'Any Irish MCs out there?'

Negotiating class, masculinity and ethnicity in the virtual Irish rap scene.

Student Name: Femke Vandenberg
Student Number: 426014

Supervisor: Julian Schaap

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Masters Thesis
June 12th 2017

Abstract

For the white working class male, recent developments in Western society have caused a surge in notions of wounded masculinity and the fragile state of whiteness. Advancements in technology, the widespread causes of globalisation and the acceleration of deindustrialization have left the white working class male in a state of crisis. Unemployment among the white working class male is at an all-time high, and with a political system that fails to acknowledge them, it is the identity of this group that is being precluded. Challenges to the traditional perception of masculinity, whiteness and working class culture are resulting in the loss of identity of the white, working-class male.

Broad consensus exists within sociology that culture is a key element of the construction of identity. Music is a crucial element in developing friendships and common bonds and can provide a sense of subjective and collective identity for youths. Through the formation of subcultures, youths can use music to create bonds and collectively come to terms with their social circumstances.

The aim of this thesis is to uncover the relationship between the formation of postmodern subcultures and the loss of identity of the white working class male. By examining the case of the Irish MCs, an online rap scene, its purpose is to determine how the subculture is used to create a sense of community and maintain notions of masculinity and ethnicity. In doing this its hope is to obtain a better understanding of these youths, the working class position today, and the role that culture plays in identity formation.

Through the use of quantitative and qualitative content analysis of YouTube comments (n=2230), this thesis will analyse the boundary formation of this group. It will examine who and what these youths positively and negatively mark and what they leave unmarked. It will look into what auxiliary characteristics are required to be an 'in' member, and interpret the aspects of the subcultural capital needed. In researching the boundary work of the scene, it aims to get a deeper understanding of the collective identity of this group, in doing so exposing the relationship between the subculture and the class position of its members.

From the research, it emerges that there is a strong correlation between the formation of the scene and the present state of the white working class male. It demonstrates that in contrast to the members of traditional subcultures – who celebrated the working class condition and rebelled against 'selling-out' and popular culture – members of this group applaud commercialisation and discard working class values. Through the MCs positive marking of the commercial music industry and the negative marking of the working class condition, the analysis reveals that these youths express a longing to escape their working class position.

Keywords: class; masculinity; whiteness; boundary work; Irish rap; YouTube

Table of Content

1. Introduction

In the winter of 2014 a four-minute YouTube video clip of a young white male, dressed in a tracksuit, sitting at a bus stop, rapping along to what can only be called a standard pop song, went viral. Within two days the track had received over two million views through shares on Facebook (O'Sullivan, 2016). The artist was an unknown sixteen-year-old, Jack Lynch, from the city of Limerick, in the Republic of Ireland. The rap was a form of freestyle – improvised lyrics, made up on the spot, recited in accordance with the timing of a backing track (Forman & Neal, 2004). Jack Lynch, or MC Lynchy as he is more readily known among his online followers, is the most prominent figure in the Irish MC scene.

The acronym MC, coming from the term "Master of Ceremony", is traditionally used to describe the individual who hosts gatherings. They are the ones responsible for livening up the audience and introducing performers (Rhodes, 1993). Today there is a new angle to the term MC referring to the act of rapping. MCs perform in rap battles, engaging in live competitions using forms of lyrical delivery, skill and wit to distribute personal insults, move the audience and defeat their opponents (Cutler, 2014). While the Irish MCs gravitate towards the principles of battle – engaging in strong rivalry between members – there is a distinct difference: the Irish MC scene operates solely online. With no live concerts or appearances, the artists promote their music by posting videos online, primarily through the music sharing site YouTube and partly through social media sites such as Facebook. The rest of the scene is made up of the fan base. By writing in the comment section under the posted videos the fans partake in the scene, commenting on the performance or engaging in dialogue with other members.

In examining the Irish MCs videos, one is initially struck by a number of prominent features. At first glance, the scene seems to be exclusively white, with all the artists having an Irish accent. Secondly, one gets the impression that it is a male orientated group, as all the artists and the majority of the commentators are young men. Finally, due to the shared sense of style – the signature Adidas tracksuits and the white Nike Air trainers – along with a distinct working class language, one is lead to believe that there is a celebration of lower class values at play.

As sociologists, we do not know much about this group. Today, the young white working class male is left understudied (Sayer, 2005). The white male has invariably been perceived as the privileged group in society, left unmarked, their position taken for granted (Brekhus, 1998; Gallagher, 2004). On top of this is the decrease in class-related research. In

recent times inequality studies have veered away from the study of class structures, replaced by investigations into the unjust positions of women and ethnic minorities (Sayer, 2005).

Facing a different future than their parents due to a changing society – favouring technology over the manufacturing industry, and supporting gender and racially diverse workplaces – it is more relevant than ever to study this group. The working class male is seen to be in a position of crisis, with unemployment reaching all-time highs and the huge drop out rate from school, the young working class male finds himself in a period of increased uncertainty and risk (Nayak, 2003). Against the backdrop of the changing economy and job market, how do these white working class youths construct a sense of identity? What role does culture play?

Thus the research question for this thesis is: To what extent does the rise of the virtual Irish rap scene, where strong symbolic and social boundaries based on class, ethnicity and gender are constructed and maintained, relate to the experienced loss of a masculine, working-class white identity in Irish society?

To answer this research question, this thesis will use a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analyses of the YouTube comments posted by the Irish MC community. To examine how these youths see their current position it will look at how they form boundaries (Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Cerulo, 2002). Who do they consider 'in' members and who is left 'out'. It will closely look into what they positively and negatively mark and what is subsequently left unmarked (Brekhus, 2015). In finding the symbolic and social boundaries of the scene, it hopes to gain a holistic understanding of the subculture and clarify how these youths use it to negotiate their identity struggles.

This thesis consists of five chapters, each chapter contributing to the answering of the research question at hand. The next chapter, chapter 2, is composed of the theoretical framework for this thesis; it will review the existing literature. It is divided into three subchapters. Section one, *The Redundant Class* (2.1), provides an insight into the current situation of the working class. Section two, *Culture to the Rescue* (2.2) looks into how music can provide a tool for constructing communities and generating friendships. It looks into the formation of subcultures, their demise and their current position. Section three is called *Constructing Identity* (2.3). It deals with identity formation, delving into the previous literature on the construction of identity and the more recent notions of authenticity. The chapter concludes with a subsection on boundary work.

Chapter 3 considers the methodology used in gathering and analysing the data for this research. Here the methodological framework is introduced, including the case study at hand.

It presents the qualitative and quantitative methodology used in this thesis and discusses the sample and the manner it was attained. It also gives an explanation of the coding process and looks into the dimensions and sub-dimensions chosen.

Chapter 4 is the results section where the findings of the research are laid out. It is divided into two subchapters *Subcultural Capital* and *Auxiliary Characteristics*. The first section deals with the boundaries of the scene in relation to the music, style and personality traits. It looks at the non-inherent characteristics that one needs to be part of the scene. The second section presents the internal characteristics required to be an 'in' member of the group; the necessary gender, race and class.

This thesis then concludes with chapter 5. Here a summary of the findings is presented and related to the theory discussed in Chapter 2. An overall conclusion is drawn and the limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.

2.Theory

2.1 The Redundant Class

In recent times the study of class has been left on the sidelines, pushed there by 'more pressing' inequalities such as gender, race and sexuality (Edgell, 1993). Given their position of relative neglect before this point, the transition to look into areas such as feminism and anti-racism was in one way a logical one. This dramatic shift of inequality studies in the social sciences coincided with the changing political landscape of the 1980's (Sayer, 2005). The rise of the conservatives, lead by Margret Thatcher (UK) and Ronald Reagan (US) brought with it a new stream of neo-liberal politics. Mounted on ideas of meritocracy and individualization, they had ambitions of suspending societal thinking regarding class (Jones, 2011). While they succeeded in devaluing the term 'class' in relation to relevance and power, they did not manage to reduce the economic inequalities of society. For the working class high modernity brought with it a time of extreme uncertainty, insecurity and risk. Due to the consequences of the 2008 financial crises, the collapse of domestic industry and increasing economic inequality, today the white the working class males still has legitimate cause for anxiety. History tells us that populist, right-wing candidates and ideas have always flourished in these conditions, as they offer a simple-sounding solution with little basis in fact. During this last year, we have seen the results of this through the staggering, unforeseen outcomes in both the UK Brexit referendum and across the Atlantic in the American presidential elections. The demographic profiles for Trump and 'Leave voters' look similar – disenfranchised, less educated, white male voters, who turned

out to reject the power of the elites, resulting in an unexpected outcome. These results demonstrate the unease of the white working class male, in need of a new identity.

The main body of this chapter is organised around the loss of identity of the white working class male in a deindustrialized, polarised postmodern age. The first section starts with a brief historical background into deindustrialization and the changing cityscape. It will provide an insight into the current condition of the working class, in terms of gender and ethnicity. It will focus on the loss of masculinity and white identity of the working class and discuss the role of education for working class youths.

Section two objectifies itself around the loss of the working class identity itself. Looking into ideas of recognition and taking into account the consequences of the neo-liberal governments of the 1980's. It will use concepts of symbolic violence to provide a view into the lost identity of the working class (Schwarz, 2016).

2.1.1 Wounded Masculinity & White Fragility

Deindustrialization – the process of economic and social change caused by the reduction of industrial activity or labour – struck the western world in the early 1970's. The significant decrease in manufacturing industry meant the highest unemployment since the 1940's. This unemployment affected the young working class male the most, and with a changing cityscape, there seemed to no longer be a place for them in postmodern society (Bayer, 2009). The 'post-Fordist' capitalist culture that came brought with it a transformation of the labour market. Manufacturing sector jobs were at an all time low with the industry competing with the new trend of outsourcing manual labour to low-wage countries. For example, products which would have been made in factories in the west were now being shipped off to third world countries to be made there for half the price. Gerd Bayer (2009), goes on to state that "deindustrialization must be seen in the context of a wider strategy in which capital has gone on the offensive against labour … by busting unions or demanding givebacks, depressing wages and cutting benefits"(p.145). Consumerism was on the rise, and it was leaving the young working class behind.

In conjunction with the advancement of capitalism, the 70's brought a rapidly recovering economy and significant advancements in technology. This growth led to the extensive expansion of cities in the UK. In his 1972 paper *Subcultural Conflict and Working-Class Community*, Phil Cohen explains how the labouring class traditionally drew their strengths from kinship and networks of close neighbourhoods. Through tight communities where workplace and peers were connected, they formed a close unity. However, due to

deindustrialization and the change in the city space, their neighbourhoods – with its local pub and corner shop – were replaced by extremely densely populated high rise blocks. The unity of local communities diminished further as people left to move elsewhere. The young people of the time were hit the hardest. With the displacement of their family trade, and lacking the qualifications in the new technology sector, a huge number of young people were left unemployed.

Today, adversely affected by economic change and neglected by mainstream politics and social policy makers the young white working class male finds himself as the new disadvantaged(McDowell, 2003). With the growing gap in educational performance between genders and the huge rise in feminised service sector employment opportunities, being masculine is coming to be seen as a disadvantage rather than an advantage in the labour market (McDowell, 2003). In the past white men had been placed in an unmarked space, unexamined and taken for granted (Brekhus et al., 2010). They were seen as the privileged in society with no need of guidance or support. However, skin colour and hence 'whiteness', like gender, is a socially constructed concept meaning that it fluctuates with time and space. In recent times there has been an increase in the study of whiteness (DiAngelo, 2011; Fine et al., 1997; Frankenberg, 1994; Gallagher, 2004; Hill, 1997); it is no longer seen solely as a position of advantage with many studies also focusing on the negative aspects of whiteness (Robinson, 2000; Roediger, 1991; McDowell, 2003; Newits & Wray, 1997). With these studies, an argument has started stating that white masculinity is in fact in crisis, with the white male now becoming the victim. The rise of liberal leftist thinking and the increasing visibility of ethnic and racial diversity puts the white man's power on the descent. It is the working class who get hit the hardest. With new demands for equal and racially diverse work spaces and the hard working and low-wage ethnic minorities taking low paid service sector jobs, the working class male struggles to compete for work. The displacement of this group, is seen again through the rallying together of white working class males, in the American presidential elections and the Brexit vote. In both cases voting for the extreme option represented a vote against diversity, a vote to close the borders and build up walls.

Liberal and leftist thinking has not only hit the white male in terms of race and ethnicity but also in perception of gender. The rise of women's liberation, with increased feminist accusations of male society, meant that there was a call for a revision of masculine identity in the 21st century (Robinson, 2011). Fintan Walsh, in his 2010 book *Male Trouble Masculinity and the Performance of Crisis* writes "gender could no longer be seen as the problematic

domain exclusive to female subjectivity: masculinity was equally in need of attention" (p.3). The consequence of feminism and women's education saw two implications for the working class male, firstly the number of women in the workplace vastly rose, and secondly, due to advancements in technology, jobs that could once only be done by men could also now be done by women. Bayer (2009, p.145) states:

> "The job losses and downward mobility caused by deindustrialization have emasculated working-class men; this insecurity has coincided with the increasing numbers of women in the workforce and the overall visibility of the feminist movement, which many men have interpreted as another threat to their privileged status in society"

The meaning of masculinity has been rooted in manufacturing work, in jobs such as production, construction and operation of heavy machinery. These roles were essential for the image of the working class male. However, with new mechanisation processes, these men are finding themselves either pushed out of a job by women or ethnic minorities, or working a job that encompasses "self-presentation", "emotional labour" and "customer service" all things that have been associated with women's work (Bayer, 2009). These developments have led to a crisis of masculinity for the working class (Clare, 2000; Walsh, 2010; Macdonald, 2001; Horocks, 1994).

The formation of masculinity is enrooted in the adolescent years. Through influences such as school, peers, family and the parent culture youths form an image of themselves and an identity that coincides with it. The importance of the schooling system in a child's life is not a secret, however, with working class youth it holds a different purpose than solely educational. Scholars and theorists have long thought that the rebellion towards the school system in working class boys is a method undertaken by these youths in preparation for the future labour market (Bayer, 2009). Although the acting out and resistance to partake in school activities may cause lack of concentration and consequential bad grades, it is a crucial element to the developmental process of these boys. Bayer (2009, p.146) goes on to that:

> "In an economy where manufacturing jobs were still relatively plentiful, this socialisation into working-class masculinity was somewhat functional, as the rebelliousness of working-class boys ensured their failure in the educational system and lack of social mobility, while their investment in masculinity…prepared them to embrace a future of manual labour"

Here again, Bayer stresses the importance of the labour market. Throughout their whole lives, working class adolescents are being prepared to work in the manufacturing industry, but with the decline in work in this field, many are left on the sidelines. They act out in school,

developing their masculinity, training for a job that they will most likely never reach. The danger here is that due to the struggle in school, their grades slip and they can't complete the schooling cycle. Education today is crucial, it is assumed to be the key to opportunity, merit and social mobility later in life (Evans, 2006). However, studies show that it is the white working class male who ranks at the bottom for educational attainment (Quinn et al., 2006). These youths are falling behind women and ethnic minority in education and thus the job market (Wigmore, 2016; Nayak, 2003; Stahl, 2014).

Left at the back of the queue, "the new disadvantaged [are] trapped in relationships of dominance and aggression … penalised [by] the public and the private spheres" (McDowell, 2003, p.4). With the pressures of masculinity and the disadvantages that the status brings, young working class men are facing a society which does not support or favour them in any sense.

2.1.2 The Fall of Working Class Identity

The belief that higher education is the crucial element to success in life is a notion which developed with the neoliberal governments that arose in the 1980's (Stahl, 2014). It came with the views of individual merit which prioritised aspiration and competition, focused on qualification and was based on economy. For the Thatcher government of this time, 'good qualifications', equalled a 'good job'. Gareth Stahl (2014) noted in his influential paper *The Affront of the Aspiration Agenda: White Working-Class Male Narratives of 'Ordinariness' in Neoliberal Times* that the working class mentality of apathy, "ordinariness", and "averageness" – not wanting to be the best or the worst at something – did not fit into the new political image. The working class centre their disposition towards 'fitting in', celebrating their culture they do not follow the aspirations of success driven by the current system (Stahl, 2014). During this period, however, working class communities and identities shifted from being something to be proud of to being something to escape. This was a period that Owen Jones (2011) classifies as the "class wars", with the primary battle being against the working class, their values, communities, industry, and institutions (Jones, 2011, p.40). It was Thatcher, and her government's wish to expel the notion of class in all its forms. The concept of class was a dangerous one; in recognising that there was an issue with polarisation and inequality, they would also have to be resolved. This is why she pushed for ideas of meritocracy and individualism, giving the responsibility to the people. "In a new supposedly upward mobile Britain, everyone would aspire to climb the ladder and all those who did not would be responsible for their own failure" (Jones, 2011, p.48).

