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Stand Strong, Stand Proud: Alternative and Pariah Femininities in San Diego's Punk Rock Community

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Stand Strong, Stand Proud:
Alternative and Pariah Femininities in San Diego's Punk Rock Community

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Alternative and Pariah Femininities in San Diego's Punk Rock Community

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Anthropology

by

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California State University San Marcos
Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, 2012

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Abstract

Since its inception nearly 40 years ago, punk rock has often been understood as a social space for rebellion and resistance to dominant cultural norms. As such, punk rock culture becomes fertile ground for explorations of subversive constructions of genders. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the San Diego punk rock community, this thesis unpacks the construction, embodiment and enactment of alternative and pariah forms of femininities and examines their impact on gender dynamics within the scene. Ultimately, this thesis argues that (1) the San Diego punk rock community is a space where alternative and pariah femininities can be embodied and enacted, (2) the embodiment and enactment of these femininities challenges the traditional hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity, and (3) these challenges, and the responses to them, constitute a shift in the culturally-dominant gendered order with the scene.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Theorizations of Punk Rock.....	14
Chapter 3: Feminist and Gender Theories and Their Application to Punk Rock Culture...	29
Chapter 4: There is Going to be Blood, There is Going to be Bruises.....	44
Chapter 5: Stand Strong, Stand Proud.....	58
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	73
Bibliography.....	79
Appendix.....	83

List of Figures

Figure 1 - GBH circa 1980

Figure 2 - Career Soldiers circa 2010

Figure 3 – Sex Pistols – God Save the Queen

Figure 4 – The punk rock aesthetic

Figure 5 – Clothing of punks in Indonesia

Figure 6 – Punks in Indonesia: Aesthetics

Figure 7 – Riot Grrrl Convention Flyer

Figure 8 – Riot Grrrl vs. punk rock timeline

Figure 9 – Space-use diagram of a skinhead show

Figure 10 – Band playing at a skinhead show

Figure 11- Space-use diagram of a punk rock show

Figure 12 – Mosh pit during Opposition Rising's set

Figure 13 – San Diego Punk Rock Band 'At Fault'

Chapter 1

Introduction

Why Gender?

This thesis specifically examines gender dynamics in the San Diego punk rock community. Punk rock culture in San Diego is extremely complex and diverse and can be unpacked in innumerable ways. I chose to focus on gender, and specifically constructions of femininities, because this topic is woefully underrepresented. In fact, there really is only one book on the subject, and while it is a solid piece of scholarship, it is outdated both in terms of time and theory (Leblanc 1999).

The lack of scholarship on gender dynamics in punk rock is extremely unfortunate. As I hope this thesis will demonstrate, there are very interesting things going on in terms of the construction of alternative femininities. I became interested in exploring concepts of femininity in the San Diego scene as an undergraduate when I took a course that discussed feminist approaches to understanding gender. I found that it was quite easy to apply the theoretical perspectives I learned in school to the culture around me. I played a backyard show and a young woman was hurtled out of the mosh pit smashing into my microphone stand which hit me in the face and she crashed into the drum set. She quickly jumped up, brushed herself off, smiled, and eagerly rejoined the action. I realized that this was not the ‘normative’ femininity that we had been discussing in class. Something very different was going on here.

Ultimately, that incident, and several other similar occurrences serve as the impetus of this thesis. What is going on the San Diego punk rock scene is special and the people who are challenging convention really ought to be represented in scholarship. It is my position that the San Diego punk rock community is a space for the construction and embodiment of alternative

and pariah femininities, which challenge the gendered social order. This has theoretical implications on several academic discourses.

Why Punk?

Punk is not dead, it is just no longer regularly engaged with by academics. While meaningful scholarly works have always been few and far between over the nearly 40 years since punk rock's inception, the past decade has seen a marked dearth of critical engagement with the culture. This might lead some to believe that punk rock culture or its relevance has decreased. Neither is the case. Both within the US and internationally, punk rock culture is perhaps more relevant today than it has ever been. High profile events such as the 2012 arrest and imprisonment of the feminist punk rock band Pussy Riot in Moscow or the arrest and 're-education' of punk rockers in Aceh, Indonesia have made international headlines and underscore the notion that punk rock culture is still alive and, moreover, still creating friction against dominant political discourses and regimes.

While the friction created by punk rock culture is overtly apparent in cases such as Pussy Riot's imprisonment, the lived realities of those who are members of punk rock culture often act as daily modes of resistance in several ways. The purpose of this thesis is to explore one such part of punk rock culture which actively challenges hegemonies and potentially shifts hierarchical social constructions of gender. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in San Diego, California's punk rock community, I contend that punk rock culture serves as a space for the construction of alternative and pariah femininities that challenge the hegemonic gendered orders and shifts for participants, if only slightly, the hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity.

Any meaningful discussion of punk rock culture requires proper context. This introductory chapter serves to situate the reader and provide such context by: (1) discussing issues that skew perceptions of contemporary punk rock communities; (2) outlining and defining the San Diego punk rock scene; (3) discussing the methodologies utilized in this project; (4) and explaining the organization of the thesis.

Hidden in Plain Sight¹

Though this project is largely based on ethnographic data collected during the summer of 2014, I have been academically interested and conducting research in the San Diego punk rock community for the past 5 years. In 2011, as an undergraduate student, I presented a poster at the American Anthropological Association's (AAA) annual meeting in Montreal titled "Tracing the Legacies and Evolution of San Diego's Punk Rock Community." This was my first experience in a professional anthropology setting and I was ecstatic to see that not only was my poster generally well received but, also, that the field of anthropology had so many people who were interested in the punk rock community. Several people who stopped and talked to me knew quite a bit about punk rock music and history. In fact, to my amazement, one man was able to name several people in one of the historic photographs I included and claimed that he was more than likely at the specific show depicted, which took place somewhere in an obscure venue in San Diego during the early 1980s.

While my overall experience of presenting the poster was outstanding, I did make an interesting observation. I found that I was often being told about punk rock more than I was telling anyone about it. I chalked this up to being a novice and having an outrageously broad

¹ This section is an adaptation of a paper presented at the 2014 AES/SVA meetings in Boston.

research questions with limited data, as it was simply research stemming from a class-based undergraduate project.

In 2013, as a graduate student, I presented another poster at the AAA meetings titled “Where the Rules Do Not Apply: Femininity in the San Diego Punk Rock Community”. I had a wonderful experience; however, I did notice that once again people seemed to have preconceptions about punk rock culture whether they had any direct information about the community or not. In fact, many people’s preconceptions about punk rock were either extremely outdated or simply wrong. Furthermore, I found that the textual information that was included on my posters was often overlooked. Conversations would start after a brief once-over of the photographs that I had included. This ultimately leads me to believe that the photographs used in my presentation carried information independent of any ethnographic context that I had included.

Where did this information come from? This is, in fact, a very important question. As punk rock culture has become more globally prominent and visible, more people have been exposed to punk rock ideologies and their associated symbols. Indeed, brightly colored mohawks and ornately decorated jackets not only hold meaning within the community, but amidst growing recognition and familiarity are now often associated—whether entirely accurately or not—with specific punk rock ethos and attitudes by outsiders as well. Punk rock’s deliberate visibility thus suggests readily accessible cultural and community values and commitments. In reality, however, the same visibility also presents pitfalls for ethnographic purposes. Whereas punk rock presents a myriad of visual markers and cues for ethnographic exploration, growing popular familiarity masks ethnographic insight with preconfigured associations. Thus, even in professional academic settings such as the AAA meetings, understandings of punk rock culture can be masked and marred by popular misunderstandings.



Figure 1 - GBH circa 1980 (Punkygibbon.uk.co)



Figure 2 - Career Soldiers circa 2010 (Courtesy of Career Soldiers)

This issue is exacerbated to an extent by the punk rock aesthetics' perceived lack of change over time. *Figures 1* and *2* exemplify this well. While these two groups may look very similar, and the people almost interchangeable, the fact is they are separated by thirty years and 5,500 miles.

While the notion that many of the aesthetics that are prevalent in punk rock culture have not changed dramatically over time may be true, the notion that punk rock culture has not changed over time is unmistakably false. Yet, it seems as though popular perception of punk rock comes from outdated sources and that the relatively unchanging aesthetic supports this line of reasoning.

What is at the heart of the issue though is that popular perceptions have little to do with the realities of punk rock culture for those who are a part of it. Try typing in “punk rock culture” into your preferred internet search engine. Within the first results, you will find the image



Figure 3 – Sex Pistols – God Save the Queen

(Retrieved from: <https://threelongerslater.wordpress.com/2012/03/15/happy-birthday-and-god-save-the-nme/>)

contained in *Figure 3*. It is the sleeve for the seminal single by The Sex Pistols titled “God Save the Queen”. The Sex Pistols were undoubtedly an influential punk band; so much so that this image has meaning beyond its role as artwork for a single. To those who are familiar with it, it often stands for a certain attitude and mentality—the ‘punk rock ethos.’ This becomes a problem when visuals such as this stand-in for ethnographic data about punk rock culture. Internally, many contemporary punk rock community members see the Sex Pistols as a symbol of what not to do, i.e. being victims of exploitation and seeking rock-stardom. It has become apparent to me while presenting my posters and engaging in discussion with people outside of the culture, that the Sex Pistols and the ethos attached to them and their symbols, is the popular perceptions of punk rock. Even the most rudimentary ethnographic research, however, will reveal that contemporary punk rock communities are much more than nihilists, hell-bent on self-destruction.

Unfortunately, for those who are interested in the extraordinary things that are going on in contemporary punk rock communities, there are few avenues for quality information. No one appears to be conducting ethnographic fieldwork in punk scenes. The few works that have been presented recently are largely stale theorizations based on bands that have not existed since the early 1990s (see Greene 2013). It is my intention with the thesis to not only advance theorizations of the punk scene but to also add ethnographic insights that will ultimately demonstrate that contemporary punk rock communities are worthy of recognition and investigation by the academy, and represent a robust site of gender dynamics and negotiations.

Who I am Talking About

More often than not, analyses of punk rock culture will begin with an overview of the history of punk rock music (Leblanc 1999; Moore 2010). While this can be interesting, it

actually does very little to bolster the understanding of punk rock communities due the fact that they are always woefully incomplete. Contemporary punk rock music draws from a wide variety of sources. While it may be true that the genre has been built from late 1970s bands such as Television, The Ramones, and The Sex Pistols, punk rock music has expanded over the past 40 years to incorporate a slew of musical varieties. This is evident in the almost infinite number of sub-categories of punk rock. Crust punk, ska punk, street punk, oi, pop punk, d-beat, hardcore, and grindcore are just a select few of the styles of the music. Again, while all of these styles are deeply rooted in the history of punk rock, they draw from many influences (not all musical). As the short list of styles shows, punk rock music is actually extremely diverse (see Cogan 2008).

What is important to understand about punk rock music for the purposes of this thesis is that it is absolutely central to punk rock culture. This may seem obvious, but it should be stated outright. Also possibly obvious but equally key, is that punk rock shows are the social and cultural hearts of punk rock culture. Communities are perpetuated by frequent shows that feature local bands and further bolstered by shows that feature larger national and international touring bands. The scale of these shows range from a small bars with local bands playing to as few as dozen people to large shows at music venues that can hold several hundred people.

So who are the people who are part of contemporary punk rock communities? This is an important question that is much more difficult to answer than it may appear. In 1979, sociologist Dick Hebdige asserted that the punks were British working-class white youths (1979). 35 years later that assertion no longer applies. In San Diego, punks come for a variety of different socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and vary in age. Indeed, during my fieldwork I spoke to punks who held degrees from prestigious institutions, those who had dropped out of high school, and everything in between. In terms of employment, punks in San Diego also ran the

gamut from jobs as engineers to fast food workers. The oldest person that I spoke with was 41 years old and the youngest was 18, though there were both younger and older people present and active in the community.

Reliable demographic information is nearly impossible to compile in the San Diego punk rock community. This is due to a number of factors. There is a constant flow of people in and out of the group. People are sometimes heavily active within the community and then suddenly are not, for various reason, and then may just as quickly reappear. Furthermore, determining who primarily identifies themselves as punks, and who other punks identify as punks, prove to be difficult as well. While an individual may assert that they are a punk rocker, that does not necessarily mean that they are seen as part of the community. ‘Authenticity’ is debated, contested, and determined using a number of factors.

While there will never be an universally agreed upon definition for who is a punk and who is not, for the purposes of this thesis I am defining punks in the following way: Those who primarily self-identify as punks and who are frequent participants in various modes of bolstering the larger punk rock community. As I see it, bolstering and perpetuating the community can happen in several different ways. These can include being a musician, booking and promoting shows, frequently attending and participating at shows, helping with the logistics of putting on shows (i.e. housing touring bands, being a roadie). Again, this is how I choose to define members of the punk rock community for the purposes of this thesis and I recognize that this is simultaneously vague and specific. Using this definition I would roughly estimate the number of core participants in the San Diego punk rock community as being somewhere in the neighborhood of 300 people.

Methodology

It would be inappropriate for me to go any further without stating outright that I primarily identify myself as a punk. Furthermore, I am from San Diego. I have spent the better part of 15 years as a participant of the San Diego punk rock community. I participated in several different ways including being in several bands. Both theoretically and methodologically this comes with advantages and disadvantages. Certainly anyone still clinging to the delusion of objectivity will assert that my research is tainted somehow by my involvement with the culture I am studying. Conversely, thanks to my background, my ability to build rapport and navigate an often guarded culture has been invaluable.

While so-called 'native' anthropology is fairly common in the discipline today, I still sometimes struggle with my positionality. Though it would be absolutely absurd to draw firm connections between my position and that of indigenous anthropologists, I found that many indigenous anthropologists' writings were helpful in orienting a critical analysis of my own positionality (Medicine 2001; Deloria 1988). Ultimately, I firmly believe that the access I was granted, stemming from my identity, has strengthened this project in many ways and certainly outweighs any negative aspects. That said, where applicable I have noted cases of potential conflict, at least as far as I was aware of such.

