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CYCLING AS A POLITICAL ACT: THE FRAMING AND CULTURE THAT CREATE A NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

CYCLING AS A POLITICAL ACT:
THE FRAMING AND CULTURE THAT CREATE A NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT

This study analyzes the bicycling community of Lexington, Kentucky. Interviews and participant observation were conducted in order to better understand the structure of Lexington's cycling community, revealing three prominent groups/types of cyclists: (1) road cyclists, (2) underground/urban cyclists, and (3) commuters. The characteristics of each group are discussed, with particular attention devoted to the underground/urban cyclists, due to their politically-minded culture. Building from prior social movement literature, the unique framing processes of the underground/urban cycling group are analyzed in order to explore the group as a new social movement. Finally, the potential for a broader cycling movement based upon interests common to all cyclists is discussed.

KEYWORDS: Bicycling, Cultural Sociology, Ethnography, Framing, New Social Movement Theory

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THESIS

Mitchael Lee Schwartz

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2010

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts in the
College of Communications and Information Studies
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Thomas R. Lindlof, Professor of Telecommunications

Lexington, Kentucky

2010

To my father, for his continuing perseverance

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> Cycling is also a bit of a marvel. It is the most efficient form of transportation developed by any species on this planet, ever. It's more efficient in terms of calories burned per distance traveled than a dolphin swimming, an eagle flying; it's unbelievably more efficient than an automobile or a plane. … And so it's a bit of a marvel of physics and ingenuity that—just how far you can travel for how little energy invested.
>
> - Shane Tedder

Figure 1.1. Bike Lexington Logo.

It is May 31, 2010—Memorial Day. But in Lexington, Kentucky it is also the culmination of this year's month-long series of events known as Bike Lexington. Bike Lexington is a celebration of cycling that occurs every May in unison with National Bike Month. Events on the calendar include education clinics at local bike shop and primary sponsor Pedal Power, covering topics like fixing flat tires, chain repair, shifters and derailleurs, and other basic maintenance; progressive dinners where each course is served at a different location and participants ride their bikes from one stop to the next; introductory commuting courses lead by a League of American Bicyclists Certified Instructor that teach new cyclists proper riding habits; the Bluegrass Cycling Club's

annual 100-mile group ride, the Horsey Hundred; and, today, a 10-mile family fun ride along car-free downtown streets.

By 11 a.m., Lexington's Courthouse Plaza is crawling with hundreds of cyclists. The weather is perfect for a bike ride: clear skies, sunny, the temperature around 80°. The Bike Lexington staff brought 1,000 registration sheets; they have used them all. The actual number of participants for the family fun ride is closer to 2,000. [*Lexington Herald-Leader* columnist Tom Eblen (2010) estimated 2,500 people attended the event.] Riders are played off by Lexington's March Madness Marching Band—a motley crew of local part-time musicians and hula-hoopers. For the first few blocks, the riders are also joined by Presto the People-Powered Piano Bike, a brightly colored, piano-towing, dual-bicycle-driven float built by local cyclists Shane Tedder, Brad Flowers, and Alex Meade, among others. Weighing several hundred pounds, though, the float would have been "nearly impossible" to pedal up the steep hill on South Upper Street, between West Vine and West High Streets. Brad jokes, "We would've had to have all the riders get off their bikes and help us push it up the hill." Instead, they pull off to the side of the route, and cyclists are treated to a bit of piano-playing as they pass. Shane (left) and Brad (right) are shown below, leading the start of the ride.

Figure 1.2. Bike Lexington Family Fun Ride. Photograph by Tom Eblen; appears courtesy of Tom Eblen.

Compared to the music provided at the outset by the March Madness Marching Band and Presto, the remainder of the ride is relatively uneventful. Uneventful, though, is quite an accomplishment for such a ride. The route follows 10 miles of downtown and campus streets which the police have blocked to motorized traffic for the event. And despite the wide range of participants, the ride goes very smoothly, with no serious wrecks or accidents. Experienced cyclists on thousand-dollar bicycles, wearing brightly colored spandex riding attire; hipster-esque cyclists on fixed-gear bicycles with their right pant-legs rolled up; couples riding tandem bicycles; parents towing small children in trailers; kids of all ages riding SpongeBob SquarePants and Disney-themed bikes—all riding alongside one another, enjoying the company, the great weather, and the leisurely ride.

The Bike Lexington Memorial Day family fun ride is indicative of the growing popularity of cycling in Lexington. Although registration for the event is not required—

so actual numbers are not available—Bike Lexington coordinators estimate that the number of participants has grown by hundreds in each of the past few years, from several hundred participants three and four years ago to the 2,500 participants at this year's ride. This is one of many indicators that Lexington, Kentucky is one of the American metropolitan areas currently involved in the recent resurgence of the bicycle. In fact, the League of American Bicyclists, a nationwide advocacy organization that promotes cycling, recognized Lexington-Fayette County as a "Bicycle Friendly Community" in 2007. At the time, Lexington-Fayette was one of 73 American cities acknowledged by the League for their efforts in promoting and facilitating cycling (League of American Bicyclists, 2010). As of May 2010, the League now recognizes 140 cities as Bicycle Friendly Communities (League of American Bicyclists, 2010).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey, approximately 0.4% of Lexington-Fayette Urban County citizens commute via bicycle to work (League of American Bicyclists & Alliance for Biking & Walking, 2009). While this is well-short of Portland, Oregon's nation-leading bicycle commuter ratio near 6%, Lexington-Fayette's 0.4% bicycle commuter ratio is still high for the state of Kentucky, which has an overall bicycle commuter ratio of 0.19%, the fifth lowest in the nation (League of American Bicyclists & Alliance for Biking & Walking, 2009). The cycling trend may be affecting Kentucky more slowly than leaders like Washington, Wisconsin, and Maine—Mark Twain is often quoted by residents and commentators: "When the end of the world comes, I want to be in Kentucky, because everything there happens 20 years after it happens anywhere else." Nevertheless, Lexington is emerging as a premiere city for cycling.

Numbers for Lexington-Fayette Urban County may be a little misleading, as they include citizens of the entire county in the calculations of commuter ratios. The growth of the Bike Lexington family fun ride and the increase in cycling on the University of Kentucky's campus are better indicators of cycling in the city. Studies conducted by UK Parking and Transportation Services in 1998 and 2008 showed a 37% increase in the number of bicycle commuters over the 10-year span (Howard, 2008). In 1998, 3,572 bicycles were observed entering and leaving campus in one day; the follow-up in 2008 observed 4,882 bicycles (Howard, 2008). Enrollment over the same span only increased 9.2% (Howard, 2008), indicating a larger student population is not the only factor responsible for the increase in bicycle commuting. Still, this study was targeted at bicycle commuting, which does not account for recreational cycling throughout the city and in surrounding areas.

Although it does not indicate any thorough evaluative process, a reference from seven-time Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong serves as anecdotal evidence of Lexington's increasing prominence as a bike-friendly city. In an interview with ESPN's Tony Kornheiser, Armstrong cited Lexington as an exemplary city for cycling-related infrastructure policy:

> You have certain cities and certain examples out there: you could look at Portland, Oregon; you could look at Lexington, Kentucky; you could look at Boston, Massachusetts. They will not build a mile of pavement for a car without a mile of bike lane. (Sterne & Glassie, radio broadcast, March 19, 2010)

Bicycling magazine's May 2010 ranking of the top 50 bike-friendly cities provided a more thorough evaluation. Compiling data from several organizations and sources, *Bicycling* ranked Lexington-Fayette as the 41st most bike-friendly city in the nation, citing the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government's bike-pedestrian master plan

and procurement of $7,000,000 in funding for bicycle facilities as important factors ("America's Top …", 2010). Lexington-Fayette was ranked just behind Greensboro, North Carolina and just ahead of Omaha, Nebraska ("America's Top …", 2010). The top five most bike-friendly cities were Minneapolis, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; Boulder, Colorado; Seattle, Washington; and Eugene, Oregon; Louisville, Kentucky was ranked 21st ("America's Top …", 2010).

Such statistics and designations, though, do not indicate cohesion, as the cycling community within Lexington is diverse and even somewhat disparate. Moreover, there is no central organization in Lexington that unites the different cycling groups, and, upon initial examination, a unified perspective within the cycling community is not readily apparent. As such, one might assume that Lexington's cycling community lacks direction or has no specified goals. While such suppositions bear some truth, in the sense that there is no explicitly stated credo held commonly by the entire cycling community, I will argue that the structure and culture of at least parts of Lexington's cycling community still comprise a "new" social movement. After proffering a conceptualization of social movements and outlining the features of new social movements, I will describe the most prominent cycling groups within Lexington's cycling community, focusing on the aspects most closely associated with social movements. I will explore the unique communicative and framing processes that facilitate the emergence of a social movement, particularly the framing of cycling as a politically significant act aimed at effecting social change. Additionally, I will explore the perspectives that unite Lexington's cycling community as a whole, and I will highlight the potential for a broader social movement built upon these commonalities.

Snow, Soule, and Kriesi (2004) argued

> An understanding of many of the most significant developments and changes throughout human history – such as the ascendance of Christianity, the Reformation, and the French, American, and Russian revolutions – are partly contingent on an understanding of the workings and influences of social movements. (p. 3)

They also posited that we live in a movement society, and perhaps in a movement world (Snow et al., 2004). Understanding social movements—in addition to explaining historical events—explains contemporary society:

> Some of the major events and figures of the past century, as well as earlier, are bound up with social movements. And that is particularly true today, as social movements and the activities with which they are associated have become an increasingly conspicuous feature of the social landscape. (Snow et al., 2004, p. 3-4)

As such, exploring the social movement aspects of Lexington's cycling community provides insights into the larger society in which this community exists. The framing of cycling as a politically significant act highlights the intersections of the cycling movement with other new social movements like the environmental and Global Justice movements. And exploring the emerging movement to make Lexington a bicycle-friendly city illuminates the dynamics of framing processes as different frames interact and new meanings are negotiated. Such investigations have implications for understanding society beyond cycling and beyond social movements. I will begin, though, with a conceptualization of social movements.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Conceptualization of Social Movements

A systematic and all-encompassing conceptualization of a "social movement" is difficult to posit. Speaking broadly, Johnston and Klandermans (1995) suggested, "The dominant culture of a society appears stable. Social movements, on the other hand, are quintessentially changeful" (p. 4). They continued, "[Social] movements arise out of what is culturally given, but at the same time they are a fundamental source of cultural change" (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995, p. 5). But the concept of resistance may be a better descriptor than change, for Snow et al. (2004) observed that social movements can seek change or seek to halt change. Seeking change represents resistance to the existing institutional/cultural order; seeking to halt change represents resistance to emerging trends, often in defense of the existing institutional/cultural order. In conceptualizing social movements, Snow et al. (2004) built from the view that social movements are "challengers to or defenders of existing *institutional authority* – whether it is located in the political, corporate, religious, or educational realm – or patterns of *cultural authority*, such as systems of beliefs or practices reflective of those beliefs" (p. 9). Further, they observed that definitions of social movements are most often derived from the properties of collective action, change-oriented goals, non-institutional forms of action, some level of organization, and some level of temporal continuity (Snow et al., 2004).

But Snow et al. (2004) agreed with most scholars that a more specific conceptualization of social movements is necessary, beyond the broad definition as agents of resistance and a loose association of characteristics. Diani (2000), for example, argued that a broad conceptualization of social movements is risky because, if

scholars share only this broad conceptualization, the same issues might be addressed just as thoroughly without mentioning social movements at all, instead simply building from concepts like collective action, social change, and social conflict. In contrast, social movements are a specific social dynamic connected to, but also distinct from, these concepts (Diani, 2000). Diani (2000) outlined three principal components of social movements: (1) social networks among a plurality of actors, (2) collective identity, and (3) conflictual issues. He elaborated on the social dynamic indicative of social movements:

> [The social dynamic] consists in a process whereby several different actors, be they individuals, informal groups and/or organisations, come to elaborate, either through joint action and/or communication, a shared definition of themselves as being part of the same side in a social conflict. (Diani, 2000, p. 156).

Through this dynamic, these actors give meaning to otherwise unconnected symbolic actions and prompt the emergence of specific issues and conflicts (Diani, 2000).

Social Movement Theory

Traditional Approaches

There exist many differing approaches to the study of social movements. The earliest social movement scholars, influenced greatly by Marx, tended to emphasize ideologies and social structures, focusing on the systems of ideas espoused by movements (e.g., capitalism, socialism, communism) and the characteristics of social movement groups that define their place in the socioeconomic structure (Johnston, Laraña, & Gusfield, 1994). Much of the Marxist-inspired social movement research emphasized the class origins and class-based interests of social movements, adopting concepts like ideology, commitment, and partisanship to explain the emergence of social movements (Johnston et al., 1994). From this perspective, social movements are viewed

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as responses to injustices in the existing social structure, with a shared sense of injustice and a common belief in the movement's ideas and goals serving as the impetus for individual participation and mobilization (Johnston et al., 1994). As such, traditional analysis of social movements focuses on structure, both the social structure(s) from which a movement arises and the ideological structures of the movement itself (Johnson et al., 1994).

