

PEACE PUNKS AND PUNKS AGAINST RACISM: RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND FRAME CONSTRUCTION IN THE PUNK MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, scholars have begun to attend to the gap in our understanding of the relationship between music and social movements. One such example is [Corte's and Edwards' "White Power Music and the Mobilization of Racist Social Movements."](#) Our research shares the perspective of Corte and Edwards (2008) which emphasizes the centrality of music to social movement organizations, especially in terms of resource mobilization, but rather than look at how punk music was used as an *instrument* by an external social movement like the White Power movement, we look at how punks themselves joined social movements and altered the dynamics of the movements they joined. We also provide examples of punk involvement in left wing social movements to emphasize the indeterminate nature of punk politics. We examine two such cases: the Rock Against Racism movement in the U.K., and the Peace movement in the U.S. In both cases, punks made use of their independent media as a means to provide an infrastructure for mobilization of resources to sustain the punks' involvement in these social movements and the unique framing provided by punks, which altered the dynamic of the movements they joined. What makes punk an interesting case is that the "do-it-yourself" ethic of independent media construction that was at the centre of the punk movement made it possible for punks to make connections to various other social movements as well as alter the dynamics of those social movements. In these cases, punk music was not used as a means toward an end, but rather punks themselves had a significant impact on these movements both in terms of resource mobilization and frame alignment.

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INTRODUCTION

Although recent years have witnessed a cultural turn in the study of social movements on the one hand, and a move toward serious attention to the semiotics of youth sub-cultures in cultural studies on the other hand, the relationship between music and social movements continues to be relatively neglected. There are a few very important exceptions to this understanding of music and social movements, including Eyerman and Jamison's *Music and Social Movements* (1998), Roscigno and Danaher's *The Voice of Southern Labor: Radio, Music and Textile Strikes, 1929-1934* (2004), and Corte's and Edwards' "[White Power Music and the Mobilization of Racist Social Movements](#)" (2008). We approach these particular works and the question of the relationship between music and social movements from the point of view of what Paul Willis (1990: 21) refers to as "grounded aesthetics," which he considers to be the "yeast" of common culture. For Willis, "grounded" aesthetic value is not derived from a particular text or object, where value is something intrinsic to the form itself. In contrast to what he sees as the "hyper-institutionalization" of "art" – where art is dissociated from everyday life and form is given emphasis over function – Willis calls for a way to view aesthetics that grounds the phenomena in the act of consumption of the commodity. The shift is to focus on how people make sense of the world in cultural terms through the consumption of objects/artefacts. Willis (1990:24) argues that: "the crucial failure and danger of most cultural analysis are that dynamic, living grounded aesthetics are transformed and transferred to ontological properties of things...the aesthetic effect is not the text or artefact. It is part of the sensuous/emotive/cognitive creativities of human receivers, especially as they produce a strong sense of emotional and cognitive identity as expanded capacity and power... These creativities are not dependent on texts, but might be enabled by them." In the following pages we appropriate Willis' concept of "grounded aesthetics" as a way to intervene in the discussions about aesthetics and social movements, in particular of music and social movements as it relates to punk by considering two cases of punk's relationship to social movements: the rock against racism movement in the U.K. and the peace movement in the U.S.

We focus on a phenomenon in punk culture that is referred to as the "do-it-yourself" (DIY) ethic, which in some ways we see as an example of "grounded aesthetics," although we emphasize the production side as much as the consumption side of the process. The DIY ethic states that punks should not be content with being consumers and spectators but instead should become active participants in creating culture by starting their own fan magazines (commonly known as "zines"), creating their own record labels, starting their own bands, and creating a network of venues for live performance. An underlying idea is that these media should be autonomous from the culture industry and the "mainstream" media as much as possible, to serve as an alternative form of cultural production which can facilitate artistic experimentation by minimizing the impact of commercialization (Moore 2007). Thus our analysis is not an exegesis on Willis, but our position is informed by his ideas. In short, we see punk's relationship to social movements as a good example of modes of action rooted in an art world, but that art world is framed in terms of "grounded aesthetics."