A system of this forged society is that the dominant class are seen to be entitled to their advantages, due to ideas of merit the dominant can be seen to have earned their position (Sayer, 2010). Piere Bourdieu (1991) wrote that domination always relies on the complicity of the dominated. 'Symbolic power' as he called it maintains its effects through the misrecognition of the subordinate to the power relations of a given field. It is here implied that the dominated group experience their position as natural in society. Building on this Ori Schwarz (2016) writes on the much-discussed topic of 'symbolic violence'. SV1, he states, "consists in all mechanisms, through which the dominated (of capitalism, sexism, colonialism, etc.) contribute to their own subjection through their own desires, emotions, sentiments, bodily reactions, and judgements" (p.2).

With the rise of meritocracy and notions of social mobility increasing in the 1980's there came a new form of symbolic violence (SV2). Schwarz states that SV2 derived from ideas of individuality, evaluation now accrues in singular terms rather than in a collective or a group and hierarchies were justified "by relying on abstract quasi-universal principles of equivalence" (p.5). While with SV1 the dominated are blind to the dominant oppression and feel no shame in sticking to their social roles, in SV2 the dominated believe that their culture is inferior to that of the dominant class and wish to escape it relying on hope, liberal false promises of social mobility and equal opportunity. However, this is a false hope because the position they long for will never be reached. Social mobility for all was in a sense a myth. We are in a time of "symbolic economy of liberal capitalism" (Schwarz, 2016, p.6), here value is not ascribed with categories or goods but with acquired cultural features or as Bourdieu describes it 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984). This is capital gained through life experience; it is measured by inherent characteristics such as style, speech and dress. These are features that without the right background and up bringing one can not just obtain. This once again puts the working class in a dominated position, filled with notions of false equality and opportunity.

Trodden down by neoliberal ideologies and with no sense of social mobility, the working class lost all feelings of identity and social recognition. Recognition, as stated by Andrew Sayer (2005) is the key to an individual's wellbeing. Recourses and goods can only go so far in keeping a social actor happy, to be content one must also feel as though they are recognised. Gestured recognition is closely tied to feelings of self-worth and respect – it is very hard to respect yourself if no one else does. With the new developments in the societal thinking of 'class'– or more precisely the lack of societal thinking towards it – the working class found themselves seriously struggling with this phenomenon. In believing that upper-class lifestyles are obtainable, they set themselves up for inevitable defeat, invariably falling short at the hurdle

only achieving feelings of deficiency and uselessness. In experiencing loss, the working class consequently act out in resentment, and in doing so, they confirm the notions of the dominant classes (ideas that the working class are a lost cause and do not care about bettering themselves) (Sayer, 2010). This, in turn, adds to the negative image of the working class and the cycle continues.

In society, the working class both physically and symbolically have been ignored. With neoliberal governments came the demise of the concept of class; working class culture was tainted, labelled as unacceptable. But with nowhere to go, the working class now just sit in a state of perpetual standby. With fake promises of equality and opportunity the working class dream of moving up in society, but with the countless fails end up feeling more angered and removed. The working class have been stripped of their identity, no longer allowed to celebrate their position and not able to transcend it.

2.2 Culture to the Rescue

Section two starts by looking into how working class youths deal with the oppression and loss of identity put upon them by the prevailing system. It examines the cultural methods that these youths use to come to terms with their social circumstance. The first subsection (2.2.1), *Subcultures*, presents a historical view of subcultural studies, looking at how they help youths forming cohesion and solidarity. It looks into how subcultures create a sense of belonging and group identity for working-class youths who have previously been denied one. It then goes on to examine the role of music in youth culture and its part in identity formation. The first section ends with a brief insight into subcultural 'distinctiveness' and the importance of finding unity in being diverse. The second subsection, *post-subculture*, will then go on to talk about subcultural theories today. What subcultures look like now, and how they have changed with the times. It notes the revision of the ideas of the CCCS and the demise of subcultural thinking due to the expansion of individualism, postmodernism and the internet. This section concludes with an argument for the revival of the term subculture. It contests for old manners of subcultural theory looking at the internet for its new location. To look at the scene where the case study for this thesis takes place the final subsection looks at the medium of the internet as host to virtual communities, focusing on the video sharing platform YouTube.

2.2.1 Subculture

Coinciding with the unrest and uncertainty caused by deindustrialization was the new study of subcultures. Researchers and theorists began to explore subcultures as a means to understand and research youth culture. The leading school that undertook this study was the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Adapting concepts of Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci, the theories formed by the CCCS involving youth culture were stemmed in ideas of social structure and class inequalities. Culture for the original members of CCCS (such as Stuart Hall 1932-2014) was an expression of class position, and subcultures a by-product of the resistance of working class youths. Subcultures came to be seen as symbolic forms of resistance, against hegemony. In his influential paper Subcultures and the meaning of style, Dick Hebdige (1979) states that culture, and hence subcultures are generated in the context of historical events. Subcultures are thus endorsed with the distinct ideologies that rise from these developments; the time and the place. Hebdige writes that the original subcultures – the mods, skinheads, glam rockers and punks – formed in consequence to the changes taking place in post-war Britain. What Hebdige and the other members of the CCCS observed was that the development of these subcultures coincided with the materialisation of deindustrialization in the west.

Graham Murdock (1974) states that:

> "Subcultures are the meaning system and modes of expression developed by groups in particular parts of the social structure in the course of their collective attempts to come to terms with the contradictions of their shared social situation. More particularly subcultures represent the accumulated meanings and means of expression through which groups in subordinate structural positions have attempted to negotiate or oppose the dominant meaning system. Subcultures, therefore, provide a pool of available symbolic resources which particular individuals or groups can draw on in their attempt to make sense of their own specific situation and construct a viable identity". (p.213)

Here Murdock explains that subcultures act as a tool to help members of a particular (generally low) social group come to terms with their situation. By being part of a collective, formed by the subculture, they find strength, support and a medium to express the inequalities placed upon them by the dominant system. The identity that the working class youths of the 1970's lost due to the changes in society – the loss of their jobs and the deprivation of the traditional Neighbourhood – was gained through the agglomeration of a shared sense of style and music. Subcultural scholar Phil Cohen two years before Murdock wrote in his paper *Subcultural Conflict and Working-Class Community* (1972, p.71), "It seems to me that the latent function of subculture is this: to express and resolve, albeit 'magically', the contradictions which remain

hidden or unresolved in the parent culture." Cohen, similarly to Murdock, states here that subcultures have the potential to resolve issues caused by the dominant system. Through style and music, members of the subordinate class can resist the mainstream and form a collective identity, something the current system denies them. Hebdige, a few years later, goes on to further this claim by saying that Punk (one of the later and most studied subcultures of the 70's), formed cohesion and solidarity for working class youths in the sense that it created "a highly structured, visible, tightly bound group identity" (1797, p.79). Through the collective forms of music and style, these adolescents were able to articulate their hegemonic struggle beset by the institutions that oppressed them. Music gave them a voice; they could articulate their conflicts and share it with like-minded people. It was a way to spread a collective feeling and at the same time make themselves heard (Bennett, 2000).

 Music was not only a by-product of subcultures, but it also created them (Williams, 2006). Music is a powerful tool and plays a huge role in the everyday lives of adolescents; it is explicitly linked to the creation of bonds and the generation of friendships. Bourdieu (1984) states, when discussing music in terms of cultural capital, that music is the best cultural product to study regarding identity formation. For him, music taste more so than any other taste can be seen as part of an individual's identity (ibid). If individuals share the same music taste, they will share other similar tastes and characteristics (Brown & Sellen, 2006). People socialise around music, they play music, talk about music, swap, share and create music together. Sharing the same taste in music creates important bonds for youths and in undergoing these interactions they can express who they are (O,Hara & Brown, 2006). According to Simon Firth (1996), when studying music in relation to identity, we should not examine how it reflects its listeners but how it constructs them. Firth states that music has the ability to create a subjective and collective identity. He goes on to say that "Identity is not a thing but a process - an experiential process which is most vividly grasped *as music*. Music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective" (p.110). Thomas Cushman in a similar light wrote that music is "not simply a static cultural object which [is] produced and consumed, but an active code of resistance and a template which [is] used for the formation of new forms of individual and collective identity" (Cushman, 1995;91). Thus, music plays a huge part in developing the unified community needed for subcultures to work.

Not only does music provide a sense of subjective and collective identity for youths but it also provides the crucial element of distinctiveness. Paul Hodhkinson (2016) in his paper *Youth cultures and the rest of life: subcultures, post-subcultures and beyond* addresses the

importance of distinctiveness for subcultures. He quotes Ross Haenfler in saying that "a subculture is a social subgroup distinguishable from mainstream culture by its values, beliefs, symbols, and often, in the case of youth, styles and music" (Hodkinson, 2016, p.634). Subculturalists stand apart from the norm, they go against the parent culture and find unity in being diverse. One of the characteristics of subcultures is that it has clear defined boundaries through which it distinctively establishes 'in' and 'out' members (Becker, 1963). They provided a classification system through shared ideologies and insider understanding. To be an 'in' member of a subculture you have to have the right credentials, you have to have the right taste. Sarah Thornton (1995), expanding theories of Pierre Bourdieu calls this subcultural capital. This she states is capital based on the notions of 'hipness', meaning that to be admitted to the group you have to be familiar with and informed about the group's latest ideas styles and trends. With ambitions of authenticity, subcultural groupings tend to be quite closed being very selective with who is qualified as an 'in' member.

2.2.2 Post-Subculture?
In more recent times there has been a revision of the CCCS's idea of subcultures. Since the 1990's, with the development of postmodern theories, subcultural scholars started to questions the reliability of studying youth culture through fixed structural groupings. Early critics of the traditional form of subcultures (Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Malbon, 1999; Miles, 2000; Readhead, 1993) argued that with the change in the times came porous, undefined boundaries. They thought that young people no longer wanted to be closely associated with one group – style and music genre – but would jump from one to another fluidly. With the new concept of postmodernity, contemporary youth culture studies focused on elements such as fragmentation, flux and fluidity. Muggleton (2000), writes that the breakdown of the theory of subcultures corresponded with the decline of "mass society" (p.12). With no overriding mass culture to resist there is no longer a need for subcultures. Instead of having one prominent culture, postmodern society suggests that there are many, with its consumers having more reflexive and cursive characteristics. According to Muggleton, with the emergence of postmodernism an individual will no longer just have one style and taste, but many. They will celebrate style, fashion and the media rather than resist it. Subculturalists will cease to regard themselves in collective terms, diminishing the ideas of group identification. Due to this, it will be increasingly hard to identify a subculture; they will not name themselves or regard themselves in a collective nature. Where subcultures represented a fixed collective derived from structural determinism, post-subcultures, as they came to be known, reflected individualism and a post-

Ford consumer society (Hodkinson, 2016). New youth culture theories found that these groupings show no structural positions; transcending strata's, cross-cutting between them. Paul Hodkinson (2016, p.631), in his recent paper *Youth cultures and the rest of life: subcultures, post-subcultures and beyond* sums up this new approach to youth culture studies:

> "post-subcultural theories focused on individual young consumers reflexively combining and moving between ephemeral, loosely bounded groupings in the context of an increasingly uncertain, individualised consumer society where the fixed and stable categories of the past were being replaced by more shifting, fluid identities."

With this shift the name subculture was made redundant, and, in its place came concepts of neo-tribes (Bennett, 1999; Maffesoli 1996) and scenes (Bennett & Peterson, 2004).

With the rise of the internet, a huge majority of these scenes are taking place online. The internet and the virtual world that comes with it has been argued to be one of the causal reasons for the demise of subcultures (Bennett & Peterson, 2004; Muggleton, 2000). The internet brought with it an "increasingly all-encompassing culture of media and consumption" (Hodkinson, 2003, p.285), and, like postmodernism, itself takes pleasure in playing on the surface, discarding any depth (Muggleton, 2000). Through it one has access to unlimited information and can experience any number of cultures from anywhere in the world. Hodkinson (2003) writes, "online communities [are] fluid, emphasising that they allow individuals to continually construct and reconstruct unique individual 'portfolios of sociability' in a number of networks with low entry barriers and low opportunity costs" (p.286). The accessibility and anonymity of the internet enhanced notions of neo-tribes and scenes and confirmed the death of subcultural theories. Adolescents with online access had the opportunity to make up their own highly individualised identity and thus abandoned any ideas of collective distinctiveness.

In contrast to this feeling, however, is the theory that the internet instead of leading to the death of subcultures lead to its rebirth. In *'Net.Goth': Internet Communication and (Sub)Cultural Boundaries* Hodkinson (2003) demonstrated the "potential for Internet technology to allow the enforcement and maintenance of (sub)cultural boundaries, rather than their disintegration" (p.293). Hodkinson along with Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner (2003) argue that the internet and its online networks can, in fact, enhance and strengthen social boundaries and groupings just reworked in a new virtual manner. The previously noted perceptions about the internet's ability to erode groupings and collectivised identity was proven to be misleading; Hodkinson verified in his paper about Goth that the internet in this case

actually "consolidated" and "strengthened" the subcultural boundaries. He makes the point that in presuming that the internet is autonomous and entirely accessible, you also make the assumption that everything online is mixed; all music genres and styles are infused equally. However, this is not the case, as a browser of the internet one tends to stick to aspects that one knows; we choose because of existing interests and established habits. Online subcultures too have boundaries. Like the original subcultures, this is an important part, and a vital tool in creating distinctiveness and group autonomy (Hodkison, 2003).

How online subcultures battle the unlimited accessibility of the internet is through subcultural capital. For example, if an internet user stumbles onto an online subculture and does not have the adequate amount of subcultural capital (doesn't have the right background, taste or knowledge) he will not be able to comprehend or appreciate the subcultural music or style entirely. With this, online subcultures can stay autonomous and authentic. As Andy Bennett (2000) makes clear, music taste is closely linked to location, social experience and circumstance. The internet is thus emerging as a new, but highly contested place for subcultures to emerge; subcultures that can exist solely online (Williams, 2006; Kahn & Kellner, 2003). Here by the internet has changed the previous thinking about subcultures.

2.2.3 Virtual Communities

Since the development of the internet in the nineties, we have seen an unanticipated growth in the approaches people take in using it. For example, in recent times there has been a huge surge in user participation. With people from all spectrums posting photos, videos, audio and text onto a variety of online sites. On top of this, there is a growing culture of leaving comments on these posts, contributing to online conversations. Madden et al. in their 2013 paper on the analysis of YouTube comments state that "technology provides affordances but is not prescriptive, and so can be put to uses other than that for which it was originally intended" (p.695). Music sharing sites such as YouTube provide a space for people to upload videos without charge, it also gives a platform where people can leave comments and remarks. However, there are no instructions or prescription on how to then use these facilities. It is these facilities thus that encourage interaction between its users.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the popularity of the social web has dramatically increased as a place for social interaction. Sites that simplify the process of online participation either by facilitating platforms for posting or sharing are referred to as 'Web 2.0' (Madden et al., 2013). There are two kinds of 'Web 2.0' or social websites: activity-focused (focused on the presentation of content such as videos and photos i.e. public sites such as YouTube) and

people-focused (these are user centred sites which contain private profiles and personal information, i.e. Facebook) (Keen & Shiri, 2009). In recent years we have seen a blurring between the two groupings. The two kinds of social website have combined into one, with activity-focused sites now also accompanying personal profiles and people-focused sites providing a space for posting random videos and photos. Where people-focused sites were always dubbed as the ones that held the 'community aspect' activity-focused sites such as YouTube now have the potential to also generate this feeling (Madden et al., 2013).