Apart from the ideological and structural facets of social movements, traditional social movement approaches also view the actions of social movements from a distinctive perspective, namely by interpreting social movements and the actions of them as particular forms of collective behavior, as opposed to various forms of institutional and organizational behavior (Diani, 2000). This is not to imply that collective behavior lacks organization or rationality; rather, it simply means that collective behavior is less rigidly structured than institutional or organizational behavior (Diani, 2000).

Turner and Killian promoted this collective behavior approach to social movements as early as 1957. They emphasized that social movements are not necessarily connected to specific organizations with distinct structures (i.e., formal leaders or members); rather, they defined a social movement as "a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in the society or organisation of which it is a part" (Turner & Killian, 1987, p. 223). Jasper (2007) noted, though, that Turner and Killian viewed such collectivities as having few differences from other forms of collective behavior, as they viewed collective behavior in general as essentially consisting of deviations from traditional social norms. While the deviations that constitute collective behavior can be creative and fruitful, they can also devolve into

dangerous and mob-like actions (Jasper, 2007). Traditional social movement approaches

tend to view social movement action similarly, as little more than a particular form of

collective behavior rooted in deviation from and/or resistance to dominant social norms

(Jasper, 2007).

Resource Mobilization Approaches

In order to compensate for the deficiencies of such traditional social movement

perspectives that heavily emphasize ideological features and that essentially view social

movements as a variation of collective behavior, sociologists McCarthy and Zald (1977)

developed the resource mobilization theory. Resource mobilization theory posits that

participation in a social movement is governed not by ideologies and emotional

sentiments, but by more logical and economic factors like resource availability, cost-

benefit analyses, and opportunities to act (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Still, McCarthy and

Zald (1977) did not offer a definition of social movements that was drastically different

from that of Turner and Killian (1987) (Diani, 2000). Indeed, they similarly defined

social movements as "a set of opinions and beliefs which represents preferences for

changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of society"

(McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1217-1218). The distinction between traditional approaches

and the resource mobilization approach is that the latter is less concerned with the details

of "sets of opinions and beliefs" (i.e., ideologies), emphasizing instead the conditions

under which these ideologies are transformed into tangible action (Diani, 2000). To this

end, resource mobilization approaches focus on the organizational features of social

movements, viewing social movements not simply as collectives but as organizations

and emphasizing the importance of resource availability, leadership, and interaction within and among social movements (Diani, 2000).

The introduction of this perspective allowed social movement theory to move beyond broad issues of ideology and to address the actions of social movements, not simply as examples of collective behavior, but as the rational tactics and strategies of organizations designed to achieve specific goals (Johnston et al., 1994). However, as with traditional approaches, the resource mobilization perspective still emphasizes structural features (i.e., organizational structures) of social movements (Diani, 2000).

Political Process Approaches

Initially developed by Tilly in 1978 (concurrent to McCarthy and Zald's development of resource mobilization theory), the political process perspective of social movements similarly emphasizes structural aspects of social movements; however, instead of focusing on the ideological structures underlying the emergence of social movements (as traditional approaches do) or on the organizational structures through which social movements convert ideology into action (as resource mobilization approaches do), political process approaches relate social movements to the broad political struggle of excluded interest groups trying to gain access to the established polity (Diani, 2000). Tilly (1978) placed social movements in the context of a broader historical perspective, drawing correlations between contemporary shifts in and phases of intense conflict and the corresponding changes in the dynamics of collective action. Unlike McCarthy and Zald's view of social movements as specific organizations of actors, Tilly emphasized the broader factors influencing social unrest and its characteristics (Diani, 2000).

Still, Tilly did not offer a definition of social movements that was drastically different from those of either Turner and Killian (1987) or of McCarthy and Zald (1977) as noted above. Tilly (1984) defined social movements as a

> sustained series of interactions between power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support. (p. 306)

Although Tilly (1984) emphasized broader historical trends rather than specific organizational factors (as resource mobilization theory does), his conceptualization of social movements still included notions of collectives resisting or seeking to change dominant social structures. And Tilly's (1984) view of social movements as organized, sustained, self-conscious challenges to dominant social structures that imply a shared identity among participants does not contain any great departures from prior conceptualizations.

Although political process approaches acknowledge the shared identity of social movement participants (as do traditional and resource mobilization approaches), political process approaches still emphasize structural features of social movements, namely the political structures of social movements and the societies in which they operate. Criticism of all three approaches revolves around this overemphasis on structural features, whether the ideological structures emphasized by traditional approaches, the organizational structures emphasized by resource mobilization approaches, or the political structures emphasized by political process approaches. Melucci (1989) observed that such structure-centered approaches tend to analyze the "how" rather than the "why" of social movements. As Taylor and Whittier (1992) noted, "The resource

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mobilization and political process theories cannot explain how structural inequality gets translated into subjectively experienced discontent" (p. 104).

In response to such criticism, McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1988) developed the concept of micromobilization to attempt to explain the relationship between macrolevel and microlevel processes that prompt collective action (Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Building upon research that showed the importance of preexisting group connections for the formation of social movements, they posited informal groups held together by strong ties as the basic building blocks of social movements (McAdam et al., 1988). However, this concept still does not explain how such networks transform their members into political actors (Taylor & Whittier, 1992).

New Social Movement Theory

Emerging in response to the deficiencies of the structure-centered perspectives of the more traditional approaches (i.e., Marxist analyses, resource mobilization theory, and political process perspectives) outlined above, new social movement approaches attempt to explore social movements not only from a structural perspective, but also from a cultural perspective (Johnston et al., 1994). Essentially, the new social movement perspective seeks to relate social movements to broader structural and cultural changes in society (Diani, 2000). The categorization is a bit controversial because "new" social movements do not necessarily have different tactics or goals than "old" social movements, but Melucci began promulgating the term *new social movement* in 1985 simply to emphasize the cultural aspects of social movements, not to promote a clear delineation between different movements (Jasper, 2007). However, new social movements generally cannot be thoroughly defined by the strictly structural approaches

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of other perspectives and, as such, often have certain characteristic cultural features that distinguish them from "old" social movements. In general, political organizing based upon collective identity, rather than socioeconomic class, is what distinguishes new social movements, which emerge primarily in post-industrial societies, from the more class-based social movements of industrial societies (Taylor & Whittier, 1992; Johnston et al., 1994).

Habermas (1981/1984, 1981/1987) attributed the emergence of new social movements to the "colonization of the lifeworld". Habermas (1981/1984, 1981/1987) posited the modernization of society as the emergence of the capitalist economy and the modern bureaucratic state. The primary media of these two systems are money and power, respectively (Habermas 1981/1984, 1981/1987). And while these systems and their media do, in some ways, facilitate the smooth operation of society—and are therefore not necessarily bad—colonization of the lifeworld occurs when the purposive rationality—oriented to success—of the economy and the state dominate, infringe upon, and distort the communicative processes of the lifeworld—oriented to reaching understanding—that balance purposive, normative, and expressive rationality (Habermas 1981/1984, 1981/1987). New social movements are, in turn, manifestations of reactive efforts to recover the lifeworld from colonization—to restore the role of communicative action with the goal of reaching understanding, as opposed to the dominance of instrumental rationality via money and power with the goal of achieving success (Habermas 1981/1984, 1981/1987).

Habermas' (1981/1984, 1981/1987) conceptualization of new social movements explains the "why" of social movements at the theoretical level. This is the "why"

Melucci (1989) said is lacking in structure-centered social movement approaches, which generally only explain the "how" of social movements. More concretely, Johnston et al. (1994) outlined eight interconnected characteristics of new social movements as they appear in practice. While by no means exhaustive or definitive, these features often characterize new social movements and their cultural, rather than structural, facets.

(1) New social movements tend to transcend the structural roles of their participants, who often come from widely varying socioeconomic classes (Johnston et al., 1994). In this way, new social movements generally are not bound by or tied to class structures as old social movements tend to be (Johnston et al., 1994).

(2) New social movements cannot be defined by overarching ideologies, as "they exhibit a pluralism of ideas and values, and they tend to have pragmatic orientations and search for institutional reforms that enlarge the systems of members' participation in decision making" (Johnston et al., 1994, p. 7). In turn, they often have important political meaning and imply the expansion of civic, rather than political, engagement by the populace (Johnston et al., 1994). That is, while new social movements may encourage traditional forms of political involvement like voting, they also encourage engagement with political issues through non-traditional channels, often through community activism and dialogue/debate outside of political institutions.

(3) New social movements often emphasize cultural and symbolic issues related to personal and collective identities rather than economic issues related to socioeconomic class (Johnston et al., 1994). New social movements tend to prompt participants to create new identities or alter old identities to fit newly gained perspectives (Johnston et al., 1994).

(4) With this focus on identity (particularly on developing a collective identity and a shared culture), the distinction between the individual and the collective often becomes unclear (Johnston et al., 1994). New social movements are acted out not only in mobilized groups, but also in individual actions, and action within the movement becomes a complex combination of both personal and collective identities (Johnston et al., 1994).

(5) New social movements also often involve intimate aspects of daily life and are associated not simply with specific activities, but with entire lifestyles (Johnston et al., 1994). New social movements extend beyond particular acts of protest or resistance and impact the everyday lives of participants, affecting what they eat and wear, what they find enjoyable, how they plan their days, and how they define problems and identify solutions (Johnston et al., 1994).

(6) This is not to say that new social movements do not utilize acts of public protest, for they do; but even so, new social movements tend to adopt tactics of resistance that differ from those of working-class movements (Johnston et al., 1994). Beyond ideological or rational calls to action, new social movements often rely on more radical mobilization patterns, like nonviolence and civil disobedience (Johnston et al., 1994).

(7) In addition to radical protest and mobilization tactics, new social movements are generally autonomous from traditional channels of participation in Western democracies (Johnston et al., 1994). These movements seek new and alternative forms of participation and decision-making related to the issues of collective interest (Johnston et al., 1994).

(8) Finally, new social movements tend to be segmented, diffuse, and decentralized, with various subgroups generally maintaining relative autonomy (Johnston et al., 1994). Although there is considerable variation according to each movement's structure, the disparate nature of new social movements may sometimes even limit the connectedness, cohesion, and success of the movement (Johnston et al., 1994).

While all these characteristics are by no means present in every new social movement, these features indicate the cultural focus of such movements, which do not fit the structural models of more traditional social movement approaches. In turn, new social movement approaches require tools that are better suited to cultural, rather than structural, analyses. Frame analysis became one of the first cultural tools adopted by scholars when it was incorporated into the study of social movements in the 1980s. And although concepts like collective identity, symbols, characters, narratives, texts, and discourses have been employed to investigate cultural and meaning-making processes that frame analysis cannot address (Jasper, 2007), the framing perspective remains a prominent one within social movement research.

Framing as a Tool for the Cultural Analysis of Social Movements

Salman and Assies (2007) noted the need for new tools of cultural analyses of social movements: "Opportunity structures and mobilization structures remain insufficient to account for collective action" (p. 227). Further, they observed that framing processes can compensate for these deficiencies, as framing processes are the mediating element between structures and action:

> [Framing processes] bring in the element of shared meaning and definitions, an
> element that was long neglected in the resource mobilization tradition as it relied

on cost-benefit analysis while, in contrast, new social movement scholars tended to highlight this dimension. Framing is about sociocultural perceptions and the construction of shared understandings that justify, dignify, and motivate collective action. They are about building consensus for action. (Salman & Assies, 2007, p. 227-228)

An application of framing processes to social movements emphasizes how frames intersect with broader cultural patterns and how they might be strategically used for mobilization (Johnston et al., 1994). Within Diani's (2000) conceptualization of social movements, framing is the process by which actors give meaning to symbolic actions and promote specific issues.

Frame analysis is rooted in Goffman's explorations of how individuals make sense of social experiences. Goffman (1974) posited that the social world is too complex for individuals to completely understand; frames are the tools that allow people to make sense of life's complexity. Goffman (1974) referred to the most basic frames of human experience as "primary frameworks", which allow people to attribute meaning to their experiences by providing a mechanism for classifying, interpreting, and understanding information and their experiences. Reese (2001) defined frames as "organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world" (p. 11). Hertog and McLeod (2001) added to this definition that frames are more than just principles; rather, frames are meaning structures encoded with rules that guide the interpretation of content:

We view frames as relatively comprehensive structures of meaning made up of a number of concepts and the relations among those concepts. Although each frame provides principles for the organization of social reality, frames are more than just principles. Frames have their own content, as well as a set of rules for the processing of new content. (p. 140)

Entman (1993) associated the rules implicit in frames with the primary functions of defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. Through its meaning structures, a frame fulfills these functions simultaneously and provides rules that guide individuals toward particular conclusions regarding problems, causes, normative evaluations, and solutions. As such, a frame provides a neatly packaged, preferred interpretation of potentially complex situations.

In their review of framing applications within social movement research, Benford and Snow (2000) identified similar functions for what they called "collective action frames"—the frames employed by social movements. They categorized problem definition and causal attribution as "diagnostic framing" and solution suggestion as "prognostic framing" (Benford & Snow, 2000). Collective action frames fulfill the additional function of urging individuals to act together in order to effect the desired solution; Benford and Snow (2000) referred to this as "motivational framing".