Gaining access to the San Diego punk rock community was fairly easy for me. My primary interlocutors were able to put me in contact with several other individuals and the majority of my interview data came from chain-referrals. For this thesis I draw from a relatively large body of ethnographic data compiled from a myriad of informal interviews and 11 longer one-on-one interviews. The 11 longer interviews were conducted in various places, including

peoples' homes, bars, and music venues. Most of these interviews were tape-recorded, however, the locations sometimes made the recordings largely unintelligible due to the ambient noise.

Initially my plan was to rely heavily on visual anthropological methods as a means of gathering data. As punk rock culture is extremely visual, I felt this would be necessary. Additionally, I was interested in gathering data about the gendered use of space at punk rock shows. I felt that photography would be an excellent way to do this. I assumed there would be very few issues with taking pictures as photography is commonplace in the community. Drawing from Jonathan S. Marion's 2010 article "Photography as Ethnographic Passport" I assumed photography would facilitate further access to the punk rock community (25). As it turned out, the use of photography did not work out the way I had planned. Though punks often exhibit an overt and showy aesthetic, they usually do not like to be made into a spectacle. Taking pictures of bands while they were on stage was appropriate but, even as an insider, photography of anything else became rather suspect.

Though the use of photography as an ethnographic method was less fruitful than I had hoped for, I did manage to make visual analyses via other means. Based on sketches made in the field, I was able to compile diagrams that depict the gendered use of space at shows. These revealed a great deal of information about culturally constructed barriers and boundaries within the scene.

How This Thesis is Laid Out

In order to substantiate my assertion that the San Diego punk rock community is a space for alternative and pariah femininities I have divided this thesis into several chapters. Chapter 2 of this thesis provides a review of the pertinent theoretical positions and literature on punk rock.

Specifically, this chapter critically engages with sociological perspectives of subculture and offers alternative approaches to understanding contemporary punk rock culture. Finally, the chapter ends by challenging the conflation of theorization of Riot Grrrl with theorizations on punk rock culture. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to create space for ethnographically based explorations of punk rock culture and contends that there is a marked lack of anthropological engagement with the community.

Chapter 3 specifically engages with gender theory and feminist perspectives that I contend are essential for understanding gender dynamics in the San Diego punk rock community. Beginning with the works of Judith Butler, I provide a basic theoretical position on the performativity of gender. Building from this position I move to several other works that analyze the constructions of alternative masculinities and femininities. Lastly, I discuss the works of Mimi Schippers whose notions of gender maneuvering and pariah femininities are foundational to my analyses of gender in the San Diego punk rock community.

Chapter 4 makes critical analyses from data collected at punk rock shows. In this chapter I specifically show how the San Diego punk rock community provides fertile ground for the construction of alternative and pariah femininities. I do this by analyzing the gendered use of space at various shows that I attended during my fieldwork. Additionally, I critique the popular position that punk rock is inherently violent by unpacking the punk rock mosh pit.

Chapter 5 is intended to demonstrate how alternative and pariah femininities are constructed and maintained in the San Diego punk rock community. Drawing from the ethnographic data collected in conversations and interviews with various members of the community, I argue that many femininities in the scene are not merely acts of collusion with masculinity, but rather, are embodiments of traits that challenge the hegemonic gendered order.

Finally, Chapter 6 serves as a conclusion in which I explore the implications and impacts of pariah femininities in the San Diego punk rock community. Additionally, I discuss how the theorizations and perspectives I have argued in the thesis can be used for future research and discourses.

Chapter 2

Theorizations of Punk Rock

A Critical Examination of Subculture Theory

Since its inception in the late 1970s, punk rock has garnered interest from academics eager to theorize about it. Indeed, there is a fair, though not overwhelmingly large, corpus of scholarly literature written on the subject. Unfortunately, few of these works draw from anything other than sociological perspectives. While these sociological works offer an excellent foundation from which to launch critical analyses of scholarly discourses regarding punk rock, as I will argue, this is still problematic.

Dick Hebdige's 1979 book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* offers one of the first fully articulated examinations of punk rock. Hebdige masterfully unpacks the historical context of punk rock (and other music-based cultures) and explores the genesis of its style. He asserts that punk rock is a subculture comprised of white working class youths who stylistically draw from a multitude of interesting sources including reggae and Rastafarianism (Hebdige 1979:29). Hebdige's Marxist approach and semiotic analysis of punk rock yields significant insights, however, some of his assertions and predictions did not stand the test of time. For example, Hebdige contends "as soon as the original innovations that signify 'subculture' are translated into commodities and made generally available, they become frozen" (Hebdige 1979:96), and went on to say "punk clothing and insignias could be bought mail-order by the summer of 1977...which presaged the subculture's imminent demise" (96). Even within the realm of the British punk scene that Hebdige was speaking to, this concept of stagnation after commodification proved to be untrue. Circa 1982, British punk rock stylistically diversified with

the advent of what becomes known as UK82 punk rock and continued to become more complex over subsequent decades. Certainly the “imminent demise” that Hebdige speaks of has not come to fruition as punk rock has not only continued but has also grown and maintained its relevance to this day.

Hebdige was certainly on the cutting edge in terms of theorizing about punk rock as the culture was still in its infancy when his influential book was published. The “Suggested Further Readings” section of *Subculture* notes that there were no scholarly approaches to punk rock for him to suggest at the time the book was written (Hebdige: 186). As such, *Subculture* stood, and still stands, as the theoretical basis for most academic forays into punk rock. Indeed, Hebdige’s assertion of punk rock as being a white, working class, youth subculture persists to this day. Sociologists studying punk rock consistently refer to it as a youth subculture and rarely, if ever, critically engage with that moniker (Dimitriadis 2008; Leblanc 1999; Baron 1989; Moore 2010).

Hebdige’s approach to subcultures comes from his affiliation with the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Culture Studies (Birmingham school) and the theoretical lineage of the famed Chicago School of sociology. As he notes, Hebdige draws from the work of Frederic M. Thrasher (Chicago school) whose 1927 book *The Gang*, which documented and theorized about urban youth gangs in Chicago, has served as the theoretical starting point and impetus for countless sociological examinations of youth subcultures and delinquency. Hebdige asserts:

Though it is important to distinguish between the delinquent *gang* and the *subculture* which is altogether broader, looser... and less literally involved in law-breaking, there are obvious connections. Moreover, the two terms are virtually synonymous in the popular mythology. Unfortunately, the confusion that follows from this association has all too often been reproduced in academic work because...the analysis of subculture grew in large part directly *out of* the study of delinquent street gangs. (1979:180, original emphasis)

Although Hebdige cautions against conflating delinquent gangs with subculture, this seems to be an underlying theme in many subcultural studies. Indeed, the structural functionalist approach utilized by many theorists situates subculture in terms of its deviance from larger societal norms. Unfortunately, as Hebdige points out, all too often deviance and delinquency become synonymous. Sociologist Stephen Baron's audacious 1989 article on Canadian punks provides a prime example of this conflation. After making the absurd and unsubstantiated assertion that there were exactly 35 punks in Victoria, Canada (1989:295) he proceeded to contend that "scamming, rolling (i.e. mugging), panhandling, and violence" were common among subcultural members (311). Baron's methodological approach underscores how subcultural theory can be sullied by the conflation of subculture and delinquency. He states that he found participants for his study by simply walking up to 'punks' on a street corner which he already knew was 'punk turf' (293). It is clear by the syntax that Baron uses that his approach to punk is as if it were a criminal gang. His preconceptions of what punk rock is appear to be shaped, at least in part, by larger theoretical approaches to subculture which blur deviance and criminality.

Published in 1999, Lauraine Leblanc's seminal work on gender enactments in punk rock, *Pretty in Punk*, was the next major academic work focused on the culture. Leblanc's sociological line of inquiry was framed by the same theoretical approach as Hebdige's. Indeed, Leblanc operates within the subculture framework; however, she critiques previous approaches in interesting ways. While she fails to critically engage directly with the concept of youth subculture, she does suggest that previous works do not include women's perspectives. Leblanc contends "Sociologists have argued that, in entering a subculture, a (working class) (white) (male) youth actively constructs a subject position that puts him at odds with the mainstream,

dominant culture, thereby individually resisting the structural oppression *he* faces” (1999:14, original emphasis). As Leblanc indicates, Hebdige and others from the Birmingham school failed to consider gender dynamics within the subcultures they were exploring. Though Leblanc grapples with the lack of gender studies in subculture theory, she seems to buy into the rest of the theoretical framework that asserts that punk rock is a youth subculture.

It is particularly interesting that Leblanc uses the term ‘youth subculture’ when discussing punk. In an extremely insightful appendix to *Pretty in Punk*, Leblanc provides vignettes of her key informants (1999:239-251). She includes the ages of her interlocutors and they range from 15-37 years old. It is perplexing that she insists on using the term ‘youth’ when talking about a subculture that consists of many people above the age of 30. Youth must end at some point. While ‘youth’ certainly cannot be quantified, approaching punk rock culture as if it were a phase that a person will grow out of is undeniably problematic.

While Leblanc’s analyses still operate within the youth subculture theoretical framework, she does challenge the methodological approaches of earlier subcultural theorists, particularly Hebdige and those from the Birmingham school. She contends that the lack of ethnographic data found in their analyses confounds their assertions. Specifically, she says:

Although the Birmingham school strongly advocated the use of ethnographic methods, its adherents seem largely to have constrained themselves within observational methods of data collection...Although semiotic readings are important and interesting, their failure to present accounts of intent in the construction of resistance seriously impugns their validity. (1999:14-15)

As Leblanc’s work goes on to show, by heavily incorporating ethnographic methods that give voice to those within punk rock, the validity of previous theorization about what punk is comes into question. *Pretty in Punk* is focused primarily on feminist theorization of punk rock

and, thus, stops short of making critical analyses of the overarching sociological theory that frames our understanding of punk rock culture. However, making critical analyses is essential moving forward as contemporary punk rock communities continue to become more complex and multifaceted.

As Leblanc contends, approaches to punk rock will not be successful if assessed solely from observational perspectives and semiotic analyses. Retrospectively, it is simple to see such a critical flaw in Hebdige's analysis when he notes "the challenge to hegemony which subculture represents is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely in style" (1979:17). Hebdige and other subcultural theorists are contending that subcultures are defined by their relationship to hegemonic culture. In *Subculture*, Hebdige contends that the punk rock subculture's relationship to hegemonic culture is done indirectly and symbolically through style. Additionally, subcultural style can only be understood via hegemonic culture because hegemonic culture provides the interpretations that give it meaning. Ultimately, subculture is meaningless outside of its role as passive counterpoints to a singular hegemony. By neglecting robust ethnographic methods this conclusion seems to be appropriate; however, as Leblanc's book *Pretty in Punk* clearly shows (and as I argue Chapter 5), within punk rock culture resistance is embodied and challenges are being directly made to cultural hegemony that are *not* contingent on outside interpretations.

Subculture theory is embedded within a structural functionalist approach to culture. Indeed, subculture is seen as contingent upon and mechanistically linked to other cultural factors. From this approach there is a marked lack of agency for subcultural participants; they are cast as reactors, never actors. As Leblanc aptly highlighted, from such a (structural functionalist) perspective an entire gender can be overlooked.

In addition to subculture theory's lack of regard for agency, the framework can no longer account for the complexities of culture as we now understand it. Globalization theorist Arjun Appadurai, while speaking to global economics, asserts "the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models" (1990:285). While Appadurai is certainly not speaking directly to issues surrounding subculture theory it is easy to extend his assertion and apply it to different spheres. Essentially, Appadurai is contending that old models that cannot account for the complexities of a globalized world need to be discarded and new theoretical approaches formed. Subculture theory falls apart when confronted with the intersubjectivities, flows, and disjunctures of contemporary culture.

Alternative Theoretical Approaches to Punk Rock

More recent sociological scholarship has attempted to account for the heterogeneous nature of what has been called subculture. Some sociologists (Haenfler 2013; Dimitriadis 2008) advanced theoretical positions that became known as 'postsubculture' theory. Essentially, postsubcultural theorists take a postmodern approach to subculture and largely contend that it is impossible to define subcultures because they are too amorphous and porous (Haenfler 2013). Many postsubcultural theorist posit that there are not 'subcultures' but instead scenes (Haenfler 2013; Dimitriadis 2008). Sociologist Ross Haenfler sums up the position by saying "[different] scenes share styles, interests, music, and so on, making it difficult if not impossible to identify distinct groups such as 'punks' (2013:11). Postsubculture theory immediately falls apart when one simply asks a group of punks if they primarily identify as punks; to which most would answer 'yes'. As such, postsubculture theory seems to have fallen out of favor within sociology

because of its extreme postmodern perspective and its inability to further understandings. The rise and fall of postsubculture theory has left social scientists reverting back to subculture as the framework for explorations into punk rock culture and other realms (Moore 2010).

Ultimately, if the concept of subculture cannot account for the complexities of a globalized culture and it can no longer apply to contemporary punk rock, what is an alternative approach that yields productive insights? As I will argue, an anthropological approach to punk rock provides person-based, holistic understandings of this complex and often misunderstood culture.

From an anthropological perspective punk rock can no longer simply be seen as a subcategory of a single, relatively homogenous, hegemonic society, but rather, must be understood as a global culture that is connected via its learned and shared systems of beliefs, customs, symbols, art and other cultural aspects (see Tylor 1871). By using a multitude of anthropological theory, it will become apparent that punk rock must be understood as globalized culture replete with the associated intricacies and complexities.

Costly Signaling Theory

Drawing from ecological anthropology and human behavioral ecology provides a unique insight into punk rock culture. Specifically, the concept of costly signaling theory provides an interesting framework from which assertions about a global punk rock culture can be made. Costly signaling theory, as used by cultural ecologists, is based upon evolutionary biology concepts first put forth by Amotz Zahavi. In 1975, Zahavi proposed what he called the 'handicap principle' as a means of understanding counterintuitive animal behaviors.

