

DISSERTATION FROM THE
NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF
SPORT SCIENCES
2017

Tonje Fjogstad Langnes

Breaking – that's me!

MEANING – IDENTITY – GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS
among young break(danc)ers living in Oslo, Norway.

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To know oneself
is to study oneself
in action with
another person.
– *Bruce Lee*

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Oslo, 2017



Tonje Ejøgstad Langnes

Summary

In a rapidly changing world characterized by increased ethnic diversity, successful integration depends (among other factors) on social interaction among people. Hence, there is a need for cross-cultural meeting points. Breaking [breakdance] is historically linked to a black, urban street context and has evolved into a global phenomenon with adherents throughout the world. This dissertation investigates the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people living in Oslo, Norway. Considering breaking as a subculture and alternative sport, the dissertation may contribute to the understanding of young people's choices – their construction of meaning, identity and gender within this activity.

Theoretically, the study draws on symbolic interactionism to understand how young breakers in Oslo define their experiences and give meaning to their identities, behaviors, realities and social interactions. However, to address social structure and power, a gender perspective has been applied. As a social construction, gender is constantly reconstructed through social interaction, and the dissertation explores how gender influences the breakers' experiences and how breaking is a site for negotiating gender ideology and power relations.

Methodologically, the study uses a qualitative research strategy to create an in-depth understanding of the social practices of breaking. Empirically, the dissertation draws on ethnographic data generated through fieldwork and interviews. The fieldwork involved participant observation four days a week from August 2011 to March 2012. The fieldwork was followed by 17 qualitative interviews with 6 female and 11 male breakers, who reflected the observed diversity within the subculture of breaking.

The results of the dissertation have been presented through four articles. These are interconnected and constitute a whole as they explore the breakers' construction of meaning, identity and gender.

Articles 1 and 2 draw mainly on symbolic interactionism. Article 1 highlights the breakers' construction of an alternative breaker identity. The article reveals that successful integration into the subculture of breaking is dependent on impression management according to the subculture's characteristics. Through deliberate impression management, subcultural boundaries were created through a style that constituted the breakers' collective group identity.

Accordingly, the breakers constructed an alternative breaker identity detached from other social categories and created a sense of belonging to a wider breaker community.

Article 2 discusses the breakers' meaning constructions. The results show that the breakers had made a deliberate choice to start breaking. The article highlights that the meaning of breaking arises through the breakers' ongoing social interaction and that the symbolic value of breaking was created through a demand for involvement. Accordingly, the breakers developed a sense of affiliation to a group that not only supported them but also challenged them to make their contribution to breaking. By defining breaking as an artistic dance, differences were celebrated and the meaning of breaking was constructed around the feeling of freedom to "just be yourselves."

Articles 3 and 4 have a mainly a gender perspective. Article 3 explores how young people involved in breaking contribute to the doing, redoing and undoing of gender. The negotiation of gender is highlighted through the female breakers' experiences in a male-dominated culture. Within the subculture of breaking, the perception of gender served as a frame for female breakers' actions and re-actions. The article emphasizes how the female breakers constantly challenged the perceptions of doing gender, and how breaking holds the capacity to redo and undo gender.

Article 4 draws on R. Connell's (2005) conceptualization of masculinities and explores how masculinity is exhibited among young male breakers – how this is formed, performed and (re)negotiated through breaking. The article highlights how the breakers' masculinity constructions are influenced by breaking's history, and how this can be interpreted as a protest masculinity, challenging the hegemonic masculinity in the societal gender order.

Even though the dissertation focuses on the everyday practices of breaking at a local level, the results underline the breakers' sense of belonging not only to a Norwegian breaking community (regional level), but also to a wider global breaker community. The dissertation concludes that the meaning of breaking is constantly reconstructed through the breakers' social interaction. The results highlight that young people's cultivation of freedom and differences are framed by the prevailing definition of the situation within the subculture of breaking. This collective awareness influences the breakers' construction of meaning, identity and gender.

The study reveals how gender as a social structure influences the breakers' social interaction and meaning constructions. Gender is constantly renegotiated in the breakers' social

interaction, and the results show that breaking seems to have a transformational potential regarding gender. Furthermore, among the breakers, ethnic diversity was regarded as a natural part of breaking and the results underline breaking as an alternative means of identification and acceptance for young people of diverse backgrounds. As the meaning of breaking was constructed around a sense of respect and recognition, the breakers communicated increased self-esteem and confidence, which were useful in contexts outside breaking.

The main finding of this dissertation is that the meaning of breaking arises through the breakers ongoing social interaction in a *gendered* and *multicultural youth culture*. The meaning of breaking is connected to a sense of *belonging* to a *local and global subculture* and constructing an *alternative identity* across social differences. Within this framework the breakers expresses the feeling of freedom to “just be themselves.” In sum, the results of the study show that breaking is a meeting point across social and cultural borders, and that the meaning of breaking was constructed around a sense of “belonging” and empowerment.

Sammendrag

I en verden med økende etnisk mangfold er sosial interaksjon mellom mennesker en avgjørende faktor for vellykket integrering. Det er derfor et sterkt behov for kryss-kulturelle møteplasser. Breaking (breakdance) har utviklet seg fra en svart, urban gate kontekst til et globalt fenomen. Denne doktorgradsavhandlingen undersøker hvilken mening breaking har for unge mennesker som bor i Oslo, Norge, og gir et bidrag til å forstå unge menneskers konstruksjon av mening, identitet og kjønn.

Avhandlingen kombinerer symbolsk interaksjonisme og et kjønnsperspektiv. Symbolsk interaksjonisme synliggjør unge breakeres opplevelser, mening, identitet og sosiale relasjoner. Kjønnsperspektivet synliggjør sosiale strukturer og makt. Kjønn rekonstrueres kontinuerlig gjennom sosial interaksjon. Kjønn influerer breakeres opplevelser og maktrelasjoner.

En kvalitativ forskningsstrategi belyser breaking som et sosialt fenomen. Datamaterialet er et resultat av åtte måneders deltagende feltobservasjoner, etterfulgt av 17 kvalitative intervju. Datamaterialet har blitt presentert gjennom fire artikler, som diskuterer breakeres konstruksjon av mening, identitet og kjønn.

Artikkel 1 og 2 har i hovedsak et symbolsk interaksjonistisk perspektiv. Artikkel 1 synliggjør breakeres konstruksjon av en alternativ breaker identitet, mens Artikkel 2 diskuterer breakeres meningskonstruksjoner.

Artikkel 3 og 4 har i hovedsak et kjønnsperspektiv. Artikkel 3 undersøker hvordan unge mennesker involvert i breaking opprettholder og utfordrer stereotypiske oppfatninger knyttet til kjønn. Artikkel 4 anvender R. Connell's (2005) begrepsliggjøring av maskulinitet og utforsker hvordan maskulinitet gjøres av unge mannlige breakere og hvordan maskulinitet formes, iscenesettes og forhandles gjennom breaking.

Resultatene viser at breakere føler en tilhørighet til et lokalt, regionalt og globalt breakefelleskap. Avhandlingen konkluderer med at meningen med breaking kontinuerlig rekonstrueres gjennom breakeres sosiale interaksjon. Breakerernes kultivering av frihet og mangfold er rammet inn av den til hver tid rådende definisjonen av breaking. Denne kollektive bevisstheten influerer breakeres konstruksjon av mening, identitet og kjønn.

List of Articles

Article 1

Langnes, T.F. & K. Fasting (2014) Identity constructions among breakdancers. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. Published online before print 19 March 2014. doi: 10.1177/1012690214526402. Print: *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. May 2016, 51 (3), pp. 349–364.

Article 2

Langnes, T.F. & K. Fasting (2014) The construction of meanings in breaking. Insights from breakers in Oslo. *Nordic Journal of Dance*. 5(2), pp. 22–35.

Article 3

Langnes, T.F. & K. Fasting (2017) Gender constructions in breaking. *Sport in Society*. Published online before print 6 February 2017. doi: 10.1080/17430437.2017.1284809, pp. 1-16.

Article 4

Langnes, T.F. (2017) Masculinity constructions among Norwegian male break(danc)ers. *Submitted to European Journal for Sport and Society*, pp. 1-29.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

December 2005:¹

Thousands of people have signed up to the audition for the Norwegian version of “So You Think You Can Dance” in Oslo. They have been queuing for hours before it is their turn to enter the stage to impress the judges. Everybody hopes to be the one standing out from the crowd. One by one, they perform their dance in the spotlight, to be considered by four experts. The air is bursting with anxiety, tension and excitement. For most people, the dream of fame would end today.

Next up is Adil – dressed in black trousers and an armless singlet, he gives an athletic impression. He enters the stage with distinct confidence. In the interview that follows with the experts, he clearly states that he is a B-Boy.² When the judges ask him what kind of dance he is going to perform, he looks straight at them and answers:

“It is ME!”

(TvNorge, 2006a)

Adil gets selected! In the following months, he competes against professional and amateur dancers on national TV for the title of Norway’s best dancer. Through hard work and believing in himself, he ends up outclassing them all. Consequently, Adil’s career³ catapulted and triggered a dance resurgence, “dansefeber” (Engelsrud, 2006, p. 105; TvNorge, 2005a), among young people all over Norway. At this point, breaking was unfamiliar to me, but Adil’s confidence, self-assurance and performances impressed me. Defining himself as a B-Boy, breaking clearly meant

¹ Oslo was the last city with auditions for the first season of *Dansefeber*, the Norwegian version of *So You Think You Can Dance*. Over 6000 people had signed up for auditions in three cities: Trondheim, Stavanger and Oslo. The reality show aired from January 2, 2006 to March 22, 2006 (TvNorge, 2005b, 2006b).

² B-Boy, B-Girl or breaker refers to a person performing breaking, also known as breakdance.

³ Adil Khan is today a well-known actor, dancer, artist and television personality (Flaatten, 2006; Khan, 2016).

a lot to Adil. Enthralled by his statement: “It is ME!”, I started to wonder why and how breaking had such an impact on Adil. Thus, the initial seed for this dissertation was planted.

The dissertation investigates the meaning of breaking in young people’s lives. The study explores breaking as a signifying practice and its impact on young people’s lives in Oslo, Norway. Perceiving breaking as a social phenomenon, I identify breaking’s relation to different central issues: (1) youth subculture, (2) alternative sport, (3) meaning construction, and (4) gender.

Breaking can be defined as a youth subculture. Youth subcultures often develop around specific activities such as music, fashion, cars/motor, and sport. In a time characterized by increased individualization and pressure on the individual (Krange & Øia, 2005; Øia & Vestel, 2014)⁴, youth subcultures are signifying practices providing shared meanings constructed through social interaction with peers as the “significant others” (Rye, 2013; Schiefloe, 2011; Øia & Vestel, 2014). Peer socialization is important in constructing a sense of “self” (e.g. Mead & Morris, 1934), and youth subcultures can be interpreted as concrete expressions of traditions losing their currency for young people’s subjective perceptions of “who I am.” An important aspect of the subculture of breaking is the embodied enactment of the activity – the physical performance of breaking. As a physical activity, breaking is embraced by a wide understanding of the concept of sport. I understand sport as “movement cultures,” referring to activities emphasizing body positions and movements of the body, which could be activities emphasizing competition or co-operation or open activities such as training and exercise (Loland & Erøy, 2013).

Breaking can be associated with alternative unorganized sports. These alternative sports are often different from traditional rule-bound, competitive and institutionalized sports. Rinehart (2000, p. 506) defines alternative sports as “activities that either ideologically or practically provide alternatives to mainstream⁵ sports and to mainstream sport values.” These activities are often closely aligned with a perception of “play,” as, being “unorganized,” they are without adult supervision or established practice times/locales, but take place with friends or family in private

⁴ Changes from traditional industry to a post-industrial age have resulted in a society in which the past in many ways has become irrelevant for the future. Hence, modern society has been labeled, high-, late-, risk-, post- or liquid modernity (e.g. Bauman, 2007; Beck & Ritter, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Ziehe, 1989).

⁵ I do recognize that mainstream is a contested term; in this dissertation I use it to refer to widespread normative assumptions in society (e.g. Williams & Hannerz, 2014).

or public spaces, some designed *for* and *by* teenagers (e.g. Bakken, 2016; Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003; Sisjord, 2011). Throughout the twenty-first century, these more informal and individualistic alternative sports activities have grown considerably and become increasingly more visible (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2016). With these activities, sport has conquered new locations and spaces without fixed boundaries such as the urban-city, e.g. skateboarding, parkour, and breaking at Oslo Central Station. Corresponding with social changes in society, these alternative sports have emerged as a commentary on traditional sports, and are (often) grounded in individuality, creativity and artistic sensibility (Humphreys, 2003; Sisjord, 2011). Combining sport, play and art, these activities have the potential to challenge not only traditional ways of “doing” sports, but also the meaning of sports. For instance, breaking celebrates creativity and is defined by most breakers as an artistic dance (see Article 2).

In terms of theoretical considerations, the dissertation is inspired by symbolic interactionism and gender as a social construct. Symbolic interactionism has inspired my understanding of the constructed meanings within the subculture of breaking. As the members of the subculture share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects and practices, they are tied through social interaction (Williams, 2011). Hence, meaning is a process, socially constructed within a specific context (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). This means that, through “mirroring” with peers as the significant others, the breakers give meaning to themselves, others and the world around them (e.g. Charon, 2010; Mead & Morris, 1934). The constructed meanings are then closely connected with identity and the perception of “who and what I am.” Giddens (1991) argues that the complexity of modern society has made self-identity an inescapable project. As a consequence, people are involved in what Goffman (1959) calls impression management: that is, strategic decisions about which information to conceal or reveal in their self-presentation. For example, to become a breaker involves adjusting the impression management according to the subculture’s characteristics. As this is learned through social interaction and socialization (e.g. Donnelly & Young, 1988, see Article 1), the prevailing definition of breaking creates a frame (Goffman, 1974) for the individual’s actions.

Gender is an overarching category influencing all aspects of everyday life. Hence, gender is an important criterion for self-identification and how the world is perceived and structured (Järviluoma, Moisala, & Vilkkö, 2003). West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that people

continuously “do gender.” As individuals act out gendered practices, i.e. express masculinity or femininity according to norms and expectations in face-to-face interaction, gendered societal structures are reproduced and gendered systems of dominance and power are constructed (e.g. R. Connell, 1987, 2005, 2009; R. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Importantly, as gender is a social construction, it is constantly re-negotiated through social interaction and can not only be “redone” but also “undone” (Lorber, 1994, 2000, 2005; Risman, Lorber, & Sherwood, 2012; West & Zimmerman, 2009). For instance, breaking is defined as a dance – that is, as something commonly considered as a female activity in Western countries (e.g. Craig, 2014) – while being rooted in an urban, male street culture. Thus, the construction of gender within breaking seems to be contested and represents a potential challenge to the prevailing definitions of doing gender (see Articles 3 and 4).

The purpose of the dissertation is to contribute to knowledge about young people involved in breaking and their construction of meaning, identity and gender. Breaking as a subculture can tell us something about our society – how groups forge their own behaviors and meanings from their own lived experiences – and has a transformative potential to change the way social life is organized. To outsiders, subcultures can appear as mysterious little worlds with secret symbols, rituals and social codes. To be a part of a subculture involves constructing a new identity and a sense of belonging (Williams, 2011). This makes it interesting to explore how breaking is made meaningful to young people living in Oslo, Norway. Attention to young people’s everyday experiences is important, if we are to understand young people’s choices and everyday activities. Who are the Norwegian breakers? How do they construct their breaker identity? What are their experiences of belonging? And how do they negotiate gender?

Research Question and Outline of the Dissertation

The main research question has been formulated as follows:

What is the meaning of breaking in the lives of young breakers in Oslo, Norway?

To answer this question the following sub-questions are discussed in the four articles that comprise the dissertation:

- *How is identity constructed within breaking?*
- *What meanings are constructed?*
- *How is gender constructed and negotiated?*
- *How is masculinity exhibited among young male breakers?*

In order to conceptualize the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people, I will draw on several theoretical perspectives. In Chapter 2, I elaborate on the concepts of youth and youth subculture(s). How young people actively construct meanings in their lives is explained further in Chapter 3, where I present symbolic interactionism as a perspective and discuss gender as a social construction. The methodology of the study is presented in Chapter 4. In order to grasp the breakers' social interaction and thus their meaning constructions, I have used an ethnographic approach, combining fieldwork and interviews. Chapter 5 provides a short review of the articles and summarizes the main results of the study, while Chapter 6 answer the main question raised in this dissertation: *What is the meaning of breaking in the lives of young breakers in Oslo, Norway?* This chapter concludes with the significance of the study for our understanding of young people's everyday experiences and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2 – YOUTH (SUB)CULTURES AND BREAKING

In this chapter, I will elaborate on themes central to the understanding of breaking as a youth subculture. I take a closer look at the emergence of youth as a social category, before I give a brief overview of research on youth subcultures and alternative sports. I argue that subculture is a useful concept for understanding the breakers' social interaction and meaning constructions. The chapter concludes with an examination of breaking's history and academic accounts of breaking.

Understanding Youth Subcultures

First and foremost, youth is a socially constructed category positioned between childhood and adulthood. Youth is then understood as having social and cultural components as well as biological aspects. On the one hand, youth describes a period of transition; it is framed by social institutions (such as school rituals, confirmation, marriage) and social acts (such as leaving home, finding a profession, forming a family), and involves proceeding from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence (Wyn, 2011; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). On the other hand, young people shape their lives and actively ascribe meanings to events through continuous negotiations with the social world and by exercising agency, i.e. what people do. With respect to age, youth is a fluid and changing category. The UN defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (UNESCO, 2016), while NIF (2009) defines youth sport as for people between 13 and 19 years old. In modern Western countries, youth is associated with attractive ideals (e.g. vitality, expansion, possibilities and the future), and it has become important to "avoid" getting old. As a result, the distinction between the social categories of adulthood and youth has almost disappeared (Øia & Vestel, 2014).

In the process of individuation, separation and emerging independency, peer socialization becomes more important, and young people construct their own cultures. Broadly speaking, culture refers to everyday social practices: that is, commonplace routines and practices characterizing and binding particular groups together (Barker, 2003; Hall, 1997; Kehily, 2007). As a collective awareness, culture is actively constructed through social interaction and is connected to symbols, signs, experiences and activities that constitute shared meanings and identities. In other words, culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings, and depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them and

“making sense of the world.” Culture can then be studied through day-to-day engagements within the social world. Such a perspective of culture has implications for the understanding of youth. From a cultural perspective, young people make sense of the world and take their place within it through participation and engagement with everyday social practices (Kehily, 2007). Hence, young people actively construct meanings in their lives, and can develop their own cultures, often referred to as youth cultures or youth subcultures.

The emergence of youth subcultures accelerated due to social changes occurring after World War II. Youth subculture refers to a culturally bounded network of young people sharing attitudes, values, practices and styles (Williams, 2011). To varying degrees, subcultures foster some sort of resistance to mainstream culture (Haenfler, 2014; Williams, 2011). Notably, even though subcultures are not exclusively the domain of youth,⁶ many people begin their subcultural explorations at a young age. The social, cultural and economic changes after World War II facilitated “youth” as a distinct life stage⁷ and created more space for people to experiment with a variety of identities (Giddens, 1991). Changes in production resulted in the weakening of the traditional ties between family, school and work. This created a space between childhood and adulthood, and youth became a social category. Youth faced a wide range of opportunities, challenges and choices. The changes brought about by modernity resulted in a break from the past, characterized by fragmentation, commodification and incoherence. Various commercial goods and services were targeted towards a distinct youth market, such as fashion, music, films, motorbikes and scooters (Roberts, 2016). Youth had the time and opportunity to explore leisure activities, and youth subcultures became important providers of peer socialization. As youth had the freedom to explore and question society, they also expressed frustration with it (Haenfler, 2014; Humphreys, 1996).

Social dissatisfaction was expressed through different movements such as feminism, Black Power and the new leisure movement. The new leisure movement expressed social frustration through the realm of sports that did not conform to traditional definitions of sport. Central to this movement were artistic sensibility, freedom of action and expression. Adherents of

⁶ Earlier research has documented that people continue to be involved in youth-related activities such as snowboarding (e.g. Sisjord, 2014), surfing (e.g. Brown & Earnest, 2001) and breaking (Fogarty, 2012b).

⁷ New laws specifying age-related rights, responsibilities and prohibitions reconstructed youth from “mini adults” to a distinct life stage; important for these changes were among other things public education and children’s labor laws (Roberts, 2016).

this philosophy reacted against capitalism, overarching conformity and bureaucratized traditional sports (Humphreys, 2003). The counterculture⁸ inspired individualism and co-operation: traditional competitions were rejected, as freedom, fun, personal growth and creativity were emphasized. Emerging from the new leisure movement in the 1960s were alternative sports, such as skateboarding, snowboarding, surfing and rock climbing, characterized by creativity, and accentuating motor skills and risk (Donnelly, 1988; Humphreys, 2003; Sisjord, 2011). During the 1970s and 1980s, the new leisure movement was further influenced by punks, and originality, authenticity,⁹ artistic movements and anti-commercialism gained increased focus. Many alternative sports were then referred to as art. This is among others reflected within skateboarding and snowboarding and their artistic movements and tricks, clothing style, music and other symbolic markers (e.g. Beal & Weidman, 2003; Humphreys, 2003; Sisjord, 2011). Throughout the years a wide range of alternative unorganized sports has progressed, gained media attention and even become accepted as Olympic sports (e.g. windsurfing (1984), snowboarding (1998), BMX (2008), and kitesurfing (2016)).

Youth subcultures evolve and continually change over time. Subcultures throughout time have included teddy boys, mods, hippies, punks, skinheads (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979), hip-hop (Forman & Neal, 2012), skaters (Beal, 1995), emo (Vestel, 2014), and hipsters (Maly & Varis, 2015). However, even though increased cultural visibility and commercialism has blurred the boundaries between mainstream and subcultures, youth subcultures such as hip-hop, continue to exist, offering a framework of shared meanings and identities (Øia & Vestel, 2014). Today, social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube allow for continuous self-presentation and impression management (Goffman, 1959; Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). The self has in many ways become a reflexive project with consumption, lifestyle and identity construction as central components (e.g. Giddens, 1991). This involves risk, but has also a liberating potential from social categories such as class, ethnicity and gender.

There are a number of reasons why people get involved in subcultures, and Vestel (2014) sketches different motivation profiles that interplay. One reason for youth to get involved in

⁸ The term “counterculture” refers to subcultures in which the members criticize or reject mainstream society, often accompanied by a hope for a better life or a new society (e.g. Schiefloe, 2011; Williams & Hannerz, 2014).

⁹ Authenticity express ideals, who is doing it right, and communicates status (Haenfler, 2014). Authenticity is a social construction and is an important part of the construction of a collective subculture identity, a sense of “us” and “them.”

subcultures is to get friends. Another motivation could be a desire to appear as “cool” or fashionable (often superficially), while others are attracted to the subculture due to its key objects such as the music, skateboard or snowboard. Most people have a more ad hoc approach, and borrow subculture style elements without any real attachment to the subculture. Others get deeply involved in the subculture, as they identify themselves with the subculture’s meaning constructions. For instance, research around the musical genres of hip-hop and rap has shown that hip-hop among ethnic minorities offers an “answer” to a sense of marginalization (e.g. Forman & Neal, 2012; Jensen, 2011; Knudsen, 2008; Sandberg, 2008a; Sandberg & Pedersen, 2006). Either way, subcultures meet individuals’ social needs, provide leisure spaces, and can be a place for people “outside the norm” to connect with peers, explore and experiment with identities and activities (Haenfler, 2014).

Research Traditions and Youth Subcultures

Research on subcultures has emerged out of two distinct sociological traditions: the Chicago School in the US in the early 1900s and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the UK in the 1970s. Even though few scholars from the University of Chicago used the term subculture, their insights regarding “urban deviance,” social problems, crime, immigration, urban life and research methodology have influenced subcultural studies (Haenfler, 2014; Williams, 2011). The Chicago School underlined that subcultures emerged from social circumstances and developed an understanding of deviance in relation to the norms, opportunities and experiences of the participants. The American tradition emphasized systematic studies through fieldwork and the importance of including insights from the participants in the subculture.

The CCCS at the University of Birmingham in the UK developed an explicitly subcultural approach in the decades following World War II. Inspired by the Chicago School and critical of English Cultural Studies, CCCS combined ethnographic research and semiotic textual analyses to the study of youth subcultures (e.g. Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1977). CCCS emphasized class as a key aspect of youth culture, and youth cultures were analyzed as collective expressions of resistance (see for instance Hall & Jefferson, 1976). Style (in the form of clothing, language and performance) was perceived as constituting the subculture’s features and to understand subcultures involved decoding their “spectacular” style (e.g. Hebdige, 1979). Subcultural working class youth were perceived as “semiotic warriors,” challenging the status

quo through signs and symbols (Haenfler, 2014). The portrayal of the working class as standing against an oppressive hegemonic culture has, however, been questioned (Williams, 2011).

During the 1990s and early 2000s, post-subculture theorists responded to the shifting nature of contemporary culture(s) by re-conceptualizing central features of subculture and produced a wealth of alternative metaphors, such as “scene”¹⁰ and “lifestyle”, to replace the concept of subculture (see e.g. Bennett, 1999, 2011; Thornton, 1995). Post-subcultural scholars (e.g. Bennett, 1999, 2011; Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2003) drew attention to agency, fluidity and individualization in contemporary youth cultural identities and questioned the importance of class and the conceptualization of subcultures as cohesive groups with shared identities situated in opposition to mainstream culture (e.g. Haenfler, 2014; McRobbie, 1991; Thornton, 1995; Wheaton, 2007; Williams, 2011). Post-subcultural theorists demonstrated young people’s diverse identifications and memberships of different groups, viewing subcultural participation as a choice (rather than a result of social position such as class). However, post-subcultural perspectives have been criticized for overemphasizing the individual dimension in contemporary consumer societies while overlooking the continuing relevance of larger social structures, such as gender and ethnicity (Blackman, 2005).

Since the 1970s, the central focus of the Chicago School’s symbolic interactionism has been adopted by sport researchers to compare sporting subcultures with non-sports groups, and to highlight what it means to be a member of an alternative sports subculture (Atkinson & Young, 2008b). For instance, little league sports such as baseball have been explored, due to their shared statuses, identities and collective rituals (Fine, 1987). Beames and Pike (2008) utilize Goffman’s dramaturgy framework within the world of rock climbing and the engagement of the instructors/students in impression management. The classical work of Donnelly and Young (1988) examines the deliberate act of identity construction within rugby and climbing and suggests a four-stage contingency model in the development of subcultural identity. Through continuous socialization processes, individuals acquire knowledge about the activity and use impression management as they go from “outsiders” to “insiders” of the subculture (Donnelly & Young, 1988).

¹⁰ Scene refers to a mutually recognized subcultural space, defined by the production and consumption activities of those involved and less by membership criteria (Atkinson & Young, 2008a).

Throughout the 1980s and later, sport researchers employed subculture research initiated at the CCCS. Through this approach, sport researchers explored how youth developed sport as a site of resistance. For instance, a classic is Donnelly's (1988) study of sport as a "popular site of resistance" and a contested cultural terrain. Struggles over legitimate uses of sport and the body are an ongoing feature of the social production of sport in contemporary society, and Donnelly highlights how sports have been the objective of cultural struggles between dominating and subordinated groups. However, the most prominent studies inspired by CCCS theory have been on skateboarders (e.g. Beal, 1995) and snowboarding (e.g. Heino, 2000). With roots back to the new leisure movement, these alternative sports emerged as a challenge to traditional organized sports and were identified as subcultural rebels during the 1990s, emphasizing "keep it real" when experimenting with sports on the "edge" (Atkinson & Young, 2008a, pp. 32–35). There is also considerable work inspired by CCCS and "risk theory" (e.g. Beck & Ritter, 1992; Giddens, 1991), exploring youth subcultures in sport as resistance oriented and rejecting mainstream sports' values and ethics (e.g. Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003; Wheaton, 2004). As highlighted by Langseth (2012), risk sports¹¹ are getting increasingly popular and are often perceived as "cool," selling a lifestyle in commercials.

However, how resistant alternative sports are to the mainstream has been questioned, as many of them are getting more and more commercialized, echoing some of the stereotypical characteristics of traditional organized sports (e.g. Beal & Wilson, 2004; Humphreys, 2003; Rinehart & Sydnor, 2003). Commercial popularity has opened up for professional snowboarders and skateboarders, creating a debate over "selling out" and losing the activity's soul (Humphreys, 1996, 2003). Drawing on post-subcultural theory, Wheaton (2004, 2013) challenges the CCCS-inspired subcultural research in sport and disputes whether youth sport subcultures have ever operated as meaningful forms of social resistance. Wheaton (2004) argues that commercialization contests subcultural meanings, spaces and identities, as consumption of signs and styles has made it easy *to look like* a subcultural member (e.g. Beal & Wilson, 2004). Accordingly, Wheaton (2004, 2013) introduces the term "lifestyle sport," reflecting the enthusiasts' description of their activities as lifestyle rather than sports. "Lifestyle sport" is less all embracing than the term "alternative sport," as it refers to a style of life central to the meaning and experience of the

¹¹ Risk sport refers to activities with a real danger of serious injuries or dying; obvious examples are base jumping, sky jumping and free mountain climbing.

activities (Wheaton, 2004) and “illustrates the ways in which youth in Western societies creates identities through consumption” (Wheaton, 2013, p. 26).

In sum, the history of the concept of subculture is prolonged and circuitous, raising debates and questions about the term (Crosset, 1997). Notably, subcultural analysis of sport focuses on the activities, which frees the term “subculture” from being solely relevant for youth groupings (Hughson, 2008). The emphasis on activity combined with increased commodity consumption has resulted in subculture claims of authenticity and has created a distinction between insiders – i.e. those who are doing it (Wheaton & Beal, 2003) – and outsiders. To be a part of a subculture and recognized as an insider involves a continuous identity construction process and deliberate impression management (Donnelly & Young, 1988). Within the subculture, participants distinguish themselves by holding subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995). Subcultural capital comprises practices, objects, ideas and knowledge that are rewarded with recognition, admiration, status or prestige within the subculture. For instance, within breaking the ability to perform with attitude¹² gives winning opportunities for breakers with poorly developed physical movement skills (see Article 1).

Alternative sports have been perceived as providing challenges to traditional ways of doing sports, but research has documented that many of these alternative sports remain the playground of affluent western white men (Anderson, 1999; Brayton, 2005; Kidder, 2013; Kusz, 2004; Sisjord, 2005, 2015; Wheaton, 2013, 2015). For instance, Kusz (2004) argues that the media’s representation of extreme sport in North America is a cultural construction of white masculinity, while Brayton (2005) draws attention to how the presentation of skateboarders can be interpreted as a symbolic escape from middle-class whiteness, through their references to street culture and the “ghetto.” Even though some of these alternative sports are less gender-differentiated than traditional sports (Wheaton, 2004), most of them are male dominated and commonly perceived as masculine in terms of styles and expressions (Sisjord, 2005, 2015; Thorpe, 2010; Wheaton, 2015). However, there is growing research on subordinated voices and experiences within alternative sports, such as African American surfers and “alternative girlhood” in skateboarding (e.g. Kelly, Pomerantz, & Currie, 2005; MacKay & Dallaire, 2013; Wheaton, 2013).

¹² Attitude involves embodying an aggressive persona.

The informal and global spaces of alternative sports can be a foundation for critical consciousness. Earlier research (e.g. Sisjord, 2015; Wheaton, 2013, 2015) has exposed these sport cultures as having complex and contradictory articulations of social categories, such as gender, class and ethnicity. Alternative sports, such as breaking, then have political opportunities and potential to challenge the social order. Moreover, many participants in alternative sports demonstrate a stable, shared and uniform notion of their subcultures and their status and identity (Beal & Weidman, 2003; Beal & Wilson, 2004). This challenges the post-subculture debate of “fluid boundaries” and “floating memberships” (Hughson, 2008; Wheaton, 2013). As Muggleton (2005, p. 205) argues, “reports of the death of subculture are greatly exaggerated,” and a combination of the CCCS focus on group coherence, consistency and commitment with the post-subculture attention to flux, fluidity and hybridization should be appreciated by future research. In this dissertation, I have chosen to rely on a symbolic interactionist perspective on subculture, due to the participants’ understanding of breaking as a *cultural phenomenon*. Focusing on how the breakers’ actions are related to the social situation provides a perspective that helps to bridge CCCS and post-subculture studies, revealing the breakers’ social interaction and their internal power hierarchies (i.e. claims to authenticity). This approach will be elaborated further in Chapter 3.

Breaking and Earlier Research

Breaking can be traced to the hip-hop culture that ramified into four elements: MCing (rapping), DJing, graffiti and breaking (e.g. Forman & Neal, 2012). The hip-hop culture and breaking has evolved from local Black Noise (Rose, 1994a) into Global Noise (Mitchell, 2001). The global spread of hip-hop culture, especially rap music, has been thoroughly described (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003; Bennett, 2000; Buffam, 2011; Dyndahl, 2008, 2009; Forman & Neal, 2012; Huq, 2006; Mitchell, 1998; Neal, 2016). However, despite the global proliferation of all the hip-hop culture elements, academic research on breaking is rather limited. In the following, I combine the presentation of breaking’s history with research discussing breaking.

The first seeds of breaking can be traced back to the 1970s, the new leisure movement and particularly punk (e.g. Humphreys, 2003). As part of hip-hop culture, breaking’s history is connected to marginalized people in the multicultural ghettos of The Bronx in New York (Forman & Neal, 2012; Schloss, 2009), and is historically bound to a black, urban street context

(Banes, 1981; Brake, 1985; Rose, 1994a). Among the Latino and African American inhabitants of these ghettos, the meaning of breaking was connected to group solidarity. Hazzard-Donald (2004, p. 512) argues that hip-hop dance¹³ was used by the inhabitants to present “a challenge to the racist society that marginalized them.” By organizing themselves in crews (groups), which were networks for socializing, they claimed status on the street and supported each other. In other words, through breaking, marginalized and disenfranchised youths protested against mainstream society (Hazzard-Donald, 2004) and constructed youth subcultures with alternative identities to gain respect (Banes, 2004). The teenagers of The Bronx used their bodies to develop a feeling of worth in a neighborhood that provoked feelings of insignificance and hopelessness (Rose, 1994b).

Breaking reached the media in 1981 (Stevens, 2006) when Banes (1981) published an article about breaking in the *Village Voice*.¹⁴ Consequently, breaking started to become publically known outside its subcultural borders and the breakers gradually gained respect in wider society. Breaking symbolized hope for the future, as marginalized youth showed off a resourceful ability to create their own expressions out of a life that seemed to offer very little (Banes 2004). However, the media exposure changed breaking in “form and meaning” (Banes, 2004, p. 14), and created a distinction between breakdance, i.e. assigned by cultural outsiders, and breaking, i.e. the insiders’ indicator of authenticity (Schloss, 2009). The media exposure resulted in breakers rehearsing to be discovered rather than practicing to compete with a rival. For example, the Rock Steady Crew performed in the movie ‘Flashdance’ and battled¹⁵ the New York City Breakers in the movie ‘Beat Street’ in 1984. That year, breaking/breakdance became so popular that it was featured as entertainment in the opening show of the 1984 Olympics (Hazzard-Donald, 2004). Breaking/breakdance became an international fad (Schloss, 2006) and evolved into a worldwide phenomenon (Mitchell, 1998, 2001). However, in 1986 the popular dance suddenly disappeared from the mainstream media in the USA, as it lost its novelty and there was a shift in popular music taste (Fogarty, 2010a, 2010b, 2012a).

¹³ Hazzard-Donald (2004) defines hip-hop dance as: Waack dancing, Breaking and Rap dance.

¹⁴ The *Village Voice* was a weekly, free, urban, tabloid-format newspaper in New York.

¹⁵ Battle is the competitive part of breaking, where breakers duel face to face, individually or as part of a crew (i.e. group). A battle can be judged (e.g. organized battle events), or informal (i.e. to call out someone at a practice or gathering). Either way, everyone knows a battle is a competition, where the goal is to exceed the other (Fogarty, 2010a).

In one of the earliest anthropological accounts of breaking, Kopytko (1986, p. 25) describes breaking as a provider of a strong and positive identity, raising the self-esteem of “problem youths”¹⁶ in New Zealand. Breaking was male dominated and perceived as a “macho” activity, conforming to traditional gender stereotypes. Despite this, Kopytko (1986) emphasizes the existence of female breakers and their constant struggle for acceptance. As emphasized by Fogarty (2010a, 2012a), gender differences are reflected in how people enter the milieu. While male breakers become a part of the milieu as a result of social networks, peer bonding and musical taste, they often enter the milieu lacking movement skills. Female breakers, on the other hand, often practice isolated and alone (by using videos) to develop their movement skills *before* they enter the milieu (Fogarty, 2010a, 2012a). Research from all over the world supports Ogaz’s (2006) notion that female breakers experience obstacles and even exclusion because of their gender (e.g. Banes, 1981, 2004; Blagojevic, 2009; Gunn, 2012a, 2012b, 2016; Gunn & Scannell, 2013; Hazzard-Donald, 2004; Kopytko, 1986; Ogaz, 2006; Shane, 1988; Vestel, 2008).

Perceived as a physically demanding dance (Banes, 2004; Vestel, 2008), breaking is almost entirely male dominated (Hazzard-Donald, 2004). Shane (1988, p. 263) emphasizes breaking as a “high-voltage expression of masculine style,” in which male breakers could show off their “strength and machismo.” As summarized by LaBoskey (2001, p. 114) “symbolically and physically, to breakdance and compete is simply unfeminine.” How gender assumptions within breaking and society influence female breakers is explored by Blagojevic (2009), who also discovers that the female breaker viewed herself as challenging traditional gender stereotypes. Gunn (2012a, 2012b) and Gunn and Scannell (2013) argue that female breakers are required to present themselves in both a masculine and a feminine manner. In other words, breaking is a site to increase the regulated repertoire of bodily expression (Gunn, 2016) and seems to present a challenge to traditional gender stereotypes (Blagojevic, 2009; Gunn, 2012a, 2012b). This is supported by Engel (1996, 2001), who argues that breaking opens up a mixture of masculine and feminine signs.

The mixture of signs and fusing global breaking culture with local experiences is supported by Osumare (2002). Osumare (2002) introduces the concept of the intercultural body, as she sees breaking as a global hybrid dance and an expression of the negotiation of personal and

¹⁶ The majority of New Zealand breakers were Maori or Pacific Islanders who were failing school and who often faced discrimination because of their social position and ethnicity (Kopytko, 1986, p. 24).

collective identity. Bohnsack and Nohl (2003) highlight the importance of collective actions to constitute individuals identities; “even personal elements of style need to be integrated into collective or milieu-specific contexts in order to be fully expressed” (p. 376). As breaking has evolved into a global phenomenon, an international aesthetic¹⁷ has been preserved through mediated encounters, such as YouTube, traveling, international breaking events and workshops (Fogarty, 2010a, 2012a). This means that breaking possesses a corpus of knowledge, i.e. creating the subculture of breaking,¹⁸ transmitted to breakers throughout the world. Common experiences of socialization and collective elements of style contribute to imagined affinities¹⁹ (Fogarty, 2012a), and crews as extended families that are multi-generational²⁰, multi-cultural, and international in composition (Fogarty, 2010a). The global frame is often used to imagine a community across differences of language, ethnicity, nationality, religion and age (Johnson, 2009, 2011).