Essentially, social movement theory has extended Goffman's perspective of frames as cognitive tools at the individual level in order to analyze how social movements are involved in creating and employing frames at the level of collective action:

> Whereas individuals perform culture by applying frames to situations they encounter, the processes of frame extension and frame amplification, of drawing upon frame resonance or augmenting frame potency, are for the most part treated as strategic actions of social movement organizations and presume systemic relations of social movement culture with the other aspects of culture. (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995, p. 8)

Within social movements, framing is more than a process for making sense of complex social experiences; framing is the active construction of reality by social movement participants (Benford & Snow, 2000). Snow (2004) argued that because of the

prominent role framing processes play in meaning construction, social movements

cannot fully be understood without understanding their frames:

> Rooted theoretically in these symbolic interactionist and contextual constructionist principles, the framing perspective on social movements, as it has evolved, not only focuses attention on matters of meaning and the interpretive processes through which movement-relevant meanings are generated, debated and contested, diffused, and altered, but contends that collective action and master frames that are the product of these interpretive processes are central to understanding the course and character of social movements. (p. 404)

As framing relates to communication, collective action frames are the means by

which social movement participants communicate the values of the movement and

attempt to influence the meaning of the movement to others. These frames determine

meaning not only for participants, but also for opponents and bystanders or third-party

observers (Benford & Snow, 2000). Further, the communicative processes of social

movements are more than simple reflections of frames; these processes actively

reinforce preexisting frames and generate new frames, in an interpretive and constantly

evolving process of meaning construction and negotiation (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Although such meaning construction processes may not fall under the

conventional definition of communication, they are indeed forms of communication.

Carey (2009) differentiated the transmission view of communication from the ritual view

of communication. The former refers to "the transmission of signals or messages over

distance for the purpose of control" (Carey, 2009, p. 12), and has become the more

common definition of communication both in vernacular and academic uses (Carey,

2009). However, Carey (2009) noted that the ritual view is by far the older view of

communication, derived from religious ceremonies designed to bind people together in

communities (hence, the similarity between the words *communication* and *community*).

Using the ritual view of communication, Carey (2009) proffered this definition: "communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed" (p. 19). From this ritual view of communication, framing is one communicative process through which people (in this case social movement participants) construct their social realities. Accordingly, frame analysis of social movements explores the specific communicative techniques employed by participants in reality construction and meaning negotiation.

Further, the frames individuals use to interpret conflicts can impact their willingness to participate in collective action (Gamson, 1985). So the frames employed by a social movement can directly influence its success in retaining adherents and recruiting new ones. (See Entman & Rojecki, 1993; Klandermans, 1988; Klandermans, 1992; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987.) And in the context of new social movement approaches, frame analysis takes on new meaning as one way of assessing collective identity because new social movements often self-consciously create, present, and use frames to generate collective identity (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995). Hunt and Benford (2004) noted that collective identity is not an individual attribute; rather, collective identity arises from the interactions of individuals in their efforts to negotiate meanings. It is these communicative interactions that comprise the framing processes of social movements and, in turn, contribute to collective identity among movement participants (Hunt & Benford, 2004).

In addition to providing a theoretical conceptualization of new social movements, Habermas (1981/1984, 1981/1987) also highlighted the connection between new social movements and communication. In his seminal work, *The Theory of Communicative*

Action, Habermas (1981/1984, 1981/1987) rooted his theory of social action in communication, arguing that effectively coordinating actions within society requires adequate communication. He summarily defined communicative action as follows:

> I shall speak of *communicative* action whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions. In this respect the negotiation of definitions of the situation is an essential element of the interpretive accomplishments required for communicative action. (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 285-286)

Within the theory of communicative action, communication is the means by which social actors negotiate common definitions of situations and reach mutual understandings about how to act in those situations (Habermas 1981/1984, 1981/1987). Once a consensus has been reached regarding the situation, actions can be coordinated to meet the needs of the group (Habermas 1981/1984, 1981/1987).

Coordinating the actions of a group of social actors is indispensable to the fundamental social movement goal of seeking or resisting change. Negotiating common situation definitions, reaching mutual understanding, and achieving consensus are the prerequisites to coordinating collective action. These prerequisites are equivalent to the framing processes of social movements as discussed above. The "interpretive accomplishments required for communicative action" (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 286) occur through framing processes in which social movement participants negotiate the meanings of their situations, reach mutual understanding about the problem sources and the solutions, and achieve consensus regarding how to proceed. In turn, these framing processes allow for the effective coordination of collective action. And again, as

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explained by the theory of communicative action, communication is the medium both for the execution of prerequisite framing processes and for the subsequent coordination of collective action.

In summary, framing as a tool of social scientific research allows for more interpretive analyses, better captures the dynamics of meaning negotiation, and emphasizes the discursive and communicative aspects of negotiation processes (Reese, 2007). Framing as a tool of social movement research links the communicative processes of social movements to the formation of collective identity and consensus, which are vital to the successful organization and mobilization of collective action. The research questions I derived from the perspective of framing expounded above are presented in the following section.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The shift in social movement theory to include cultural analyses reflects a broader trend—dating back to Max Weber's work at the turn of the 20th century but not gaining prominence until the 1980s—in the social sciences toward phenomenological and interpretive studies designed to more fully capture the experiential aspects of human existence (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). This trend led to the development of an "interpretive paradigm" based upon beliefs that realities are socially constructed; meaningful realities are emergent, collaborative, and symbolic; complete understanding of social action is gained through immersion and dialogue practiced in actual social settings; evidence should be recorded and expressed using verbal and narrative methods; and knowledge claims should convey the subjective experiences of the social actors they analyze (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The influences of this interpretive paradigm on the development of new social movement theory and frame analysis are apparent in their similar emphases on culture, symbolic meaning, and social constructions of realities. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) noted that the emergence of the interpretive paradigm corresponded with an expansion in the use and acceptance of qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) methods in the social sciences, as researchers realized "qualitative methods are more suitable than quantitative methods for addressing certain (but not all) questions about culture, interpretation, and power" (p. 14).

With a foundation in new social movement theory and frame analysis, exploring the culture surrounding Lexington's cycling community and examining cyclists' interpretations of this culture and community are two such research goals that fall within

the interpretive paradigm. I, accordingly, employed qualitative methods within this study.

The specific research questions that guided my qualitative inquiry are as follows:

RQ1: How do members of Lexington's cycling community collectively define group membership, and what processes and activities do they use to self-identify with this community?

RQ2: Are there distinct groups within Lexington's cycling community that define membership in the overall cycling community or in a specific group in differing ways? If so, what ideological differences distinguish the various groups?

RQ3: How do members of Lexington's cycling community frame cycling and their goals relative to Lexington's broader cycling community and/or to any distinct groups that may exist?

In the following section, the method by which the characteristics and frames of Lexington's cycling community have been identified and analyzed are explained.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODS

In order to explore the facets of cycling in Lexington and the frames utilized by Lexington cyclists in their conceptualizations of Lexington's cycling community, I conducted in-depth interviews with prominent and active Lexington cyclists. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) noted that interviews have the advantages of illuminating native conceptualizations of social phenomena and of capturing participants' rhetorical constructions of their experiences. They continued, "Interviews are particularly well suited to *understand the social actor's experience and perspective*. The researcher expects the nature of the actor's experience to result in words that can only be uttered by someone who has 'been there' (or 'is there')" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). Because capturing cyclists' own perspectives on Lexington's cycling community was central to analyzing the cultural aspects of this community, in-depth interviews were employed precisely for their unique ability to illuminate the subjective experiences of Lexington cyclists.

Beginning with an existing acquaintance, I located participants via snowball sampling, and, in the end, I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews in October and November 2008. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and followed the same interview guide, which contained questions related to the general benefits of cycling, the specifics of cycling in Lexington and Lexington's cycling community, the various groups that exist therein, and the culture of each group and of the cycling community as a whole. As part of the informed consent process, each participant granted me permission to use his/her name and other personally identifying information in subsequent reports.

To use Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) terminology, these 20 interviews were informant interviews, as all interviewees are active cyclists involved to varying degrees in multiple facets of Lexington's cycling community, from bike shop owners and managers, to Bluegrass Cycling Club officers, to avid bike polo players. Fifteen of the 20 interviewees are members of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, a nonpartisan group that advises the Mayor and initiates and executes various cycling advocacy efforts. The Task Force is composed of a diverse array of cyclists who are familiar with all the cycling groups/styles in Lexington. Similarly, the sample of informant interviewees represents a diverse range of interests and perspectives regarding cycling.

After the interviews were completed, I transcribed each interview verbatim and then coded each transcript for analysis. The analysis proceeded along two lines of inquiry: the first related to Lexington's cycling culture as a whole and any overarching goals and/or perspectives that unite the entire cycling community, and the second related to any different groups or types of cyclists and their distinct goals and/or perspectives regarding cycling. Discussions of these topics were coded and analyzed to identify, on the one hand, the most commonly cited overarching goals/perspectives that unite the entire cycling community and, on the other hand, the most prominent groups/types of cyclists and the goals/perspectives of each.

In order to supplement the information obtained from the informant interviews, I also engaged in participant observation over the course of 20 months, from October 2008 through May 2010, amounting to approximately 40 hours of time spent on my bike and/or at cycling-related events. My participation ranged from solo riding in the city, to participation in urban Alleycat races, to participation in the long-distance Bike Trek to

Shakertown, to attendance of cycling-related events like the Downtown Bike Bash at Cheapside Park. The primary purpose of the participant observation was to better understand the various facets of Lexington's cycling community that had been discussed during the informant interviews. As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) noted, participant observation allows the researcher to experience the world as the actors being studied experience it. More than simply having respondents tell me about different styles of cycling, I wanted to experience those styles of cycling for myself to better understand the varied perspectives of different cyclists.

In addition to my own participation and observation, I conducted approximately 15 informal and impromptu ethnographic interviews (terminology from Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) while in the field. As my 20 in-depth interviews were all conducted with active cyclists, many of whom are in cycling-related leadership positions, my own participant observation and the ethnographic interviews were designed to explore the perspectives of less-active cyclists. I would not consider myself an "average" cyclist after twenty months of research on the topic, but I was certainly not an active cyclist before I began my research. And although I now cycle on a fairly regular basis, I still would not consider myself an actively involved cyclist from the perspective of having a leadership position within the cycling community. Similarly, in my ethnographic interviews, I sought the opinions/perspectives of people who cycle with varying degrees of frequency and who do not have the same level of leadership status/prominence as my informant interviewees. (In the following analysis, the names of ethnographic interviewees have been altered to conceal their identities. Ethnographic interviewees will also be denoted by the title *Cyclist*, for example Cyclist Dwight, to distinguish them

from informant interviewees. This is not to imply that the informant interviewees are not cyclists; rather, the title is simply used to indicate an ethnographic interviewee. Again, with their permission, informant interviewees' names appear unaltered.[1])

Fieldnotes were composed after the respective sessions of fieldwork. The resulting transcripts were coded in the same manner as the in-depth interview transcripts, again, to contextualize the information provided by the informant interviewees.

The findings and analysis derived from the interview responses and my participant observation are summarized in the following sections, beginning with an exploration of the most prominent groups/types of cyclists within Lexington's cycling community.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In general, respondents indicated that there is not a unified cycling culture in Lexington; rather, there are several groups/types of cyclists that, while sharing some commonalities in interests and overlaps in membership, also possess unique characteristics. Shane Tedder, the Sustainability Coordinator for the University of Kentucky's Office of the Vice President of Facilities Management and the Vice Chair of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, said simply, "I think that there are multiple perspectives [within the cycling community]. … So, no, it's not united by one perspective; it's really diverse." Dave Elbon, a member of the Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee and a fellow member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, elaborated, "Well, the cycling culture is not really monolithic, though, you know? There are a lot of different cycling cultures going on at the same time in town, and I'm not sure that they all have the same goals." Likewise, Tim Buckingham, a member of the Bike Lexington Planning Committee and another member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, observed,

> I don't think there's one theme that everyone agrees on. I think everybody comes to cycling with their own—not political agenda, but their own agenda. I don't think there's one primary goal for the culture, and right now the culture's kind of, like, fragmented; there's lots of different groups.

And Bill Crank, the manager of Pedal the Planet (a local bike shop) agreed, "I think the groups are kind of splintered and—not because there's really any animosity, but they've kind of all grown up separate. … I don't think there's one organization that kind of gathers everybody or speaks for everybody."

With all 20 informant interviewees acknowledging at least some delineation among cycling groups and/or types of cyclists, several groups/types were noted throughout the interview process. Brian Turner, a Lexington artist and the co-owner of

Cricket Press (a local poster-printing venture that often produces advertisements for cycling events), summarized the three most prominent types of cyclists:

> There's the people who just use it to—as transportation, the commuters; there's the people who see bikes as more of a cultural—like a lifestyle, that kind of thing; and then there's the people who—the bike is sort of a—almost like a piece of exercise equipment, basically. That might be generalizing it, but I mean that's sort of the way I—you know, I think that you could break it down into real simple terms that way.