YouTube developed in 2005, and soon became the largest video sharing tool on the internet. It provides a platform where anyone anywhere can upload a video. It is entirely public and free of charge. These posted videos can then be viewed, rated and commented on by anyone. Whereas it started as a media site which allowed users to upload and share music and videos, it has now grown into something else. It has become a space where people can communicate and exchange ideas, interacting freely with the content and other users. The YouTube comment section is no longer prescribed solely for comments on the posted video but now hosts a place where people can talk about anything, fostering a dialogue that is in many cases completely unrelated (Madden et al., 2013). Patricia Lange (2008) describes the medium of YouTube as a "media circuit", it in itself is not a social network, but rather it supports the creation of one by facilitating and technically mediating social interacting among its users. Because of its lack of barriers and expenses it is an effective tool in connecting like minded people. It can act as a medium to support already existing social networks that found their origin in face to face contact, or has the ability to create new social networks which would not have had the chance to exist without its presence (Lange, 2008). It is these elements that make YouTube the perfect location for an online community.

Youths have been embracing social media sites such as YouTube. With young people accounting for a significant proportion of YouTube audience it is not surprising that this is where they make a significant amount of their social interactions (Chau, 2010). YouTube offers a place where adolescents can create and socialise, providing the ideal location for them to network and make online communities. Wang and Chen (2004) in their paper, *An automated tool for managing interactions in virtual communities*, state:

> "An Internet-based social network can … be considered a virtual community, consisting of characteristics such as: using common language and ease of communication; public space; common interests, values, and goals, persistence of common meaning; use of information technology for interaction, not physical space; overcoming time and space barriers; and using digitized identities as a substitute for physical being'' (p.4)

Wand and Chen allude to online social media sites as "virtual communities", where youths can share common goals and aspirations, confiding in respective values and creating a collective virtual identity. Communities like these are used by youths to meet their social and relational needs (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). They allow adolescents to feel close to peers, no matter where in the world, from the comforts of their own home.

Online sites like YouTube provide the perfect space for new forms of subcultures. They present a platform where youths can collectively express themselves, where they can find strength and support and a medium to voice the hardships placed upon them by the dominant culture. Away from the eyes of the media and with endless possibilities they find opportunity to resist the mainstream and escape the parent culture (Kahn & Douglas, 2003). Clement Chau states that YouTube has five characteristics: 1) Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, 2) Strong support for creating and sharing one's projects, 3) Informal mentorship, 4) belief that contributions matter and 5) A sense of social connection (Chau, 2010). This is why YouTube works so well as a space for the postmodern subculture. It is informal and allows for fluidity; it doesn't require much effort and is less strict than the traditional face to face subcultures. YouTube is free and completely public, so it provides easy access, thus reaching a broad audience, where like-minded youths can easily find one another. They receive mentorship and social connection, which they have lost in the prevailing system. Moreover, youths think they are contributing to something important, they feel like they belong to something, and in doing so receive feelings of recognition.

2.3 Constructing Identity

Section three deals with the study of identity. It looks into modes of identity formation. The first subsection considers notions of authenticity. In recent time authenticity has been used as a new form of capital. It has become an increasingly significant source of dignity, recognition and self-worth. It first looks at the importance of authenticity for the creation and preservation of subcultures. The second subsection then continues by briefly looking into the study of identity, looking at past and present theories, around the concept of identity as a social construct. The final subsection then advances this perception, by examining theories of boundary work, looking at the relationship between identity formation and the process that an individual undergoes in the drawing of social and symbolic boundaries. It touches on theories such as 'othering' and 'social markedness', to portray the significance of boundary work for the identity formation of working class youths.

2.3.1 The Cult of Authenticity

One of the key features of a subculture is the principle of not "selling out" or maintaining authenticity. In other words, staying true to one's self, by "being true to one's emotions, uniqueness, and spontaneity" (Schwarz, 2016, p.8), not compromising one's integrity, morality or principles in exchange for any personal gain. Rupa Huq quotes Roy Shuker (1998) in saying authenticity is "a central concept in the discourses surrounding popular music", defining essential characteristics such as "originality, creativity, sincerity, uniqueness, musicianship, live performance and independent label operations" (Huq, 2006, p.113) as being fundamental features. The concept of authenticity has been widely discussed in subcultural studies, with a majority of them focusing on the relationship of authenticity to one's category identity (Clark 2003; Muggleton 2000; Williams 2006). Category identity according to Wayne Brekhus (2008) is one's social identity in relation to group membership, for example, one's connections to nationality, ethnicity or gender.

Brekhus (2008) in his paper *Trends in the Qualitative Study of Social Identities*, goes to large extents to disclose the importance of authenticity for subcultures. He ties authenticity with the need to present certain traits and qualities, these he calls auxiliary characteristics; the attributes expected to go along with a given identity role (Brekhus, 2008, p.1066). As a member of a subculture, you have to adhere to certain inherent traits and characteristics. These characteristics determine who is an authentic member of the subculture and who isn't. Authenticity can also be linked to subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995), and ideas of 'hipness'; where members have to have the right knowledge of the latest styles and trends of the group. With ambitions of "purity", subcultural groupings tend to be quite closed, being very selective with who qualifies as an 'in' member. Threatened by the assimilation of the mainstream culture, the boundaries of authenticity are put up as a meaningful structure to separate the subculture from commercialization. An example of this would be the 1970's punks. Through their adoption of ripped and painted clothing, and outlandish hair and make up they managed to express views of non-conformity and notions of not selling out. The punks, did not tolerate 'pretenders' or fakes – individuals who adopted the aesthetic style but not the ideologies – calling them 'poseuers'. Claims of authenticity are thus a way of preserving the purity of identity from being diluted by popular culture (Brekhus, 2015, p.121).

For cultural institutions "youthful expressions of alienation and rebellion can be a valuable commodity...the entertainment industry of fashion, music and movies know that there is profit to be made from the extremely valuable and coveted demographic of young consumers" (Moore, 2005, p.231). Cultural industries use the 'cool', 'underground' image of

subcultures to exploit them, converting them into valuable commodities. They take the authenticity, rebelliousness and pure state that subcultures encompass and use those exact traits to draw in a mainstream audience. When the market commandeers a subculture, the style no longer belongs to the original group and access is open to everyone. The subculturalists subsequently feel robbed of the thing that they need the most; the sense of belonging (Encheva, et al., 2013). In the popularising of a counter culture the market dilutes the expression of the original members, they lose their unique collective image and their voice. Blaire makes an interesting point in regards to this; she states that "the industrialisation of music means a shift from active musical production to passive pop consumption, the decline of cultural traditions and community" (Blaire, 1993, p.24). In popularising music, you take away the music's ability to form an active audience. The original traditions and meanings are lost, as well as the ability to attract a community of listeners. The human element of the music – the artistic expression – is taken and substituted for a futile commodity. Taken from the original creators the captivators have little understanding or respect for the subculture's ideologies and origins. Blaire (1993) writes that this is a dangerous position for subcultures, in removing the subculture; from its original context you take away its soul and it ceases to exist. When a subculture is no longer driven by its perceived original members but by a new, capital craving, host, it can no longer be seen as the same entity. The fight against commercialization is thus a real one, as giving into the mainstream would mean handing over the subculture and its assets to the industry. Hence members of a subculture use authenticity to identify legitimate members of the group and shun all notions of 'selling out' or profitable behaviour.

It is thus imperative to be perceived as a legitimate member. One's personal and group identity, has to be authentic. One has to have the appropriate auxiliary characteristics, sharing the same background as the group. One also has to carry the right subcultural capital, maintaining the necessary knowledge of and commitment to the scene. With the danger of being called a "fake", "wannabe", "pretender", "sell-out" and "fraud" so high, authenticity warrants one of the main causes of identity struggles and disputes (Brekus, 2008, 2015). This relationship between identity and authenticity has accordingly been of significant concern in studies regarding identity construction.

2.3.2 The study of Identity
Identity construction has been a central topic in sociological studies since the writings of Herbert Mead in his 1934 paper *Mind, Self & Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*. Mead along with theories such as Goffman (1959, 1963) and Stone (1962) laid

the foundation for identity studies. With these influential writings, the concept that identity is constructed socially was introduced. They considered the self in relation to social contexts and looked at how individuals interact with others in interpersonal relationships to formulate a sense of self (Brekhus, 2008, p.1060). Erving Goffman (1956) states that individuals perform as social actors, we are adaptive and attentive depending on our audience, presenting ourselves strategically. In his later paper on the effects of 'stigma', he shows how a mark of disgrace can affect one's social and personal identity, again demonstrating the social weight of the construction of self. This theory is backed up by writers such as Gregory Stone who during this same period also situated identity in relation to social circumstance. It was their observation of the relationship between the personal identity and the social world that sparked theories on the cognitive sociology of identity (Brekhus, 2015).

Schwartz et al. in their first addition *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* look at identity formation from a social cognitive perspective, stating that identity is a cognitive structure (Schwartz et al., 201, p.55). This means that identity is related to the mental processes of memory, judgment and reasoning in contrast to more emotional motives. They state that "Identity is categorised as a cognitive structure or self-theory, which provides a personal frame of reference for interpreting self-relevant information, solving problems, and making decisions" (p.55). Identity is thus concerned with the act or process of conscious intellectual activity, giving one a personal frame to interpret information and make decisions. Identity is the framework from which one encodes, organises experiences and identifies relevant information; it is how one makes clear one's values, standards and goals. A cognitive perspective assumes that "people play a role in constructing both a sense of who they think they are and the "reality" within which they live" (Schwartz et al., 2011, p.57). Not only is it a conscious construct but it is derived from one's surrounding culture, from one's family, peers and local institutions. This is what makes the study of identity construction so interesting because it can reflect society's categories from the position of the subject studied.

In more recent times qualitative research on social identities has been influenced by forms of Marxist analysis, focusing on politically salient collective identities and studying attributes in relation to an individual's identity construction such as race, class and gender (Brekhus, 2008). The study of the construction of identity can explain why one is opposed to another individual, an ethnic group or culture. Schwartz et al. (201, p.2) state "Identity is a powerful construct. It guides life paths and decisions, allows people to draw strength from their affiliation with social groups and collectives and explains many of the destructive behaviours

that people carry out against members of opposing ethnic, cultural, or national groups." One use the process of categorization and classification to construct a sense of self (Brekhus, 2015). Identity construction works alongside drawing boundaries, defining oneself in relation to distinguishing others. The last section of this chapter deals with this relationship; the formation of identity through boundary work.

2.3.3 Drawing Boundaries to Forge Identity

Brekhus (2015) states "identity work is simultaneously boundary work" (p.113), individuals and groups often make distinctions by defining themselves against others (someone or something). In abstaining, discriminating or distinguishing oneself from something, one makes clear that it is something that is different from them. A group's identity is defined and maintained just as much by what they do as what they do not do. For example, abstainers define themselves through actively choosing not to do or consume something. A good example of a subculture using abstaining as a method of forging identity is the Strait Edge movement. Williams and Copes used this group as their case study in the 2005 paper *How edge are you?*. Strait edge is a subgenre of hard-core punk that arose in direct reaction to the hedonism and excess associated with the punk rock lifestyle. Their philosophy is that one should have strength, pride, dignity, honour and self-respect and thus not engage in activities that are a disgrace to either mind or body. Adherence of this subculture abstain from using alcohol, Tabaco, meat, recreational and prescription drugs, and promiscuous sex. Thus distinguishing themselves from the traditional rock/punk music scenes.

Influential writers such as Emile Durkheim, George Simmel and George Herbert Mead already from the early 20th century wrote on the dimensions of classification. In presenting notions of categorization, they uncovered new theories on the construction of identity. Since this period the study of boundary creation has become an essential element in the social sciences. Karen Cerulo (2002) quotes Eviatar Zerubavel in saying that "we divide reality into islands of meaning". We do this in two ways, lumping and splitting. This she states is how "we partition our social worlds into chunks, deploying strategies for constructing similarities that we group together and strategies for creating differences that we keep apart with mental voids" (p.83). To make sense of our social circumstances, we categorise happenings into sections. We create means and strategies to group things, dividing what is similar to us from what is different from us.

Cerulo (2002) goes on to state that this is a function of the brain. It is a cognitive process where the brain establishes similarities and differences to cluster and group information. For

action to occur, the brain must first make sense of social circumstances by categorising the incoming information. According to Cerulo, the ability to discriminate, categorise and classify is something developed in early childhood, with children gaining the skill of discrimination at around five years old, and by nine being able to group happenings and classify experiences. While it is certain that the process of classification is undergone through functions of the brain (thus cognitive), it is important to remember that these cognitive functions are socially constructed. How the brain goes through the procedure of grouping information – recognising similarities and drawing distinctions – is derived from social circumstances, the background of the individual and the prevailing culture (Cerulo, 2002). How and what we categorise is thus dependent on social situation and institutional relationships such as family, education, work and peers.

In signifying who or what is different, an individual can thus create their own identity. Identity is therefore constructed through exclusionary practices or 'othering'. The process of othering is a significant method in identity negotiations as noted by Andrew Sayer (2005), Hollingworth (2009), Stefan Lawrence (2013) and Gareth Stahl (2017). Gareth Stahl (2017), argues that the practice of othering has steadily increased since the end of the 20th century being shaped by neoliberal rhetoric. This is especially prevalent for working class youths, in particular males coming from heavy industry areas. Due to deindustrialization and neoliberal thinking the traditional masculine, working class identity, has been wiped out, leaving young men feeling disillusioned and left out. It is in these places that othering is most prominent. Stahl (2017) writes that othering is a strategy used by these youths to stabilise their identity and retain a sense of normativity. Through othering they can define themselves, giving themselves an identity, by distinguishing themselves from others.

The prospect of establishing oneself in regards to someone else is a tricky one and shows how identity construction is laden with power relations. Along with the positive aspects of othering – the feelings of belonging generated through group othering and sense of self-worth created though distinguishing oneself from others – there are consequential negative aspects. The act of differentiating implies the idea of superiority. This moral boundary drawing, according to Sayer (2010), is a common feature of class relations. Othering is not only used to create a sense of identity but also to retain notions of power. In this sense, a person from the upper-class sections of society can maintain their status by othering people from the lower classes, thus putting them down. This is derived as 'negative othering' (Sayer, 2005). However, this is a dangerous process, as people's identity is then dependent on this procedure. To then stop the act of negative othering would mean that one also loses ones own identity. One

becomes reliant on the repression of the other to keep one's identity and thus can not remove the mark or grant upper-class recognition to the subordinate group.

The idea that boundary formation does not only signify an outsider but also defines self is not dissimilar to that of the theory of 'social markedness' (Brekhus, 1998). The concept of 'markedness' derives its origins from linguistics with the writings of linguists Nikolaj Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson in the 1930s. They noted that when you highlight something, one-half of the pair is 'marked' and actively defined and the other half of the pair is left 'unmarked', undefined and absent from a mark (Brekhus, 1998). In linguistics as well as social situations it is the case that the marked elements are more narrowly specified while the unmarked elements are left relatively unnoticed. Concepts of markedness are hence just as useful in studying linguistics as social phenomena. Social marking is when people actively recognise one side of something while ignoring the other side. For example, in Western European society it is taken for granted that 'people' are white (unmarked) unless they specified otherwise (marked). Brekhus (2015) states that: "we observe the world in an uneven fashion, cognitively attending to socially marked features, while virtually ignoring and taking for granted unmarked features" (p.25). What one chooses to mark and leave unmarked are crucial elements to ones identity. What we choose to see and what we choose to ignore as irrelevant is a social construct, dependent on the communities, culture, subcultures and organisations one belongs to (Brekhus, 2015, p.34).

Durkheim ([1912]1965) was one of the first people to try and study this. He researched "cognitive asymmetry" – why we like and dislike certain things, why we notice some elements and leave the rest unnoticed, why some people call things sacred and others things profane. He noted that the profane things in life are the generic things, the norm or the 'unmarked' while the sacred things in life are the extremes, either standing out extremely above or below the average. We only pay attention to the marked things in society; these tend to be either really bad or really good. Hence one can positive and negative mark something. For example, the very poor and the very rich, alcoholics and teetotalers, or sex addicts and virgins are marked, while the people in between the two extremes are just 'normal', these are the unmarked in society. These are the things that one takes for granted, the things "hidden out of plain sight" (Brekhus, 2015). These are also the things in society that are unnamed. We label the extremes while leaving the normal things in society nameless. A person who drinks an appropriate amount of alcohol, or has an average amount of sex, for example, does not have a name. We do not have a label for this 'average' person. Labelling is thus an important part of the marking

system. In labelling something, you are distinguishing it from the generic, or average form. However, when you mark something as extraordinary, at the same time you are marking the original, or the normal, as nothing, it is generic mundanity (Brekhus, 1998).