Breaking as a multicultural subculture re-defining identity has been important for young breakers throughout the world (e.g. Banes, 2004; Bohnsack & Nohl, 2003; Dalecki, 2011; Johnson, 2009; Kopytko, 1986; Niang, 2006; Ong, 2015; Petracovschi, Costaş, & Voicu, 2011; Vliet, 2007). In a rapidly changing world, breaking seems to offer a framework of expression for youth touched by a lack of identity references. The breakers’ constructed identities are centered on the “show and prove” mentality through the display of abilities in performances (Fogarty, 2012a). Johnson (2009, 2011) argues that battles allow breakers to compete for the honor of being best in that moment and simultaneously are a space for competing cultural meanings expressed through dance. Shapiro (2004) emphasizes that internally breaking is composed of three different but entwined approaches: socialization, competition (in the form of large-scale battles) and art. Following Fogarty (2010a), defining breaking as art became more apparent around 2000, and is among other things reflected in the change of terminology (breakdance vs. breaking), as breakers became invested in talking about breaking as aspects of an art form worthy of aesthetic consideration (Fogarty, 2010b; McCarren, 2013; Shapiro & Heinich, 2008).

¹⁷ Fogarty (2010a, p.15) defines aesthetics as “access to issues of content, form, balance, expression, structure and an interaction with a tradition.” Through an aesthetic analysis, Fogarty (2010a) investigates breaking as an art form by conceptualizing art as experience.

¹⁸ There exists a wide spectrum of subgroups within breaking.

¹⁹ Identifications expressed by cultural practitioners who shares an embodied activity.

²⁰ While Banes (1981) tended to position breaking as a youth culture in opposition to parental culture, Fogarty (2012b) highlights that older breakers have always been present in the milieu as mentors for younger breakers.

In summary, breaking has aspired to an international aesthetic, while remaining an art form centered on competition (Fogarty, 2010a).

Breaking in the Norwegian context

To understand the social trends which the Norwegian breakers are influenced by, I start with a short introduction to Norway as a multicultural society, before I focus on breaking in Norway.

Immigration to Norway, as the result of work, studies/education, family or refugees, has been relatively fast since the 1970s, and reached a peak in 2012 (SSB, 2016). Today, the population of Norway includes persons with backgrounds from over 223 different countries, who have settled down all over the country. However, the densest settlement of people with another ethnic origin²¹ is in the capital – Oslo (IMDi, 2016; Østby, Høydahl & Rustad, 2013).

In Oslo, one third of the population has another ethnic origin and their settlement is unevenly distributed among the city's districts. As a result, Oslo is often referred to as the “divided city,” due to the pattern of the inhabitants' socio-economic status and ethnicity (e.g. Amundsen 2015). The differences in education, income and health, and the consequences that follow (Nordbø, 2015; Nordvik & Eggesvik, 2015; Oslo kommune, 2016) have divided Oslo in half – into the east and west sides. The west side of Oslo is associated with the affluence and wealth of the middle class, while the east side has been dominated by working-class residents. The east side has the densest settlement of people with another ethnic origin, and some areas have more than 50 percent of their inhabitants from non-Western areas (e.g. Høydahl, 2015). This constitutes the reality for young people living in Oslo, and is among other aspects reflected in their leisure activities. Andersen and Bakken (2015) document that young people living on the east side and close to the inner-city tend to have other leisure activities than those on the west side of the city. Young people on the west side of the city are more involved in organized activities in their spare time (Bakken, 2016; Andersen & Bakken, 2015).

In Norway and Scandinavia, the first noticeable impact of hip-hop culture became evident in 1984 with the movie *Beat Street*. That year, a “breaking wave” (Dyndahl, 2008; Holen, 2004; Vestel, 2004) affected youth throughout the country and young people performed breaking in the streets (Holen & Noguchi, 2009; NRK, 2006). Breaking was the first popular element, but was

²¹ Other ethnic origin refers to whether the persons themselves or their parents have been born in a country other than Norway.

later bypassed by other elements of hip-hop culture: first by graffiti, and then by rap, as the music became increasingly more common during the 1990s (Holen, 2004; Holen & Noguchi, 2009). The breakers were regularly observed dancing at Oslo Central Station (Oslo S) until 2002, when they got banished. This resulted in an illegal “breakdance show” to demonstrate their frustration. As one youth stated:

Listen! We have no place to be, and dance here at Oslo S. Normally we break in a corner, but last week we got thrown out by the security as they have implemented a new (prohibition) policy (VG, 2002, my translation).

Today, breaking has left the streets and is mostly performed behind closed doors. Even though breaking regained media attention with *So You Think You Can Dance* in 2006 and sporadically appears on TV²² and even in the Opera House,²³ breaking remains an “underground” activity. There are, of course, breakdance courses offered by dance studios throughout the country, but, as emphasized by Schloss (2009), there is a distinction between breakdance and breaking (see Article 1).

In Norway, research on hip-hop culture and its elements is a developing field; for example, Høigård (2002) has studied graffiti, rap has been studied by, among others, Dyndahl (2008, 2009) and Knudsen (2008), while Sandberg (2005, 2008a, 2008b) and Sandberg and Pedersen (2006) have exposed hip-hop culture’s influence on marginalized people in street-corner societies. However, while studying a youth club in Oslo East in the 1990s, Vestel (1999, 2004) exposed breaking as a multicultural meeting-point for youngsters. According to Vestel (1999, p. 7) the movie *Beat Street* was tremendously popular two years after its premiere and had an empowering effect on boys from the “slums.” Vestel (2008) argues that hip-hop’s history (and thus breaking’s history) as an inclusive and anti-racist activity makes it easy for marginalized and stigmatized youth to identify with hip-hop. Similar observations have been made by researchers

²² Breaking is often portrayed as specular entertainment in reality shows such as *Norske Talenter*, *So You Think You Can Dance*, *X-factor*, *Adil’s hemmelige dansere*. This creates waves in breaking’s popularity (see further NRK, 2011, 2012, 2015; TV2, 2014).

²³ In 2012 and 2014, the popular King Wings crew “battled” the Norwegian National Ballet in the Opera House. In front of full houses, they showed spectacular tricks and steps vs. excerpts from classics dances (Den Norske Opera og Ballett, 2012).

in Sweden (Beach & Sernhede, 2012; Sernhede, 2005, 2006; Sernhede & Hedenström, 2002) and Denmark (Engel, 1996, 2001).

This chapter has elaborated on themes central to the understanding of breaking as a subculture. Even though the concept of subculture throughout the years has come under academic scrutiny, I argue that the concept is useful to understanding breakers' social interaction, their meaning and gender construction.

CHAPTER 3 – MEANING – IDENTITY – GENDER

In this chapter, I will introduce the main theoretical perspectives employed to understand the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people. Throughout the fieldwork, I witnessed how the construction of meanings emerged through the breakers' social interaction and how this influenced the breakers' identity and gender constructions. Consequently, as mentioned before, symbolic interactionism has inspired my understanding of meaning constructions within breaking. Symbolic interactionism focuses on how experiences are defined and how individuals give meaning to their identities, behaviors, realities and social interactions. I will give a brief introduction to symbolic interactionism, with particular focus on Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical work, which has been inspirational for my understanding of how the breakers are working individually and collectively to construct meaning(s). Furthermore, a gender perspective has been applied to extend my understanding of the constructed meanings within breaking. As gender is a social construction influencing every aspect of everyday life, it is constantly "done" in the breakers' social interactions. Accordingly, symbolic interactionism has been supplemented with a gender perspective, which will be elaborated on at the end of this chapter.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspective on Meaning and Identity

Symbolic interactionism is a term given to a sociological perspective that belongs to the interpretive approaches in studying society. The interpretive paradigm has emerged from two schools: phenomenological sociology, often called ethnomethodology or phenomenology; and the Chicago School, i.e. symbolic interactionism, including American pragmatism redefined by Mead's social psychology/behaviorism, and Goffman's dramaturgy (Donnelly & Atkinson, 2015; Moe, 1994). Both these schools raised the question of meaning and rationality, and challenged methods used in natural science. By focusing on "contextual judgment of rationality," these two schools highlighted that actions must be judged with reference to their circumstances and the need to observe social life as it occurs (Cuff, Francis, & Sharrock, 1998). In everyday life, individuals are involved in various social interactions that require different behaviors, manners and appearances, according to where they are, with whom and in what context. In short, interpretive approaches attempt to theorize the nature of everyday life. Interpretive refers then to a wide range of "sociologies" concerned with the way the social world is continually constructed

and reinvented by the participants – the meaning they construct about what they do and what others do within situated cultural contexts, settings, places and fields (Donnelly & Atkinson, 2015). The most prominent of the interpretive sociologies in the sociology of sport has been symbolic interactionism (Donnelly & Atkinson, 2015).

Symbolic interactionism views social life as a series of interactions that are understood according to the symbolic meanings attached to events and behaviors (Charon, 2010; Molnar & Kelly, 2012). The focus is on symbols, ordinary everyday action and interaction – what these symbols mean, and how people interact with each other. Hence, the current study explores the breakers' use of symbols, their everyday actions, and social interaction to conceptualize the meaning of breaking in young people's lives. Symbols refer to abstract meanings attached to objects, people and behaviors. Influenced by Mead and Morris (1934), symbolic interactionism is based on the idea that human beings, through interaction, give meanings to themselves, others and the world around them, and use those meanings as a basis for making decisions and taking actions in their everyday lives (Charon, 2010; Coakley & Pike, 2014). Following Mead and Morris (1934), "the self" – who I am – develops in and through the process of interaction, which enables the individual to have a sense of himself or herself as an individual.

Blumer (1969) outlined three premises of symbolic interactionism. First, people act toward objects, based on what the objects mean for them. Objects are anything that can be indicated, such as physical objects (e.g. clothing, equipment, locations and music), social objects (e.g. battle events, traveling, parties and gatherings) and abstract objects (e.g. values, ideas). The nature of an object consists of the meaning it has for the person for whom it is an object. This means that objects can have different meaning for different people. To understand the actions of people it is necessary to identify their world of objects (Charon, 2010). For instance, there exists an agreed-upon repertoire of breaking songs that – for breakers – are associated with breaking's history (Schloss, 2009).

Second, meaning arises through social interaction. Meanings are then social products, created and formed in and through interaction. Through interaction, people learn what objects are good for and how to use them, i.e. objects are socially constructed and understood (Charon, 2010). Social objects include then other people, our "self", symbols, ideas and perspectives. For example, if breaking is perceived as "hard" for female breakers, this will influence women's involvement with breaking. Another example is the stereotype of ethnic minorities as "dangerous

foreigners.” The latter is a dual stereotype that has a negative effect within general society while involving status in street-related subcultures (e.g. Sandberg, 2005; Vestel, 2004). Notably, the development of meaning often relies on a symbolic system shared within a culture. This means that the breakers negotiate and define the meaning of breaking in “joint” partnership.

Third, meanings are continuously reconstructed according to time and situation. For instance, the breakers might reach a stage at which they go from emphasizing power moves²⁴ in their routines to accentuating other components such as top-rock²⁵ or down-rock²⁶. This may be due to injuries or aging, experiencing that their body cannot take it anymore.

In sum, meaning is a process, socially constructed within a specific cultural context (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). Symbolic interactionism explores how people define situations and give meaning to themselves, their actions, other people and the world around them. People are considered as potential agents of change, as they actively make choices and give meaning to their experiences (Coakley, 2009). Accordingly, the constructed meanings in breaking are a result of the breakers’ actions, the responses from others (both breakers and non-breakers) on those actions, and each breaker’s reaction to their interpretations.

Symbolic interactionism highlights that, without an explicit definition of “self,” people cannot interact successfully with others. The self develops in and through the process of symbolic interaction and enables the individual to sense him or herself as an individual (Mead & Morris, 1934). Through taking the role of the others who act toward us, we come to recognize our self and come to see our self through interaction with others and their labeling of us, such as “You are a breaker,” “You are a tough boy,” or “You are a pretty girl.” As the self is social, arising in social interaction, it is continuously defined and redefined in social interaction (Charon, 2010). Over time, children develop a sense of the generalized other, which is the individual’s conscious awareness of society and its norms, values and rules. The ability to take the role of the general other or the role of the group, i.e. to use the rules and perspective of the group, is important for individual actions and is a necessity for any group, organization or society’s successful operation (Charon, 2010). Through interaction with others, the individual develops a sense of who and what

²⁴ Power moves is the acrobatic part of breaking. These moves are often spectacular to onlookers, with names such as windmills, head spins, 1990s, air flare and so on. Power moves are the only component of breaking involving physical strength (Schloss, 2009).

²⁵ Top-rock refers to the upright dancing done before going down “to the floor.”

²⁶ Down-rock refers to steps done with the torso close to the ground, often with hands touching the ground.

they are and how they are connected to a social world: this results in a labeling of the self, i.e. identity.

Identity is based on the connection to other people and is constructed through intentional strategic processes, often entailing considerable negotiation. Identities are meanings attributed to the self; they are relational, social and placed in a context of interaction (Charon, 2010). Identity is then never formed once and for all, but is always changing according to social relationships and situations. This means, that identity is not something people have, but is rather a relational becoming. Identity involves sameness and difference²⁷ simultaneously, creating a distinction between the insiders, us, and them, the outsiders. Goffman (1959) sees identity as a collaborative achievement, accomplished in face-to-face interaction with others. Through available symbolic and material resources (e.g. gestures, languages and clothing) identification and differences are marked. In sum, identity is what people think they are, and what they want to present to others.

Goffman (1959) defines social life as a staged drama in which people perform specific roles in a series of social situations. In life, as in the theatre, there is front-stage (or front region) and backstage (back region) in which the self is performed (Goffman, 1959). The performance is given front-stage, but prepared backstage. For instance, within breaking front-stage would be the battle and the cypher,²⁸ i.e. both arenas of competition (see Article 1 and Article 4). Front-stage, the breaker is performing and presenting their breaker character to an audience, i.e. self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). Here the breakers try to control the image of themselves through strategic decisions about which information to conceal or reveal in their self-presentation, i.e. impression management (Goffman, 1959). This is done through items of identity markers – style, such as material objects (e.g. clothes) and practices (e.g. rituals, language, ways of moving). The backstage region within breaking would be their practice arena and outside of the cypher. As the breaking practice is separated from outsiders of the subculture, the breakers can rehearse, relax, reflect and adjust their breaker character. It is worth noting that backstage and front-stage are relative terms, defined in relation to the specific role being played and the audience (Goffman, 1959). Any region can then be transformed into a backstage, and regions can function as front-stage at one time and backstage at another (Goffman, 1959). For instance, the cypher is a very important part of breaking and appears when and where it is needed in the breakers' milieu

²⁷ Such as “We are male” and “We are not female,” or “We are breakers” and “They are not breakers.”

²⁸ Cyphers are the circles formed as people surround breakers who trade turns dancing in the middle.

(Schloss, 2009). Accordingly, the cypher appeared regularly at the breakers' practice arena and as such there was always a front-stage present. As a back region, the practice arena was filled with breakers just doing as they pleased, but, as the breakers entered the cyphers that appeared – front-stage – they would change their appearance and character, i.e. from backstage to front-stage performance (see Articles 1 and 4). The breakers' impression management would become utterly clear, if rival crew members were present at the practice arena and it became important for the breakers to position themselves in relation to each other.

Social interaction is always affected by norms, values and rules of the group or society. The ability to recognize these expectations from the generalized other²⁹ (Mead & Morris, 1934) is important to make actions consistent with what others are doing and allow actions to go in an agreed-upon direction established through interaction (Charon, 2010). Through the generalized other, the individual breaker takes on the rules of the subculture and coordinates his/her actions to facilitate social interaction and cooperation with other breakers. As highlighted by Charon (2010), the only time we can afford to act alone is when our actions do not need to be coordinated with anyone else's. Accordingly, by taking one another into account, the breakers ended up "staging a single routine" and became a cooperative performance team that presented a united front to outsiders (Goffman, 1959, p. 79).

As a team, the subculture of breaking constructs a perception of reality – a "team impression" (Goffman, 1959, p. 80). This requires loyalty and teamwork, since breakers unschooled in the arts of impression management can spoil the impression. To be able to perform accurate impression management involves a socialization process through which people come to identify themselves as a breaker (e.g. Donnelly & Young, 1988; see Article 1). To be a part of the subculture of breaking includes adopting and internalizing the subculture's ideas, objects and practices. As highlighted by Goffman (1967, p. 45), "the person becomes a kind of construct (...) from moral rules that are impressed upon him from without." This means that the individual does not have complete freedom, but is constrained by the prevailing definition of a situation. The concept "definition of the situation" was introduced by the Chicago School theorist William Thomas, and has later been referred to as the Thomas theorem: "If [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572). This works as a self-fulfilling prophecy, as our realities are our definitions. As people organize their conduct

²⁹ The generalized other is the guide for correct behavior within a group (Charon, 2010).

according to their expectations of others, and the definitions and meanings attached to situations, this governs individual and group behavior. The definition of a situation not only opens up an understanding of others' actions, but also provides a mechanism for the individual to see themselves (Charon, 2010). It becomes a frame, i.e. implicit assumptions that shape meanings and interactions, and structure the individual's experiences at any moment of their lives (Goffman, 1974, p. 13). A frame seems natural as it is part of the social world, and is hardly ever questioned. For instance, breaking's history works as a frame for the breakers' masculinity performances in the cypher (see Article 4).

As symbolic interactionism provides in-depth descriptions of experiences and the social world in which they occur, it has been inspiring to explore the constructions of meaning and social relationships within the subculture of breaking. As previously mentioned, this perspective defines subcultures as culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who share the meaning of specific ideas (e.g. values, beliefs), material objects (e.g. clothing), and practices, i.e. what people do (e.g. rituals, language, movements), through interaction (Williams, 2011, p. 39). The focus is on *how* people interact with one another through symbols – how social interaction creates the subculture knowledge that again forms discursive structures acting upon the members. Williams (2011) and Fine and Kleinman (1979) emphasize that the essential parts of subcultures are transmitted through communication-interlocks, for example internet forums and international events. Accordingly, subcultures are not restricted to particular groups or areas, but are spread through various channels of social interaction. This ties the members of a subculture together and they form “joint actions” (Blumer, 1969, p. 17) that are constantly renegotiated. This means that the members of the subculture make use of the very same culture that acts upon them to shape their thoughts, emotions and actions. From a symbolic interactionism perspective, subcultures are conceptualized as fluid and heterogeneous, founded on their social and historical context (Williams, 2011), always in an interplay, affecting and affected by the outside culture. The perspective provides a broad understanding of the subculture and recognizes aspects of post-subcultural critiques, while retaining an emphasis upon collective identity (Hodkinson, 2015; Williams, 2011).

In summary, from a symbolic interactionism perspective, subcultures are described as abstractions created and communicated among people, influencing their actions and collective activities (Williams, 2011). Symbolic interactionism focuses on meaning and interaction: how

people define situations and give meaning to their experiences. Symbolic interactionism provides vivid descriptions of experiences and the social worlds in which they occur. Hence, the dissertation has focused on how breakers come to define themselves and identify others as breakers, how they give meaning to their experiences, as well as the characteristics of the subculture of breaking and the influences breaking has on young people's lives. Symbolic interactionism helps to illuminate how beliefs and expectations are maintained and preserved.

However, the most frequent critique of symbolic interactionism is its failure to address social structure and power. Symbolic interactionism as a perspective has accordingly two main weaknesses. First, the attention is almost exclusively on relationships and definitions of reality, which makes symbolic interactionism an individualistic approach. The theory tends then to ignore social processes and how the interaction and the construction of meaning are influenced by social organization, power and material conditions (Coakley & Pike, 2014; Scott, 2015). Second, focusing on everyday life and the social formation of self, symbolic interactionists often ignore social structures, especially structured forms of inequality. This means that symbolic interactionist theory does not provide critical visions of the ways sports and society could or should be organized. Yet I agree with Molnar and Kelly (2012) that Goffman (1959) highlights how wider societal power relationships and codes shape face-to-face interaction. As he described:

Thus, when the individual presents himself before others his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the official accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole (Goffman, 1959, p. 35).

It may then be more accurate to claim that symbolic interactionism deals with societal issues inadequately and indirectly rather than not at all. However, social structures play a crucial role in face-to-face interaction; for instance, gender influences all aspect of everyday life and serves as a frame for the individual's actions and re-actions. To overcome symbolic interactionism's shortcomings, I have therefore combined symbolic interactionism with a gender perspective.

Gender as a Social Construction

Earlier research on breaking (see Chapter 2) has documented breaking as a gendered activity, i.e. it is socially constructed out of the values and experiences of men (e.g. Birrell, 2000; Coakley & Pike, 2014). However, research (e.g. Engel, 1996, 2001) has also argued that breaking poses a challenge to traditional gender stereotypes. In this dissertation, I wanted to explore not only how gender is constructed among the breakers, but also how gender relations were reproduced, resisted and potentially transformed through breaking. Accordingly, the dissertation is inspired by feminism.

Feminism, or more correctly feminisms, is an umbrella term reflecting the diversity of approaches, positions and strategies of feminist theories and research (Holst, 2009; Molnar & Kelly, 2013). Common to feminist theories is their focus on social injustices and oppression. Working toward an equal society regardless of social categories such as class, ethnicity and gender, feminist theories are committed to transforming the way social life is organized and providing more complete understandings of the complex dynamics of the power relations of which gender relations are a fundamental part (Birrell, 2000; Holst, 2009). This dissertation is inspired by critical feminist theory exploring issues of ideology,³⁰ power and the dynamics of gender relations in breaking (e.g. Birrell, 2000; Coakley, 2009). Critical feminist research has been crucial for exposing sports as gendered activities (e.g. Fasting, 2015; Pfister & Sisjord, 2013), celebrating skills and values marked as masculine (Birrell, 2000; Theberge, 2000). Sports feminist research has uncovered the construction of gender differences, and emphasized that both structural and cultural changes are needed before there can be true gender equity in sports (Coakley & Pike, 2014).

Gender is a key dimension of personal life, social relations and culture (R. Connell, 2009; Lorber, 1994). As a social construction, gender is constantly reconstructed through social interaction. Gender is then not a “thing,” but rather a set of activities that one does. Accordingly, gender is often defined as constructed meanings that shape expected behaviors of the male and female sex (biology), and involves continually socially reconstructed “normative conceptions” of men – masculinity – and women – femininity. The result is two complementary but unequal sets of people, and a frame creating gendered behavior (e.g. Goffman, 1974; Lorber, 2000). For instance, breaking

³⁰ An ideology is the set of ideas that serves the interest of dominant groups and is taken up by those who are disempowered by them (Birrell, 2000).

is perceived as a man's world (e.g. Banes, 2004; see Article 4) and female breakers experience obstacles and exclusion because of their gender (e.g. Blagojevic, 2009; see Article 3). The differentiation between girls and boys starts at birth, as everybody is allocated to a sex category (biology) and assigned, for instance, gendered names and gender-specific colors (e.g. girls being dressed in pink, and boys in blue). Growing up, the individual is introduced to gender-specific activities³¹ (gender logic) and given gender-appropriate toys³² and clothing³³ (Lorber, 1994; Messner, 2000). This means that gender is simultaneously ascribed and achieved (Lorber, 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987). In sum, sex refers to the biological aspects of being male or female, while gender refers to learnt behavior and is often categorized as "masculinity" and "femininity." As highlighted by R. Connell (2005): "Gender is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body" (p. 71).

West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that people are constantly doing gender. Doing gender involves behaviors that "sustain, reproduce and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex categories" (p. 146). As individuals act out gender practices – that is, express masculinity or femininity according to norms and expectations in face-to-face interaction – gender societal structures are reproduced and gendered systems of dominance and power are constructed. By doing gender in social interaction, gender is validated and legitimated by others' evaluation. Accordingly, gender is a situated accomplishment, done in every social interaction, in every situation and every institution. Gender is then not only an aspect of identity, but also an aspect of every interaction. It is constantly reconstructed in social interaction, i.e. through social interaction the breakers get a sense of who and what they are (e.g. they learn what it means to be a male and female breaker such as "It was all about being macho" (see Article 4) or "Girls cannot break" (see Article 3). Gender is then closely connected with power, and the definition of the situation (e.g. Charon, 2010; Thomas & Thomas, 1928). Messerschmidt (2005) emphasizes gender as structured action and what people do under specific social-structural constraints. This means that gender is not imposed on individuals through socialization, but is rather a social construction equally influenced by individuals' agency (what people do) and

³¹ For instance, sports promoting strength and toughness cultivate qualities in men, while dance is feminized and thus not for men (Craig, 2014).

³² For instance, girls get Barbie dolls while boys get sea monsters (Messner, 2000).

³³ For instance, girls in dresses are told not to show their bottoms, while boys wearing trousers are told to climb trees.

structures (the results from what people do). Therefore both male and female breakers draw on gendered stereotypes to ensure that their actions are gender appropriate.

Furthermore, gender is not only relational but also plural (R. Connell, 2009). The binary division between men and women intertwines with other social categories such as ethnicity, class and age – these differences inform, shape and modify the definition of gender, creating a spectrum of masculinities and femininities. Both men and women can perform masculinity and femininity (R. Connell, 2009). The result is a complex hierarchical system of dominance and subordination. Hence, gender is about differences, inequality and power. To conceptualize the power relations of gender, R. Connell (1987, 2005, 2009) provides a fruitful framework to understand the constructed gender hierarchy.

R. Connell (2009) draws on the West and Zimmerman (1987) concept of doing gender, arguing that gender is produced in and through social interactions. Following R. Connell (2006), gender is, above all, a pattern of social relations which defines the position of men and women and in which the cultural meanings of being a man and a woman are negotiated. Gender relations are found in all spheres of life, such as the subculture of breaking. Even though gender is an ongoing construction influenced by time, place and cultural context, R. Connell (2005) argues that there exists a more or less prevailing gender hierarchy.

On top of the gendered hierarchy stands the “currently accepted strategy” (R. Connell, 2005, p. 77) of gender practices to maintain masculine domination called hegemonic masculinity (R. Connell, 1987, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is the normative construction, the ideal type for men, against which others are measured and subordinated, often exemplified through e.g. iconic images of the hero, warrior, sports star and entrepreneur (Bromley, 2012). Previous research has shown that, in any culture, group or institution, there is some hegemonic form of masculinity (R. Connell, 2005, 2008). This means that within the subculture of breaking there exists an ideal type of masculinity, which dominates and suppresses other masculinities and femininities. For instance, the hegemonic masculinity within breaking is strongly connected with bodily displays, performances and attitude (see Articles 3 and 4). Interestingly, the hegemonic form of masculinity is not the most common form of masculinity; in fact, R. Connell (1987, p. 185) emphasizes that “hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustain their power”.

Hegemonic masculinity always exists in relation to subordinated gender constructions. The hegemonic ideal is often taken for granted (Lorber, 1994), and constructed as “not-feminine (...) not-gay, not-black, not-working-class and not-immigrant” (Messner, 2005, p. 314). R. Connell (2005) identifies three other gender relations that construct the main patterns of masculinities in Western societies: *subordinated* masculinities, which are dominated by hegemonic masculinity (e.g. immigrant- and gay masculinities in Western culture); *complicit* masculinities, which are allies to hegemonic masculinity; and *marginalized* masculinity, which is created as gender interplay with other social structures such as class and ethnicity. Marginalized masculinity can collectively represent resistance: that is, protest masculinity (R. Connell, 2005). Protest masculinity picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the gender order and reworks them in a context of poverty, such as the “bling-bling” ethos³⁴ of hip-hop culture. These other masculinities are not always clearly identified, as the hegemony consists of “preventing alternatives gaining cultural definition and recognition as alternatives, confining them to ghettos, to privacy, to unconsciousness” (R. Connell, 1987, p. 186).

Gender and hegemonic masculinity are constantly reconstructed in every social interaction; thus, all social life is gendered, reproducing both gender differences and gender inequality. Lorber (1994) defines gender as a social institution that:

establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself (Lorber, 1994, p. 1).

Hence, gender has a long history, deeply embedded in social lives, creating structure and stability and influencing social roles. In other words, it is one of the major ways to organize social life. The overall pattern of gender within organizations³⁵ or institutions³⁶ is defined by R. Connell (2009) as the gender regime. The gender regime provides the context for particular events, relationships and individual practices. These local gender regimes may reproduce or challenge

³⁴ For instance, hip-hop fashion with large, gold and diamond jewelry mocks and affirms the gold fetish in Western trade (Rose, 1994b).

³⁵ An organization refers to a social system with acquired membership (Schieffloe, 2011).

³⁶ Institution refers to the process through which behaviors become patterned or standardized over time and from one situation to another (Coakley & Pike, 2014). Lorber (2005) highlights that institutions are ways of doing things that are hardly ever questioned.

the wider gender order: that is, the whole societal pattern of gender relations (R. Connell, 2006). As the construction of gender is a process of social construction, a system of stratification and an institution structuring every aspect of the social world, it defines possibilities and consequences for the individual's actions.

R. Connell (2005, 2008, 2012), Deutsch (2007) and Lorber (2000) argue that, since doing gender is a social construction, there is always the possibility to undo gender. Undoing gender refers to the end of gendered practices that maintain gender inequality (Lorber, 2005). Undoing gender evokes resistance (Deutsch, 2007), and becomes obvious when people experiment with gender characteristics producing non-stereotypical versions of gender. For instance, defining breaking as an artistic dance combined with the fact that the overwhelming majority of breakers are male contests the perception of dance as feminine in Western countries. By performing an activity (i.e. dance) commonly associated with femininity (e.g. Craig, 2014), male breakers challenge traditional gender stereotypes and violate the boundaries for gendered behavior (see Article 3). Lorber (2005) highlights that gender troublemakers are needed to challenge the way gender is still built into the Western world's overall social system. As a result, the gender differences can be reduced and gender can be stated as being redone (West & Zimmerman, 2009) or undone (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2008; Deutsch, 2007). Both undoing and redoing gender upset the gender binary, and the old gender norms are losing currency. Hence, gender as a social institution can be challenged, and degendering is possible. Degendering means freedom from gender restrictions and enables "a world beyond gender" (see Risman et al., 2012). In order to move beyond gender, Lorber (2005) emphasizes that a period of self-conscious attention to gendering is necessary. Gendering involves all taken-for-granted social practices that construct gender as a social institution (Lorber, 2005). Degendering is thus only possible through the awareness of gendering. Greater awareness of gender inequality is the first step in social change to a more democratic world (C. Connell, 2010; R. Connell, 2009; Lorber, 1994, 2000).

In summary, gender is an overarching category organizing social life and an important criterion for self-identification and how the world is perceived and structured (Järviluoma et al., 2003). As gender is constantly renegotiated in social interaction, it influences all aspects of everyday lives, and is a process creating statuses, rights and responsibilities. In other words, gender acts as a basis for inequality. Within breaking, the gender categories are conceptualized in relation to each other and form a structure that is adopted and applied by the breakers. As gender

is a situated construction involving power, the gender regime within breaking is constructed. This gender regime provides the context for the breakers' social interaction and individual practices. Hence, breakers in Oslo construct themselves as masculine or feminine according to the prevailing definitions within the subculture. Through a gender perspective, the dissertation explores the breakers' gender constructions, which involves problematizing gender and the impact gender has on people's opportunities, social roles and interactions.

Throughout the years, feminist theories have been criticized for having a sometimes-confusing vocabulary lacking guidelines for neglected or marginalized groups (e.g. class, black, women) to make progressive changes in the social world (Coakley & Pike, 2014). For instance, feminist research provides few guidelines for determining when sports reproduce dominant forms of social relations in society and when they are sites of resistance and transform social relations. Moreover, Connell's (R. Connell, 1987, 2005, 2009) work on multiple masculinities and hegemonic masculinity has been applied differently and has come under scrutiny for its academic usefulness (Messerschmidt, 2012). The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been criticized for e.g. producing a static typology, marginalizing the body, reifying power, and being a self-reproducing system (e.g. Donaldson, 1993; Hearn, 2004; Jefferson, 2002; Messerschmidt, 2012; Whitehead, 2002). As a consequence, R. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reformulated the concept in appropriately significant ways. They highlighted that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed entity or trait, but rather a social pattern that is accomplished in social action. Hence, the definition and practices of masculinities differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting. Hegemonic masculinity is then relational and pertains to a hierarchy of dynamic gender relations which are open to change (R. Connell, 2012). R. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize that the understanding of hegemonic masculinity must incorporate a holistic grasp of gender hierarchy that recognizes the agency of subordinated and marginalized groups.

Furthermore, R. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) highlight that masculinities are constructed on three levels: *local* (i.e. arenas of face-to-face interaction such as breaking crews, and everyday breaking practice); *regional* (i.e. the society or nation-wide level of culture, such as the Norwegian breaking community³⁷); and *global* (i.e. transnational arenas such as the global breaking community,³⁸ international breaking events, and media such as YouTube). This means

³⁷ All the participants in this study expressed a sense of belonging to a Norwegian breaking community.

³⁸ The participants expressed a sense of belonging to a wider global breaker community (see Articles 1 and 2).

that, even though gender regimes are constructed locally, they are simultaneously a part of a wider gender order. The local gender regime usually corresponds to the regional gender order, but can also depart from it (R. Connell, 2009). This means that change in one local arena of society can over time seep through into others. Lusher and Robins (2009) argue that individual gender constructions are most apparent in local settings, and it is here that personal resistance and/or reinforcement of gender relations can occur.

Through the combination of symbolic interactionism and a gender perspective, I want to examine breaking from the inside, from the perspective of those who make a decision to get involved in breaking, and who integrate breaking into their lives in various ways. Interactionist theory helps me to understand the meanings, identities and social relationships associated with breaking. Focusing on the meanings and interaction dynamics, symbolic interactionism emphasizes the complexity of social interaction and the need to understand how people define situations through their relationships with others. Through a gender perspective, I explore how gender is a primary category of the breakers' experiences and how breaking is a site for negotiating gender ideology and power relations. By locating the breakers within a historically and socially gendered context, I also situate the breakers within the complex matrix of social life.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapters, I have presented the theoretical underpinnings of the dissertation. However, all theory is grounded in a worldview “that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemological fundamental ways” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). In short, ontology concerns what constitutes reality, while epistemology refers to philosophical assumptions about what constitutes valid knowledge. These assumptions provide methodological guidelines and consequences for the research process and the judgment criteria of the results. Hence, in the following I will elaborate on the philosophical worldview proposed in the dissertation, the implications of that worldview, and how this has shaped the research approach. The chapter discusses the strategies of inquiry and methods (i.e. data collection, analysis and interpretation). These three factors – the worldview, the strategies of inquiry, and the methods – contribute to the dissertation’s research design (e.g. Creswell, 2009). Moreover, I will position myself and discuss how my position might have affected the constructed knowledge. This will enable readers to consider the credibility and sincerity of the dissertation’s knowledge production.

An Interpretative Worldview

From an interpretative perspective, the social world is continuously (re)constructed by people in their everyday life. This means that the social world is understood (interpreted) by different people in different situations in different ways. Hence, the social world has no objective features, but rather is fluid and multifaceted (ontology). From this perspective, it is the interaction between people or between people and things that creates the meaning of an action or a phenomenon (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). These varied and multiple meanings arise through social interaction, and opens up a complexity of views (Creswell, 2009). As mentioned before, an interpretative perspective is based on the assumption that the individual’s “self” is constructed through social interaction (e.g. Mead & Morris, 1934). As a social being, people make deliberate choices in different situations, and their actions, meanings and perception of “self” must be understood according to their historical and sociocultural context (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005; Schwandt, 2000). An interactional perspective, according to Järvinen and Mik-Meyer (2005), moves the researcher’s attention from individuals’ private experiences (i.e. people’s own

perspectives) to focus on social interaction and how this interaction is framed by the context. As highlighted in Chapter 3, the prevailing definition of a situation generates a frame for people's social interaction, creating both limitations and opportunities.

Through this perspective, research concerned with people's constructed meanings of a phenomenon, such as breaking, seeks to understand the phenomenon relying (as much as possible) on the participants' views of the situation (Creswell, 2009; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The intention is to make sense of the meanings others have about the world. Accordingly, knowledge is relative – actively constructed, continually tested and modified in the light of new experiences. The empirical material presented is then a construct of the interaction between the researcher and the researched (epistemology). The knower (me as a researcher) and the researched (the breakers) are interdependent and fused together, making the “findings” a creation of a process of interaction (e.g. Sparkes & Smith, 2014). This implies an understanding in which the researcher's background and experiences, as well as location, are important for the construction. As there is no theory-free knowledge, an interactionist perspective influences the research strategies and methods.

A Qualitative Research Strategy

As the purpose of the dissertation is to explore the meaning of breaking from the viewpoints of the breakers, a qualitative research strategy (Creswell, 2009) was selected. To understand the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people, it was necessary to investigate the subculture and how it develops shared patterns of behaviors. Accordingly, the dissertation is based on ethnographic methods, such as fieldwork, with participant observation and semi-structured interviews to investigate the breakers' (own) experiences of breaking.

Stumbling into the Field

The aim of the fieldwork was to carry out an extended exploration of the subculture of breaking in Oslo, Norway. Unfamiliar with the field, my first task was to search the internet for information. At that time (there is more information available today), this turned out to be a dead-end. Luckily, I had met a few breakers through my previous professional job focusing on social

inclusion through sport. These connections pointed me in the right direction.³⁹ Consequently, I got in touch with the owners of the two main breaking sites in Oslo. After a short introduction meeting with the owners, I was granted access.

Unfamiliar with the world of breaking, I was not sure what to expect on my first entry to the field. The owners connected me with a gatekeeper. However, the first phone call resulted in the gatekeeper scolding me for using the word “breakdance”. Hence, the first meeting with the gatekeeper in the field was nerve-wracking, as I did not know whether he would endorse me in the field. Yet the gatekeeper granted me access and even informed the other breakers about the importance of this project.

Doing the Fieldwork

The fieldwork involved participant observation at the breakers’ two main breaking sites from August 2011 to March 2012. During this period, I was in the field four days a week, i.e. two days at each breaking site. Additionally, I attended large breaking events arranged in Oslo to get an overall impression of the breaking milieu in Norway. However, the fieldwork’s main concern was participant observation at two breaking sites within the inner city, approximately 20 minutes apart by foot.

The two sites were located in very different socio-cultural/economic parts of Oslo. One of the sites is situated in an area with a distinctive villa environment, with some businesses, hotels and embassies. The area is associated with art, literature and exclusive shopping. The majority of breakers at this site were in the age group 18-30. However, on a relatively regular basis, a few boys down to the age of 15 was also present. The other fieldwork site was positioned in an area with old tenements, some abandoned buildings and old factories. Crime, drugs and social problems have long been associated with the area, but recently they seem, at least to some extent, to be in the process of loosening their grip (e.g. Vestel, 2004). This site had a slightly more multi-cultural profile than the other. Here the majority of breakers would be around 18–22 years old, with a few older breakers up to 30 years old and younger breakers all the way down to 5 years old.

³⁹ Furthermore, to my (surprise and) relief, these acquaintances turned out to be well regarded in the milieu and the name-dropping increased my credibility within the subculture of breaking.

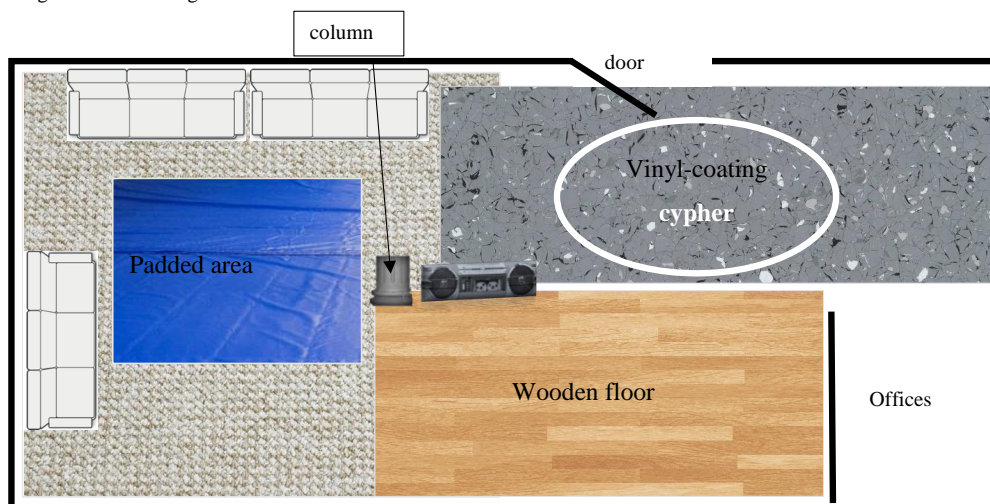
Even though the two breaking sites had some differences, most of the breakers circulated between the two. However, some preferred the one before the other for different practical reasons, such as that one was closer to their home, the different feeling on the floor, crew belonging or simply the musical experience (one site had a better music system than the other). As most of the breakers alternated between the two sites, they turned out to be quite similar in their organization and appearance, due to the breakers' degree of involvement, years of breaking, dance style, age, ethnicity, and gender. Accordingly, due to a strong need for anonymization, the two sites have been merged into *the Location*.