Although other types of cyclists were acknowledged by respondents (like racing teams, mountain bikers, families and adolescents, and the homeless), these three types were described as the most prominent, so the following analysis will focus on these types: (1) fitness-oriented road cyclists, (2) lifestyle-oriented underground/urban cyclists, and (3) transportation-oriented commuters. I will begin with a description of each, with an investigation of their commonalities to follow.

Road Cyclists

Nineteen of the 20 informant interviewees at least mentioned road cyclists, and this was often the group discussed in the most detail. Generally referred to by respondents and self-referenced simply as "road cyclists" or "road riders", these cyclists primarily engage in recreational and fitness-oriented cycling on Kentucky's rural roads. The photograph below of Peggy Littrell, the President of the Bluegrass Cycling Club, shows the common attire and equipment of road cyclists.[2]

Peggy Littrell, president of Bluegrass Cyding Club

bike jersey, pockets in back

helmet with vents

bike pants, with padded seat

first-aid kit

tire pump

bike sandals, with pedal dips

water bottle

Figure 5.1. Road Cyclist Peggy Littrell. Photograph by Robbie Clark; appears courtesy of Smiley Pete Publishing.

A road cyclist (and commuter) himself, Dave described this group as "people who are mostly interested in recreational cycling, you know, who probably drive a car during the week and then on the weekends, go ride out in the countryside." Additionally, when most respondents talked about road cyclists, they referred to the Bluegrass Cycling Club (BCC). This is likely because, as Mike Galbraith, a League of American Bicyclists Certified Instructor, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, and a transportation and urban planner, said, "They're the only officially organized bicycling club, and there are no others." Mike elaborated on the BCC, noting the group's goals of fitness, competition, and recreation:

There are many dedicated cyclists in the Bluegrass Cycling Club, but it is a club, and they are club riders—I call them. They're fitness, health, a little competition; but it's group riding, and group riding is fun, you know, group riding's a lot of fun.

These sentiments were echoed by Tim, who additionally mentioned the BCC's advocacy efforts:

The fitness cyclists—you have groups like—demarcated groups like the Bluegrass Cycling Club that—their goal is mainly individual health; they do some advocacy standpoints, but for the most part, it's fitness cycling: it's how many miles did you ride, things like that.

Bill Gorton, the President of the Kentucky Bicycle and Bikeways Commission, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, and an environmental lawyer, explained that one of the primary advocacy efforts related to the BCC is the "Share the Road" campaign to raise motorists' awareness of cyclists:

Things that might be more specific to, say, road riders, would be, for example, the Share the Road initiative. We have signage on the beautiful Bluegrass bikeways and roads throughout the community to let automobile drivers know that this is an area that's frequented by our road riders, and, as we try to expand the reputation of the community as a safe cycling destination, we hope to increase cycling tourism here, and we want people that are coming to visit us to feel safe on our roads.

Lynn Phillips, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force and a lecturer in the Geography Department at the University of Kentucky, agreed that road cyclists struggle to gain acknowledgement from motorists:

There are the folks who are the leisure weekend riders—you know, the Cycling Club people—and their goals are to create an infrastructure outside of the city because riding in town is not as aesthetically pleasing; it's not as relaxing—whatever it might be—so they like to ride in surrounding counties. They want the surrounding counties to be more accepting, which—you know, that's an even bigger challenge.

And, finally, Bill Fortune, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, former Vice President of the BCC, a cross-country cyclist, and a professor in the University of

Kentucky's College of Law, also mentioned safety (the intended outcome of increased motorist awareness) as one of the goals of the BCC:

> The primary concern of the Bluegrass Cycling Club and the road riders is really bike safety: the way cyclists ride on the rural roads and the way in which cars react to cyclists on the rural roads.

While acknowledging the recreational and fitness goals of road cyclists, Shane also hinted at some of the stereotypes associated with this group: "… the Bluegrass Cycling Club, which was very much a fitness-oriented, spandex-wearing, very-nice-bike-riding group … who rode for the exercise in it, for the fitness in it, and for the enjoyment of, like, long-distance rides." Because road cyclists generally ride for long distances (at least 30 miles in a day, with the BCC's annual Horsey Hundred covering 100 miles over two days), a fair amount of money needs to be invested in equipment. A well-vented helmet, water bottle, and water bottle cage are necessities. Spandex riding pants with a padded seat may be a fashion faux pas but are necessary on long-distance rides to prevent soreness. Other gear like riding gloves, cleated shoes or pedal clips, and a bike jersey are not required, but are very common. And although any kind of bike can be taken on long-distance rides, "road bikes" (with lightweight frames and narrow tires) are most commonly used because they are specifically designed for fast and/or long-distance riding. Respondents observed, though, that because road cyclists tend to skew in the over-40 age demographic, the expense of road bikes and other equipment is not as much of a concern, because this demographic generally has more disposable income to invest in cycling.

However, the dedicated demeanor and elaborate equipment associated with road cycling can be a deterrent to some cyclists. For example, when I asked a friend if he

wanted to go on a group ride with me, Cyclist Dwight responded with apprehension: "I'm uncomfortable riding with the more-experienced, really serious riders." And although the BCC encourages new cyclists to join and offers different classes based on the speed of rides and the experience level of cyclists, the atmosphere of road cycling can nonetheless be intimidating and somewhat exclusive. An anecdote from my own experience with road cycling provides another example:

As noted above, I participated in the 2009 Bike Trek to Shakertown. The Trek is an annual event held over a weekend in mid-September, with a few hundred participants riding around/between Harrodsburg, Danville, and Shakertown, Kentucky. There are 30-mile routes for average cyclists and 70-mile routes for more-experienced cyclists. In general, the atmosphere is quite welcoming and encouraging, with veteran cyclists very willing to help novice cyclists. At one point while I was riding, a cyclist whose bike and attire indicated him as an experienced road cyclist commented to me that I needed to have my seat raised. We had been riding near each other for around an hour, and he had noticed that I would lean far forward when going uphill. Cyclist Michael quickly explained that raising my seat would make riding uphill easier. I thanked him for the advice and we continued riding; at some point he rode ahead when I stopped for a break.

That evening, when I reached the stopping point for the day, I visited the traveling bike repair/maintenance van to get my seat raised. As the mechanic was raising my seat, I saw Cyclist Michael and went over to talk to him.

"Thanks again for the advice," I said. "I'm getting the seat raised right now. Yeah, my old bike got stolen, and this is just one I bought cheap from someone who fixes up old bikes."

"It looks like it's too small for you. You should probably be on a little bigger bike."

"Yeah, but like I said, I needed a bike, and it was cheap."

"Well, you should let someone steal that one, too, so you can buy a bike that's better for you," he said jokingly. We both laughed, I thanked him again for the help, and we parted ways.

Again, he and everyone else on the Trek were helpful and welcoming of less-experienced cyclists. And even though he only facetiously recommended that I let someone steal my bike to have a reason to buy a new one, the sentiment that the cost of equipment is secondary to the quality of equipment is certainly a common one among road cyclists. This sentiment and the serious and sometimes competitive atmosphere of road cycling can be a deterrent to cyclists who either do not have enough money to afford an expensive road bike and other cycling equipment, or who prefer a more laid-back, leisurely form of cycling.

Underground/Urban Cyclists

Although this group was only mentioned by 14 of the 20 informant interviewees, it was generally discussed at length. Respondents often noted that underground/urban cycling seems to have emerged as an alternative for cyclists who are not interested in road cycling. Speaking of the sometimes exclusive nature of organized cycling groups, Tim said,

> I don't think anybody excludes on purpose; like I don't think, like the trail people or the Bluegrass Cycling Club—I don't think anybody excludes and says, 'Oh, you can't be a part of our group.' I think people just find their own niche in life. And so some people have gone to the cycling clubs and just not felt like that was their thing; maybe it's too competitive or more focused on just the fitness aspect but not the transportation aspect. So I don't think anybody has ever been, like,

purposively exclusive; I think it's just people find their—the group that they most identify with; and sometimes it's not like the Cycling Club, or the race teams and things like that.

The "niche" that underground/urban cycling fills is a more relaxed, informal style of cycling compared to the structure of organized long-distance rides or cycling teams. This group is so informal, in fact, that there is not even an agreed-upon term used to describe them. The term *urban cyclist* was sometimes used by respondents to indicate that this form of cycling occurs in the city, not on rural roads. The term *underground cyclist* was also used by respondents, a reference to the somewhat countercultural and rebellious undercurrents associated with this group. Often, interviewees simply referred to one or more of the underground/urban subgroups: the Alleycats, the LexRides online forum, and the bike polo players. However, none of these subgroups are clearly defined or delineated, and respondents often used the subgroups interchangeably to refer to underground/urban cycling culture. I use the word *culture* intentionally with the underground/urban cyclists, because, more than any other cyclists, underground/urban cyclists are interested in building a culture around the bicycle. And despite the affiliated groups, there is no structure to the underground/urban cycling culture; rather the culture is built around spontaneity and creativity in an effort to instill enthusiasm and charisma into their brand of cycling.

The photograph below shows Chris Simpson attired for bike polo.

Chris Simpson, bike polo extraordinaire

Cut-down handle barr for better swinging motion

Corregated plastic shield, protect spokes

fixed-gear hub

mallet, ski pole with plastic gas line

Figure 5.2. Underground/Urban Cyclist Chris Simpson. Photograph by Robbie Clark; appears courtesy of Smiley Pete Publishing.

But again, there is no standardized equipment associated with this group. As a member of the underground/urban cycling culture, Robert Brandon, a longtime cyclist who currently works at the Lexington Bicycle Center (a local bike shop) and whose father has owned multiple bike shops in Lexington, explained, "It's okay to ride bikes with regular clothes; you don't have to dress up like a superhero to get on your bike, you don't have to have special shoes; you just get on it, get on your bike and ride." Robert did note that a "hipster-type" appearance may identify a cyclist as part of the underground/urban culture, but the culture is less about appearance and more about an "… ethos, which is

do-it-yourself, independent type of riders, a little more informal." He also elaborated on

the spontaneity of the culture:

> The LexRides people, the Alleycat people, the urban cyclists, we don't want to have a leader and a president and a style of riding. We don't want to have a schedule; we want to be spontaneous; we want to celebrate riding in the city, at all different times of the day and night, and, we're very spontaneous, sort of, happening.
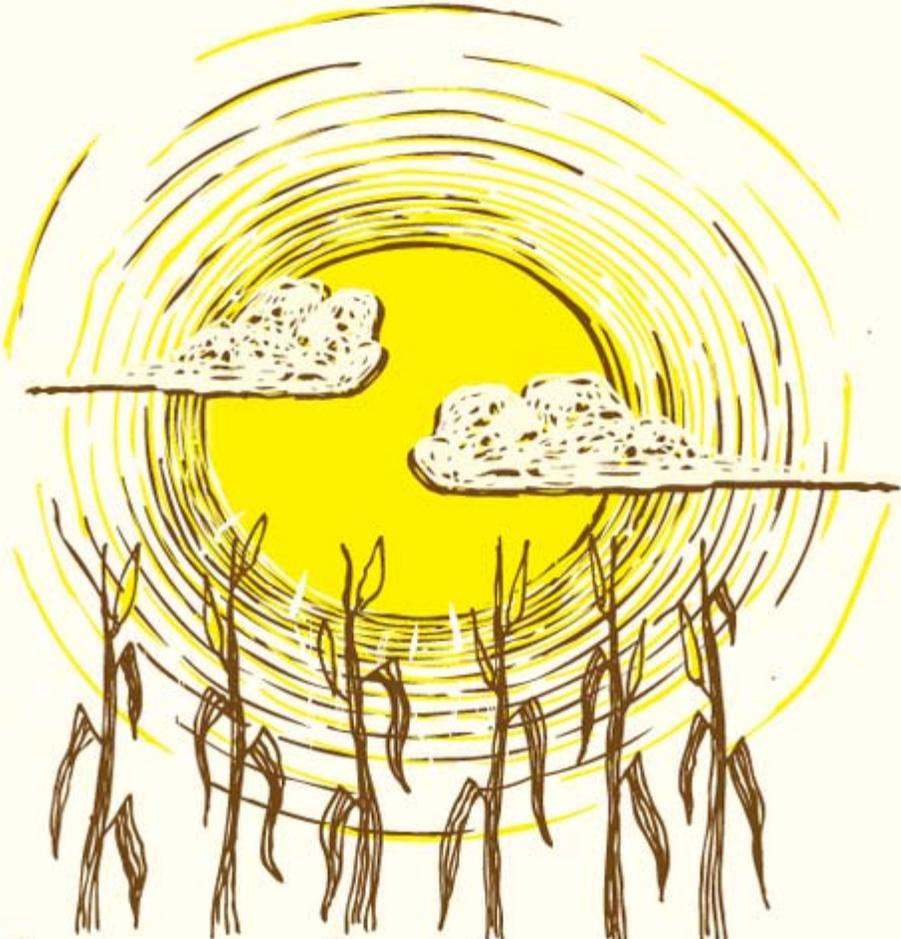
And Melissa Bellew, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force and a racing/triathlon

cyclist, admiringly summarized the creativity promoted by the underground/urban

cycling culture:

> The Alleycat or the underground group, they're a terrific group of people who work hard to bring alternative styles of cycling to Lexington, whether it's racing at night or a recent thing they had—the bike prom, where they had people come out and dress up and ride their bike; but they're making cycling fun to the general person.