Drawing from Zahavi's handicap principle some human behavior and cultural ecologists contend that people often embody and exhibit honest signals and that these can be examined to better understand cultural phenomena. One example of this theoretical approach comes from anthropologist and human behavioral ecologist Richard Sosis. Sosis asserts that signaling theory can be applied to religious practices in what he calls the "costly signaling theory of religion". In a 2004 article, Sosis argues that extreme rituals of religion act as costly signals to other likeminded individuals (Sosis 2004). Take for example some Christians in the Philippines who will publicly self-flagellate and have themselves crucified during Holy Week. Why would anyone choose to do that to themselves? Not only are they purposely subjecting themselves to excruciating pain but they are also marginalizing themselves from the greater population. Sosis argues that acts such as self-flagellation can be seen as costly signals that communicate commitment to other likeminded individuals. Furthermore, these costly signals can be taken at face value as too costly to fake. Sosis asserts "one prediction of the 'costly signaling theory of ritual' is that groups that impose the greatest demands on their members will elicit the highest levels of devotion and commitment, Only committed members will be willing to dress and behave in ways that differ from the rest of society" (Sosis 2004:169). Essentially, devotion can be measured by the level of self-handicapping a person is willing to impose upon him/herself.

While the handicap principle is useful for understanding deleterious traits in terms of Darwinian fitness, human behavioral ecologists utilize costly signaling theory to unpack seemingly illogical cultural practices in terms of group identity and cohesion. Costly signals symbolize devotion, which has social benefits in circles recognizing that signal positively. Signals that are too costly to fake thus serve as a mechanism through which trust is built, facilitating access to community acceptance. While costly signals are deleterious to individual's

acceptance by people who do not interpret the signal positively, the same signals can thus be beneficial to individuals as they facilitate acceptance and accrue status within specific social realms.

The theoretical framework utilized by Sosis in the costly signaling theory of religion can be seamlessly applied to other cultural spheres. Indeed, costly signaling theory can be exceptionally illuminating when applied to punk rock culture. The punk rock aesthetic can easily be understood as a costly signal. Brightly colored mohawks, numerous facial piercings, extensive tattooing, and spiked, studded, and patched clothing all have negative connotations outside of the cultural context of punk rock (see Chapter 5 for elaborations). Almost every punk has many stories of harassment based on the punk rock aesthetic and there are countless accounts of this harassment turning violent (see Lyons 1999 for a high profile incident).

Undoubtedly, the punk rock aesthetic costs its practitioners. While it seems nonsensical to purposely submit oneself to harassment and violence, costly signaling theory offers a viable explanation. Costly signals are only logical if they provide some sort of net benefit to the signaler. The punk rock community offers such benefits to those who are willing to bear the costs associated with the culture's signals. For example, the vast majority of punks in the San Diego scene identify as artists of some nature. The punk rock community offers a network for musicians and artists to collaborate and disseminate their work. A more specific example comes from a group known as the San Diego Pyrate Punx. The Pyrate Punx are a loosely organized network of punks with chapters in most major cities in the US as well some in international locations. They put on local DIY shows and help facilitate national tours via their counterparts in other cities. When a band wants to play shows and tour and is part of the punk rock community the Pyrate Punx can make it happen and often do.

While the costs of the punk rock aesthetic and lifestyle are high at times, according to the theoretical approach they are necessary costs. In order to gain acceptance and access, signals must be too costly to fake. Harassment and violence are indeed costly; however, they are not the only costly signals that show commitment to punk rock culture. *Figure 4* shows the time commitment that is necessary to achieve the proper look. Note the meticulous studding which undoubtedly took a tremendous amount of work-hours (all DIY of course). Also, note the man of the right's hairstyle. This is undoubtedly displays a significant level of dedication and, according to the costly signaling theory, can be taken as an honest signal of commitment to the punk rock ethos and lifestyle.

It should be noted that the level of commitment necessary for easy access into the punk rock community is easily identified by community members. Signals that are not costly enough in the eyes of the practitioners will generally result in a closing of ranks. The classic examples of this would be the 'middle school mohawk' (where the sides of the head are not shaven, merely



Figure 4 – The punk rock aesthetic (Courtesy of Mike Virus)

patted down), and attire bought at the mall. These attempts at the punk rock aesthetic are not costly enough to demonstrate real commitment, and people who try this approach are generally rebuffed and ostracized.

Punk Rock as a Global Culture

Anthropological approaches provide useful discourses and theoretical frameworks from which to interrogate contemporary punk rock cultures. As I have argued, costly signaling theory can be used as a means of understanding a largely unified culture that shares meanings, symbols, and ethos. By utilizing and building upon anthropological theorizations and discourses surrounding globalization, I will argue that punk rock should in fact be understood as a global culture. The following retelling serves as basis for discussion.

“As we were arrested, I got beat up,” said Jarot Susanto, 23, his forearms marked with smudgy tattooed skulls. “We couldn’t fight back. We just let ourselves go. I just wanted it to stop.” He appeared equally aggrieved over the loss of his triple mohawk, which took months to cultivate. Every male detainee was buzzed bald and every female punk’s hair was clipped into a neat, military-friendly bob. “It’s a permanent heartbreak,” Jarot said. (Winn 2012)

This account is from Banda Aceh, Indonesia where in 2012 scores of punk rockers were rounded up and ‘re-educated’ by local police. This re-education included ten days of detainment and rampant physical and mental abuse. According to the deputy mayor of Banda Aceh, the punks had not necessarily committed a crime. However, she declared punk to be “the new social disease” that needs to be eradicated (Hasan 2011). While this clearly was a human rights violation the event garnered little public outcry outside of the international punk community.

Certainly the punks in Indonesia are utilizing costly signals. As the story shows, mohawks and tattoos undoubtedly cost the punks a great deal. Furthermore, the man’s despair at



Figure 5 – Clothing of punks in Indonesia
 (<http://gracemanalo.blogspot.com/2010/03/sunday.html>)



Figure 6 – Punks in Indonesia: Aesthetics
 (<http://gawker.com/5888817/in-southeast-asia-punk-is-not-dead-and-is-more-awesome-than-ever>)

the loss of his hair shows how culturally significant the costly signal is – it is intertwined with his identity. Equally as interesting, and as *Figures 5 & 6* demonstrate, the costly signals utilized by punks in Indonesia are largely synonymous with the signals utilized by punks elsewhere in the world. Simply put, the costly signals of punk rock translate both transnationally and translocally. The signals of the punk rock aesthetic convey commitment and devotion to punks elsewhere. This is evident not only in the stylistic similarities that we can see across the globe but also in the ways the global punk rock community operates.

In response to the human rights atrocities occurring in Aceh the international punk rock community organized several efforts to support the punks in Indonesia. One of the most well-known efforts was organized by Mike Virus, a prominent musician and figure in the San Diego punk scene, titled Punk Aid: Aceh Calling. Punk Aid was a compilation album that featured punk rock bands from across the globe. The proceeds of the album sales went directly to the punks in Aceh. The mission statement of Punk Aid: Aceh Calling asserted “punks stand together. And the time is now” (PunkAid.org).

A question must be asked: How did Mike Virus and others know that the punks in Indonesia were indeed punks worthy of being part of the global community? The San Diego and Banda Aceh punk communities are separated by nearly 9,000 miles. It must be that punk rock’s costly signals translate transnationally. The clothing, hairstyle, and ethos exhibited by the punks in Aceh are too costly to fake and, thus, can be taken as honest signals of dedication and devotion to the lifestyle. These signals can be taken at face-value and the punks in Aceh were immediately accepted by the global punk rock community and aid was readily made available to them.

It should also be pointed out that the global punk rock community already seems to conceptualize itself as a global community. Referring to the Punk Aid mission statement once again, it says “punks are getting arrested in Indonesia” rather than ‘Indonesian punks are getting arrested’. This specific use of syntax signifies that, at minimum, within punk rock culture, punk rockers primarily identify as punk rockers; nationality is inconsequential.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for a largely unified global culture comes from how Punk Aid operated via the international punk rock network. In broader contexts, many charitable efforts are facilitated through third-parties. Take for instance causes that aim at feeding children abroad (or any similar endeavor), connecting donors and recipients is done via a NGO or a similar entity because the two groups involved have no way of facilitating transactions between themselves. This is not an issue for punk rock as rather than two separate entities, the recipients and the donors are from the same larger community, and are thus connected via cultural networks. There is no need for an intermediary because costly signals build trust and acceptance across the globe. As such, punk rock can be seen as a global community.

Conclusion

Certainly subculture theory has provided a foundation for theorizations about punk rock culture. Dick Hebdige’s book *Subculture* is still an excellent starting point for academic inquiries into this dynamic culture. However, 35 years later, the theoretical framework which he and others have utilized to understand punk rock no longer apply to contemporary globalized communities. Indeed, today’s punk rock culture is much too dynamic and multifaceted to be seen merely as a subculture.

As I have argued, anthropology offers unique perspectives that shed light on punk rock culture. Due to their holistic and interdisciplinary nature, anthropological perspectives such as costly signaling theory and models of global cultures offer new frameworks that perhaps provide better foundations from which to launch scholarly inquiry. When applied to punk rock, costly signaling theory offers a viable explanation to the aesthetics and perceived deviant behavior of punk rock. When coupled with discourses surrounding culture and globalization, a strong argument can be made for viewing punk rock as global culture.

Rather than utilizing the subcultural approach, this thesis thus examines the San Diego punk rock community as its own cultural entity. While punk rock is undoubtedly tied to other cultural spheres, taking a culturally relativistic approach to punk rock will offer new perspectives and insights. Additionally, anthropological approaches will unveil lived experience and will give voice and agency to those whose world we are interested in.

Chapter 3

Feminist and Gender Theories and Their Application to Punk Rock Culture

As discussed in Chapter 2, many earlier works on punk rock used a theoretical framework that overlooked the complexities of gender dynamics within the culture. As Lauraine Leblanc aptly noted in her work *Pretty in Punk*, subcultural theorists from the Birmingham school's structural-functional approach completely overlooked the role of women with the subcultures they were examining. Leblanc's work serves as one of the few fully articulated pieces that provides ethnographic and theoretical explorations of punk culture from a feminist perspective (for historical analyses see Reddington: 2012; 2004).

Leblanc's work serves not only as a starting point but also as an impetus to my own explorations and theorizations about gender dynamics within punk rock culture. While *Pretty in Punk* does a masterful job unpacking issues of gender and identity within the communities Leblanc worked in, her fieldwork was conducted close to 20 years ago. Since then, feminist and gender theorists have expounded upon the frameworks that Leblanc utilized and formulated new approaches that can help shed additional light onto such complex issues. This chapter offers a critical examination of theoretical approaches that are useful in unpacking the gender dynamics of contemporary punk rock communities.

Doing Gender & Performativity

Contemporary theorizations of gender dynamics come from the perspective that gender is a social/cultural construction. Gender theorist Judith Lorber contends that cultural constructions of gender are "the processes that both create gender differences and render the construction of

gender invisible” (Lorber 2012:226). Rather than stagnant and rigid categories based on an essential fact, gender is simultaneously a product and process of culture. A foundational articulation of this concept comes from Candace West and Don Zimmerman’s seminal article “Doing Gender”. In their oft-cited piece, West and Zimmerman contend “gender is not a set of traits, not a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sorts” (1987:129). They also assert that “the ‘doing’ of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production” (1987:126).

Essentially, West and Zimmerman are arguing that gender is a strictly enforced process of culture that is embodied performance. Judith Lorber asserts “a huge body of empirical research shows how girls and women in Western societies are made docile, submissive, emotional, and nurturant through socialization by parents, teachers, and peers, and imitation of constantly presented media depictions of heterosexual attractiveness” (2012:212). The constant bombardment of culturally-defined gender normative behaviors is how gender is constructed and perpetuated. Lorber also expounds upon the notion of strict social enforcement and contends “gender-inappropriate behaviors and appearances that could challenge conventional gendering are suppressed...In adults, attempts at gender rebellion are controlled by laws, religions, and psychiatry (2012:227). Not only does culture define how gender is done, it also informs perspectives that, when enacted by people, actively police against breaches of the accepted norms.

While cultural construction approaches and West and Zimmerman’s concept of ‘doing’ gender are foundational to contemporary theorizations, Judith Butler provides perhaps the most sophisticated theoretical approach to gender. Butler’s 1990 book *Gender Trouble* and her subsequent works have, in large part, shaped the way gender is theorized in the social sciences

today. While Butler's notions are not without controversy, most serious explorations that draw from gender and feminist theory critically engage with and utilize many of her concepts. As I will contend, Butler's notion of gender as performativity is foundational to understanding gender dynamics in contemporary punk rock culture.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler draws from multiple disciplines to construct an argument that asserts that gender is performative. Her notion of performativity is theoretically derived from linguistic philosophy. Philosopher Raoul Moati asserts "performative acts are characterized by the fact that their function is not to describe a state of the world, but to allow *action in the world* through the intermediary of words" (Moati 2014:18, original emphasis). To Butler, gender is constructed through the constant repetition of performative acts. She contends "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1990:34). Essentially, Butler is arguing that gender is purely a construction and that what is often considered expressions of gender are, in fact, simply reiterations of previous expressions. Gender is constructed by constantly citing performed iterations. I would also add the reciprocal and contend that gender can also be viewed as constantly iterating performed citations. Indeed, she goes on to note "that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (1990:185).

Butler systematically deconstructs the gender binary by asserting that there are no underlying ontological factors to gender and that the concept exists only to the extent that it is embodied performance. Indeed, this position asserts that gender cannot be reduced to categories or group but, rather, gender is a continuous construction. While this theoretical approach seems liberating in a certain sense, Butler's position seems to leave little room for individual agency. In

her book *Bodies that Matter* she contends “performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act’, but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practices by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (1993:2). While she is asserting that gender need not fit into a binary, she is also contending that gender is repetitions of citations, ostensibly meaning there is little room for originality. However, since gender is based on citations rather than inscriptions, there is room for interpretations. Butler also contends there are subversions as well. As such:

Genders, then, can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent...In effect, gender is made to comply with a model of truth and falsity which not only contradicts its own performative fluidity, but serves a social policy of gender regulation and control. *Performing one’s gender wrong* initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all. (1988:528, emphasis added)

While Butler is asserting that gender construction is performative and that it is based on citations, she also argues that people can perform gender in unconventional ways. Additionally, she also contends that people can and do intentionally subvert gender expectations by way of parody (1990a:187). Drag and cross-dressing are prime examples of parodying subversions to normative gender.

