely might seem naïve. However, it is useful as an ideal to strive for. The aim is thus to make the actors free to choose, and thus not to force them to a change. We can increase the options for activists to choose less absolutist ways to react to their surroundings. As Habermas writes, it is not ethically valid nor possible, to *force* anyone to change their views. Force may lead their opposing views to gain strength, as mentioned earlier. They must have a choice, and they do not have this choice if they are always merely read in light of their own past crimes or views. No one inhabits a static personality. A person who may once have been an activist and committed an act or belonged to a political group may later enter a new situation which gives room for other qualities to come into play.

What I do is to interpret them from various angles, and thus extend the horizon of possible ways of seeing the radical nationalists. This may also expand their opportunities to choose a more reflective way of seeing themselves and the world around them. Such insight does not necessarily change their practice. However, it makes them more free to do so.

It is also important to highlight the contexts where their actions take place. Understanding may be the result of making clear what *context* an action occurs within, and the argumentation within which it is legitimised. The detachment we need in order to interpret the practice of the radical nationalists will consist of putting this practice into a cultural context.<sup>101</sup> We can thus describe the self-image of the participants, at the same time as we interpret it from a broader context of meaning. Our objectivation of the activists might in this way function as to give them more alternative perspectives, and might thus increase the options available. In this sense, my strategy is implicitly reformist, but not explicitly, as I have no intention to guide the direction in which a possible change would take.,

### 2.3.3 Reflexive Analysis

According to Habermas (1980 / 1990), in order to understand, the social scientist must take a stand towards the utterances of the other when s/he is gathering communicative experiences, instead of treating them as mere facts. I take this to mean the point is *not* that the researcher should argue with the main beliefs of the informants. Such an approach would maintain the groups by maintaining the polarisation between them, at the same time as it would destroy the possibility to learn something about these groups. This illustrated the problem of the double aspect of liberation.<sup>102</sup> In this case, the negative aspect of liberation occurs in that the learning-process is destroyed and the polarisation of the groups and their rebel-identities are maintained.

The point must thus *not* be that I, a researcher on young people, some of whom some have Nazi beliefs should discuss whether their theory of, e.g. a Zionist conspiracy is

<sup>101</sup> We can position their practice within contemporary legitimate (mainstream) culture. We can also draw parallels between the radical nationalists and other relevant groups, ideologies, and historical events. The context within which we make our interpretations may consist of an insight into Nazism as it manifested itself during the Second World War. In 'Nostalgia and Binary Oppositions' (Fangen 1998), I make such a comparison. We could also discuss differences and links with various youth subcultures from the post-war era (I do this in Fangen (1995), and in the last part of the appendix). We could also compare with other political or militant underground movements, as I do in 'Separate or Equal' Fangen (1997).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Marx' description of the peasants who was liberated both positively (from the oppression they experienced in the country-side) and negatively (they were given freedom in the cities, however, they strolled around in the streets as they had nowhere to go).



true (cf. also Dingstad 1998). To criticise their beliefs would imply that I entered a contest of truth. To start a discussion of whether or not ZOG really exists, would be an obscure strategy. If we follow Foucault (1977), the point is to *listen* to the discourses but not to criticise them. The critical aspect I will add, appears in the sense of reflexive analysis given by Bourdieu (1993b), which implies that I critically discuss my own interpretations, and the different ethical and methodological aspects of my study. This is what I have done in the article 'Ethics in an Observational Study' (Fangen 1998b), and what I do in the introductory part of the thesis.

Although I do not argue with the discourses of my informants, and thus do not in my text take a clear standpoint against them, it is implicit in my writings that I do not agree with them, and that I have a fundamentally other perspective than my informants. Yet, to argue against them would be a task meant for other arenas than the research-field, it is not my task as a researcher.

## 2.4 Research that might Increase the Options Available

### 2.4.1 *To Liberate or Not*

According to Habermas' (1980 / 1990) version of critical theory, research should ideally *liberate* the actors by revealing their ideology, and by providing alternatives to the images of enemy and stereotypical descriptions given in the media or which exist in people's consciousness. Instead of forcing the radical nationalists to live up to the demonised pictures of them, we might make them more free to behave less stereotypically. By imparting knowledge about the actors' picture of themselves, and putting it into an analytical frame, the researcher can tear down established categorical presentations of a group of actors, says Habermas.

There is no guarantee that such liberation will occur, however. My aim is thus that my interpretations *might* allow the activists more room to view themselves from different perspectives. Furthermore, it might provide the people who meet these activists (whether it be parents, policemen, youth workers, teachers or neighbours) more nuanced ways of understanding them.

An analysis of the radical nationalists' beliefs is *not* critical in Habermas' sense if it describes them with tainted categories and only attaches to these categories the meaning that was linked to them earlier. Instead of merely stating that the activists are Nazis and disregard the way they verbalise and label their views themselves, we could grasp the content of what they say and do, and deconstruct the heart of this argumentation. This is what I do in 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts'. Instead of saying that they are right-wing, racists, neo-Nazis and so forth, I discuss how they are right-wing, racists, and Nazis. In addition, I discuss the way in which they adhere to views traditionally understood as left wing or views that are nationalist rather than racist (cultural rather than racial arguments).

I thus follow a strategy similar to the one outlined by Foucault. This means that instead of seeing an underlying logic of their discourses, I try to systematise the arguments which are apparent in them. I do not try to find an underlying essence in these discourses, in the way that Ofstad (1989) did in his book about Nazism. He analysed the arguments in *Mein Kampf*, and believed that he had found the essence of Nazism, an essence he defined as *contempt for weakness*. This method might function when one takes a single source as one's empirical base, as Ofstad does. However, the utterances, publications, and practices of the different radical nationalists do not represent one joint essence. Neither am I as certain that a single utterance has only one

such essence. I think that we may always find several layers of meaning or polysemy, in the sense Ricoeur (1981) gives the term.

It is not decided in advance who is going to learn from whom within a virtual or actual process of understanding, says Habermas (1980 / 1990). Thus, at least some of my informants have felt a need to learn something about themselves based on what I have written about them. A leading skinhead activist ordered six copies of my report *Skinheads in Red, White, and Blue*, because he wanted to discuss it together with the other activists who lived near him.

However, the consequences of self-insight may be tragic. One of my informants left the underground movement, and began to write his autobiography, which he sent me. In addition, he helped me interpret him in the drafts of my writings where I had described him. Sometime later, his brother told me that he had committed suicide. This action may have been the result of a growing self-insight which he did not know how to handle. His suicide could be viewed as one possible result of the 'freedom'<sup>103</sup> created by insight into one's own relation to the ideology (Cf. my earlier discussion of the double aspect of liberation).<sup>104</sup> In other words, self-reflection is a difficult process if one does not have a circle of close persons around oneself who can help find the path out of the labyrinths of thought when one begins to question one's own former beliefs and commitments.

It is not possible to predict the effects of reflection in my informants in advance. Nevertheless, it will set the activists more free than research that only stigmatises and confirms, cf. Habermas (1980 / 1990). Stigmatising research leads to self-fulfilling prophecies when the participants as a result of long-term labelling, choose to live up to other people's conceptions of them, as a leading figure of the underground claims is the case with him (*Ikke-Vold* no. 1, 1996). Such research might also just as well lead to the tragic event of suicide.

By contrast, when we approach the activists with an open mind, they are free to emphasise other aspects of their practice than those constantly portrayed in the media. They might thus feel free to use what I would call their positive potentials, potentials they have obtained by living on the edge of society. They thus experience mainstream culture from another point of view. Instead of using this unique experience by triggering hatred and violence, they may use it in other ways.

#### 2.4.2 *Create a New Space with Signs that Allow for Heterodoxy*

We can ask which signs to use in order to admit something new. In his research on racist youth, Back (1994) found that talking about music was often a way of making them go far in a pluralist way of thinking. When talking about music, youths who are racist otherwise often tend to talk in favour of black musicians. Music becomes an arena where it is possible to unite opposites.

This is one possible room for dialogue. We can thus try to find such 'rooms' that give us access to these groups. I had the same experience during my fieldwork. On one occasion, when I visited two radical nationalist skinheads at their home, one of them was very eager to show me his huge collection of reggae music, and he wanted me to watch a video of ska music played by black musicians. A lady sang one of the songs, and he admitted that he thought she was very stylish and tough.

<sup>103</sup> A radical interpretation would be to see suicide as the ultimate freedom, cf. Skárdal's argument that many people of today are less afraid of dying than of being rejected..