As an underground/urban cyclist himself, Roscoe Klausing echoed the sentiment that

spontaneity and creativity make cycling more fun:

> All of the stuff that I do from a cycling standpoint is all completely grassroots; there is no structure. If anything, the only thing that seems to always tie together is that people are trying to have fun riding their bikes, and that may be a race, it may be riding in the parade, it may be going for a beer, or whatever; it's just about riding for fun. … I think what holds together the grassroots side of this…so kind of the LexRides contingency, that's just about people who are motivated. There's no clear leader, people do whatever they want, and if their idea is good, people follow. So it's a very different thing; it's completely spontaneous.

A brief description of one of the Alleycat races may help illustrate these aspects

of the underground/urban cycling culture:

Figure 5.3. Harvest Moon Alleycat Race Promo.

Although I knew there was an Alleycat race that evening, I had not planned to attend until a friend called me around 5:30 p.m., informed me that he and another friend were going, and encouraged me to join them. I even declined at first, as I was finishing up some work on campus and did not think I would be done in time to make the start of the race at 7 p.m. However, I finished my work a little after 6 p.m. and decided to go to the race. So I walked the seven blocks from my office to my apartment, got my bike without even entering my apartment, and rode a mile to get to the London Ferrell Community Garden at 250 East Third Street. I arrived around 6:45 p.m. to find the garden—essentially a backyard, probably 25 yards wide and 50 yards long—and the sidewalk bordering it filled with a few dozen cyclists and their bikes. If not for the bikes lying in the grass, though, you would not have known any of those in attendance were cyclists. In fact, most looked more like hipster farmers. Corresponding with the Harvest Moon theme, flannel shirts and jean overalls with one leg rolled up composed the standard outfit for this event. In fact, if it were not such an informal event, I might have felt a little out-of-place for not dressing up as an "urban farmer". I registered for the event: my $5 fee would benefit Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and Seedleaf; I was also asked if I wanted to sign up for the Kentuckians for the Commonwealth listserv, which I did. After registering, I was given a spoke card to commemorate the event— which I promptly put in my spokes—and a map showing the checkpoints for the race.

I then met up with my friends and said some hellos to other people I recognized (like Tim, who had helped organize this race) while we waited for the race to begin. Around 7 p.m., we were all ushered toward the middle of the garden, where a couple of speakers were set up (for the after-race square dance). Tim made some opening

remarks, thanking us for coming and giving an overview of the festivities that would occur after the race. Then we were all sent to collect our bikes, and after a few minutes, the race began. Of course, the beginnings of Alleycat races are always a little chaotic. Some people are able to bolt off quickly toward their first stop, but most people are stuck scooting and wobbling around in a traffic jam as everyone tries to gain balance and momentum. (It is about the only time you will see a bicycle traffic jam.) Having arrived only shortly before the race began, neither I nor my friends had had time to pick an "ideal" route—to find the order of checkpoints that would be most efficient. In fact, we were not even sure where we were trying to go, and after spending a few minutes in the traffic jam, we quickly agreed that we would not be able to "win the race".

Of course, winning is not really the point of Alleycat races. Although there are often prizes for the cyclists who visit all the checkpoints and reach the final checkpoint fastest, the emphasis is less on winning the race, and more on enjoying the event. When asked if there was a goal for the LexRides events, Roscoe said,

> There's no—I think you have to think of it more of: if you were to have a party, would you establish a goal? So, you might have a *theme* for your party, like, a holiday party, or a school's-out party, or a birthday party; but the goal is merely to enjoy yourself.

Instead, my friends and I followed a pack of cyclists as they presumably rode toward one of the checkpoints. Traveling to the checkpoints took us to five community gardens within an approximately two-mile radius. As we rode toward our first checkpoint, families and children along one block waved and yelled greetings; we returned the gesture. While riding and at the various stops, we carried on conversations

with one another and other cyclists, much as one would at a party. Roscoe's metaphor of a party is quite appropriate; but instead of socializing at a friend's house, you socialize while riding your bike around the city. At each garden, we completed a trivial task and took a piece of our work: at one stop we filled our container with compost like banana peels and orange rinds; at another stop we added soil; at another stop, we were each given a clove of garlic. By this point the pack of cyclists had spread out across the route, so my friends and I had to get out our maps to see where the next stop was. It was a community garden near campus, but we rode around in circles for several minutes unsuccessfully searching for it. When we finally found it, we discovered that the "garden" was only about a 10-foot by 10-foot patch, which explained why we had such a difficult time finding it, especially since it was well past sunset by that time. We shared a laugh at our ineptitude in interpreting the map and our ironic unfamiliarity with the campus area. At that stop we turned in our compost-and-soil mixture and cranked a compost drum a few times before getting a batch of fertilized soil. The final checkpoint was the garden where we had started, where we planted our garlic cloves in a tilled row and covered them with the fertilized soil. That concluded the race portion of the evening, which was followed by a square dance that lasted into the evening hours.

This example is indicative of Alleycat races, which generally build a festive environment around the bicycle while simultaneously incorporating various forms of community involvement and civic engagement. That Harvest Moon race promoted sustainable living by locating checkpoints at community gardens. Local businesses are common checkpoints for other races, which promotes community development in a

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related way. Such examples are evidence of aspects of the underground/urban cycling culture that extend beyond simple enjoyment of cycling, namely a strong sense of advocacy and a commitment to an entire lifestyle intertwined with cycling. Tim referenced these characteristics as they apply to the diverse underground/urban cycling culture:

> There's groups like LexRides or the Alleycats group; that group is kind of like a culmination of everybody: some people are in it for health, some people are in it for transportation, but, for the most part, what LexRides—that's who I'm more affiliated with—is just building a culture, like trying to create something from the ground up, so a lot of us are involved in, like, government politics of cycling.

Brian observed that one of the goals of such culture-building is changing others' perspectives regarding cycling and helping them see how the bicycle can be integrated into their lives:

> There's still a large contingent of people in town that view a bicycle as just, like a piece of exercise equipment, or, you know, something to race on; you know, it's like, 'If you're on a bike, you *have* to be competing against somebody or something,' whether it's miles or, you know, race speed, you know, whatever. And I tend to think of it more as a cultural sort of symbol, you know, in that it can provide you with a lot of things if you just think about it in a different way; so, you know, I think that if people get out there and see that you can not only have fun and get from one place to another on it, but you can also build a whole like lifestyle around—you can build friends, you can build an entire culture around a bicycle.

Shane said he and his fellow "lifestyle cyclists"

> use their bike really as part of their personal identity the way a lot of people think of their cars as being part of their personal identity, and they wanna be involved in social spaces and social activities that may not be about riding 40 miles really fast, but maybe it's about a progressive dinner, where you get together with a group of people and have wine and appetizers one place, and then bike ride somewhere for dinner, and then bike ride for dessert.

Brad Flowers, the President of the Mayor's Bike Task Force and former manager of Pedal Power (a local bike shop), noted that such lifestyle commitments to cycling intertwine the bicycle with civic involvement:

> Bicycling is definitely for the LexRides folks still a form of recreation and a form of fitness, but I think it has a little bit more—a little bit more, maybe, of a political statement in some way; more—it just has more ideological significance, the bicycle.

Several respondents even referred to the underground/urban cyclists as the cycling group with the strongest advocacy contingent. Dwayne Edwards, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force and the Vice President of the BCC, said of the group, "Some of them are the really—the leading edge of the people that really advocate cycling." Hope Proctor, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force who works at the YMCA, echoed this view:

> … like the group with the AlleyCats, but I think they might actually be probably the strongest, most vocal, as far as bringing awareness to cyclists in Lexington, and have the most impact and influence in the political arena as well.

Shane summarized the various facets of the underground/urban cycling culture, beginning with a simple enjoyment of cycling: "The underground cyclists, their primary goal is just the fact that they have so much fun around the bicycle." He quickly transitioned, though, to the civic involvement and lifestyle commitments associated with underground/urban cycling:

> I think that, you know, [underground/urban cyclists'] more community-focused goal is more people on bikes more often. We believe that the bicycle is, you know, a great form of fitness, a great form of recreation, but the true glory of the bicycle is as a mode of urban transportation.

And finally, he referred to the underground/urban culture rooted in creative forms of cycling:

I think [the underground/urban cycling] group is also interested in just culture-building. I mean, that group of people really likes the other people that they associate with when they're out doing activist events or doing polo or doing Alleycat bike rides, and so they're continually looking for creative ways to create social space for those cyclists to come together and interact.

Commuters

As nebulous as the underground/urban cycling culture may be, this final group of cyclists may be even more nebulous. And although all 20 of the informant interviewees mentioned commuters, this group was not often discussed in great detail. The overlap between the commuter class and other types of cyclists is one factor that makes commuters difficult to define as a group. In general, though, the key characteristic of commuters is their use of the bicycle as a means of transportation, usually to and from work and for errands like grocery shopping. At the same time, many of the more-active road and underground/urban cyclists are commuters as well. For example, BCC members like Dave, Bill Fortune, and Dwayne commute to and from their jobs in addition to the organized riding they do on rural roads; active members of the underground/urban culture like Shane, Brad Flowers, Tim, and Robert commute as part of the lifestyle commitments they have made to cycling. The photograph below shows Alex Meade, who has been commuting in Lexington for over twenty years, attired for his daily commute.

Alex Meade, commuting for over 20 years

Light-colored clothing

Helmet, always

Fenders for rainy days

Messenger bag, for toting work cloths

Wheel reflectors, to be seen from the side

Enclosed, weather-proof, 8-speed hub

Figure 5.4. Commuter Alex Meade. Photograph by Robbie Clark; appears courtesy of Smiley Pete Publishing

This picture of Meade is indicative of dedicated commuters, who have invested in the kind of bike and equipment necessary to commute year-round and in inclement weather. However, this group also includes less-dedicated commuters, like University of Kentucky students, who commute on a limited basis and may not have any commuter-specific equipment. Unlike road cyclists and underground/urban cyclists, commuters cycle primarily as individuals, and there are no groups like the BCC or the LexRides forum associated with the commuter class. In fact, as Shane observed, many commuters may not be interested in the culture of such a cycling group: "There's also a growing group of people who want to use their bikes as a mode of transportation, but who aren't

necessarily in to the culture of it; they just want to be cyclist-commuters." Bill Crank also acknowledged the solitary nature of the commuter class: "There's a lot of commuters also—well that's a pretty new thing also—but I don't know that they have a site or a group that they're linked together with—everybody's kind of out on their own."

But even without an organized group to represent them, commuters still have readily identifiable goals. Sam Dick, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force and a local news anchor, noted goals such as safety and infrastructure: "[Commuters are] very up on safety, the road conditions, how they're treated by drivers; so it's less the social thing and more of a, you know, this-is-how-I-get-to-work-everyday kind of thing." Dave echoed this commuter interest in better cycling infrastructure: "There are people who use bicycling for everyday transportation— commuting, things like that—and they're probably concerned with getting better facilities in town, you know, maybe bike lanes, or some people like off-road paths, and better parking downtown." Bill Fortune also noted his fellow commuters' interest in infrastructure:

> Commuting cyclists are concerned with bike lanes, with safety again, of course. I think the primary thing the commuting cyclists would like to have is designated bike lanes which are contiguous, so that you don't have bike lanes stopping and starting, so that you could go almost anywhere in Lexington on designated bike lanes.

> Moreover, a couple of respondents observed that more people would commute if

there was a more developed cycling infrastructure. Dwayne, as a commuter, noted,

> The commuters would just like to have some better facilities. Like I ride from Masterson Station to here, two or three days a week, and I can get here and it's relatively safe, but I know a lot more people would ride if there were really dedicated bike lanes or a trail where you were actually away from the cars.

Likewise, Tom Walters, a member of the BCC, said that many people would like to commute but simply do not feel it is safe: "A lot of people, the biggest pet peeve is, 'If I

had a safe means to travel in town, I would use a bike.' Now I've heard that more and more and more." He elaborated on the importance of creating a connected cycling infrastructure, especially for would-be commuters:

> We got a lot of bike lanes right now that lead nowhere; they come from nowhere, they go nowhere, because they're new or reconstruction. Case in point: Hayes, from here to Richmond Road. Now on Richmond Road you have a shoulder; you go up so far, with the widening of Richmond Road, that had to include a bike lane; so it does have a bike lane. But then when you get into town it doesn't have a bike lane—or in towards town it doesn't have a bike lane—actually New Circle Road. So, if they can just tie all that together, I think that—you know, it'd be great. I would do somethin' like that; I would commute.