Butler’s theorizations of gender performativity and agency in *Gender Trouble* are somewhat ambiguous and she, self-admittedly, revises and readdresses many concepts throughout her career (1990:XV). Other scholars, however, have also addressed the connections between performativity and agency. In her article “Performativity Identified” Alecia Jackson contends “although repetition works to establish the coherence of an identity category, this same repetition makes the category vulnerable to change” (2004:685). Indeed, people’s constructions

of multiple identities and the intersubjectivity of performativity do, in fact, leave a great deal of room for individual agency. As Jackson goes on to assert:

In poststructuralism, multiple, conflicting, and hybrid subjectivities are theorized as contingent and fluid. This contingency—of ourselves, of our realities—points to everything as *in the making* and ‘suggests that there is always choice, and power to act, no matter how bleak the situation may appear to be.’ (2004:686).

Though gender is performative, and, thus, always shaped within the context of hegemony, it is also always in flux and fluid. As a result, hegemonic gender constructions can also always be challenged and subverted.

Gender Maneuvering and Pariah Femininities

Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity provides a foundation for critical engagements with gender dynamics in punk rock culture. While Butler’s works have provided a high-theoretical model, other scholars have provided middle-range theoretical approaches that are tremendously useful in analyzing contemporary punk rock communities.

While Butler directly challenges the concepts of masculinity and femininity by theoretically deconstructing the gender binary, the fact remains that this framework exists in and shapes peoples’ lived realities. Working within the performativity framework, however, R.W. Connell asserts that there are in fact multiple masculinities – and by implication multiple femininities – that are positioned hierarchically. In his book *Masculinities* Connell contends that there are four major types of masculinity: hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized (1995). Hegemonic masculinity consists of practices that define what masculinity is—against which other types of masculinity are measured. Complicit masculinities reinforce hegemonic masculinities and reap many of the same benefit, yet, they do not actively participate in overt

hegemonic behaviors. Connell uses the analogy of football players (hegemonic) versus football spectators (complicit) (1995). Marginalized masculinities are generally constructed at the intersections of gender, race, and class. Masculinities of marginalized races and ethnicities make up this particular category (Schippers 2002:30). Finally, subordinate masculinities are often perceived to be more feminine and, thus, inferior to all other forms of masculinity. Homosexual men are generally associated with subordinate masculinity (Connell 1995; Schippers 2002).

Building from Connell's framework, sociologist Mimi Schippers further unpacks the complexities of gender construction and enactments. In her book *Rockin' Out of the Box*, Schippers analyzes rock music culture and makes an argument for what she calls "gender maneuvering". Schippers' concept of gender maneuvering is theoretically based on sociologist Anthony Giddens' notion of structuration and also draws heavily from the gender theory perspectives of Butler and Connell. Schippers contends:

Male dominant power relations are continually reproduced in the normal, 'commonsense' ways of going about our daily lives. If, however, we decide to buck the rules and refuse to follow the expectations for femininity and masculinity in a given setting, we could possibly disrupt the relationship between masculinity and femininity. If done collectively a group of people could possibly set a new course for gender structuration. This is what I call gender maneuvering. (2002:XII)

To Schippers, these challenges to hegemonic gender relations come from the construction of the alternative masculinities and femininities that Connell outlines. Additionally, she asserts gender maneuvering that has established itself within the practices and ideologies of an "enduring setting" can be deemed "cultural gender maneuvering".

In a 2007 article titled "Recovering the Feminine Other", Schippers further develops her concept of gender maneuvering. While Connell's work outlined gender hegemony by unpacking

hierarchical masculinities, it only offered a glimpse at intra-gender dynamics (1987; 1995).

Connell states that there is no hegemonic femininity because all femininity is constructed as subordinate to masculinity. He then refers to dominant and normative femininity as “emphasized femininity” (1987:187). In terms of inter-gender relations, Schippers accepts that hegemonic femininity is nonexistent. However, Schippers further interrogates the complexities and contends that within intra-gender relations there is hegemonic femininity as alternative femininities are always deemed subordinate.

What is of particular importance to both Connell and Schippers approaches is that hegemonic masculinity and emphasized/hegemonic femininity maintain their positions not only through dominance of subordinate masculinities and femininities but also through their relationship to each other. Connell and Messerschmidt argue that emphasized femininity’s compliance to patriarchy is central to masculinity’s hegemonic position (2005). Conversely, emphasized femininities relation to hegemonic masculinity is what gives it hegemonic positioning over alternative femininities (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Schippers 2007).

Building from the notion that the normative gendered order is based on both intra- and inter-gender relations, Schippers builds her argument for what she terms “pariah femininities” (2007). She contends that pariah femininities are subordinate to emphasized femininity, yet, they directly challenge hegemonic masculinity. In this way, they disrupt the traditional hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity. Schippers asserts that rather than simply being seen as subordinate these femininities should be labeled pariah femininities because “they are deemed, not so much inferior, as contaminating to the relationship between masculinity and femininity” (2007:95).

Schippers describes pariah femininities as being constructed by women who embody traits that are coded for hegemonic masculinity. She contends that “the possession of any one of these characteristics is assumed to contaminate the individual, so by having the one characteristic, an individual becomes a kind of person – a lesbian, a ‘slut’...a ‘cock-teaser’, a bitch” (2007:95). Indeed, when a woman embodies traits that are coded as masculine it is often met with language that emphasizes a lesser position in the gender hierarchy. Schippers adds “when a woman is authoritative, she is not masculine, she is a bitch” (2007:95). Recent discourses about pariah femininities have included examinations of women’s roller derby (Carrier-Moisán 2013; Newsom 2013; Blank & Paul 2013). Indeed, women in roller derby display aggression that is generally coded as masculine. Additionally, many monikers that are utilized by the women are often re-appropriations of derogatory terms used to maintain the gendered order². This effectively challenges the relationship between masculinity and femininity in two ways, first by ‘doing’ gender wrong, and second by reclaiming and attempting to take power away from terms used to demean alternative femininities. It should be restated that while challenging hegemonic masculinity, pariah femininities are subordinate to emphasized femininities—within hegemonic discourse—and are thus marginalized both by hegemonic masculinities and femininities.

In *Rockin’ Out of the Box*, Schippers builds her argument for gender maneuvering from ethnographic data collected in the alternative rock scene of Chicago. Her notion of gender maneuvering, though, can be seamlessly applied to gender dynamics within punk rock culture. Additionally, and as I will contend in Chapters 4 and 5, Schippers’ notion of pariah femininities

² Examples of roller derby names that utilize this re-appropriation: Killer Bee-otch (Rat City RollerGirls), Lezbehonest (Single-Handed Roller Derby), and some less straight forward allusions to the derogatory terms such as 99 Problems (Northwest Arkansas Roller Derby).

offers unique insight into the alternative constructions of gender within the San Diego punk rock community. Situating anthropological research within the theoretical frameworks provided by Butler, Connell, Schippers, and others shows not only the intricacies of gender within punk rock, but also helps reveal the larger implications of these gender constructions within the context of broader feminist discourses.

Pretty in Punk

Lauraine Leblanc's book *Pretty in Punk* stands as the standard for issues revolving around gender in punk rock culture. Though Leblanc's book predates Schippers concepts by a significant amount of time, there is substantial theoretical overlap. Leblanc asserted that punk rock culture is a space for gender resistance. Similarly, gender resistance as used by Leblanc is, in some ways, in line with what Schippers later deems as gender maneuvering. There are, however, important differences.

Gender resistance emphasizes the domination of women within the punk rock scene by hegemonic masculinity. Leblanc states "I argue that punk was originally constructed as a masculine subculture and continues to be so as the males in the subculture reinforce these norms through their interactions with punk girls" (1999:31). She goes on to contend that women in the punk scene often construct alternative femininities that allow access into the "boys'" subculture. In this way, women become bystanders whose resistance to gender norms comes in the form of largely benign constructions of alternative femininities.

Leblanc's contention is that the embodiment of traits coded as masculine by women is an attempt to create and maintain space in a male dominated community. The act of creating space in a male dominated arena is an act of gender resistance to Leblanc, though ultimately this

resistance will have little effect as it is based largely on colluding with masculinity rather than defying it. Leblanc asserts that of the punk rock women she interacted with “few reported having girl friends, and thus their forms of resistance to the masculinity of punk would enjoy little support, and little chance of success” (1999:133).

Utilizing Schippers frameworks and theorizations to examine Leblanc’s assertions retrospectively, a different interpretation can perhaps be drawn. Leblanc’s conclusion that gender resistance would have limited success without a collective force does line up, to an extent, with Schippers notion of cultural gender maneuvering. Gender maneuvering, by definition, requires a concerted collective effort. However, the lack of inter-gender relationships at Leblanc’s field sites may not necessarily preclude gender maneuvering. If pariah femininities create space for themselves in a given setting then, to a certain extent, the gendered order is being challenged not only from pariah femininities but also by the other versions of masculinity and femininity being performed in the same space. In this way, an individual can be thought of as significantly challenging the relationship between masculinity and femininity.

While Leblanc masterfully unpacks the alternative femininities she encounters while conducting her fieldwork, the concept of pariah femininities may, in hindsight, challenge some of her conclusions. To Leblanc, punk rock women’s embodiment of masculine-coded traits is collusion in an effort to create space in a male dominated arena. While no one can debate the fact that punk rock culture is male dominated, the notion that women’s creations of alternative femininities in this realm are designed only to create space neglects any type of agency. Instead of assertively resisting hegemonic gender norms, women in the punk scene are merely resisting as a side-effect of their want to fit in, from this perspective.

Using the concept of pariah femininities, and the subsequent gender maneuvering that results from them, provides a theoretical framework that unpacks the complexities of gender dynamics within punk rock culture. Additionally, these perspectives emphasize agency and give voice to the women who are, as I will argue further in chapter 4, actively challenging conventional gender ideals.

Discourses Surrounding Riot Grrrl

Commonly known as a feminist sub-movement started in the early 1990s, Riot Grrrl was known for its brash tactics against the dominant gendered order, and widely associated with the punk rock scene. Not only was the movement associated with punk rock but it was also one of the most prominent manifestations of third-wave feminism. Indeed, any analysis of third-wave feminism is inadequate without a thorough discussion of the Riot Grrrl movement. On the surface, it seems as though the scholarly literature written about Riot Grrrl would serve as both a theoretical and ethnographic background to analyses of gender dynamics in contemporary punk rock communities. However, a closer investigation of Riot Grrrl coupled with recent ethnographic data reveals that punk rock and the Riot Grrrl movement are often erroneously conflated.

After reading the literature surrounding Riot Grrrl, I approached my fieldwork in the San Diego punk rock community from the perspective that Riot Grrrl and punk rock were somewhat synonymous. However, it quickly became overwhelmingly apparent that there is a disconnect between women in the San Diego punk rock community and the Riot Grrrl movement. Instead of citing influential Riot Grrrl bands like Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, and Sleater-Kinney, the women I spoke with were talking about woman-fronted punk rock bands (that is predominantly male

bands with a female vocalist) like Vice Squad, X, Naked Aggression, and the Midnight Creeps as having a meaningful impact on them. When I directly asked whether Riot Grrrl was influential to them, almost everyone I spoke to said no. This was odd given the almost natural conflation of Riot Grrrl and punk rock.

The conflation of Riot Grrrl and punk rock happens in both popular representations and in scholarship. This conflation is easily identifiable in popular thought. The 2013 documentary film *The Punk Singer* provides an excellent example. The film details the life and times of the prolific Riot Grrrl movement espouser and lead singer of Bikini Kill, Kathleen Hanna. Bikini Kill is the quintessential Riot Grrrl band, but can they be definitely declared a punk rock band? Indeed, the Riot Grrrl movement itself seemed to question whether it should be considered part of the punk rock community or not from very early on (Figure 7). As the film also shows, Bikini Kill seemed to be more personally connected to other realms of alternative music than to punk rock (Punk Singer). At minimum, Bikini Kill's position within punk rock is debatable. Hanna, as documented in the film, went on to create the feminist electroclash/new wave band Le Tigre and



Figure 7 – Riot Grrrl Convention Flyer
(https://www.flickr.com/photos/rock_creek/11969784505/)

more recently the indie-rock band The Julie Ruin. Somehow the sum of all of these parts makes her unequivocally “the punk singer”.