<sup>104</sup> However, research will probably never be the sole reason why a person commits suicide. Such an action is always a result of complex social and psychological processes, which might be the result of many different experiences.

This episode might illustrate the point that music is one possible arena which is useful in order to open the heterodoxy, and to make the orthodoxy move. My only aim is to trigger the self-reflection and thus heterodoxy of the activists. When I discuss my interpretations with my informants, the result might be that my objectivation and analysis of them extend the horizon of possible meanings in their life-world.

I have thus found that my writings have released critical self-reflection in my informants. This reflection has not led them to drop their ideology, but it has made them treat this ideology in a more non-doxic way. This may be the most positive consequence research like mine may have. It provides a basis for heightening the activists' reflection on themselves. In the end, they must decide whether they find it appropriate to leave their former beliefs behind. No one can force them to do so.

What I have done, to some extent, is listen to the doubts of the activists, and prompted them in this kind of thinking. The primary interpretations are thus partly a collaboration between my informants and myself. My aim is *not* that my research be a form of action research which seeks to remove activists from their former beliefs.

When the radical nationalists talk with people who do not treat them merely as a category, their own most pluralist ways of thinking are revealed. Thus, we see that they need a *time-out* in a way. They require a space where they can talk freely, beyond the closed positions. We then see that they are no longer one-sidedly essentialist. Suddenly they are able to discuss the content of their own concepts, without taking them as given. Then we see the possibility of dialogue.

Contempt tells these people nothing. They already know its content. What I try to do is create a space where these people might *recognise themselves in a new way*. I focus on the diversity, as it is along these lines that we can splinter the absolute positions, and make room for dialogue. This gives the activists better opportunities to show other sides of themselves than the absolutist positions.

#### 2.4.3 *The Possibility of Inclusion*

An important lesson from the trials about treason in Norway after World War II is that it is possible and important to talk with people, no matter what they have done. We cannot progress unless we are able to interact. (see the experiences of Rothenberg's (1992:130) interview with Arne Næss). Naturally we could isolate all of the people who have committed despicable acts or who have illegitimate beliefs on an island,<sup>105</sup> so that we would not have to consider them part of our world anymore, but this is not a long-term solution.

When we deal with young people who still can choose the paths of their lives, we have a responsibility to not force them to distance themselves even more and not have a way back. It is naive to think that they should come to us with bowed heads because of excessive excommunication and say 'Yes, I agree with you. My actions have been terrible. Forgive me'. It is only when we do not reject them as fellow human beings that they are set free to make such a choice. Then their own complexity as people with an opportunity to make their own choices, is revealed.

This is as well the opposite of excusing them for their actions, and the opposite of seeing them as machines who passively do what 'the system' forces them to. It is a view of them as fellow humans, responsible for their own choices. In this regard it is also important that we judge individuals for the criminal offences they have committed, instead of criminalising whole groups or movements.

Carlsson and Lippe (1997:7) has studied a community called Vennesla, where young people linked to the FMI movement committed acts of violence and terror against

<sup>105</sup> The Norwegian Progress Party once actually suggested to use the island Svalbard for such purposes.

refugees. This community managed to stop the violence without external help. According to Carlsson and Von der Lippe, one of the main reasons they managed to do so, was that the gang leaders were quickly arrested by the police and served their sentences. When they came out of prison, they were not excommunicated by the community. They were allowed to reintegrate themselves, and their earlier acts were not held against them. They were allowed to construct new identities as normal inhabitants of the community. They were shown the usual trust, and they had no difficulty getting jobs, an education, and housing. In other words, the path back to the community was not blocked off for them. As Von der Lippe and Carlsson say, if Vennesla had been a community which was marked by moral panic, where the main goal had been to punish these young people strongly by social exclusion, they probably would have become involved in more xenophobic activity and gone down a more extreme road.

#### ***2.4.4 The Position of Responsibility***

My project is to create a frame of understanding that might go beyond the stereotypes of these groups, at the same time as it might trigger reflexivity and possibly self-criticism within the groups. Then they will also be allowed a position of responsibility. They will have to stand by their words, and do to a much greater degree, than when we merely treat them as condemned objects. They will then be unable to claim that they are persecuted and stigmatised, and thus legitimise their violence by that persecution. Their stigma will no longer function as a crutch, which they can turn the other way around and use like a club.<sup>106</sup> Instead, the stigma will disappear, and they will have to defend their position as responsible fellow humans.

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<sup>106</sup> Goffman (1963) writes about an invalid who starts turning his crutch the other way around and starts using it as a golf club. He thus turns his stigma into something positive, something he actively can make use of.

### 3 Appendix III: The Radical Nationalist Underground Movement

#### 3.1 Historical Review

The radical nationalist underground<sup>107</sup> is made up of various groups which change names constantly. They are groups that differ in their degree of militancy and political extremism. The term underground primarily embraces the radical nationalist groups and organisations that are marked by secrecy.

Delimited this way, extra-parliamentary parties such as contemporary *Hvit Valgallianse* (White Election Alliance), which is a party that openly hands out its programme and membership list, is not part of the radical nationalist underground, although some groups from the underground collaborate with it, and some of the underground activists are members of the party. Several of the activists were also former members of extra-parliamentary parties such as the former *Norsk Front* (NF - Norwegian Front) and *Norsk Folkeparti* (NFP - Norwegian People's Party). However, these parties are not part of the radical nationalist *underground*, as they had a public programme and membership list. When I refer to these parties in the introduction to this thesis, I therefore use the term radical nationalist *movement*. I will briefly discuss these parties in this part of the appendix, however, as these are the forerunners to the radical nationalist underground, and many of the oldest activists within the underground today served their apprenticeship within these extra-parliamentary parties.

The prelude to what I call the radical nationalist movement emerged in Norway during the late 1960s. This movement was *not* a direct continuation of the politics of the Norwegian National Socialist party *Nasjonal Samling* (National Unification - NS) that was banned after 1945. After the war, these former members of Vidkun Quisling's party *Nasjonal Samling* established their own publishing house *Folk og Land*, and their own archive for Second World War history, called the *Institutt for okkupasjonshistorie* (Institute of Occupational History - INO). Within this circle of former NS members, there were indeed efforts to revitalise National Socialism, and they collaborated with National Socialists in other countries, primarily in Sweden.

To continue the work of these older people was almost an impossible choice for the new generation, as National Socialism was discredited after the war. This was both because of the knowledge of the atrocities which were committed in the name of the ideology and because of the association between this ideology and the occupation of Norway. In Norway the label National Socialist came to be equivalent with *traitor*. New generations of proponents of this ideology therefore use other labels, first and foremost nationalism.

According to one of the founders of *Nasjonal Ungdomsfylking* (NUF, National Youth Phalanx), no sensible person would support mass murder. Furthermore, although the ideals of this new generation were practically the same as those once proposed by *Nasjonal Samling*, they would not support a German occupation of Norway, which had been something the main faction of *Nasjonal Samling* had supported during the War. Thus they called themselves nationalists, as they were against such a germanisation. They used the term *neo-nationalists*, on occasion, as they felt they departed from the

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<sup>107</sup> My version of the development of this movement from the late 1960s until the end of this century (1999) is based on interviews with activists representing all phases of this period, including one of the founders.

traditions of classical Norwegian nationalists like Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson<sup>108</sup>, Henrik Wergeland, and other Norwegian national romantics at the end of the nineteenth century.

The nationalism of this new generation was not primarily defined out of an interest in Norwegian language, folk costume, folk music, etc. It was first and foremost defined out of an urge to defend Norwegian culture from foreign influence. Its adherents were primarily *anti-immigration* and *anticommunist*. The latter issue is of great importance, as this movement arose in an era (the 1960s and 1970s) where communist parties gained increasing support, especially among intellectuals, and thus received renewed legitimacy. The adherents of the new generation of nationalists were people who feared the consequences of increased communist influence, as well as the break-up of traditional norms as advocated by the hippie-movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In their strong reactionary anti-communism, this new movement also attracted some more violent individuals. Thus, for the first time during the post-war period, political violence was directed against a May Day march, against a communist publisher, and against an immigration office. The perpetrators of these crimes were associated with Norwegian Front and later the National People's Party. However, some of the leading figures of these parties were not happy about the association between their organisations and such brutal acts. As a result, some of them left these organisations by the mid-1980s, including two of the founders of NUF, NF and NFP, Tor Petter Hadland and Øystein Hovdekinn. On the other hand, other, even older members of these parties, encouraged some of the young members to commit acts of violence.