We see potential problems in recent attempts to analyze the role of music in social movements, because in the cases where attention is given to the relationship between music and social movements, music is situated as secondary to other components that are included in the activities of social movement actors and organizations

(Klanderfans and Staggenborg, 2002). Music is typically framed in a way that views it as playing a supporting role in a social movement, rather than as an organizing catalyst. We would argue that examining the relationship between music and social movements entails not only examining music as a cultural dimension of social movements that is crucial for setting frames, forging collective identities, and expressing ideologies, but also for the mobilization of resources, which includes mobilizing structures such as independent media that provide an important infrastructure for a social movement organization. Corte and Edwards (2008) make an important contribution toward filling the gap in research on music and social movements because they seek to draw attention to the ways in which music can be a crucial factor in the process of obtaining resources for a social movement, the phenomenon referred to as “resource mobilization” in social movement studies (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Edwards and McCarthy 2004). Here we will present our research on particular cases in the history of punk as a way to contrast and supplement the argument of Corte and Edwards. Our analysis considers both the resource mobilization perspective and the frame construction perspectives in social movement theory.

We agree, in part, with their perspective on the question of the role of music in mobilizing resources in a social movement, but our research differs from theirs in two significant ways: first, our research is on punk’s involvement with left wing social movements –in this case, the anti-racist movement in the U.K, and the peace movement in the U.S. -, while their research examines the relationship of punk rock to the reactionary right wing White Power movement. Second, we look at how punks attached themselves to social movements by making use of an infrastructure developed within the punk community that was inspired by the DIY ethic, and how the punk culture altered the dynamics of the social movements that punks joined. These differences between our research and the research of Corte and Edwards (2008) are important because they show not only that punk’s relationship to social movements is indeterminate in terms of political persuasion, but also that punk music cannot be reduced to a tool used by an *external* social movement like White Power. Our emphasis is on how punks developed their own independent infrastructure through the “do-it-yourself” ethic of the punk scene.

PUNK MUSIC BACKGROUND

As music, punk’s original sound was not only loud, fast, and aggressive but deliberately short and simple. This was consistent with the DIY ethic, for it allowed musicians with minimal technical proficiency to form their own bands and play music. It was also a conscious revolt against the aesthetic standards set by the rock musicians of the 1970s, particularly those involved with so-called “progressive rock” that had begun composing lengthy and complicated forms of music that aspired to be taken seriously as “art.” Punk’s sonic distinction from other forms of rock music was paralleled by its differences from the hippie subculture in manners of style, fashion, argot and drug use. Whereas hippies affected a mellow demeanor with bright colors, natural fibers, and psychedelic drugs, the punks costumed themselves as post-apocalyptic street urchins with a dystopian outlook fueled by amphetamines.

Punk was also a reaction against the commercial side of mainstream rock music: By the mid-1970s, rock music had become big business, with million-selling records, massive outdoor festivals and concerts, and a hierarchy of stars and celebrities (Chapple and Garofalo 1977; Goodman 1997). Likewise, the commercial culture had appropriated the fashions and the sensibilities of the hippie counterculture (Frank

1997). The youthful rebellion of the late 1960s fizzled out, and both rock musicians and the counterculture grew increasingly indulgent and hedonistic; the former in pursuit of drugs and groupies, the latter in search of self-actualization. In short, the power of the music industry and established rock celebrities had the effect of sanitizing rock's rebellious message and squelching opportunities for new talent to emerge.

In response, punk rock bands like the Ramones and the Sex Pistols flaunted their amateurism as musicians, even though some of them were quite competent. Their songs were nasty, brutish and short, without the epic guitar solo common in rock mainstream. The most well-known groups recorded with the major labels, but the events of 1976-77 spawned the formation of hundreds of lesser-known punk bands in the US and UK who recorded with low-budget independent labels.

The first cohort of punk musicians that coalesced at CBGB's in New York's Bowery district in 1975-76 represented an eclectic array of musical styles and influences. As the scene grew to much larger proportions in Britain during 1976-77, the punk sound became codified as the use of minimal instrumentation and short songs returned to the verse-chorus-verse form and 4/4 time signatures that had been used in the original forms of rock'n'roll. British bands like the Clash and the Slits also included the sounds of reggae and dub that were performed by London's Afro-Caribbean population. By the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, the development of "hardcore" punk had accelerated the tempos even further. In the suburbs of southern California, a cluster of hardcore bands described as "brat-core" or "snot-core" emerged; the names of the seminal bands – the Dickies, the Circle Jerks, and the Adolescents – seem to say it all. These groups were young men who flaunted their immaturity and idiocy while making high-speed but very melodic music, which might be best described as the sonic equivalent of being teased by an annoying child. The Adolescents personified this state of retardation in "No Way": *"No class/no job/I'm just a victim of society/ A slob/No ass, no head/I gotta go home and jack off instead."* This was "punk" in the juvenile sense of the word, and their songs were full-blown but fleeting temper tantrums against authority.