The conflation of Riot Grrrl and punk rock also occurs within scholarly literature. The term ‘punk’ is often used as interchangeable with or complementarily to the term Riot Grrrl (Leblanc 1999; Dunn & Farnsworth 2012; Moore 2010). Furthermore, many works operate from within the framework that considers punk rock and Riot Grrrl relatively synonymous, with Dunn and Farnsworth’s 2012 article on Riot Grrrl concluding: “we would argue...that Riot Grrrl had a lasting influence on women involved in punk...” (2012:155). I find this problematic. It seems as though this conflation, both within popular perceptions and scholarly literature, is based on the idea that if a movement espouses a DIY ethic and plays aggressive music, than it must be punk rock. There is certainly significant overlap between Riot Grrrl and punk rock culture, and I am

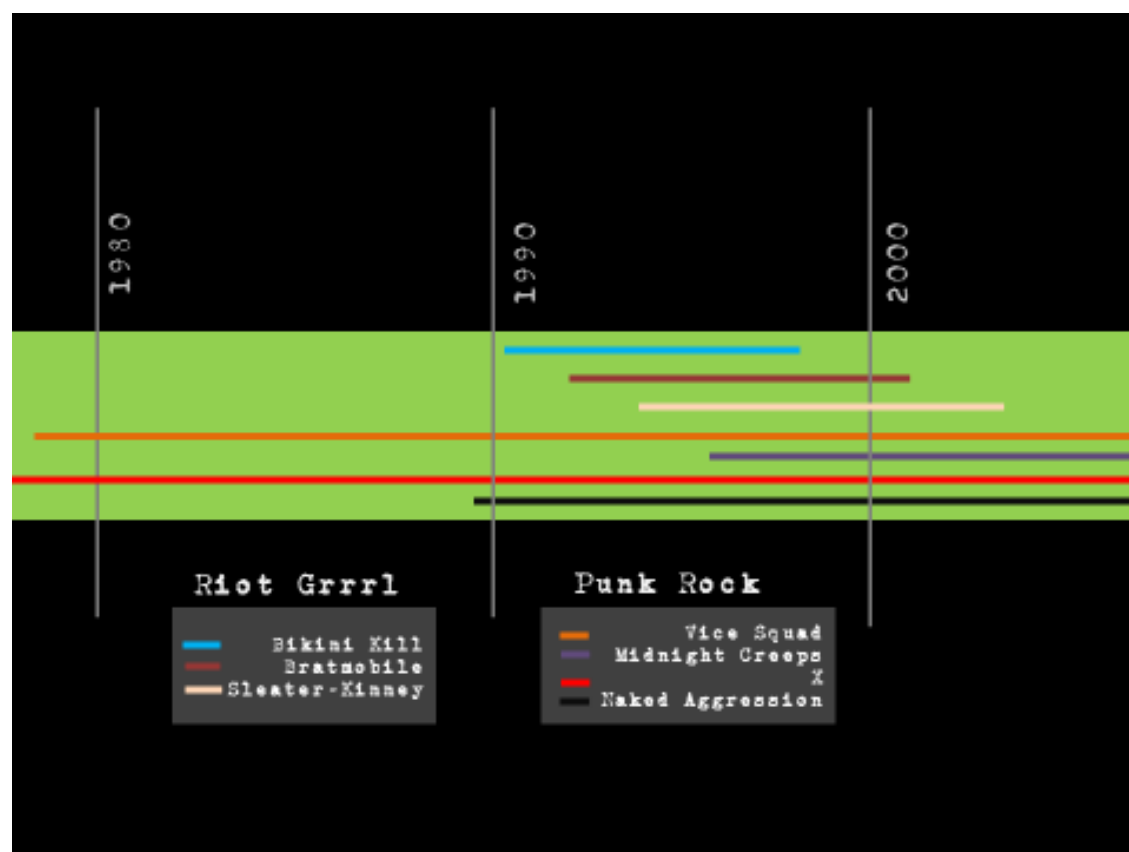


Figure 8 – Riot Grrrl vs. punk rock timeline

not implying that the two are mutually exclusive. However, if we look at the timeline (*Figure 8*) and we couple that with what women in a contemporary punk rock culture are telling us, we see that Riot Grrrl and punk rock are not the same thing. Indeed, women in the San Diego punk rock community are influenced by bands that span 35 years, many of whom were operating at the same time as Riot Grrrl, only in a different cultural sphere.

My intent here is not to devalue discourses on Riot Grrrl in any way. Rather, I wish to problematize the conflation of punk rock culture and the Riot Grrrl movement. When this conflation is directly and distinctly challenged, the under-theorization of punk rock femininities becomes quite apparent. Aside from analyses of Riot Grrrl, few scholarly works, if any, explore femininities in contemporary punk rock communities.

Conclusion

The gender and feminist theoretical approaches discussed in this chapter offer an excellent platform from which inquiries about gender dynamics within the San Diego punk rock community can be launched. Judith Butler's concept of gender as performativity is foundational to most contemporary gender studies and her deconstruction of the gender binary, as well as her insights into the cultural construction of gender, serve as fertile ground for further theorizations. Indeed, as R.W. Connell and Mimi Schippers show, if we no longer understand masculinity and femininity as essential and unwavering characteristics, the possibility for multiple, and sometimes transgressive, gender enactments become apparent.

Schippers notions of gender maneuvering and pariah femininities potentially offer unique insights into realms such as punk rock. As delineated in *Rockin' Out of the Box*, Schippers concept of gender maneuvering can be used to shed valuable light onto music-based cultures.

Additionally, the concept of pariah femininity has direct implications for studying punk rock gender dynamics, as I will show in the following chapter. Likewise, while Lauraine Leblanc's seminal work *Pretty in Punk* serves as outstanding reference point, her fieldwork is now nearly 20 years old, and cannot, *a priori*, be generalized to broader geographic settings. Finally, the fact that many theorizations of femininity in punk rock are actually highlighting the similar— but not synonymous— Riot Grrrl movement, the need for contemporary ethnographic explorations of punk rock becomes blatantly apparent.

Chapter 4

There is Going to be Blood, There is Going to Be Bruises

Upon entering a show in the San Diego punk rock community it becomes blatantly obvious that many of the femininities being performed are starkly different from the emphasized femininity that R.W. Connell spoke of. Indeed, I argue that for women, long term participation within the punk rock community requires the formation of an alternative femininity. While the range of those alternative femininities is quite wide and diverse, the popular perception of punk rock as an aggressive, seedy, and nonconformist arena strips long term female participants of the ability to be categorized as practitioners of emphasized femininity. The alternative femininities present in the San Diego punk rock community seem to span a spectrum from women whose association with punk rock marginalizes them from ‘normative’ femininity to femininities constructed by women who consciously challenge hegemonic gender dynamics.

In this chapter, by unpacking the ethnographic data I have collected, I show how the San Diego punk rock community’s gender dynamics are shaped by the construction and enactments of alternative and pariah femininities. By analyzing how space is used at punk rock shows, I argue that the embodiment of pariah femininities by punk women challenges the traditional hegemonic gendered order and alters the relationship between masculinity and femininity within the punk rock culture.

The Gendered Use of Space

It should be restated that while there is undoubtedly a definitive punk rock community in San Diego, it exists alongside and is intertwined with several other spheres of underground

music communities. Often times the delineation between these spheres is blurred and certainly identifying yourself as a punk does not preclude you from going to other types of shows. This fact made conducting ethnographic fieldwork with the punks in San Diego a bit of challenge. Suppose a band that identifies themselves as a punk band plays a show, but very few people who identify as punks attend the show, is that a punk show? Conversely, if a band that does not primarily identify themselves as a punk band plays a show that is attended heavily by punks, is it then a punk show? While those may seem like trivial questions, they have real implications when observing the gendered use of space at shows. Instead of trying to systematically categorize what was a punk show and what was not, I simply went to as many shows as I could that I knew punks were going to.

Taking this approach, I ended up at several shows that placed me significantly outside my comfort zone. One of the first shows where I attempted to observe the gendered use of space was at a small club on El Cajon Blvd in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego. This particular show featured several bands that self-identify as skinheads³, though there were several punks in attendance, including some of my key informants. It took some time for the venue to become more populated, but from the onset it became quite clear that there was a gendered boundary set. *Figure 9* is an amalgamation of several diagrams that I sketched that evening that showed where people were positioned based on gender.

It is clear that the space directly in front of the stage and the middle of the venue was for men. There was only one breach of this boundary throughout the show. One of the women seated

³ I would be remiss if I did not mention that many of the skinheads in attendance that night would specifically want me to state that they are “non-racist” skinheads. Frankly, I do not buy it. There is, in fact, a sect of skinhead culture called SHARP (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), that specifically denounces racism. Those involved are generally easily identifiable because of their blue suspenders and bootlaces. No one at this particular show was a SHARP.

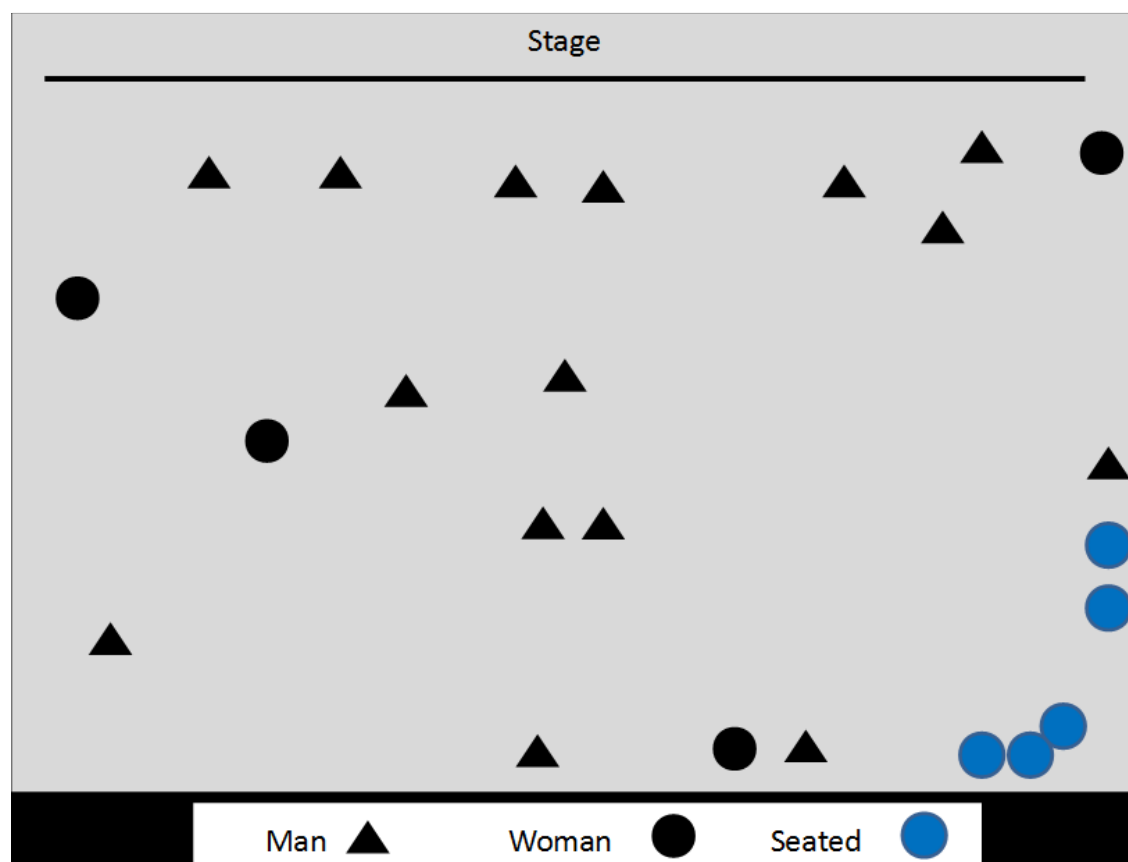


Figure 9 – Space-use diagram of a skinhead show

in the corner approached and spoke to one of the men situated in the middle of the venue on several occasions, though their conversations lasted only seconds and she would quickly go back to her seat. Directly in front of the stage many of the men were interacting with the band and being mildly rowdy, though with so few people a fully functioning mosh pit was impossible.

In addition to the show diagrammed above, I attended one more skinhead show with punks in attendance. Unfortunately, I was unable to sufficiently diagram the use of space at this particular show. As I walked into the bar where the show was taking place I noticed the woman in front of me was sporting a large Skrewdriver back-patch. Skrewdriver is one of the most prolific Nazi skinhead bands of all-time. It has been my experience that when Nazi skinheads and skinheads who do not openly profess bigotry meet, there is usually violence. This was the

case this particular evening. As one band finished their set and began moving their equipment outside, the next band began to load in. As they began to assemble their equipment, they abruptly stopped, and then hurriedly took their equipment outside to their van. It started to become obvious that this was in preparation for an altercation. Luckily, the group of punks that I came with saw the writing on the wall and we left before things got too far out of hand, but, as we drove away we saw a large fight and then a secondary group assaulting one man⁴⁵.



Figure 20 – Band playing at a skinhead show (Photo by Author)

⁴ One of the members of the group I was with told me about a similar encounter several years ago at a show he was at in the Mission Beach area of San Diego which resulted in a Nazi skinhead being shot in the head. He was adamant that we leave before the fight got under way.

⁵ The following day, many I spoke with told me that the Hammerskins (a notorious white-power gang) instigated the fight and that this was becoming a more frequent occurrence within the skinhead/hardcore communities.

While I was unable to properly document the use of space at this particular show, I did observe a similar gender dynamic to that of the previous skinhead show. Women were marginalized physically, in terms of the use of space, but also in other ways. In many ways, the skinhead shows, that punks will sometimes go to, seem to be more in line with hyper-masculinity, which is sometimes used to describe punk rock (Leblanc 1999; Haenfler 2004). *Figure 10* presents an excellent example of this hyper-masculinity. Note the drummer's shirt, which reads "suck my cock," and the soft-core porn being projected behind the band. The massive fight, the overstated heteronormativity, and the distinct gendered use of space certainly appear to be in keeping with the concept of hyper-masculinity. While there were women in attendance, their presence was largely inconsequential.

Again, these particular shows are in a gray area so to speak. They were not punk rock shows, yet several punks attended them. Conversely, there were several individuals who do not identify as punks at these shows who were subsequently at distinctly punk rock shows. In order to talk about gender dynamics in the punk rock scene, one has to discuss these types of shows as they are undeniably apart of the landscape. However, if we contrast these types of shows with shows that are definitively defined as punk shows, a stark difference in gender relations and dynamics emerges.

One of the more interesting shows that I attend, in terms of gender dynamics, occurred at new venue in the Barrio Logan neighbor of San Diego. This was a punk rock show, the bands identified as punks and the majority of the attendees did as well. This show had particularly good turnout as the headlining band, Opposition Rising, is well-liked in the hardcore punk rock scene. From the outset, the ratio of men to women was different than the aforementioned skinhead

shows with women making up a larger portion of the crowd, though they were still the minority.

Figure 11 is an amalgamation of the space-use diagrams that I created that evening.

Clearly, the gendered use of space is significantly different in this situation than it was in the previously described contexts. There does not appear to be any distinct gender boundaries as women occupy spaces in all areas of the venue. This show was big enough to warrant a mosh pit and, thus, the center of the diagram is empty as people do not stand stationary. It should be noted though, that the women standing on the perimeter of the mosh pit were directly involved throughout most of the show. Additionally, the mosh pit erupted while the opening bands were playing and it was initially started by a young woman. Throughout the evening women were actively involved in the mosh pit. This can be seen in *Figure 12*.