The Foundations of a Broader Cycling Culture

Creating a Bicycle-Friendly Community

Although respondents identified different groups/types of cyclists and the characteristics specific to each, many also spoke of commonalities that extend throughout the entire cycling community. Melissa cited a common goal of enjoying cycling and promoting a general cycling culture:

> All those people together I think have a common thread in that they all enjoy cycling and want to see it grow in Lexington. … So all those folks have different individual goals with different groups but overall, even despite the differences, I think all the groups want to work together to make it better in Lexington for the cycling culture.

And Tim noted the simple idea that cycling is fun for everyone, regardless of how or why they cycle: "I think everybody could agree that cycling's fun—I'll give it that—so yeah, fun, you know? Everybody thinks it's fun, regardless of what your goal is; everybody enjoys it, so that's maybe the unifying goal."

Additionally, several respondents referenced the concept of a bicycle-friendly community when discussing goals that are common across the various cycling groups. For example, Lynn did so while referencing safety as a primary concern to all cyclists:

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I think the first thing that we need to do as a community is create a bicycle-friendly city, and I think before we speak to uniting the cycling culture, you know, whatever elements are around here, we need to create a place where it's safe.

Bill Gorton echoed her sentiments regarding a bicycle-friendly community and safety, also noting infrastructure and health concerns as common to all cyclists:

What we're trying to do—and I'm an advocate for it—is making Lexington, even then Kentucky, much more cycling-friendly. … If you're dealing with the general cycling community, across the board, whether you're road riders, or you're city riders, or you're commuters, you know, good infrastructure—trail development, bike lanes—that helps everybody. It also is good for the health of the community, the safety of the community, the safety of all cyclists; so that's one big thing that cuts across all facets and all communities of the cycling culture.

Dwayne reiterated these ideas of a bicycle-friendly community built upon general interest in safety, infrastructure, health, and enjoyment of cycling:

I think to get the community more cycling-friendly and aware and to build facilities would be the one common theme; and, you know, taking as many cars off the road as possible and to show people that it's healthy and that it's actually convenient to a point, and it's fun. I think that's kind of a consistent theme amongst all the different little groups.

Hope explained the concept of a bicycle-friendly community as an all-encompassing goal that simultaneously implies other goals:

I think it goes back to just creating a more bike-friendly community in Lexington. I think that's—that is the ultimate mission; and then there's several different things—that's the umbrella, and then there's things that kind of trickle down underneath there. But as we know, you know, to make Lexington more bike-friendly, you have to have the education; you have to have the enforcement, you know, after the education; the environment has to be built and equipped for a bike-friendly community.

She and many other cyclists noted the need for both motorist and cyclist education. Cyclist Pam observed that uneducated motorists make cycling unsafe: "I can ride around aggressively but safely and feel good about myself for being smarter than the drivers, but

the truth is those dumb drivers could kill me. I won't win." Respondents often echoed this sentiment that motorists need to be aware that cyclists are legally required to ride on the road (unless conditions there are unsafe) and that bicycles are subject to the same laws as automobiles. As such, motorists should treat bicycles just as they would treat a motorized vehicle. At the same time, respondents acknowledged that cyclists need to be educated on how to ride properly and legally. This would include riding on the right side of the road and not riding on sidewalks (again, unless road conditions are unsafe for a bicycle). Cyclists should also follow all traffic laws as if they were in a motorized vehicle, including stopping at red lights and stop signs. Many respondents suggested the drivers' exam as an ideal opportunity to educate both motorists and cyclists. Further, respondents also acknowledged the need for enforcement, both formal and informal. They recommended that police issue citations to motorists for treating cyclists improperly and to cyclists for riding improperly. Realizing that the Police Department's resources are better used in other areas, cyclists also encouraged an environment where cyclists themselves enforce proper cycling habits. For example, speaking of the tendency of underground/urban cyclists to break traffic laws, Cheryl Wyatt, a member of the Mayor's Bike Task force who works for the National Center for Safe Routes to School and is involved with the Kentucky Rails to Trails Council, said,

> The only [negative] thing I've heard about the Alleycats is that they do ride, sometimes, the wrong way on the streets downtown. … But just kind of a fussy kind of complaining that they're—you know, have a tendency to do things that are not abiding with the traffic laws. So within the broader aspect of the cycling culture, if you've got the diehard education people and you've got the diehard folks who just want to have fun and are doing their thing—which they have the right to do—you're gonna have some conflict between those kind of cultures. I don't think it has to be a big deal, though; I just think it ought to be recognized that there's an opportunity for some discussion about those things.

In addition to education and enforcement regarding proper cycling, most respondents cited bike lanes and/or off-road trails as the best means of creating a safe environment that encourages more people to cycle. Although experienced cyclists do not need such facilities because they are comfortable riding in traffic regardless, Dave observed, "The main benefit of bike lanes is it gets cars—gets bikes out of the way of the cars, so the cars can go by faster, you know? And I think that helps make us accommodate each other better." Several respondents even acknowledged that bike lanes can send the wrong message by implying that bicycles should not be on the road unless there is a designated lane. For example, Robert said,

> I'm not opposed to bicycle lanes; I think, though, that all the facilities for the bicycles—once we—we're pushing for those type of things, but we're also at the same time saying, 'We can't ride unless we have these facilities.' If a bike lane ends, what's gonna happen? 'Oh my god, the bike lane ends!' Well, you know, just keep goin', you know?

> But respondents did agree that facilities like bike lanes encourage less-experienced cyclists to cycle. Roscoe explained,

> I think one of the biggest obstacles is getting people who don't feel comfortable riding on the street; and there's two ways you can do it: one is you just—you force people into the street, and through time they would get comfortable riding; or two: you give them the infrastructure where they can—it takes years to get them, like, to feel comfortable riding their bike in the street. Thank god bike lanes have been coming along, because they have a way to stay on safe roads and in bike lanes. So I'm bringing all this up because until you can make it really convenient for people and make people feel safe, then it will never really catch on.

Wendy Trimble, the co-owner of Pedal the Planet (a local bike shop) and a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, suggested that off-road trails may be even more beneficial than bike lanes, because the majority of people are uncomfortable riding in traffic:

> There's beautiful cycling for people that don't worry about cars; but I think that the infrastructure for people that don't wanna ride with cars is what the main

barrier—and I think that that's a majority of people in Lexington. Like, from really letting the cycling population expand, it would be that, because I think the majority of people want a place to ride that's not necessarily where they're gonna be with cars.

Brad Oakley, a member of the Kentucky Mountain Biking Association and a member of the Mayor's Bike Task Force, noted that regardless of where or why people are cycling, the goal is to have cycling more broadly acknowledged as a legitimate form of transportation:

> We all have a common goal of more cycling facilities, more awareness, more respect out on the roads and things like that. … There's an overriding goal for more access, more facilities, things like that, just for it to become more mainstream, I guess, in a lot of ways, but still retain its own unique identity; but just to have it more recognized as a good, viable alternative means of transportation.

Cheryl echoed the concerns of legitimacy, awareness, and safety as common to all cyclists:

> It seems a high priority is to make the general community aware that bicycling is a legitimate means of transportation and that motorists need to be conscious and aware of that, in respect to bicyclists. And at the same time, I think those who are in the bicycling culture recognize that there's a lot of work that needs to be done to make sure that those who are on bicycles are safe cyclists. So I think a lot of it has to do with safety factors, just getting word out and making sure that the public knows that it's a bicyclist's—a person's right to be out on a bicycle.

The Benefits of Cycling

In addition to identifying common goals that extend throughout the various facets of Lexington's cycling community, respondents also identified the same core set of cycling benefits, regardless of their preferred style of cycling. The benefits most commonly cited fall into five broad and sometimes interrelated categories: economic, environmental, health, community, and fun.

The economic and environmental benefits are fairly obvious: cycling is cheaper and more environmentally-friendly than petroleum-based transportation. Cyclist Pam said, "It's faster than taking a car at times and always cheaper—I don't have to pay for gas or parking." In addition to saving money on gas, being a petroleum-free form of transportation means cycling is emissions-free, which is both an environmental and health benefit—improving air quality benefits both the planet and individual physical health. The simple act of cycling is also a physical health benefit. Cyclist Andy said, "The main benefit is having a form of exercise built in to your daily routine." Many cyclists echoed this sentiment of convenience derived from integrating exercise into activities that you already have to do.

There are also community benefits intertwined with the economic and environmental benefits of cycling. For example, replacing cars with bicycles reduces traffic congestion on Lexington's oft-busy roads. Another quality of life benefit is the community relationships facilitated by cycling. For example, Cyclist Jim said that when he first moved to Lexington, he enjoyed riding around at night to explore the city and to familiarize himself with the community. Cyclist Andy noted that it is very easy to stop to talk to someone you know if you are on a bicycle as opposed to in a car. Shane elaborated on how cycling connects you to the community:

> I think walking is probably the highest quality of life form of transportation, because if you walk from point A to point B, and you see somebody you know, it's phenomenally easy to stop and have a conversation; and so now, a trip that would've been—say you'd been in a single-occupancy vehicle and your friend had been in a single-occupancy vehicle as well, you maybe honk the horn or call them on the cell phone; but you're biking: very easy to stop and interact with people along the way; if you're walking, it's even more so. So I think biking has a quality of life aspect to it just because how it turns transportation into the potential for social encounters that really enrich your life. And it allows you to really get to know your community a little better. As you cycle more, you learn

not to take the main roads, so you're takin' backroads and you're seein' things at a different speed.

These quality of life issues also intersect with the fun of cycling and the mental/spiritual health benefits of cycling. Cyclist Angela said of cycling, "It's nice to get outside, in the open air, relative to being cooped up in artificial environments most of the day."   Bill Fortune referred to cycling as "freer", not just financially, but also mentally:

> It's faster and freer; and it is. For me, it's significantly faster to come over here on a bike than it is in a car, and it's freer; I mean I don't get caught in traffic jams, other people do. So I think there's a psychological boost that you—that comes with cycling; and that's the intangible.

And Cyclist Oscar said, "The primary benefit of cycling is fun. It's fun to bike and it's extra, extra fun to bike with friends. It feels great. There are hundreds of other reasons, obviously, and they are all important, but number one is fun." Several cyclists described this fun associated with cycling as a reminder of childhood. For example, Shane said,

> Personally, there's nothing else I do in my life that every single time I do it, it reminds me of being eight years old, and eight was a good year for me. [He laughs.] Cycling is just so much fun; every time I get on a bike I think about how much fun it is.

Hope also described cycling as reminiscent of childhood:

> When you get on a bike you just kind of feel a sense of empowerment, you know, and that you're—you have…I think—I don't know; it's hard to describe, but you kind of get the sense that your experiencing something that, you know, the cars aren't. And so you just kind of react in manners that—it's just fun, you know? When you're a kid, you know, you kind of look back on when you used to ride and do all kinds of crazy stuff. I still think that adults get on bikes and they kind of—they have that sense again that they're a kid and they're immune to getting hurt.

With so many respondents—regardless of preferred style of cycling or group affiliation—acknowledging a myriad of issues and benefits as common to all cyclists,

there is certainly the potential for an all-inclusive cycling movement that extends throughout the entire cycling community and its various facets. In the concluding section, I will explore what cultural elements of a new social movement currently exist within Lexington's cycling community. I will also introduce a contemporary approach to culture that simultaneously accounts for the distinct differences among cycling groups and for the broader commonalities among them. And I will explain why different styles of cycling are not necessarily a hindrance to a widespread cycling movement and how the commonalities among styles can be used as a foundation for a more expansive cycling culture.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

Framing Cycling as a Political Act

Overall, the existence of multiple, and even disparate, groups/types of cyclists within Lexington's cycling community does not detract from the potential of the cycling community as a social movement. Although the groups may have differing perspectives about and goals for cycling, there is also a lot of overlap among the various groups. As noted above, goals that all cycling groups have in common range from the general promotion of a cycling culture and the development of Lexington as a bicycle-friendly community, to the idea that cycling is fun and healthy, to the need for increased safety and better infrastructure. As Dave said, "We all share cycling, you know, we have that thing in common, so we tend to identify with each other more, even if we're not doing exactly the same thing." Moreover, many cyclists noted that a more cohesive cycling movement seems to be emerging from the coalescence of the various groups, especially within the past three to five years. Events like the Lexington Bike Summit in 2007 and the annual month-long calendar of events referred to as Bike Lexington have and are bringing different types of cyclists together. And as more cyclists from across the spectrum of styles have begun to exchange ideas, a movement to promote cycling in general has emerged, rooted in the issues and benefits that affect all cyclists. Mike explained that cyclists have realized that they share common interests, even if they do not share cycling styles:

> There are differences between types of cyclists and, again, what they're looking for from their cycle; but the Bike Summit helped the differing cultures start to realize themselves as 'Yep, there's something to this.' And there really is, on many, many different levels: energy crisis, environmental crisis, sprawl, high cost of petroleum, our dependency on foreign petroleum.