The Location

The Location turned out to be a remodeled office space. There was no equipment in the room, except for a few old sofas and a worn-out boom blaster. The big open space was rarely cleaned, had no air-conditioning, no facilities such as wardrobes or showers, and there was limited access to toilets. Regarding the latter, only a few breakers had a key to the toilets and if the “right person” was not present, the toilets remained a closed area. Consequently, the breakers would pretend to be living in the hotel across the street and use their toilets. Some of the breakers would discreetly change their clothes at the Location, but most breakers just danced in what they wore when they arrived. The Location had an open-access policy, but there were no signs or advertising. Consequently, most breakers learned about the place through friends and attended the training by invitation. Furthermore, only a few people had an access card to the door, sentencing most breakers to wait outside and knock on the windows to get access to the training facilities. All these factors constituted the Location as a mainly backstage region (e.g. Goffman, 1959), and there were hardly ever any outsiders, i.e. non-breakers, present.

The training sessions at the Location had no formal organization. Every breaker had their own approach according to the practice of breaking. At first sight, it all seemed disorganized, with breakers everywhere just doing as they pleased. On my first entry, it all appeared chaotic and unmanageable. I soon discovered that the different segments of flooring structured the breakers according to their skills and involvement in the group (see Figure 4.1). A transportable vinyl-coating covered most of the old office carpet within the Location. This vinyl-coated area was perfect for performing complete breaking routines, and it was here that the cypher would appear. Consequently, this area gathered the most experienced and established breakers. A

Figure 4.1: Drawing of the three areas within the Location



section of the Location had a wooden floor and gathered the partly established breakers who were still working on their repertoire and tuning their breaking moves. The novices would alternate – backstage (Goffman, 1959) – between the wooden floor’s outer area and the section of the room covered with extra padding, which was perfect for practicing acrobatic and more gymnastics moves.

During the fieldwork, anything from 2 to 35 breakers were present at the Location. The age range within the milieu was from approximately 5 to 30 years old.⁴⁰ The breakers would train for approximately four hours every day. In Norway, the Location was well known among breakers and they would travel to visit the Location from other parts of the country. On a daily basis, the majority of the breakers at the Location were from the whole Oslo area, and the breakers had very different social backgrounds. Oslo is a capital with areas with huge differences in the inhabitants’ education, income and health, and the consequences that follow (Nordbø, 2015; Nordvik & Eggesvik, 2015; Oslo kommune, 2016). According to fieldwork observations (i.e. language and physical appearance), there seemed to be approximately half ethnic Norwegian breakers and half breakers with another ethnic origin in the field. Moreover, based on

⁴⁰ During the fieldwork, one five-year-old boy was dropped off by his mother to practice at the Location, three or four boys aged between 10 and 13 showed up by themselves, while the overwhelming majority of breakers were between 15 and 30 years old.

observations and interview statements, the breakers seemed to represent different social classes. The majority of the breakers were male, with just a few female breakers.

Being a researcher in the field

The fieldwork focused on the social interaction between the breakers. I took notes regarding significant events, cultural phenomena (e.g. objects, language, gestures, body movements, rituals), informal conversations and the interaction process (between the breakers themselves, as well as between the breakers and the researcher). I tried to preserve as many details of the interaction as possible. In addition, I drew a sketch (see Figure 4.1) of the Location, divided into three sections, i.e. vinyl area, wood area, padded area, as I kept noting that the interaction in the room shifted according to who was where. I found it difficult to take notes out of the breakers' sight. In the beginning, I would therefore go outside or to the toilets, but, as the fieldwork progressed, I started to use my mobile phone for "jotted notes"⁴¹ (Bryman, 2012, p. 450; Lofland & Lofland, 2006, p. 109). As long as I did not immerse myself in it,⁴² this strategy was very successful. Leaving the Location late at night, I wrote extensive field notes the next day, recalling the day by using the jotted notes. I also noted questions about things that were unclear to me or that I did not understand, which I would get the breakers to elaborate on further, either in informal conversations or in the semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork journal also contains reflections regarding methodological problems – e.g. a recurrent topic was how to connect with the breakers and my placement in the room – and provisional analysis.

To summarize, the fieldwork gave me unique access to understand how the subculture of breaking functioned, how the breakers interacted with each other, a feeling of the milieu's atmosphere and what the breakers talked about. For instance, during the fieldwork I soon got familiar with the breakers' six-month rule regarding people's dedication to breaking,⁴³ and extended the fieldwork from the original four to eight months.

⁴¹ Very brief notes jotted down out of sight to evoke memory about events later, also called scratch notes (Bryman, 2012, p. 450).

⁴² As the fieldwork was very intense, I found it tempting to remain by the mobile phone taking notes. However, this situated me on the outside of the breakers' interaction and would be commented on by the breakers.

⁴³ As breaking has varied in popularity throughout the years, there have been many people just trying out breaking. Newcomers had to prove that they were committed to breaking before the established breakers especially would engage more in social interaction with them. The established breakers had a six-month rule (see Article 1, footnote 4).

Access to a field is an on-going negotiating process (Bryman, 2012; Fangen, 2010; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). With admission from the owners of the Location and the gatekeeper's blessing, I had gained formal access to the Location, but this did not grant me the breakers' trust. To gain trust, Fangen (2010) argues that learning skills is sometimes a necessity. My presence at the Location was very visible, and I realized that, if I wanted to be taken seriously by the breakers, I had to get involved in the bodily practice of breaking. Consequently, I practiced breaking every time I was at the Location. More precisely, at the beginning of the fieldwork I limited myself to stretching, which turned out to be an important part of the breakers' practice. Doing stretching, I could comfortably sit close to the breakers and observe their movements and social interaction. However, after two months in the field the gatekeeper called me out on the dance floor. Even though the loud music made it impossible to hear anybody speak, the approximately 30 breakers stopped their practice on "command." All attention was on me. As I entered the vinyl-coated area, I realized that my position within the Location had changed from backstage to front-stage (e.g. Goffman, 1959). The gatekeeper instructed me to perform some basic breaking moves. I could feel my whole project hanging on a thread – I was dancing for my "life." Following the gatekeeper's instructions, I repeated the moves for what felt like an eternity. After five minutes, the gatekeeper was satisfied and he encouraged me to continue with my practice.

Even though this episode was never mentioned, I perceived it as a turning point for the interaction between the breakers and me as a researcher. After this, I can honestly say I practiced breaking moves every time I was at the Location. I would practice breaking together with the beginners at the outer area of the wooden floor and at the padded area. I would though move between all three areas within the Location, in order to observe and interact with the breakers. In an environment based on physicality, the practice revealed my skill level as a rather clumsy novice. My dedication to practice breaking for hours resulted in sweat, muscle pain and bruises all over my body; that was crucial in order to connect with the breakers and to gain their trust. Wheaton (2002) argues that the ability to participate in the activity is especially important for female researchers attempting to negotiate access to a male-dominated world. The participation was challenging, as I had no previous experience with breaking, was over 30 years old, and a woman. Despite these obstacles, my position changed during the fieldwork from that of "hanging about," an explicit outsider position, to more of a "hanging out" status (Hammersley & Atkinson,

2007; Woodward, 2008). According to Woodward (2008), the hanging out position offers insights into a social world that may be less immediate for those who hang about and do not have the influence to be accepted in the culture. Hanging out provided a chance to overhear intimate exchanges that were not specifically addressed to the researcher. On the other hand, the physical presence of the researcher may distort the authenticity of the exchange. Inside the Location, the main focus was on the practice of breaking. As a result, the only way to create a relationship with the breakers was to get physically involved. Hence, the fieldwork was very intense, as it involved taking notes about the social interaction between the breakers, as well as being involved in informal conversations, while learning and practicing breaking.

To grasp the individual breakers' experiences of being involved in breaking – their story regarding how and why they started with breaking, and their legitimization of beliefs and actions – semi-structured interviews were conducted.

The Interviewees

At the end of the fieldwork, 17 interviewees were sampled. I wanted the interviewees to reflect the diversity observed within the subculture of breaking, and through generic purpose sampling (e.g. Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2006) the interviewees were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Gender.** The majority of the breakers in the field were male with only a few female breakers. In fact, more than nine out of ten breakers were male. It was therefore interesting to get a deeper understanding of the female breakers involvement in a male-dominated milieu. Thus, I wanted relatively more female than male breakers in the sample.
- **Age diversity.** I decided to interview breakers between 15 and 30 years old. At the Location, there were hardly any parents present, and I realized that it could be difficult to get the parents' consent to interview children below 15. Furthermore, I wanted to focus on youth and their meaning constructions.
- **Breaking experience.** The interviewees had varied experiences with breaking – from novices who had just started with breaking to experienced breakers with over 15 years of practice.

- **Ethnic background.** It was important that the interviewees reflected the observed ethnic diversity within the subculture of breaking. The fieldwork revealed the ethnic diversity among the breakers. In the field, approximately half were of ethnic Norwegian background and half of another ethnic origin. I wanted this ethnic diversity to be reflected among the interviewees. Every participant who was asked to be an interviewee agreed, and only two of the originally sampled interviewees with other ethnic backgrounds dropped out due to school and work. Nevertheless, by comparing and contrasting the interview material with the fieldwork observations, the data material should still be representative for the ethnic diversity within the Location.
- **Different dance styles.** Breaking consists of different dance styles, and I wanted this to be reflected among the interviewees. Based on observations, informal conversations and interviews, I have named these different dance styles: experimental, old-school and all-round dance styles. These different dance styles emphasize different components within breaking. Simplified, the experimental and all-round breakers incorporate more acrobatic power moves than the old-school breakers, who accentuate top-rock and down-rock. The different dance styles were reflected in the breakers' clothing style (e.g. old-school breakers would buy their clothing second hand) and their training approach (e.g. old-school⁴⁴ breakers would dissociate themselves from power moves and preferred to practice in closed localities).

Note that old-school breakers would only be occasionally at the sites merged into the Location. The old-school breakers preferred to practice in abandoned buildings, on concrete or at the railway station. However, many of the old-school breakers would appear on battle events. Throughout the whole fieldwork, I tried to get permission to attend the old-school breakers practices. As these were held in "secret" places and always agreed upon on "the go," this never happened. However, as the old school breakers occasionally showed up at the Location, I took the opportunity to connect.

⁴⁴ I have chosen to use the term old school, even though it seems to be debated within the subculture.

Table 4.1: An overview of the breakers' individual characters.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age group	Years of breaking	Occupation	Ethnic origin	Dance style
Oakley	Male	21-25	9	Higher Education*	Norwegian	Old school
Charlie	Male	15-20	7	High school	Norwegian	Experimental
Emma	Female	15-20	1	High school	Norwegian	All-round
Skyler	Male	15-20	1	High school	Norwegian	All-round
Remy	Male	21-25	9	Job**	Norwegian	Old school
Lily	Female	15-20	2	High school	Other ethnic origin	Experimental
Casey	Male	26-30	15	Job	Norwegian	All-round
Ava	Female	21-25	5	Higher Education/ Job	Norwegian	All-round
Hunter	Male	26-30	15	Higher Education/ Job	Other ethnic origin	Old school
Mia	Female	15-20	2	Job	Norwegian	All-round
Ryan	Male	15-20	4	High school	Other ethnic origin	Experimental
Harper	Male	15-20	4	High school	Norwegian	Old school
Sophia	Female	15-25	3	Higher Education/ Job	Other ethnic origin	Experimental
Logan	Male	26-30	12	Job	Other ethnic origin	All-round
Dylan	Male	26-30	12	Job	Other ethnic origin	All-round
Isabella	Female	21-25	5	Higher Education	Norwegian	All-round
Blake	Male	15-20	3	High school	Other ethnic origin	All-round

*Taking or have finished a degree within higher education.

**Freelance dancer or work outside breaking

Accordingly, the purposive sampling in this study was conducted with the aim of achieving a heterogeneous group of interviewees regarding gender, age, ethnicity, experience and dance style. This way of sampling aims to capture central themes emerging across this variation (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). As a result, I sampled 17 interviewees, 6 female and 11 male breakers. Of these, 10 were ethnic Norwegians, while 7 was of another ethnic origin. All interviewees were aged between 15 and 30 years old, and their occupation varied between education and work. This can be shown in Table 4.1. As the focus is on the young breakers' situation today (and not their

parents' situation), their main occupation has been used as an indicator of their class position. There seems to be a tendency that many of the interviewees were unskilled, as some of the breakers had low-demanding jobs. Finally, within the different dance styles, I sought interviewees of different ethnic origins and ages.

The Interview

I wanted to conduct all the interviews in an office outside the Location. Fangen (2010) argues that a less environment-specific setting separated from other members gives opportunities to ask about things that can be difficult in the fieldwork setting. The interviews were executed in an office space situated a few blocks from the Location.

Each interview started with the study's purpose and a request to tape the interview (see Appendices 2 and 3). All interviewees agreed to the interview being taped and gave their informed consent to participate in the study. A semi-structured interview guide had been constructed, based on the research question and experiences during the fieldwork (see Appendix 3). The interview guide contained predefined themes regarding subculture practices (e.g. rituals, communication, clothing, use of space), identity and gender. The prepared topics were, though, only suggestions, as it was the interviewees' answers that guided and created a two-way conversational flow (e.g. Kvale, Brinkmann, Anderssen, & Rygge, 2009). The interview was an excellent opportunity to get the breakers' own reflections on episodes observed during the fieldwork, such as e.g. the shirtless body (see Article 4), the perception of the female breaker (see Article 3), the importance of the greeting ritual (see Article 1), and episodes implying ethnicity (see Articles 1, 2 and 4).

The interviews lasted from 45 to 180 minutes, averaging about 60 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Nine of the interviews were transcribed by myself, while a research assistant transcribed the remaining eight interviews. To ensure the accuracy of all the transcriptions, I listened to the audio file and compared it with the transcript as I loaded the interview into the software MAXQDA. There were only minor differences between the sound recording and the transcript.

Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation run alongside data collection in the field (e.g. Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996; Lofland & Lofland, 2006). This allowed for a deeper insight, since I could present and discuss interpretations of themes and/or social practices observed at the Location with the participants in informal conversations or in the semi-structured interviews.

As mentioned before, an interpretive worldview involves acknowledging that knowledge is always constructed through interaction. This is in contrast to a more naturalistic ethnographic approach, where the goal is to analyze the world from the “participants’ perspectives” (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005, p. 98). Ethnography inspired by constructivism and interactionism focuses on the social interaction between people and how this is affected (framed) by the social context. For instance, the breakers change in character from backstage (‘cuddly’ camaraderie) to front-stage in the cypher (exaggerated behavior) was very obvious and surprised me. The combination of interviews and fieldwork was crucial here, as the interviewees emphasized the change in character, and neither the observations nor the interview statements could be understood without the other. The interviewees statements – their *what* – could not be isolated from the subcultural frame (Goffman, 1959), *how* the social context influence the social interaction.

The interpretation of the empirical findings has been integrated with theoretical arguments to understand the data uncovered in the field (Wilson & Chaddha, 2009). To avoid reducing the complexity of the empirical material, I have maintained an openness for surprises when analyzing the material (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). This approach should not be misunderstood as being without a pre-understanding or a theory, but rather provides potential to produce knowledge.

During the analyzing process, all the empirical material – both the interviews and the fieldnotes – has been continuously re-read to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. This has been important to preserve the empirical materials’ contextual meanings (e.g. Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). Consequently, I got a sense of the data material and became intimately familiar with it.

During the analyzing process, I have used different approaches and techniques for meaning generation, what Kvale et al. (2009) defines as an ad hoc approach. This involves a free interplay of different techniques to bring out connections and structures significant to the research process. For instance, I have re-read the empirical material to get an overall impression, gone

back to specific passages, made a few quantifications resulting in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, and been inspired by thematic analyses.

The empirical material – the fieldnotes and the semi-structured interviews – was loaded into the data analysis software MAXQDA. All the interviews were coded in MAXQDA. Coding is the process of organizing the material into categories, and labeling those categories with a term (Creswell, 2009). With over 300 pages of transcribed texts from the interviews, MAXQDA has been a helpful tool to categorize and code the interviews. I also started to code the fieldnotes in MAXQDA, but, after a while, I decided that this was not a necessity. Instead, I have worked with the paper version of the fieldnotes, and coded only specific episodes regarding the social interaction between the breakers, their oral exchanges and special events. MAXQDA made it manageable to compare interview segments with each other and retrieve specific statements.

Throughout the analyzing process, I have written analytical thoughts in the margins – both on the paper version of the fieldnotes and by using the memo function in MAXQDA. These analytical thoughts sought to reflect, “what is this about?”. I also used the memo function to attach methodological and theoretical ideas to specific text segments. Additionally, I have made a thorough check to ensure that no data were overlooked in the coding.

The thematic analyses revealed similarities and differences between the breakers (e.g. Bryman, 2012; Riessman, 2005; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Accordingly, I started to identify different themes across all interviews, checked whether it was possible to recognize any coherent pattern between the breakers and considered whether the themes and codes worked across the empirical material.

Three main themes/codes with subcodes were identified within the empirical material: 1) *Identity* (subcodes: codes, crew, hierarchy, body/clothes/ injuries, name, self-identity), 2) *Meaning* (subcodes: authenticity, community (local/regional/global), freedom, art, demands, self-esteem, involvement), and 3) *Gender* (subcodes: impression management, stereotypes, masculinity, co-operation, devaluation of female breakers and being a female breaker).

The last step of the analysis happened while writing the articles (e.g. Sparkes & Smith, 2014), in which the empirical material is presented by meaning condensation, i.e. abridgements of the meanings expressed in informal conversations, the interviews and observations (Kvale et al., 2009). Starting up with this project, I was inspired by theories connected with youth culture and gender. For instance, subculture theory was a necessity during the fieldwork to be able to

describe what was going on within the Location, and gender theory was useful to understand how gender relations were reproduced. However, during the analyzing process, the breakers' change in character as they entered the cypher became evident. Writing the articles, the need for a more dramaturgical jargon became apparent. This led me to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical work and understanding of social life as a staged drama.

Anonymity

Starting with this study, it soon became clear that the breaking milieu in Norway is very transparent, and I realized the importance of implementing strategies to hide the participants' individual characteristics in what was an instantly recognizable milieu. For the purpose of anonymity, the two breaking sites were merged into *the Location* and I decided to present the empirical material by grouping the breakers in three of the articles. The grouping of the participants has been a rather bold methodological choice, with a danger of oversimplifying and losing the complexity within the milieu. However, I have repeatedly examined the data to reveal the variety within the material.

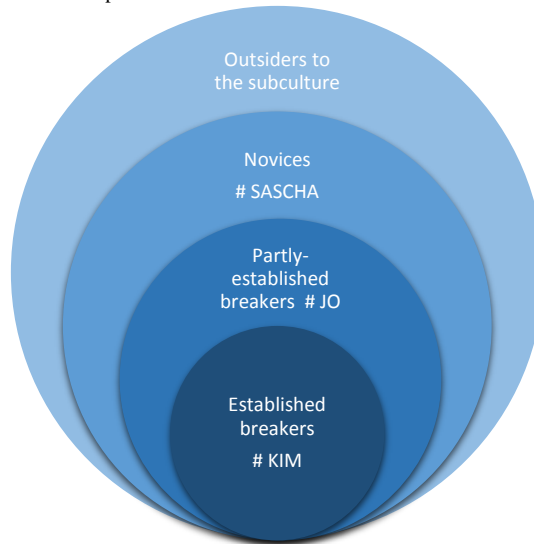
Grouping of the Participants

The analyzing process revealed an interesting distinction between the breakers according to their contribution in the milieu. As a result, the interviewees were grouped under the names Kim, Jo, and Sascha, according to their degree of involvement and influence in the milieu.⁴⁵ This can be illustrated in a simplified model, see figure 4.2.

The participants in these three groups were male and female breakers aged between 15 and 30 years old and from the three different dance styles within breaking. The group named Kim consisted of the **established** breakers who were active in the milieu; they trained regularly at breaking, attended battles, and seemed to be influencing the milieu. The group named Jo refers to the **partly established** breakers who appeared occasionally at training and battles; they were accepted as subculture members but seemed to have limited influence in the milieu. The third group, Sascha, refers to the **novices**; they attended training and battles occasionally, and as rookies they were not fully accepted nor did they have influence in the milieu. This grouping of

⁴⁵ The perception of "influence" in the milieu is based on observations during the fieldwork and how the breakers talked about each other in informal conversations and in the interviews.

Figure 4.2: Subculture membership



the participants, as shown in Table 4.2, has been used in Articles 1 and 2, where the presented quotations are sometimes merged from one or more participants within the same grouping.

Table 4.2: The interviewees' involvement in the milieu⁴⁶

	KIM	JO	SASCHA
Ethnic background*	5 Norwegians 2 other ethnic origin	1 Norwegian 4 other ethnic origin	4 Norwegians 1 other ethnic origin
Involvement	High	Medium	Low to Medium
Influence	Medium to High	Limited	None
Training / battles	Regularly	Occasionally	Occasionally
Battles	Regularly	Occasionally	Occasionally

*Whether the participants themselves or their parents were born in a country other than Norway

⁴⁶ It is worth noting that gender is not shown in the table. This has been a deliberate choice, due to the gender biased field and considerations regarding anonymity. All three categories, however, consist of both female and male breakers.

In Articles 3 and 4, which focus on the breakers' gender constructions, I decided not to present the empirical material through the above three groups. The analyses of the interviews revealed that the breakers confirmed traditional gender stereotypes across their degree of involvement and influence in the milieu. The majority of breakers were male, and to underline the many different voices within the milieu each breaker was given his/hers individual pseudonym.

In sum, throughout the whole research process it has been of the utmost importance to implement several anonymity strategies to protect the participants involved in this study. The grouping of the participants in Articles 1 and 2 has been a necessity, due to the transparency of the Norwegian breaking milieu and a particular need to conceal the female breakers' identity especially. To avoid losing the empirical nuances, the data has, however, been rigorously examined to reveal the variety within the material. I hope I have succeeded in reflecting the diversity within the subculture of breaking, while protecting the breakers' anonymity.

Judgment Criteria, Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Judging the quality of qualitative research is complex and requires alternative judgment criteria other than validity, reliability and generalization (i.e. the traditional quantitative judgment criteria) (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Sparkes & Smith, 2014). As mentioned before, an interpretative perspective defines the world as constructed, i.e. reality cannot be discovered and collected, but is constantly reconstructed through interaction. As emphasized by Kvale et al. (2009), validity is also then a social construct. In the following, I will therefore present some possible criteria for the evaluation/judgment criteria for the dissertation. The list is inspired by Guba and Lincoln (1994), Tracy (2010) and Sparkes and Smith (2014):

Topic – Is the topic worthy and original? Is it relevant, timely, significant and interesting?

Richness – Is the study rich? Does the study use sufficient sample(s) and time in the field to produce information required for analysis?

Credibility – Is the study marked by thick descriptions and concrete details? Have I succeeded in locating different voices? For example, is it possible to differentiate between the researcher and the participants' voices?

Coherency – Is there coherence between the understanding of central concepts, the constructed data and the story told in this dissertation?

Sincerity – Is there transparency about methods, theory and challenges? Is the study characterized by self-reflexivity? Have I succeed in positioning myself in a meaningful way?

Resonance – Does my study answer the question raised, and generate further questions?

Ethical – Has the study been conducted within acceptable ethical standards?

Contribution – Has the study created new insight that can contribute to the understanding of youth and their meaning constructions in breaking? Has the study succeeded in placing the subculture of breaking within a wider context? A story that is not located in the wider context tells a very small part of the story.

The strengths and limitations of this dissertation can be dealt with in relation to these questions. First, there has been relatively modest social research on the *topic*. This dissertation is the first to explore the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people living in Oslo, Norway. At the point of starting the study in 2010, breaking had re-gained popularity. In 2006, breakers started to appear in reality shows such as *So You Think You Can Dance*, *X-factor* and *Norske Talenter*, more dance schools offered breaking classes and breaking entered the Opera in 2012. The *richness* of the study includes 8 months of participating observations combined with informal conversations during the fieldwork and 17 semi-structured interviews.

Following Järvinen and Mik-Meyer (2005), I understand the interview as a social meeting where experiences are analyzed and meanings are constructed. Consequently, the interview circles around not only the interviewee's beliefs, experiences and actions, but also their social identity and social strategies. Or following Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor, the interview is a social process of impression management, i.e. a more or less conscious decision to reveal and/or conceal aspects of one's self. Consequently, the interviewee will position him/herself and other persons in their narratives according to what they define as most appropriate. As highlighted by Järvinen and Mik-Meyer (2005), the constructed meaning in the interview cannot be isolated from the cultural context that dominates the field of study. Hence, the combination of ethnographic research methods (i.e. fieldwork and interviews) allowed for an in-depth understanding of the interviews related to the breakers' cultural context, and resulted in

thicker descriptions of the breakers' impression management and meaning constructions. This has been important in order to remain *credible*.

Throughout the study, it has been important to ensure a meaningful *coherency* (e.g. Tracy, 2010). To achieve meaningful coherence, the study must hang together well, creating a coherency from its research question, paradigms, theory, methods and interpretations. The empirical material has been continuously re-read and re-written to ensure a coherency between central concepts, theory, the constructed data and the story told in this dissertation.

The *sincerity* of this study is closely connected with its *resonance*. Through the articles, I wanted to reach a wide audience and contribute to a deeper understanding of young people performing breaking in Oslo. In the whole research process, self-reflexivity has been important. Haraway (1988) uses the concept "situated knowledge" to emphasize that all knowledge is produced from a position. Consequently, who I am (the researcher) affects the constructed knowledge. My presence at the Location was obvious. There were no places to be "invisible." Olive and Thorpe (2011) highlight that the researcher occupies multiple and dynamic positions in the field, which affects the research. Entering the field, I honestly thought that a position as an academic with extended movement knowledge could be a way to connect with the breakers. I have probably never been so wrong. Within the subculture, everyone was evaluated according to movement and subcultural skills. Entering the field as a white, middle-class female researcher with clumsy and unimpressive breaking moves, I was regarded as no threat to the breakers. This limited "insider knowledge" and may have distorted the authenticity of the social interaction (Woodward, 2008). On the other hand, as previously mentioned, during the fieldwork my position in the field changed from "hanging about," an explicit outsider position, to a more "hanging out" status (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Woodward, 2008). My dedication and commitment to attend every breaking practice throughout the fieldwork was a necessity, not only to gain access to the field but also to get the breakers' trust and sincerity in informal conversations and in the interviews. As mentioned before, breaking is a male-dominated field and, as a female researcher, I was "positioned as gendered" by my very presence (Woodward, 2008, p. 546). In order to minimize the awareness around my gender, I mirrored the female breakers – that is, I dressed in big, concealing, grey or black clothes, tucked my long hair into a ponytail and used the minimum of makeup (for more about the female breakers' clothing style, see Articles 1 and 3).

This project was granted *ethical* approval from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the study, and gave informed consent prior to involvement. Entering the fieldwork, I intended to hang up information letters about the project within the Location; this was, however, denied by the gatekeeper due to the Location's policy. The gatekeeper informed the breakers in the field; however, due to the ad hoc nature of the field,⁴⁷ I continually informed (new) breakers about the study and my presence as a researcher. The majority of the breakers found the project interesting and were eager to participate in informal conversation with me during the fieldwork. A few breakers kept their distance, and as they showed no interest in talking to me, I did not impose myself on these breakers during the fieldwork. Furthermore, the data material is confidential, and, as mentioned before, several strategies (e.g. creating the Location and grouping the breakers) were applied to ensure the participants' anonymity, since the breaking milieu in Norway is very transparent.

The dissertation highlights breaking as a cross-cultural meeting point. Placing the subculture of breaking within a wider social-cultural context, the dissertation makes a *contribution* to the field of sport sociology and youth (sport) culture studies, as well as the field of physical education⁴⁸ (PE) and physical education teacher education (PETE).

⁴⁷ At the Location, new breakers were coming and going all the time. However, there was a hard core of approximately 20 breakers, who practiced at the Location almost every day.

⁴⁸ It is worth noting that alternative sports such as breaking are mandatory in PE in Norway (Udir, 2015).

CHAPTER 5 – PRESENTING THE ARTICLES – MAIN FINDINGS

The dissertation is based on a study in which the results are presented in four articles. These articles are interconnected and constitute a whole as they explore the breakers' construction of meaning, identity and gender. The articles provide a comprehensive understanding of the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people living in Oslo. These articles can be read independently and in any order. Three of the articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals; the fourth article is in the process of being peer-reviewed. In this chapter, I give a short presentation of each article.

Article 1: Identity Constructions among Breakdancers

Drawing on a symbolic interactionist perspective on subcultures (e.g. Williams, 2011), this article discusses the dissertation's subquestion: *How is identity constructed within breaking?*

The article highlights how becoming a breaker involves a process of continuous identity construction, in which adopting and internalizing the subculture's ideas, objects and practices is crucial. Through a socialization process (e.g. Donnelly & Young, 1988), the novices learn how to adjust their impression management according to the subculture's characteristics (e.g. Goffman, 1959). Accordingly, an alternative breaker identity is constructed, creating a sense of belonging not only to the Norwegian subculture of breaking, but also to a wider global community. Subcultural boundaries were created through style: that is, cultural objects (e.g. the breakers' clothing style) and practices (e.g. the greeting ritual, language, alternative naming, and embodying attitude). Style constituted the breakers' collective group identity by signifying differences, communicating identification and belonging – creating a distinction between “us” (the breakers) and the outsiders. The results show that the ability to perform with attitude (i.e. embodying an aggressive persona) was an important part of the breakers' impression management and gave breakers with poorly developed physical movement skills winning opportunities in battles. Attitude involved subcultural capital and increased the breakers' status within the subculture. Furthermore, through deliberate impression management, the breakers constructed an alternative breaker identity detached from other social categories. As a result, breaking seems to have an empowering and liberating potential.

Article 2: The Construction of Meanings in Breaking: Insights from Breakers in Oslo.

This article investigates the dissertation's subquestion: *What meanings are constructed within breaking?*

Exemplified through Jo, a fifteen-year-old boy who has traveled every week for the past three years to practice breaking with guys who are twice his age, this article highlights that the meaning of breaking is constructed through the breakers' ongoing social interaction. Meaning is understood as a process, socially constructed in a specific cultural context (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). The results highlight that breaking can only be learned through social interaction with other breakers. In fact, the symbolic value of breaking was created through a demand for involvement. By interacting with other breakers, Jo learned the shared meaning of specific ideas, material objects and the practices of breaking. Gradually he adjusted his actions to be in line with the other breakers at the Location and became a part of the collectively initiated joint actions (e.g. Charon, 2010; Goffman, 1959). Jo experienced a feeling of affinity with other breakers, not only at the Location, but also throughout the world. Hence, breaking provides an alternative identification and acceptance. Moreover, the results show that Jo got socialized into a group that not only supported him, but also challenged him to make his contribution to breaking. Defined as an artistic dance, differences between the breakers were celebrated and the meaning of breaking was constructed around the feeling of freedom to "just be yourselves." This resulted in a sense of being an individual of importance. Consequently, Jo's self-esteem and confidence increased.

Hence, the meaning of breaking was constructed through a sense of belonging to a global breaking community and personal growth.

Article 3: Gender Constructions in Breaking

This article focuses on the dissertation's subquestion: *How is gender constructed and negotiated?*

The article explores how young people involved in breaking contribute to the doing, redoing and undoing of gender (e.g. C. Connell, 2010; R. Connell, 2009; Risman et al., 2012; West & Zimmerman, 1987). The negotiation of gender is highlighted through the female breakers' experiences in a male-dominated culture. The results show that the perception of gender serves as a frame for female breakers' actions and re-actions. Although being defined as an artistic dance, which is commonly considered as a feminine activity in Western Europe (Craig,

2014), breaking is male dominated and perceived as a man's world. The results show that the female breakers were constantly devalued, as traditional gender stereotypes were maintained and reconstructed within breaking. It appeared that the female breakers' involvement in breaking apparently challenged the male-dominated gender regime, and extended the female breakers' "doing of gender" as they deliberately mixed masculinity and femininity in their appearance and embodied masculine-gendered movements. Furthermore, the female breakers expressed a desire to disprove the gendered expectations of female breakers from people both inside and outside of the subculture. The results presented in the article emphasize that the female breakers constantly challenged the perceptions of doing gender, and that gender was undone at different levels within the subculture of breaking.

Hence, the construction of gender in breaking was influenced by traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Yet, the female breakers deliberately challenged stereotypical gendered assumptions in general. Consequently, gender was constructed in a process of continuous negotiation.

Article 4: Masculinity Constructions among Norwegian Male Break(danc)ers

This article investigates the dissertation's sub question: *How is masculinity exhibited among young male breakers?*

Drawing on R. Connell's (2005) conceptualization of masculinities, the article explores how masculinity is exhibited among young male breakers – how this is formed, performed and (re)negotiated through breaking. The results show that the breakers' masculinity constructions were framed by breaking's legacy. The notion of attitude and breaking's historical circumstances as a black, working-class street culture was essential for the breakers' masculinity constructions. As a result, ethnic diversity was regarded as a natural part of breaking, and as an explicit and implicit factor bringing the breakers together. Consequently, the breaker who performed an exaggerated masculinity⁴⁹ with attitude represented hegemonic masculinity (within the subculture of breaking). With obvious references to the ghetto (i.e. working class and ethnicity), this is a marginalized masculinity in the societal gender order. However, as it is the subculture of breaking that is the bearer of masculinity, the breakers' exaggerated masculine constructions can

⁴⁹ Staged an impression of success and control through physical intimidations, toughness, aggression, masculine movements and exaggerated style.

be interpreted as a collective means of resistance, i.e. protest masculinity. As the breakers worked hard to embody attitude, they adopted breaking's traditions in order to achieve success, and their complicity sustained the hegemonic form of masculinity within breaking bounded to a multi-cultural context. Through their embodied claim to power, the breakers signified a challenge to hegemonic masculinity in general Norwegian society, making a dent in the gender order.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Through the sub-questions discussed in the four articles, I intended to contribute to knowledge about young people's involvement in breaking and their construction of meaning, identity and gender. The aim of the dissertation was to investigate:

What is the meaning of breaking in the lives of young breakers in Oslo, Norway?

The main finding of this dissertation is that the meaning of breaking arises through the breakers' ongoing social interaction in a *gendered* and *multicultural youth culture*. The meaning of breaking is connected to a sense of *belonging* to a *local and global subculture* and constructs an *alternative identity* across social differences. Within this framework, the breakers express the feeling of freedom to "just be themselves."

The empirical material discussed in all four articles highlights that the breakers come to share values and beliefs, practices and material objects, which set them apart from mainstream society. Hence, I argue that the results of this project are associated with significant characteristics of subcultures.

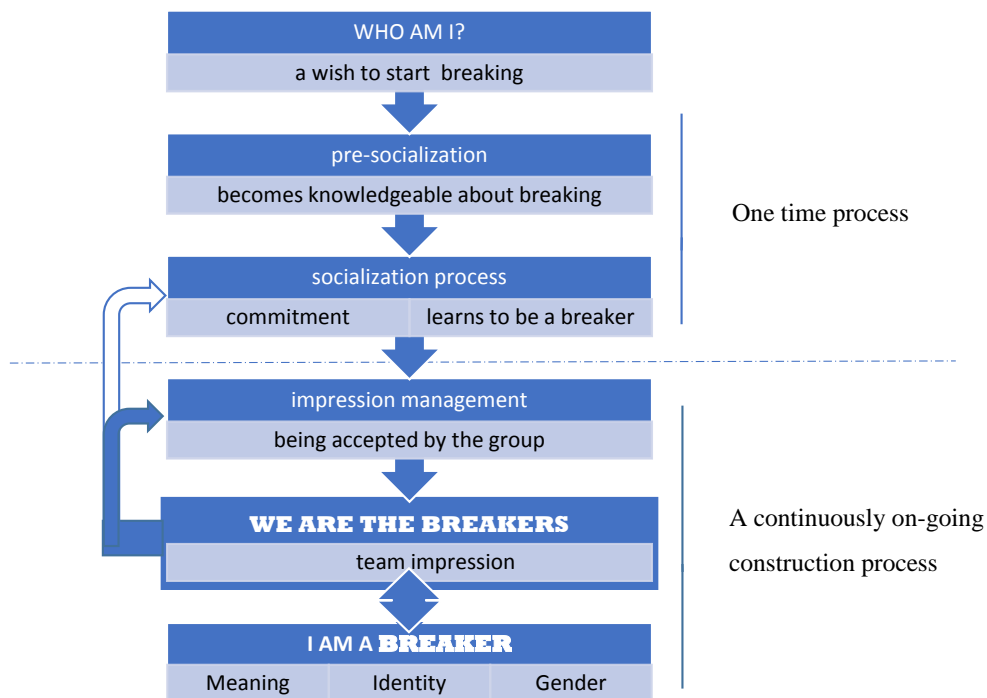
Interestingly, many of the breakers had no friends who practiced breaking when they started (see Article 2). Inspired by mediated encounters (Fogarty, 2012a) the participants were curious about the activity and had made a deliberate choice to start breaking. This is interesting, since earlier research has shown that significant others such as family and in particular friends, influence young people's activity choices (Bakken, 2016; Coakley & Pike, 2014; Seippel, Sisjord, & Strandbu, 2016; Stroot, 2002). Most of the participants in this study, however, started breaking without these socialization agents.

Vestel (2014) highlights that people get involved with subcultures for a number of reasons. In this particular study, many of the old pioneers associated their entry into breaking with breaking's history and as a means that had saved them from the street. This is in line with earlier research on breaking (e.g. Kopytko, 1986). On the other hand, mostly of the younger breakers – and thus the majority – engaged with breaking as they wanted to do cool moves, "let off some steam" (in terms of high energy) or be free (see Article 2, 3 and 4). The feeling of freedom was emphasized during the interviews, among others, in comparison to organized sport.

Almost all interviewees, at one point of their lives, had been involved in organized sport, such as soccer, basket, hockey, floorball, etc. In contrast to organized sport, breaking was perceived as a free, adventurous and thrilling activity. Many of those formerly involved in organized sport had quit as “(...) it started to be boring” (see Article 4, p. 16).

Based on Donnelly and Young’s (1988) article on socialization to subcultures, becoming accepted as a breaker involves a process of four phases: (1) becoming knowledgeable about breaking; (2) spending time and being associated with people who participate in breaking; (3) learning about the expectations and behaviors of other breakers; and (4) being accepted into the group by other breakers (see Article 1). During this process pre-existing mainstream and subcultural knowledge are important for the novices and their impression management according to the characteristics of the subculture of breaking (see Article 1 and 2). As a result, the breakers’ perceptions of breaking, actions and meaning constructions gradually come into line, forming collective actions and team impressions (e.g. Goffman, 1959). The breaker identity became alive and, as it was affirmed by fellow breakers, the novices started to define themselves as breakers.

Figure 6.1: The process of becoming a breaker



Subsequently, the breaker identity functioned for individuals, who wanted to claim it, and for the subculture of breaking, which needed it for cohesion (e.g. Charon, 2010). Through social interaction, the breakers give meaning to themselves – “I am a breaker,” to others – “We are the breakers,” and to the world around them. A simplified illustration of this is shown in Figure 6.1.