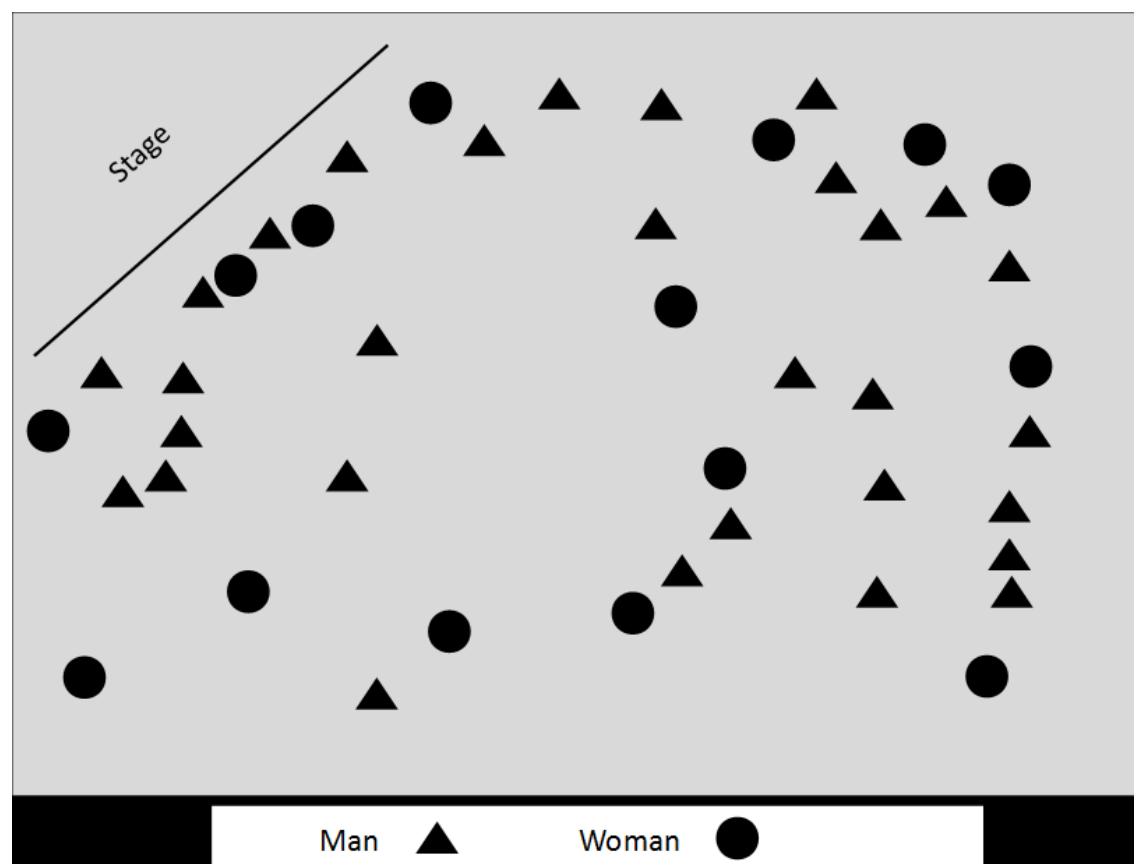


Figure 11- Space-use diagram of a punk rock show



Figure 12 – Mosh pit during Opposition Rising’s set (Photo by Author)

During the one of the opening bands set, Disaster Strikes, a fight broke out. Interestingly, the instigator was a young woman. From my vantage point, it appeared as though a young man had pushed her in the mosh pit a little harder than she thought was appropriate, she in turn started throwing punches and landed a few shots into the young man’s face⁶. He initially tried to get away, but then turned and started swinging himself. Several people tried to break up the fight and the melee ended up crashing into the table where the bands were selling merchandise. This prompted the band to stop playing mid-song and reprimand those involved in the fray, not for knocking over their merchandise but because fighting at punk shows is inappropriate. Essentially, the singer stated that punks do not fight punks and if that is what they want to do they should leave. Once the fight was completely quelled the band resumed playing.

⁶ It is impossible for me to say for certain that there was not more backstory to this fight, but the two had been in the mosh pit at the same time for a good portion of the set without anything odd occurring.

Later in the evening, while Opposition Rising was playing another scuffle broke out, though this one was particularly onesided. As the band played and the mosh pit was raging, two young skinheads repeatedly grabbed a particular individual and kept throwing him to the ground. While punk rock mosh pits may look like discordant chaos and violence, it is documented, and certainly well-known within the community that there are rules, etiquette, and form that must be followed. Purposely trying to hurt someone else is undoubtedly against the rules. The two skinheads repeatedly threw the man, and he kept getting up and rejoining the mosh pit, and soon enough they would grab him and throw him to the ground again. This continued for a while, until the band stopped playing and the lead singer pointed out the two skinheads and berated them from the stage. Essentially, he said that punk rock shows were not the place for ‘wanna-be tough guys’ and that they should leave. The singer kept yelling at them until they left the venue and then the band continued with their set.

The aforementioned scenarios can be dissected in several different ways. What is clear, though, is that punk rock shows are not simply spaces of hyper-masculinity. The skinhead shows that I attended exhibited clearly defined gendered boundaries that were rarely, if ever, breached. Additionally, overt violence is in fact commonplace and as I saw can become the focal point of the show rather than the music or other interactions. Again, the skinhead band that was about to play put their instruments back and then prepared themselves for the main event, the large brawl. Furthermore, the overt and overstated displays of heteronormativity visavie things like the soft-core porn demonstrate that the hierarchical relationship between hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity is being reaffirmed, if not bolstered.

Conversely, looking at the space-use diagram from the punk rock show, shows that there is, at least in terms of space usage, no discernable gendered boundary. Women’s active

participation in the more animated parts of the show was very clear. The mosh pit and the area directly in front of the stage were for both men and women.

While there were physical altercations at the punk rock show, there was a concise effort to stop them and ostracize those involved. Indeed, the denouncing of ‘wanna-be tough guys’ was particularly interesting in that there was a concerted effort, at least by the bands, to ‘other’ the instigators of violence. While I cannot deny that there were in fact fights at this particular punk rock show, there is, in no uncertain terms, a distinct difference between the collective hyper-aggressiveness of the skinhead show and the isolated acts of violence at the punk rock show.

Violence and Aggression

The punk mosh pit is a microcosm of punk itself: frightening to outsiders, apparently full of anger and chaos, but actually sociable and cooperative, usually carried out both in the name of fun and in the spirit of an egalitarian society. (Clark 2001:57)

I believe the misconception of punk rock as a violent culture comes directly from misinterpretations of the mosh pit. Indeed, it is easy to see how such misinterpretations could be made. Without context, seeing hoards of people shoving and flailing on each other for no apparent reason might lead a person to deduce that violence is occurring. However, several scholarly pieces have been written about the ritualistic nature of the mosh pit and the multiple rules and etiquette that must be followed (see Clark 2001, Palmer 2005). Though most scholars who have examined the mosh pit concur that there are rules, there is some disagreement in terms of what the practice signifies. In his article “Mosh Pit Politics” Richard Lakes mistakenly conflates several different music cultures in his examination of moshing (1999). Lakes goes from seemingly speaking about punk rock shows, to skinhead shows, to metal show without differentiating between them (1999). He ultimately contends that mosh pits are places for young

men to engage in socially regulated violence. However, others have looked solely at punk rock mosh pits and have come to different conclusions. In fact, both Clark and Palmer contend that punk rock mosh pits are highly ritualized social practices that promote solidarity and group cohesion rather than areas of gratuitous violence.

The ethnographic evidence that I collected confirms the concept that though the punk rock mosh pit may look like a hyper-aggressive and violent place, it is actually something quite different. While the movements involved in moshing could be considered aggressive in that they are generally short and abrupt, the actual process of moshing cannot be considered aggressive in that there is no intention to cause harm or provoke violence. I was discussing women's participation at punk show and specifically in the mosh pit with one of my interlocutors, Crash, when she told me: "There is going to be blood, there is going to be bruises. If you can't deal with that, then this is not the place for you." I followed up by asking her if she feels that men 'take it easy' on women in the pit. She contended that since the mosh pit is not about hurting people in the first place, there would be no reason for men to 'take it easy' on women and that she felt as though this rarely, if ever, occurs at shows. To outsiders, the aggressive movements of the mosh pit equates to violence, however, this is clearly a misconception.

Many of my informants contended that while injuries can occur in the mosh pit, it was really about catharsis and acceptance. However, the fact that during my time at San Diego punk rock shows in the summer of 2014 I saw several fights erupt out of the mosh pit challenges this perspective. If it really is about harmony and group cohesion, why were there so many fights?

As it turns out, this is something of a sensitive topic for many long term participants in the community. In fact, in several of the interviews that I conducted, this topic was where people became the most animated and impassioned. Crash and another informant named Mike both

spoke eloquently about what they see as the problem. To them, fights at punk shows are almost always perpetuated by the youngest members of the crowd. From what I observed, this in fact holds true. At the Opposition Rising show, all of the fights and dust-ups that occurred were perpetuated by people who appeared to be in their late teens. Crash contends that the young people in the scene today are less dedicated to the punk rock ethos and community, thus, fighting is common. She went on to claim that when she was younger, her generation did not fight and they were more committed⁷.

Mike articulately stated that young people will often perpetuate violence at shows and that those who are truly dedicated to the punk rock community have a duty to stop and correct this behavior. He aptly pointed out the larger number of venues across San Diego county that have closed or will no longer book punk rock shows because of the problems associated with them, fighting being one facet of these issues⁸. To Mike, bands have the responsibility to regulate shows and stem violence. Interestingly, he espouses the very tactics that Opposition Rising employed.

Lauraine Leblanc, in *Pretty in Punk*, asserted that women in the punk rock scenes she worked in seemed to be embodying masculine traits in an attempt to create space for themselves in male-dominated culture. The fact that younger punks engage in violence seems to play into this notion. If a person misunderstands punk rock as a violent space, then hyper-aggression could be seen as a way to create a place for oneself in the scene. However, as both Crash and Mike point out, the long term members of the San Diego punk rock community shun this kind of behavior. Both bands and participants actively attempt to stem the violence and ostracize those

⁷ Though as a long term observer of this community, I am not certain that her claim holds up.

⁸ Underage drinking was one of the main issues at many of these venues.

who perpetuate it. The intent is that the instigators of violence will realize that fighting is not welcome in punk rock shows and either modify their behavior or leave to seek acceptance in a different cultural sphere.

Conclusion

Analyzing how space is used in punk rock shows and also at other overlapping genre's shows unveils important facets of gender dynamics within the San Diego punk rock community. Looking at the gendered use of space at skinhead shows, we can clearly see that there is a distinct boundary for women. Coupling this observation with the displays of hyper-aggressiveness and overstated heteronormativity that I found at these types of shows suggests that skinhead/hardcore culture promotes hegemonic masculinity, arguable to the extent of hyper-masculinity. If these space are indeed areas of hyper-masculinity, then it makes sense that there would be such a clearly defined boundary for women and that they would play a marginal role within these social spaces. While punks will sometimes attend these types of shows, they are distinct from shows that are purely punk rock.

At punk rock shows, the gendered use of space is markedly different from that of the skinhead shows. In fact, there was no discernable boundary and women's involvement was noted in all aspect of crowd participation. There were women in front of the stage, in the mosh pit, and on the peripheries of the venue. While there was certainly violence at the punk rock shows I attend, it never approached the full-scale combat of the skinhead show turned brawl. Additionally, when violence did occur at the punk shows there was a concerted effort by bands and crowd members to break up fights and stop harassment. Long term community members also suggest that fights at punk rock shows stem from misinterpretations of the punk rock ethos

and culture by young people and that those who stay involved in the community are almost never involved in punk versus punk violence.

Many misinterpretations of punk rock as a violent culture stem from the mosh pit. To outsiders, the mosh pit may very well look like a brawl, with seemingly chaotic and aggressive behaviors. However, several scholars have stated—and my informants verified—that the punk rock mosh pit, while inherently dangerous, is not necessarily a violent space as it is highly regulated and promotes group solidarity. As such, it would be a mistake to categorize punk rock shows as aggressive and violent.

With all of this being said, several important assertions can be made. As I have demonstrated with the accounts of the skinhead shows I observed and documented, other music-based cultures that share similarities and overlap with but are undoubtedly distinct from punk rock, can be places where gender relations bolster and support the hierarchical relationship between hegemonic masculinity and femininity. However, looking at punk rock shows indicates that there is a completely different gender dynamic at play. In several different ways, punk rock shows indicate that punk rock culture can be a place where hegemonic gender dynamics are challenged. Indeed, the docility and subordination of women at punk rock shows is not as abundantly clear as in other cultural spheres.

It would be completely incorrect to assert that there is gender equality in punk rock. However, we can look at the punk show as a microcosm of the culture and contend that punk rock culture is a realm where the formation of alternative and pariah femininities takes place. It is, then, the embodiment of these alternative and pariah femininities that, when enacted, interrupt the traditional hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity in the community, which in turn creates space for further gender resistance. Ultimately, the embodiment of pariah

femininities and their relative acceptance within the San Diego punk rock community act as a feedback loop of sorts. The question of how pariah femininities are constructed and embodied is the topic of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Stand Strong, Stand Proud

In *Pretty in Punk*, Lauraine Leblanc makes the assertion:

No forms of resistance can be pure, untainted by stains of accommodation. It is in their dealings with male punks and with the masculinity of the subculture that punk girls' forms of resistance fail them, for the cost of resistance—expulsion from the subculture—may be too high. (1999:133)

I certainly will not claim that Leblanc is wrong in the contexts which she worked but gender dynamics within the San Diego punk rock community seem to suggest something different than this conclusion. Utilizing Mimi Schippers concept of pariah femininity presents an alternative interpretation for women's gender resistance in punk rock. Rather than seeing women's constructions of alternative and pariah femininities in these contexts as 'failing' in gender resistance, I will contend that these constructions actively challenge hierarchical gender norms both within and outside of the community.