Tim elaborated on the coalescence of cycling groups, noting that the groups understand that making cycling more prominent in Lexington will require cooperation:

> So you have these different categories of a fitness cyclist, of a commuter, a this, a that; and they've really operated as separate silos, but I think now there's so much energy around the idea of the bike as alternative transportation, and just the general bike that I think that's really bringing people together. So it's connecting it back. … I think things are just getting more festive and fun, and you're seeing a lot of the groups work together. And also from an advocacy standpoint, I think people in Lexington realize we're where we're at, and unless we start doing more like the Bike Summit and things like this and bringing everybody together, then we're just gonna continue on this road that we're on, instead of really building an infrastructure and a culture that unites everyone. So I think there's an energy around the bike and advocacy, that people are really energized and excited about cycling; and so I think that's really the common denominator that are bringin' folks together, gettin' a little cross-pollination among groups.

Returning to Diani's (2000) definition of social movements, the current cycling movement fits the fundamental criteria, even if the movement is not yet fully formed: (1) cycling groups like the BCC, the LexRides forum, and the Mayor's Bike Task Force constitute a social network of actors; (2) cyclists involved in this network seem to be realizing, especially within the past few years, that they share a collective identity through the bicycle; and (3) these cyclists have adopted a set of goals (e.g., making Lexington more bicycle-friendly, increasing the number of bike lanes and off-road trails, improving education and awareness regarding proper cycling habits) that situates them in a struggle against the status quo of a car-centered society—a struggle to increase the number of bicycles on the road but also just generally to have cycling recognized as a legitimate form of transportation along with motorized vehicles. However, the real potential of the cycling movement seems to rest with the underground/urban cyclists. Their framing of cycling as politically significant is unique, and it is this frame that situates the underground/urban cycling culture as a new social movement. Essentially,

because they view themselves as activists and frame cycling as a form of activism, they become participants in a social movement and cycling becomes a political act. They have unique communicative (i.e., framing) processes that socially construct a reality in which cycling is politically significant. In turn, cycling becomes symbolically meaningful in ways that do not seem to apply to other cycling groups.

As noted above, underground/urban cyclists are interested in building a culture around the bicycle. A key characteristic of this culture is its informal nature and spontaneity, which contribute to the fun of and enthusiasm for cycling. This relative lack of structure and the incorporation of alternative approaches to cycling embody two characteristics of new social movements as outlined by Johnston et al. (1994). The resultant enthusiasm is likely why new social movements often share these characteristics of spontaneity and creativity. Ultimately, their interest in culture is also one aspect of the framing processes that underground/urban cyclists use to present cycling as more than a means of transportation, recreation, or exercise. For underground/urban cyclists, cycling is framed as an integral part of an entire lifestyle. As Shane said, lifestyle cyclists "use their bike really as part of their personal identity the way a lot of people think of their cars as being part of their personal identity." This redefinition of personal identity is another common characteristic of new social movements (Johnston et al., 1994). The enthusiasm for cycling and the lifestyle built around it, in turn, promote more political and civic activism among underground/urban cyclists. Several respondents cited Brad Flowers and Shane as two of the most prominent actors in the expansion of cycling in Lexington over the past few years. It is no coincidence, then, that they are, respectively, the Chair and Vice Chair of the

Mayor's Bike Task Force. Alex, who, again, has been commuting in Lexington for more than twenty years, explained,

> A big shift came five or seven years ago, when a politically active generation either came of age or came to the city. It wasn't the old farts like me—we're just out riding around—but it was the younger cyclists who were willing to go down to City Hall, bang on the doors, rattle the chains, and make some noise. And a lot of the credit goes to Shane Tedder and Brad Flowers specifically. But it's that group that has been responsible for making cycling a priority in the government.

Johnston et al. (1994) noted that such an emphasis on civic involvement and lifestyle changes are additional characteristics of new social movements.

Another key characteristic of the underground/urban cycling culture that identifies it as a new social movement is the unique framing of cycling as a political act in and of itself. The bicycle is a tool for building a culture and a focal point for a lifestyle, but the very act of riding a bicycle has political significance for underground/urban cyclists. Cyclist Kevin explained that this perspective is especially common among younger cyclists:

> Young people—like 18 and 19 years old—seem to be really getting into the environmental and health issues. And I like that young people have started riding within the past few years, because in 10 years these people will have more political power. But for now, riding the bike is a statement itself.

And although Robert acknowledged the value of organized advocacy efforts like the Task Force, he explained that his preferred form of advocacy is simply riding his bicycle:

> It's not doin' a lot of talkin' about stuff; just riding. People see me riding every morning. I ride year-round. Every day. And if somebody can see me ride comfortably in traffic: 'Wow, I mean that doesn't look that bad.' … I ride purposively, I ride courteously, and I ride like a vehicle, you know? And the more I can be—the more people can see me out riding, that's my form of advocacy: just ride, you know?

In addition to his various positions, Shane also views his cycling as a form of activism:

> We want to promote [the bicycle as a mode of urban transportation], we want to provide examples of how that works; and so every day, when the 60 or 70 of us get on our bikes and commute to work, and we're out in traffic in the mornings and we're coming home at five, we're providing the example that there is a different way to get around this community.

Such alternative forms of activism further identify the underground/urban cycling culture as a new social movement (Johnston et al., 1994). Because the underground/urban cyclists frame cycling as a political act, their group embodies more than just a cycling culture, they embody a cycling movement.

However, the underground/urban cycling culture as a new social movement does not exist within a void; rather, this new social movement is inherently intertwined with other new social movements. In many ways, the cycling culture/lifestyle frames the bicycle as the solution to the problems addressed by other new social movements. The most obvious connection is to the environmental movement. As noted above, many cyclists identified the environmental benefits of cycling, namely that it is petroleum-free and emissions-free. In this way, the cycling culture frames the bicycle as a solution to current environmental crises. However, even the environmental movement is not distinct from other new social movements. Because much of the environmental problems facing the planet are the results of capitalist over-consumption, the environmental movement has become intertwined with anti-globalization movements. Intertwined with these movements are issues of economic equality—issues that have been adopted by the Global Justice Movement.

Reid and Taylor (2010) investigated some of the overlaps of these new social movements, specifically as they relate to Appalachian culture. Essentially, they

promoted the preservation of unique local communities as an alternative to the capitalistic status quo of exploiting Appalachia for its material resources (Reid & Taylor, 2010). Of course, the impetus for such identity preservation and community development has to come from grassroots activism and the engagement of local citizens (Reid & Taylor, 2010). In many ways, the underground/urban cycling culture in Lexington is an example of the community activism Reid and Taylor (2010) encouraged. Whereas in Appalachia, cultural staples like family ties, storytelling, and bluegrass music compose the "commons"—"the substantive grounds of collective life" (Reid & Taylor, 2010, p. 12)—the underground/urban culture is attempting to build a commons around the bicycle. In this commons, the bicycle is the solution to environmental, economic, and consumerist crises.

So while the do-it-yourself ethos of the underground/urban culture is linked to creativity and grassroots organization in planning events, it is also linked to the equipment of underground/urban cyclists in a very tangible way. For example, many underground/urban cyclists build/modify their own bicycles using old frames and parts. A "velo swap"—a bicycle-focused swap meet—is included every year as part of the Bike Lexington schedule of events for do-it-yourself cyclists who work on their own bicycles. Cyclists bring bikes, cycling equipment, and spare parts like chains, gears, shifters, derailleurs, brakes, and wheels to sell/trade. One of the most common do-it-yourself modifications requires no additional parts, though: bike polo players often adjust their brakes such that the left brake lever controls the rear brakes (whereas generally the right brake lever is connected to the bike's rear brakes). For polo players who wield their mallets in their right hands, this allows for safer and more stable

braking. Moreover, you will not find any bike polo equipment at your local sporting goods store. Bike polo players make their own mallets—usually from ski poles and gas pipes—and spoke guards. Further contributing to the do-it-yourself aesthetic of the underground/urban culture in Lexington are the Cricket Press posters (a few examples appear below) often used to promote cycling events. Such posters are literally created by cyclist Brian Turner and his wife Sara via their Lexington-based screen-printing business. And, of course, in addition to fueling the creativity and fun of the underground/urban cycling culture, the do-it-yourself ethos has obvious anti-consumerist implications that tie the culture to other new social movements.

Figure 6.1. 2009 Bike Prom Alleycat Race Promo. Poster by Cricket Press.

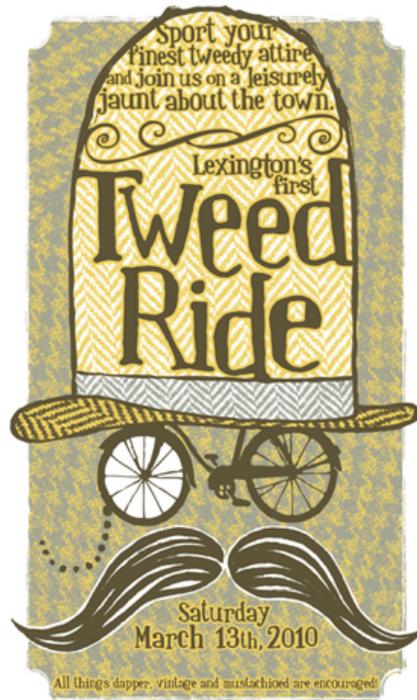*Figure 6.2.* Tweed Ride Alleycat Race Promo. Poster by Cricket Press.

Figure 6.3. 2009 Ride of the Living Dead Alleycat Race Promo. Poster by Cricket Press.

The benefits of community development interrelated with cycling also intersect with the environmental and Global Justice new social movements in the form of the "buy local" movement, as a lot of the underground/urban culture also promotes local

agriculture, business, and culture. The Alleycat races always have checkpoints at local businesses, many of whom are members of the Local First Lexington group. For example, checkpoints for the Bike Prom were located at a local salon and downtown bars/restaurants—places you might go before or during a date. As described above, the checkpoints for the Harvest Moon race were at community gardens, and the race in general promoted sustainable living. Additionally, the common $5 fee to participate in Alleycat races also supports community institutions: the proceeds from the Bike Prom benefited Lexington non-profit organization the Living Arts & Science Center, and the proceeds from the Harvest Moon race benefited Seedleaf (a Lexington network of community gardens) and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Partnerships with such organizations further link the underground/urban culture to Global Justice issues, as Kentuckians for the Commonwealth is a community activism organization that works with issues like voter registration, economic equality, sustainable energy, and Mountain Justice efforts to address the problems in Appalachia associated with coalmining and mountaintop removal. (This connection between the underground/urban cycling culture and Appalachia draws another interesting parallel with Reid and Taylor's (2010) work.)

Shane explained how the environmental benefits of cycling intersect with the concept of localized living:

> Environmentally, I think the benefits of that almost go without saying. It's—the only petrol-chemicals involved in the actual bicycle itself are in the rubbers—the rubber and the plastic pieces. Of course, there's some embedded carbon and some embedded petroleum in the production of it and the transport of it to the point of sale; but, after you get it there, it's an emissions-free vehicle. It's totally dependent on food as a fuel source. Food, for the most part, is a domestic-fuel resource, and so the money that you spend on the fuel for your bicycle doesn't go anywhere, and if you're shopping locally, I mean, your fuel could potentially be comin' from the farmers in the surrounding counties. So that's an interesting way to look at it.

Brad Flowers also spoke of the localized living benefits of cycling for the Lexington community:

> I feel like [cycling] has a bigger role, kind of in the way that our culture is changing, to where things are becoming more—and this is tying in lots of different things. The culture is changing in general in pushing for more—like things…like produce, you know, more local food production, more localized living, more local economies. I think those things are trying to like scale back; people, you know, are more interested in living downtown, being able to walk to the grocery, ride. I think it has—the bike is kind of a good image for those—a way for transit. And if we can capitalize on that, I think we can be the sort of city that's positioned to be one of the leading cities in the next, you know, few decades.

Despite the relatively significant distinction in cultures, there is not great disparity between underground/urban cyclists and other types of cyclists. The primary characteristic that distinguishes underground/urban cyclists from other cyclists is their particular framing process; that is, the unique ways underground/urban cyclists communicate about, present, and internalize symbolic meanings associated with cycling. As noted above, underground/urban cyclists frame themselves as activists and they frame cycling as a meaningful symbolic and political act. Underground/urban cyclists frame cycling as not only a form of transportation, recreation, and/or exercise, but as an entire lifestyle that incorporates these and many other aspects of cycling. Additionally, underground/urban cyclists place great emphasis on promoting an energetic cycling culture that makes cycling enjoyable and encourages enthusiasm for the "cycling lifestyle". Again, such cultural and lifestyle implications are defining characteristics of new social movements (Johnston et al., 1994). Further, the underground/urban culture intersects with other new social movements (e.g., environmental and Global Justice) such that the bicycle is framed as a solution to environmental and consumerist/economic crises. In summary, the excitement for cycling, its culture, and its lifestyle provide the

foundational motivation for participation in the cycling social movement, which develops from framing cycling as a lifestyle and from framing the act of cycling as politically significant.

Reconsidering Cycling Culture

Although underground/urban cyclists are generally the only cyclists who frame cycling as politically significant, Lexington's cycling culture/movement need not be confined to underground/urban cyclists only. Given the shared concerns of all cyclists, there is a common cultural thread running throughout the various cycling groups that not only connects these groups/types of cyclists, but that can also link individual cyclists to a collective identity that they enact both publicly and privately. And the diversity of groups/types of cyclists is not necessarily a deterrent to the success of a broader cycling movement, for new social movements tend to be somewhat fragmented and decentralized. Moreover, the diversity of groups/types of cyclists may not even be hindering the development of a more extensive cycling culture. Quite the contrary, contemporary cultural sociology has revealed that culture is rarely simple; rather, even at the individual level, people often draw upon a myriad of complex and sometimes conflicting cultural resources.