The symbolic value of breaking was created through a demand of *involvement*. This involved not only bodily involvement, but also to support each other and give their individual contribution to the dance (see Article 2). Within the Location, the activities were not initiated by any formal coaches nor had any formal organization; every breaker had their own approach to practice. Yet, getting involved in the milieu, the breakers developed a commitment to participation and many felt the obligation to practice breaking every day. Hence, many breakers circulated between the two breaking sites which constitute the Location. This underlines the physical place as rather unimportant for the breakers’ identity construction. What gathers them is the “doing” of the activity, i.e. breaking, and the social community. This is in line with research on other alternative sports, such as skateboarding and windsurfing (e.g. Wheaton and Beal, 2003). As the breakers got more and more dedicated, they acquired both subculture skills/jargon and a larger network of breaking friends. Consequently, they started to use more time at the Location and events at the weekends. As the breakers became more subculturally competent, they gained *status* within the subculture, and thereby prolonged and strengthened their identities as breakers.

Generally, subcultures provide leisure spaces and meet individuals’ social needs, as they can explore activities and identities and connect with peers. Traditionally breaking has been viewed as an activity best suited for younger people, due to its acrobatic moves, the participants’ age and its origin as a youth culture (e.g. Banes, 2004; Fogarty, 2012b). This was reflected within the Location, as the younger breakers especially accentuated physicality and the importance of attending battles. However, many of the old pioneers would be at the Location regularly. Fogarty (2012b) argues that physical constraints of the body do not seem to set the limitations on a dancer’s involvement in hip-hop culture. Still involved in the milieu, many of the older breakers took on new roles, as mentors for younger breakers. As a result, many breaking crews were multi-generational. That many of the older breakers continued to be in the milieu underlines the *social aspects* of breaking. Involvement in breaking leads to a sense of belonging and identity, this is “what I am” and “what I do.” This was highlighted further as many of the breakers would

be at the Location just to hang around despite injuries (see Article 2 and 4). In contrast to the younger breakers, the older breakers had a tendency to downplay the importance of the battle and rather accentuate breaking's legacy. This can be interpreted as a result of being in an environment based on physicality, which can cause injuries and worn-out bodies after years of practicing. However, it can also be understood in line with the social aspects of breaking, and a consequence of an acquired social network within breaking and being socialized into a global subculture.

Even though the dissertation focuses on the everyday practices of breaking at a local level, the results underline the breakers' sense of belonging not only to a Norwegian breaking community (regional level), but also to a wider *global breaker community*. These levels are interconnected, and breakers throughout the world are in a constant interplay. Hence, the meaning of breaking is not simply inherited, but, as revealed in this study, also locally constructed. This is among other aspects reflected in the breakers' various definitions of "foundation" and the differences in the construction of a breaker character (see Articles 1 and 4). The constructed breaker identity among the Norwegian breakers is then simultaneously local and global. Dislocated from both the ethnic Norwegian and the immigrant culture, the subculture of breaking created a sense of belonging not only to the local subculture of breaking, but also to a global breaking community. In other words, the dissertation reveals a pattern of experiences and connections between breakers on a larger scale.

Through mediated encounters, the Norwegian breakers were connected to breakers throughout the world and adopted and internalized some of the global subculture's ideas and values. It should be noted here that most of the breakers were not especially concerned with general hip-hop culture or its history. Some breakers performed other elements connected with hip-hop culture (such as graffiti, MCing or DJing), but most of the breakers were only concerned with breaking. Yet, breaking's legacy (in terms of e.g. being authentic, the need for attitude and constructing an alternative identity within a multicultural culture,) was emphasized within the subculture of breaking. This was, among other aspects, reflected as the breakers emphasized that, "You can't do it by yourself" (see Article 2, p. 28). This underline the peer-to-peer teaching centered on collective efforts and the importance of passing along knowledge. Within hip-hop culture and breaking, the phrase "each one teach one" has resonated throughout rap lyrics over the past 40 years (Fogarty, 2012b, p. 58). The saying originated in the United States during slavery, when Africans were denied education. In Norway and within the Location, the saying

was implicit among the breakers, as the social interaction – the support and feedback from other breakers – was regarded as crucial in order to develop as a breaker, i.e. you can't do it by yourself (see Article 2).

The fact that the participants have *chosen* to be involved in breaking can be interpreted as a consequence of the increased individualization in modern society, in which self-identity has become a reflexive project (Giddens, 1991). Young people seem to be free to shape their lives and make their own lifestyle choices. This can involve a potential liberation from social categories such as class, ethnicity and gender. And, within the subculture of breaking, the breakers represented a diversity of social backgrounds. First of all, their living conditions varied, as some lived with their parents (due to their young age or to save money), some lived collectively with other breakers or friends, some had their own apartments, were married and had children. Many of the grown-up breakers lived in the innercity, embracing the urbanlife with short distances to “everything,” using the inner-city bikes to get around. A few breakers lived out of town in the suburbs, and took public transportation to the Location. Second, some of the breakers had been brought up in the countryside and moved to Oslo (because of family, education, or to break at the Location), while others had lived their whole lives in Oslo, i.e. from both sides of the city with a majority from the east side. Some were immigrants, while a few were adopted from abroad. Third, during the fieldwork and in informal conversations, the diversity among the breakers' parents became apparent, as some were highly educated, and some were artists, plumbers or unemployed.

The *social diversity* among the breakers contradicts earlier research documenting that young people's involvement in leisure activities is strongly influenced by socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity (Andersen & Bakken, 2015; Bakken, 2016; Krange & Øia, 2005; Seippel et al., 2016). For instance, young ethnic Norwegian males from higher social strata are overrepresented in traditional organized sports (Bakken, 2016; Kavli, 2007; Øia & Vestel, 2007) and young people from lower socioeconomic strata, ethnic minorities and females are underrepresented (Myrli & Mehus, 2015; Seippel et al., 2016; Seippel, Sletten, & Strandbu, 2011). Even though alternative sports have been perceived as a challenge to traditional organized sports, research has documented that many of these remain the playgrounds of affluent western white men (Anderson, 1999; Brayton, 2005; Kidder, 2013; Kusz, 2004; Sisjord, 2005, 2015; Wheaton, 2013, 2015). In comparison, Bakken (2016) and UNG&FRI (2009) document that

young people on the outside of organized leisure activities are often frequent users of more unorganized activities related to “Youth Clubs” and youth subcultures.

Furthermore, I argue that ethnicity had a *unifying effect* within the subculture of breaking, and was considered a natural part of breaking. As highlighted by Dylan in Article 4 “hip hop [and thus breaking] was created to unite” (p. 21). However, despite the ethnic diversity among the breakers, ethnicity was hardly ever mentioned within the Location – making ethnicity both an explicit and implicit factor among the breakers. Eriksen (1993) highlights the importance of exploring such multi-ethnic contexts, where ethnicity as a dimension does not have tangible practical significance, in order to understand the relevance of ethnicity (in these contexts). In this particular study, breaking’s legacy as a multicultural culture was vibrant among the breakers. Earlier research (e.g. Forman & Neal, 2012; Jensen, 2011; Vestel, 2008) has accentuated hip-hop – and breaking – as an alternative to (a sense of) marginalization within general society. This is underlined, as the breakers of an ethnic origin other than Norwegian seemed to experience everyday racism outside of the Location. The subculture of breaking was perceived as more accepting and inclusive regarding ethnic diversity than general Norwegian society. That hip-hop and thus breaking can be an inclusive and anti-racist activity is highlighted by earlier research (e.g. Beach & Sernhede, 2012; Engel, 2001; Sernhede, 2005, Vestel, 2008). Consequently, the subculture of breaking seems to offer breakers a sense of belonging and sameness across demographic differences.

The Location seemed to be a *safe space* for temporary refuge from everyday racism and a place where they could make their everyday experiences bearable, e.g. by joking about ethnic origin. Following Goffman (1959), the breakers’ social interaction within the Location can be understood as a staged drama. Through deliberate impression management (i.e. verbal and non-verbal communication, bodily adornments, arrangement of scenery), the breakers presented an impression in accordance with what was regarded as acceptable within the subculture, i.e. an impression with obvious references to the ghetto. These performances were given front-stage in the cypher, but rehearsed backstage. Goffman (1959) highlights that “backstage” and “front-stage” are relative terms, and any region can be transformed into one or the other. Within the Location, the cypher was closely connected with the breakers’ backstage region, and they supported each other’s impressions through “props” (i.e. recognition through visual signs or

verbal communication). This social play (Goffman 1959), where people/breakers impress and are impressed, can be interpreted in several ways.

First of all, the social play can be understood as the individual breakers craving for status within the subculture as they continuously adjusted their impressions in accordance with what was regarded as socially acceptable. Second, the social play can be interpreted as a functional social process, where the breakers make compromises between individuality and social order to maintain a balance. This is, among other aspects, reflected as the breakers highlight individuality and freedom of expression on the one side, and on the other accentuate the need to make an impression with attitude front-stage, i.e. the breakers' masculinity constructions are framed by breaking's legacy. Third, the social play can be understood as a way to cope with alienation, and make everyday life more tolerable. For instance, the Location seemed to be a place where the breakers could make their experiences of everyday racism more endurable (see Article 4). Through a sense of belonging and support, the breakers felt safe. At the same time, the constructed meanings within breaking are, to some degree, distinct from widely accepted norms and values.

Haenfler (2014) and Williams (2011) highlight that subcultures offer either passively or actively some sort of resistance to the mainstream. Within breaking, this was reflected among other ways in the breakers' identity construction as they embodied attitude (see Articles 1 and 4) and their construction of gender (see Articles 3 and 4). As shown in Chapter 2, scholars debate whether subcultures reflect resistance. The results of this study, however, show that breaking fosters an oppositional consciousness. Involved in the subculture of breaking, the breakers come to share some sort of outsider status in society. As underlined by Oakley in Article 4: "I have learned to be different" (p. 13). For many of the breakers, breaking involved a *feeling of freedom* – freedom to do the activity, freedom from racism, freedom from everyday life and freedom to be themselves.

By defining breaking as an artistic dance founded on individuality, creativity and expressivity, the breakers got an opportunity to express their feelings, and "just be themselves" – i.e. be different. Through the social interaction at the Location, the breakers were socialized into a group that not only supported them, but also challenged and encouraged them to contribute to the dance. For instance, I argue that the greeting ritual is essential for inclusion. The ritual has the effect of creating a sense of being seen – empowering the individual while producing a sort of

“brotherhood.” Consequently, the meaning of breaking was constructed around a sense of respect and recognition – *a feeling of being someone*. The breakers communicated a sense of wholeness, i.e. connecting with themselves and their body, and increased self-esteem. Through the social interaction within the subculture of breaking, the breakers not only learned to trust themselves, but they also got more confidence, which was useful in contexts outside breaking. For instance, some breakers highlighted that they had lost the fear of showing off, which was useful when giving presentations at school. Their confidence and self-esteem within breaking seemed then to seep into other aspects of the breaker’s life. It seems then reasonable to assume that the breakers develop a strong sense of self. This not only makes them independent, but also affects their ability to overcome adversity in life and handle stress (e.g. Schraml, 2013): a much-needed capability in a time where an increased number of young people report mental problems (Aglen, 2015; Flatås, 2014).

Furthermore, by continuously facing new opponents and performing in the cypher, the breakers seems to be able to adjust to new situations and perform their best – i.e. skills useful in a rapidly changing world. Hence, breaking was an important source of personal growth and influenced many of the breakers’ lives outside the Location. For instance, many breakers expressed a feeling of developing a sense of who they are and a sense of empowerment in situations disconnected with the dance, i.e. what they can do. Among others, most breakers were not afraid to enter new settings or situations, e.g. some young breakers had leader responsibilities within organizations, while others had stayed for months in foreign countries by themselves to develop as a breaker. Furthermore, the breakers seemed to learn the ability to work systematically and purposefully to resolves tasks, a useful capacity in other aspects of their lives. A few breakers emphasized this as they highlighted that at school or work they benefited from breaking’s mindset, i.e. the power of discipline and dedication to achieving goals. Moreover, some breakers had taken the risk of moving to Oslo to follow their dream to become a “good” breaker. The Location was regarded as the best place to practice breaking in Norway. Here a few breakers had managed to make their dream come true, and were able to support themselves through the dance. However, the number of paid career opportunities seems rather limited for the breakers and there is a danger of marginalization. Even though many of the breakers were not structurally marginalized, some of the breakers ended up choosing marginalization as they dropped out of school, delayed higher education or settled for low-demanding jobs (see Article 4). Hence, a

consequence of the breakers' commitment implied a danger of alienation from the job market, as the need for formal qualifications seems to be increasing (Knezevic & Omland, 2017).

Becoming a breaker is not just about embodying the practical movement skills of breaking, but also about adopting the values of the subculture. Through the lenses of critical feminist theory and a gender perspective, the dissertation highlights that breaking seems to have transformational potential regarding gender. The results show how gender is an overarching category organizing the subculture of breaking (see Articles 3 and 4). Breaking is perceived as a man's world, in which male domination maintained and (re)constructed traditional gender norms and stereotypes. For instance, the hegemonic masculinity within breaking is strongly connected with breaking's history and attitude, which involves embodying an aggressive persona (see Articles 1 and 4). Among the participants of this study, attitude was defined as a fundamental skill of breaking. And as they worked hard to embody attitude, the breakers internalized a masculinity interplaying with class and ethnicity – that is, a marginalized masculinity within the gender order (R. Connell, 2005). However, as attitude involves signifying power, strength and pride, regardless of social background, the breakers' exaggerated masculine constructions signify resistance to hegemonic masculinity in the regional gender order (e.g. R. Connell, 2006). Hence, I argue that breakers' embodied claim to power can be interpreted as protest masculinity (e.g. R. Connell, 2005), making a dent in the Western gender order.

Even though breaking is defined as a meritocracy, in which everyone should be judged by their skills (and not gender), the results show that the female breakers experienced obstacles and exclusion because of their gender. The female breakers were constantly devalued and subordinated within the subculture of breaking (see Article 3). However, by adopting and embodying gendered expectations within the subculture of breaking, i.e. adopting masculine gendered practices, the female breakers can be defined as what Lorber (2005) calls gender troublemakers (towards society at large). In fact, as emphasized in Article 3, many of the female breakers had deliberately chosen to perform breaking, since it is regarded as a “non-girly” activity. By experimenting with gender characteristics, such as mixing masculinity and femininity, non-stereotypical versions of gender were constructed while signifying a challenge to normative perceptions of how gender should be done. Involved in a male-dominated activity, the female breakers moved beyond stereotypical gendered beliefs and expanded gender boundaries, e.g. gender is redone (e.g. West & Zimmerman, 2009). Consequently, there seems to be a

potential liberation from stigmatizing gendered perceptions of masculinity and femininity within breaking. This applies not only within the subculture of breaking, but also to the larger society. When Mia highlights “I like things that are not so stereotypically for females” (Article 3, p. 11) this implies a resistant consciousness regarding gendered stereotypes, not only at a local level (within the subculture of breaking), but also toward perceptions of how gender should be done in general society. As Risman, Lorber, and Sherwood (2012) argue, degendering on the interactional level is tied to the macro-institutional level, and change of the gender order in society is thus a consequence.

The combination of symbolic interactionism and a gender perspective has made it possible to examine how the breakers’ social interaction is influenced by social structures, such as gender. The lenses of symbolic interactionism have created in-depth descriptions of how the breakers give meaning to their experiences, the characteristics of breaking and the impact breaking has on young people’s lives. By focusing on how the breakers interact with one another through symbols (verbal and non-verbal) the study has documented how the breakers’ social interaction creates the subculture knowledge that again forms discursive structures affecting the members of the subculture. The study highlights the meaning of breaking and how these constructed meanings are framed by the breakers’ ongoing social interaction. Additionally, the study reveals how gender as a social structure has an influence on the breakers’ social interaction and meaning constructions.

In summary, the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people is strongly connected to a sense of “belonging” and “being someone.” Thus breaking may have an empowering effect and offers a means to overcome unequal opportunities and cultural differences. The meaning of breaking in the lives of young people is summed up by the breaker Jo, as follows:

The meaning of breaking?
It is about self-discipline, patience,
The opportunity to stand for what you love (...).
It is about affiliation.
It is about love and hate,
Meaning that if I am angry it is reflected in my dance.
It is a language.
It can mean dance.
But simply... It is a lifestyle. (see Article 2, p. 32)

As a concluding remark, the dissertation may be a modest contribution to the study of breaking, which is a rather unexplored field. The dissertation shows how young people actively make choices and give meaning to their experiences. Above all, the results of the dissertation show that the meaning of breaking is socially constructed through the interaction within the subculture of breaking, influencing the breakers' identity and gender constructions. Hence, meaning is an ongoing process (e.g. Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). By defining breaking as something they wanted to do, they gave meaning to themselves, their actions, other people and the world around them. Gathering people with diverse ethnic and social backgrounds, the breakers seem to overcome cultural differences. Breaking functions also as a cross-cultural meeting point, a meeting point that is much needed in a rapidly changing world characterized by increased (ethnic and social) diversity, where successful integration among other things depends on social interaction between people (e.g. Sandberg, 2008a; Ødegård, 2014; Øia & Vestel, 2007). As such, the dissertation may contribute to youth (sport) culture studies, and the fields of sport sociology and sport pedagogy, as well as the fields of PE and PETE.

During the research process, new knowledge has answered some questions, but also raised fresh ones. For instance, the study reveals that the social interaction within breaking, defined as an alternative sport, creates both differences (e.g. male breakers vs. female breakers) and opportunities (e.g. transformational potential regarding gender, crossing social differences). This is useful knowledge, especially since alternative sports have been introduced as mandatory in the PE curriculum in Norway (Udir, 2015). When breaking is separated from its subcultural context and introduced into a school setting, what meanings are then constructed? What ideas, values and beliefs are brought into school? How can we as PE teachers utilize breaking's pedagogical potential? Brought out of its subcultural context, will breaking still function as a cross-cultural meeting point? Furthermore, in bringing breaking into school, how will gender be constructed? Will breaking still have transformational potential? Moreover, within the subculture of breaking, the breakers are in charge of their own progress and develop a strong sense of being someone of importance. How can this be utilized in PE? These interesting questions should be developed by future research. Another interesting topic for future research would be to evaluate the impacts of breaking in PE on the students' learning outcomes. It would be interesting to develop teaching guidelines, promoting the positive effects of breaking in school.

These questions are also important with regard to the asylum situation in Europe. Following Cappelen, Skjerven, and Tønnessen (2016), immigration to Norway in the ten years from 2005 has been high, but will probably peak in the next years due to the asylum situation in Europe. Accordingly, there will be an increased need for cross-cultural arenas and activities that bring people together. Perceived as an inclusive and non-racist activity, breaking seems to encompass these needs and to have a useful potential in a rapidly changing world. As such, during 2016 several projects involving breaking among other aspects were started up at reception centers in Norway (e.g. Kulturtanken, 2016). For future research it would be interesting to evaluate these projects. For instance, what are the preconditions for such projects regarding inclusion of refugees into mainstream society? Are the mechanisms the same as for e.g. soccer as an arena of integration (see Lidèn, 2016)?

Furthermore, recent numbers from Statistics Norway, SSB, (Epland & Kirkeberg, 2017) document that one in ten children in Norway grows up in families with persistent low income. This number is increasing and, within this group, children with other ethnic origin are overrepresented. Within this study, I have used the breakers' main occupation as an indicator of class position. For future research, it would be interesting to illuminate more in-depth class analysis from the parents' position. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate how breaking can be utilized as a systematic means of inclusion for children and young people from lower economic strata.

I see huge pedagogical potential within breaking, not only to teach young people movement skills and thereby enhance self-esteem, but also to consider diversity, the construction of identity and how gender perceptions frame and influence our experiences. It is important to reflect upon these questions both in PE and PETE if we want to understand young people's choices and facilitate activities for young people in school and leisure time. As a multicultural meeting point, I argue that breaking has great potential outside its "subcultural arena." I believe that an awareness of the values underlying activities, such as breaking, are important to create alternative ways of doing sports and PE and understanding body movements.

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Abstract

The hip-hop culture has evolved from the ghettos of The Bronx, New York in the 1970s, into a global phenomenon. Despite such prominence there is an absence of academic research on the hip-hop culture element: breakdance. Through eight months of participant observations and 17 qualitative interviews, this study investigates the identity construction process among breakdancers with diverse ethnic backgrounds in Norway. The aim is to provide an insight into the lives of young people and their impression management in constructing a breaker identity. The analysis highlights the complex and contested nature of breakdance as it is experienced and viewed by young people performing breakdance in Norway. Through deliberate impression management the breakdancers construct an alternative identity detached from other social categories. As a result, breakdance seems to counter social oppression and to have an empowering and liberating potential different from the common stigmatization and stereotypical prejudices regarding gender and ethnicity that many have experienced.

Keywords

ethnicity, gender, impression management, subculture, youth

The performance of breaking, better known as breakdance, is for many young people an activity that involves identity construction and a sense of belonging. As one of the elements in the hip-hop culture (Pabon, 2012), breaking has evolved into one of the most prominent youth cultures of today. However, despite this global popularity, relatively modest social research has been conducted on the element of breaking. The aim of this

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study is therefore to contribute to better knowledge about youth and breaking. As a global phenomenon, breaking seems to offer an identity to youth all over the world and the purpose of this paper is to discuss the identity construction process among young breakers (persons who perform breaking) in Oslo, Norway. Before continuing to the theoretical framework, methodology, results and discussion, a brief overview of the historical context and earlier research of breaking will be presented.

History and earlier research

Hip-hop is a cultural movement originally comprised of four elements: MCing (rapping), DJing, graffiti and breaking. These four elements emerged in the ghettos of the Bronx, New York, in the 1970s as a source of identity formation and social status by and for Latino- and Afro-Americans. Out of these ghettos came a cultural force of creativity, unity and social protest (Rose, 1994a). The teenagers of The Bronx used their bodies to develop a feeling of worth in a neighbourhood that provoked feelings of insignificance and hopelessness (Rose, 1994b). Breaking crews (small units organizing social relationships within the subculture of breaking) were forged with intercultural bonds, and *battled*¹ in the streets to get respect. Alternative local identities were founded in fashions, language, street names and neighbourhood crews (Rose, 1994b). Rose (1994b) argues that breaking originated as a source of resistance and preparation for the hostile world in the 1970s, which denigrated young people of colour. Consequently, breaking became a source of identity construction and gave social status to youth in the ghetto.

As the hip-hop music evolved from marginalized to mainstream in the United States, the cultural practices of the hip-hop culture emerged into a global phenomenon (Mitchell, 2001; Schloss, 2009). The global spread of hip-hop culture, especially rap music, has been thoroughly described (e.g. Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2003; Bennett, 2000; Huq, 2006; Mitchell, 2001). However, despite the global proliferation of all the elements in the broader hip-hop culture, the academic research on breaking is rather limited.

Breaking reached the media in 1981 (Stevens, 2006) when Banes (1981) published an article in the *Village Voice*. Later the movie *Beat Street* pushed breaking to an international fad in 1984 (Schloss, 2006). According to Banes (2004: 14), the media hype changed breaking in “form and meaning” and created a distinction between the terms *breakdance*: assigned by cultural outsiders, and *breaking*: the insiders’ indicator of authenticity (Schloss, 2009). In one of the earliest anthropological accounts of breaking in New Zealand, Kopytko (1986) emphasizes that insiders and outsiders of the breaking culture have various perceptions of the dance. As an identity marker, outsiders viewed the breakers as problematic “street-kids”,² while insiders fused the global breaking culture with local experiences and created a positive identity, raising their self-esteem.

Later qualitative studies support the perception of breaking as the “real thing”, with a genuine standard learned through social interaction in the milieu (Schloss, 2006; Shapiro, 2004; Osumare, 2002). Fogarty (2012) argues that mediation provides an international aesthetic and Osumare (2002) refers to breaking as a global hybrid dance; an expression of the negotiation of personal and collective identity. The significance of collective action in constituting individual identities are highlighted by Bohnsack and Nohl (2003) and their research on Turkish German breakers. That young people form new affiliations

and collective elements of style based on common experiences of socialization is supported by Fogarty (2010, 2012), who defines breaking crews as extended families that are multi-generational, multi-cultural and international in composition.

In Scandinavia, the first noticeable impact of the hip-hop culture was evident in 1984 with the dance movie *Beat Street*. In Denmark Engel (1996, 2001) followed different dance groups connected with the hip-hop culture during the 1990s. Through phenomenological descriptions Engel (2001: 371) described the Danish hip-hop dance culture as a creative and multi-cultural phenomenon where movement and clothing styles were influenced by the “American multicultural background”. Vestel (1999: 8) argues that the hip-hop culture’s multi-cultural aspect constituted it as a “meeting point” for youth with a variety of cultural backgrounds at a youth club in Oslo, Norway. By reconstructing images, clothing and bodily practices from the movie *Beat Street*, youth connected with each other through the hip-hop culture as an imagined place, and breaking was used as a barrier against stigmatization (Vestel, 2004).

Theoretical framework

The literature overview indicates that breaking may offer a frame of identity construction to youth around the world. The focus in this article will therefore be on the *process* of identity construction among breakers in Oslo.

Subculture studies from last decade can be characterized by a debate over classical theories (especially the Birmingham school), and the suitability of “subculture” as a concept for contemporary youth cultural analyses (e.g. Atkinson and Young, 2008; Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006; Wheaton and Beal, 2003). Post-subcultural approaches highlight that individual choices prevail over models of social constrain, and critical researchers argue that post-subcultural perspectives are disconnected from local structural processes. The symbolic interactionist approach, which we rely on in this article, helps to build a bridge between the Birmingham School and post-subcultural studies, as the focus is on how human actions are related to the social situation. According to Goffman (1967: 45), “the person becomes a kind of construct (...) from moral rules that are impressed upon him from without”. In other words, the prevailing definition of a situation creates a frame, with limitations and opportunities, for social interaction (Goffman, 1959).

A symbolic interactionist perspective sees subcultures as culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who share the meaning of specific ideas (e.g. values, beliefs), material objects (e.g. clothing) and practices (e.g. rituals, language, ways of moving) through interaction (Williams, 2011: 39). These shared meanings “set them apart from the larger culture, dominating their life and stabilising over time” (Atkinson and Young, 2008: 9). According to Fine and Kleinman (1979), subcultural components are transmitted via communication-interlocks: social linkages or conduits within and among networks of people. Cultural information and behaviour are then diffused through interaction. As members of the subculture, breakers around the world affect and are affected through internet forums, YouTube and by participating in workshops and international events. Consequently, through social interaction with breakers nationally and internationally, the breakers in Oslo make use of the very same culture that acts upon them to shape their thoughts, emotions and actions. Breakings aesthetics are preserved through an

infrastructure (Fogarty, 2010). Hence, breaking seems to have a corpus of knowledge and as such deserves the term *subculture of breaking*.³

Within a (sub)culture identities are always produced, consumed and regulated (Woodward, 1997). To signify group affiliation and belonging, individuals coordinate their appearances through available symbolic and material resources (e.g. gestures, languages and clothing). As the marking of differences and social exclusion forge identities, the social order is maintained through symbolic classification and creates the distinction between “insiders” and “outsiders”. Hence, identities are dependent on differences and are constituted by social relationships.

The interaction order is analysed by Goffman (1959) as a dramatic process of social interaction. As a staged drama people perform: they impress and are impressed. Impression management involves verbal and non-verbal communication, bodily adornment and the arrangement of scenery. The performance is given front stage but is rehearsed backstage, where “the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted” (Goffman, 1959: 112). To protect the vital secrets of shows, the backstage is separated from the frontstage by barriers for the audience (the outsiders).

Members of a group, for example a subculture, will cooperate “in staging a single routine” (Goffman, 1959: 79) and are precariously dependent on the loyalty of its members. Consequently, the breakers will cooperate to manage others impressions of them. This impression can quickly be spoiled by a breaker unschooled in the arts of impression management. To be able to perform, accurate impression management involves extended interactive processes through which people come to identify themselves as breakers. Donnelly and Young (1988) argue that this involves long-term processes of identity construction and confirmation where individuals acquire knowledge about the activity, become associated with the subculture, learn the shared norms and expectations, earn the acceptance of groups members, and experience repeated confirmation and reconfirmation of their identities as members. This means that becoming involved in the subculture of breaking involves adopting and internalizing the subculture’s ideas, objects and practices so that the individual is identified and accepted as a breaker. This identification and acceptance does not happen once, but is a continuous process. Hence, identities are actively constructed through impression management and are part of an interaction strategy (Goffman, 1959; West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Methodology

This article is part of a larger study investigating the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people in Oslo, Norway. The data material was produced by the use of ethnographic research methods: fieldwork and interviews.

The sites

The fieldwork was carried out at the two main locations for breaking in Oslo. Even though one of the sites had a more multi-cultural profile than the other, the sites were very similar regarding appearance and organization. The two separate sites are therefore combined and refer to as the *Location*.

Originally, the Location was office space for an organization, but is now a big open space, with no equipment except for a couple of sofas and a worn-out boom-blaster. Most of the old office carpet was covered with transportable vinyl coating, but one section had been replaced with a wooden floor. The training facility was rarely cleaned, there was no air-conditioning, no facilities such as wardrobes, and only limited access to toilets. The Location had no signs or advertising, and most people learned about the place through friends. Only a handful of people had an access card to the door; consequently, most people were forced to wait outside and knock on the windows to be let inside. The training sessions were open, had no formal organization and during the fieldwork anywhere from two to 35 people were present. Most of the breakers exercised for approximately four hours every day. The majority were male with just a few dedicated females in the milieu.

Sampling, data gathering and analysis

The fieldwork was conducted by the first author from August 2011 to March 2012 and was followed by 17 semi-structured interviews. The first author did participant observations at the Location four days (two days at each site) a week and additionally at large events arranged in Oslo during the fieldwork period. Throughout the fieldwork, field notes were taken regarding significant events, cultural phenomena, conversations and the interaction process between the breakers themselves, as well as between the breakers and the researcher. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), ethnographic access is an ongoing negotiating process. In this study, formal access was granted by the owners of the Location, and a gatekeeper was used for the first entry. A “door opener” throughout the fieldwork was though the name dropping of a casual acquaintance with a former breaker by the first author. That casual acquaintance turned out to be well regarded in the milieu.

In conducting the ethnographic data a combination of personal involvement in the body practices and observations was executed. In order to “blend in” the first author hung outside the Location with the breakers, found her own dancing spot inside the Location, stumbled with the dance moves along side of some of the best breakers in Norway, and experienced the same embarrassment felt by so many novices.

At the end of the fieldwork interviewees were sampled. Every participant who was asked to be an interviewee agreed. The interviewees consisted of six females, aged 18–25 years old, and 11 males, aged 15–30. The interviewees were sampled from generic purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012). Due to observations done during the fieldwork, the interviewees were selected based on the following criteria: (1) varied breaking experience, from novices who had just started to experienced breakers with over 15 years of practice; (2) age diversity (15–30 years old); (3) within the three dance styles practised within the subculture of breaking: experimental-, old-school- and all-round-dance style; and (4) diverse ethnic backgrounds; 10 of the interviewees were ethnic Norwegians while seven had other ethnic backgrounds. Two of the originally sampled interviewees with other ethnic backgrounds dropped out. By comparing and contrasting the interview material with the ethnographic observations, the data material should still be representative for the ethnic diversity that exists within the Norwegian subculture of breaking.

Table 1. The interviewees' involvement in the milieu.

	Kim	Jo	Sascha
Ethnic background ^a	5 Norwegians 2 other ethnic origin	1 Norwegian 4 other ethnic origin	4 Norwegians 1 other ethnic origin
Involvement	High	Medium	Low to medium
Influence	Medium to high	Limited	None
Training/battles	Regularly	Occasionally	Occasionally
Battles	Regularly	Occasionally	Occasionally

^aWhether the participants themselves or their parents have been born in a country other than Norway.

The interviews were carried out in an office outside the Location and had a semi-structured interview style in order to create a two-way conversational flow (Kvale et al., 2009; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). The data presented in this paper are based on the themes in the interviews related to identity and sense of belonging. The first author conducted the interviews, which have been fully transcribed.

Via thematic analysis salient themes were identified such as “group-“ and “crew codes”, “clothing”, “name”, “authenticity”, “self-identity”. All interviews have been coded through the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. According to Riessmann (2001), people use narratives to construct their lives and claim identities. The interviews were therefore triangulated with observations from the fieldwork in order to make thick descriptions of the breakers' impression management and subcultural identity construction. During the analysing process the interviewees were grouped under the gender-neutral names Kim, Jo and Sascha, in order to hide their individual characteristics. The participants in all these groups were male and female breakers aged between 15 and 30 years old and from the three different dance styles within breaking. The groups represent different degrees of involvement and influence in the milieu (see Table 1).

The group named Kim includes the established breakers that were active in the milieu, trained breaking regularly, attended battles and seemed to be influencing the milieu. The group named Jo refers to the partly established breakers who appeared occasionally at training and battles; they were accepted as subculture members but seemed to have limited influence in the milieu. The third group, Sascha, refers to the novices; they attended training and battles occasionally, and as rookies they were not fully accepted nor did they have influence in the milieu.

An interactionist perspective has implications for the empirical material produced, as the presented results are dependent on and constructed by the interaction between the breakers and the researcher (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer, 2005). This requires reflexivity regarding the researchers' position (Haraway, 1988), which is discussed below.

Limitations and ethical considerations

The project was granted ethical approval by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, and gave informed consent prior to involvement. During the fieldwork a few breakers chose not to

participate in the study. This has been respected throughout the whole research process. As the data material is confidential, several strategies have been applied to ensure the participants' anonymity: (1) the two fieldwork sites have been merged into one Location; (2) all the participants are grouped under three gender-neutral names to hide their individual characteristics; and (3) data are presented by meaning condensation (Kvale et al., 2009).

During the fieldwork the first author had to get involved in the bodily practice of breaking. This was challenging, since the first author had no previous experience with breaking, was over 30 years old, and a woman. Despite these obstacles, the position of the researcher changed during the fieldwork from a "hanging about", an explicit outsider position, to a more "hanging out" status (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Woodward, 2008). According to Woodward (2008), the hanging out position offers insights into the social world that may be less immediate for those who hang about and do not have the influence to be accepted in the culture. During the fieldwork the researcher was tested, accepted and guided along by the members of the subculture. The commitment to participate in the activity was especially important, as the first author was a female researcher attempting to negotiate access into a male-dominated world (e.g. Wheaton, 2002).

The researcher occupied multiple and dynamic positions in the field, which affects the research (Olive and Thorpe, 2011). Entering the field, the position as an academic in sport with extended movement knowledge was thought to be a way to connect with the breakers, but it soon became clear that this position provided no influence in the milieu. Within the subculture everyone was evaluated by their movement and subcultural skills. Being a female and novice marked the position as a non-breaker. This was a limitation in reaching "insider knowledge" and may have distorted the authenticity of the social interaction (Woodward, 2008). On the other hand, the entry into the field as an outsider offered the opportunity to be objective, to overhear intimate exchanges and to ask questions. By dressing discreetly without displaying emphasized femininity, the researcher blended in with the guys. This positioned the researcher as a "breaker" and not as a non-serious woman engaged in breaking for social reasons. As the Location gathers people of all ages with diverse ethnic backgrounds, the researcher's rather "advanced" age and ethnicity seemed to have minor effects in the field. All these factors combined marked the researcher as no threat for either female or male breakers. In order to gain access to the field and the breakers' trust, the researcher's dedication and commitment to practise breaking throughout the fieldwork was a necessity.

Originally the fieldwork was planned to last for four months, but entering the Location the first author soon became aware of the milieu's six-month rule⁴ regarding a person's dedication to breaking. As a result, the participants hesitated in befriending newcomers for the first few months. Consequently the fieldwork was extended from four to eight months.

Results and discussion

To be part of a subculture involves constructing a new identity and a sense of belonging (Williams, 2011). Through the socialization process novices learn to express the characteristics of the subculture, and discover whether conceptions developed during

pre-socialization are accurate or not (Donnelly and Young, 1988). Becoming a breaker is not just about the practical skills of breaking, but about adopting the values of the subculture. The novices must learn to act and think like a breaker. Following Goffman (1959), the novices must adjust their impression management according to the subculture characteristics in order to become insiders. The boundaries between insiders and outsiders of a subculture are made and maintained through *style* (Williams, 2011). Style includes both cultural practices (e.g. greeting ritual, language, name and attitude) and objects (e.g. clothing) and expresses the member's subcultural essence (Williams, 2011). Style constitutes the collective group identity by signifying differences, communicating identification and belonging. Here the focus will be on how style is used in the impression management of constructing the subculture breaker identity.

Creating boundaries

One of the first cultural practices Sascha learned was the greeting ritual. The most standardized greeting routine involved two people simultaneously slapping their palm and fists together, some would add a hug, and the female breakers were often given kisses on the cheek. This greeting ritual was, for most of the interviewees, unique for the interaction within the subculture of breaking. The ritual was introduced as quite obligatory for Sascha, who would make an effort to greet everybody at the Location despite insecurity and unfamiliarity with the setting. "In the beginning it was very hard, when you don't know anybody, to walk around and greet everybody (...)" (Sascha). The greeting ritual forced Sascha to familiarize him-/herself with the milieu and to interact with the established members of the subculture. As a result, Sascha seemed to develop more confidence and self-esteem.

It makes me happy...when people greet each other and ask you how you doing. And when you have greeted everybody, it is not that scary to dance. And you feel a lot better. It makes me happy. I think it is very positive. (Sascha)

The symbolic meaning of the greeting was rather unclear; a few participants referred to the palms as being a symbol for friends and the fist as a symbol for the heart, friends from the heart, while others mumbled that the ritual could be an expression of the "peace, love and unity" ideal in the hip-hop culture. For most participants, the greeting ritual was connected with the hip-hop culture's legacy and represented a way to show respect and acceptance. "It is part of the tradition to include everybody. I think it is important that everybody feels belonging (...) that you do not have to be very good before people bother to greet you" (Kim). Vestel (2004) argues that within groups with large variation in ethnic backgrounds, such greeting rituals function as symbolic expressions of that a common meeting ground actually exists for the people involved. The ritual underlines the inclusion in the group and creates a feeling of community, equality and sameness. At the same time, if the ritual is deliberately neglected, it is a very effective way of excluding people.

The ritual constituted power distinctions within the subculture. While Sascha and Jo were sensitive about greeting everybody at the Location, Kim made more selective and

deliberated choices regarding who he/she greeted. Goffman (1959) sees this as an arrangement of scenery, as Kim's status and position are maintained by forcing the more inexperienced breakers to approach him/her rather than the other way around.

Another crucial cultural practice for the novices to learn was the breaker language. Like all social worlds, the subculture of breaking has a unique language. The novices would start to learn the language during the socialization stage (Donnelly and Young, 1988). To become a breaker the novices not only had to learn technical terms regarding the dance, but they also learned to define their activity as breaking and not breakdance. The importance of the distinction in the social construction of the collective subculture breaker identity was highlighted when the first author got scolded for using the word "breakdance". For many the term breakdance connotes exploitation, disregarding the dance from its root in the hip-hop culture (Banes, 2004; Schloss, 2009). By defining their activity as breaking, the members of the subculture distinguished their activity from what was defined as losing touch with the original ideals of breaking. The importance of being authentic was soon learned by Sascha and Jo and was reflected in their language as they talked about "foundation", "battles", "crews", "attitude", "passion" and "to be real". Goffman (1959) sees language as a social marker that creates differences and distinctions. Inside the Location language skills distinguished between outsiders and insiders. An outsider could hardly understand the conversations between the breakers and would be barred from their social interaction. In order to be a part of the social interaction at the Location, Jo and Sascha had to develop their subculture language skills. This is supported by Williams (2011), who argues that poorly developed subculture language makes it hard to be recognized and accepted as a member of a subculture. Hence, to be accepted as a member of the subculture of breaking, language was an important part of the breakers' impression management.