Through labelling, we tend to focus on the marked or visible groups (categories) in society. This we do through a process of 'colouring' (Brekus, 1998). We figuratively paint a whole marked category one colour. Everyone in the marked category is seen in the same light. The image of this group is then presented through the most extreme stereotype. The most extreme case shouts the loudest thus tainting the whole category. For example, the case of ethnic minorities, in particular, the current position of Muslims in the West. They have been coloured as a negative group through the unfavourable actions of a select few members. In society they are marked, corrupted by the behaviour of a small sample. The working class, however, can also be seen as a marked group. Through their oppression they have grown sour, no longer fitting into the prevailing society. Through acts of symbolic violence, they are in a recurring cycle, with no escape. With notions of equality and mobility, they long to move out of their repressed state but keep being knocked back again. In this struggle, they come off as apathetic, and not caring; the youth act out in school, and the parents require financial support. Society thus groups them as one collective marked group coloured by the most extreme cases.

To cope with the oppression bequeathed by the system of society, working class youths construct their own subculture, independent from the prevailing culture, and maintain a sense of stability, identity and self-worth. They create a sense of status and form their own community. Here they are in charge; they have the capability to draw boundaries to determine what is authentic, what is marked and who is othered. Through these exclusionary processes, they find a sense of purpose, control and power; they can determine what is hip and trendy, they can set the rules, who is 'in' and who is 'out', what is marked and what is unmarked. Through using culture to create a community they give themselves an identity.

3. Methodology
3.1 Research Design and Method

This thesis investigates the online dynamics of the Irish MC scene. This investigation was achieved by conducting content analyses of the music sharing platform YouTube, where the scene primarily takes place. With the development of Web 2.0 (online websites that facilitate user participation) in 2004 and the social media sites such as Facebook and Myspace that came with it, there has been a steady increase in online culture. People-focused sites – sites that focus on a user-centred space and contain personal profiles and information – are allowing for the

development of online communities (Madden, et al., 2013). In recent years we see a surge in the formation of these communities not only on Facebook but also on sites such as YouTube. YouTube has increasingly become a people-focused space where users can now create profiles and rate, comment and respond to videos. Few studies have addressed subcultures that operate solely online. Even fewer studies have been conducted regarding the loss of identity of the white working class male in postmodern society. This revealed a substantial research gap for the study of how subcultures work in an increasingly digitalized postmodern age. By studying a particular small group, this paper hopes to make a theoretical point about a wider issue. It aims to not only add to existing research on youth culture but also open up a much-needed discussion into the loss of identity of the working class.

Thus the research question is as follows: To what extent does the rise of the virtual Irish rap scene, where strong symbolic and social boundaries based on class, ethnicity and gender are constructed and maintained, relate to the experienced loss of a masculine, working-class white identity in Irish society? To answer the research question, a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analyses was used. As stated by Jick (1979), quantitative and qualitative methods should be viewed as complementary rather than rival. Triangulation, as Norman Denzin (1978) coined it, uses a combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon. This not only validates research but also gives a holistic and more complete portrayal of your subject. This thesis uses the method of content analysis – a method for studying and retrieving meaningful information from written documents or recodes – to dissect characteristics of messages, in this case, the characteristics of YouTube comments posted by members of the Irish MC scene (Hodder, 1994). The platform of YouTube and its ability to host conversation and provide a space for meaning making meant that it was the perfect field to conduct content analysis.

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Through a systematic search of YouTube, the videos needed for the research were selected. Three terms were used in the search: 'Irish MC', 'Irish freestyle rap' and 'Irish Rap movement'. The videos were selected on four criteria: 1) the 'artist' is Irish, 2) the word MC was in the title of the video, 3) visible low production costs, 4) the video had more than ten usable comments (for more detailed explanation go to Appendix 2). If a video had over 100 comments, then the first 100 comments posted were selected to be analysed (so chosen in regards to date). Comments were left out if they consisted solely of an image, an emoji or if it was just lyrics.

To select the videos for analysis, selective sampling was used. Thirteen different 'artists' were chosen, in as random a pattern as possible (this proved difficult as there were only a select number of 'artists' on YouTube that fit all the criteria). From these 'artists', three videos were chosen to be examined: 1) The video with the most views, 2) the most recent video posted by the artist, and 3) the debut video posted by the artists. This method was adopted because in choosing the video with the most views one analyses the videos at the core or the scene; the ones that encompass the essence of the group. The first video posted by the artist is chosen because it is important to assess the root of the subculture; looking at what came first is significant in determining how the scene developed. The most recent video was chosen to get a complete image of the scene and to also include views and opinions of the group members in the present. By using the most recent video, this research shows that the scene is still present and relevant. In employing these three categories a cohesive and thorough view of the scene is assured.

Table 1 displays the chosen sample. It provides a view into the characteristics of the videos while leaving the names of the artists out. The name of the artist is replaced by a number and the title of the track is omitted from the table, substituted for its corresponding numerical category. Eysenbach and Till (2001), write on the ethical conditions surrounding online research. They question the accessibility and porous boundaries that the internet maintains. As a researcher investigating an online scene, one has to be wary of the invasion of member's privacy and the lack of informed consent. Therefore, the name of the artists and commentators have been concealed to prohibit any infringements on the privacy of the members of the scene.

Next Table 1 displays the number of views, likes, dislikes and comments the videos had received by March 2017. From this one can see that there was a large variety within the sample with the most popular artist receiving 1,895,466 views and the least popular obtaining only 63. Not surprisingly the most popular video also received the most comments with a total of 1,639 recorded comments. Two videos received the minimum of 10 comments, the most recent video from artist number 10, the least popular video all over, along with the 3rd video from artist number 5.

Table 1. Characteristics of Selected artists on YouTube (March 2017)

Artist	video	Views	Likes	Dislikes	Comments
1	1	222,417	2,065	79	189
	2	71,075	715	54	118
	3	6,055	76	2	13
2	1	76,614	486	56	103

	2	9,483	71	6	15
	3	4,398	41	11	14
3	1	32,945	458	17	46
	2	104,137	870	53	142
	3	8,727	145	15	48
4	1	43,369	410	41	88
	2	2,139	36	0	14
	3	8,119	132	4	27
5	1	8,348	48	4	11
	2	5,045	51	1	14
	3	1,773	44	2	10
6	1	129,872	1,205	110	201
	2	18,018	292	20	46
	3	20,175	254	21	27
7	1	39,413	302	17	29
	2	50,988	418	55	58
	3	12,644	187	27	32
8	1	99,494	749	46	103
	2	24,601	167	22	13
	3	16,826	128	5	12
9	1	1,895,466	14,764	411	1,639
	2	802,535	8,504	183	592
	3	3,918	300	9	200
10	1	3,052	52	13	99
	2	361	15	1	37
	3	63	7	1	10
11	1	323,887	2,560	173	287
	2	189,408	1,072	47	109
	3	16,685	369	10	56
12	1	516,723	4,642	169	534
	2	175,265	1,201	61	124
	3	1,935	33	5	21
13	1	50,241	659	27	71
	2	36,760	485	30	78
	3	13,435	208	4	25

(Video: 1= Most viewed: 2= First video: 3= Most recent)

From the 39 videos chosen, 2174 comments were adequate to analyse for this research. However, due to the fact that a comment may contain two or more sections, instead of comments this thesis uses utterances as the sample size. An 'utterance' in this case is determined by the meaning of a sentence. If a comment has a number of sentences all of which have different themes these can then be recorded separately (Schaap & Berkers, 2014). (Find an example of how a comment is split into utterances in Appendix 3). This can thus lead to more elaborate results. With this in mind, the overall sample of the thesis was 2230 (n=2230).

3.3 Data Analysis

Comparative content analysis was then used to analyse the YouTube comments quantitatively. As Min Song et al. in their 2014 study on K-pop state, comments left under YouTube clips can provide useful and insightful knowledge on social networks. This thesis aims to provide a holistic picture of the case at hand by translating key words (indicators) from the utterances into value categories (sub-dimension). To attain a full image of the scene and the group's identity in relation to the working class condition an analysis of the boundary work of the group took place. In examining who the MCs considered to be authentic 'in' member of the group and who they do not accept, this thesis hopes to gain a broad understanding of the situation at hand.

To obtain the quantitative data needed for this research a thorough coding process took place (see Appendix 1 for Codebook). Utterances were coded within three groups groups, 1) *Characteristics of the Video*, 2) *Characteristics of the comment*, and 3) *Theme of Comment*. Group 1 was used as a tool to gain preliminary information on the artist and the video. It consisted of 9 variables that all documented a different aspect of the video, for example, the name of the artist, name of the track, gender of the artist, the number of likes, dislikes, etc. This was recorded to gain a framework of the scene. These variables were coded per video. Group 2 was also used to obtain background information on the sample. However, it was registered per utterance. In group 2 there were three variables, *Gender of Commentator*, which recorded if the commentator was a male or a female, *Commenting on Another Comment*, which documented if the comment was referring to the video directly or replying to a previous comment, and *Evaluation*, this variable looked at if the comment was made in a negative or positive manner. The third group, *Theme of Comment*, was one variable with 21 values. Each value was chosen as a code because it related to the boundary work of the scene. *Theme of Comment* was separated in six dimensions, either based on the scene's subcultural capital (Dimension 1) or auxiliary characteristics (Dimensions 2-7). Table 2 gives a clear view of how the dimensions were divided into 21 separate sub-dimensions. The values (codes) for this variable were made up of the 21 sub-dimensions.

Table 2. Dimensions and sub-dimensions of Theme of Comment

Dimension	Sub-dimensions	Indicators	Description

1. subcultural capital/ authenticity	Lyrics	'copy cat', 'stealing lyrics', 'sick bars'	About the lyrics, if they were authentic or not.
	Skill	'not freestyle', 'too slow'…	The quality of the rap skill, or freestyle. When the authenticity of the actual rap is mentioned.
	Style	'nice jacket', 'get a haircut'…	Differentiation in accordance with style. Commenting on the way someone looks.
	Personality	'ego', 'arrogance'…	If the personality is/is not authentic
2. Gender and sexuality	Masculinity	'hard', 'Rough', 'tough', 'Brave'…	If the comment has masculine features. If it deals with themes or qualities traditionally associated with men.
	Femininity	'girly', 'soft', 'sensitive', 'pussy', 'weak'…	If it deals with themes or qualities traditionally associated with women. E.g. vulnerability, sensuality.
	Homophobia	'Faggot', 'fag', 'gay', 'queer'…	If there is any homophobia indicated – any anti-gay tendencies.
	Homosociality	'mate', 'lad', 'bro', 'boi', 'pal', 'man' …	An indication of a social interaction between two members of the same sex, in this case, two males.
3. Ethnicity	Whiteness	'fake ass white bitch', 'white man got flow'…	An indication that commentator makes a critical point of belonging to a group that have light-coloured skin.
	Racism	'darky', 'nigga', 'Irish bastered', 'American cunt'…	If race is mentioned. If there is any gesture towards ethnic differentiation or racism. If there is a generalisation of stereotyping present.
	Nationalism	'up the Irish', 'Go on Ireland'…	If there is any national (Irish) pride present in the utterance. When Ireland is mentioned in a comment.
	Place	'up Limerick', 'kip'…	About a specific place in Ireland. E.g. when they declare like/dislike for a specific place.
	Religion	'prody', 'orange', 'protestant', 'catholic' …	If religion is mentioned. An ethnocentric definition of religion is used because in Ireland religion is thought of as another manner in which to show Irish pride. In this case not so much about beliefs or values.
4. Class	Lower Class	'knacker', 'gypsy', 'pikey', 'traveler', 'thinker', 'chav' …	Indication of class differentiation or classism in regards to a lower class. This includes any comments on economics, poverty, or the suggestion of belonging to a lower social group. E.g. comparing someone to a lower member of society.

	Higher Class	'townie', 'rich cunt', 'posh cunt','D4'…	Indication of class differentiation or classism in regards to a higher class. This includes any comments on economics, being well off, or the suggestion of belonging to a higher social group. E.g. comparing someone to a high member of society.
5. Age	Young	'kid', 'child', 'wee lad', 'innocent boy'...	Drawing boundaries in regards to someone being too young. Can be positive or negative.
	old	'old man'	Drawing boundaries in regards to someone being too old.
6. Group/ collective identity	The scene	'we', 'us', 'our … 'shout out'	Group sensibility - If there is any form of collective assembly present in the comment. Evidence of the scene.
	conversation	'Hi', 'hello', 'where are you from'	When the tone of the comment is purely conversational. E.g. Not addressing the video
7. Commerciality	Commerciality	'Sign this kid', 'He's going places!'	Promotion of self or others. Professional aspirations.
No theme	No theme		No theme that is relevant to theoretical focus.

Table 1 also demonstrates the indicators and descriptions used to record a value. This is how the values were measured – how the utterances were translated into codes. For example, if the utterance was about the lyrics used in the video, and consisted of phrases such as 'stealing lyrics' or 'sick bars' then it would be documented as the value *Lyrics*. Similarly, if the utterance was discussing masculinity – dealing with themes or qualities tied to the traditional notions of manhood, and used terms like 'hard', 'rough', 'tough' and 'brave' – then it would be recorded as the value *Masculinity*.

The software program SPSS was used as a tool to statistically record and analyse the quantitative data collected through the coding process. It was primarily used to draw frequency tables, interpreting the number of times a value was mentioned in the sample. In noting the frequency of the value or sub-dimension this thesis could determine what the Irish MCs mark and what they leave unmarked, what they acknowledge and what they do not.

SPSS was also used for Crosstab Analysis, which compares two variables, uncovering the relationship between the variables. For example, the variable *Theme of Comment* could be compared with *Gender of Commentator* or *Evaluation*. In the case of this research, the relationship between *Theme of Comment* and *Evaluation* was very important. In comparing the boundary work with the assessment of the comment – if it is negative or positive – one can

articulate if they negatively or positively mark something. If the value was recorded as being predominantly negative, then it could be determined that it is a negatively marked category, while if the value has been registered as being mostly positive, then it could be said to be a positively marked category.

To make sense of the quantitative data recorded in relation to the boundary work, qualitative content analysis was also applied. For example, the utterances that displayed an aspect of how the youths in the scene 'othered' in regards to race, gender and class were analysed further using qualitative methods. A 'direct approach' to qualitative content analysis was used in interpreting meaning from the content. As Hsieh and Shannon in their 2005 paper state, a direct approach can be employed when one already has codes or theory in mind. Because the codes were the same as the values used in the quantitative content analysis, this method was applicable. Discourse analysis, which uses methods of close reading, understanding and systematic analysis was then applied to study the utterances that mention the boundary work of the scene further (van Dijk, 1995). Using the addition of qualitative content analysis, meant that shortcomings such as not knowing the "context of the text components", the lack of ability to identify "the latent structures of sense", "the distinctive individual cases" and the "things that do not appear in the text" were overcome (Kohlbacher 2006, p.23).

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the empirical research are presented and discussed. The findings that emerged from the YouTube comments are grouped in thematic subchapters and are analysed in relation to the research question. To conduct this analysis, the results of the quantitative statistical data will be triangulated with the qualitative data. The chapter is split into two sections based on the theoretical concepts of *Subcultural Capital* and *Auxiliary Characteristics*. The findings are then structured into smaller subsections each one based on one of the prominent values from the variable *Theme of Comment*. Each subsection discusses another aspect of the group's boundary work, what they mark and what they leave unmarked, in relation to their class position.

This chapter starts by discussing *Subcultural Capital*. It is broken into two sections, *Lyrics* and *Style*. These sections show how the scene forms boundaries in relation to the non-inherent attributes of the group, looking at what is required to be a member of the MCs in regards to music and appearance. The rest of the chapter deals with the auxiliary characteristics

of the group. Here the inherent traits of the group are discussed. The subchapter *Auxiliary Characteristics* is broken up into four sections. It starts by reviewing the boundary work of the scene in relation to gender. Section two moving on to discuss race and ethnicity. The chapter concludes by debating the working class position, the methods in which boundaries are drawn around class and commerciality.