Some of the most serious acts of violence committed within the radical nationalist movement occurred between the late 1970s and the early 1980s. However, this was also a period when the movement had the clearest political and ideological profile, and when its members managed to organise themselves as extra-parliamentary parties. The first half of the 1990s has mostly been marked by the skinheads' predominance of the radical nationalist underground. Street violence, Nazi concerts and pub gatherings have been typical practices. As a consequence of the move towards youth subcultural profiles as well as violence on a more frequent basis and with less planning, many of the initial members of the radical nationalist movement view the current throng of militant groups as unserious. They believe that they contribute to the interests of contemporary decision-makers, rather than serve 'the national cause', as the original ideology is now merely defined as extremist and violent, and is thus excluded from public debate.

These former activists believe a much better strategy would have been to organise legal demonstrations, political rallies and to participate in debates in the media. They criticise the few contemporary activists they consider serious of mingling too uncritically with more or less non-ideological militants, instead of accepting the opportunities some of them have to participate in debates on television or in the main Norwegian newspapers.

During the latter half of the 1990s we have seen a resurgence of groups based in the underground. The members meet in private, instead of at pubs, and they are marked by more serious, planned violence, rather than street fights.

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<sup>108</sup> Bjørnson was a pan-Germanist, but in a quite other sense of the term than the one given by the German Nazis a half century later, cf. Øystein Sørensen. Henrik Wergeland is known for his work to remove the so-called 'Jew section' in the Constitution, which said that Jews were not allowed to the country.

### 3.2 The 1960s and 1970s: Neo-National(Social)ism

The radical nationalist underground movement was, as mentioned, *not* a result of the efforts of the few former Nazi party members who still were active after World War II. The initiators of NUF were inspired by what they read in *Folk og land* but wanted to organise themselves on a new platform, independent of the old National Socialists. One of the initiators of NUF, Tor Petter Hadland, made his first contact with the people at the INO after having read *Folk og land*. He was amazed by a text on the back of the journal: 'see the world with new eyes'. He had an army background, and was inspired by thoughts of defending one's national character and fighting communism, which he saw as a real threat to this character. Through the people at *Folk og land* he met Øystein Hovdekinn. They eventually thought of building up a circle of young people like themselves, including Jan Ødegård, who was a few years older than Tor Petter Hadland, and had earlier, for a period of time, lived at the same boarding home as Hadland had. He worked with them to build up a party proposing these politics.

In other words, their initiative came to the fore through their contact with *Folk og land*. However, they decided to break with the term National Socialism and put together a more up to date programme that remained aloof from the negative associations with the NS party. They thus soon removed themselves from this initial contact with the former NS members. This is also the reason why it is difficult to name this new generation. They are highly inspired by old National Socialism, although they break with it in important respects. Furthermore, as they point out themselves, do not easily fit into the right-left axis. For example, some of them are, very concerned about welfare services (often understood as left-wing policy). On the other hand, they want to preserve tradition (family, etc.) and have a strong national defence (typically understood as right-wing policy). In 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998c), I discuss the difficulty of placing the radical nationalists on the right-left axis.

The new generation of 'neo-nationalists' was radical in the sense that they supported radical methods in order to achieve their policy. For example, in 1975 they began weapons training and made lists of communists at their workplaces<sup>109</sup>. Their goal was to fight immigration and communism. However, they were conservative in their strong belief in the necessity to preserve national traditions.

### 3.3 The 1980s: Extra-Parliamentary 'Nationalist' Parties

During the late 1970s, the efforts of the members of *Nasjonal Ungdomsfylking* resulted in the foundation of an extra-parliamentary radical nationalist party, *Norsk Front*. Their members were aged 17 to 65. During the 1980s, young and old alike co-operated in the radical nationalist movement. According to some of the individuals who made up the youngest group in the movement at that time, they were encouraged to commit serious acts of violence by a few of the oldest people in the movement. Some of these young people felt too subordinate to these elders, and look back upon this period with bitterness. The relationship between young and old has dimmed since that period.

However, the most high profile members of the party were a circle of nationalists aged 30-40. Among them were Erik Blücher, Jan Ødegård, Tor Petter Hadland, and his wife Bitten Katrine Lunde. They published the magazine *Nasjonalisten* (The Nationalist).

From the very beginning, this new generation of National Socialists used the terms national and nationalist to refer to their movement, as mentioned earlier, in order to

<sup>109</sup> Bangsund (1984)

avoid the stigmatised content of the Nazi label. Despite their fight against an alleged Jewish conspiracy, and implicit glorification of Fascism, the extra-parliamentary parties which they constituted in the 1980s were named *Norsk Front* (Norwegian Front) and, later, *Nasjonalt Folkeparti* (the National People's Party). These parties implicitly had a National Socialist profile.

Subsequent to the bombing of a mosque in 1985, the police took statements from most of the members. As a result, the members became more cautious, and their activities became more secretive. Several of the activists from that period talk of cover operations in relation to meetings. The tactics used were identical to those used by communist parties a decade earlier: meet one place, then drive somewhere else. As one activist put it, 'when something like that [the mosque bomb and the following police rehearsals] happens we all are in a state of alert'.

During the late 1980s, there was an attempt to found a nationalist society at the University of Oslo. The *Nasjonal Demokratisk Studentunion* (the National Democratic Student Union), emerged in 1986. All of the initial members of NDS had previously been active in the *Norwegian Front*. The organisation had about eight members, four of whom were students. One of them was the founder, Michael Knudsen, who studied Sociology. Except for Knudsen, the core members were *not* students. The most prominent ones were Johnny Olsen (who was in prison for murder at that time, but participated with his radical nationalist fellows whenever he was on leave), Petter Kristian Kyvik and skinhead Ole Krogstad (who later founded the skinhead group *The Bootboys*). NDS later changed its name to NDU (*Nasjonal Demokratisk Union* - National Democratic Union), as a result of the fact that an increasingly large number of its members were not students.

NDU was constituted as a discussion group, which met once a month at the University of Oslo. However, there were periods when the group did not discuss politics much, as they had more than enough to deal with mentally following the mosque bombing in 1985, which led to much paranoia within the entire underground. During other periods, the group carried out political tasks. They collaborated with the German NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*); the latter even printed leaflets for the NDU group once. The group published a monthly information letter. According to its program, the political profile of NDU was national democratic. The members also used the label *centre nationalists*.

'Nationalists' of the older generation, such as Jan Ødegård and Bastian Heide, who still were members of *Norwegian Front*, attended some of NDU's meetings. According to one of the leading activists, Bastian Heide was known as an extreme racist, although not a Nazi. He once wrote that 'the others do not see the immigrants because they only look for the Jews'. In other words, immigrants were the problem, not the 'Zionist conspiracy', as some of the of the members argued. Heide was later convicted of publishing racist leaflets.

Other former NF members, like Tor Petter Hadland, had broken off ties with the others after the mosque bombing. Hadland had established himself as an individual free-thinker with no commitment to the new efforts within the radical nationalist underground.

After they handed out leaflets at the initial meeting of FMI (The Folk's Movement against Immigration) on 13-14 October 1987, the membership of NDU rose to 70 people. In 1989, Hege Sjøfteland started the *National Democrats* group, and thereby took over the political work. Then Michael Knudsen left NDU to start his monthly magazine *Norsk Blad* (Norwegian Paper, later called *Fritt Forum* - Free Forum).



In 1987, *Zorn 88* emerged, a group which had broken away from *Nasjonalt Folkeparti*, as its founder, Erik Rune Hansen, thought the party had become too moderate in terms of ideology. *Zorn 88* is strictly organised in several layers, and follows the Nazi leadership principle. It has all the marks of an underground movement (see the introduction), as it is based on secrecy. The members hardly know each other. All communication between them takes place through aliases.

In 1998, the *Zorn 88* group changed its name to NNSB - *Norsk Nasjonalsosialistisk bevegelse* (the Norwegian National Socialist Movement), thus corresponding to the Danish *DNSB; Dansk Nationalsosialistisk bevegelse* (Danish National Socialist Movement) which it co-operates with.

### 3.4 The 1990s: Skinhead Profile on the Radical Nationalist Movement

'Nationalist' skinheads dominated the radical nationalist underground during the early 1990s. The people that started this part of the radical nationalist movement had become skinheads about five years earlier. However, it was first during the early 1990s that the skinhead profile dominated the radical nationalist underground as a whole. From 1992 to 1994, to the despair of some of the more ideologically-based activists, the movement was associated first and foremost with monthly gatherings at pubs in Oslo, beer drinking and frequent street fights. Some of the most high profile activists from this period were more interested in skinhead style and music than in 'nationalist' policy. The activists who had been involved in the extra-parliamentary political parties of the 1980s particularly disliked this change of direction. The movement resembled a youth subculture more than a political movement. Correspondingly more teenagers joined its ranks.