In early drafts of this essay I concluded by advocating for a unified cycling culture that could encompass the different groups—a single culture that would unite all cyclists. However, taking a cue from cultural sociology, I have realized that "most people do not actually have a single, unified set of attitudes or beliefs and that searching for such unified beliefs [is] the wrong way to approach the study of culture" (Swidler, 2001, p. 4). If Swidler concluded that even individuals do not have a unified set of

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attitudes/beliefs, then proposing that a diverse collective of cyclists build a unified culture seems a poor recommendation. Like Swidler (2001), I feel it is more appropriate to think of cultural resources and how they are employed, rather than thinking about singular, unified cultures. In many contemporary cultural studies, culture is no longer thought of simply as the context in which phenomena occur; rather, culture is a tool for agency: "There are not simply different cultures: there are different ways of mobilizing and using culture, different ways of linking culture to action" (Swidler, 2001, p. 23). Swidler (2001) employed metaphors comparing culture to repertoires (as of actors, musicians, and dancers) and to tool kits, emphasizing that people can be more or less skilled with certain cultures, people may find certain cultures more or less appealing, and certain cultures may be more appropriate than others in any given situation. The repertoires and tools in these metaphors are equivalent to frames, as frames are explained above.

As such, the three cycling groups discussed above should not be thought of as employing three distinct frames. Rather, members of each group employ a myriad of frames related to cycling; some of these frames are unique to the particular group and some of the frames are shared with other groups. Speaking of the different cycling groups, Robert observed that the overlap among them makes it sometimes difficult to separate the groups from one another: "… a lot of overlap, and I don't see groups as necessarily being distinct groups; they're just these amorphous type of clusterings, as opposed to being, you know, distinct."

This perspective of culture more accurately explains the overlap among seemingly distinct styles of cycling. It would appear that all cyclists, regardless of their

preferred style, employ frames that emphasize developing Lexington as a bicycle-friendly community, promoting cycling as fun and healthy, increasing bike safety, and building a better cycling infrastructure. A frame unique to recreational/fitness cyclists would be one that emphasizes the enjoyment of cycling on rural roads; a frame unique to commuters would be one that emphasizes cycling as an efficient means of daily transportation; and, as aforementioned, a frame unique to underground/urban cyclists would be one that emphasizes cycling as a politically significant act. However, another benefit of this contemporary view of culture is that it does not restrict the use of such frames. In this way, members of one cycling group are free to employ frames generally associated with a different group. So at the same time that a recreational/fitness cyclist, a commuter, and an underground/urban cyclist can share the frame of increasing bike safety; an underground/urban cyclist can enjoy cycling in the city and on rural roads; a recreational/fitness cyclist can bike to and from work in addition to riding for recreation on the weekends; and a commuter can view cycling to and from work as politically significant. And, as indicated by the wide array of responses during my interviews, any type of cyclist can be aware of all these different frames, regardless of the degree to which (s)he employs each one.

The malleability of frames related to cycling is likely due to the unique status of the bicycle as having many implications at a variety of levels, both individual and societal. Few devices have such far-reaching implications in modern life: personal and community economic benefits; local and global environmental benefits; individual physical, mental, and spiritual benefits; community quality of life benefits; and fun, which is tied to the fact that it can integrate so many of these other benefits.

Enriching the Cycling Culture

Returning to the view of diversity within the cycling culture as a benefit rather than as an obstacle, incorporating a wider variety of frames can make the cycling culture more robust. With the understanding that culture is inherently complex and even contradictory, a cyclist cannot have too many frames to employ. Although a cyclist need not always employ every frame in his/her "tool kit", the more frames a cyclist has, the more readily (s)he can adapt cycling-related frames to apply in a variety of contexts. Essentially, having more frames at his/her disposal will only make any given cyclist better equipped to incorporate cycling into different aspects of his/her life, should the desire/need arise. As such, extending the cycling culture to emphasize the full spectrum of benefits and include a wide array of frames from all styles of cycling will enrich the cycling culture and help cyclists better employ a range of cycling-related frames in a variety of situations.

Expanding the Cycling Culture

Swidler's (2001) work also offers an explanation for why everyone does not adopt the cycling culture or employ cycling-related frames: given the vast array of cultural resources available to any given individual, skepticism and rejection are common responses to culture. Such negative responses are often the result when a culture does not match with personal experience or conflicts with one's already adopted cultures (Swidler, 2001). Thus, cyclists are those who accept cycling culture and employ cycling-related frames; non-cyclists are those who are skeptical of or completely reject cycling culture, or who may be otherwise prevented from accepting cycling culture (e.g., by what they perceive as poor infrastructure). This perspective explains

how a recreational/fitness cyclist can accept the frames of cycling as fun and healthy, but reject the frame of cycling to and from work as an enjoyable form of transportation—because the latter frame is not one of the cycling frames that (s)he accepts, perhaps because (s)he does not enjoy riding in heavy traffic, or having to stop frequently at traffic lights; that is, because that frame does not coincide with his/her preferred frames.

This perspective also highlights the need for cycling-related infrastructure and education. Naturally, people are aware of many more cultures and frames than just the ones they adopt/accept (Swidler, 2001). By definition, one must be aware of a culture before being skeptical of or rejecting it. So, at any given time, each person is aware of a variety of cultures beyond those that (s)he has incorporated into his/her own culture (Swidler, 2001). As such, there are two steps in expanding Lexington's cycling culture. The first is making people aware of the culture and its various frames. The second is overcoming skepticism and other barriers so that cycling culture becomes "vital" (Swidler, 2001, p. 14) to those encountering it. The general public is likely already familiar with many cycling-related frames. Shane acknowledged non-cyclists' simultaneous awareness of cycling benefits and skepticism toward cycling.

> I think that people understand that our current transportation system is flawed; our current energy system is flawed; we have an energy crisis, an economic slowdown if not crisis, we have a health crisis, and I think that—on a mental level I think that people get it. I think they say, 'Oh, well, cycling is cheap, it's oil-free, and it promotes physical activity.' So right there, it's a *piece* of the solution to three major crises that Americans face. But, once people get on the road, and they're in a hell of a hurry to get to the next stoplight, their attitude suddenly changes, and road rage takes over, and they think, 'Why do I have to be behind this vehicle moving slowly?' And so they *race around* to the next red light. And so—and a lot of that—you know, a lot of that goes back to the education, and the enforcement.

The key to expanding the cycling culture is removing skepticism and barriers pertaining to cycling, by exposing non-cyclists to frames and experiences that incorporate the cycling culture into the cultures they currently accept. As noted above, most cyclists see infrastructure (like bike lanes and off-road trails) and education regarding proper cycling as the best means of encouraging more people to try cycling, by providing them a safe and convenient environment in which to cycle. Cyclist Andy said,

> Lexington needs more walking/biking paths. In some areas, you're able to bike to the store on the corner and get back home in fifteen minutes, but that's not the case in a lot of areas. But for people that could bike easily, there's just a car-centered mindset to be overcome; people don't realize until they try it how convenient, easy, fun, et cetera it is. So there maybe just needs to be better promotion to get people to try it and realize all the benefits.

Again, the implication is that non-cyclists have not been fully exposed to the benefits of cycling in their own experiences. Finding a way to promote cycling to non-cyclists can change non-cyclists perceptions of cycling such that they experience its benefits firsthand, prompting them to adopt the cycling culture into their cultural "tool kit".

Converting Culture into Activism

Habermas' (1981/1984, 1981/1987) theory of communicative action provides a good model for both enriching and for expanding the cycling culture. Again, Habermas (1981/1984, 1981/1987) posited egalitarian communication as the ideal means through which social actors can reach mutual understanding regarding their situations, achieve consensus regarding the needs of the collective, and then effectively coordinate their actions to best meet those needs. Communication among current cyclists, especially among those who employ varied frames, will help introduce a wider array of frames to the cycling culture, which allows the cycling culture to be more adaptable in a variety of contexts. In turn, communication between cyclists and non-cyclists will expose non-

cyclists to this array of cycling-related frames, and exposure to a greater variety of frames makes it more likely that some of those frames will remove the skepticism they may hold toward cycling.

Ultimately, if enough members of Lexington's cycling community build upon their shared interests, they can construct a collective identity and a shared culture—in essence, they can construct more similar social realities from the cycling-related frames they share. New social movements can build success just as easily from such cultural features and social constructions as from structural and organizational features. As collective identity and shared culture develop among different groups/types of cyclists, the activist and lifestyle frames currently most prominent among underground/urban cyclists can be incorporated into a more widespread cycling movement as more cyclists begin to view cycling as politically significant. Shane provided an example of how the frame of cycling as politically significant can be adopted by any cyclist. He already believes that all cycling is a form of activism, regardless of how the cyclist may view it:

> Pretty much every research study about cycling safety shows that the number one thing that increases the safety of cyclists on the road is more cyclists on the road. Bike lanes help, but they help in a secondary fashion; they help because more people ride because of the bike lanes. But the more people you have on the road, the more visible you are; and so every time anyone in that group gets on their bike and commutes to work, they're being an activist simply by making the road safer by choosing to ride.

As this frame is adopted by more cyclists, as is inherent in the interpretive and emergent nature of framing processes, new frames will emerge from the expanding social movement that will create an increasingly inclusive and cohesive cycling movement.

Wendy observed the nearly universal relevance of cycling:

> When you talk about bicycling, I think most people, even if you're not in the cycling culture, most people can relate to cycling because every house has a bike

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in their garage, you know? So even if you're talking to people that aren't necessarily *in* the cycling culture, you can talk about cycling.

The key for the cycling movement is converting this relevance into activism. Lexington's underground/urban cyclists have shown that this conversion can be accomplished with the appropriate frames. The next step for Lexington's cycling movement is to use their unique frames to expand participation. Shane views such as expansion as almost inevitable as more people realize the benefits of cycling:

> I don't think hostility is the majority feeling. And I think it's becoming a smaller and smaller piece, and I think we'll see more and more a vocal majority for the sanity of the bicycle, for the benefits of the bicycle, because it fits in so perfectly with our energy needs, our economic needs, and our health needs. It's just—it literally is a vehicle for social change; literally and figuratively.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

Admittedly, there are several groups/types of cyclists that were mentioned by respondents but that were not examined within this essay. I limited my exploration to the three groups that respondents discussed most thoroughly, but other groups like racing teams, mountain bikers, families and adolescents, and the homeless were acknowledged and may warrant further study. Additionally, although I attempted to understand the perspectives of both active and casual cyclists, my in-depth interviews were all conducted with active members of Lexington's cycling community. It is possible that, despite my participant observation and ethnographic interviews, the views of casual cyclists may not have been adequately represented. Moreover, the views of non-cyclists were not explored in my research, except through the observations of cyclists. Understanding the views of non-cyclists, however, will be crucial to any sustained success of Lexington's cycling movement.

Finally, this study exclusively explores the cycling community of Lexington, Kentucky as it existed from September 2008 through May 2010. As I have outlined, the cycling community is complex, so it is difficult to know how the trends observed in this report will evolve in the future. Further, although it is likely that parallels exist between this cycling community and others, there are myriad factors that influence the characteristics of a cycling community in any given location; therefore, the preceding discussion of Lexington's cycling community is not generalizable to other cycling communities. Feedback from respondents throughout the research process, however, indicated that my research and analysis authentically reflects both their words and their perceptions of Lexington's cycling community. I also feel that the analysis of

Lexington's cycling community as a [new] social movement further supports the authenticity of my research by identifying in Lexington's cycling movement commonalities with other social movements. However, comparison of different cycling communities/cultures/movements might provide additional insights that could help improve the cycling cultures/movements of these communities.

ENDNOTES

1. I asked for permission to use informant interviewees names for two reasons: (1) to increase the credibility of my research—so I could include informant interviewees' leadership positions and roles within the cycling community, instead of just referring to all interviewees as generic cyclists; and (2) to facilitate conversation within the cycling community—so cyclists reading this report would have a list of prominent Lexington cyclists to contact for potential collaboration. Informant interviewees consented to the use of their names and other personally identifying information as part of the informed consent process. I did not, however, ask ethnographic interviewees for permission to use their names, as I feared it might deter participation without substantially contributing to the credibility/quality of my research.

2. The three photographs taken by Robbie Clark appeared in an article I wrote in May 2009 for Lexington's *Chevy Chaser Magazine* and *Southsider Magazine*, entitled "What Kind of Cyclist Are You?". In the article, I gave a brief overview of the three most prominent types of cyclists. Robbie, the editor for both magazines, contacted the cyclists that appear and asked them to come to the shoot with their usual cycling equipment and in their usual cycling attire. So although the photographs are "staged" in the sense that they were not taken in ethnographic settings, they still accurately represent each cyclist's personal preferences and presentation of style.

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