4.1 Subcultural Capital

A subculture, and the boundaries that it creates, can give working class youths a feeling of recognition, solidarity and acceptance. With music's power to express notions of collective identity, the boundaries established around the scene, in regards to the actual music and its characteristics, are imperative. The subcultural capital – the knowledge of the scene and the familiarity with its ideologies, staple traits and style – is crucial to the formation of boundaries from which the collective identity is derived. These are the non-inherent aspects, the qualities that one as a member can learn and develop. To understand the relationship between the boundary work in relation to the visible elements of the scene – the musical characteristics, the style and the member's personality – and the formation of the scene around the loss of white, male working class identity, this thesis firstly analysed the YouTube comments which addressed the artistic performance itself.

To be part of an online group like this one, you have to have the appropriate knowledge and display a considerable amount of commitment towards the scene. For example, as an artist, you have to have a thorough understanding of the musical genre, the clothing style and personality traits connected to the scene. For a fan, along with having "subject-specific knowledge" and "group-specific etiquette", one also has to have an adequate amount of "acquaintance with other subscribers" (Muggleton & Weizierl, 2003, p.292). In looking at the results and analysing the variable *Theme of Comment*, 234 utterances out of the 1109 were about this subcultural capital in correlation with the artist's performance. Table 1 shows the overall distribution of the variable. It shows the frequency and the percentage of the times each value was mentioned. When analysing this table, one sees that a significant amount of the comments (21.9%) were on the different aspects of subcultural capital in relation to the performance. For example, if the utterance was about the 'skill level of the artist (the speed of the rap or the competence of his freestyle), the lyrics (their meaning and the rhyming ability), the clothing style or his personality.

Table 1. Frequency table of utterances related to Subcultural Capital (n=1109)

Dimension	Sub-dimensions	frequency	Percent
Subcultural capital/ Authenticity	Lyrics	**85**	**7.7%**
	skill	**81**	**7.3%**
	style	**46**	**4.1%**
	Personality	**22**	**2.0%**
Gender and sexuality	Masculinity	8	0.7%
	Femininity	9	0.8%
	Homophobia	41	3.7
	Homosociality	134	12.1%
Ethnicity	Whiteness	5	0.5%
	Racism	50	4.5%
	Nationalism/Irish pride	59	5.3%
	Place	23	2.1%
	Religion	6	0.5%
Class	Lower Class	63	6.0%
	Higher Class	1	0.1%
Age	Young	17	1.2%
	old	1	0.1%
collective identity	The scene	116	10.5%
	conversation	275	24.8%
Commerciality	Commerciality	67	(6.0%)
Total		1109	(100.0%)

Most of the utterances from this dimension addressed either the lyrics (36.3%) or the skill level of the performer (34.6%). The clothing style of the artist was twice as unlikely to be discussed (19.6%) with only 46 comments out of the 1109 being about dress. Lastly, the personality of the artist was marginally discussed (9.4%) with a mere 22 comments. From this one sees that the musical part of the scene was significantly important as 15% of all comments were about either the skill of the artist or his use of lyrics. The style of the artist was then somewhat less relevant, and the personality of the artist even less again, not receiving much attention at all.

When qualitatively analysing the comments related to subcultural capital further, one sees that there are a number of elements that are of importance musically for an artist in this scene: 1) original lyrics, 2) variety of lyrics, 3) favour towards meaningful lyrics, 4) adequate rhyming capabilities, and 5) freestyle rap. With these the members of the Irish MCs draw boundaries in relation to the musical aspects of the videos.

4.1.1 Lyrics

Lyrics are an essential part of MC-ing. Because MCs tend to rap on top of appropriated pre-recorded beats, such as house or pop, they legitimate their music by creating their own lyrics; this, according to the scene, has to be in a freestyle manner. Freestyle, as stated, is a type of improvised rap, where lyrics are recited with no particular subject or structure (Forman & Neal, 2004). For the MCs the backing track is crucial, often borrowed from a well-known artist, it provides the beat onto which they rap. Because they do not make their own backing tracks and appropriate ready-made popular songs, they have to ensure that their lyrics are up to scratch. Reference towards the salience of freestyle in the scene is visible throughout the sample. For example, one commenter states, "The songs better than the freestyle anyone know what it's called?". Here we see that the background song can easily outshine the rap. To compete with the accomplished backing track, the young artists have to make competent freestyles, abiding by the prescribed rules. Some examples of commentators persecuting artists for not undertaking the process of freestyle properly are "Not even a freestyle when hes reading it off a phone", "shite freestyle, defo pre written" and "by the title, I expected to see an actual freestyle, this is shite". These comments exemplify the necessity of sticking to the rules if an artist does not comply with the logistics of the scenes musical characteristics they get penalised and shunned.

Another aspect which artists would often get scrutinised for is the relevance or 'meaningfulness' of the lyrics. One commenter states " MC Pat Flynn has changed for the better his lyrics have more meaning now, come on pat". Here you see that the commentator praises the artist for making advancements in the emotional aspects of his tracks. Another commenter states in regards to a performance, "Good flow but he doesn't have shit to rap about?". The commenter expresses that the "flow" was good, meaning that the rhythm and the projection of the lyrics were adequate, but the lyrics themselves were not satisfactory. This shows that it is important to have something to rap about, to have something to say. In this one sees that what the MCs express through their music has to be worthwhile and substantial, a good "flow" is not enough to be a real MC.

Flow, something inherently to do with rhythm and rhyme capabilities, was a crucial aspect to a member's authenticity. To be a recognised member one had to be able to string together a nice sentence while maintaining the 'flow'. How the MC manipulated the verse and related lyrics together was very important. Words should in a sense rhyme, stream together and flow with the beat of the backing track to make a single cohesive whole. "You can't even rhyme you can't even mc to the beat of the music". This is an example of a commentator who is dissatisfied with the quality of the freestyle. He critiques the artist for not being able to rhyme or rap to the beat of the backing track. Another commentator perhaps more frustrated by the incompetence of an artists rhyming capabilities states "If you like this, you are most likely under the age of 15 with some form of special needs. Horrible 'mc', cancerous wordplay and flow and equally bad lyrics." Here he compares anyone who likes the track to a 15-year-old. In a sense saying that if you enjoyed the video, you don't have the insider's knowledge to know better. He finishes the comment by affirming why it is bad. He dislikes the way the artist formulated his lyrics; for him they do not have rhythm or cadence.

Finally, for the Irish MCs it is very necessary to have original and diverse lyrics. An MC is not allowed to repeat the same words in a freestyle too often. Members are very aware of artists using the same word repeatedly throughout a performance, and consequently, deal a scolding to members who do. One member states in regards to a video where the artist frequently says "on the mic", "New drinking game... Every time he says "on the mic" you have to take shot." Where in response another member reacted with "hilarious and original man", the first commentator then replies with "its not but you'd get fucking steaminggggg lol". Here the writer refers to a proposed drinking game, where, when the artist says the words "on the mike", the players have to drink. By stating that competitors would get "steamingggg" (drunk) he implies that the artist uses these words to often. Another commentator on a separate video states, "man your terrible … repeating the same line over and over your stealing lines and you talk from your nose". This shows how the scene is very wary of artists using the same words through the freestyle, a larger variation of vocabulary is preferred.

The previous quote also presents another important aspect of the value of originality in lyrics. In saying that the video is terrible because the artist is "stealing lines," he notes that lyrics not only have to be diverse, but also have to be authentic and self-written. Authenticity, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a crucial aspect of our times, it is a measurement of evaluation, and a means of capital. As an individual, you have to remain true to yourself. Social actors have to stay spontaneous and independent, aware of their "true nature". If they don't and are caught copying someone else, they are perceived as a fake (Schwarz, 2016). Throughout the

sample of the Irish MCs this notion is broadly broadcasted. Any form of appropriation of lyrics from another MC and the artist is considered unauthentic, a "copy cat" and a "fake". One commentator on this topic states, "Steeling lyrics man. Fucking shite would burn you easily", another states "stole lyrics from MC innes. you faker". Artists are encouraged to produce their own lyrics; stealing, or copying lyrics is highly frowned upon.

4.1.2 Style

It has been thought that youths not only create meaning systems through music, but also through collective style. Collective distinctiveness, something that Paul Hodkinson (2016) claims is a key element to social groupings, orientates itself around music and style. The study of style-centred youth culture derives its origin from the early writings of the CCCS. The subcultures of the 1950's, 60's and 70's – the teddy boys, rockers, skinheads and punks – were all studied in relation to their visual appearance. Style was seen as a form of resistance, it was regarded not only as a tool to stand apart from wider society, but also as a means to create solidarity and feelings of community.

Taking into account the original writings of the CCCS such as Dick Hebdige (1979), one would expect to see a significant number of comments addressing style. Hebdige and his contemporaries concluded that style was an essential part of subcultural groupings. However, in postmodern times – with the rise of concepts such as individuality and fluidity – ideas of collective style have declined. This can be seen through the analysis of the quantitative data of the sample. When looking at Table 1 one sees that *style* was only mentioned as a theme of an utterance 46 times. Only 4.1 % of all utterances were directed towards the appearance of the artist. What one sees when analysing the case of the Irish MCs is, that, although style plays a part in the boundary work, as all members were dressed similarly, it does not manifest itself in anything as extreme as the dress of the traditional subculturalists. The uniform of an Irish MC tends to be understated clothing, with the artist and any bystanders in the video wearing dark-coloured tracksuits, usually of the brand of Adidas or Nike. They would also commonly wear Nike Air trainers, and occasionally a cap or raised hood of a training jacket. For the unassuming bypasser, there is nothing extraordinary about these teens; no abnormal markings, tattoos, piercings or hair. They look like any other Irish working class youth.

Despite the unexpectedly small amount of comments that addressed the topic of style, there was a definite connection through their visible appearance. From this one can presume that clothing style was an important aspect for the group. Clothing style if nothing else symbolized where they came from. From the way they look it is clear that they come from a

working class background. It is this exhibition of style that leads one to believe that they celebrate their social position.

However, in qualitatively analysing the comments further there seems to be more at play. One commentator on the topic of style states "this dirty fool is just embarrassing him self. # get a haircut". Here the commentator addresses the hair style of the artist. He asserts that it is an embarrassment for the artist to have hair that unkempt and long. Another commentator on the same video states "fucking shit. get a haircut ya scruffy retarted cunt". The commentator here relates the "scruffiness" of the artist's hair to his capability of making music. From these comments one sees that, to be an authentic member of the group, the appearance of untidiness is not accepted. Along with the comments about "scruffy" hair, there are also negative comments in relation to the artists clothing. One commentator writes, intersecting style with economic capital, "I think he spent the gas bill money on his shitty looking jacket". In this post, the writer is commenting on the economic position of the artist, stating that he does not have the finances to pay for both his bills and his clothing. In saying this he assumes that the artist is economically unsuccessful. From these comments we begin to see something else appearing in the scene. With their rejection of unkemptness and the acknowledgment of financial instability we start to see cracks in the idea that they celebrate their working class position.

4.2 Auxiliary characteristic

While topics about the performance, the artist and the scene made up a large part of the recorded utterances (38.4%), surprisingly more than half of the utterances were thus not related to the music at all. The second section of this chapter looks into what the other 61.6% of the utterances were addressing. Table 2. highlights all the utterances that were directed at the scene, the performance, and the music. The rest, the larger part were made up of utterances discussing other crucial elements that make up the boundaries and thus identity of the subculture. These are the inherent traits, or as Brekhus (2008) calls them "auxiliary characteristics". These he explains are the attributes of a person that are innate; for example, race, gender, and class position. To be an authentic individual you have to abide by the attributes you are given at birth. You are expected to go along with the identity role that you are born with. For subcultures, genetic and intrinsic characteristics of a person are just as important to the scene as subcultural capital (knowledge of the scene). Subculturalists draw important boundaries and distinction between themselves, the 'in' group, and the 'others', the 'out' group. Thus to be an 'in' member one most also have the correct auxiliary characteristics. This section of the results

analyses what the MCs mark positively, what they mark negatively and what they leave unmarked.

Table 2. Frequency table of utterances related to Subcultural Capital (n=1109)

Theme of utterance	frequency	percent
Lyrics	**85**	**7.7%**
Skill	**81**	**7.3%**
Style	**46**	**4.1%**
Personality	**22**	**2.0%**
Masculinity	8	0.7%
Femininity	9	0.8%
Homophobia	41	3.7
Homosociality	134	12.1%
Whiteness	5	0.5%
Racism	50	4.5%
Nationalism	59	5.3%
Place	23	2.1%
Religion	6	0.5%
Lower class	63	6.0%
Upper class	1	0.1%
Young (age)	17	1.2%
Old (age)	1	0.1%
Scene	**116**	**10.5%**
Conversational	275	24.8%
Commerciality	**67**	**(6.0%)**
Total	1109	(100.0%)

To be a marked category, this thesis states that a value has to be documented over 58 times in the sample. Meaning that a value has to be present in 5.2% or more of the utterances. If a value is under this figure it is noted as an unmarked category. This figure was formulated by dividing the total number of usable comments, in other words, the sample (n = 1109) by the number of themes (19). If the themes of the comments are equally distributed throughout the sample, each would be mentioned 58 times. Therefore, anything less then this is irrelevant.

4.2.1 Gender and Sexuality

In discussing gender and sexuality, it is firstly important to note that the scene, as anticipated, is for a large majority male (see appendix 1 for description of how gender was assigned). Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of male and female commentators in the sample. From the table you see that 82.6 % of all commentators were male, 12.7% female and 4.6% were comments left by the artist themselves, commenting on their own video, either for promotional reasons or in response to a comment. What one can also note is that all the artists in the sample were male; this subsequently rises the percentage of male participation even higher. When adding the comments valued as 'artist', the male population of the sample rises from 1816 (82.6%) to 1918 (87.35). One can thus derive that the subculture is primarily a male scene, with women participants only making up a small number of the group. In stating this, one can also assume that, in analysing the comments further, there is a high chance that the commentator will be male.

Table 3. Frequency table Gender of Commentator (n=2198)

	Frequency	Percent
Male	1816	82.6%
Female	280	12.7%
Artist	102	4.6 %
Total	2198	100.0%

Table 4 shows a crosstab analysis of the evaluation and the theme of the utterances. From this table, we see that out of the dimension *Gender and Sexuality* homosocial behaviour was noted the most regularly through the sample with 134 utterances. Homophobia was the second most popular value discussed with 41 utterances. Masculinity and femininity were the least mentioned through the sample both obtaining less than 10 comments (masculinity 8, and femininity 9).

Table 4. Cross analysis of Evaluation of Utterances and Dimension *Gender and Sexuality* (n=1109)

	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Total**
Lyrics	16 (1.4%)	52 (4.7%)	17 (1.5%)	85 (7.7%)

Skill	24 (2.2%)	36 (3.2%)	21 (1.9%)	81 (7.3%)
Style	9 (0.8%)	19 (1.7%)	18 (1.6%)	46 (4.1%)
Personality	2 (0.2%)	18 (1.6%)	2 (0.2%)	22 (2.0%)
Masculinity	**0 (0.0%)**	**5 (0.5%)**	**3 (0.3%)**	**8 (0.7%)**
Femininity	**0 (0.0%)**	**9 (0.8%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**9 (0.8%)**
Homophobia	**4 (0.4%)**	**37 (3.3%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**41 (3.7)**
Homosociality	**79 (7.2%)**	**2 (0.2%)**	**53 (4.8%)**	**134 (12.1%)**
Whiteness	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)	5 (0.5%)
Racism	1 (0.1%)	5 (0.5%)	44 (4.0%)	50 (4.5%)
Nationalism	19 (1.7%)	16 (1.4%)	24 (2.2%)	59 (5.3%)
Place	3 (0.3%)	18 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)	23 (2.1%)
Religion	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.5%)
Lower class	1 (0.1%)	60 (5.7%)	2 (0.2%)	63 (6.0%)
Upper class	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)
Young (age)	6 (0.5%)	7 (0.6%)	4 (0.3%)	17 (1.4%)
Old (age)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)
Scene	31 (2.8%)	12 (1.1%)	73 (6.6%)	116 (10.5%)
Conversational	17 (1.5%)	80 (7.2%)	178 (16.1%)	275 (24.8%)
Commerciality	58 (5.2%)	1 (0.1%)	9 (0.8%)	67 (6.0%)
Total	270 (24.3%)	381 (34.4%)	458 (41.3%)	1109 (100.0%)

69.8% of all utterances in the dimension *Gender and Sexuality* displayed aspects of homosocial behaviour – same-sex relationships, in this case male, that are not of a romantic or sexual nature, such as friendship. For examples, phrases such as "sick bro", addressing the quality of the artist's performance, and "Jordy can u pm me on Facebook pal", where a commentator is asking the artist to add him on the social media site Facebook and is using the word "pal", show solidarity and friendship. In using words like "bro", "pal", "man" and 'mate' the Irish MCs display elements of brotherly affection and intimacy. They exemplify notions of collectivism and group affiliation, and generate feelings of respect and recognition.