The ideology of the underground has generally grown into numerous fragments of beliefs from various sources. The more consistent (latently national socialist) ideology of the 1980s was exchanged into a more provocative and slogan-dominated white power ideology.

The term *white power* is linked to this particular version of the nationalist (alternatively National Socialist) skinhead subculture. This layer of the skinhead subculture evolved in England during the 1970s, when several skinheads had ties to local football clubs, as well as to the British Movement and the National Front.

The skinhead subculture first emerged in England in the late 1960s.<sup>110</sup> Skinheads were originally neither outspokenly anti-racist, as today's SHARP (Skinheads Against

<sup>110</sup> According to Hebdige (1979:55), the style had mainly two sources of influence. The one was the cool image of black 'rude boys'. The rude boys young working-class second generation immigrants from the West Indies, who played aggressive ska music and acted out a style which combined delinquency with elegance. They wore starched trousers, clean shirts, short hair, and highly polished boots. The ideal signalled working-classness and masculinity. At the same time it had to be 'style', in the sense of 'nice looking'. When the rude-boys introduced the ska-rhythms in their own clubs in the mid-Sixties, some white working-class boys went to the clubs and became fascinated both by the style and by the music. According to Dick Hebdige, who has analysed these connections, the black rude boys had qualities that the white boys admired and tried to copy. The black boys were the real 'underdogs' of society, excluded not only because of their class belonging, but also because of their race. However, it is not correct that skinheads originally were anti-racists, especially since one of the things that diminished the contradictions between white working-class boys and their black friends, was that they joined each other in 'paki-bashing'; i.e. they beat up Pakistani boys. Following Dick Hebdige, 'the alliance between white and black youths was an extremely precarious and provisional one: it was only by continually monitoring trouble spots (e.g. the distribution of white girls) and by scape-goating alien groups ('queers', hippies, and Asians) that internal conflict could be avoided. Most notably, 'paki-bashing' can be read as a displacement manoeuvre whereby the fear and anxiety produced by limited identification with one black group was transformed into aggression and directed against another black community. (...) The Pakistanis

Racial Prejudice) are nor were they nationalists or racists as the boneheads or Nazi-skins of today.<sup>111</sup> The current skinhead movement is divided into different poles along the continuum of racism/anti-racism. There are also non-political skins and other more marginal skinhead groupings, e.g. gay skins or female skinhead groups.

The skinhead subculture emerged in Norway in the early 1980s.<sup>112</sup> As in many other countries, the Norwegian skinhead subculture split into a nationalist and an anti-racist faction. On the outside, these two factions look quite similar. From the inside, however, minor differences of style are crucial in determining whether the other is a friend or an enemy.<sup>113</sup>

Ole Krogstad, who founded *Bootboys* in 1987, initiated the *nationalist* skinhead scene. According to Krogstad, he became inspired when he visited his like-minded friends in Sweden. According to Krogstad, *Bootboys* was not meant to be political. The group's goal was for skinheads to be able to get together to 'talk and have a few beers.' Krogstad has always used labels such as nationalist skinheads or national skinheads. However, in his fanzine he often refers to ZOG (cf. 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts' (Fangen 1998c), and has a high profile as a National Socialist. At times he also uses labels such as white power skinheads, thus linking his milieu to the international white power movement. He has many contacts with white power skinheads from all over Europe, as well as from the USA.

Relations between *Bootboys* and more ideological organisations like *Zorn 88* and *INO* have been tense. *INO* has publicly said that it will not have anything to do with these young people, whereas *Zorn 88's* line, according to Krogstad, has been to speak up against *Bootboys* in public "...because they are so violent." Behind closed doors, though, they think "...it will be good to have the skinheads around when the reds come."

Krogstad and his friends who started the nationalist part of the skinhead scene had for a short period been part of the punk scene before. In the beginning, there was no overt contradiction between the left wing and the radical nationalist skinheads in Norway. However, one of the first skinheads was thrown out of the punk scene because of his use of nationalist symbols. Krogstad says that he and his friends wanted to rebel, but found the punk style too disorderly. In contrast, they found the skinhead lifestyle to be elegant, proletarian, and tough.

The leftist part of the skinhead subculture grew out of the punk scene, especially after the oi-rock band *Sham 69* held a concert here in 1983. After a while, some of these skinheads adopted the international label *SHARP* (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), thus trying to avoid the increasing association between skinheads and racism.

were singled out for the brutal attentions of skinheads, black and white alike. Every time the boot went in, a contradiction was concealed, glossed over, made to 'disappear' (ibid. p.58).

The alliance between black and white crumpled even further in the early 1970s. This also meant a decline in the skinhead subculture. At the same time, there were ideological shifts inside reggae that threatened to exclude white youths. Hebdige actually writes that 'as the music became more openly committed to racial themes and Rastafarianism, the basic contradictions began to... burst into the arena of aesthetics and style where the original truce between the two groups had been signed. As reggae became increasingly preoccupied with its own blackness, it began to appeal less and less to the skinheads...' (ibid. p. 59).

<sup>111</sup> Although 'paki-bashing' - the violence directed at Pakistani youths - was a known activity for skinheads, black youths (so-called rude boys) joined white skinheads in this practice (cf. Hebdige 1979).

<sup>112</sup> This section on the skinhead subculture is a rewriting of my some of my earlier publications on this issue (Fangen 1992; Fangen 1995; Fangen 2000).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *AFA magazine* no. 8 1996 where AFA gives an overview of the most frequent emblems used by the radical nationalists. This list is meant to make it easier for AFA activists to recognise the 'Nazi' skins so that they do not risk beating up the wrong person in their fight against the nazis.

Some of the 'nationalist' skinheads, including Ole Krogstad, became members of *Nasjonalt Folkeparti* (the National People's Party) (see above). Krogstad was appointed Youth Division Leader of the party.

Several skinheads were later excluded from the *Blitz* house because their nationalist symbols and attitudes contrasted greatly with the house's anti-racist profile. According to a leading figure of the radical nationalist underground, skinheads are "...a reaction against the hippie subculture, cultural decline, and the blending of races, whereas the SHARP skinheads are a ...bunch of confused anarchists who live for chaos, sex, violence, and hash". Another leading radical nationalist writes in his fanzine that the SHARP skinheads are "a pain and try to split the skinhead movement ... They say that the skinhead movement was originally in favour of multi-cultural society with some reggae (ska) in their music. But the truth is that the first skinheads hated everybody!" (*Bootboys* No. 9, 1990).

On the other hand, the SHARP skinheads claim that the 'nationalist' skinheads are not real skinheads. They call them 'boneheads' or 'Nazi-skins', who deny the skinheads' original link to black culture, using international skinhead terminology. The SHARP skinheads thus emphasise the fact that skinheads originally were not racists or nationalists, and that the goal of several SHARP skinheads is to fight the Nazi skinheads. The SHARP skinheads are conscious about skinhead style and music. Unlike the 'nationalist' skinheads, they prefer ska music by black musicians in bands like The Specials and The Madness. The ska-bands play songs with explicit anti-racist lyrics. Some of the most famous songs by The Specials, are 'Free Nelson Mandela', 'Stereotype', and 'Racist friend'. The 'nationalist' skinheads, on the other hand, listen more to 'white power' music from oi bands such as Screwdriver and Brutal Attack.

At the present, there are two SHARP groups in Norway. A couple of the SHARP skinheads have been skinheads as long as some of the leading 'nationalist' skinheads. IN addition, a distinct group of skinheads is called the Oslo Skins. Some of the group's members define themselves as being SHARP, others do not want to define themselves as anti-racists. Neither do they like the fact that people associate skinheads with Nazis. This group has its own oi-rock band, The Fuck-Ups.

There is also a group of skinheads who define themselves as being politically neutral. Some of them wear patches with the Norwegian flag, similar to those worn by the nationalist skins. They stay aloof of the ongoing conflict between militant anti-Fascists and white power skinheads. They are very upset about the way matters have developed. One of them said 'the whole thing is so pathetic that there is hardly any use in talking about it'. A few of them have become friends with some of the leading white power skinheads, and respect them because they are 'real' skinheads.