The construction of a character

During the socialization stage (Donnelly and Young, 1988) the breakers learned the importance of "developing your own dance style", never "bite" [copy] but to stand out as unique. This subcultural ideal was implemented in their dance as well as in their appearance. Hence, a character (i.e. a breaker identity) was constructed through deliberate impression management and became evident through alternative naming, clothing and attitude.

In the early days of hip-hop culture, the breakers took names that identified their role, personal characteristics or expertise. The alternative name was earned by proving movement skills and was normally given as recognition from other members of the crew or subculture. To be recognized as a breaker from other subculture members represented status and was an acknowledgement of having skills. The new name offered a new identity and "prestige from below" when there was limited legitimate access to forms of status attainment: it was a "claim to fame" (Rose, 1994b: 80). This supports the idea of breaking as a meritocracy, where skills are more important than social background (Schloss, 2009).

The tradition of alternative name giving is still alive today, and a common mistake among novices seemed to be their self-naming. Following Donnelly and Young (1988), this misconception would be discovered during the socialization stage.

B-boy⁵ name? In the beginning I misunderstood that. I thought you could name yourself (...) but I checked it out (...) the tradition is to be named by others (...) people would name you according to your characteristics. (Sascha)

Most of the participants in this study had B-boy/B-girl names that highlighted their dance style, physical skills and personal traits or was self-mocking. During the socialization stage, Sascha's impression management gradually became more deliberate in order to construct a breaker identity, which seemed to be liberated from his/her social background. Through the alternative name the breaker identity became alive.

My name is B-boy X. The name should reflect something you have experienced or your personality (...) that you can build your character on.(...).My B-boy name represents my alter-ego (...) It was given to me and I have found a way to justify the name – to make it suit me. (Kim)

Since the alternative name ought to be representative of the person, the naming could be interpreted as a confirmation of being authentic and according to the subculture ideal of "keeping it real". "It is dangerous to say that I am a B-boy (...) it is better to be recognized as a B-boy from people with knowledge than to be self-appointed" (Kim).

On the other hand, by referring to the authenticity code a few breakers deliberately chose *not* to have B-boy/B-girl names but danced under their birth name.

I call myself X. That is my given name. I do not care about nicknames. Nicknames are usually given, you get it naturally, or you name yourself and demand to be called that by others. But for me, even though I practise breaking, I do not call myself a breaker, I am X and I do not want to call myself something else [that's who I am]. (Kim)

For outsiders the most evident part of the breakers' impression management was dressing. Through clothing style the breakers articulated and projected their character and self-image, their desired "presentation of self" (Goffman, 1959). During the socialization stage Sascha learned the practical importance of signifying subculture identification through his/her clothing. The dress code was, despite some crew variations, the same for all regardless of level, age and gender.

It is really cool, that there is...not exactly a fashion style, but some codes in breaking that is recognizable. So – if you travel to another country, you can always see who practise breaking, because there is always a sign in their clothing (...). (Kim)

All participants demanded a sense of freedom in their clothing. Hence, the breakers' clothing style was distinguished from mainstream hip-hop fashion style characterized by oversized clothing. A breaker used clothes that were not too loose fitting or baggy, since this would be an obstacle to their movement range. For Sascha the distinction was not obvious, but had to be learned.

I did not have any particular clothing style when I started. I just used my PE outfit from school, but was not pleased with it. It didn't look cool. So I purchased a new outfit, because what you

wear is very important. (...) The new outfit was too large, the trousers were big and heavy. So in spite of the fact that I normally like big clothing, I did not like them. (...) So I bought another outfit that was light. It is perfect (...) It is important to feel good. It affects your dancing. If you dress cool, your confidence increases. (Sascha)

Sascha had only practised at the Location for a couple of months, and through the social interaction he/she had learned and adopted the subcultures values. The result was a gradually increased consciousness about clothing style. This is supported by Donnelly and Young (1988), who argue that acceptance into social groups is directly related to signify the appropriate impression. That Sascha had to purchase two outfits before matching the subculture clothing style underlines the fact that dress codes are more subtle than it first appears.

For Kim clothing was an important part of his/her impression management not only to signify his/her breaker identity but also the dance style and crew belonging. Crew belonging was signified through specially made crew accessories such as T-shirts, jackets, headbands, etc. Dance style was reflected, as experimental dancers would wear black, slim-stretch jeans or Adidas trousers with narrow legs, while old-school dancers preferred second-hand clothing. Especially at battles, the clothing style was an important part of Kim's impression management. At battles each breaker's movement skills were displayed and the power hierarchies within the subculture were negotiated. It can then be interpreted that it was important for Kim to signify crew belonging to demonstrate strength and an authentic subculture identity not only to distinguish him-/herself from other subgroups within breaking but also to underline his/her subcultural competence. According to Goffman (1959), bodily adornments require a developed cultural competence and are important in order to portray the right impression frontstage as it signifies belonging. To highlight his/her subculture competence, Kim could then combine the American-inspired dress code for breaking with traditional Norwegian clothes, making a bricolage between the local and the global.

As the dress code was the same for both genders, the female breakers would wear big T-shirts, minimum makeup, no jewellery, and their hair hidden in a ponytail or cap. The result was that the female breakers presented themselves as detached from femininity.

I do not want to show my body and do not dress up for practice. If I wanted some, I could have done it, but I do not (laughter). But sure some people think like that. (Sascha)

The female breakers seemed very pleased to be "one of the guys" at the Location and deliberately dressed down, arguing that it made it easier to get into character and to focus on their practice. One female breaker explained that dressing "normal feminine" at the Location often gave her unwanted attention from the male breakers. This is a contrast to the male Kim, who highlighted his masculinity through clothing and could rip off his T-shirt to show off his muscular body to stage "attitude".

To perform attitude was the most important part of the breaker's impression management. Attitude involves embodying an aggressive persona. "Breaking is about attitude. It is not just about how you perform the dance, but how you present yourself" (Sascha). All the participants in this study emphasized the significance of attitude. A breaker with a

distinct attitude was well regarded in the milieu and thereby gained status. The controlled aggressiveness simultaneously expressed and defended one's identity on the dance floor. By exaggerating pre-existing aspects of their physical abilities or personality the goal was to present themselves as the "best", regardless of their actual level of breaking. Hence, the ability to perform attitude in battles (frontstage) gives winning opportunities for breakers with poorly developed physical movement skills.

According to Schloss (2009) and Banes (2004), attitude derives from the Latino- and Afro-Americans' fight for respect in the ghettos. By showing pride, strength and control, marginalized groups created an identity that was not passive and disempowered despite the lack of other signifiers, such as a prestigious job, high income or a college degree. Majors (1993, 2001) describes these expressive styles of interpersonal self-presentation as "cool pose", a set of expressive behaviours to carve out an alternative path to achieve the goals of dominant masculinity. As a result of communication-interlocks (Fine and Kleinman, 1979) or what Fogarty (2012) calls mediated encounters, this legacy was evident within the Norwegian subculture of breaking.

I think (the level of breaking in Norway) is connected to our high standard of living. In other countries like France and USA many breakers are from the ghettos and they are fighting for their lives. In order to get a better life they practise breaking really hard. (Kim)

This statement highlights three factors relative to breaking. Firstly, with references to the ghetto Kim positions breaking as an immigrant, working-class, street culture. In the Norwegian subculture of breaking this was reflected in the participants' diverse social and ethnic backgrounds. Andersson (2007) argues that boundaries between minorities, majorities and national identities are constructed among others through ethnic humour. However, at the Location ethnicity was hardly ever mentioned, and as found by Fogarty (2010), almost all breaking crews were multi-cultural in composition. Within the subculture of breaking there existed an ethos that everybody could make it regardless of social background (Schloss, 2009). This is underlined by Kim: "If you have prejudice against ethnicity, breaking is not for you (...) the hip-hop culture is all about unity".

Secondly, according to Kim, being from the ghetto was an advantage and the good life in Norway was an obstacle. The result was that especially the male breakers worked hard on their self-presentation to perform a "coolness" closely connected to a more or less common masculinity. In many ways they adopted the "cool pose" through verbal (e.g. name dropping of important people, events, travelling) and non-verbal communication (e.g. gangster walking style), bodily adornments (e.g. clothing) and arrangement of scenery (e.g. their placement within the Location and practising breaking in parks, railway station or on concrete). Williams (2011) argues that subculture status is a delicate ongoing process of careful negotiation between insiders and all these behaviours were used to impress other breakers and as a quest for insider status. However, taken to an extreme the breakers' impression management could backfire, resulting in pejorative remarks from other insiders.

Many breakers [in Oslo] pretend to be from the ghetto, and I ask them "Why do you, a spoiled boy from the best neighbourhoods in Oslo, pretend to be from the street?" It is provoking (...)

to pretend to be from the ghetto to prove that you have understood the code of breaking. That is just lame. (Kim)

White people adopting the ghetto can be interpreted as a distancing from middle-class whiteness (Brayton, 2005), but on the other hand it lacks the oppressive baggage attached to black youth who adopt such an image (Anderson, 1999).

Thirdly, Kim sees breaking as a possible means to improve one's life by saying "in order to get a better life they practice breaking really hard". This is supported by earlier research; for example, Vestel (2004: 98) argues that breaking "was a way of getting prestige for the boys from the 'slum'. Goffman (1951) argues that skill and proper credentials result in recognition and status. Within the subculture the participants distinguish themselves by holding subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995). Subcultural capital comprises practices, objects, ideas and knowledge that are rewarded with recognition, admiration, status or prestige within the subculture. Thornton (1995) argues that subcultural capital can be transformed into social or economic capital. For example, many breakers could make a living from their dance due to reality shows such as "so you think you can dance". To perform the breaker identity frontstage could then improve the breaker's status in mainstream society as well as their standing within the subculture. However, there was a fine line because too much media attention raised questions about the breaker's authenticity within the subculture.

Concluding remarks

This paper has contributed to the rather limited academic research on the hip-hop culture element breaking. The aim has been to investigate the breakers' impression management in order to construct a breaker identity. This study shows that becoming a breaker involves a continuous identity construction process. To be a part of the subculture of breaking includes adopting and internalizing the subcultures ideas, objects and practices. Following Goffman (1959), the novices must adjust their impression management according to the subculture characteristics in order to become insiders. This is learned through social interaction and socialization (e.g. Donnelly and Young, 1988). Affirming from the established members of the subculture was a practical necessity for the breaker identity to be alive, and functioned both for individuals who wanted to claim it and for the group that needed it for cohesion.

In the subculture of breaking, one type of acknowledgement of appropriate impression management was done through the greeting ritual; when less experienced breakers were approached by the established members, or the presentation of a breaker character; when the alternative breaker identity started to become alive through the performance of attitude, clothing style and alternative naming. The impression management gave the breakers the possibility to construct an alternative identity detached from social background.

As found by Fogarty (2010), the subculture of breaking was characterized by ethnic diversity and provided alternative means of identification and acceptance. The breaker identity was simultaneously local and global; disconnected from the ethnic Norwegian or the immigrant culture, creating a sense of belonging to a wider global breaker

community through communication-interlocks (Fine and Kleinman, 1979). Regardless of gender, all breakers met the same expectations. Hence, the female breakers constructed a breaker identity detached from femininity, while the male breakers adopted the cool pose. Consequently, the breakers' impression management seems to have an empowering and liberating potential from typical stigmatization and stereotypical prejudices regarding both ethnicity and gender.

As part of the hip-hop culture, breaking has evolved into one of the most prominent youth cultures of today and offers an identity to youth all over the world. The aim of this study has been to contribute to insights into the lives of young people. Attention to youth's subcultural experiences is important if we are to understand their choices and facilitate activities for youth in school and leisure time.

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Notes

1. Battle is the competitive part of breaking. It can be formal, in front of judges, or informal, to call out somebody at practice or dance gatherings. Either way the goal is to exceed the other, and judged or not, everyone knows it is a competition.
2. The majority of the breakers were Maori or Pacific Islanders, who often face discrimination because of their social class position and ethnicity.
3. This is a theoretical simplification as there are subgroups within the subculture.
4. Media attention had throughout the years led to peaks of participants at the Location. As a consequence the subculture had a rule: "We see after six months whether they are serious or not" (Kim). In short, to be considered in the milieu one had to be dedicated and committed for at least six months.
5. Someone who breaks.

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Article 2

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The Construction of Meanings in Breaking: Insights from Breakers in Oslo

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SAMMENDRAG

ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper concerns the meaning of breaking in the lives of young people living in Oslo, Norway. Meaning arises in the process of interaction with other people (social interaction) and self-reflection. The data are produced by the use of fieldwork (eight months) among young breakers at two sites in Oslo referred to as the Location, and included 17 separate semi-structured interviews. The interviewees were six females and 11 males, all of them breakers, aged between 15 and 30 years old. Seven of the interviewees belonged to different minority groups, while ten were ethnic Norwegians. The results show that through the interaction at the Location youth with diverse ethnic backgrounds experienced a strong sense of identification and belonging, not only to local breaking crews (groups) but also affiliation with breakers all over the world. The meaning of breaking was constructed around the feeling of freedom to "just be yourselves". The breakers connected with themselves and their bodies, and experienced a sense of importance and respect. Consequently, the breakers also felt empowered in situations disconnected from the dance context.

Every week, for the last three years, Jo has taken the one hour bus ride to practice breaking (often referred to as breakdance) with guys that are twice his age. Just fifteen years old, Jo has made a deliberate choice to be committed to breaking even though none of his classmates are into it. Breaking seems to mean a lot to Jo, but why and how did he become so committed? What is it about breaking that makes Jo make this journey every week? By investigating the constructed meanings in breaking we hope to get closer to an answer to these questions.

As one of the elements¹ in the hip-hop culture, breaking has evolved into a worldwide phenomenon. The hip-hop culture is one of the most prominent youth cultures of today and has emerged from the social and structural changes that formed the post-industrial urban climate of the South Bronx; one of the poorest communities in New York, during the 1970s (Chang 2012). For the Latino- and African American inhabitants of the ghettos of the Bronx the meaning of breaking was connected to group solidarity. Hazzard-Donald (2004, 512) argues that the participants through hip-hop dance² presented "a challenge to the racist society that marginalized them". By organizing themselves in crews [groups], which were networks for socializing, they claimed status on the street and supported each other. Through breaking marginalized youth showed a resourceful ability to create their own expressions out of a life that seemed to offer very little (Banes 2004). According to Stevens (2006), breaking

started to become publically known outside its subcultural borders in 1981 when Sally Banes published an article in the *Village Voice* (Banes 1981). As the media became fascinated by breaking, the youth gained respect among the inhabitants and breaking symbolized hope for the future. Later the Rock Steady Crew performed in the movie *Flashdance*³ and battled [competed] the New York City Breakers⁴ in the movie *Beat Street* in 1984. This year, breaking became an international fad (Schloss 2006) and evolved into a worldwide phenomenon (Mitchell 2001; 1998).

In New Zealand Kopytko (1986, 25) did one of the earliest anthropological studies on breaking and argued that breaking provided a strong and positive identity that raised the self-esteem of "problem youths"⁵. Drawing on anthropological and historical research, interviews and personal experience, Schloss (2009) presented a nuanced picture of breaking in New York City, its social context and as a manifestation of the most fundamental principles of hip-hop culture. Osumare (2002) highlighted the Hawaiian Islands as a cultural crossroads between East and West and introduced the concept of the intercultural body as a tangible result of the globalization of American pop culture in general and hip hop subculture in particular. The intercultural body refers to breaking as a global hybrid dance; an expression of the negotiation of personal and collective identity. By observing breaking in France, Shapiro (2004) reveals how alliances between members of different

groups produced interdependent processes of institutionalization that constructed a new field of practice and contributed to structure breaking internally into subspaces such as art, competition or as socialization. Shapiro (2004) highlights the “artification” of breaking through theatrical presentations, as social workers and educators supported to develop the dance during the 1980s. As a result, breaking was recognized by “high art” dance institutions (Shapiro 2004, 320). The artification process of breaking is examined by Shapiro and Heinrich (2008). Fogarty (2010) explores the relationship between musical taste and breaking in a multi-sited ethnography. Fogarty (2010; 2012a) uses the term imagined affinities about the identifications expressed by a cultural practitioner who shares an embodied activity with other practitioners. Imagined affinities are sustained through mediated texts, such as video, online representations as well as travelling involving encounters between breakers. In Scandinavia, the first noticeable impact of the hip-hop culture became evident in 1984 and breaking was the first popular element. According to Vestel (1999, 7) the movie Beat Street was tremendously popular at a youth club in Oslo, Norway, in 1986 and had an empowering effect on the boys from the “slum”. In Denmark, Engel (1996; 2001) makes similar conclusions from her fieldwork among different dance groups connected with the hip-hop culture during the 1990s.

Despite the global proliferation of all the elements in the broader hip-hop culture, this literature review shows that the academic research on breaking is limited. The aim of this study is therefore to contribute to better knowledge about youth and breaking. As a global phenomenon, breaking seems to offer a frame of references to youth with diverse ethnic backgrounds that

are experienced as meaningful. Hence, in this paper we examine the breakers’ constructions of meaning through social interaction in Oslo, Norway.

Symbolic interactionist perspectives on the constructions of meaning(s)

As reality can be considered socially constructed, the construction of meanings can be seen to take place in the process of interaction (Becker and McCall 1990). This means that as members of the subculture⁶ of breaking the breakers share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects, and practices through interaction (Williams 2011, 39). Hence, the members of the subculture are tied through symbolic interaction. The subculture of breaking is comprised by members who construct and re-construct their acts in relation to one another. Through social interaction they take another’s action⁷ into account, and decide on an action dependent on that fact (Charon 2010). Through ongoing coordinated interactions the breakers form “joint actions” (Blumer 1969, 17). These joint actions are constantly negotiated as each breaker is involved in self-reflection⁸. As a result new joint actions are produced. Hence, as members of the subculture breakers affect and are affected by the shared perspective (Shibutani 1955). It is important to note that each individual acts according to their “definition of the situations”, which is created as a result of the social interaction with others and self-reflection in the situation (Charon 2010). By defining the situation it is given meaning, and actions are a result of this definition. This means that how a breaker defines the situation is central to how he or she acts in it. Hence, it is through the definition of the situation that meaningful actions are created.

To sum up, meaning is a process, that is socially constructed in a specific cultural context (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2005). People act towards social objects based on their attributed meanings; these meanings are constructed through social interaction and are modified through self-reflection. Even though individual and joint actions are framed by historical and cultural meanings, individual creativity is always at play and new forms of joint actions occur. As a result, the constructed meanings of breaking are culturally transmitted through social interaction with other breakers from all over the world, bound to its historical origin, but locally constructed by the breakers in Norway, the local breaking crews and the individuals who practice breaking. Hence, the breakers define immediate situations according to perspectives developed and altered in ongoing social interactions.

Methodology and the context of the study

This article presents initial findings from a broader ethnographic doctoral study on youth and breaking in Oslo, Norway. Ethnography is an interpretive approach to social science that is often based on observational work in particular social settings, and involves studying the behaviour of a culture-sharing group (Silverman 2010; Creswell 1998; 2009). The empirical data consist then of 1) field notes; regarding significant events, cultural phenomena, informal conversations, and the interaction process (between the breakers themselves, as well as between the breakers and the researcher), and 2) semi-structured interviews. Such a qualitative approach combining fieldwork and interviews allowed for an in-depth understanding of the social practices of breaking. This paper illuminates

the researcher’s interpretations of the empirical data encompassing the meaning constructions within the culture of breaking.

Data gathering, sampling and analysis

The fieldwork was conducted by Langnes from August 2011 until March 2012 at two sites in downtown Oslo. Even though the sites were located in different parts of the city their appearance and organization were very similar. The sites have therefore been merged into the *Location*.

The *Location* had been remodelled from offices to an open room with no facilities such as wardrobes or air-conditioning. Inside the *Location* the room was unofficially divided into three parts: a “cypher” where the dancers took turns, a padded rehearsal area for more gymnastic power moves, and an outside⁹ area. Every day 2-35 people from all over Oslo practiced for five hours at the *Location*. Most of the breakers were men as there were just a few dedicated girls in the milieu.

The fieldwork was carried out for four days (two days at each site) a week. The fieldwork was intense as it involved the first author participating in the bodily practices of breaking as well as taking “jotted notes”¹⁰ (Bryman 2012, 450; Lofland and Lofland 2006, 109). However, much of what happens inside the culture of breaking could not be understood through observations alone, and the fieldwork was therefore supplemented with semi-structured interviews.

At the end of the fieldwork, the first author sampled 17 interviewees through generic purposive sampling (Bryman 2012). The interviewees included men and women of different age, breaking experiences, ethnic diversity and the three dance styles¹¹ identified within breaking. Six

female breakers, aged between 18 and 25 years old, and 11 male breakers, aged between 15 and 30 years old, were interviewed by Langnes in an office outside the Location. Ten of the interviewees were ethnic Norwegians, while seven had diverse ethnic backgrounds. The interviews were semi-structured (Kvale et al. 2009). The overall goal of the interviews was to: elicit descriptions of events and situations regarding breaking; to gain a sense of global and local affinity with other breakers and their degree of involvement; and to discern the implications breaking had on the participants' everyday lives. Every interview has been fully transcribed by the first author, before loading into the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA.

In the analysing process the first author has read and re-read all data (both the transcribed interviews and the fieldnotes) thoroughly to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. The salient themes identified in the data were used as codes to retrieve data in MAXQDA (i.e. thematic analysis, Bryman 2012). Thematic analysis revealed shared experiences across participants within the culture of breaking. The results presented in this article are based on an interpretation of the analysis of the coded themes: "meaning", "meaning – involvement", "meaning – affiliation", "meaning – community", "meaning – sanctuary" and "meaning – self-esteem": The coded themes also organize the results and discussion section of this article, as we start by underlining the importance of involvement in the milieu, the subheading "You can't do it by yourself" addresses the feeling of affiliation and community, while the subheading "It's up to you" highlights the determination needed among breakers and how the social interaction develops the breakers' self-esteem.

During the analysing process all participants

were grouped under the names: "Kim", "Jo" and "Sascha", to conceal their identity and to protect their anonymity. The data are then presented through meaning condensation (Kvale et al. 2009) i.e. the material has been compressed focusing on the main themes in the milieu. As a result, the presented excerpts from the interviews are sometimes merged from one or more participants within the same grouping. The groups represent different degrees of involvement and influence² in the milieu. The group named "Kim" includes the established breakers who were active in the milieu; trained breaking regularly, attended battles, and seemed to be influencing the milieu. The group named "Jo" refers to the partly established breakers who appeared occasionally at training and battles; they were accepted as members of the breaking milieu but seemed to have limited influence. The third group, "Sascha", refers to the novices, they attended training and battles occasionally, and as rookies they were not fully accepted and had little or no influence in the milieu.

The social interaction within the Location was registered in the first author's fieldnotes. Since the breakers were self-organized, the room was filled with people just doing as they pleased. As the fieldwork emerged, the fieldnotes revealed that the three groups of breakers related differently to the areas inside the Location. The established breakers ("Kim") would mostly be in the cypher, but could circulate between all the three areas. The novices ("Sascha") and the partly-established breakers ("Jo") would, for the most part, be in the outsider area or the padded area. They would participate in the cypher if there were few established breakers present.

Järvinen and Milk-Meyer (2005) emphasize that an interactionist perspective has implications for the empirical data, as the presented results are

dependent on and constructed by the interaction between the breakers and the researcher. Hence, reflexivity regarding the researcher's position is required (Haraway 1988), which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Limitations and ethical considerations

Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) highlight that ethnographic access is an on-going negotiating process. Langnes was granted formal access to the Location by its owners and at the first entry a gatekeeper was used. The gatekeeper was useful in order to be introduced to the breakers, but what really was a door opener was mentioning the name of a former breaker who was an acquaintance of the first author. This former breaker turned out to be well regarded in the milieu, and by dropping his name, the first author was accorded more credibility in the milieu.

As the main focus inside the Location was on the actual practice of breaking, it was necessary for Langnes to practice breaking in order to blend in with the breakers. Even though the first author had a background in gymnastics and social dance, involvement in the movements required for breaking was a big challenge. The first author had no previous experiences with breaking, was thirty-six years old and a woman. The result was that the first author usually practiced breaking in the outsider area. But two months into the fieldwork she was invited to enter the cypher to show off her breaking skills. This test was a turning point in order to interact with the breakers. By being willing to contribute to the dance, the first author achieved a "hanging out" status (Woodward 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Consequently, the first author could circulate more freely between the three

areas inside the Location. Woodward (2008) highlights that "hanging out" gives no insider status, but offers insights into a social world that is not provided to outsiders (tanging about). As a result, Langnes gained the breakers' trust in informal conversations and in the interviews.

This project was granted ethical approval from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), and all the participants gave informed consent prior to involvement. All data has been handled confidentially and several strategies has been applied to ensure the participant's anonymity, e.g. the two fieldwork sites are merged into one Location, the participants have been categorised into groups with gender neutral names and the data are presented by meaning condensation. Though this is an extreme oversimplification, it has been necessary as the breaking milieu in Norway is very transparent.

Results and discussion

Almost all of the participants started with breaking after being impressed by the dance through what Fogarty (2012a) defines as mediated encounters. Inspiring movies, videos, internet forums or shows elicited excitement among the participants: "It just hit me. I just 'shit'...I want to do that" (Kim). With no previous experience with breaking nor friends that were breakers, the participants made a deliberate choice to start with breaking. Through self-reflection breaking was defined as something they wanted to do. This decision led them to the Location where the meanings of breaking started to evolve through the process of interaction, for as Jo noted: "You need to dance and become a part of the milieu [to understand what breaking is all about]".

Through the social interaction at the Location, the rookie Sascha soon learned to

distinguish between breaking as “the real thing”; that only could be learned through social interaction and involvement, and breakdance; the presentation of the dance in media as “acrobatic and gymnastic movements” (Langnes and Fasting 2014). There was no doubt among the participants; breaking could only be learned through face-to-face interaction with other breakers. Schloss (2009) argues that this is a natural result of the nature of breaking. Despite several attempts to make breaking mainstream, the activity has no product to sell (Schloss 2009). This clarifies that breaking is something that has to be lived. It cannot be bought or sold. The symbolic value of breaking was created through a demand for involvement. During the fieldwork Kim emphasized that:

You need to live as a breaker to understand. To really feel it. . . . go to work, go to practice, feel your body getting tired, but still force yourself to work out. Attend battles. . . . Only then you can understand.

Consequently, the meaning of breaking was constructed through bodily involvement. The result was that most of the participants felt an obligation to practice breaking every day even though their bodies were worn out or injured. Charon (2010) argues that such encouragement and the demand to be committed nurtures social interaction and holds a group together.

At the Location the social interaction was all about breaking, both in the bodily practices and in the discussions. The breakers continually reinforced and informed one another through the discussions surrounding breaking experiences, such as where to travel for inspiration, which battles to attend, how to practice and so on. These conversations tied the participants together

as the breakers took each other's actions into account (e.g. Charon 2010) and transmitted knowledge about breaking. As a novice Sascha soon learned the shared meaning of specific ideas, material objects and the practices of breaking (e.g. Langnes and Fasting 2014). This included the informal organization at the Location; how to place themselves in the room, the importance of battling and travelling and other information important for the group. Gradually Sascha adjusted his/her actions to be in line with the other participants at the Location and became a part of the collective joint actions.

You can't do it by yourself

Even though all the participants found their own spot inside the Location, it was assumed that it was impossible to develop as a breaker by oneself. The social interaction; the support and feedback from other breakers, were regarded as crucial in order to develop and manage the moves in breaking. This was evident when Jo, a breaker from a small town outside Oslo, visited the Location. As the only breaker in Jo's hometown, he/she was struggling not only with the motivation to practice four times every week but also to manage the moves of breaking. In a conversation between Jo and Kim, Kim emphasized that:

If you practice alone - it takes forever to learn it. You need to practice with experienced breakers . . . make them look . . . you must take a hold of me and say 'Bro . . . Can you help me? An experienced breaker sees it right away and can help you. Alone it is very difficult, it takes a very long time. It is almost impossible. (Fieldnotes Nov 18, 2011)

By using the term “Bro” Kim underlines the feeling of affinity among breakers; they belong to the same

group that support each other. As part of the “family” everybody at the Location was accounted for and expected to contribute. Fogarty (2010: 2012b) argues that analogy of the “family” has been a part of breaking since its origin, as breaking crews were defined as families. The analogy is still alive today (Fogarty 2012b, 2010) and was apparent among the participants from Oslo.

It is like a foundation wall. Like a family, support and back up. . . . you belong somewhere, and that is nice. I do not stand alone. And sometimes we do stuff together.

You are part of a group that demands things of you and you must give something back. (Kim)

The image of a family suggests that the breakers feel responsible for each other similarly to kin relationships. They act with one another in mind (Charon 2010, 153). Fogarty (2010, 110) argues that the analogy of the “family” has developed from “a one-dimensional signification for the closeness of friends who participate in a shared activity to become *extended* families that are multi-generational in composition”. The extended families involve not only alliances between crews at the local and regional level, but also an affiliation with crews and breakers in different areas of the world (Fogarty 2012a). This is supported by Osumare (2002), who argues that breakers all over the world can communicate and relate to one another through what she defines as the “intercultural body”. As a result the breakers located in Oslo, Norway regularly used YouTube, internet forums, media, and travelling to interact with other breakers from all over the world. Consequently, breaking seemed to provide alternative identification and acceptance.

I experience breaking as . . . I have travelled and met with different people, and have a positive impression of breaking worldwide. It is like a community. As a breaker arriving in another country, you are considered as a friend since you do the same thing. . . . I think that is beautiful. That you, regardless of culture, religion, race or whatever. . . . you have a sense of community. (Kim)

It is up to you!

In the conversation with Jo from out of town, Kim highlights the determination needed among breakers by saying: “you must take a hold of me”. The statement refers to the view that every breaker is in charge of his/her own development and actively needs to seek assistance from more experienced breakers. To approach the more established breakers was not only an important element in order to raise the novices' confidence, but also in order to transmit the constructed meanings in breaking. Schloss (2009) argues that the personal interaction affects the individual breakers' understanding of breaking; its history, their placement in it, their expression of individual/group identity and how this knowledge is transformed to others. For example as a novice at the Location, Sascha soon picked up the term foundation¹⁵.

Among the group of breakers there was an ongoing discussion about the rather abstract term *foundation*, also referred to as “basic elements”. Even though there were various definitions of foundation, the idea of it framed the participants' actions as they all related to it one way or another:

You need to know how to walk before you can run. (Jo)

It is about preserving the roots of breaking, the history, to understand what you are doing. Basics are the foundation for everything. I think. You need to start one place. (Sascha)

The idea of foundation was historically rooted and each breaker's interpretation of *foundation* had profound influence on their actions (e.g. clothing, dance style, practices). The different interpretations divided the breakers into different subgroups representing different dance styles, but on the other hand foundation tied the breakers together through symbolic interaction and formed joint actions. As Blumer (1969) noted "joint actions" does not mean imitation but are an ongoing coordinated interaction where individual creativity is always at play. This element of creativity was underlined through the construction of breaking as art.

Through the social interaction at the Location, the novices quickly learned to define breaking as an artistic dance. It was a strong expectation to every breaker not to "bite" [copy] another breaker, but that everybody should develop their own dance style and "just be themselves". Hence, individualization is significant and art is seen as deliberately created and emerging over time (Shapiro and Heinich 2008). The artification process (Shapiro and Heinich 2008): e.g. change of terminology (breakdance vs breaking) and the defining of breaking as art, started according to Fogarty (2010) in the year 2000 as the breakers got more invested in talking about breaking as aspects of an art form worthy of aesthetic considerations. As a result, breaking has aspired to an international aesthetic, while remaining an art form centred on competition (Fogarty 2010). The legacy of breaking seems to be connected to a sense of retreat, and especially the established breaker Kim expressed a strong sense of freedom:

When I break I feel connected with myself. Everything else does not matter. ... You can feel the moment. Breaking is a means of meditation. When you get into the zone, everything else is gone and you are just floating ... that's magic and sacred.

Kim expressed a feeling of connecting with himself/her-self through breaking and communicates a state of mind detached from everyday life. The meaning of breaking was constructed around a sense of being free, and as a result the breakers constantly hunted for the ultimate feeling of absorption. This state of mind was evident around the cypher. Here the established breakers were the majority and the energy of the cypher could be felt in the whole room.

Kim is in the cypher. The activity elsewhere in the room has stopped for a minute. Everyone [in the room] seems to be mesmerized by Kim's movements. Fully concentrated Kim pays no attention to the others. It is almost like Kim is hovering. (Fieldnotes Sept 25, 2011)

To "be yourself": also constructed the feeling of being an individual of importance. The demand that everybody should and could contribute to the dance and create their own expressions is rooted in breaking's origin (Banes 1981). The meaning of breaking was constructed around the feeling of "being someone". The result was a sense of respect and recognition.

I feel that I switch roles. The milieu is very different from school. People are very different. It is very pleasant [to be at the Location] ... to be with people that I feel more connected with. (Sascha)

By having the same frame of references the breakers experienced a sense of belonging. This is supported by Fogarty (2012a) and Osumare (2002) who argue that breakers all over the world have a perception of commonalities.

An important element of the social interaction at the Location was not only to support but also to challenge each other further. Jo said that "they [referring to other breakers] are your driving force; they are the ones pushing you". This is clearly seen in the cypher where the breakers take turns. According to all breakers, everybody can participate in the cypher, there are no requirements. But as Jo noted: "It is difficult to start, to just walk into the cypher and be self-confident. I think it takes time". To participate in the cypher required courage, and during the fieldwork it became obvious that the ones entering the cypher were mostly the established breakers. But by mastering the moves of breaking, both Jo's and Sascha's self-esteem increased:

Jo: I like that it makes me feel athletic, I never felt that at school, I was never really good at anything. Breaking makes me feel athletic.

Kim: So it is the physical part that you like about breaking?

Jo: Yes. No. Not just that ... it is like a drug, you get addicted, just have to do it. (Field notes 18 Nov. 2011)

It gives me confidence and belief in myself, more and more. It does that. ... I get motivated. (Sascha)

The rise of self-esteem is supported by earlier research (e.g. Kopytko 1986; Vestel 1999). Through social interaction; support and

challenges, Jo and Sascha developed not only their breaking skills but also self-confidence to enter the cypher. This confidence was transmitted to contexts disconnected from breaking.

Some [break] moves I have struggled with for years, but when I defeat the barrier - it is not only a victory for my breaking but for me as a person. I know that I can do it, regardless of how hard the task is. I have proved to myself, that through discipline and dedication I can do whatever I want in life. (Kim)

For all the participants breaking developed to be a significant part of their lives: "I think about breaking all the time" (Sascha), "I moved to Oslo to follow my passion" (Jo) and: "It is more than a hobby. You make sacrifices - family, work, education ... you put everything on one card" (Kim). As a result of their dedication and commitment to practice breaking several times a week, breaking gradually emerged into a lifestyle where: "You have to adjust everything." (Jo). A life without breaking, was for most of the participants, unthinkable. They stated that when their body could not take it anymore, they would still be a part of the milieu bringing their knowledge to the next generation of breakers. This is supported by Fogarty (2012b), who argues that as the breakers get older they take on new roles in the milieu. The breaking crews have become more multi-generational and the older dancers have an important mentoring role for younger dancers. Consequently, knowledge is passed along to new generations of breakers and forms joint actions that are negotiated and constructs new joint actions.

Concluding remarks

In the introduction we presented Jo, a fifteen

year old boy who has made a deliberate choice to be committed to breaking. For the last three years Jo has travelled every week to practice breaking with guys that are twice his age. In this paper we have focused on the construction of meanings in breaking-- to highlight what it is about breaking that makes Jo so committed.

The results illuminate how youth with diverse ethnic backgrounds experienced identification and belonging to a global society. Through the social interaction at the Location, Jo gradually became a part of the collectively initiated joint actions at the Location. As the meaning of breaking was constructed as something that had to be lived, Jo felt dedication to the group. Charon (2010) argues that such demand to be committed and to nurture social interaction holds a group together. Through commitment and interdependence a culture develops that becomes important to the individuals who make up the group. As the meanings of breaking were culturally transmitted through mediated encounters (Fogarty 2012a), the result was a sense of belonging not only to the local crew but also the affiliation with breakers all over the world. As the Location gathers breakers with diverse ethnic backgrounds, breaking becomes a means of alternative identification that is both local and global (Langnes and Fasting 2014). Hamera (2007, 19) argues that the learning of dance techniques translates the individual body into a common "mother tongue" that is shared and redeployed by its participants that hold sociality together across differences and perpetuate over time. McCaren (2013) emphasizes that "le hip hop" is a figural language in which dancers express themselves differently. The result was that Jo got socialised into a group that not only supported him, but also challenged him to contribute to the dance. Consequently, the meaning of breaking was

constructed around the feeling of freedom to "just be yourselves". As a consequence, Jo communicated a sense of connecting with himself and his own body. Even though the breakers faced each other in battles, they supported each other at the Location. Schuff (2012) highlights that the freedom to self-expression is strengthened by a supportive dance environment where dancers support each other rather than compete. The supportive environment at the Location offered breakers a frame for expressing and processing emotions through breaking. This means that breaking offers a frame of reference to youth with diverse ethnic backgrounds that is experienced as meaningful, and many of the breakers expressed a sense of wholeness. Accordingly, Jo's sense of importance and respect was transmitted to contexts outside breaking, and he felt empowered in situations disconnected with the dance. Hence, breaking is not only a meeting point across social and cultural borders, but also an important source for personal growth. This indicates that breaking may offer a means to overcome unequal opportunities and cultural differences. The meanings of breaking are summed up by Jo himself:

The meaning of breaking? It's about self-discipline, patience, the opportunity to stand for what you love. ... It is about affiliation. It's about love and hate, meaning that if I am angry it is reflected in my dance. It is a language. It can mean dance. But simply... it is a lifestyle.

Notes

- 1 Other elements in the hip-hop culture are: MCing (rapping), DJing (playing records by using two turntables), and graffiti.
- 2 Refers to waack, breaking/breakdancing, and rap dance (Hazard-Donald 2004)
- 3 To battle involves comparing skills and are normally performed in a cypher. A cypher refers to an impromptu circle where the dancers take turns. A battle could be formal in front of judges or informal at practice or at dance gatherings. Either way everyone knows it is a competition and the goal is to continually exceed the other (Fogarty 2010).
- 4 Breakers or a breaker, persons or a person who performs breaking.
- 5 The majority of New Zealand breakers were Maori or Pacific Islanders that were falling school and who often faced discrimination because of their social position and ethnicity (Kopytko 1986, 24)
- 6 We follow Williams (2011) and define subculture as a cultural phenomenon. This means that subculture is an abstraction from the individuals that comprise it, and refers to culturally bounded networks of people (Williams 2011).
- 7 Anything that humans do and give name is an act.
- 8 The term refers to the process of self-interaction, i.e. the interpretative process within the individual, that is interwoven with social interaction and influences that social interaction (Derzin 1992).
- 9 Outsider refers here to novices and visiting breakers. The Location gathered breakers from different crews. Some crew would prefer to practice more at one site than the other. When a member from such a crew showed up at the other site, their status would be as a visiting breaker and they would often prefer to dance on the padded area or outsider area instead of the cypher.
- 10 Very brief notes jotted down out of sight to evoke memory about events later, also called scratch notes (Bryman 2012, 450).
- 11 Experimental-, Old-School-, and All-Round-dance style.
- 12 Influence refers to the individual's impact in the milieu.
- 13 Schloss (2009, 50) refers to the legendary breaker Ken Swift who defines foundation as: "the combination of the mental approach, philosophies, the attitude, the rhythm, style and character combined with the move".