Homosociality, in being referred to 134 times, is a marked aspect of the scene. When looking at Table 5 one sees that a significant amount (59.1%) of the utterances on homosocial behaviour were made in a positive manner with the rest consisting of mainly neutral utterances (39.5%). Only 2 comments (1.5%) were made in a negative way. In observing this, one can

then state that the Irish MCs positively mark homosocial behaviour. This is an aspect of the scene that they encourage. The online scene provided by YouTube allows working class males to connect, show support and generate homosocial friendships. The predominantly male scene allows young men to create a community where the members have common interests, backgrounds and ideologies.

Table 5. Evaluating Homosocial Behaviour (n=1109)

	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	Total
Masculinity	0 (0.0%)	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	8 (100.0%)
Femininity	0 (0.0%)	9 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (100.0%)
Homophobia	4 (9.8%)	37 (90.2%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (100.0%)
Homosociality	79 (59.1%)	2 (1.5%)	53 (39.5%)	134 (100.0%)

The high amount of comments made in regard to homosocial behaviour also displays a manner in which the group creates boundaries in terms of gender. Homosociality in this case is a form of boundary work, as through this openly male act they prevent females from taking part. Even though femininity was not negatively marked, with only 9 comments recorded discussing female attributes (see Table. 5), the fact that there were so few women in the group, as artists or fans, meant that the group was orientated towards the coming together of men and woman were not included.

The highly marked value of *Homosociality* was in contrast to that of *Masculinity*. Where one would expect the group to positively mark masculinity (masculine attributes), this was not the case. Masculinity, a trait which has been largely associated with working class behaviour, is not a marked feature. In referring back to Table 4 we see that only 8 comments (0.7%) out of the sample of 1109 regarded masculine behaviour. The presence of male practices could have also been seen through comments negatively marking femininity. In adversely marking woman, they could build up their male persona. However, this was also not found. Femininity, like masculinity was an unmarked feature. Together masculinity and femininity only make 17 utterances, 41 utterances short of being a marked group.

This is a surprising result, as attitudes of masculine nature are closely associated with lower class culture. As Stahl (2017), in his study on London chavs observed, working class youths in being pressured by society to adapt their behaviour, actually do the opposite and reinforce traditional notions of masculine behaviour. With the crisis of masculinity, due to the

decline in manufacturing work and the rise of feminist attitudes, young working class males are finding themselves having to revise their ideas of being a man. However, what Stahl found is that the London chavs distanced themselves from alternative methods of masculinity. He observed that these teens, instead of adopting contemporary masculine attitudes, rebelled and intensified traditional notions of masculinity.

In the Irish MC scene one would then expect to find the positive marking of masculine characteristics, or at least a large amount of negative comments marking feminine sensitivity. This, however, is not the case. In fact, the few comments that were made in accordance to masculinity were made in a negative manner. And there were only 9 documented utterances negatively addressing femininity. In the scene overtly masculine behaviour seems to be replaced by a form male kinship, brotherly sentiment and homosociality.

When analysing the 8 comments about masculinity further we see a recurring theme. While traditional characteristics associated with women such as vulnerability and sensuality are negatively marked, so were overtly masculine attributes. One commentator addressed the artist by saying "The state of that GAY cunt hahaha fuckin townie thinking your hard". Here one gets the opinion that the artist is acting in a homosexual manner, thus a non-traditional masculine way. The commentator dislikes this, insulting the artist by calling him a "cunt". He continues by saying that the artist "thinks he is hard". By this implying that because he is gay he can not be "hard". The attribute of being "hard" is a traditional masculine characteristic, something that the commentator values. One gets the opinion then that the artist is adopting new masculine characteristics and the commentator dislikes this, reverting to tradition masculine characteristics. In response to this, however, another member writes, "Just because he is Mcing doesn't mean he is trying to act hard". Here we see that the second commentator is defending the artist. He dissociates the notion that MC-ing is related to being hard. This is interesting in that MCs come from the Irish working class; for these youths traditional masculine characteristics such as "being hard" would be expected to be encouraged.

Additionally, another commentator writes in similar light, "I will knock u out stop mouthing or I'll fucking drop u on ur arse", In the hostile tone of this comment, the writer expresses traditional working class masculine characteristics. In response, a second commentator writes, "yeah ok then you little wannabe chav, stop acting like a prick". Here again, the first commentator, who seems to value traditional masculine attributes, is disdained. The second commentator ridicules his "prickish" behaviour. He calls him a "wannabe chav" and in this states that the first commentator is acting like the lowest class in Irish society. Chavs or 'travellers' as they are also known in Ireland come from the Irish gypsy community. They

are a traditionally itinerant ethnic group, known for being unemployed, uneducated and having particularly bad health. They are also largely associated with teen pregnancies, violence and petty crime. The Irish travellers are seen to be the lowest members of Irish society, holding a very bad reputation. In calling the first commentator a wannabe chav the second commentator associates the overtly masculine language with being from this community.

From these comments one sees that carrying traditional masculine traits or using overtly masculine language are not condoned within the MC scene. They do not tolerate violent or hostile commentary. In leaving masculinity unmarked, abandoning masculine rhetoric, they have adapted to more modern forms of masculinity. Although being a man is still a crucial aspect of the scene, and women are not readily permitted, overtly masculine behaviour − like that of the Irish travellers − is not acceptable. It seems that homosocial bonds have taken the place of these traditional masculine characteristics.

4.2.2 Ethnicity

A prominent auxiliary characteristic of any subculture are traits based on ethnicity and race. To be an authentic member of a group you have to have the appropriate background, the correct nationality, race and religion. Brekhus (2015), calls this intra-racial authenticity. With the Irish M's this was no different. Table 6 demonstrates the dimension *Ethnicity*. It highlights the frequency of utterances that were about 'whiteness', 'race', 'nationalism', 'place' and 'religion'. It also shows the values relationship to *Evaluation*, noting if the value's were mentioned in a positive or negative manner.

In analysing Table 6, one sees that the only marked value from the dimension *Ethnicity* is 'nationalism' with 59 comments. All the other values are left unmarked. 'Race' did, however, receive a significant amount of acknowledgement with 50 utterances, demonstrating that 'race' was a relatively important aspect for the MCs. The rest, 'place' (23), 'religion' (6) and 'whiteness' (5) are deemed insignificant.

Table 6. Cross analysis of Evaluation of Utterances and Theme of Utterances (n=1109)

	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Total**
Lyrics	16 (1.4%)	52 (4.7%)	17 (1.5%)	85 (7.7%)
Skill	24 (2.2%)	36 (3.2%)	21 (1.9%)	81 (7.3%)
Style	9 (0.8%)	19 (1.7%)	18 (1.6%)	46 (4.1%)
Personality	2 (0.2%)	18 (1.6%)	2 (0.2%)	22 (2.0%)

Masculinity	0 (0.0%)	5 (0.5%)	3 (0.3%)	8 (0.7%)
Femininity	0 (0.0%)	9 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (0.8%)
Homophobia	4 (0.4%)	37 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (3.7)
Homosociality	79 (7.2%)	2 (0.2%)	53 (4.8%)	134 (12.1%)
Whiteness	**1 (0.1%)**	**2 (0.2%)**	**2 (0.2%)**	**5 (0.5%)**
Racism	**1 (0.1%)**	**5 (0.5%)**	**44 (4.0%)**	**50 (4.5%)**
Nationalism	**19 (1.7%)**	**16 (1.4%)**	**24 (2.2%)**	**59 (5.3%)**
Place	**3 (0.3%)**	**18 (0.2%)**	**2 (0.2%)**	**23 (2.1%)**
Religion	**0 (0.0%)**	**6 (0.5%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**6 (0.5%)**
Lower class	1 (0.1%)	60 (5.7%)	2 (0.2%)	63 (6.0%)
Upper class	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)
Young (age)	6 (0.5%)	7 (0.6%)	4 (0.3%)	17 (1.4%)
Old (age)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)
Scene	31 (2.8%)	12 (1.1%)	73 (6.6%)	116 (10.5%)
Conversational	17 (1.5%)	80 (7.2%)	178 (16.1%)	275 (24.8%)
Commerciality	58 (5.2%)	1 (0.1%)	9 (0.8%)	67 (6.0%)
Total	270 (24.3%)	381 (34.4%)	458 (41.3%)	1109 (100.0%)

When looking at Table 6 it is clear that 'Whiteness' is left unmarked with a mere 5 comments. The MCs do not openly acknowledge their skin colour either in a positive or negative manner. This in a sense is not surprising, as the whiteness of individuals in the west has historically never been marked, it is far more likely to mark 'blackness' (Brekhus, 1998; Gallagher, 2004). The black population has been occupying a social position of disadvantage, while the white, no matter what their class situation, are the designated privileged. However, in recent times this has changed. Being white is no longer always a good thing. For the whites, the rise of liberalist thinking and ideas of equal and racially diverse workspaces, has meant an increase in competition in the labour market. The young lower class male struggles to find work, competing for employment with the determined and low-waged ethnic minorities who now dominate the low paid service sector. It is thus interesting to note that even with these circumstances, these Irish youths do not mark their white position. However, they are aware of their origin and their white Irish heritage. One commentator states "Proud to be Irish......but trying to sound American. he even says "thug niggers......drug niggers" - and with a straight face as well. I suppose that is what is what they call each other in Limerick?!". Here the

commentator addresses the artist saying that, although he is proud to be Irish, he is pretending to be American, appropriating African American lingo non-ironically. This shows that even though these youths appropriate the African-American music form of rap, they are aware that they themselves are not African American, and hence not black. They are not permitted to use the same language as the original rappers, in using it they are unauthentic.

As stated, 'Nationalism' is the only marked value in the dimension, with 59 utterances containing notions of national pride. However, looking at Table 7 it is hard to distinguish if the MCs positively or negatively mark nationalism. 32% of comments about pride of country are marked positively, 27.1% negatively and 40.7% are neutral. As there is no clear result it is very hard to determine how the MCs evaluate nationalism.

Table 7. Cross analysis of Evaluation of Utterances and Theme of Utterances (n=1109)

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Whiteness	1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)	2 (40.0%)	5 (100.0%)
Racism	1 (2.0%)	5 (10.0%)	44 (88.0%)	50 (100.0%)
Nationalism	19 (32.2%)	16 (27.1%)	24 (40.7%)	59 (100.0%)
Place	3 (13.0%)	18 (78.3%)	2 (8.7%)	23 (100.0%)
Religion	0 (0.0%)	6 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (100.0%)

In qualitatively analysing the comments, it becomes apparent that being Irish is a key aspect of the scene. To be an authentic member one must come from Ireland. The positive utterances referring to nationalism generally go along the lines of "most sick Irish mc i have ever heard makes me proud to be irish", "Can't beat the Irish", or "Gwan Ireland". These commentators relate MCing with being Irish. They are proud of their home grown talent and this contributes to the love for their country. When looking at negative utterances about nationalism, it is found that these comments weren't negative in reference to Ireland, but in the sense that it's a negative comment in general. For example, one member writes in response to an outside commentator "Go fucking die were Irish and proud and you're probably some fat fuck American kid". Here the member of the subculture defends the Irish, after someone (most likely not an 'in' member of the group) comments about the scene negatively. The comment is negative, as its insulting and racist. However, it is not negative in the sense of nationalism. In fact, it demonstrates further the national pride that the MCs have.

Another example of a negative post about nationalism reads "I know he's irish u twat y is he puting on an English accent wen he mcs...sad". The commentator is responding to a previous comment that addressed the Irishness of the artist. He states that its pathetic that the MC is rapping in an English accent. This was a common recurrence throughout the sample; it was not permitted to rap with an English accent. If you are British, or rap in an English accent, you are not an authentic member of the scene. Similarly, comments read "hes shit why does he sound english" and "Your accent is worse than ellen de genneres tits". All three comments were made on the same video. In the video, the MC puts on a slight English twang even though he is Irish. The Irish MCs derive a significant amount of their influence form British rap genres such as Grime, Garage and Battle Rap. Therefore, it is not surprising that an Irish member occasionally adopts an English accent. This, however, is not tolerated. As the comments demonstrate, the members of the Irish MC scene heavily criticised the artist for not sticking to his roots and in doing so abandoning his authenticity.

It is thus very important for the scene to show intra-racial authenticity (Brekhus, 2015). To be an MC or member of the group, you have to show commitment to your race, in this case being Irish. This boundary again creates a sense of identity. Through determining that one must be Irish to be an authentic 'in' member, they form a sense of solidarity and cohesion. While this ties into notions of racism, racism itself was not marked, as it was only noted in 50 comments. However, from these comments, insulting other nationalities, one sees again this strong boundary. The Irish MCs actively distinguish themselves from other nationalities, putting up a barrier between themselves and the outside world.

4.2.3 Class

The working class has always been a marked group in society. As Brekhus (2015; 1998) writes, the extremes in society are marked, for example the rich and the poor. The group in the middle – the 'average' person – is seen as 'normal' and left unmarked. It is this process of labelling a group that is integral not only to the practice of social marking but also to the formations of power relations.

Historically the working class have celebrated their label. Their marked position was nothing to be ashamed of. However, since the 1980's and the formation of neoliberal governments, one sees a shift in working class mentalities. Today, with the ideas of universal equality and social mobility, it is no longer acceptable to be working class (Jones, 2011). With these notions the lower classes aim to transcend their position and move up in society.

Looking at Table 8 one see that the dimension *Class* is primarily made up of utterances addressing lower class mentality and attributes. The value 'lower class' is made up of 63 utterances while 'upper class' scores 1. From this, it is apparent that being lower class is, as expected, still marked.

Table 8. Cross analysis of Evaluation of Utterances and Theme of Utterances (n=1109)

	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**	**Total**
Lyrics	16 (1.4%)	52 (4.7%)	17 (1.5%)	85 (7.7%)
Skill	24 (2.2%)	36 (3.2%)	21 (1.9%)	81 (7.3%)
Style	9 (0.8%)	19 (1.7%)	18 (1.6%)	46 (4.1%)
Personality	2 (0.2%)	18 (1.6%)	2 (0.2%)	22 (2.0%)
Masculinity	0 (0.0%)	5 (0.5%)	3 (0.3%)	8 (0.7%)
Femininity	0 (0.0%)	9 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (0.8%)
Homophobia	4 (0.4%)	37 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (3.7)
Homosociality	79 (7.2%)	2 (0.2%)	53 (4.8%)	134 (12.1%)
Whiteness	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)	5 (0.5%)
Race	1 (0.1%)	5 (0.5%)	44 (4.0%)	50 (4.5%)
Nationalism	19 (1.7%)	16 (1.4%)	24 (2.2%)	59 (5.3%)
Place	3 (0.3%)	18 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)	23 (2.1%)
Religion	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.5%)
Lower class	**1 (0.1%)**	**60 (5.7%)**	**2 (0.2%)**	**63 (6.0%)**
Upper class	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (0.1%)**	**0 (0.0%)**	**1 (0.1%)**
Young (age)	6 (0.5%)	7 (0.6%)	4 (0.3%)	17 (1.4%)
Old (age)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)
Scene	31 (2.8%)	12 (1.1%)	73 (6.6%)	116 (10.5%)
Conversational	17 (1.5%)	80 (7.2%)	178 (16.1%)	275 (24.8%)
Commerciality	58 (5.2%)	1 (0.1%)	9 (0.8%)	67 (6.0%)
Total	270 (24.3%)	381 (34.4%)	458 (41.3%)	1109 (100.0%)

Table 9 shows that 95.2% of all comments about the working class were made in a negative manner. From the sample, only 1 (1.5%) utterance was made in a positive way, and 2 (3.2%) made with neutral intentions. Being lower class is thus negatively marked, with a huge majority of the utterances rejecting this class position. With only 1 comment it is safe to say that upper-class values were not marked at all. This confirms the mentalities instilled in society

during the eighties. The MCs, in negatively marking working class mentality and culture, show that it is no longer a position to be celebrated. It is no longer a position that is admirable, but a situation that needs to be escaped from.