The criterion of being a 'real skinhead' is heard in every area of the skinhead subculture. The most common traits associated with being a real skinhead are a complete commitment to the lifestyle and musical preferences of skinheads, as well as strong identification with and knowledge of the history of the skinhead subculture. Most skinheads do not have either a political or ideological view of what it is to be a skinhead, other than the fact that skinheads love football, beer, street fights, and girls, and that skinheads are comrades and do not adhere to the principle of leadership. In the white power subculture, it is common to speak of 'leaderless resistance'.

During the 1980s, the different kinds of skinheads went to the same pubs, and they were on somewhat friendly terms, despite their political disagreements. Living the skinhead style was of primary importance to them, even though the leading figure of the 'nationalist' skinhead faction, Ole Krogstad, had been remanded in custody for abetting a bombing against a Muslim mosque in 1985, five years earlier. However, he was never

convicted of this crime. During the early 1990s, the atmosphere between the two skinhead parties changed.

The turning point came in 1991, when white power skinheads, local bikers, and some local citizens joined Arne Myrdal and his FMI party at a political rally in Brumunddal, a town in eastern Norway. The SHARP skinheads joined the anarchist *Blitz* youths as well as local citizens on the anti-racist side. There were hundreds of anti-racists. Despite their numbers, the anti-racists were the ones to be forced out of the village and onto the highway. The reason was that more local people joined forces with the racists than with the anti-racists. After this event, the fronts became clearer between the two factions of skinheads, and there have been many violent clashes between SHARP skinheads and the 'nationalist' skinheads or other radical nationalists. More than ever before, the *Blitz* youths want to 'destroy the Fascists'.

SHARP is a group of its own, but its members have strong ties to the *Blitz* youths. The SHARP members are in a difficult position, because they still know many of the 'nationalist' skinheads personally, and being skinheads is still the most important thing for them. However, they are also provoked by the Nazi label, which affects them because outsiders may think they look similar to 'nationalist' skinheads. This has intensified the fronts. Right before Christmas 1993 there was a violent confrontation between three SHARPs and one leading figure from the radical nationalist underground.

The skinhead lifestyle is primarily linked to 'beer culture'; i.e. heavy beer drinking. One older radical nationalist with strong Nazi sympathies says he does not like this skinhead concept. He labels it as 'unserious' because the music and beer drinking tends to play down the importance of ideological convictions.

Being experienced with the various codes of the skinhead lifestyle and knowing a great deal about the subculture entitles skinheads to a certain status in every area of the skinhead subculture. The men who are known to be central figures within the subculture are seen as important, no matter which part of the movement they belong to. Many aspire to attend skinhead concerts abroad where skinheads with different political opinions stand side by side, without this leading to fights. Many of the leading skinheads among the nationalists look back upon the period before the fronts became more clearly defined with nostalgia.

The skinhead style dominated the profile of the radical nationalist underground in 1993-1994. Many of the participants of that period were intensively occupied with the history of this style. Some of the dominant nationalist skinhead groups in 1993-1994 were *Varg* (Wolf), *Bootboys*, and *Ariske Brødre* (Aryan Brothers). The *Varg* group dissolved in 1995. However, in 1998, some of its younger members founded a new group using the *Birkebeiner*<sup>114</sup> name, primarily used by a very militant faction of the scene. The new *Birkebeiner* group, however, is moderate. Half of its members are skinheads, and they all love to drink beer and listen to *Ultima Thule*, a Swedish nationalist rock band, which in comparison with many other musical bands on this scene is quite moderate. The *Bootboys* group has mostly had ties to with Hokksund, where its founder lives, but there has also been an active group in Eidsvoll. The two heads of the Eidsvoll faction, Tore Huuse and Per Øyvind Monge, started their own group, *Riksfronten*, (The Reich's Front) in 1998. This group is independent of the Swedish group with the same name<sup>115</sup>. *Riksfronten* might also be seen as a breakaway

<sup>114</sup> *Birkebeinerne* was a political party in Norway in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This party helped King Sverre in fighting the so-called lend-men, and in constituting a strong Kingdom.

<sup>115</sup> The Swedish *Riksfronten* has been replaced by *National Socialistisk Front/NSF* (National Socialist Front), a group which in turn co-operates with *Blood & Honour Scandinavia*, which is headed by Norwegian Erik Blücher, who lives in Hälsingborg in Sweden.

faction of the Nazi organisation *Zorn 88*. The two groups collaborate, however. In February 1998, they met to draw up a joint agreement. *Riksfronten* fines people who do not show up at organised meetings and members who are drunk during attacks, demonstrations or concerts.

In 1997, *Bootboys Oslo* emerged. In 1998, its members were aged 22-23. They pay more importance to a 'pure style' by not drinking much. The group is strictly organised, and it holds political meetings. Its leader is 23-24. From time to time, the group holds meetings run by Tore Tvedt, an older man who previously had his own karate club. On Constitution Day in 1998 *Bootboys Oslo* held a rock concert which was shut down by the police only half an hour into the concert. The members of the group live in Bærum, Oslo, and Romerike. Bærum and Romerike are communities just outside Oslo.

Several individual activists had similar lifestyles to that of the skinheads, but did not define themselves as such. In 1993-1994, *Norsk Ungdom* (Norwegian Youth), founded by Michael Knudsen, held joint monthly gatherings for the activists. He also published the fanzine *Ungfront*. One of his editorials dealt with the organisation *Norsk Ungdom*. The aim of this organisation was to function as an umbrella for different 'nationalist' groupings of young people. It organised monthly pub gatherings to gather young 'nationalists' with different orientations, from the more militant activists to those who were more intellectual and less raucous. The pub gatherings had a somewhat 'unserious' profile (because of heavy drinking and prevalent street violence). As a result, many of the more ideological (and less militant) activists kept away. After a short while, however, the pub gatherings became institutionalised. The first location they met at on an evening was always the same one, and the participants turned up when they felt like it. They met at the same pub the football supporters went to. Consequently, some individuals from both these two groups knew each other well. We will therefore in the next section take a look at the former links between the football supporters and the radical nationalists.

### 3.5 Nationalist Football Supporters

A few skinheads, both from the SHARP group and from the radical nationalist underground, are members of *Vålerengaklanen* [Vålerenga Klan]. In 1993-1994, several supporters labelled themselves 'nationalists', and frequently joined the radical nationalists. Quite a few of the football supporters frequented the same pubs as the radical nationalists did during this period. The supporters met there regardless of the radical nationalists' gatherings. For them, *Stedet* (the pub) was a place they went to regularly, not just once a month. Some of the football supporters even joined the radical nationalists on their trips to Sweden to attend rock concerts and nationalist demonstrations.

Those who were both participants of the radical nationalist underground and football supporters, were usually not ideologically extreme as many other radical nationalists, and they did not support militant strategies. The radical nationalists who had double loyalties, both to their club and to the radical nationalist underground, are known to be fond of fighting, at the same time as they do not approve of arson attacks and other forms of more serious violence.

The skinheads who are members of the football club accept each other, and mostly maintain a friendly tone, even though some of them are loyal to the radical nationalist underground, whereas others have ties to Blitz and the anti-Fascist groups. The contradictions between the two factions first became problematic when the supporters who were also participants of the radical nationalist underground took their more

extreme fellows from the underground to parties held by the supporter club. Other supporters became angry, and demanded that the radical nationalists leave.

These particulars are famous both for their songs and their loyal support of the team regardless of the outcome of the matches. A few years ago, they were criticised for being violent and making racist statements. All the supporters are local patriots. Angry letters from these people was previously often published in *Dagbladet*, a Norwegian tabloid. They complained about other supporter clubs who use English lyrics in their songs, instead of Norwegian ones. There are no immigrants in the supporter club. I asked about this once, and the boy I asked burst out laughing, 'no immigrants, of course not'. IN 1993-1994, there were many incidents during football matches, where this supporter club have shouted racist remarks at black players on other football teams. Some of their songs have also had a racist content, such as 'Ali doesn't like hot-dogs'. 'Ali' here symbolised another Oslo football team, their main adversary.

The head of the supporter club tried to stop the racist talk and cut down on violence. The racist songs therefore disappeared in 1995. Members are no longer seen wearing white power T-shirts, as some of them did previously. By contrast, some of the anti-racist supporters wear anti-racist T-shirts. This is the result of an anti-racist campaign within the club. Thus, the nationalist members of the club still take part, but no longer display their political orientation openly. It seems that their primary loyalty to the club is most important. They remain despite the fact that the club has taken a stand against their racism. This holds, despite the football team today having three immigrants among its most high profile players, one of whom is often portrayed as the hero of the team.