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BIOGRAPHY

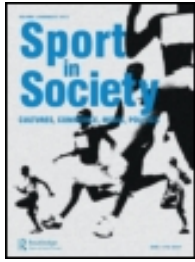
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Gender constructions in breaking

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the perspectives of youth involved in breaking, also known as breakdance, the aim of this article is to explore how their experiences contribute to the doing, redoing and undoing of gender. The negotiation of gender is highlighted through the female breakers' experiences in a male-dominated culture. The analysis is based on fieldwork and qualitative interviews with young breakers in Norway. The results show that the female breakers challenged the perception of masculinity and femininity as they extended their practice of gender. Their desire to disprove the gendered expectations of female breakers resulted in a mixing of masculinity and femininity. Accordingly, the gender regime among the breakers was simultaneously re-constructed and challenged. We argue that both male and female breakers challenge normative perceptions of doing gender. Consequently, breaking has the capacity to dismantle the gender binary, and to redo and undo the gender order.

Introduction

Chloe, a new female breaker,¹ arrives at the Location with Alan. Chloe is dressed in a dainty orange jacket and big earrings. With her long curly hair flowing down her back she has a definite feminine appearance. The music blares as Alan and Chloe find a spot for their belongings. Alan quickly changes his shoes and rips off his jacket. Within seconds after his arrival Alan conquers the dance floor. Meanwhile, Chloe is changing in the corner. She carefully puts her petite orange jacket into her backpack and removes her big earrings. Skilfully she puts her hair into a tight ponytail and conceals it with a baseball cap. She pulls on a black t-shirt, which engulfs her hips and camouflages her female form. Finally, she sneaks into the outer area of the dance floor. (Fieldnote 2011)

This observation is from the subculture² of breaking, better known as breakdance,³ in Oslo, Norway 2011. While Alan enters the dance floor without any adjustments, Chloe seems to go through a transformation. Step by step, Chloe removes her feminine characteristics. Her transformation is striking but not exceptional, as it is supported by repeated observations in the subculture of breaking.

As part of hip-hop culture, breaking can be traced to the new leisure movement during the 1970s (Humphreys 2003; Williams 2011). The new leisure movement expressed social

dissatisfaction through sports that did not conform prevailing definitions, such as skateboard, snowboard and breaking. Central to this (counterculture) movement were artistic sensibility, freedom of action and expression (Humphreys 2003). Evolving from the ghettos of The Bronx, breaking is historically linked to a black, urban, street context (Banes 1981; Forman and Neal 2012). Today, breaking has evolved into a global phenomenon and members of the subculture of breaking share the meaning of practices through interaction (e.g. Williams 2011). The alteration of the female breaker Chloe seems paradoxical for two reasons. First, all activities related to the new leisure movement emphasize traditionally feminine values such as aesthetics and expressivity (Humphreys 2003). Second, dance in Western Europe is categorized as a feminine activity (Craig 2014; Fisher and Shay 2009). Breaking is male dominated and defined as a masculine dance with macho qualities and alleged physical risk (Banes 2004; Blagojevic 2009; De Shane 1988; Hazzard-Donald 2004; Kopytko 1986). Since breaking is perceived as a man's world, female breakers experience obstacles and exclusion because of their gender (Engel 2001; Fogarty 2010, 2012; Gunn 2012a, 2012b; Gunn and Scannell 2013; Ogaz 2006). As summarized by LaBoskey (2001, 114) 'symbolically and physically, to breakdance and compete is simply unfeminine'. In brief, female breakers are facing the same traditional gendered assumptions that discourage them from participating in a number of sports (see Pfister and Sisjord 2013). Looking back only a few years' women experienced the same when they first participated in sports that only were open to men, such as football, and boxing (e.g. Caudwell 2003; Hall and Oglesby 2016; Krane 2001; Messner 1988; Pfister 2010).

This article contributes to the literature addressing how gender is negotiated within the subculture of breaking, and the growing literature exploring the 'undoing of gender' in sports (e.g. Channon 2014; Hills and Croston 2012; Priyadharshini and Pressland 2016). The aim of the article is to explore how gender is constructed within the subculture of breaking and whether the breakers' experiences contribute to the doing, redoing and undoing of gender. The gender constructions in breaking are highlighted by focusing on the female breakers and their experiences in the male-dominated breaking subculture in Oslo. To understand the female breaker's impression management, it is necessary first to examine the theoretical framework of gender constructions, and how gender can be done, redone and undone. The methodological considerations for the study are then outlined, before we discuss the female breakers experiences and consider to what extent they do, redo or undo gender.

Theoretical framework

Gender is an overarching category organizing social life and an important criterion for self-identification and how the world is perceived and structured (Järviluoma, Moisala, and Vilkkö 2003). It is often defined as constructed meanings that shape expected behaviours of the male and female sex, and involves continually socially reconstructed 'normative conceptions' of men and women. Hence, gender produces two complementary but unequal sets of people and is a frame creating gendered behaviour (Goffman 1974; Lorber 2000). A frame refers to implicit assumptions that shape meanings and interactions and structure the individual's experiences at any moment of their social lives (Goffman 1974). Hence, a frame constructs a reality that seems 'natural' (Lorber 2005). A simple example of gender framing is the categorization of sports during early childhood, where certain activities are defined as appropriate for boys (i.e. football, wrestling and boxing) and others appropriate for girls

(i.e. dance, gymnastics and figure skating) (Chalabaev et al. 2013; Craig 2014; Khomutova and Channon 2015; Klomsten, Marsh, and Skaalvik 2005; Messner 1988). Gender is above all a pattern of social relations that not only defines the position of men and women, but also where the cultural meanings of being a man and woman are negotiated (Connell 2006).

Gender relations are always being made and re-made. West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that people are constantly doing gender. Doing gender involves behaviours that ‘sustain, reproduce and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex categories’ (West and Zimmerman 1987, 146). As a result, male and female breakers draw on gendered stereotypes to ensure that their actions are gender appropriate. Hence, breakers construct themselves as masculine or feminine in compliance with the gender regime within breaking (e.g. Connell 2006, 2009).

In its most common usage, masculinity and femininity express patterns of social practices that refer to biological properties of male and female bodies (Connell 2012). Masculinity and femininity are defined as hierarchical opposites, and constitute hegemonic gender structure. Consequently, power is an important dimension of gender. That is, male-dominant power relations are continually reproduced in everyday life as people do gender and reinforce the gender stereotypes. Gender therefore involves possibilities, but also boundaries, limitations and inequalities (Lorber 2000; Risman, Lorber, and Sherwood 2012). It is important to notice that masculinity and femininity are cultural constructions and not determined by the biological body, and that masculinity and femininity can be enacted by both sexes (Connell 2009). What is regarded as gender appropriate behaviour varies across time, ethnic groups and social situations, but, echoing Deutsch (2007) ‘the opportunity to behave as manly men or womanly women is ubiquitous’. However, as Connell (2005, 2008, 2012), Deutsch (2007) and Lorber (2000) argue, since doing gender is a social construction there is always the possibility to undo gender.

Undoing gender refers to the ending of gendered practices that maintain gender inequality (Lorber 2005). The concept of undoing gender was first introduced by Butler (2004), but has been offered another twist by Deutsch (2007). Deutsch (2007) defines undoing gender as social interactions that reduce gender differences. Undoing gender evokes resistance (Deutsch 2007) and becomes obvious when people experiment with gender characteristics such as gender bending and gender crossing. Gender bending involves mixing elements of masculinity with femininity (Carroll, Gilroy, and Ryan 2002), while gender crossing refers to an individual’s efforts to fully access groups and activities of the other gender (McKenna and Kessler 2006; Thorne 1993). As a result, gender differences can be reduced and gender undone (Claringbould and Knoppers 2008; Deutsch 2007).

West and Zimmerman (2009) disagree and argue that abandonment of attribution to a sex category is impossible. As a result gender can never be undone, only redone as a result of people behaving in ways that produce a non-stereotypical version of gender (West and Zimmerman 1987). Connell (2010) emphasizes that both concepts – undoing and redoing gender – share the common interest of furthering the feminist project of dismantling gender inequality. After all, both undoing and redoing gender upset the gender binary, and old gender norms are losing currency. This is supported by Lorber (2005) who emphasizes that gender-troublemakers are needed to challenge the way gender is built into the Western world’s overall social systems.

Degendering means freedom from gender restrictions and enables ‘a world beyond gender’ (see Risman, Lorber, and Sherwood 2012). Lorber (2005) calls on more people to start

the process of challenging the binary gender structure. In order to move beyond gender, Lorber (2005) emphasizes that a period of self-conscious attention to gendering is necessary. Gendering involves all taken-for-granted social practices that construct gender as a social institution (Lorber 2005). Degendering is thus only possible through the awareness of gendering.

In sum, gender is not 'given' or 'static', but is constantly re-negotiated through social interaction. Consequently, the gender categories within the subculture of breaking are conceptualized in relation to each other, and gender forms a structure that is adopted and applied by the members. As gender is relational and a situated construction involving power, the gender regime within breaking is constructed. This gender regime provides the context for breaking events, the relationships between breakers, and the breakers' individual practices. Hence, the breakers in Oslo construct themselves as masculine or feminine according to the definitions within the subculture of breaking. As most breakers are male and breaking is defined as a masculine dance (Banes 2004; De Shane 1988; Hazzard-Donald 2004; Kopytko 1986), breaking seems to challenge the normative perceptions of which activities are gender appropriate.

Methodology

The world of breaking was unfamiliar to both authors when we began this research, as neither of us are breakers. The data for this article derives from participant observations from August 2011 to March 2012, followed by 17 semi-structured interviews with breakers in Oslo. During this time, the first author attended the breakers 'training sessions' at the two main locations for breaking in Oslo. As the training sites appeared to be quite similar, they have been merged in this article as *the Location*. Even though these two breaking sites were located in different socio-cultural areas of Oslo, they turned out to be quite similar in their appearance and organization. Regarding recruitment, one site recruited more children than the other. However, the 'hard core breakers', i.e. those who trained regularly, would alternate between the two training sites as they were open at different days and times. Accordingly, due to a strong need for anonymization, the two sites has been merged into *the Location*. The first author also attended multi-day events at the weekends to get a deeper understanding of the subculture of breaking in Norway; these events were open to the general public and gathered breakers as well as people involved in other dance styles. The foundation of the fieldwork is though the observations from the Location.

The first author was granted official access by the legal owners of the Location, who introduced her to an established breaker, i.e. gatekeeper. The Location was a remodelled office-space without any equipment. The Location had an open access policy, but since there were no signs or advertisements most people learned about the place through friends. Between 2 and 35 breakers from the Oslo area gathered at the Location for every training session. The practice was informal, without any leader or instructor and lasted for approximately four to five hours. The majority of breakers were male, with only a handful of dedicated females. According to fieldwork observations (i.e. language and physical appearance), there seemed to be approximately 50/50 ethnic Norwegian breakers and breakers with another ethnic origin⁴ in the field.

The fieldwork was intense, involving the first author not only observing the social interaction between the breakers and participating in informal conversations, but also being

actively engaged in learning breaking while jotting research notes⁵ (Bryman 2012; Lofland and Lofland 2006). Nevertheless, participation in breaking, as unimpressive as it might have been, and all the hours ‘hanging out’ (Woodward 2008) with the breakers, facilitated a deeper understanding of the subculture of breaking. Wheaton (2002) argues that the ability to participate in the activity is especially important for female researchers attempting to negotiate access to a male-dominated world. Throughout the fieldwork, memos were written in order to explore emerging themes that required further exploration in informal conversations and in the semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, data analysis ran concurrently with data collection, following traditional ethnographic methods (Lofland and Lofland 2006).

The fieldwork was supplemented with 17 semi-structured interviews. At the end of the fieldwork, interviewees were sampled through generic purpose sampling, i.e. selected purposively in terms of criteria central to the main topic of the research (Bryman 2012). To reflect the diversity observed within the subculture of breaking, the interviewees were selected based on the following criteria: breaking experience (from novices to experienced), age (between 15 and 30 years’ old), different breaking dance styles emphasizing different components within breaking (experimental, all-round and old school⁶ dance styles), ethnic background and gender. As a result, the interviewees covered 11 men and 6 women between 15 and 30 years’ old with diverse ethnic backgrounds, varied breaking experiences and from the different dance styles found in breaking. As the breakers came from all over Oslo, they also had different socio-economic status. During the fieldwork, factors such as class and ethnicity were observed to have minor impact on the breakers’ social interaction at the Location. The main focus of this article is therefore the female breakers’ experiences and gender constructions. The interviews were conducted outside the Location, and lasted between 45 and 180 min, averaging just about 60 min. The interviews were semi-structured, covering topics such as subcultural practices, identity and gender. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the first author. The software MAXQDA was used to code themes and analyse data. This article is based on the interpretation of the text coded in/under the following themes: ‘gender – impression management’, ‘masculinity’, ‘gender co-operation’, ‘gender stereotypes’, ‘perceptions of female breakers’ and ‘to be a female breaker’.

Prior to the fieldwork, ethical approval for this project was granted by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. During the fieldwork and the interviews, all participants gave informed consent. Only a few breakers preferred not to participate in the study during the fieldwork. This has been respected throughout the research process.

In order to preserve the participants’ anonymity in an instantly recognizable milieu, strategies have been implemented to hide the participants’ individual characteristics. Accordingly, all the participants have been given a pseudonym. The empirical material is presented by meaning condensation, i.e. abridgements of the meanings expressed in informal conversations and interviews (Kvale et al. 2009).

Olive and Thorpe (2011) highlight that the researcher occupies multiple positions in the field, which implies reflexivity regarding the researcher’s position (Haraway 1988; Järviluoma, Moisala, and Vilkkö 2003). A male-dominated field has implications for female researchers who cannot be un-situated from gender classification (Woodward 2008). Hence, the first author mimicked female breakers and deliberately dressed down and presented herself as detached from femininity, i.e. big concealing T-shirts, minimum makeup and no jewellery (see Langnes, Kari 2014a). Entering the field as a white, middle-class researcher could have impacted the social interaction with the breakers, but this position seemed not

to have major influence on the social interaction with the breakers. The main focus inside the Location was on the actual practice of breaking, and, as a female outsider with clumsy and unimpressive breaking moves, the first author was regarded as no threat.

The first author worked hard to establish herself within the subculture as an interested outsider, and her commitment to attend every practice and to learn breaking moves were crucial in order to be taken seriously. Consequently, the first author could overhear internal discussions, participate in the social interaction and be a part of informal conversations. The first author's dedication was vital in order to connect with the breakers and offered an opportunity to question taken-for-granted assumptions within the subculture, i.e. the perception of female breakers.

Results and discussion

At her first visit at the Location, Chloe quickly faced and experienced dominant perceptions of gender within the subculture of breaking. The gendered expectations within the subculture were summarized by another female breaker, Isabella, as follows:

[Regarding female breakers] you hear comments like 'Oh, she has a heavy ass' or 'Wow, she did a baby freeze'. That is 'dissing', because she is on a lower level [than the male breakers]. And I have heard comments like 'female breakers look like boys'. Sometimes you cannot see the difference. Even some boys wonder why girls can't be girls [when they break]. I agree. I think you can do both [being female and a breaker]. Develop your own style, don't be a copycat trying to be as cool as the boys. It is girls! (Isabella)

In the following sections, we will elaborate how gender is done within the subculture of breaking. By focusing on the perceptions of the female breakers, the negotiating of gender will be highlighted and at the end we discuss whether breaking holds the capacity to undo gender.

Is it possible – a female breaker?

Even though the majority of the breakers were male, breaking was defined as an artistic dance by all the participants (see Langnes, Kari 2014b). This is interesting, since artistic dance in Western countries is strongly associated with women and femininity (Craig 2014; Fisher and Shay 2009; Gunn and Scannell 2013). During the interviews, all the interviewees were challenged by the first author who put forth the assertion that dance was a female activity. In response, most interviewees emphasized that breaking was more a male- (than a female-) dance, due to its acrobatic demands and the lack of female breakers. A few interviewees emphasized that the perception of dance as feminine was connected to 'dance in general', and was rather 'old fashioned' and allocated the perception to 'non-dancers'. When Ava was asked to characterize the masculine aspects of breaking, she responded: 'It is due to the many acrobatic moves, the dress-code and tough attitude'.

Inside breaking, the overall perception was that breaking was harder for female breakers. Lack of strength and the female bodily composition (e.g. the perception of female breakers 'heavy asses') were consistently used by both male and female breakers to explain the image of female breakers within the subculture. Common statements were 'It is easier for guys', 'Girls are weak', 'Girls don't dare' and 'Girls don't have the willpower', etc. These statements draws on gendered stereotypes regarding women, and is supported by Blagojevic (2009),

who underlines the general perception of breaking being a difficult dance requiring physical strength.

Consequently, through traditional gender stereotyping and norms, female breakers were constantly devaluated and the social domination of men was reinforced (e.g. Lorber 1994). The female breakers faced the perception (especially from male breakers) that ‘It does not look good when girls break’, due to their lack of strength and appearance. As a result, breaking was constantly re-constructed as a masculine dance. Thus, breaking is assumed to be more appropriate for men than women. Following Connell 2012, this creates a gender regime that subordinates women.

Comparable perceptions of breaking and female breakers have been found in earlier research from all over the world (e.g. Blagojevic 2009; Gunn 2012b; Ogaz 2006). Accordingly the gender order in the global culture of breaking is solidified. Gunn and Scannell (2013, 54) emphasize that ‘the acceptance of one’s expression is always conditioned by social protocol’. Following Connell (2009), this means that the locally constructed gender regime within the subculture of breaking in Oslo was influenced by and influenced the gender order of the wider global breaker community. However, the cultural convictions that breaking requires strength can be questioned. This is emphasized in the following episode: With a beginner, the first author was trying to figure out how to do a specific breaking move, and the male breaker, Hunter, came to assist them. The first author questioned whether the move required strength and Hunter answered ‘It is not about strength. Breaking is about balance’. The accuracy of the gendered perception of strength as a limitation for female breakers was then challenged. Fogarty (2012) highlights that breaking involves a particular set of structured components: entry, top-rock (upright dance), get downs (drop to the ground), down-rock (hands and feet on the ground), freezes (holding a position), power moves (acrobatic moves) and exits. Of these components power moves requires the most strength. However, the essence of the dance is, according to Schloss (2009), to be able to respond to the music.

Furthermore, within breaking it is possible to identify different dance styles that emphasize different components: to simplify, proponents of experimental and all-round dance styles incorporate many acrobatic power moves into their dance, while old-school breakers accentuate top-rock and down-rock. Hence, depending on the dance-style, the need for strength varies. Consequently, the cultural perceptions of strength as a restriction for the female breakers seem to have limited explanatory power. As stated by the female breaker, Emma: ‘Physical strength ... I am not strong. Breaking requires technique (...)’, but also among the male breakers, Oakley and Harper: Oakley: ‘Maybe it is the girls’ lack of confidence (...) As said before, I do not emphasize acrobatic moves or tricks as the most important part of breaking.

Harper: Breaking is often conceived as masculine, because of the acrobatic moves. The perception is that girls cannot do it. I think girls can be as good as boys, (...) I think it just has become this way (...).

Harper emphasizes gender as a social institution (e.g. Lorber 1994). The power of the constructed gender regime influences the expectations for individuals (e.g. breaking is easier for men), and is socially reproduced (‘... it just has become this way’). Harper’s statement highlights how cultural perceptions influence individual actions. As breaking is defined as masculine, it has consequences for the participants’ doing of gender. The participants classified femininity and masculinity as the opposite of each other. Femininity was associated with ‘beautiful’, ‘sexy’, ‘elegant’ and ‘light’, while masculinity was connected with ‘hard’,

'tough', 'aggressive' and 'grounded' – the latter being an idealized performance of breaking. As Hunter stated:

It is not the sexy feminine part that attracts women to breaking. Breaking is more tough and cool, so it is kind of natural that there are more guys who practise breaking.

The gendered perception constantly reproduced the convictions that breaking was normal for male and almost impossible for a female to learn. As the female breakers adopted and internalized such doing of gender, it restricted her development and self-esteem as a breaker (e.g. 'lack of confidence ...').

On the other hand, Schloss (2009) highlights breaking as a meritocracy, in which everyone should be judged by their skills (and not gender). Hence, a male and female breaker should be regarded as equal in e.g. battles.⁷ Breaking appears then to have a gender-neutral philosophy. However, according to both male and female breakers, gender had significant influence on the perceptions of skill level. This is highlighted by the male breaker, Remy, and the female breaker, Mia:

Remy: Usually – girls are not that good. And if you break against someone that is not as good as you ... You know you can easily take them and your breaking automatically changes.

Mia: Because I am a girl, I get 'props' easy ... even if I do a half good windmill,⁸ I get a lot of response, or 'Good work'. A boy would never get that. I do not like it.

'Props' refers to the recognition breakers give each other through visual signs or verbal communication. Mia's experiences underline the fact that props were used differently in relation to male and female breakers. Similar observations are described by Blagojevic (2009) and Gunn (2012b), who report that female breakers in e.g. Belgrade and Sydney received props merely for participation. This can be interpreted as positive discrimination, encouraging women to participate by decreasing the levels of intimidation in an obviously male-dominated environment. On the other hand, this reinforces the gender stratification system in breaking that ranks men above women; where men's actions are more valued than those of women simply because they are men (Lorber 1994). Consequently, the expectations for female breakers are much lower than for the male breakers. Hence, a female breaker could get enormous response for even easy breaking moves (something a male breaker would hardly ever get). This is a clear articulation of the gender regime within the subculture of breaking. Everybody knows that 'easy props' are given in response to gender and not skill, which underlines the female breaker as deviant, e.g. other than the feminine norm (Scraton et al. 1999) and as the weaker sex (Channon 2014; Pfister 2010). For Mia, this was yet another reminder of 'dissing' [dis-respect]. The gendered expectations devalued female breakers, and resulted in the fact that the female breakers, in contrast to the male breakers, did not call themselves a breaker.

I do not define myself as a breaker. (...) No, I just practise breaking. (...) Because ... [of the general perception that] ... 'Girls cannot break.' (Mia)

Challenging the gender binary

As set out at the beginning of this article, Chloe transformed herself before entering the dance floor. Within the subculture of breaking, the dress code was the same for both sexes (Langnes, Kari 2014a) and at the Location the female breakers would wear big T-shirts,

minimum makeup, no jewellery, and have their hair hidden in a ponytail or cap. As a result, the female breakers ended up hiding their feminine figure and deliberately dressed down at the Location. Even though the male breakers argued that they wanted 'Girls to be girls', they admit that the presence of female participants changed the social interaction. 'If a girl comes to the Location, the testosterone level increases. It becomes more 'show off', since everybody wants the girl to notice them' (Dylan). This is supported by Sophia, who explained that, if she dressed 'normal' at the Location, she received comments from the male breakers such as 'Wow, are you going to a party?' or 'You are dressed up!' Even though Zoe highlighted that she '(...) didn't want to look like a boy' many female breakers deliberately presented themselves as detached from femininity. As part of the male-dominated subculture, the female breaker's transformation can be interpreted as an attempt to hide their femininity and just be 'one of the guys'. Thus, they performed gender crossing to avoid attention and as a means to focus on their practice. This is supported by Engel (2001) who observed young women directly imitating the clothing style of the boys.

According to Lorber (1994) women who dress like men indicate that they (in that situation) want to be treated as men. This does not erode gender boundaries, but preserves them. But, as Lorber (1994) continues, the gender statuses and their external markers, such as clothing, make gender bending or gender crossing possible. Through their clothing style, the female breakers crosses the gender binary: 'Many look like boys' (Zoe). Consequently, the female breakers challenged the traditional expectations of doing femininity. This can be interpreted as redoing gender (West and Zimmerman 2009).

The female breakers presence in the subculture evoked mixed feelings among the male breakers, especially in battles:

I got quite stressed when I realized that a girl was my opponent. I thought: 'Oh shit'. Because ... female breakers ... if they really know their style ... they get a handicap from the judges. ... She automatically gets more from the judges because she is a girl. It is peculiar. (Charlie)

Charlie's dilemma when meeting a female breaker in a battle is that he is favoured to win the battle easily. Since the female breaker probably has lower breaking skills than Charlie, he could save his strength for later battle rounds the same evening. But it is taking a chance, since Charlie could risk losing. As highlighted by Charlie, female breakers get a handicap from the judges. Consequently, Charlie is stressed because the female breaker may be more likely to win. In such cases, culturally adapted statements such as: 'I consciously did not perform to my potential' or 'A battle is always against yourself' (Charlie), could be interpreted as preventing degendering and humiliation. For, as Fogarty (2010) underlines, breaking is a competitive dance, and whether or not the battle is judged, everyone knows it is a competition. Consequently, if the female breaker wins a battle against a male breaker, the male-dominated gender regime within breaking seems to be challenged and partly disrupted. As a result, gender could be undone (Deutsch 2007; Lorber 2005).

By emphasizing 'if they (women) really know their style', Charlie highlights another important aspect that involves possibilities for the female breakers. Style, also called attitude, involves giving off an impression of exaggerated masculinity and involves embodying an aggressive persona (Schloss 2009). Within the subculture, a distinct attitude entailed respect and status (Langnes, Kari 2014a). As a result, the ability to perform attitude involves an opportunity to win battles regardless of physical movement skills, and gives opportunities for female breakers. That attitude is a learned performance was emphasized by Casey: 'I break masculine. I do not mean that breaking is masculine. It is an important distinction'.

By staging masculinity, Casey embodied traditional masculine stereotypes and confirmed cultural expectations regarding breaking and gender. In other words, attitude necessitated Casey doing gender in a masculine way. Moreover, attitude underlined the female breakers' ambivalent position:

It is different when girls do it. To be a female breaker is very hard; you automatically become a bit boyish. That's not cool. The challenge is to do breaking in a cool girlish way. If you know what I mean? Do a feminine style, because girls grabbing their groin and wearing caps is not cool. I don't think so. (Lily)

The statement emphasizes the female breaker's dilemma. According to Schloss (2009) and Langnes, Kari (2014a) the ability to embody attitude is a fundamental skill of breaking. Hence, to be regarded as a breaker this has to be implemented by Lily. This means adopting and embodying masculine stereotypes. Engel (2001) and Gunn (2012a, 2012b) argue that female breakers imitate male breakers both in clothes and body language. Thus, the female breakers' impression management can be interpreted as gender crossing (e.g. Thorne 1993). Furthermore, the statement highlights that the embodiment of attitude, i.e. masculine stereotypes, are more accessible for male breakers, and that female breakers' embodiment of these masculine characteristics risk being defined as 'to boyish' and therefore 'not cool'. But, as Casey emphasizes, the female breakers have the opportunity to blend masculinity and femininity:

If you are a feminine girl ... it is wrong if you enter the dance floor as a mad man, i.e. a totally changed personality. Everybody should have their own dance expression. I have seen female breakers who dance feminine. That is nice. But I do not say that all girls need to be feminine. You should always dance as yourself. I think many girls don't dare to be feminine, because they think breaking should be done in a certain way. (Casey)

Casey emphasizes the authenticity code 'keeping it real' e.g. 'dance as yourself' within the subculture of breaking (Langnes, Kari 2014a). This is in line with the new leisure movement ideology 'be true to one's self' (Humphreys 2003) and can be interpreted as support for feminine female breakers. But Casey's statement also confirms that there are strong cultural expectations that influence the perception of how the dance should be done. This reflects the gender regime (Connell 2012). Since breaking is constructed as a masculine dance, Lily has to meet the gendered expectations if she wants to be accepted as a breaker within the subculture. Gunn (2012b) argues that female breakers must learn how to perform in a masculine manner, i.e. to perform a new gendered way of moving, acting and clothing. Hence, female breakers seem to be confronting a dilemma regarding the authenticity code: on one side, they have to adopt a masculine dancing style, but on the other 'be true to herself', i.e. being a female. Consequently, cultural gendered expectations constrain Lily's expressions, but also open up for new opportunities.

The female breakers states a vision of mixing gendered expectations of masculine movements with feminine ones. 'I want to preserve some femininity (...) while performing a masculine dance' (Ava). The mixing of masculine moves with softer feminine ones is supported by Engel (2001) and is a clear statement of intentional gender bending. The female breakers were fully aware of the gendered perceptions regarding female breakers both within the subculture of breaking and from outsiders, e.g. 'women cannot break'. In many ways, this provided the foundation for her participation and a desire to disprove the gendered stereotypical expectations: 'I want to show them that I, as a female, can perform breaking' (Isabella).

Similar results are presented by Blagojevic (2009) who affirms that the female breaker wanted to prove that women could perform dance acrobatics as well as men. Consequently, female breakers seem to have a more or less stated desire to challenge stereotypical assumptions about women. As Engel (1996) emphasized, female dancers were fully aware that the mixture of masculine and feminine signs gave them new ways of 'being girls'. This consciousness was reflected by Mia who stated that: 'I have become tougher, a little less girlish in a way' and '(Breaking) gives a little break from the girls'. This can be interpreted as redoing gender (e.g. West and Zimmerman 2009). As Mia stated:

I am fascinated by girls who do typically non-girly things ... like going to the military and so on. It is really cool. I like things that are not so stereotypically for females. ... Maybe I am a feminist.

Mia has deliberately chosen to perform breaking, since it is regarded as a 'non-girly' activity. And, through her involvement in breaking, Mia gradually challenged the male-dominated gender regime within the subculture of breaking. This is supported by Ogaz (2006) who notes that female breakers over time have defeated sexism through their skills. The female breakers presence in the subculture of breaking questions breaking as a masculine activity. It also questions the gender stereotypes regarding male and female capabilities and perceptions of how gender should be done.

Concluding remarks

This article has focused on the perceptions of gender within the subculture of breaking in Oslo, Norway. Through the experiences of the female breakers the negotiation of gender has been highlighted. The aim has been to investigate the gender constructions in breaking.

This study shows that the perceptions of gender serve as a frame for the female breakers actions and re-actions. Even though breaking was defined as a dance, i.e. a feminine activity, the male domination within breaking constructed a gender regime that subordinated female breakers. As a result, the female breakers were facing the same mechanisms that discourage them from participating in a number of sports (see Messner 1988; Pfister and Sisjord 2013). Earlier research has documented sports as gendered with structures of power often defining participating girls as deviant. As pointed out by Priyadharshini and Pressland (2016) and Channon (2013) sports are microcosmos of traditions, social norms and expectations, constructing gendered meanings. Within breaking traditional gender norms and stereotypes were constantly maintained and (re)constructed. As a result, several power strategies were put in play to ensure hegemonic power. Hence, the female breakers performances were constantly devalued through the perceptions of gender, i.e. breaking is harder for females, and by marking their performance through easy props. As a result, male breakers performances were constantly rewarded while female breakers were constantly devalued because of their sex. Thus the female breakers self-esteem and development as a breaker were restricted.

On the other hand, the female breakers involvement in the subculture challenged the male-dominated gender regime. By presenting themselves as detached from femininity and by embodying masculine gendered stereotypes, the female breakers were gender crossing (e.g. McKenna and Kessler 2006; Thorne 1993). As a result, their performance of breaking challenged the traditional expectations of doing femininity and heteronormativity. Hence, gender was redone. The female breakers construction of gender was further extended as

they mixed masculinity with femininity. Such gender bending challenged the gendered expectations within the subculture and the maintenance of the gender regime. The results also show that the female breakers deliberately challenged stereotypical gendered assumptions in general and resisted the male breakers' attempts to undermine female breakers.

In sum, the female breakers' experiences underline how the gender regime within breaking was simultaneously re-constructed and challenged. Their adoption of the gender norms both limited and extended their construction of gender. This is supported by Gunn (2012a), who argues that breaking supports masculine qualities and suppresses femininity, but defined as a masculine dance has the possibility to transgress gendered social norms. According to Risman, Lorber, and Sherwood (2012) people must take the risk of being labelled deviant and undo gender whenever possible to change the gender order. The results presented in this article emphasize undoing of gender as a constantly ongoing process at different levels.

First of all, the definition of breaking as a masculine dance and the overwhelming majority of male breakers contest the perception of dance as feminine in Western countries. By defining breaking as artistic dance and hence performing an activity strongly connected with femininity, male breakers challenged the traditional gender stereotypes and violated the boundaries for gendered behaviour.

Secondly, through both gender crossing and gender bending, female breakers challenged the perceptions of how gender should be done both inside the subculture of breaking and in society at large. How gendered expectations are challenged within the subculture of breaking has been elaborated above, but another important aspect is how gendered expectations in society at large are contested. By adopting and embodying gendered expectations within the subculture of breaking (i.e. masculine characteristics), the female breakers challenged gendered appropriate behaviour at a larger scale, since gendered perceptions within the subculture are distinct from those in society at large (i.e. women should be feminine and heterosexual). Consequently, female breakers move beyond stereotypical gendered beliefs and challenge traditional perceptions of doing gender. As highlighted by Shaw (2001) women's involvement in male-dominated activities can be interpreted as resistance that not only expand the individual's behaviour, but can lead to new discourses about masculinity, femininity and activities. Hence, both male and female breakers challenge perceptions of doing gender. They can be seen as gender troublemakers creating a greater awareness of how gender is done, as they expand gender boundaries, e.g. gender is redone (e.g. West and Zimmerman 2009). By constantly creating situations in which traditional perceptions of doing gender are contested, both male and female breakers challenge expectations of gender (e.g. Risman, Lorber, and Sherwood 2012). Consequently, there seems to be a potential liberation from stigmatizing gendered perceptions of masculinity and femininity within breaking. This applies not only within the subculture of breaking, but also to the larger society. As Risman, Lorber, and Sherwood (2012) argue, degendering on the interactional level is tied to the macro institutional level, and change of the gender order in society is thus a consequence.

This study suggests that breaking as a global phenomenon both reaffirms and challenges perceptions of doing gender worldwide. In order to move to a 'just world beyond gender' (Risman, Lorber, and Sherwood 2012), we understand undoing gender as an ongoing *process*, where gender bending and gender crossing are important strategies to redo gender as they redefine qualities associated with masculinity and femininity. Hence, the gender binary can be dismantled and gender undone. As power is a part of gender, practices that

undo gender are important means to create equality between men and women (Deutsch 2007; Lorber 2000). However, more research is required to understand when and how social interaction can become less gendered and a site of change.

Notes

1. Person performing breaking.
2. Based on a symbolic interactionist perspective, a subculture is defined as a culturally bounded, but not closed, network of people who share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects and practices through interaction (Williams 2011).
3. For insiders of the subculture of breaking, the term breakdance represents exploitation by commercial outsiders during the 1980s. The term is regarded as highly offensive and has been abandoned (Schloss 2009).
4. Whether the participants themselves or their parents were born in a country other than Norway. During the fieldwork it was impossible to clarify everyone's self-defined ethnicity. The distribution of ethnic origin has been done from observations, i.e. language and physical appearance.
5. Very brief notes jotted down out of sight to evoke memory about events later, also called scratch notes (Bryman 2012).
6. We use the term 'old school', even though it is debated within the subculture.
7. The competitive part of breaking, where the goal is to exceed the performance of another breaker.
8. Breaking move involving the torso rolling continuously in a circular path on the floor, while twirling the legs in a V-shape through the air.

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Article 4

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MASCULINITY CONSTRUCTIONS AMONG NORWEGIAN MALE BREAK(DANC)ERS.

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explore how masculinity is exhibited among young male breakers in Oslo, Norway. This article is part of a larger project drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and 17 semi-structured interviews with male and female breakers. The article focuses on the 11 male breakers as the objective is to analyze how young male breakers construct their masculinities — how these are formed, performed and (re)negotiated through breaking. The results show that the breakers' masculinity constructions are formed by breaking's legacy, which works as a frame for their masculinity performances. Through a combination of Connells's social theory of masculinities and social interactionism, I discuss how the breakers' collective performance of an exaggerated, aggressive masculinity signifies resistance to hegemonic masculinity in the gender order.

Keywords

Hegemonic masculinity, protest masculinity, front and back stage, dance.

Introduction

This article explores young men living in Oslo, Norway, and their masculinity constructions within breaking [breakdance]. Breaking is part of the hip-hop culture, and historically bound to an urban, black context (Rose, 1994). From a marginalized position in the ghettos of the Bronx, New York, during the 1970s (Forman & Neal, 2012; Williams, 2011) disenfranchised youths used breaking as a vehicle to construct an alternative masculine identity to gain respect and status (Banes, 2004; Williams, 2011). Through breaking young men protested against mainstream society (Forman & Neal, 2012; Hazzard-Donald, 2004). Since then, breaking has evolved into a global phenomenon with adherents located far away from the American ghettos, such as in Oslo, Norway. For young people living in Norway – a country perceived as the home of egalitarianism and as a decent host of immigrants (Gudmundsson, Beach, & Vestel, 2013), the legacy of the ghettos seems somewhat irrelevant. However, in 2010 media problematized ethnic segregation and tendency to “white flight” in some parts of Oslo (Høgmoen & Eriksen, 2011, p. 31). Yet, as underlined by Høgmoen and Eriksen (2011), a ghetto refers to ethnic uniformity and the areas exposed in media are the least homogeneous parts of Oslo. Norway has a system which encourages equal opportunities, but, as in many European countries, research has documented that ethnic minorities face greater barriers than the majority (Fangen & Frønes, 2013). This is among other reflected in young people’s involvement in leisure activities such as organized sport, in which young people from ethnic minorities are often underrepresented (e.g. Bakken, 2016).

Previous research has featured hip-hop culture as a masculine expression (Rose, 1994) and breaking as “a specific expression of machismo” (Banes, 2004, p. 17) and “a high-voltage expression of masculine style” (Shane, 1988, p. 263). This is supported by research from all over the world (e.g. Blagojevic, 2009; Engel, 2001).

The first seeds of breaking can be traced back to the new leisure movement during the late 1970s (e.g. Forman & Neal, 2012), which embraced the idealism of youth and counter-culture, and incorporated values traditionally associated with femininity, such as creativity and expressiveness (Humphreys, 2003). From its origins, breaking has been defined as dance – that is, an activity traditionally perceived as feminine in Western countries (e.g. Banes, 2004; Craig, 2014). Despite this, as with most activities evolving from the new leisure movement (Sisjord, 2011), breaking has always been male dominated (Banes, 2004).

Rooted in an street culture and defined as dance, breaking seems to offer an alternative to the prevailing definition of hegemonic masculinity within European countries (e.g. Connell, 2005; Lorber, 1994). Accordingly, Forman and Neal (2012) argue that breaking can be seen as counter-hegemonic, and Gunn (2016) highlights that breaking potentially can transgress social norms of appropriate gendered activities. Therefore, this article focuses on how masculinity is exhibited among male breakers in Oslo.

Theoretical Framework

Gender influences all aspects of everyday life and serves as a frame for individuals' actions and re-actions. Following Goffman (1974) and Lorber (2005), a frame refers to implicit assumptions that create a reality that seems natural and is hardly ever questioned.

Messerschmidt (2005) accentuates gender as structured action and what people do under specific social–structural constraints. Hence, there exists a diversity of masculinities and femininities structured in a gender order, i.e. the whole societal pattern of gender relations (Connell, 2009). To conceptualize the power relations of gender, this article utilizes Connell's (1987, 2005) social theory of multiple masculinities and focuses on the construction of hegemonic, marginalized and protest masculinity within breaking.

On top of the gendered hierarchy stands hegemonic masculinity, which is always constructed in relation to femininities and other masculinities (Connell, 2005). Previous research has shown that, in any culture, group or institution, there is some hegemonic form of masculinity (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity refers to the pattern of gender practices that, for a specific time period, is the “currently accepted strategy” (Connell 2005, p.77) to maintain masculine domination. Interestingly, hegemonic masculinity is not the most common form of masculinity; Connell (1987, p. 185) emphasizes, “hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power (...)”. The hegemonic ideal is often taken for granted (Lorber, 1994) and constructed as “not-feminine (...) not-gay, not-black, not-working-class and not-immigrant” (Messner, 2005, p. 314). In Western societies, hegemonic masculinity is often connected to a white, rational, heterosexual and economically successful businessman (Connell 2005). Furthermore, the body is a participant in generating social practice, as such embodiment interweaves with social context (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For instance, in Western, hegemonic masculinity is strongly connected with sport and grounded in bravery, bodily strength and heterosexuality (Messner, 2002b). Hence, successful achievement in sport is often a salient hegemonic practice.