In the previous chapter, I argued that punk rock, while still undoubtedly male-dominated, potentially presents a space that serves as fertile ground for the construction of pariah femininities. This chapter will explore how these femininities are constructed and embodied with the San Diego punk rock community.

Stand Strong

In *Pretty in Punk*, Lauraine Leblanc asserts that women in punk rock are largely colluding with masculinity. She argues that rather than being confrontational to or defiant of hegemonic gender norms, punk women's constructions and enactments of alternative femininities—which includes the embodiment of characteristics traditionally coded as

masculine—allows access into a male-dominated culture. While these constructions often differ greatly from emphasized femininity, they do not challenge male dominance or the traditional gendered order. In this way, according to Leblanc, punk women's femininities act as mechanisms of acceptance rather than forces of defiance. Speaking with many women in the San Diego punk rock community, it became apparent that this notion of collusion may not be as applicable as it appears. Indeed, several women indicated that their embodiment of traits traditionally coded as masculine were a way that they became interested and involved in the scene, as they were welcomed in the context of punk rock, rather than an act of collusion with masculinity in an attempt to gain access and acceptance.

Assertiveness, aggression, and nonconformity are traits that many of the women I spoke with contended they have. While some may argue that embodying these traits constitutes colluding with masculinity, most punk rock women assert that it is simply the way they are. An informant named Jen explained it quite eloquently. Speaking about the punk rock community she said:

I was just born this way. Angry and uncomfortable most of the time. And so it was just like 'oh, I fit in here because I am aggressive and that is *encouraged* here, not just tolerated.

Many women that I spoke with contended that they did not modify their behavior to fit into the punk rock community, rather, the community was a place where they could be themselves. Jen also asserted that her aggressive and assertive behavior was looked down upon in other social contexts. Particularly, her family would often attempt to modify her behavior to meld more into hegemonic concepts of femininity. As she began to become more assertive her parents made her go to Cotillion classes. Jen contends that these classes ultimately had the opposite of their intended effect and she became more involved in punk rock culture as she felt "less stifled".

Ultimately, Jen argues that her involvement in punk rock was only marginally perpetuated as a result of rebellion against her parents. As a teenager, Jen played on several high school sports teams. However, she often found herself getting in trouble for being too rough. While she contends that she was actually quite good at the sports she played and her roughness simply a result of her competing, she often felt ostracized by both her coaches and her peers. Eventually, this led her to abandoning sports altogether.

Jen went on to say that the punk rock community gave her a place to be herself. However, rather than being drawn to the scene simply because of the catharsis of the mosh pit and as a space to be unabashedly aggressive, she was drawn because of the acceptance of who she was. There were also other women who had similar personalities that she could identify with. Many of the women in the San Diego punk rock community that I spoke with had similar stories. Though the details differ, thematically there are congruencies. Rather than being exposed to punk rock culture and then embodying traits in order to fit in, women in the punk rock community seem to be drawn in because it offers a space for their alternative forms of femininity.

While I came across many examples of the acceptance of traditionally masculine-coded traits being embodied by women in the punk scene, perhaps the story Tamera told me best encapsulates that notion. Tamera, a woman in her mid-twenties who has worked as an alternative model and also played bass in several bands, laughingly discussed a somewhat infamous encounter with the lead singer of a well-known local band⁹. According to her, the singer of the band, who is a good friend of hers, was at a party and had been drinking quite a bit. Though she

⁹ When I told people that I was interested in learning about femininity in the punk scene, several different people insisted that I talk to Tamera, and they specifically cited this incident as why.

could not recall exactly what was said, she contends the singer jokingly said something about her being ugly (or something to that effect), and the two had a good-natured back and forth banter. Eventually Tamera asserted that she could “kick his ass any day”, to which the singer replied by offering her one free shot. After much ado, Tamera apparently reeled back and punched the man square in the face, breaking his jaw in multiple places.

Me: So what did everyone think about that?

Tamera: Everyone thought it was hilarious. I love the guy but that dude runs his mouth all the time. Somebody needed to put him in his place. I felt bad after the whole British Invasion thing¹⁰. But he did ask for it.

Me: How about outside of the punk scene?

Tamera: I told a couple co-workers about it, but just got the typical ‘crazy-bitch’ look from them.

Within the San Diego punk rock community Tamera’s personality and behavior appears to be acceptable. This particular encounter happened a few years ago and she reports no social repercussions and in fact it appears to have gained her quite a bit of social capital. Rather than being labelled a “crazy-bitch” like she was in outside contexts, Tamera appears to receive accolades for her assertive and aggressive behavior from both men and women in the punk rock scene.

Though it could be argued that this anecdote shows that the embodiment of ‘masculine traits’ is being rewarded and promoted, there is a different, more compelling argument that can be made. If we consider the story that Jen and others told about how their versions of alternative

¹⁰ British Invasion was a large punk rock music festival that took place soon after the jaw-breaking incident. The festival ended with the police firing tear gas into the crowd. The man with the broken jaw had it wired shut, thus, when the tear gas hit him he could not breathe properly and was quite a mess.

femininity were not initially formed by punk rock, but rather, they were accepted by punk rock, then the argument that women are accommodating or colluding with masculinity is less cogent. If women are drawn to the punk rock community because they see it as a space where assertiveness and aggression can be incorporated into their constructions of femininity, then I find it hard to say that it is merely collusion and accommodation.

Furthermore, taking Tamera's anecdote into consideration, we can see that the enactment of these alternative femininities is, at minimum, generally accepted within the San Diego punk rock community. Instead of demeaning or ostracizing her, the punks seem to appreciate Tamera standing her ground and being aggressive (and in this case violent) in a situation where it was deemed appropriate. Conversely, the same anecdote garnered a completely different reaction from her co-workers as it was being recounted outside of a cultural context in which her behavior was acceptable.

As I see it, the above ethnographic evidence supports the notion that the San Diego punk rock community is a space for the embodiment and enactment of pariah femininities. By incorporating traits that are traditionally coded as masculine into their constructions of femininities, women in the punk rock scene are effectively challenging the gendered order. Rather than mimicking the perceived masculinity of punk rock, I am contending that many women are constructing pariah femininities that embody traditionally-coded masculine traits and that this cannot be seen as obliging or acquiescent to masculinity, rather such enactments challenge as opposed to bolster traditional masculine hegemony.

Additionally, Tamera's story can be interpreted as a pariah femininity successfully creating space in the punk rock scene. As she stated, outside of the punk rock culture her encounter was immediately shamed and looked down upon. However, within the culture, a

certain level of cultural capital was garnered. A woman successfully assaulting a man and thereby gaining prestige clearly challenges hegemonic gender standards, expectations, and values.

Stand Proud

As Tamera alluded to, often times the pariah femininities that many punk rock women construct are not well accepted outside of the cultural context of punk rock. Often times the punk rock aesthetic and these alternative femininities overlap, combine, and create an image that fosters friction with people outside of the scene. Indeed, there are no lack of stories that both men and women have about altercations with non-punks. In many of the conversations that I had with punk rock women, however, there seemed to be an underlying assertion that women get more grief from the outside than men do. This makes sense with the popular perception of punk rock as being a hyper-masculine arena. Essentially women would be more ‘wrong’ as punk rockers. It appears that because of this women in the San Diego punk rock scene continuously deal with verbal and sometimes physical altercations stemming from their appearance and performance of gender.

Me: So I imagine you get quite a bit of grief for your appearance.

Crash: Oh fuck yea. When I walk down the street someone always has something stupid to say. Somebody always has a comment that they think is clever, that they think I haven’t heard about 50 times. I am 25; I think I have heard everything in the book by now.

Me: Has that ever driven you away from being a punk?

Crash: Hell no, it has never pushed me away from being who I am. I love what I love, if anyone else has anything to say about it, well, I don’t really give a shit.

Indeed, many of the women I spoke to seem to take pride in the fact that they get harassed but are devoted and strong enough to take it. This is in line with costly signaling theory (see Chapter 2) in that the costs of their dedication to the punk rock ethos and aesthetic stands as a badge of honor. Being willing to take the harassment indicates their true devotion.

While Crash spoke about the near constant verbal harassment she gets, others spoke about more physical acts that they have encountered as punk rock women. Sarah, a heavily tattooed and pierced woman in her late twenties, complained about how men and women outside of the community interpret her body modifications as an invitation to touch. She said “people will just cruise right up to me and stick their finger through my gauges or lift up my shirt [sleeves] to see my tattoos. It really pisses me off when these hags walk up and touch me and then say ‘such a shame, you are such a pretty girl’”. She went on to assert that this rarely happens to any of her male friends. To her, the fact that she is a woman seemingly indicates to others that it is appropriate to touch her and that she will not retaliate. Sarah went on to contend that she always confronts people and that they usually react by calling her a ‘bitch’ or men will call her a ‘dyke’.

One of the more disturbing stories came from a woman named Emily. Emily, a mother of two, is a small woman, with a brightly colored mohawk, many tattoos and piercings, and often wears a heavily studded vest. While we were chitchatting she confided that she was struggling a bit due to some legal troubles stemming from an altercation she got in a few months earlier. As she relates, she was at an Oceanside bus stop waiting for the bus when she was approached by a middle aged woman. Unprovoked, the woman began berating Emily about her appearance. The verbal assault was laden with a slew of derogatory terms, attacking everything from her intelligence to her sexuality. Eventually, things got heated when the woman began to pull at

Emily's hair and clothing. At this point, Emily confided that she felt cornered and threatened, and began to fight back and started throwing punches. The melee was brief and it left the middle-aged woman battered and bleeding. Soon thereafter, the police arrived at which point the woman claimed that Emily had attempted to rob her and then viciously beat her. Ultimately, the police sided with the woman and Emily spent a few nights in jail, charged with several crimes.

In talking with Emily and others about their experiences with harassment by people outside of the punk rock community, it became apparent that there is indeed a gendered component. While men also reported harassment, it was not generally comparable to that faced by women. While punk men certainly push the boundaries of cultural acceptability with their attitudes, ethos, and aesthetic, women seem to be doing this and also transgressing a gendered boundary, thereby becoming prey for all sorts of additional harassment. Crash, for instance, contended that men's comments generally have sexual overtones, often referring to her as being promiscuous.

Again, we can look to costly signaling theory to illuminate some of why women are willing to subject themselves to this type of treatment. What is more compelling though, is that many women in the San Diego punk rock community see their handling of harassment from the outside as a point of pride. Sticking to their ethos and lifestyle in the face of stiff adversity is seen as empowering. Furthermore, in keeping with costly signaling theory, several women contended that comradery was formed via their collective struggle.

In a more fiery moment in one of our discussions Jen complained about women who dress more conventionally—and in her opinion are “trying to impress some dude”—infiltrating the punk rock scene. She said:

Its like...Fuck you, this is our place to be who we want to be. And then you are going to come in here with your hair that obviously took you two hours and wearing hundreds of dollars of makeup on your face, and you are going to try to step into this...Go fuck yourself, you already have a place. Somewhere else.

In speaking with Jen and others it became clear that many women in the San Diego punk rock community take pride in the fact that they do not easily fit into other social contexts. While Jen took a more hardline stance in comparison to others, most women that I spoke with confirmed that their marginalization from broader cultural contexts creates comradery with both men and women in the punk rock community.

Lauraine Leblanc contended that within the communities that she worked with, punk rock women were isolated from each other. She went on to assert that “few reported having girl friends, and thus their forms of resistance to the masculinity of punk would enjoy little support, and little chance of success” (Leblanc 1999:133). This does not hold true for the San Diego punk rock community. All of the women that I spoke with had significant networks of friendships with men but also, and more significantly, numerous other women.

At one particular show, the intra-gender friendships of women was quite apparent. I attend a show in the North Park neighborhood of San Diego at a medium sized venue/bar. That evening’s lineup included the legendary pop-punk band The Queers supported by the up-and-coming band Masked Intruder. Pop-punk is a more upbeat style of punk rock¹¹ than others and tends to garner a slightly different crowd—less studs and mohawks per se. Upon arriving at the

¹¹ For those who are really into the music, distinguishing the different styles of punk rock is useful to be more precise in conversations with fellow enthusiasts. However, for those who are not overly familiar with punk rock music, it can be quite difficult to make sense of these distinctions. The style of pop-punk that I am talking about is very heavily influenced by The Ramones.

show, I knew who to expect to see. I was quite surprised to see one of my interlocutors, Crash, and three of her (women) friends at the show complete with studs and mohawks.

I chatted with them for a while, and excited to see The Queers, they pushed their way to the front of the stage. When the band began to play the crowd was surprisingly unenergetic, except for the four women in front. Rather than simply being aggressive the women were genuinely ecstatic to see the band and were clearly singing along with every word. After the set, the four women hung out themselves, had a few beers, said farewell to me, and left the venue.

As I see it, this a far cry from the lack of intra-gender friendships that Leblanc observed. If we follow Leblanc's argument that the lack of intra-gender friendships means a lack of successful gender resistance, then, the San Diego punk rock community's abundance of intra-gender friendship could mean more successful gender resistance. Indeed, the women's collective participation that was not contingent on men constitutes gender maneuvering and a challenge to the hegemonic gendered order.

Inequality

While I have argued that the San Diego punk rock community is space for the construction and embodiment of alternative and pariah femininities, it must be restated that the scene undoubtedly remains male-dominated. Walking into any punk rock show and taking even a cursory glance will reveal a skewed gender ratio, with men outnumbering women, often significantly. Furthermore, women are even less represented in positions that hold prestige and power within the community. Very few bands include women musicians, and booking and promoting is also heavily male-dominated. As such, I am certainly not insinuating that because

the San Diego punk rock community is a space for the construction of pariah femininities that there is gender equality; that is blatantly incorrect.

Particularly interesting in this respect are people within the community's thoughts about why there is still a great deal of gender inequality, particularly in higher profile positions.

Michelle, a musician in a fairly prominent punk rock band from San Diego, had this to say:

We [her band] have gotten to do everything any guy band has been able to do, so in that matter it is equal. But if you read stuff on places like punknews.org you'll find all those ridiculous, sexist, ignorant comments posted about female-fronted bands. To be honest, we think it is funny because we are out on the road, playing shows with other touring bands and punk rock legends, we've gotten to meet the real people behind the music. And they don't talk that way or interact that way with us because we are equals...But all the nerds at home posting comments via their jizz encrusted keyboards – because they don't have real lives or real girlfriends— seem to think different. And that is really funny if you think about it.