### 3.6 Mid-1990s: Nationalist Rock Radio and MC Fellows

Several of the leading figures in the underground have friends within outlaw MC clubs. There are thus also links between the biker subculture and the radical nationalist underground. This once led to public speculation as to whether one of these persons was involved in the bombing of a MC club. Such thought was ungrounded. However, some bikers and some radical nationalists have collaborated, for example in 1993-94, when the nationalist rock radio station in Oslo was run by a biker. The radical nationalists wanted to turn *Radio Nite Rocket*, as it was called, into their radio station. However, on the few occasions they were allowed on the air, the DJ did not let them say much. On the other hand, the reporter let young sympathisers say their opinion on the phone. As the radio station was attacked by anarchists several times during 1993-1994, the reporter began to speak more and more in favour of the radical nationalists. The paramilitary group Viking, which was organised in 1995, was originally based on a group of friends who used to gather at *Radio Nite Rocket*. When Eirik Solheim, a young radical nationalist found out about the station and the circle of friends that met there, he assumed leadership of the group, and soon provided it with more discipline.

The main tattoo artist of the radical nationalists is also a biker. He gives a 'Nazi discount' to radical nationalists. There are many similarities between the images of the two subcultures.<sup>116</sup> Both subcultures portray a macho image, and use militant and often politically extreme symbols. The bikers often go further along this line than the radical nationalists do. This is probably because the bikers do not openly support any political party. They are merely fond of potent symbols. Some bikers even use the swastika, whereas in 1993-1994 the radical nationalists had agreed not to wear this symbol in public. They used it in their fanzines, but not on their jackets. Later, several younger activists have started to use the symbol during Nazi-marches or concerts.

<sup>116</sup> For a description of central aspects of Norwegian MC subculture, see Andersen (1999).

### 3.7 The Mid-1990s: Paramilitary Groups

In 1994-1995, the paramilitary nationalist group *Viking* emerged, and provided the underground with a new profile, defined by militarist discipline, and various training activities, including weapons training, march training and camouflage training in the woods. These para-militarists view drunken skinheads as a political pariah. The group was at its peak during 1995-1996, when it had a relatively high amount of members, and several local divisions. By 1998, there were only 20 active members within the *Viking Oslo* group. In addition, there are local groups in Hønefoss, Nittedal, Moss, and Ålesund.

The Norwegian version of *Blood & Honour* (the fanzine of the militant hooligans in *Combat 18* in England) was first published in 1995. The English mother group formally approved of the Norwegian faction. It is strictly organised, with commanders and subcommander. It supports so-called *Combat 18* methods, which means the use of weapons and terror. Paradoxically, in 1993-1994 its Norwegian leader, Per Øyvind Monge, had a non-militant profile, and said that he did not support such methods. His only involvement with violence was street fights.

### 3.8 The Late 1990s: Militant Cells and Bomb Attacks

During the mid-1990s, there was a resurgence of attacks of terror which were almost as serious as the ones perpetrated between the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. However, a new feature in the mid-1990s was that the violent acts were carried out by activists who had organised themselves in militant cells, which were formed especially in order to carry out acts of political violence and terror. Each cell had only three or four members. The reason why the membership count was kept low was that this ensured the secrecy of the organisation and actions of these cells. The emergence of militant and secretive organised cells was a change of profile in comparison with the early 1990s. The early 1990s was the period that may have been the most unorganised within the underground. It was also marked by street violence rather than organised underground violence.

In 1994-1995, the militant cells *AntiAntifa* and the *Einsatz* group emerged. A few years later the name *Hvit Arisk Terror* - HAT (White Aryan Terror) - was used in connection with several acts in the Oslo area. As nobody knows for sure who the members of the militant cells are, these cells often openly take responsibility for their acts of terror. For instance, *Væpnede ariske celler/VAC* (Armed Aryan Cells) claimed responsibility for a bombing against the anarchist Blitz house. Similarly, HAT took responsibility for blowing up the mailbox of the Chief of Police, as well as smashing the windows of her house, and spraying her garage with "*husk AKV*" ("remember AKV"). AKV is the abbreviation for *Aker Kulturverksted*<sup>117</sup> (Aker Cultural Workshop; a warehouse rented for a short period by the radical nationalists until militant anti-Fascists forced the owner of the building to evict them. They threatened to destroy the building otherwise). VAC is a breakaway faction from HAT. One person from HAT is also a member of VAC. According to a leading activist, HAT consists of 3-4 cells, which have minor joint contact. The name HAT is used every time they commit an act of violence. The founders of HAT therefore do not always have control over the use of the name. For example, on one occasion, several young participants broke the windows of a community house in Nittedal, and later phoned *Fritt Forum* to inform them that HAT

<sup>117</sup> All of the activists took part in the AKV project, except for a few football supporters. They were denied because the guard at their pub had denied some radical nationalists because they wore swastika badges on their jackets.

was responsible for the action. These young boys were criticised by core activists, who told them that one did not use the *HAT* name for childish and unnecessary actions such as this.

Younger activists have also used a militant group name for their own purposes in Sweden. According to Lööw (1995), the Gothenburg division of *Nordiska Rikspartiet* (The Nordic Reich's Party) continued their activities after many members left the party because of disruptive court cases in 1985-87. The remaining members wanted to gather 'race-conscious whites' and began a network and a journal called Storm. The group did not call itself anything in particular, they only referred to themselves as people from different fronts. One day some of the members handed out a leaflet where the name White Aryan Resistance (VAM) appeared for the first time. When this name was launched by the public press, the group took this name as their own. The network received enormous media coverage.

As a consequence, young delinquent gang members with racist ideas began to adopt the VAM name for their own purposes. Lööw calls these unattached young people who used the VAM label, but were still unknown to the core of VAM as 'racist freelancers'. She writes that they created a problem for the VAM core members because they were unable to control these young people. The core members complain that 'certain maniacs' operate in the name of the network even though the core has not accepted them as members. There are individuals with racist ideas who even start their own groups before they contact the network.

### 3.9 Links between Radical Nationalists and Paganists

People often ask whether there are any links between Satanists and radical nationalists. In his book on American skinheads, Hamm (1993:198) maintains that there is no evidence for the presumed satanic influence of so-called hate groups when one examines these groups. Several of these groups use 'bizarre forms of Christian fundamentalism as moral justification for their political violence. But there has never been an American hate group organised around the principle of Satanism. ... Nor is there any evidence that Satanism has been practised by skinheads in other countries, including Great Britain.' This is not quite true of the Norwegian scene. Kaplan (1998:111) says that the connection between Odinism, National Socialism, and Satanism came to light with the case of Varg Vikernes, 'popularly identified as Europe's best known denizen of the satanic underground'.

Vikernes, and his group *Norwegian Heathen Movement*, function on the fringe of the radical nationalist underground. Vikernes has been imprisoned for the murder of a black metal musician with whom he earlier collaborated. He is currently serving his sentence in Trondheim. Several core members of the underground have collaborated with Vikernes, including Ole Krogstad and Tom Kimmo Eiternes. The latter founded *Norsk Hedensk Front* with Vikernes. *Norsk Hedensk Ungdom* emerged in 1997. According to a leading radical nationalist, most of its members live in southern Norway. However, the headquarters of the group has been moved to Sweden. According to a leading radical nationalist, Tom Kimmo Eiternes was excluded by Vikernes after Vikernes received copies of letters written by Eiternes to a police officer, giving her information about some of the members of the underground.

Except for these personal ties, there is no real link between the Satanist scene and the radical nationalist underground. However, there are death metal bands that distribute their CDs through the nationalist monthly *Fritt Forum*. Some Satanists have also joined the radical nationalist underground, but have not brought their Satanist ideology with



them. Instead they say that they have discarded this ideology, which was part of a more immature phase of their lives.

There have been some tensions between the few Christians within the radical nationalist underground and activists who previously were Satanists. Among the ex-Satanists, there are still some who listen to death metal music, and who are also fascinated by the Satanist mythology. These have chosen to play down their sympathies because there is one Christian radical nationalist who becomes so angry with them, that they do not want to annoy him any more. In the eyes of this radical nationalist, Satanism represents chaos and cruelty; two qualities which are the very opposite of his ideals. In the eyes of another leading radical nationalist, the Satanists in Norway are not 'serious'. He consequently labels them 'kids who do not know what they are doing'. This remark is a reference especially to the many church fires carried out by Satanist youths in the early and mid-1990s. Several Satanists in Norway pursued a more extreme line than the radical nationalists. No radical nationalist would say that he celebrates evil (as some Satanist youths interviewed by a newspaper did). On the contrary, they celebrate orderliness and traditional institutions like the family.