Moreover, as gender interplays with other social structures, e.g. class and ethnicity, marginalized masculinity is constructed. Marginalized masculinities may share features with hegemonic masculinity, but are degraded. For instance, black or working-class men are marginalized compared with white or middle-class, but can collectively represent resistance – that is, protest masculinities (Connell, 2005).

Protest masculinity is a marginalized masculinity resulting from deviation from the hegemonic ideal. The presence of an admired, dominant pattern of masculinity through, e.g. iconic images of the hero, warrior, and sports star, puts pressure on all males. This may result in powerlessness and thus protest masculinity. Protest masculinity picks up themes of

hegemonic masculinity in the gender order and reworks them. Connell likens it to “a tense freaky facade, making claim to power where there are no real resources for power” (2005, p. 111). With few resources to achieve hegemonic masculinity and thus “manhood”, young men utilize available resources and resort to excessively macho ways of proving their masculinity.

The concept of multiple masculinities has been applied differently and come under scrutiny for its academic usefulness. For example, has hegemonic masculinity been criticized for producing a static typology, marginalizing the body, reifying power, and being a self-reproducing system (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2012). Therefore, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reformulated the concept in significant ways, and highlighted that hegemonic masculinity is social patterns accomplished in social action. Hence, the definition and practice of masculinities differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting. Hegemonic masculinity is relational and pertains to a hierarchy of dynamic gender relations that are open to change (Connell, 2012). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize that the understanding of hegemonic masculinity must incorporate a holistic grasp of gender hierarchy that recognizes the agency of subordinated and marginalized groups.

Furthermore, masculinities are constructed on three levels: *local* (i.e. arenas of face-to-face interaction such as families, organizations, communities), *regional* (i.e. society-wide or nation-wide levels of culture), and *global* (i.e. transnational arenas such as world politics, business, and media) (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This means that, even though gender regimes (i.e. gender relations within an organization) are constructed locally, they are simultaneously part of a wider gender order. Local gender regimes usually correspond to the regional gender order, but can also depart from it (Connell, 2009). This means that change in one (local) arena of society can seep through into others. For instance, in Western societies, local practices, e.g. engaging in sports, constructs hegemonic masculine models, i.e. sports

stars, at the regional level, which in turn affect other local settings (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Likewise, global trends may influence the local level. For example, the global hip-hop culture influences (and is influenced by) adherents all over the world (local level).

This article explores everyday practices of masculinity construction among breakers at a local level. Lusher and Robins (2009) argue that individual gender constructions are most apparent in local settings, and it is here that personal resistance and/or reinforcement of gender relations can occur. The main focus will be on the breakers' impression management to construct *hegemonic masculinity within the subculture*. Impression management involves strategic decisions about which information to conceal or reveal in their self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). The article investigates how hegemonic masculinity is formed, performed and renegotiated within the culturally bounded network of breakers.

In their efforts to adopt hegemonic masculinity within the subculture, the breakers may try to manage the impressions others have of them in social interaction. Following Goffman (1959), social life is a staged drama in which people perform, i.e. they impress and are impressed. Hence, the breakers engage in deliberate impression management in accordance with ideal hegemonic masculinity. These performances are given front-stage, but are rehearsed backstage, "where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted" (Goffman, 1959, p. 112).

Methodology

The article draws on ethnographic data from a larger PhD project combining fieldwork and qualitative interviews to understand the social practices of breaking in Oslo, Norway.

The fieldwork's main concern was participant observations at two breaking sites on four days a week from August 2011 to March 2012. The two sites were located in different

socio-cultural areas of Oslo, but appeared to be quite similar. Based on the sites' similarities, combined with a strong need for anonymization, the sites were merged into the *Location*.

During the fieldwork, anywhere from two to thirty-five breakers were present at the Location. The majority of the breakers were male, with just a few dedicated females. Most of the breakers practiced approximately four hours every day. From observations of, e.g. language and physical appearance, approximately half were of ethnic Norwegian background and half of another ethnic origin, i.e. where the participants themselves or their parents had been born in a country other than Norway.

The fieldwork was intense, involving practicing breaking while simultaneously doing observations. As a female researcher, I was "positioned as gendered" by my very presence (Woodward, 2008, p. 546). Hence, to minimize awareness around my gender, I mirrored the female breakers and dressed in concealing clothes (Langnes & Fasting, 2014a; Langnes & Fasting, 2017). Entering the field as a white, middle-class researcher could have affected the social interaction with the breakers. However, struggling for hours with the steps, I was regarded as an eager beginner. Central to the observations was to gain insights in the practice and to become acquainted with the participants. Field notes were written based on "jotted notes" (Bryman, 2012, p. 450), and were intended to be supplementary to the analysis of the interviews.

At the end of the fieldwork, 17 interviewees were sampled through generic purpose sampling (Bryman, 2012). This article focuses solely on the 11 male interviewees, supplemented by informal conversations in the field. The interviewees reflect the observed diversity within the field. Hence, the interviewees were 50/50 with those of Norwegian background and those of other ethnic origin, such as from the Nordic countries, Asia, Africa, and South-America. Furthermore, the breakers came from all over Oslo and represented different social classes. As the focus is on the young breakers' situation of today, their main

occupation was used as an indicator of their class position. All the interviewees were between 15 and 30 years old, and their occupation varies between education and work. Table 1 gives an overview of the interviewees.

[Table 1 near here]

Table 1. The interviewees

Pseudonym	Age group	Occupation	Involvement	Ethnic origin
Oakley	21-25	Higher Education*	Established**	Norwegian
Charlie	15-20	High school	Established	Norwegian
Skyler	15-20	High school	Novice***	Norwegian
Remy	21-25	Job****	Established	Norwegian
Casey	26-30	Job	Established	Norwegian
Hunter	26-30	Higher Education/ Job	Established	Other ethnic origin
Ryan	15-20	High school	Partly*****	Other ethnic origin
Harper	15-20	High school	Partly	Norwegian
Logan	26-30	Job	Partly	Other ethnic origin
Dylan	26-30	Job	Established	Other ethnic origin
Blake	15-20	High school	Partly	Other ethnic origin

*Taking or have finished a degree within higher education.
 ** Seemed to be influence the milieu
 *** Not fully accepted in the milieu.
 **** Freelance dancer or work outside breaking
 ***** Accepted as subculture member with limited influence

All interviews were conducted outside the Location, and had a semi-structured interview style covering topics emerging during the fieldwork. The interviewees' answers guided and created a two-way conversational flow (e.g. Kvale et al., 2009). All interviews were all recorded, transcribed and coded in MAXQDA with main themes and associated subthemes. In cases where quotations from the interviews are presented as results, a Norwegian fluent in English has assisted in ensuring the accuracy of the translations.

In terms of ethical considerations, the study proposal was guided by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. All participants have been informed about the voluntary nature of participation and gave their informed consent. Throughout the whole research process, it was important to preserve the participants' anonymity. The breaking milieu in Norway is transparent and it has been a necessity to implement anonymity strategies, e.g. the creation of the Location, and pseudonyms.

Before turning to the empirical material, a closer look at the Location and the cypher is needed.

The Location and the Cypher

The Location no signs and people learned about the place through the grapevine. Only a handful of people had an access card to the door, and most breakers were doomed to wait outside and knock on the windows to be let in. All this consolidated the Location as a backstage arena.

At first sight, the Location seemed disorganized, with breakers everywhere just doing as they pleased. On closer inspection, the different flooring structured the breakers. The wooden floor gathered breakers still working on their repertoire and some novices, who also would be on the extra padded floor. Established breakers would be at the vinyl-coated floor, which was ideal for performing entire breaking routines. It was in this area, that the cyphers would appear.

The cypher is an important part of breaking (Schloss, 2009), and appeared regularly during everyday practice. The cypher is a circle of people that surrounds breakers who trade turns to dance in the middle. It is in the cypher that the battle, i.e. the competitive part of breaking, would take place. A cypher is not always a battle, but, as emphasized by Johnson (2009), there is always a competition within the cypher, even if only with oneself. Hence, the

cypher is the breakers' front-stage region. Note that, during the fieldwork, female breakers were *never* observed in the cypher.

Within the Location, the cypher was closely connected with the breakers' backstage region. Goffman (1959) highlights that "backstage" and "front-stage" are relative terms, and any region can be transformed into one or the other. As the breakers stepped in and out of the cyphers, they gave each other backstage support - "props" (i.e. recognition through visual signs or verbal communication), and adjusted their impressions in accordance with what was regarded as socially acceptable. Consequently, by constantly adjusting their impression the breakers end up presenting a more or less common masculinity – that is, the breakers end up forming a cooperative performance team that presents a united front to outsiders (e.g. Goffman, 1959, p. 79).

Results and Discussion

Based on the data analysis, the results and discussions are presented in three sections. The first section is devoted to the breakers' masculinity constructions. This section aims to examine how the breakers perform masculinity. The second section addresses the breakers' body and the definition of breaking as art. The third section considers ethnicity, and how the breakers' masculinity constructions are formed by breaking's legacy.

Masculinities and Impression Management

Ten breakers are gathered at the Location this particular day. At first sight, it looks like Charlie is just hanging around. As the music escalates, Charlie transforms with it. In the middle of the room, he is singing the lyrics and has initiated movements to the music.

Charlie's appearance alters. He starts pacing like a predator hunting prey. He tears off his t-shirt, uncovering a muscular upper body with tattoos. Charlie's body language becomes aggressive; he is slouching, stares at the floor, his lips are pursed and his fists are clenched. Lowering his upper body he seems ready to attack. Suddenly, Charlie grabs his crotch and enters the cypher with a spectacular one-handed freeze [balance-intensive position]. He receives praise immediately from the rest. (Fieldnote, February 2012)

This observation of Charlie highlights the breakers' transformation as they go from just hanging around with friends (backstage) and enter the cypher (frontstage). Entering the cypher, Charlie uses several strategies to emit an exaggerated, almost threatening, masculinity. This is reflected in: (1) *Charlie's physical posture, gestures, behavior and walking style* (e.g. his facial expression and self-centered focus, with a lack of attention to other dancers, while he slouches and paces back and forth), (2) *Charlie's clothing style* (e.g. showing off his tattooed muscular body) and (3) *Charlie's dancing style* (e.g. grabbing his crotch as he enters the cypher in a superior way).

Furthermore, immediate cheering from others in the room underlines Charlie's position and status as a successful breaker. By attending international breaking events and by winning battles in Norway, Charlie has created his position. Breaking is a significant part of Charlie's life and he practices breaking for several hours every day. His hard work is starting to pay off, he has proved that he is a stayer and has positioned himself as a breaker who should be reckoned with. Consequently, his social position and status among other breakers has changed. This underlines breaking as a meritocracy, where performance is more important than individual characteristics including social background (Schloss, 2009).

Moreover, the observation of Charlie's impression management as he enters the cypher underlines that knowing the moves of breaking is not enough. "It is not what you do, but how you do it that counts! You can do simple tricks, if you make them cool" (Oakley). To be "cool" involves presenting an impression with attitude. A breaker with attitude was well regarded in the milieu. "In a battle, the winner is not necessarily the one with the best movement skills. It is the 'over-all' impression that counts" (Casey).

The core principle of attitude is to present yourself with self-assurance (Schloss, 2009), regardless of movement skills or age. This is learned from the first introduction to breaking, and has an enormous effect on the breakers' self-esteem: "(...) children transforms from shy and secluded to ... showing off confidence" (Hunter). This is supported by Blake, who emphasizes that the ability to present himself with self-assurance has influenced other aspects of his life:

I have become a man (...) I have become more confident, and lost the fear of showing off. I have learned never to give up. So yes, I have learned a lot that can be used in breaking, but also in other settings. That is pretty good. (Blake)

The breakers rehearsed presenting an exaggerated masculinity in the cypher. This masculinity construction gradually influenced their overall self-esteem, and infused other aspects of their lives. The finding corresponds with Schloss (2009), who argues that breaking involves learning strategies for positive self-presentation that are easily transmittable to other aspects of the breakers' lives.

Additionally, the cypher gave breakers alternative ways to express and present themselves:

In breaking ... you don't need to be angry, but ... it is a hard dance. I like to be in a good mood when I dance, but sometimes ... I think it is damn nice to just knock myself out and dance masculine ... BAM! [Casey punches one fist hard into the other

palm, pinches his eyes and draws the eyebrows together. Suddenly, his face goes dark and he looks ticked off] ... Be hard in the dance ... intensive, and ... ARGH! ... strong determination. In many ways the dance is an escape valve for my dark side—my dark emotions. Sometimes ... I think my B-boy character is my alter ego, where my dark side can let off some steam. (Casey)

The term “B-boy”, i.e. a person who does breaking, is an integral part of breaking’s subculture language. Casey’s statement is interesting, as he highlights the distinction experienced between the private sense of self and the breaker character presented front-stage (i.e. “alter-ego”). The statement is associated with Goffman (1959), and life as a staged drama. In the cypher, the breakers reveal or conceal information and for Casey, breaking is a place where he can express his emotions.

Other breakers supported the change in character:

I am a very quiet person, but when I break ... I let myself go.

I am totally different. (...) I am my alter ego when I break. I am a warrior.

I can challenge anybody. (Hunter)

In fact, many interviewees emphasized that breaking gave them an opportunity to practice a masculine style that was not regarded as acceptable in other social settings:

In breaking I can go insane! I cannot do that in school. (Blake)

Breaking involves being totally different from what is regarded as normal.

In a way, I have learned to be different. (Oakley)

These values can be traced back to the new leisure movement and its philosophy of being socially different (Humphreys, 2003). Furthermore, the breakers emphasised originality and authenticity. Hence, a wide spectrum of (masculinity) expressions should be expected in the cypher. However, performances lacking attitude were questioned in the milieu:

Lee puts on his music. It is slow and quiet. He starts to dance on the wooden floor. Soon the other breakers start to complain, arguing that they need more energy. Lee: “I just need a few more times.” The gatekeeper starts joking around; he turns down the music and says: “Lee, is there something you would like to tell us? Are you changing to the other side? That’s OK, you know. You can tell us.” The implication of homosexuality makes everybody laugh. Lee laughs too, claiming he just needs a couple more rounds. Finished, he puts on loud, heavy, and energetic music. The other breakers are satisfied. (Fieldnote, October 2011)

The ironic statement, which came from the gatekeeper, relates homosexuality to soft music and Lee’s non-aggressive movements. Earlier research stresses that, in contrast with the sporting hero (e.g. Connell, 2005), the man who dances risks being perceived as less masculine and assimilated with femininity (Craig, 2014). However, Lee has proved himself within the milieu and can incorporate other dance moves into his breaking routine (e.g. ballet spins) without losing his position.

Likewise, during the fieldwork, established breakers were observed playing with gendered perception of dance as a feminine activity and the stigmatization of male dancers as homosexual:

Casey finds a pink scarf ... He replaces his black bandana with the pink scarf. Head-banging into the cypher with a limp wrist. Everybody is laughing. (Fieldnote, 2011)

Dylan has got a new roommate, and jokes: “We do everything together.” Pouting and pushing his hip to the side while making hand gestures, Dylan proclaims that “You know, we are male dancers.” (Fieldnote, October 2011)

These observations are from the backstage area within the Location and are in sharp contrast to impressions in the cypher, overindulgent with attitude. However, Casey and Dylan accentuate the feeling of “freedom” and breaking can be interpreted as an opportunity to

explore masculinity constructions other than hegemonic masculinity within the Western gender order.

Yet, there existed some ambivalence within the subculture, as the breakers on one hand are “free” to explore masculinities but on the other are framed by breaking’s traditions. As highlighted by the gatekeeper, performances without attitude have always been questioned:

When breaking started, they battled in the street for respect. It was all about being macho [the gatekeeper alters to a position showing off strength and dominance]. If you couldn’t display a macho style, and became softer ... you were teased and called gay” (Fieldnote, November 2011).

The statement reflects breaking as unfeminine dance expressing “machismo” (Shane, 1988, p. 263), which not only has implications for female breakers in the milieu (Langnes & Fasting, 2017) but also for the breakers’ masculinity constructions.

Almost all participants described their dance as “hard, aggressive, tough, energetic, in control, explosive, strong” and the importance of “challenge”, “attack”, “defending your reputation”, “psyching out,” and “killing” the opponent. Schloss (2009) argues that breaking involves embodying an aggressive persona, i.e. an attitude. Consequently, the participants put up front an exaggerated impression of success and control, through toughness, violence, and feeling of danger. They performed exaggerated masculine movements and were physically intimidating. Humphreys (2003) emphasizes that activities connected with the new leisure movement accentuate original expression, which often required the performer to be offensive. The breakers highlighted:

The ideal of “love, peace, and unity” pictures breaking as very kind. But in reality it is hard core and tough. It is a lot of energy and attitude. In battles, you need attitude. You

need to be able to fight. (...) it feels like being attacked, only it is not you as a person that is being confronted – it is your dance style! (Oakley)

Battle is the ultimate! (...) you have to give it all. It is a war! (Charlie)

That the breakers emphasized macho qualities of breaking and framed the dance as a battle could be interpreted as avoiding being associated with femininity. Through references to toughness, aggression, and war, breakers constructed themselves as warriors, a masculinity pointed out as an example of hegemonic masculinity in the gender order in Western culture (e.g. Connell, 2005). Entering the cypher with an intimidating and exaggerated style, breakers made breaking appear even more masculine. Hence, framing breaking as a battle can be interpreted as important to avoid feminization. Furthermore, the male domination within breaking constantly maintained and (re)constructed traditional gender norms and stereotypes.

Artistic Expressions and the Body

Interestingly, almost all interviewees have in one point of their lives been involved in organized sport, such as soccer, and floorball, some even at a high level. However, most of interviewees left organized sport as “it started to be boring” (Charlie). The interviewees stressed that they were enthralled by breaking’s freedom. Dylan highlights: “I hated organized sport. That people should tell me ‘you need to do this and that.’ In breaking you are free and can do whatever you want’, and Harper stated: “the milieu in breaking is totally different from soccer.”

In contrast to competitive sport, breaking has not the same expectation of a specialized body technique and preferred type of performance. A breaker who “bites” [copies] another dancer’s moves risks not being accepted within the subculture. Hence, breakers strongly

disapproved of any comparison with sport, but rather defined breaking as an artistic dance founded on individuality, creativity and expressivity.

Breaking is an art form. Hence, breaking is so much more than just technique and what you do. Your performance should evoke goose bumps. A breaker could have a high technical level, but without the “x-factor” [attitude], breaking becomes a sport.

(Casey)

Note that Casey accentuates attitude to distinguish breaking from sport. Defining breaking as artistic dance, breakers risk being relegated to gayness, i.e. a masculinity at the bottom of the gender order (Connell, 2005). However, this study underline that hegemonic masculinity within breaking is strongly related to attitude. Hence, in the cypher the breakers would use their body to present the opponent with signs of strength and power. As mentioned before, entering the dance floor Charlie’s physical posture, gestures, behavior and walking style reflect his artistic expression and “doing” of masculinity. The movements would be dramatic and exaggerated, in order to intimidate the opponent, e.g. big arm movements, pretending to shoot guns, grabbing their crotch and ripping off their T-shirts.

Notably, the shirtless body became apparent just a few minutes into the fieldwork and was continuously visible throughout the whole period. The shirtless body was so mundane that most interviewees were surprised that they were asked about it. Their statements confirmed the fieldwork observations that it was mostly established breakers who danced shirtless. The established breaker would reveal a muscular body; most of them had a defined six-pack and tattoos related to their group or B-Boy name. The muscular, toned, naked body signified strength and power. This became apparent in the breakers social interaction:

Five old-school breakers have entered the Location. Their appearance immediately modifies the dynamic in the room. Within a short time the old-school breakers had taken over the cypher, with only the gatekeeper entering a few times. Dylan, who has

been outstanding in the cypher until now, has totally withdrawn. His appearance has shrunk. Leaving the cypher, the gatekeeper pats Dylan on the back. Interestingly, the gatekeeper situates himself barely outside the cypher. He takes off his T-shirt, showing off his muscular upper body. Sitting with his legs crossed, he leans his upper body forward, with his arms on his knees while expanding his “lat,” (i.e. latissimus). The gatekeeper looks like a tribal chief protecting his tribe (i.e. the cypher.) Dylan, who has been hesitating all this time, finally enters the cypher. The entrance is spectacular! He is fast and furious. Totally wild! The performance is really impressive.

Interestingly, none of the old-school breakers paid attention to Dylan and, leaving the cypher, Dylan only gets “props” from the gatekeeper. (Fieldnote, November 2011)

The old-school breakers are Dylan’s and gatekeeper’s competitors and are hardly ever at the Location. Their entry causes Dylan and gatekeeper to highlight their position at the Location, and they use their bodies to show domination (e.g. posing shirtless and going wild). The observation underlines how breakers use their bodies in the ongoing power arrangement in social interaction. Charlie emphasizes:

When other people [that seldom are at the Location] come, the training becomes more show-off. In a way we [who regularly are there] have the power, and can train whatever we want and relax. But those who venture into uncharted territory, they need to show-off.

During the fieldwork, the shirtless body was just mentioned one time. The incident happened when a young, talented kid ripped off his T-shirt as he entered the cypher. Hunter’s voice could be heard clearly over the loud music: “Ooh! Johoo! Shirtless body– Damn!” The comment made everybody laugh. Only 12 years old, the shirtless body as presented was flimsy. Even though the boy was very talented and had mastered relatively advanced breaking

moves, his body lacked the signs of strength and power that the surrounding adult breakers had.

This study indicate that hegemonic masculinity within breaking is strongly connected with bodily displays and performances. This is supported by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), who argue that, for young people, skilled bodily activity is the prime indicator of masculinity. Hence, it is the breaker who practices over time, develops a distinguishable dance style, understands music, is able to perform breaking moves and embodies attitude who gains respect and honor, thus embodying hegemonic masculinity. Fogarty (2012) emphasizes that breaking is centered on display of abilities in performance. Masculinity is then constituted by bodily performances. Following Connell (2005), such constitution of masculinity makes gender vulnerable when bodily performances cannot be sustained. Performances indicating weakness should be avoided, as they are equated with feminine performances (Courtenay, 2000).

As breakers continuously pushed themselves further, injuries were a natural part of breaking.

There is no breaker who goes without injuries over time (Oakley)

I have never stopped breaking because of injuries. I have always tried to keep the body going. (Hunter)

During the fieldwork, breakers were injured all the time, but this was hardly ever mentioned. Such group-based suppression of pain and injuries constitutes injuries as an expected part of breaking and constructs their masculinities (e.g. Messner 2002b). Accordingly, breakers would be at the Location to practice breaking, despite debilitating injuries:

There were two months that I couldn't break or ... I went to practice anyway. My leg was plastered, but I continued my practice. (Casey)

Some would even argue that injuries could be positive and a way to develop, as “injuries change the frames of breaking and force you to develop new ways to move” (Oakley). Injured breakers validated dominant norms of masculinity when they refused to take time off their breaking practice. Messner (2002a) argues that boys learn early to appear invulnerable behind displays of toughness. Courtenay (2000) argues that health-related beliefs and behaviors including denial of weakness or vulnerability demonstrate hegemonic masculinity. In other words, exposure to injuries and denial of pain demonstrate masculinity. The breakers considered injuries and pain as a normal part of breaking and, as a group, breakers suppressed empathy for pain and injuries. Hence, they had internalized cultural standards of enduring pain and confirmed dominant norms of masculinity. Sabo (2009) defines this as “the pain principle,” i.e. patriarchal cultural beliefs that pain is inevitable. Denial of pain has been gendered as masculine, while admission of pain is feminine.

Ethnicity – Does it Matter?

This study underline breaking's legacy as vibrant among the Norwegian breakers. Breaking's origin and the notion of what Dylan defines as the “hard life in the ghetto” echoed through to breakers in Norway. The legacy seemed to be especially accentuated among the old pioneers and breakers. This can be interpreted as a result of injuries and worn out bodies in an environment based on physicality, but also as a consequence of their associations of their own entry into breaking as connected with breaking's history. This was reflected in informal conversations through statements such as "we came straight from the street" and "we were rootless youth". Breaking as an alternative to "street life" is supported by earlier research (e.g. Banes, 2004; Vestel, 1999). However, young Charlie points out that even though the time has changed, "new breakers" still learn and adopt the history of breaking as a street culture characterized by ethnic diversity.

Most breakers regarded ethnic diversity as a natural part of breaking. During the fieldwork, ethnic diversity among the Norwegian breakers was conspicuous. Dylan highlights this peculiarity: “Hip hop unites all cultures. You cannot have any prejudices. Hip hop was created to unite.” This can be interpreted as a reflection of breakings legacy to unify across ethnic backgrounds.

Note, ethnicity was hardly ever mentioned. Johnson (2009, p.151) argues that breakers today claim universality founded on “race-lessness.” This can of course mean that breaking appeals to anyone regardless of culture, but, as emphasized by earlier research (e.g. Johnson, 2009; Schloss, 2009) and by the participants in this study, learning the moves is not enough. By embodying attitude, the breakers adopted breaking’s traditions in order to achieve success, and their complicity sustained the hegemonic form of masculinity within breaking bounded to a multi-cultural context. As such, ethnicity was both an explicit and implicit factor at the Location. The following episode underlines ethnicity as a concealing factor among breakers.

Only a few breakers are present at the Location. Arriving on his town bike, London looks around and addresses Dylan. “Hi Dylan. Look around ... if you exclude yourself and Rylee ... what is wrong?” Laughter. London’s comment is made with reference to ethnic appearance, as Dylan and Rylee are the only ones with a “non-Norwegian” appearance. Dylan and Rylee are just smiling. It is hard to say whether they find it OK. London goes on: “Do you speak Spanish?” Dylan denies this. Pointing at Dylan and Rylee. London says: “It must be easier for you two to communicate in Spanish!” Both Dylan and Rylee mumble: “I am adopted.” The breaker keeps on going: “But it must be easier! If you could speak Spanish.” Whereupon, Rylee responds: “We speak Norwegian!” (Fieldnote, November 2011).

As a white Norwegian, London defines Dylan and Rylee as non-Norwegians, “the other”, due to their skin color. However, Dylan and Rylee do not feel like “the other”. They are both

adopted and have lived their whole life in Norway. The episode highlight that, even though ethnicity was stated to be unimportant within the subculture, it was not “invisible”. Ethnic diversity was taken for granted and the notion of “being different” brought the breakers together. Hence, I argue that the legacy of being a subculture characterized by ethnic diversity had a unifying effect. As highlighted by Dylan, the subculture was more accepting and inclusive than general Norwegian society.

Dylan: What can I say? Even though I have lived all my life in Norway, I do not define myself as Norwegian. I don't think any person with another ethnic origin can truly define themselves as Norwegian. Or if they do define themselves as Norwegians, that they will have had a problem-free life. People with other ethnic origins will experience everyday racism, all the time. No Norwegian has to go through this experience every single day. This makes it hard to identify oneself as a Norwegian.

Author: So you experience people looking at you differently?

Dylan: Yes, all the time. However, you learn to live with it, but of course, you are always aware that everyday racism exists.

Author: Do you experience the same within breaking?

Dylan: No. Not there. But, as said before, breaking was constructed to unify.

Most of the breakers support Dylan, as they emphasize the strong feeling of belonging, affiliation and being part of a family within the subculture (Langnes & Fasting, 2014b). Brought up in Norway, Dylan speaks Norwegian fluently and has no other home country. However, he is continuously defined by white Norwegians as “the other”. The conversation may be understood in term of belonging and identity as a collaborative achievement, accomplished in face-to-face interaction with others (Goffman, 1959). Identity involves sameness and difference marked through available resources, which creates the distinction between “us” and “them”. The subculture of breaking seems to offer Dylan and other breakers

divergent from the Norwegian majority a sense of belonging and sameness across differences. Hence, they have an alternative identity and thus masculinity construction, bounded to a multi-cultural context.

Breaking's legacy had another interesting effect among the breakers. In fact, several breakers argued that the high living standard in Norway was a disadvantage for developing as a breaker. This is interesting, as there was almost a mystification of the deprived breaker getting out of poverty. The stories surrounding internationally known breakers and their sacrifices influenced the breakers. As a result, many breakers dreamed about making a living from their passion and planned to take a year off school or had jobs with low demands in order to focus all their energy on breaking.

When I finish high school next year, I will take a year off to just break. I want to become known in Europe, ...even in the world. It hangs together, since breakers in the world are so connected to each other. (Charlie)

If I did not break ... I think I would be more eager to get a job and education. Maybe, my perspective would have been different. The job I have now has very low demands.

It is just OK. I focus on breaking. (Remy)

These above statements have two sides. First, they underline that there can be a tendency for self-marginalization within the subculture. The breakers emphasized, "You have to sacrifice everything" in order to make it to an international level. Consequently, many dropped out of school, took "a year off," or settled for a part-time job, in order to follow their dream. This can result in self-marginalization, as it comes at the expense of education and other activities that are vital aspects of hegemonic masculinity in Western culture (e.g. Connell, 2005; Lorber, 1994).

Second, breakers hoped that “sacrifices” would make their dream come true and result in career opportunities. As Casey said: “Other people earn a lot of money and drive nice cars. The only thing we have is our body!” The dream of being the “one to make it,” despite few resources, can be traced back to breaking’s origin, when breaking symbolized hope for the future and a way out the ghetto for ethnic minorities (Banes 2004). Likewise, breaking can represent an opportunity for upward social mobility for breakers from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This is in line with research on ethnic minorities and sports, such as boxing (Coakley, 2009). However, as in sport, the number of paid career opportunities seems rather limited for breakers.

Concluding Remarks

The aim of this article was to investigate how male breakers construct their masculinities and how this is formed, performed and renegotiated through breaking. The results highlight that breaking, as with other popular cultural activities, is not inherently counter-hegemonic (e.g. Beal, 1995). In fact, breaking carries both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic meanings simultaneously, as traditional gender norms and stereotypes are reconstructed and challenged.

The breakers’ masculinity constructions are *framed* by breaking’s legacy, and it is the breaker who *performs* an exaggerated masculinity with attitude who represents hegemonic masculinity within breaking. This masculinity construction has flagrant references to the ghetto, i.e. gender intersects with class and ethnicity – a marginalized masculinity in the Western gender order (Connell, 2005). Hence, gained status within the subculture may not be converted to other arenas in society. By embodying attitude, breakers proved their masculinity and demanded power regardless of social background. Compared with hegemonic masculinity at a regional level, i.e. white, middle-class, successful man (Lorber, 1994), the breakers’ local hegemonic masculinity, which involved exaggerated performances of masculinity, can be

interpreted as protest masculinity (e.g. Connell, 2005). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) point out, challenges to hegemonic masculinity arise from protest masculinities. Hence, I argue that breakers' embodied claim to power signifies a challenge to hegemonic masculinity in general Norwegian society, making a dent in the gender order.

The breakers' physical postures, enlarged gestures, shirtless bodies, tattoos, and exaggerated masculine movements have little meaning on their own. Connell (2005, p.107) emphasizes, individual practice is of course required, but it is the group or what Goffman (1959) calls the performance team – that is the bearer of masculinity. The Norwegian breakers were fully aware that their masculinity constructions were not regarded in mainstream society, i.e. regional gender order (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The breakers' masculinity construction collides with perceptions of what men ought to do and what signifies power and status. Hence, the breakers' masculinity constructions can be seen as a collective means of resistance and part of what Connell (2005, p. 233) terms “re-embodiment for men, a search for different ways of using, feeling and showing male bodies.” This can be interpreted as degendering, an attempt to dismantle hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005; Risman, Lorber, & Sherwood, 2012). Involved in an activity not conforming to the prevailing definitions, breakers emphasized expressivity, individuality, unity, and personal growth, i.e. breaking is an embodiment of illegitimate difference. This can be interpreted as an expression of social dissatisfaction and protest against mainstream society's demands for conformity (e.g. Humphreys, 2003).

The participants in this study come from all over Oslo, had different ethnic backgrounds and represented different social classes. For breakers with an ethnic origin other than Norwegian, breaking seems to offer a safe space with temporary refuge from everyday racism. The celebration of individuality and “being different” brought the breakers together, creating a feeling of belonging. Furthermore, for marginalized groups with small resources,

breaking may represent an opportunity to attain social mobility. Wellard (2009, p. 142) highlights, “spaces, where the body is positioned at the foreground are particular resonant for the young and economically disadvantaged as the body provides a prime source of capital.”

White breakers embodying attitude would lack the oppressive baggage attached to black youth adopting the same image (Anderson, 1999). Their embodiment of attitude can be interpreted as an escape from feminization of white masculinity in the Western gender order – for example, metrosexuality involving attention to appearance (Casanova, Wetzel, & Speice, 2016), and a secession from whiteness and conformity (e.g. Brayton, 2005). However, the borrowed black persona can unwittingly replace middle-class whiteness with a white male “anti-hero” (e.g. Brayton, 2005, p. 369). To avoid this, breakers need to emphasize breaking’s traditions, attitude and thus the racial discourses of breaking. This is supported by Johnson (2009), who argues that breaking’s universal claims are not immune from ethnicity.

Even though the gender order is highly resistant to individual challenges, Lorber (2005, p. 17) emphasizes that gendered practices not only construct and maintain gendered social order, *but can also change it*. As the social order changes, gendered behaviour changes. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) highlight that locally constructed gender regimes are part of a wider gender order. This is reflected, as the breakers’ locally constructed masculinities are influenced by breaking’s legacy (global level) and signals a protest against regional gender order. Regardless of social background, breakers show pride, strength, and control, and seemed to function as a cross-cultural meeting point.

Focusing on breakers’ masculinity constructions in Norway, this study provides a modest contribution to an unexplored field. Nevertheless, more research is required to understand when and how social interaction can become less gendered. I recommend that future research focuses on how gender interplays with age and class. The results of this study indicate a change in the breakers’ masculinity constructions, as they grow older. Furthermore,

this study has used the breakers' main occupation as an indicator of class position. More in-depth class analysis from the parents' position might possibly illuminate the breakers' family class backgrounds.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1 – Approval from Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD)



MELDESKJEMA

Meldeskjema (versjon 1.1) for forsknings- og studentprosjekt som medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt (jf. personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter).