Michelle's assertions are structurally parallel with others who previously argued that violence is often perpetuated by those only marginally associated with the punk rock community. Note that she contends that the "real people" in the scene promote gendered equality.

To be clear, almost all of my interlocutors, when confronted about aspects of the scene that reflect negatively on the culture (such as violence and sexism), were quick to point out that these blemishes were perpetuated by people who were not "real" punks. This sort of reasoning is a bit suspect, however, as these sort of behavior have persisted over some time. Still, many of the people that I spoke with would contend that is because there is a quick turnover rate with people who are only superficially involved in the community. Accordingly, even if the overtly violent or sexist people are only in the scene for a short time, as they leave, they are quickly

replaced by new uncommitted people. The consensus for long term punk rock community members is that those who are committed to the lifestyle promote equality. From my observations—both as a long term participant and as a researcher—this assertion seems to hold true.

Speaking to a San Diego punk rock musician (who is in several nationally and internationally renowned punk bands) about the lack of women musicians, Mike had this to say:

Who can blame them? They know what they are in for. Some kid snickering about her tits or whatever. You know, I saw some post the other day, Vice Squad¹² posted some new pictures up, and a couple of these little douchebag said something about how they'd 'still bang her'. That's fucking Beki Bondage you're talking about, you little shit!

Mike also contended that those who are seriously involved with the community find this sort of behavior reprehensible. While he asserts that long term punk rock community condemn this type of sexism, Mike believes that it definitely perpetuates the skewed gender ratios in punk rock bands. He also argued that social media and the ease of access to what used to be a rather isolated community has increased the frequency with which occurrences like this happen. He went on to say “nowadays you can click one button and download an entire record collection, you don't have to be invested in anything”. Rather than speaking about a financial investment, Mike is referring to investing in the community. According to him, people used to have to go to shows and create relationships in order to be into the scene, whereas today you can know a great deal about the music without any interactions. To him, this destroys any sense of accountability, thereby facilitating a lack of respect. Mike was quick to add, however, that there are still a great

¹² Vice Squad is seminal British punk rock band started in 1978 fronted by a woman named Beki Bondage.

deal of people who do things “right.” Still, for him, those that do it wrong are the ones that help perpetuate gender inequality.

Interestingly, Mike adamantly contended that the punk rock community should actively recruit women to participate in bands. Additionally, he argued that it is the duty of DIY record labels to promote bands with women members, as he believes diversity is beneficial to the music and by implication, the scene.

Discussing gender inequalities in the punk scene with my interlocutor, Sarah, she posited an interesting hypothesis. She contended that it had more to do with pressures from outside of punk rock culture rather than anything from within.

Me: Why do you think there are fewer women in the scene?

Sarah: Because of all the bullshit we get.

Me: From who? Like, at shows?

Sarah: Oh no, I mean from other people. I feel like if you are a guy, you can get away the punk rock thing more easily. I just remember a lot of the girls I hung out with and went to shows with as a kid aren’t around anymore, which sucks, but I get it. There is a lot of shit we have to put up with just to be a punk.

Sarah went on to argue that outside social pressures drive many women away and that has an effect on the ratio of men to women in more prominent positions in the community.

With all of this being said, it is important to note that there are women in well-liked and respected bands, as well as women who book and promote shows. I ran across a very talented newer band that feature a female lead singer and a female drummer (*Figure 13*). Interestingly, after the show the band confided to me that they would be on hiatus for a time because the drummer, who was very visibly pregnant, was due in two months.



Figure 13 – San Diego Punk Rock Band ‘At Fault’ (Photo by Author)

One of my key informants, Sarah, is becoming a well-known promoter and booker. When we spoke, she was in the processes of becoming the booking agent for a punk rock bar in the Point Loma area of San Diego, which had recently been bought by her friend, also a punk rock woman. While there is undoubtedly gender inequality, this is not to say that there is an impermeable glass ceiling and no chances for mobility.

Conclusion

The San Diego punk rock community is certainly a space for the construction, embodiment, and enactment of alternative and pariah femininities. While others (Leblanc 1999; Haenfler 2004) have argued that the embodiment of traits coded as masculine constitutes collusion or appeasement of punk rock masculinity, I contend that, for several reasons, this is inaccurate in contemporary punk rock scenes, such as that in San Diego. Based on what women

participants told me, it seems as though many were drawn to the community because it was a space where they could construct, embody, and enact identities more in line with what they felt. It is not that they modified their behavior to facilitate acceptance, but they gravitated towards a culture which accepted their behavior.

Despite heavy criticism and harassment from mainstream social contexts, the women I spoke with strongly identified as punks and gained a great sense of pride from being able to stand up to outside adversity and still maintain their identities. Furthermore, the sense of comradery built through shared experiences of harassment seem to have created a basis for intra-gender bonds and relationships. Taking Leblanc's assertion that a lack of intra-gender friendships for women in the punk rock community means a lack of successful gender resistance, the fact that intra-gender relationships are commonplace and strong bonds are being formed must equate to more successful gender resistance.

In Chapter 4, I argued the embodiment of pariah femininities and the punk rock scene acting as a space for their enactments acts as self-perpetuating feedback loop in many ways. Indeed, punk women's assertions that they were drawn to the scene because of its acceptance of alternative femininities coupled with how their embodied and enacted forms of femininity create space and acceptance bolsters this perspective. As I have shown in this chapter, punk women's constructions and enactments of pariah femininities directly challenge and reshape the relationship between masculinity and femininity within the San Diego punk rock community.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Challenges and Resistance

It should be stated outright once again, the San Diego punk rock community is not a place of gender equality. However, as I hope I have demonstrated, it is a place where traditional hegemonic gender norms are being challenged. While it certainly is true that the scene is male-dominated, that should not take away from or diminish the impact of the resistance to hegemonies that embodied alternative and pariah femininities represent.

Though not part of any formal study, while I was in San Diego I went to a local metal show at a venue close to where I was staying. I was immediately struck by the stark difference in the gender dynamics from that at the punk rock shows I had been attending. While metal and punk are sometimes stylistically similar, it was clear that to me that the two cultures are dramatically different. What stood out was the marked lack of women participating in the metal show. While there were several women in attendance they stood at the side of the stage waiting for the bands to finish playing. Moreover, they were conventionally dressed while men participating in various forms were distinctively clad in heavy metal dress (metal band t-shirts, tattered jeans, long hair).

While I will not speculate on gender dynamics in the metal scene, I can say that the relationships between masculinity and femininity in the punk scene appears to be vastly different. This is not to say that the San Diego punk rock community is some sort of utopia for equality; it is not. However, the gender maneuvering that is taking place within the scene—

perpetuated by the formation of pariah femininities—can be seen as successfully contesting the hegemonic gendered order.

My interlocutor Mike, a prominent musician within the San Diego punk rock community who has been a punk since the mid-1980s, told me that women's roles in punk have changed drastically throughout its history. As he sees it, in the early days of punk, from the late 1970s to the early 1980s women were much more involved. He cited the fact that there were many women in prominent bands such as: Siouxsie and the Banshees, X-Ray Specs, and The Plasmatics. He went on to contend that in the mid-1980s there was a definitive change with the advent of hardcore punk from Southern California. Bands like Black Flag were notorious for violent shows and he asserts that there was a dramatic shift in the ratio of men to women in the scene at this point. More recently, he believes there has been a shift back towards a more equal scene.

Unfortunately, the lack of ethnographic evidence makes it impossible to compare the gender dynamics of punk rock culture from the past to the present. Leblanc's book is really the only reference that we can draw from. If we take Mike's perspective that gender dynamics in punk rock culture are shifting back towards relative equality and we couple that with Leblanc's evidence and that presented in this thesis, the argument can be made that the women in the contemporary punk scene's constructions of pariah femininities has successfully shifted gendered order, to a degree. While it is far from perfect, we can look at other music cultures where there appears to be little gender maneuvering, such as the metal and skinhead scenes, and contend that the easily perceived differences in punk can be seen as successful resistance to the hegemonic gendered order.

This interpretation stands in contrast to Leblanc's analyses in *Pretty in Punk*. Again, Leblanc asserts that the formation of alternative femininities by way of the embodiment of

traditionally-coded masculine behaviors ultimately acts as collusion with masculinity rather than gender resistance (Leblanc 1999:133). I disagree with this interpretation. Michel Foucault once contended “to say that one can never be ‘outside’ power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what” (1980:141). As I see it, the pariah femininities that are being constructed and embodied in the San Diego punk rock community exemplify Foucault’s point. Certainly femininities within the community do not escape the fact that the scene is male-dominated. This does not, however, relegate the construction of alternative femininities to a state of irrelevance. No matter how small of a challenge to hegemony, gender resistance and maneuvering is never negligible simply because it cannot, as a stand-alone, completely solve gender inequalities.

How women in the San Diego punk rock community construct and embody alternative and pariah femininities shows that their resistance to gender hegemonies constitute what Schippers called gender maneuvering (Schippers 2002). Take, for example, punk women’s harassment by outsiders serving as a unifier. Riot Grrrl movement leader and prolific feminist writer Kathleen Hanna once wrote “Being told you are a worthless piece of shit and not believing it is a form of resistance” (Hanna 1991). Indeed, perhaps one of the most powerful forms of resistance enacted by the women I spoke with was turning the harassment meant to exert social control into a way of building comradery. Doing gender ‘wrong’ and then using criticisms and harassment as a means to unify and continue to collectively do gender ‘wrong’ is an extremely powerful form of subversion.

Within the community, the embodiment and enactment of pariah femininities—those which challenge the hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity—certainly cannot be seen as collusion or acquiescence to masculinity. Indeed, punk women’s assertions

that their constructions of alternative femininities were not in response to pressures from within punk rock, but were rather motivators to become involved with the culture solidifies the notion that the San Diego scene is a space for alternative and pariah femininities. More importantly though, these femininities successfully challenge and shift the traditional relationship between masculinity and femininity. This can be seen in the use of space at punk rock shows as discussed in Chapter 4. In spaces such as the skinhead shows, where traditional hegemonic gender barriers and norms are upheld, there is a distinct and discernable gendered boundary. In contrast, at punk rock shows where pariah femininities actively challenge gender hegemony, the use of space has no discernable gendered boundary. While it is important to note that punk rock culture is a place which provides fertile ground for the construction of alternative and pariah femininities, it is much more significant to note that these constructions appear to be having a significant impact on the gender dynamics of the San Diego punk rock community.

Moving Forward

This thesis has sought to unpack the gender dynamics of the San Diego punk rock community and shed light onto the construction of female identities therein. As I have demonstrated, punk rock culture is complex with a myriad of intricacies and intersections. While I would contend that the San Diego punk rock community is unique, in that it has its own idiosyncrasies based on its interaction with the other cultural contexts (i.e. a border city, large military populations), I would also emphatically assert that it represents just one facet of the overarching global punk rock culture. With this in mind, what this thesis ultimately serves as, is an impetus for further research and theorizations of punk rock culture using various anthropological approaches.

As I see it, the positions that I have argued in this thesis do not simply fill a gap in the existing corpus of research; instead, my perspectives offer a starting point for new discourses that unpack punk rock culture independent of previous sociological theorizations. This thesis, then, utilizes anthropological perspectives and discourses that situate punk rock theoretically not as a relatively homogenous subset of some singular hegemonic culture but rather as a culture in and of itself that creates frictions unique to its specific geographical settings and offers opportunities for further analytic unpacking.

I began this thesis with the statement that academics no longer engage with punk rock culture. I believe that this is in no small part due the stagnation of theoretical approaches. When the conventional way of unpacking punk rock culture involves viewing it as ‘youth subculture’, yet even a cursory glance at the scene would negate that perspective, scholars cannot go any further. Understanding punk rock as a complex culture that spans the globe can lead to meaningful contributions to several discourses. In this thesis I have argued that the San Diego punk rock community is a space for the construction of alternative and pariah femininities. Certainly this has bearing on broader feminist and gender discourses. Moving forward, it is my intention to continue conducting long term ethnographic fieldwork in the San Diego punk scene to further unpack the intersectionalities gender and class, ethnicity, and economics.

Additionally, approaching punk rock as a globalized culture situates analyses of it in globalization discourses and can serve as fertile ground for further theorizations. Arjun Appadurai’s concept of ‘scapes’, particularly ethnoscape and mediascape (Appadurai 1990), can serve as both a springboard for understanding and as a theoretical lens that can be further unpacked by ethnographic inquiries into punk rock culture.

As I have learned while conducting research for this thesis, one cannot disregard punk rock culture at the local level. While I contend that in many ways punk rock must be approached as a global culture it is important to remember that local scenes are its foundation. With this in mind, I find that utilizing Roland Robertson's concept of glocalization (1995) to be paramount to unpacking contemporary punk rock communities. He contends that globalized aspects of cultures often manifest themselves in slightly different ways depending on the idiosyncrasies of the local. From this perspective, there are an unlimited number of research opportunities in punk rock culture that will further our understandings of globalized culture, including how local norms contextualize and modulate larger discourses. From this perspective, this thesis ultimately serves as one example of how global punk rock culture manifests itself in one particular area. More specifically, it unpacks gender dynamics in this particular scene in order to learn about the construction of alternative femininities in the San Diego punk rock community. While the specifics of San Diego's scene may be their own, since it is still a subset of a permeable translocal culture it is (1) always informed by, and (2) never discrete from, the larger international scene. Since each scene can take on its own shape and characteristics, further study and in broader contexts will only deepen understandings of the translocal culture and its local iterations (Marion 2015, personal communication).

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July 7, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steve Moog
Jonathan Marion

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 14-06-781

Protocol Title: *Seeing and Being: Gender Enactments in the San Diego Punk Rock Community*

Review Type: ☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 07/07/2014 Expiration Date: 07/06/2015

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<http://vpred.uark.edu/210.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 230 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior* to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

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