### 3.10 'Anti-Immigrant' Parties and Organisations

The various nationalist parties and anti-immigration organisations which the radical nationalists have occasional contact with can be considered 'significant others'. These organisations and parties are run by older people. Many of these people had been members of the resistance during World War II. In other words, their background is within the fight against Nazis. However, many of these older people define themselves strongly in nationalist terms, and support a very restrictive immigration policy. Some of them refer to the immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers who have come to Norway since the 1960s as a new occupation of Norway. Several of these older nationalist politicians are interested in collaborating with young radical nationalists to a certain extent. However, few of them want to be publicly associated with the militant and raucous actions of these young people. These elders have a greater interest in maintaining their legitimacy in the public, so that they can participate in public debates, and spread their message through conventional channels. The reason why some of them have entered into agreements with the young radicals despite the need for legitimacy is that these people have been seriously physically wounded by anti-Fascists who have attacked them when they have given their public speeches. As a result, some of them want the young radical nationalists to act as their body-guards when they give such speeches.

One organisation of this kind is *Den Norske Forening* (DNF - the Norwegian Union), which consists of people from different parties on the right. They are all against immigration. In March 1994, the radical nationalists were invited to participate at a DNF meeting held by one of the organisation's local groups. It was agreed that the young and the old should contribute to a kind of mutual exchange, where the young activists would receive telefaxes and person-to-person from their older sponsors. They were to reciprocate by giving the elders physical backup at their political rallies. The elders were also interested in improving the activists' forms of communication, so that the activists quickly could gather during acute situations when militant anti-Fascists attacked them.

Some of these elders, who had been severely attacked by anti-Fascists several times, said they now fully supported the strategy of counter-violence. They also encouraged the activists to strategically build up local contact networks of like-minded people, and they asked the younger activists whether they had an overview of immigrants and anti-

racists living in their neighbourhood. The young radical nationalists were not eager to answer these questions. Following the meeting, they also made fun of the idea of building local networks.

There have been many conflicts between the younger and older nationalists. The older ones do not like the young radicals' use of symbols that provide associations to the German Nazis during the Second World War. In 1993-1994, the young radical nationalists agreed, as mentioned, not to wear the swastika, but they used symbols like the allodian rune. Neither did the elders approve of the skinhead uniform. Seemingly, the elders wanted the activists to act as well-dressed lifeguards. They argued that in order to gain more support, there was a need to act in a non-provocational fashion in order to gain. However, the young activists believed that since they did not use the swastika, there should be no problem with their appearance. They stressed that they were unwilling to change their way of dressing. At the meeting in 1994, the older participants from DNF agreed to accept the style of the young activists.

The DNF members themselves are not very eager for this interchange to become known. According to one leading radical nationalist, these elders are more concerned with hiding their contacts and sponsoring of communication equipment than saying what they stand for themselves. Such statements from young radical activists in response to older sponsors' public denial of contact have been made many times previously.

In the late 1990s, young people from the radical nationalist underground have once more become attached to the few far-right parliamentary parties. In 1995, young members from the paramilitary Viking group joined the youth division of *Fremskrittspartiet* (the Progress Party). When this was reported in the newspapers as a Nazi infiltration of the party, the party decided to force these young people out. This party has come under fire from the mass media on many occasions because some of its most high profile politicians have attended meetings organised by anti-immigrant organisations like DNF.

However, far-right parties with less support than the Progress Party, have let the young radical nationalists take part in their work more publicly. Both *Fedrelandspartiet* (Party of the Fatherland) and *Hvit Valgallianse* (White Election Alliance) have organised separate youth divisions, where many of the young radical nationalists are members. The latter party even includes some of the more high profile ZOG adherents from the radical nationalist underground. Even so, this party is too extreme for some of the young radical nationalists, as its programme included a paragraph that said that adopted children should be sterilised. Some of the females in the radical nationalist underground found this paragraph particularly contemptible.

Many radical nationalists have also joined the organisation *FMI* (The Folk's Movement against Immigration). FMI held its annual general meeting in Førde in July 1998. The organisation voted to keep secret its accounts, its annual report, and its list of members. In addition, all of the members are videotaped at the meetings. These precautions have been taken so is that the organisation can avoid the problem of snitches, infiltrators and police informants.

### 3.11 1996: An Attempt to Unite Forces

In 1996, another attempt to unite all of the groups was made. This new organisation was named *Forenede Nasjonalister* (United Nationalists). Its leader, Kjell Tore Vogtsland, had been a member of *Norsk Front* in the 1980s. He then spent several years away from the underground, until he reappeared at a meeting of *Fedrelandspartiet* in Skudneshavn

in western Norway in 1996. He then said that he wanted to form a union for all of the minor groups. He was originally joined by a group of twenty friends from Telemark. The attempt to put together a joint platform for all of the groups failed. For a while *Forenede Nasjonalister* shared a postbox with Knut Westland (head of *Norges Patriotiske Enhetsparti* - Norwegian Patriotic United Party). The group tried to unite the others by mailing out letters, asking people to appoint local contact persons, and then to work for a common platform. They did not get many answers. Then the group was paralysed as a consequence of the Police Security Service case of 1997. This branch of the police filed charges against the group because some of its members had talked about the need to murder leading authorities, including politicians, priests, and researchers, while the members were on a weekend trip. The case was finally dismissed because the police failed to find any evidence. However, they sentenced some local youths for holding explosives in safekeeping.

### 3.12 Rhetorical Group Names

If we present a survey of all these different groups as the 'Nazi-network' in Norway it gives an overwhelming impression. The Norwegian radical nationalist underground is not a very large one, though. In fact, many people belong to several groups, so there is extensive overlapping of membership. Within the underground, it is usually not very important which group an individual belongs to. The main reason groups are given names is to receive public attention, except for more secretive ideological groups like *Zorn 88*, which mostly stays out of the public eye.

The skinheads are generally the most poorly organised participants of the underground movement. It is not easy to determine who is a 'member' or not. At first, nobody would say that he was a 'member' of *Bootboys*. The founder of *Bootboys* stated that it was not possible to be a member of a skinhead group, since skinheads are against strict organisations. Factions of *Bootboys* have later emerged which place much more emphasis on strong leadership and hierarchical organisation, as is the case with *Bootboys Oslo*.

During 1993-1994, group names were of less importance than they were in 1998. It did not make much of a difference whether a person was part of *Ariske Brødre* or with *Bootboys*. At the time, they usually labelled each other according to where they lived, rather than according to the group identity. For example, they might say that 'those from Hokksund and from Tønsberg were present that evening', rather than saying that the *Ariske Brødre* and the *Bootboys* were present.

In other words, the participants of the radical nationalist underground use group names in order to obtain attention, to appear like a movement which is made up of a wide variety of groups. On the other hand, they do not use group names when they talk to each other, which is a practice sometimes used for strategic reasons by participants of the radical nationalist underground. By not referring to each other in terms of group names, police officers can never claim that an organisation really exists. This makes it impossible to convict the activists of belonging to organisations which support or organise militant actions directed at state authorities. As no membership lists exist and the activists never address each other using their organisational belonging, there are no grounds for conviction.

Groups like *Zorn 88* behave like underground movements, following Norwegian sociologist (Aubert 1965). Most of their members do not know each other. They use aliases, and always use these aliases when they call each other. There are no membership lists, and the number of members in the organisation is shrouded in secrecy.

### 3.13 Number and Location of Participants

The activists come from all over Norway. Most of them come from densely populated areas with few public services in eastern Norway. Some of them live in the suburbs of Oslo. In practice, those who live at the same place form a local cell. Such local cells usually consist of two or three activists. In addition the cells have drop-ins; i.e. people who stop by on occasion. The number of drop-ins may vary from three or four to ten to fifteen. The drop-ins are either merely curious about the underground or identify with it more fully, but either do not want or do not have the opportunity to participate frequently. The drop-ins are usually the activists' friends in the neighbourhood, who to some extent sympathise politically, but do not participate frequently.

In addition to the core groups located in eastern Norway, there are smaller cells of radical nationalists in other parts of Norway. Most of them are in contact with the core by letter and phone. Such satellite groups often move to Oslo and the surrounding cells, to participate with the core activists for a period. In 1993-1994, there were about six or seven local cells in eastern Norway. At the time, the core was made up of about thirty boys. 70-80 people were sympathisers, drop-ins. Hundreds of young boys supported the scene, but had not entered it. The sympathisers write letters to and ask for pamphlets, T-shirts and so on, or they may express their views on the nationalist rock radio station. About 900 young people order CDs or other material from *NorEffekt*, the distribution network of *Fritt Forum*.