Table 9. Cross analysis of Evaluation of Utterances and Theme of Utterances (n=1109)

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Lower class	**1 (1.5%)**	**60 (95.2%)**	**2 (3.2%)**	**63 (100.0%)**
Upper class	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (100.0%)

When qualitatively analysing the utterances in the dimension *Class* further it seems that the MCs in negatively marking the lower members of society are trying to distance themselves from this position. They are igniting their own "class wars", this time against the members of society under them; the Irish travelling community. Nearly all the comments that discuss class were negatively marking the Irish gypsies. "Put a DONK ON IT yaaa dirty tinker", and "fuckin shite yah pair a steamers absolute gypsy tramps", are two comments directed at non-members of the scene who gave a negative comment about one of the artists. Here the members of the scene stand up for the artists by insulting the reviewers, calling them "tinker" and "gypsy tramp". Gypsy and tinker are vernacular terms to describe the Irish travellers, they are highly offensive terms. The MCs, throughout the sample, regularly disrespect and shame the travelling community and in insulting them mark them negatively.

We see here the Irish MCs 'othering' this ethnic minority – a group that is socially lower– creating a positive identity for themselves, and in doing so forming notions of self-worth. By openly distinguishing themselves from the travellers, they are laying claim to a higher status, implying that they are superior. Othering is used to draw moral and cultural boundaries between them and the stigmatised group; in doing so they are making sure that the lower group does not taint their reputation. As Maria Kafalas (2003), in her study of working class communities in Chicago, writes:

> "The privileged have little contact with and face almost no competition from upwardly mobile minorities looking for their piece of the pie. Instead, a uniquely working-class strategy for survival relies on creating social and symbolic distances between themselves and the dispossessed" (p.156)

The upper class, who make the rules, and establish the legitimate culture have no competition from other social strata's. However, with the lower classes being grouped together there is a

need to distinguish oneself by negatively othering the subordinate group. This othering of a lower group is clearly seen in the case of the MCs. In showing resentment towards the Irish travellers they distinguish themselves from the group and maintain an aspect of superiority. As their exterior appearance is very similar, the MCs are almost indistinguishable from the travelling community. Because the travellers hold such a negatively marked position in society the MCs do not want to be coloured into that category. Through their subculture, they can draw boundaries between them and the marked group, in doing so creating a sense of self-worth and entitlement. It is also used as an opportunity to disable any notions of associations with the traveling community.

4.2.4 Commerciality

In aiming to rise the working class position one would expect to find that the MCs admire the upper class. The act of positively marking upper class mentality and behaviour would be seen as a natural one. Yet, this was not the case. When referring back to Table 9 one sees that there was only 1 utterance that dealt with theme of the value 'upper class'. What was heavily marked, however, was commerciality. Commercialization – conforming to the ways of the popular music industry to make economic profit – was for a large part celebrated.

This was a surprising finding. In studying this subculture, it was expected that a resentment of mainstream culture and commercial music industry would be present. The concepts of authenticity not only concerns ideas of being original and true to oneself, but also notions of not selling out; one can not alter their character or product for the sole purpose of financial gain. For subcultures, as stated by Moore (2005), it is particularly important to stay authentic and independent from the mainstream music industry. Claims of authenticity, for subcultures, separate the original members from the general public; they protect the members and prevent the mainstream from taking over. According to research (Moore, 2005, Encheva, et al, 2013, Blaire, 1993), this is a very real struggle. Youth culture is a very profitable industry and historically the mainstream has a reputation of commandeering it.

Table 10 shows that a significative amount of comments (6.0%), however, had the theme of commercialization. What is even more interesting to note is that a huge percentage of comments were expressed positively (86.5%). This displays an unexpected finding. In taking into account previous research, one expects to find that the Irish MCs, as a subculture would negatively mark commercialization. From the analysis of this sample, however, it is clear that they positively mark it instead. Only one comment out of the 67 (0.1%) expressed negative feelings towards the commercial market, and 9 (13.4%) were communicated neutrally. This

high indication of positive comments toward commercialization and the music industry shows that in fact the MCs do not shun the notion of the mainstream industry and perhaps actually have aspirations for it.

Table 10. Crosstab of Theme of utterances and Evaluation of utterance. (n=1109)

	Positive	**negative**	**neutral**	**Total**
Lyrics	16 (1.4%)	52 (4.7%)	17 (1.5%)	85 (7.7%)
Skill	24 (2.2%)	36 (3.2%)	21 (1.9%)	81 (7.3%)
Style	9 (0.8%)	19 (1.7%)	18 (1.6%)	46 (4.1%)
Personality	2 (0.2%)	18 (1.6%)	2 (0.2%)	22 (2.0%)
Masculinity	0 (0.0%)	5 (0.5%)	3 (0.3%)	8 (0.7%)
Femininity	0 (0.0%)	9 (0.8%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (0.8%)
Homophobia	4 (0.4%)	37 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	41 (3.7)
Homosociality	79 (7.2%)	2 (0.2%)	53 (4.8%)	134 (12.1%)
Whiteness	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)	5 (0.5%)
Race	1 (0.1%)	5 (0.5%)	44 (4.0%)	50 (4.5%)
Nationalism	19 (1.7%)	16 (1.4%)	24 (2.2%)	59 (5.3%)
Place	3 (0.3%)	18 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)	23 (2.1%)
Religion	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.5%)
Lower class	1 (0.1%)	60 (5.7%)	2 (0.2%)	63 (6.0%)
Upper class	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)
Young (age)	6 (0.5%)	7 (0.6%)	4 (0.3%)	17 (1.4%)
Old (age)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)
Scene	31 (2.8%)	12 (1.1%)	73 (6.6%)	116 (10.5%)
Conversational	17 (1.5%)	80 (7.2%)	178 (16.1%)	275 (24.8%)
Commerciality	**58 (5.2%)**	**1 (0.1%)**	**9 (0.8%)**	**67 (6.0%)**
Total	270 (24.3%)	381 (34.4%)	458 (41.3%)	1109 (100.0%)

The positive stance towards commercialization is made even clearer with a further qualitative investigation into the comments. It becomes clear the MCs celebrate the idea of becoming popular, with ambitions of breaking onto the mainstream scene. Their aim is to make music their profession, to record in studios, make albums and become famous. "He killed it, expert-level... He should go pro and record some EP's". Here a commentator states that the artist did a good job with his performance. He encourages the artist to go "pro" and make an

album. By pro he means professional, indicating that the artist should make MC-ing his career. Another commentator expresses a similar feeling "This kid is mental! He's going places! Follow him on Facebook dropping some phat freestyles!". With this quote, one sees again that MCs are not shy of notions of becoming famous. It seems that for MCs YouTube is not the final stage of their career, their aim is to move past the YouTube scene and its original members. They want to 'go somewhere'. "You expect to be a future rapper and this is how you present your music have a look at yourself BUD !!". Even though this last quote is a negative response to the artistic performance, it still addresses the idea that YouTube is just a platform. A space where MCs can show-off their talent in hope of getting discovered. In the commentator saying that the artist wants to be a "future rapper," he implies that he is not yet a real rapper. It indicates towards more ambitions than just to make raps on YouTub. Through it they aim to gain public exposure and recognition.

Making music is not only a tool that working class youths use in creating feelings of solidarity and identity but it also provides a manner in which these adolescents generate hope; in it they see a way they can escape their class position. Due to the neoliberal rhetoric and ideologies it is no longer acceptable to be lower class; the working class values are no longer recognised. Recognition, however, is highly connected to our well being and sense of self-worth. To be an autonomous individual one needs the acceptance and appreciation of others. Sayer (2005), makes the distinction between "conditional" and "unconditional respect". Unconditional respect is recognition you get from just being human, it is separate from any of the individual's characteristics or traits, it is inherent in all humans. Conditional respect, however, is recognition that you have to earn. You only receive it through achieving something. As social actors and individuals, we need both kinds of recognition. This need to have unconditional as well as conditional respect can cause distributions of inequality. Lower classes made redundant by the process of deindustrialization suffer because they can not generate the income or status needed to gain conditional respect. These lower classes affected by the changing labour market have to find conditional respect elsewhere.

This is one of the ways in which the scene is used by the Irish MCs. The artists use the media platform to gain social recognition. Although the scene itself will not generate full conditional respect as it has to be given by a member of society in a higher position, it will provide them with necessary feelings of self-worth and aspirations for a better future. Through the scene, the members see a manner in which they can achieve this respect. With notions of mobility, they dream of getting recognised and breaking into the mainstream, consequently gaining the respect they crave.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

This thesis analysed the relationship between the formation of the Irish MC scene and the loss of white working class male identity. The subject was discussed through examining the boundary work created by the online rap scene. Through the use of qualitative and quantitative content analysis of YouTube comments, it looked into two aspects needed to be an authentic member; subcultural capital and auxiliary characteristics. The inquiry has confirmed that there is a connection between the formation of the scene and the current situation of the working class white male. The findings have also confirmed that through the formation of boundaries related to the music of the scene and the inherent characteristics of the members, the group can create a sense of solidarity, community and collective identity.

Subsequently, the research has led to a number of compelling findings. First, where it was expected to find that these youths positively mark working class attributes such as traditional notions of masculinity, this was not the case with the Irish MCs. Despite being from a working class background they did not celebrate their position. The Irish MCs negatively marked working class values, distancing themselves from any related imagery. This was clearly seen through the negative marking of messy or unkempt dress and unfavourable references towards the instability of finances. This hope to transcend their social position was seen further through the 'negative othering' of communities socially below them. In the process of marking, they eliminate any associations with this group, gaining feelings of superiority. Through refusing to partake in overtly masculine behaviour, an aspect traditionally part of being a working class man, they neglect their heritage, adopting revised notions of masculinity. In negatively marking hostility and aggression, they hope to distance themselves from the lower groups in society recognized for being violent. By disdaining these characteristics, they hope to prevent being coloured as the same group, elevating their chances in moving up in society. One would have also expected that the scene would strongly protect their boundaries, prohibiting any forms of dilution; however, instead of rejecting commercialization, and the popular music industry as anticipated, they glorify it. With aims of transcending their social position, they use the hope of success to fuel ideas of escaping their current position.

While masculinity was left unmarked, homosocial behaviour was positively recognised. This was the second finding of interest. Throughout the sample, there was a significant amount of comments displaying homosociality. This finding reaffirms the idea that

the scene is used as a space for collectivist processes and group mobilisation. One sees a positive marking of brotherly affection, showing that the scene is used as a support mechanism, as a structure for mentorship and for developing friendships and networks. Through YouTube these working class youths create a community and generate notions of conditional respect and recognition.

The third interesting finding surrounding ideas of nationality. One of the prominent boundaries of the group was that the members had to be Irish. Intra-racial authenticity was a crucial element to the scene. To be an 'in' member one has to be Irish and display commitment to Ireland and its heritage. This national pride was broadcasted throughout the sample and the strong bond between members was once again seen. The MCs, in negatively marking other ethnicities, draw strong boundaries between themselves and racial 'others'. Here they once again distinguish themselves from another group, and in the process of giving a negative identity to the other, form a positive identity for themselves.

Lastly, as with most subcultures, to be a subcultural member one is required to have the appropriate knowledge of the scene (subcultural capital). Forging these boundaries creates a sense of community, something that the working class have lost. Moreover, having the same tastes creates feelings of sameness, an aspect that is equally important for lower-class youths. Dressing the same and listening to the same music, gave them something to feel part of, a social connection, perceptions of recognition and a belief that their contribution matters. It was clear from the inquiry that the scene was not only used for sharing music. The activity-focused social website, YouTube, acted as a tool, providing a space where working class youths could meet like minded people and generate feelings of collective identity. The music provided a starting point, a conversation starter. Through music sharing, they formed friendships and social networks.

5.2 Relating to Theory

This thesis has not only added to existing research on subcultures, but it has opened up a much-needed discussion into the loss of identity of the white working class male. This research has confirmed concepts of previous studies on the crisis of masculinity (Clare, 2000; MacDonald, 2001; McDowell, 2003, Nayak, 2003; Robinson, 2000) and the fragile state of whiteness (Fine, et al. 1997; Lawrence, 2013; Newits & Wray, 1997). In examining a small group of working class youths, not only does it extend these notions, but also challenges them. For example, in contrast to Gareth Stahl's idea of London's working class reinforcing their masculine attributes, the Irish MCs seem to have adopted revised ideas of manhood, withdrawing from traditional

values of working class masculinity. In an attempt to distance themselves from the classes socially below them, they choose to not recognise masculine behaviour.

Similarly, when examining the 'whiteness' of the group, it was noted that they do not acknowledge their skin colour, it was an unmarked value, as expected. However, what we do see is that they have racist tendencies; nationalism and pride of place were prominent aspects of the scene. This shows that even if they are not aware of their declining position, in relation to race they demonstrate a deep resentment to other nationalities. The working class white male used to have an important place in society; today, globalisation, with the increasing international flow of goods, services, and people, has left the working class man at the back of the line in terms of education and the labour market. The frustration and resentment of this group was demonstrated through the boundary work of the scene.

Another aspect that this thesis supports, is the concept of subcultures. With the writings of post-subculturalists such as Michel Maffesoli (1996), Andy Bennett (1999), David Muggleton (2000), and Stephen Miles (2000), the idea of subcultural collectivity was no longer relevant. These theorists wrote that with the fluid and individual characteristics of postmodernism, youths would no longer choose for one unified collective image, but jump between a variety of identities and groups. However, this thesis demonstrates that subcultural groupings are still relevant, even if it is in revised version. In examining the case study, one sees the traditional subcultural structure: a small cultural group within the existing culture, who share ideologies and attitudes, associating with the same music and style. Moreover, similarly to the original subcultures, this scene acts as a tool to help members cope with the prevailing system, it provides a resource where youths can find strength, support and a medium to express themselves. It presents a sense of subjective and collective identity. This thesis thus argues for the recovery of the term subculture. While it acknowledges the omnivorous, fluid and eclectic nature of youths today, it argues that these elements exclude the working class. Where middle-class youths have the potential and the facilities to flow in and out of trends, mixing and matching along the way, working-class youths do not have this privilege. As demonstrated they still need the boundaries that a subculture provides.

5.3 Limitations

One of the main limitations of this thesis was that all the information came from the internet. The data was collected from YouTube comments, and subsequently quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. The visibility of the group is limited to the posted videos. Because there is no live scene the only way to study the internal group interactions is through the internet.

With the distance the internet creates, an adolescent can choose who they want to be, they can also choose what they want to say. This limits the reliability of the research, as the internet can be an open impermanent and flexible place.

5.4 Further Research

This thesis examines the online scene of the Irish MCs. As stated, this is a subculture that is based solely online. This is a spinoff of our times; internet is readily available, and making networks, friendships and communities is often easier online than off. However, for further research, it would be interesting to study an offline working class subculture. The next step would be to see if the same findings occur with a non-virtual subculture. Using the same formula – researching marked and unmarked qualities – it would be interesting to see if offline subcultures draw boundaries with the same intensity as the Irish MCs. One could compare the subcultures to make wider assumptions about the position of the white working class male, in current society. In other words: To what extent does the formation of a offline subculture relate to the current situation of the white working class male? In doing this one eliminates the limitations of this thesis; the restriction in studying an online scene.

Bibliography:

Bayer, G. (2009). *Heavy Metal Music in Britain*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.

Becker, H. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: The Free Press.

Bennett, A. (1999). Subcultures or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste. *Sociology*. 33:3, 599-617.

Bennett, A. (2000). *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bennett, A & Peterson, R. (2004). Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual. Nashville: Vanderbilt Press

Blaire, E. (1993). Commercialization of the Rap music youth subculture. *Journal of Popular Culture*. 27: 3, 21.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste.

Brekhus, W. (1998), A Sociology of the Unmarked: Redirecting Our Focus. *Journal of sociological theory.* 16:1, 34-51.

Brekhus, W. (2008). Trends in the Qualitative Study of Social Identities. *Sociology Compass.* 2:3, 1059–1078.