1. Prosjekttittel		
Tittel	Breakdans - det er meg! Bevegelsesferdigheters betydning i en flerkulturell samfunnskontekst.	
2. Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon		
Institusjon	Norges idrettshøgskole	Velg den institusjonen du er tilknyttet. Alle nivå må oppgis. Ved studentprosjekt er det studentens tilknytning som er avgjørende. Dersom din institusjon ikke finnes på listen, ta kontakt med personvernombudet.
Avdeling/Fakultet	Seksjon for kroppsøving og pedagogikk	
Institutt		
3. Daglig ansvarlig (forsker, veileder)		
Fornavn	Tonje	Før opp navn på den som har det daglige ansvaret for prosjektet. For studentprosjekt er daglig ansvarlig vanligvis veileder.
Etternavn	Fjogstad	
Akademisk grad	Høyere grad	Veileder og student må være tilknyttet samme institusjon. Dersom studenten har ekstern veileder, kan biveileder eller fagansvarlig stå som daglig ansvarlig.
Stilling	Stipendiat	
Arbeidssted	Norges Idrettshøgskole	Arbeidssted må være i tilknytning til behandlingsansvarlig institusjon, f.eks. underavdeling, institutt etc.
Adresse (arb.sted)	Sognsveien 220	
Postnr/sted (arb.sted)	0806 Oslo	NB! All korrespondanse går via e-post. Det er derfor viktig at du oppgir korrekt e-postadresse. Det bør være en adresse som du bruker aktivt over tid. Husk å gi beskjed dersom den endres.
Telefon/mobil (arb.sted)	23262258 / 48041004	
E-post	tonje.fjogstad@nih.no	
4. Student		
Studentprosjekt	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	
5. Formålet med prosjektet		
Prosjektets formål	Hvilken mening har bevegelsesferdigheter i breakdans for ungdom? Formålet med denne studien er å skape en dypere forståelse av ungdommenes erfaringer og opplevelser med å utøve breakdans i et flerkulturellt samfunn. Følgende problemstillinger ligger til grunn: 1) Hvilken mening gis bevegelsesferdigheter i breakdans for ungdom i dagens flerkulturelle samfunn og hvordan bruker ungdom disse bevegelsesferdighetene i sitt identitetsarbeid? 2) Hvordan kan bevegelsesferdigheter og identitetsarbeid i breakdans belyses ut i fra kjønnteoretiske perspektiver? 3) Hvordan kan "breakernes" bevegelseserfaringer gjøres relevante i skolekonteksten? På bakgrunn av ungdommenes erfaringer vil jeg utarbeide et undervisningsopplegg som kan anvendes i skolen.	Redegjør kort for prosjektets formål, problemstilling, forskningsspørsmål e.l. Maks 750 tegn.
6. Prosjektomfang		
Velg omfang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enkel institusjon ○ Nasjonal multisenterstudie ○ Internasjonal multisenterstudie 	Med multisenterstudier forstås her forskningsprosjekter som gjennomføres ved flere institusjoner samtidig, som har samme formål og hvor det utveksles/deles personopplysninger mellom
Oppgi øvrige institusjoner		

Hvordan foregår samarbeidet mellom institusjonene? Hvem har tilgang til personopplysninger og hvordan reguleres tilgangen?		deltakende institusjoner. Les mer om hva personopplysninger er
7. Utvalgsbeskrivelse		
Beskrivelse av utvalget	Hovedmålgruppen er ungdom i alderen 16-18 år ved [redacted] med mulighet til å intervju også de over 18år.	Med utvalg menes dem som deltar i undersøkelsen eller dem det innhentes opplysninger om. F. eks. et representativt utvalg av befolkningen, skoleelever med lese- og skrivevansker, pasienter, innsatte.
Rekruttering og trekking	Oppsøkende rekruttering, via tilstedeværelse på [redacted] Snøballmetoden, hvor personer som inngår i prosjektet rekrutterer nye deltakere fra sin bekjentskapskrets.	Beskriv hvordan utvalget trekkes/rekrutteres. Utvalget kan trekkes fra registre, f. eks. folkeregisteret, NAV, pasientregistre, eller rekrutteres gjennom f.eks. en bedrift, skole, idrettsmiljø, eget nettverk. Oppgi hvem som foretar trekkingen/rekrutteringen.
Førstegangskontakt	Ansvarlig for førstegangskontakt er Tonje Fjogstad. Tilstedeværelse på [redacted] klareres i forkant med respektive leder/styrer.	Oppgi hvem som oppretter førstegangskontakt med utvalget og beskriv hvordan den opprettes. Les mer om førstegangskontakt
Alder på utvalget	<input type="checkbox"/> Barn (0-15 år) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ungdom (16-17 år) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Voksne (over 18 år)	
Antall personer som inngår i utvalget	50 personer. Jeg vil utføre 30 kvalitative intervju, samt deltagende observasjon.	
Inkluderes det myndige personer med redusert eller manglende samtykkekompetanse?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Redegjør for hvorfor det er nødvendig å inkludere myndige personer med redusert eller manglende samtykkekompetanse.
Hvis ja, beskriv		Les mer om inklusjon av myndige personer med redusert eller manglende samtykkekompetanse
8. Metode for innsamling av personopplysninger		
Kryss av for hvilke datainnsamlingsmetoder og datakilder som skal benyttes	<input type="checkbox"/> Spørreskjema <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personlig intervju <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gruppeintervju <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Observasjon <input type="checkbox"/> Psykologiske/pedagogiske tester <input type="checkbox"/> Medisinske undersøkelser/tester <input type="checkbox"/> Journaldata <input type="checkbox"/> Registerdata <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annen innsamlingsmetode	Personopplysninger kan innhentes direkte fra den registrerte og/eller fra ulike journaler (NAV, PPT, sykehus, bofellesskap og lignende) eller eksisterende registre (f.eks. Statistisk sentralbyrå, Kreftregisteret).
Annen innsamlingsmetode, oppgi hvilken	Video vil bli benyttet som et supplement til observasjon.	
Kommentar til metode for innsamling av personopplysninger		
9. Datamaterialets innhold		
Gjør rede for hvilke opplysninger som samles inn	Feltarbeidet er planlagt å starte september 2011. Det vil bli utarbeidet en intervjuguide basert på erfaringene herifra og denne vil foreligge iløpet av høsten 2011 og vil da bli ettersendt. Intervjuene er planlagt gjennomført våren 2012.	Spørreskjema, intervjuguide/temaliste, m.m. legges ved meldeskjemaet til slutt.
Samles det inn direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger?	Ja <input checked="" type="radio"/> Nei <input type="radio"/>	Les mer om hva personopplysninger er

Hvis ja, hvilke?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Navn <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fødselsdato <input type="checkbox"/> 11-sifret fødselsnummer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adresse og/eller e-postadresse og/eller telefonnummer	NB! Selv om resultatene i den endelige publikasjonen vil være anonymisert, må det krysses av her dersom direkte eller indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger registreres i datamaterialet underveis i prosjektet.
Spesifiser hvilke	e-postadresse og telefonnummer	
Samles det inn indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger?	Ja • Nei ○	En person vil være indirekte identifiserbar dersom det er mulig å identifisere vedkommende gjennom bakgrunnsopplysninger som for eksempel bostedskommune eller arbeidsplass/skole kombinert med opplysninger som alder, kjønn, yrke, diagnose, etc.
Hvis ja, hvilke?	alder, kjønn,	
Samles det inn sensitive personopplysninger?	Ja • Nei ○	
Hvis ja, oppgi hvilke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rasemessig eller etnisk bakgrunn, eller politisk, filosofisk eller religiøs oppfatning <input type="checkbox"/> At en person har vært mistenkt, siktet, tiltalt eller dømt for en straffbar handling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helseforhold <input type="checkbox"/> Seksuelle forhold <input type="checkbox"/> Medlemskap i fagforeninger	
Samles det inn opplysninger om tredjeperson?	Ja ○ Nei •	Med opplysninger om tredjeperson menes opplysninger som kan spores tilbake til personer som ikke inngår i utvalget. Eksempler på tredjeperson er kollega, elev, klient, familiemedlem.
Hvis ja, hvem er tredjeperson og hvilke opplysninger registreres?		
Hvordan blir tredjeperson informert om behandlingen?	<input type="checkbox"/> Skriftlig informasjon <input type="checkbox"/> Muntlig informasjon <input type="checkbox"/> Blir ikke informert	
Blir ikke informert, redegjør hvorfor		
10. Informasjon og samtykke		
Oppgi hvordan informasjon til utvalget gis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Skriftlig informasjon <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Muntlig informasjon <input type="checkbox"/> Ingen informasjon	Som hovedregel skal det gis informasjon og innhentes samtykke fra den registrerte. Dersom informasjon gis skriftlig, legg ved kopi av informasjonsskriv.
Redegjør	<p>Det vil bli sendt ut en skriftlig henvendelse til ledelsen av [REDAKERT].</p> <p>Enkelt personer vil muntlig bli informert om følgende: Muntlig frespørsmål om deltakelse, hvor på det informeres om prosjektets formål/prosjektets tittel. Det vil bli gitt en muntlig redegjørelse for at opplysningene skal brukes til prosjektet for å skape en dypere forståelse av ungdoms erfaringer med aktiviteten, ivaretagelse av konfidensialitet; det vil bli opplyst om at direkte personidentifiserbare opplysninger vil bli anonymisert, samt at det kun er forskeren selv som har adgang til personidentifiserbare data. Videre vil det redegjøres for prosjektets varighet, og at personopplysningene etter prosjektets avslutning vil bli slettet.</p> <p>Det vil bli understreket at deltakelse er frivillig og at et samtykke kan trekkes tilbake så lenge studien pågår uten at man må oppgi grunn. Samt at forsker er underlagt taushetsplikt og at data behandles konfidensielt.</p> <p>Videre vil jeg påpeke at prosjektet er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.</p>	<p>Dersom det ikke skal gis informasjon, må dette redegjøres for.</p> <p>Les mer om hvilken informasjon som bør gis til utvalget</p>
Oppgi hvordan samtykke innhentes	<input type="checkbox"/> Skriftlig samtykke <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Muntlig samtykke <input type="checkbox"/> Innhentes ikke samtykke	Dersom det benyttes skriftlig samtykke, anbefales det at dette følger i teksten etter informasjonen. Dersom det ikke skal innhentes samtykke, må dette redegjøres for.
Innhentes ikke samtykke, redegjør		Les mer om krav til gyldig samtykke

11. Informasjonssikkerhet		
Direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger erstattes med et referansenummer som viser til en atskilt navneliste	Ja • Nei ○	Direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger bør ikke registreres sammen med det øvrige datamaterialet.
Hvordan lagres listen/koblingsnøkelen og hvem har tilgang til den?	Det vil bli laget en manuell liste, og det vil kun være forskeren selv som har adgang til listen.	
Direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger lagres sammen med det øvrige materialet	Ja ○ Nei •	
Hvorfor er det nødvendig med oppbevaring av direkte identifikasjonsopplysninger sammen med det øvrige datamaterialet?		
Lagres direkte personidentifiserbare opplysninger på andre måter?	Ja ○ Nei •	
Spesifiser		
Hvordan registreres og oppbevares datamaterialet?	<input type="checkbox"/> Fysisk isolert PC tilhørende virksomheten <input type="checkbox"/> PC i nettverkssystem tilhørende virksomheten <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PC i nettverkssystem tilknyttet Internett tilhørende virksomheten <input type="checkbox"/> Fysisk isolert privat PC <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Privat PC tilknyttet Internett <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Videoopptak/fotografi <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lydopptak <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manuelt/papir <input type="checkbox"/> Annen registreringsmetode	Sett flere kryss dersom opplysningene registreres på flere måter.
Annen registreringsmetode beskriv nærmere		
Behandles og/eller lagres lyd- og videoopptak og/eller fotografi på PC?	Ja • Nei ○	
Hvordan er datamaterialet beskyttet mot at uvedkommende får innsyn i opplysningene?	PC på eget kontor og i kontorfellesskap. Alle PC'er er beskyttet med brukernavn og passord.	Er f.eks. PC-tilgangen beskyttet med brukernavn og passord, og står PC-en i et låsbart rom?
Dersom det benyttes mobil lagringsenhet (bærbar PC, minnepenn, minnekort, cd, eksternt harddisk), oppgi hvilken type, og redegjør for hvorfor det benyttes mobil lagringsenhet	Eksternt harddisk vil benyttes for en back-up av datamaterialet. Denne hard-disken er lokalisert i forskerens private hjem, og alle opplysninger vil også her være anonymisert. Bærbar PC beskyttet med brukernavn og passord vil bli benyttet for å bearbeide materialet.	
Skal prosjektet ha medarbeidere som vil få tilgang til datamaterialet på lik linje med daglig ansvarlig/student?	Ja ○ Nei •	
Hvis ja, hvem?		
Innhentes eller overføres personopplysninger ved hjelp av e-post/Internett?	Ja ○ Nei •	
Hvis ja, oppgi hvilke opplysninger		
Vil personopplysninger bli utlevert til andre enn prosjektgruppen?	Ja ○ Nei •	
Hvis ja, til hvem?		
Skal opplysningene samles inn/bearbeides av en databehandler?	Ja ○ Nei •	Med databehandler menes en som samler inn og/eller behandler personopplysninger på vegne av

Hvis ja, hvilken?		den behandlingsansvarlige. Eksempler på ofte brukte databehandlere er Questback, Synovate MMI, Norfakta etc.
12. Vurdering/godkjenning fra andre instanser		
Søkes det dispensasjon fra taushetsplikten for å få tilgang til data?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	For å få tilgang til taushetsbelagte opplysninger fra f.eks. NAV, PPT, sykehus, må det søkes om dispensasjon fra taushetsplikten. Dispensasjon søkes vanligvis fra aktuelt departement. For dispensasjon fra taushetsplikten for helseopplysninger skal det for alle typer forskning søkes
Kommentar		Regional komité for medisinsk og helsefaglig forskningsetikk
Skal det innhentes godkjenning/tilatelse fra andre instanser?	Ja <input checked="" type="radio"/> Nei <input type="radio"/>	Det kan f. eks. være aktuelt å søke tilatelse fra registreier for tilgang til data, ledelsen for tilgang til forskning i firma, etc.
Hvis ja, hvilke?	Det hentes inn tilatelse fra ledelsen ved [REDACTED]	
13. Prosjektperiode		
Prosjektperiode	Prosjektstart:12/04/2010 Prosjektslutt:01/07/2014	Prosjektstart Tidspunkt for når førstegangskontakt opprettes og/eller datainsamlingen starter. Prosjektslutt Tidspunkt for når datamaterialet skal anonymiseres, slettes, eller arkiveres i påvente av oppfølgingsstudier. Dette sammenfaller gjerne med publisering og ferdigstilling av oppgave, avhandling eller rapport.
Hva skal skje med datamaterialet ved prosjektslutt?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Datamaterialet skal anonymiseres <input type="checkbox"/> Datamaterialet skal oppbevares med personidentifikasjon	Med anonymisering menes at det ikke lenger er mulig å føre opplysningene tilbake til enkeltpersoner i datamaterialet. Les mer om anonymisering
Hvordan skal datamaterialet anonymiseres?	Alt datamateriale vil bli anonymisert - detageer i prosjektet vil få fiktive navn og kjennetegn vil bli anonymisert, slik at at det ikke vil være mulig å identifisere enkeltpersoner i datamaterialet, verken direkte gjennom navn eller personnummer, indirekte gjennom bakgrunnsvariabler, eller gjennom navneliste/koplingsnøkkel eller krypteringsformel og kode. Lyd-og bildefiler er kun til forskerens eget bruk og vil ikke bli publisert. Dissefilene vil bli oppbevart og anonymisert på PC, for senere å slettes slettes/makuleres ved prosjektets slutt.	Hovedregel for lagring av data med personidentifikasjon er samtykke fra den registrerte. Årsaker til oppbevaring kan være konkrete oppfølgingsstudier, undervisningsformål eller annet. Datamaterialet kan lagres ved egen institusjon, offentlig arkiv eller annet. Les mer om arkivering
Hvorfor skal datamaterialet oppbevares med personidentifikasjon?		
Hvor skal datamaterialet oppbevares, og hvor lenge?		
14. Finansiering		
Hvordan finansieres prosjektet?	Prosjektet finansieres gjennom min stipendiat / Pd.D stilling ved Norges idrettshøgskole.	
15. Tilleggsopplysninger		
Tilleggsopplysninger		
16. Vedlegg		
Antall vedlegg	0	

Fra: Tone Slotsvik [tone.slotsvik@nsd.uib.no]

Sendt: 24. mai 2011 10:08

Til: Tonje Fjogstad

Emne: Prosjektnr: 26830. Breakdans - det er meg! Bevegelsesferdigheters betydning i en flerkulturell samfunnskontekst.

Hei,

Viser til epost fra deg 18. mai, og beklager sent svar.

Jeg ferdigbehandler prosjektet slik at det kan sendes ut denne uken, men forutsetter da at alle det innhentes personopplysninger om (inkludert alle som filmes) får skriftlig informasjon om prosjektet, og at de samtykker muntlig til å delta. (Dersom de er under 15 år må foresatte samtykke.) I orienteringsbrevet som henges opp bør det dermed stå at ingen blir filmet / registrert uten at de samtykker til det. I informasjonsskrivet til deltakere bør følgende informasjon være med:

- at det er mulig å trekke seg fra prosjektet innen en bestemt dato (f.eks. prosjektslutt)
- at det kun er du som har tilgang til datamaterialet
- at datamaterialet anonymiseres innen prosjektslutt 1. juli 2014. Dette innebærer at video- og lydopptak samt koblingsnøkkel slettes, og at bakgrunnsinformasjon som kan gjøre enkeltpersoner gjenkjenbare fjernes.

Jeg ber om at du ettersender endelige informasjonsskriv. Hvis du har kommentarer til prosjektet før det ferdigbehandles er det fint om du tar kontakt i løpet av et par dager.

--

Vennlig hilsen

Tone Njølstad Slotsvik
Fagkonsulent

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datajeneste AS
Personvernombud for forskning
Harald Hårfagres gate 29, 5007 BERGEN

Tlf. direkte: (+47) 55 58 24 10
Tlf. sentral: (+47) 55 58 21 17
Faks: (+47) 55 58 96 50
E-post: tone.slotsvik@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no/personvern



Tonje Fjogstad
Seksjon for kroppsøving og pedagogikk
Norges idrettshøgskole
Postboks 4042, Ullevål stadion
0806 OSLO

Vår dato: 08.05.2012

Vår ref: 26830 KS/LR

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ ENDRINGSMELDING

Vi viser til endringsmelding mottatt 20.3.2012 for prosjektet:

26830 *Breakdans - det er meg! Bevegelsesferdigheters betydning i en flerkulturell samfunnskontekst*

Personvernombudet har registrert at det vil bli gjennomført semi-strukturerte kvalitative intervju med ca. 20 personer i alderen 15-45 år.

Det er ombudets vurdering at unge over 15 år på selvstendig grunnlag kan avgjøre om de vil gi sitt samtykke til å delta i intervjuene. Det forutsettes at alle som forespørres om deltakelse i intervju får tilsvarende informasjon som i forbindelse med observasjonsdelen av prosjektet. Personvernombudet ber om å få tilsendt informasjonsskriv som skal benyttes i forbindelse med intervjuene til orientering.

Det vil i prosjektet bli registrert opplysninger om tredjeperson, i form av opplysninger om informantens foreldre og søsken. Opplysningene som registreres om tredjepersoner er av begrenset omfang, og vurderes som relevante for å oppfylle prosjektets formål. Personvernombudet vurderer personvernulempen for tredjeperson som liten. Personvernombudet finner at opplysningene om tredjeperson kan behandles med hjemmel i personopplysningsloven § 8 d) og at forsker kan fritas fra sin informasjonsplikt overfor tredjeperson med hjemmel i personopplysningsloven § 20 b).

Ta gjerne kontakt dersom noe er uklart.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Kontaktperson: Katrine Utaaker Segadal tlf: 55 58 35 42

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no
TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no
TROMSØ: NSD, HSL, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. martin-arne.andersen@uit.no

Re: VS: Prosjektnr: 26830. Breakdans - det er meg! Bevegelsesferdigheters betydning i en flerkulturell samfunnskontekst.

✖ SLETT ← SVAR ← SVAR ALLE → VIDERESEND ☰



Katrine Utaaker Segadal <katrine.segadal@nsd.uib.no> **Marker som ulest**
to 28.06.2012 19:21

Til: Tonje Fjogstad;

• Du svarte 28.06.2012 20:33.

Hei igjen,

Så lenge informantene har fått tilstrekkelig informasjon, er det ikke noe problem at den er gitt muntlig, så da er det i orden.

God sommer!

--

Vennlig hilsen/best regards

Katrine Utaaker Segadal
Seniorrådgiver

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
(Norwegian Social Science Data Services)
Personvernombud for forskning
Harald Hårfagres gate 29, 5007 BERGEN

Tlf. direkte: (+47) 55 58 35 42
Tlf. sentral: (+47) 55 58 81 80
Faks: (+47) 55 58 96 50
Email: katrine.segadal@nsd.uib.no
Internettadresse: www.nsd.uib.no/personvern

Den 14.06.2012 15:48 skrev Tonje Fjogstad:

> Hei Katrine

>

> Jeg har vært i miljøet i 6-7 måneder før jeg har spurt de om de er villige til å stille på intervju. Noen har valgt å takke nei, mens noen har stilt opp. Jeg har fortalt om hva intervjuet skal handle om, og vi har møttes på "nøytral" grunn uten noen andre tilstede. Jeg har også passet på å være ytterst diskret i fht å avtale intervjuene.

>

> Så jeg har allerede gjennomført intervjuer, og mener å ha overholdt de etiske retningslinjene.

> Når jeg møter de informerer jeg om at det vil bli brukt lydopptak, og at de har mulighet til å reservere seg mot dette / kan be om at den skal slås av / Jeg informerer de også om at de kan trekke seg når som helst, og at de ikke trenger å svare på spørsmål om de ikke skulle ønske det.

> Jeg har understreket at de kan kontakte meg når som helst om de skulle ha spørsmål etter intervjuet og også informert de om at de har mulighet til å trekke seg.

> De har fått min fulle kontakt informasjon med seg når de går.

>

>

> Med vennlig hilsen

>

> Tonje Fjogstad

> Stipendiat

> Norges idrettshøgskole

> Seksjon for kroppsvøving og pedagogikk

>

> Mail: tonje.fjogstad@nih.no

> Tlf. : 2326 2258 / 48 04 1004

> -----Opprinnelig melding-----
> Fra: Katrine Utaaker Segadal [<mailto:katrine.segadal@nsd.uib.no>]
> Sendt: 6. juni 2012 15:42
> Til: Tonje Fjogstad
> Emne: Re: VS: Prosjektnr: 26830. Breakdans - det er meg! Bevegelsesferdigheters betydning i en flerkulturell samfunnskontekst.
>
> Hei,
>
> Jeg har nå sett på infoskrivet du sendte meg, og det ser helt likt ut som det som skal benyttes i forbindelse med observasjon. Skal du ikke utarbeide et eget skriv som skal benyttes i forbindelse med de intervjuene som skal gjøres nå? Tenker det kan være greit med et eget skriv til ungdommene som skal forespørres om å delta i intervju med praktisk informasjon om intervjuet, hva det skal handle om, samt informasjon om at det vil benyttes lydopptak. Utover det kan informasjonen i skrevet være den samme som i det skrevet du benyttet i observasjonsdelen av prosjektet.
>
> Ber om å få en kopi av dette skrevet.
>
> Ta gjerne kontakt på telefon dersom du har spørsmål i forhold til dette.
>
> --
> Vennlig hilsen/best regards
>
> Katrine Utaaker Segadal
> Seniorrådgiver
>
> Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS (Norwegian Social Science Data Services)
> Personvernombud for forskning Harald Hårfagres gate 29, 5007 BERGEN
>
> Tlf. direkte: (+47) 55 58 35 42
> Tlf. sentral: (+47) 55 58 81 80
> Faks: (+47) 55 58 96 50
> Email: katrine.segadal@nsd.uib.no
> Internettadresse: www.nsd.uib.no/personvern
>
>

APPENDIX 2 – Information letters

[Redacted]

Deres ref.

[Redacted]

Vår avd.

Seksjon for
kroppkroppssøving og
pedagogikk

Vår ref.

Tonje Fjogstad

Vår dato:

14. april 2011

Angående forskningsprosjekt

Jeg er stipendiat ved Norges idrettshøgskole og skal skrive en doktorgradsoppgave om ungdom, breakdans og identitet. Hensikten med prosjektet er å få mer kunnskap om ungdommenes erfaringer ved å utøve breakdans i en flerkulturell samfunnskontekst.

I forbindelse med prosjektet er det ønskelig å komme i kontakt med ungdom som utøver breakdans i alderen 15-20 år. Det foreligger pr. dagsdato lite informasjon om denne gruppen ungdom og hva breakdans betyr for dem. Videre er det viktig å synliggjøre ungdommenes egne erfaringer med å utøve breakdans for å kunne tilrettelegge for mer ungdommelige aktiviteter, og bidra til en ny-tenkning av kroppssøvingfaget.

For å gjennomføre prosjektet håper jeg å kunne være tilstede på Deres breakdans trening i perioden september-desember 2011, for å observere ungdom i aktivitet, snakke med dem og filme dem av og til. Jeg vil understreke at det er helt frivillig å delta i forskningsprosjektet, og at alt materiale som publiseres i forbindelse med prosjektet vil bli anonymisert, samt være i henhold til deltakernes tillatelse og samtykke. Det er forøvrig sendt søknad til Personvernombudet for forskning og prosjektet vil bli gjennomført i tråd med deres retningslinjer.

Jeg håper Dere ser positivt på prosjektet og er behjelpelige i forhold til å komme i kontakt med ungdommene som utøver breakdans ved [Redacted].

Jeg håper at vi kan ta et møte over påske. Hensikten med møtet er å fortelle mer om prosjektet og å avklare om det vil være praktisk mulig å gjennomføre prosjektet ved [Redacted].

Med vennlig hilsen

(sign.)
Tonje Fjogstad
Stipendiat / Pd.D
Telefon: 23262258
Mobil: 48041004
E-mail: tonje.fjogstad@nih.no

(sign.)
Kari Fasting
Professor / veileder

Brevet er elektronisk signert.

Deres ref.
[REDACTED]Vår avd.
Seksjon for
kroppkroppsøving og
pedagogikkVår ref.
Tonje FjogstadVår dato:
23.03.2011

Angående forskningsprosjekt

Jeg henviser til hyggelig telefonsamtale med [REDACTED] og oversender herved informasjon om mitt prosjekt.

Jeg er stipendiat ved Norges idrettshøgskole og skal skrive en doktorgradsoppgave om ungdom, breakdans og identitet. Hensikten med prosjektet er å få mer kunnskap om ungdommenes erfaringer ved å utøve breakdans i en flerkulturell samfunnskontekst.

I forbindelse med prosjektet er det ønskelig å komme i kontakt med ungdom som utøver breakdans i alderen 15-20 år. Det foreligger pr. dagsdato lite informasjon om denne gruppen ungdom og hva breakdans betyr for dem. Videre er det viktig å synliggjøre ungdommenes egne erfaringer med å utøve breakdans for å kunne tilrettelegge for mer ungdommelige aktiviteter, og bidra til en ny-tenkning av kroppsøvingfaget.

For å gjennomføre prosjektet håper jeg å kunne være tilstede på Deres [REDACTED] i perioden september-desember 2011, for å observere ungdom i aktivitet, snakke med dem og filme dem av og til. Jeg vil understreke at det er helt frivillig å delta i forskningsprosjektet, og at alt materiale som publiseres i forbindelse med prosjektet vil bli anonymisert, samt være i henhold til deltakernes tillatelse og samtykke. Det er forøvrig sendt søknad til Personvernombudet for forskning og prosjektet vil bli gjennomført i tråd med deres retningslinjer.

Jeg håper Dere ser positivt på prosjektet og er behjelpelige i forhold til å komme i kontakt med ungdommene som utøver breakdans [REDACTED]

Jeg håper at vi kan ta et møte i løpet av april, og tar kontakt per telefon for å avtale dette. Hensikten med møtet er å fortelle mer om prosjektet og å avklare om det vil være praktisk mulig for meg å gjennomføre prosjektet [REDACTED]

Med vennlig hilsen

Tonje Fjogstad
Stipendiat / Pd.D
Telefon: 23262258
Mobil: 48041004
E-mail: tonje.fjogstad@nih.no

Kari Fasting
Professor / veileder

Til orientering

Oslo, august 2011

Vedrørende forskningsprosjekt

I perioden august til desember 2011 vil Tonje Fjogstad være tilstede [REDACTED]. Tonje er stipendiat ved Norges idrettshøgskole og skal skrive en doktorgradsoppgave om ungdom, breaking og identitet. Prosjektet gjennomføres under veiledning av Professor Kari Fasting.

Hensikten med prosjektet er å få mer kunnskap om ungdom som holder på med breaking og det er ønskelig å komme i kontakt med flere ulike "breakere". Det er viktig å synliggjøre ungdommenes egne erfaringer med å utøve breaking for å kunne tilrettelegge for mer ungdommelige aktiviteter, og bidra til en ny-tenkning av kroppsvingsfaget.

For å kunne gi et riktig bilde av breake-miljøet er det viktig at Tonje får snakke med så mange som mulig.

Tonje vil være tilstede på [REDACTED] i perioden august til desember 2011 for å observere ungdom som "breaker", snakke med dem og filme.

Det understrekes at det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet, og at ingen vil bli filmet eller registrert uten at de selv samtykker til dette. Videre vil alt materiale som publiseres i forbindelse med prosjektet bli anonymisert, og være i henhold til deltakernes tillatelse og samtykke.

Prosjektet er godkjent av Personvernombudet for forskning og vil bli gjennomført i tråd med deres retningslinjer.

Om du har noen spørsmål angående dette, vennligst ta kontakt med

Tonje Fjogstad – tlf. 48 04 1004, tonje.fjogstad@nih.no

eller

Professor Kari Fasting – kari.fasting@nih.no

Med vennlig hilsen

Tonje Fjogstad
Stipendiat / Ph.D

Mobil: 48041004
E-mail: tonje.fjogstad@nih.no

APPENDIX 3 – Interview Guide

Briefing/introduksjon – punktvis huskeliste:

Takk for at du tar deg tid til dette intervjuet.

- Jeg er stipendiat ved NIH.
- Jeg har et prosjekt om breaking
- Hensikten med prosjektet er å finne ut hva breaking betyr for ungdom, og hvordan ungdom bruker breaking i sitt identitetsarbeid.
- Både mannlige og kvinnelige breakere er interessante i dette prosjektet. I det intervjuet her vil jeg spørre deg om hvordan du opplever breaking, og hvilke oppfatninger og synspunkter du har på breaking.
- Intervjuene tas opp på bånd.
- **Garanterer konfidensialitet/anonymitet:** Bare jeg som hører på båndet. Båndet oppbevares innelåst og blir ødelagt når prosjektet er avsluttet.
- Jeg har **taushetsplikt** og er ansvarlig for informasjonen du gir meg i dette intervjuet. Ingen kan koble dine utsagn til ditt navn. Jeg har ikke fortalt noen andre at du blir intervjuet, de andre vet det bare hvis du selv forteller det.
- Det er ingen riktige eller gale svar på spørsmålene eller temaene jeg tar opp.
- Husk det er dine erfaringer og opplevelser som er viktige, ikke hvordan du tror andre opplever breaking.
- **Du kan la være å svare på spørsmål, vi kan skru av båndet hvis du vil og du kan trekke deg fra intervjuet når du vil.**
- Jeg noterer litt underveis.
- Har du noen spørsmål før vi begynner?

INNLEDNING: "Breake" bakgrunn

1. **Når** startet du med breaking? Alder
2. Kan du huske **hvorfor** du valgte å starte med breaking?
3. **Hvor** trener du breaking? **Hvorfor trener du der?** Skjer det at du også trener ute?
4. Hva slags forhold har du til de andre på breake treningene? Omgås deres andre steder – når dere ikke danser?
5. Vil du si at alle kan lære seg å breake? **hva kreves** for å bli en god breaker? hva **kjennetegner en god breaker** etter din mening?
6. **Hvordan** går du frem for å lære deg nye moves?
7. Jeg ser at du av og til filmer deg selv på trening. Hvorfor det? (og hvorfor velger du å filme selv og ikke be andre om hjelp?)
8. **Hva handler breaking om for deg?**

BETYDNING: "Breake" personlig betydning

9. **Hva betyr breaking for deg?**
10. **Om du tenker tilbake på de årene som du har holdt på med breaking – har betydningen endret seg? Hvordan? Hvorfor?**
11. Hva er det med breaking som du liker?
12. Er det viktig for deg å være god? Hvorfor / hvorfor ikke?
13. Tror du at du noen gang kommer til å slutte å breake?
Har du vært så skadet at du ikke kunne breake? Hvordan opplevde du det?
14. Hva er det som inspirerer deg til å fortsette å breake?
15. Har breaking påvirket andre områder av livet ditt?
16. Hvordan vil du karakterisere deg selv som breaker? hva er det som gjør deg spesiell som breaker?
17. Hvordan gjenspeiler breakingen deg som person? i hvilken grad uttrykker du deg som person når du breaker?
18. Er det slik at du bevist jobber med hva du ønsker å uttrykke gjennom breaking? Hvorfor? Hvordan?

IDENTITET: "Breake" subkulturell identitet

19. **Det gjøres ofte, slik jeg forstår det en forskjell på "breakdance" og "breaking". Er det noen forskjell slik du ser det? Forklar**
20. Jeg har nesten inntrykk av at breaking ikke er noe en gjør men noe en er. At man er bboy / bgirl. Hva tenker du om det?
21. Har du et b-boy / b-girl navn? Hva er det? Hvordan fikk du det?
22. Er breakingens historie og opprinnelse viktig for deg? Hvorfor?
Breaking er jo linket til hiphop-kulturen. Har det noen betydning for deg?
Utøver du evt. noen andre elementer i hiphop-kulturen?
23. Har du noen spesiell klesstil fordi du er breaker? hva karakteriserer denne stilen og hvorfor har du denne?
24. Har du noen tatoveringer? Hva og hvorfor har du de?
25. Hiphop kulturen og breaking har jo de siste årene blitt mer "mainstream"/ for alle. Hva synes du om det? Slik du ser det, er breaking for alle? Hvorfor / hvorfor ikke?

FELLESKAP: "Breake" fellesskap – generelt

26. Det er jo et slags hilse-rituale. Hva betyr dette? Er det slik at du hilser på alle? Hvorfor / hvorfor ikke?
27. Er alle velkommen på treningene?
28. Ser at det ofte er besøk på treningene fra breakere fra andre land. **Er det slik at det finnes et globalt breake fellesskap?** Kan du f.eks. dra til et annet land og bare troppe opp der hvor breakerne trener? Kan hvem som helst gjøre dette?
Hvor er det du reiser / drømmer om å reise? Hvorfor hit? Hva er så spesielt med det stedet?
29. Hvordan forholder du deg til at det kommer ny-begynnere på treningene?
30. Skjer det noen form for opplæring?
Hvis en ønsker å bli god. Hva er den beste måten å lære seg breaking på slik du ser det ?
(Har hørt at man ikke burde gå for lenge på danseskole.)

31. Selv har jeg hørt fra flere: jeg kan vise deg noen steg, men du må selv lære deg å breake.
Hva ligger egentlig i det?
Jeg har hørt flere som sier at "man blir fortere god her". Hvorfor det?
32. Når du trener – har du noen fast plass i rommet? er det noen spesielle du trener med?
33. Hvordan forholder du deg til de andre på treningene? Finner du eget sted? Gir feedback?
Hjelper dere hverandre?
34. Jeg ser at det danner seg ulike "cyphern"/danseringer. Kan alle delta i disse?
35. Hvem er det som velger/styrer musikken på treningene?

Hierarki?

36. Er alt lov i breaking?
37. Hva er det som gir "cred"? Hvem / hva er det som bestemmer hva som er lov? Jeg har f.eks. sett at noen gjør balettpiruetter – er det "lov"?
38. Jeg har inntrykk av at det er litt ulike oppfatninger rundt å lære seg foundation – hva tenker du om det? Er det viktig å lære seg foundation? Hvorfor / hvorfor ikke? Hva er foundation slik du ser det?
39. Noen har jo en mer eksperimentell stil enn andre, og jeg har hørt at folk ikke går videre i battles pga det. Hvem er det som egentlig bestemmer hva som er "riktig" breaking?
40. **Er det et hierarki innenfor breake miljøet?** Hvordan er dette slik du ser det?
41. Om du tenker på breake-miljøet i Norge. Hvordan vil du beskrive dette?
Hvem er det som holder på med breaking?
Er et felleskap? Eller er det "kniving" mellom ulike crew?
42. Hva kreves for å bli en av de som på toppen / bestemmer?
43. Det at du breaker – har det gitt deg noen form for status? Innad eller utad?
44. "Battler" (konkurrerer) du? Hvorfor / hvorfor ikke?
45. Battler du mye/ofte? Hvor battler du? (norge, utlandet)
46. Hvordan forbereder du deg til battles? har du noen spesiell strategi når du skal battle?
47. Hvordan er det å entre en battle og absolutt alle ser på nettopp deg?
48. Hvem er det som dømmer battles? Hvem er det som bestemmer hvem som skal dømme på battles? Har du selv vært dommer noen gang? Hvorfor deg?
49. Jeg har sett at også barn er med på battles, og battler mot de store gutta. Hva om du battler mot en som er yngre enn deg? Legger det noen føringer for hvordan du battler?
50. Om jeg som ny-begynner ønsker å battle – er det noen som helst mulighet for at jeg kan vinne over en som er mer erfaren? Hvordan?
51. På de battles jeg har vært på, har det alltid blitt dannet en egen "cyphern" bak i rommet med breakere. Er det slik at dere er venner alle sammen selvom dere battler mot hverandre?

"Breake" fellesskap – crew

52. Er du medlem av crew? Hvorfor akkurat dette crewet? Hva betyr det for deg?
53. Hvordan blir en medlem av crewet? Er det noen spesielle kriterier? Hvem er det som bestemmer det?
54. Jeg har skjönt at det tidligere iallefall var en del gnisninger mellom ulike crew. Hvordan er det nå?
55. Hvordan forholder du deg til personer fra andre crew på treningene?

"Breake" fellesskap – etnisitet

56. Hiphop-kulturen inkludert breaking knyttes ofte til "fargede". Hva tenker du om det?
spiller etnisitet noen rolle i breaking?

"Breaking" & kjønn – gutter

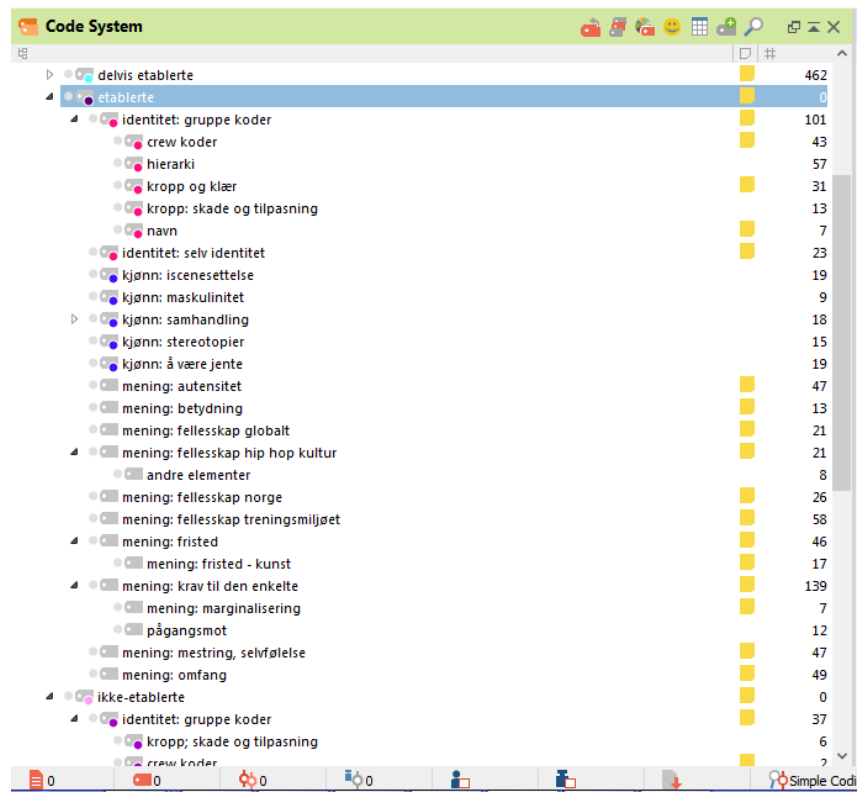
57. Det er veldig få jenter som jeg har møtt på treningene. Hvorfor er det så få jenter tror du?
58. Er det like akseptabelt for både jenter og gutter å breake?
59. Breaking defineres ofte som en maskulin dans. Er du enig i det? Hvorfor / hvorfor ikke?
Hva er det som gjør breaking til en maskulin dans slik du ser det?
60. Føler du at du kan være deg selv når du breaker?
(Må du oppføre deg på en spesielle måte når du breaker?)
61. Har du noen gang battlet mot en jente? Gjør du ting annerledes da enn om du møter en gutt?
62. Ser at noen trener i bar overkropp – hva tenker du om det?

"Breaking" & kjønn – jenter

63. Det er veldig få jenter som jeg har møtt på treningene. Hvorfor er det så få jenter tror du?
64. Hvordan er det å være jente i et mannsdominert miljø?
65. Er det like akseptabelt for både jenter og gutter å breake?
66. Føler du at det spiller noen rolle at du er jente? Blir du like inkludert?
67. Har du støtt på noen problemer / konfliktsituasjoner / seksuelle tilnærmelser fordi du er jente?
68. Legger det at du er jente noen spesielle føringer i fht hvordan du kler deg?
69. Breaking defineres ofte som en maskulin dans. Er du enig i det? Hvorfor / hvorfor ikke?
Hva er det som gjør breaking til en maskulin dans slik du ser det?
70. Ser at noen trener i bar overkropp – hva tenker du om det?
- 71.

APPENDIX 4 – Codes in MAXQDA

The figure illustrates how hierarchies of codes were progressively build up in MAXQDA



Code System
Code System
bakgrunnsvariabler
foreldre
foreldre: bosted
når til Norge
foreldre: aktiviteter
foreldre: født
søsken
søsken: født
søsken: bosted
søsken: antall
søsken: aktiviteter
født: land
født: årstall
sivilstand og bosituasjon
språk
yrke/skole
andre aktiviteter
hvorfor sluttet
metode
felt
identitet: gruppe koder
kropp og klær
navn
crew koder
hierarki
kropp: skade og tilpasning
identitet: selv identitet
kjønn: iscenesettelse
kjønn: maskulinitet
kjønn: samhandling
nedvurdering av jenter

kjønn: stereotoper
kjønn: å være jente
mening: autensitet
mening: betydning
mening: fellesskap globalt
mening: fellesskap hip hop kultur
andre elementer
mening: fellesskap norge
mening: fellesskap treningsmiljøet
mening: fristed
mening: fristed - kunst
mening: krav til den enkelte
mening: marginalisering
pågangsmot
mening: mestring, selvfølelse
mening: omfang
delvis etablerte
identitet: gruppe koder
crew koder
hierarki
kropp og klær
kropp: skade og tilpasning
navn
identitet: selv identitet
kjønn: iscenesettelse
kjønn: maskulinitet
kjønn: samhandling
nedvurdering av jenter
kjønn: stereotoper
kjønn: å være jente
mening: autensitet
mening: betydning
mening: fellesskap globalt

mening: fellesskap hip hop kultur
andre elementer
mening: fellesskap norge
mening: fellesskap treningsmiljøet
mening: fristed
mening: fristed - kunst
mening: krav til den enkelte
marginalisering
pågangsmot
mening: mestring, selvfølelse
mening: omfang
etablerte
identitet: gruppe koder
crew koder
hierarki
kropp og klær
kropp: skade og tilpasning
navn
identitet: selv identitet
kjønn: iscenesettelse
kjønn: maskulinitet
kjønn: samhandling
nedvurdering av jenter
kjønn: stereotoper
kjønn: å være jente
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andre elementer
mening: fellesskap norge
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mening: fristed

mening: fristed - kunst
mening: krav til den enkelte
mening: marginalisering
pågangsmot
mening: mestring, selvfølelse
mening: omfang
ikke-etablerte
identitet: gruppe koder
kropp; skade og tilpasning
crew koder
hierarki
kropp og klær
navn
identitet: selv identitet
kjønn: iscenesettelse
kjønn: maskulinitet
kjønn: samhandling
nedvurdering av jenter
kjønn: stereotoper
kjønn: å være jente
mening: autenistet
mening: betydning
mening: fellesskap globalt
mening: fellesskap hip hop kultur
andre elementer
mening: fellesskap norge
mening: fellesskap treningsmiljøet
mening: fristed
mening: fristed - kunst
mening: krav til den enkelte
pågangsmot
mening: mestring, selvfølelse
mening: omfang