The sympathisers are mainly younger than the core activists. Core activists are aged 20-40, whereas sympathisers are often as young as 13. In 1993, most of the active participants were aged 20-30. About 40 participants frequented the underground regularly. In 1995, the underground grew considerably, so that its number of active participants grew to about 80. According to the leader of *Bootboys*, the highest number of people that have gathered simultaneously is 130. This occurred at a white power concert which was held on New Year's Eve 1995. The number of teenagers has increased in 1995 and 1996. According to the most central activists, this age group now constitutes the largest part of the underground. However, many of these young people are not considered activists, as they are too loosely involved with the underground. The number of core activists is seldom more than 40. The number of tag-alongs, on the other hand, varies much more. Periods with almost no activity and few participants will often be followed by big events which lead to an increase in the number of participants. In 1999, about 100 individuals were still associated with the scene, but the number of active members was still only 30-40.

### 3.14 Fanzines

Many of the activists never read any books. However, they read newspapers, as well as fanzines published by activists within the underground. These fanzines have an important impact in that they make up the syllabus for ideological schooling (see 'Living out our Ethnic Instincts', <Fangen, 1998>). The fanzines discuss crucial issues for the activists: strategy, presentation of new groups and their activities, discussions of whether they really are National Socialists or not, and if so, in what sense. The fanzines also make games of media coverage of their activities. They also make humorous comments on the anti-racists' attempts to fight them. At times they use the same tactics as the anti-racists. For example, when the different groups were charted in a book published by the Anti-Racist Centre in Oslo, they responded by printing a survey of all the links between communist groups in Norway. The fanzines thus serve to build up and strengthen the joint identity of the activists, as it gives strong us-them versions of the

underground world of these activists in relation to mainstream culture, and their adversaries.

In 1993-1994, *Bootboys*, *Ung Front*, *Ragnarok* and the more 'serious' monthly *Fritt Forum* were first published. The fanzines mirror the different orientations in the underground from militant National Socialism, blending Viking mythology with an anti-Semitic content (*Einherjer*, *Ragnarok*, *Patrioten*), militant nationalism (*Viking*) to non-militant nationalism (*Fritt Forum* - although it interviews activists in militant groups, and distribute CDs with a National Socialist content). Other fanzines have been defined as skinhead fanzines (*Bootboys* and *Stomping ground*) or anti-immigration-policy news magazines (*Rapport*). *Einherjer*, *Viking*, *Rapport*, *Patrioten*, and the Norwegian version of *The Order*, are some of the fanzines that have been published in 1995-98.

### 3.15 International Connections

Some of the Swedish organisations have been built up in collaboration with Norwegian activists. For example, *Bevara Sverige Svenskt* (Keep Sweden Swedish) was formed in 1984-1985 in collaboration with the former couple Bitten Katrine Lunde and Tor Petter Hadland, who used to be married.

According to one of the Norwegian core activists, the Norwegians are highly respected among German neo-Nazis, and are considered more 'serious' and better organised than many of the major German neo-Nazi groups. In the 1980s, German radical nationalist party NDP (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*), as mentioned earlier, printed leaflets for Norwegian NDU (National Democratic Youths). In general, Norwegian radical nationalists have stronger ties to their fellows in England and Sweden, because of the linguistic barrier when talking with Germans.

A few Norwegian activists are known abroad as militants, as some serious acts of violence have been committed such as murder or bombing. However, not all of the international scene sees bombings as a measure of seriousness. Organisational abilities and ideological conviction are often more important factors. There are individuals in the Norwegian radical nationalist underground who have good reputations in terms of these abilities.

On the other hand, Norwegian activists have also several times been criticised by their fellows from other countries for being unserious. In 1993-1994, some of the skinhead activists had a relaxed attitude towards the question of international recognition. They felt no need to be considered 'serious'. They found it pleasant to meet fellows from abroad and have a few beers and go to concerts and parties together. Meanwhile, an increasing number of activists on the Norwegian scene have tried to build up a more 'serious' profile. As a result, they have gained more respect from the international scene.

The Norwegian activists have had much contact with Swedish participants. They have especially close ties to the activists who publish the fanzine *Nordland*. They usually join the Swedes when they organise demonstrations, e.g. on 30 November, when the Swedes celebrate the birth of the warrior king, Karl XII. The Swedish activists have accorded the Norwegian activists increasing respect during the past five years. One sign of this was that some of the Norwegian activists were invited to an *Anti-Antifa* meeting in 1995, and were, according to a leading Norwegian activist, warmly welcomed.

As is the case in Norway, there are Swedish skinheads who like to party a great deal, and are unwilling to exercise. On the other hand, there are others who focus on physical training, discipline, and ideological schooling. In general, the Swedes are more ideologically extreme than the Norwegians are. They also used to be more disciplined.

In the late 1990s, however, several Norwegian activists came into high regard because of their discipline and organisational abilities. The ones who are respected among the Norwegians are those who consciously work in the background, building up networks (through computer-system), buying weapons, and reading serious literature. The Norwegians are invited to demonstrations and concerts, and have no difficulty finding places to spend the night.

During the past few years, some Swedish activists have committed serious violent acts. Among these acts is the murder of a police officer. The occurrence of such actions in Sweden might imply that the radical nationalists there constitute a much stronger and more scrupulous network than the one we have in Norway. Yet, it might be pointless to draw a clear line between Norway and Sweden in this regard, as there is much collaboration across the boarder, and some of the most militant and ideologically convicted among the Norwegian activists operate to a huge extent via their contacts in Sweden. The reason why they choose Sweden as their arena is probably that this kind of movement has better conditions in Sweden than in Norway. Since Sweden was neutral during the Second World War, no trials about treason were held there. This might be one possible reason why there seems to be more ideologically convicted national socialists there than in Norway, and why these people do not need to rewrite and justify their views to such a great extent as the Norwegian radical nationalists do.

### 3.16 Development of the Underground into the Future

During recent years, radical nationalist groups have emerged in Bergen and other bigger communities in Norway. According to one of the leading figures, the underground is growing gradually, and now has about 100 active individuals. He estimates that for every 10 clients *NorEffekt* has, there is one active member. He believes that there will be a generational shift within the Norwegian far right within the next 5-10 years. Parties and organisations like *Fedrelandspartiet*, *Den Norske Forening*, *FMI*, and so forth will gradually dissolve, as their leaders become too old or die. These groups will thus be taken over by people who are now in their 30s and 40s. In other words, the radical nationalist underground, will take over. They are more 'radical' as they term it, and will have more collaboration with French and German parties like *Front Nationale* and *NPD*. They will probably join the network of nationalist parties in Europe called *EuroNat*. Paradoxically, self-declared nationalists all over Europe seems to develop into one of the parties that practice the most international political practice. According to this leading activist, the barrier against violence will also decline. We already find that the more established parties of the far right in Europe, such as the above-mentioned ones are becoming less restrictive against skinhead music, for example. They probably have realised that there is a large recruitment base among the young 'radicals'. We then see that parties which recruit among broad segments of the population, such as France's *Front National*<sup>118</sup>, take the step into a more extreme line of action.

This is the future as one leading activist sees it. Only time will tell whether this is an accurate prediction. Tore Bjørgo has argued that the Norwegian underground is almost removed as a result of attempts to fight it during the past few years. There has indeed been less activity during the late 1990s in comparison with the mid-1990s. However, new groups have emerged during the last few years, and some activists have also carried out serious acts of violence. At present, some of the core activists are in prison, but there are still others who are active. Heléne Lööw has argued (in the newspaper

<sup>118</sup> Le Pen, the leader of *Front National* has been convicted twice of playing down the Holocaust.

*Sydsvenskan* on 19 February 1996) that the Swedish movement no longer has ups and downs. It shows a steady increase.

In many European countries, right-wing and radical nationalist groups and parties are gaining support at present. The increasing movement of people across national boundaries tends to increase xenophobic sentiments in larger segments of the population. New links have also emerged between radical nationalist groups across the borders. Norwegian radical nationalists thus not only co-operate with high profile groups in the 'white power' movement in other countries. Some of them have also made contact with ethnic nationalist groups as well as Muslim fundamentalists. In light of these trends, and the serious consequences such links might have, it is clear that it will be necessary to study these groups continuously, and their changes in profile in the years to come.

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