Brekhus, W, Brunsma, D, Platts, T & Dua, P. (2010). On the Contributions of Cognitive Sociology to the Sociological Study of Race. *Sociology Compass.* 4:1,61–76

Brekhus, W. (2015). *Culture and Cognition: Patterns in the Social Construction of Reality.* Oxford: Polity Press

Brown, B & Sellen, A. (2006). "Sharing and Listening to Music" O'Hara, K & Brown, B. (ed.), Consuming Music Together - Social and Collaborative Aspects of Music Consumption Technologies. 37-57, New York: Springer.

Clare, A. (2000) On Men: Masculinity in Crisis. London: Chatto & Windus.

Clark, D. (2003). 'The Death and Life of Punk, the Last Subculture.' 223–36 in The Post-Subcultures Reader, edited by David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl. New York, NY: Berg.

Chau, C. (2010). YouTube as a participatory culture. *New Directions for Youth Development.* 128

Cerulo, K. (2002). Culture in mind: Toward a sociology of culture and cognition. New York: Routledge.

Cohen, P. (1972). "Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community". Halls, S (ed.) Culture, Media, Language, London: Hutchinson.

Cushman, T. (2006). Authentic Identities Straightedge Subculture, Music, and the Internet. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography.* 35:2, 173-200.

Cutler, C. (2014). White Hip Hoppers, Language and Identity in Post-Modern America. New York. Routledge.

Denzin, N. (1978). *The Research Act, 2d ed.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Durkheim, E. [1912] (1995). The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Translated by Karen E. Fields. New York: The Free Press.

DiAngelo, R. (2011). White Fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy.* 3:3, 54-70

Edgell, S. (1993). *Class: Key Concept in Sociology.* Oxford: Routledge.

Encheva, K, Driessens, O & Verstraeten, H. (2013). The mediatization of deviant subcultures: an analysis of the media-related practices of graffiti writers and skaters. *Mediekultur: Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 29:54, 8-25.

Evans, G. (2006). *Educational Failure and Working Class White Children in Britain.* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan

Eysenbach, G & Till, J. (2001). Ethical issues in qualitative research on internet communities. *BMJ.* 323:7321, 1103–1105.

Fine, M, Powell, L, Weis, L. & Wong, M. (1997). *Off White.* London and New York: Routledge.

Firth, S. (1996). "Music and identity". Hall, S & du Gay, P (ed.), Questions of cultural identity, 108-27. London: Sage.

Forman, M & Neal, M. (2004). *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge

Frankenberg, R. (1994) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gallagher, C. (2004). "Racial redistricting: expanding the boundaries of whiteness" , Heather M. Dalmage (ed.) The Politics of Multiracialism: Challenging Racial Thinking, Albany, NY : State University Press of New York , pp. 59 – 76

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* New York: Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.* Englewood Cliffs,

NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Hall, C. (2002) White, Male and Middle Class. London: Routledge.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. London: Routledge.

Hill, M. (1997) Whiteness: A Critical Reader. New York: New York University Press.

Hinduja, S & Patchin, W. (2008). Personal information of adolescents on the Internet: A quantitative content analysis of Myspace. *Journal of Adolescence.* 31: 125–146.

Hodder, I. (1994). "The interpretation of documents and material culture" Lincoln & Denzin (ed.), Handbook of qualitative research, 393-402, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Hodkinson, P. (2003). 'Net.Goth': Internet Communication and (Sub)Cultural Boundaries.

Hodkinson, P. (2016). Youth cultures and the rest of life: subcultures, post-subcultures and beyond, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19:5, 629-645.

Hollingworth, S, & Katya, W. (2009). Constructions of the Working-class 'Other' among Urban, White, Middle-class Youth: 'Chavs', Subculture and the Valuing of Education. *Journal of Youth Studies.* 12 (5): 467–482.

Horocks, R. (1994). Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies and Realities. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hsieh , H & Shannon, S. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15:9.

Huq, R. (2006). *Beyond Subcultures: Pop, youth and identity in a postcolonial world*. New York: Routledge.

Jick, T. (1979). Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24:4. 602-611.

Jones, O. (2011). *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class.* London: Verso.

Kefalas, M. (2003). *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community and Nation in a Chicago Neighbourhood*. CA: University of California Press.

Kahn, R & Keller, D. (2003). *Internet Subcultures and Oppositional Politic* in the post-subcultural reader 298 – 313 – (ed.) David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzier. Oxford: Berg Publishing.

Keenan, A & Shiri, A. (2009). Sociability and social interaction on social networking websites. *Library Review*. 58:6, 438-450.

Kohlbacher, F. (2006). The Use of Qualitative Content Analysis in Case Study Research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research.* 7:1.

Lange, P. (2008). Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.* 13: 361–380.

Lamont, M & Molnar, V. (2002). The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences. Annu. Rev. Sociol. 28,167–95.

Lawrence, S. (2013). "On White Men's Representations of 'Race', Whiteness, Masculinities and 'Otherness': A Critical Race Study of Men's Magazines, Racialisation and Athletic Bodies." PhD diss., Leeds Metropolitan University.

Madden, A, Ruthven, I & McMenemy, D. (2013). A classification scheme for content analyses of YouTube video comments. *Journal of Documentation*. 69:5, 693-714.

MacDonald, N. (2001). The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York. Palgrave Macmillan.

Madden, A, Ruthven, I & McMenemy, D. (2013). A classification scheme for content analyses of YouTube video comments. *Journal of Documentation*. 69:5. 693-714.

Maffesoli, M. (1996), *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, London: Sage.

Malbon, B. (1999). *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality*. London: Routledge.

McDowell, L. (2003). *Redundant Masculinities? Employment Change and White Working Class Youth*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Mead, G, Herbert, M & Charles W. (1934). *Mind, Self & Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miles, S. (2000). *Youth Lifestyles in a Changing World*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Moore, R. (2004). Postmodernism and Punk Subculture: Cultures of Authenticity and Deconstruction. *The Communication Review*, 7:305–327.

Muggleton, D. (2000). *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style*. Oxford: Berg.

Murdock, G. (1974) "Mass communication and the construction of meaning". Armistead, N. (ed.), Reconstructing Social Psychology. 205-20, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books

O'Hara, K & Brown, B. (2006). *Consuming Music Together: Social and Collaborative Aspects of Music Consumption Technologies*. New York: Springer.

O'Sullivan, E. (2016). Limerick viral star Lynchy keeps it steady in the rap game. Irish examiner.

Newits, A. & Wray, M. (1997). *White Trash*. London: Routledge.

Nayak, A. (2003). 'Boyz to Men': Masculinities, schooling and labour transitions in de-industrial times. *Educational Review*, 55:2, 147-159.

Quinn, J, Thoman, L, Slack, K, Casey, L, Texton, W & Nobel, J. (2006). Lifting the hood: lifelong learning and young, white, provincial working-class masculinities. *British Educational Reseach Journal.* 32:5, 735-750.

Reeser, T. (2010). *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Rhodes, H. (1993). *The Evolution of Rap Music in the United States*. Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute.

Roediger, D. (1991). *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London: Verso.

Sayer, A. (2005). *The Moral Significance of Class. New York*: Cambridge University Press.

Sayer, A. (2010). Class and Morality. In Handbook of the Sociology of Morality Editors: Steven Hitlin, Stephen pg 163-179

Schaap, J. & Berkers, P. (2014). Grunting Alone? Online Gender Inequality in Extreme Metal Music. Journal of the Internationa Association for the Study of Popular Music. 4:1, 101-116.

Schwartz, S, Luyckx, K & Vignoles, V. (2011). *Editors Handbook of Identity Theory and Research Volume 1 Structures and Processes*, New York: Springer.

Schwarz, O. (2016). The symbolic economy of authenticity as a form of symbolic violence: the case of middle-class ethnic minorities. *Distinction: Journal of Social Theory*, 17:1, 2-19.

Shuker, R. (1998). *Understanding Popular Music*. London: Routledge.

Song, M, Kyung Jeong, Y & Jin Kim, H. (2014). Identifying the Topology of the K-pop Video Community on YouTube: A Combined Co-comment Analysis Approach. Journal of the association for information science and technology.

Stahl, G .(2014). The Affront of the Aspiration Agenda: White Working-Class Male Narratives of 'Ordinariness' in Neoliberal Times. *Masculinities and Social Change*, 3:2, 88-119.

Stahl, G. (2017) The practice of 'Othering' in reaffirming white working- class boys' conceptions of normative identities. *Journal of Youth Studies*. 20:3, 283-300.

Stone, G. (1962). 'Appearance and the Self.' 86–118 in Human Behavior and Social Processes, edited by Arnold M. Rose. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Thornton, S. (1995). *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity.

Robinson, S. (2000). *Wounded Masculinity: marked men, white masculinity in crisis*. Columbian University press.

van Dijk, T.A. (1995). Ideological Discourse Analysis. *New Courant*. 4, 135-161.

Walsh, F. (2010). *Male Trouble: Masculinity and the Performance of Crisis*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Wang, J & Chen, C. (2004). An automated tool for managing interactions in virtual communities—using social network analysis approach. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*. 14:1, 1-26.

Williams, J. (2006). Authentic Identities Straightedge Subculture, Music, and the Internet. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 35:2. 173-200.

William, P & Copes, H. (2005). "How Edge Are You?" Constructing Authentic Identities and Subcultural Boundaries in a Straightedge Internet Forum. *Symbolic Interaction*. 28:1, 67–89.

Wigmore, T. (2016). The lost boys: how the white working class got left behind. New Statesman. Accessed on the 09-10-16: http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/education/2016/09/lost-boys-how-white-working-class-got-left-behind

Appendix 1: Code Book

Group 1: Characteristics of the Video

Variable	Description	Values
Name (NAME_ART)	Name of artist	Nominal String Max characters = 60
Number of video (VID_NO)	The number video it is, E.g. if it is the most viewed, most recent, or first published	0=most viewed 1=first 2=most recent
Access date (ACC_DATE)	The date that the video was recorded by the researcher	Interval Numeric
Published date (PUB_DATE)	The date that the video was published on YouTube	Interval Numeric
Views	How many views does the video have	Ratio

(VIEWS)		Numerical
Likes (LIKES)	How many likes does the video have	Ratio Numerical
Dislikes (DISLIKES)	How many dislikes does the video have	Ratio Numerical
Amount of comments (YT_COM)	How many comments does the video have	Ratio Numerical
Gender (GENDER)	The gender of the artist	Nominal Numeric 0=male 1=female 2=unknown/other
Published by (SELF_PUB)	If it was posted by the artists him/herself or someone else	Nominal Numeric 0=yes 1=other

(Recorded per video)

Group 2: Characteristics of the comment

Variable	Description		Values
Gender of commentator (GEN_COM)	If the person commentating is male, female or unknown. The gender of the artist was primarily base on the name and photo of the commentator. If it was undecipherable the profile of the commentator was inspected further. If after this, it was still unclear then the code was marked with the value unknown.		Nominal
	Male		0
	Female		1
	Unknown/other		2
	The artist		3
Commenting on another comment (COM_COM)	If it is a comment that is commenting on another comment and not directly on the video		Nominal
	No		0
	Yes		1
	Unknown		2
Evaluation (EV_COM)	Was it a positive or negative comment		Nominal
	Positive	Was it a positive comment	0
	Negative	Was it a negative comment	1
	neutral	Was there no bias	2

(Recorded per utterance)

Group 3: Variable - Theme of Comment

Theme (THEM_COM)	Used to uncover the boundaries of this scene. It is split into subcultural capital or knowledge of the scene and auxiliary characteristics such as gender, race and class. These themes are also used to get a deeper understanding of the scene and its member's collective identity (or to see if there is collective identity present).			Nominal
Dimension	**Sub-dimensions Code**	**Indicators**	**Description**	**Values**
Authenticity/sub cultural capital	Lyrics	'copy cat', 'stealing lyrics', 'sick bars'	About the lyrics, if they authentic or not.	1
	skill	'not freestyle', 'too slow'…	The quality of the rap skill, or freestyle. When the authenticity of the actual rap is mentioned. E.g. If the rap is not freestyle	2
	style	'nice jacket', 'get a haircut'…	Differentiation in accordance with style. Commenting on the way some one looks.	3
	personality		If the personality is/is not authentic	4
	Commerciality		Promotion of self or others. Professional aspirations.	5
Gender and sexuality	Masculinity	'hard', 'Rough', 'tough', 'Brave'…	If the comment has masculine features. If it deals with themes or qualities traditionally associated with men.	6
	Femininity	'girly', 'soft', 'sensitive', 'pussy', 'weak'…	If it deals with themes or qualities traditionally associated with women. E.g. vulnerability, sensuality.	7
	Homophobia	'Faggot', 'fag', 'gay', 'queer'…	If there is any homophobia indicated – any anti-gay tendencies. E.g. the labeling of some who is or is not a homosexual.	8
	Homosociality	'mate', 'lad', 'bro', 'boi', 'pal', 'man' …	An indication of a social interaction between two members of the same sex, in this case, two males.	9
Ethnicity	Whiteness		An indication that commentator makes a critical point of belonging to a group that have light-coloured skin.	10
	Race	'darky', 'nigga',	If race is mentioned. If there is any gesture towards ethnic	11

61

		'Irish bastered', 'American cunt'…	differentiation or racism. If there is a generalization of stereotyping present.	
	Nationalism/Irish pride	'up the Irish', 'Go on Ireland'…	If there is any national (Irish) pride present in the utterance. When Ireland is mentioned in a comment.	12
	Place	'up Limerick', 'kip'…	About a specific place in Ireland. E.g. when they declare like/dislike for a specific place.	13
	Religion	'prody', 'orange', 'protestant', 'catholic' …	If religion is mentioned. An ethnocentric definition of religion is used because in Ireland religion is thought of as another manner in which to show Irish pride. In this case not so much about beliefs or values.	14
Class	Lower Class	'knacker', 'gypsy', 'gyppo' 'traveler', 'pikey', 'hillbilly', 'thinker', 'chav' …	Indication of class differentiation or classism in regards to a lower class. This includes any comments on economics, poverty, or the suggestion of belonging to a lower social group. E.g. comparing someone to a lower member of society.	15
	Higher Class	'townie', 'rich cunt', 'posh cunt','D4'…	Indication of class differentiation or classism in regards to a higher class. This includes any comments on economics, being well off, or the suggestion of belonging to a higher social group. E.g. comparing someone to a high member of society.	16
Age	Young	'kid', 'child', 'wee lad', 'innocent boy'…	Drawing boundaries in regards of some one being too young. Can be positive or negitive.	17
	old	'old man'	Drawing boundaries in regards of some one being too old.	18
Group/collective identity	The scene	'we', 'us', 'our'… 'shout out'	Group sensibility - If there is any form of collective assembly present in the comment. Evidence of the scene.	19
	conversation	'Hi', 'hello', 'where are you from'	When the tone of the comment is purely conversational. E.g. Not addressing the video	20
No theme	No theme		No theme that is relevant to theoretical focus.	99

(Recorded per utterance)

Appendix 2: Criteria for Sampling

Criteria		description	Reasoning
1	The 'artist' is Irish	The artist had to have an Irish nationality	To be a authentic member of the scene one had to be Irish.
2	The word MC was in the title of the video	The word MC stands for mic controller. This is what the rappers called themselves.	There is more then one rap scene in Ireland. To guarantee that all the videos are from the same scene it was essential that the word MC was some where in the title of the video or the name of the artists.

3	Visible low production costs	i.e. filmed on a handheld mobile device.	From looking at the scene, one sees that the DIY quality of recording on a handheld phone was desired. To establish which videos were from this scene they had to be filmed on a mobile phone in a vertical video.
4	The video had more than 10 usable comments	If a video had less then 10 comments it was not used.	In having 10 comments or less, it meant that the video was not very popular.

Appendix 3: example of utterance

The sample(n) in the case of this thesis is not the comments but the 'utterance'. An 'utterance' is determent by the meaning of a sentence. For example, when necessary, a comment can be divided into two or more parts depending on the meaning. If a comment has a number of sentences all of which have different themes than these can be recorded separately. Thus leading to more elaborate results.

Example of how a sentence can be broken up into utterances:
Comment: "get a fuckin haircut u little thinker and stop thinking your a hard fuckin townie"
This comment can be broken up into 2 utterances.
   1) Get a fucking haircut u little thinker (Code = Evaluation: negative, Theme: lower class)
   2) Stop thinking you're a hard fucking townie (Code = Evaluation: negative, Theme: masculinity