PUNK AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Punk can be considered both as a social movement in its own right, and as a movement that made links to other social movements, rather than merely an *instrument* used by an external movement like White Power. In some ways we take the point of view of Joe Strummer, the leader of the punk band The Clash, who said, "Punk rock for me was a social movement" (D'Ambrosio 2004a: 5). We think that punk was its own movement, but also that punks relied on their culture of "do-it-yourself" in cases where they linked up with other movements. While the focus of Corte and Edwards is on how the White Power movement raised revenues for their movement through record sales of white power music, our focus is on how "zines" provided part of an infrastructure of the punk movement itself and for punks who branched out into other social movements.

Corte and Edwards demonstrate how music has become a cultural resource for the White Power movement. The movement has used music to recruit young people into its ranks, frame issues and articulate an ideology that facilitates a White Power collective identity, and raise money by selling music and sponsoring events. In short, the authors' case study reveals how a pre-existing social movement has come to use music as an instrument of its goals. Music, for instance, has replaced counterfeiting

and bank robbery as the preferred means of raising money for White Power organizations (p.16). Music has also become an effective tool for recruiting young people into the movement and articulating a frame that presents White Power as oppositional, authentically non-commercial, and persecuted by authorities.

Like Corte and Edwards, we argue that punk music and related media have been instrumental in mobilizing resources for these White Power movements in addition to setting frames and forging collective identities. However, we believe that our study reveals an additional side of this process, for it shows how music and subculture have contributed to building social movements rather than simply being used as a means to an end by a pre-existing movement like White Power. In the following pages we provide an analysis that demonstrates both how punks framed issues when they got involved in left wing social movements, and how punks mobilized resources that sustained their political activity in these movements. We show how punk's "do-it-yourself" ethic contributed both to the construction of mobilizing structures and to the construction of cultural frames.

MOBILIZING STRUCTURES

Punk has created a "mobilizing structure" (McCarthy 1996) through its DIY ethic. This ethic has enabled punk subculture to build a substantial infrastructure of underground media and we will examine different episodes where this media has played an active role in generating and coordinating social protest among people who identify as punks. These media serve as mobilizing structures in the sense defined by McCarthy (1996: 141): "the range of everyday life micro-mobilization structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated." In other words, social movements may be mobilized on the basis of social networks that are not explicitly political, such as friendship, family, and neighbourhood. While it is "not aimed primarily at movement mobilization," punk's DIY ethic plays a constitutive role in resource mobilization and other organizational aspects of a social movement. Culture, which has usually been thought of only in terms of the identity element in the new social movements paradigm can and has become a constitutive element of a social movement organization and resource mobilization.

ROCK AGAINST RACISM BACKGROUND

Rock Against Racism (RAR) was formed in 1976 in response to racist sentiments expressed by rock stars Eric Clapton, who declared his support for xenophobic politician Enoch Powell, and David Bowie, who was using fascist iconography, while stating publicly that he believed "Adolf Hitler was one of the first rock stars." (Quoted in *Playboy magazine*, April 1975) Responding to a concert in which Eric Clapton announced that he wanted to "keep Britain white" and reiterated his support for Powell, the founders of RAR wrote letters to several British music magazines which stated their intention to form an anti-racist movement through music: "We want to organize a rank and file movement against the racist poison in music. We urge support for Rock Against Racism. P.S. Who shot the Sheriff, Eric? It sure as hell wasn't you" (quoted in Frith and Street 1992: 68). While the need for a response to Clapton and Bowie may have been the most immediate catalyst for RAR's formation, the movement was also shaped by a broader context of intense racial conflict throughout Britain during the mid-1970s. The National Front, an unabashedly anti-immigrant political party, formed in the late 1960s and was already receiving up to 10 percent of the popular vote in the elections of 1974 (Gilroy 1991: 118). The

National Front was building further visibility by staging street marches through neighborhoods with large numbers of Black and Asian immigrants, and increasingly intensified racist and xenophobic sentiments as well as fuelling several acts of white mob violence against South Asians, commonly referred to as “Paki-bashing” (Gilroy, 1991). Predictably perhaps, these forces of racism and anti-immigration had been revived during a time of economic crisis and deindustrialization which hit working-class communities very hard. The number of manufacturing jobs in Britain declined from 8 million in 1971 to 5.5 million in 1984 (Lash and Urry 1987: 99). The crisis reached its peak in 1976, when the number of unemployed reached 1.5 million, representing 6.4 percent of the workforce—the highest unemployment figure since 1940 (Savage 1992: 229).

In this social context, punk was certainly not a uniformly anti-racist subculture, and some individuals within it expressed the kind of racist and anti-immigrant sentiments that were circulating in Britain at the time (Sabin 1999; D’Ambrosio 2004b). A subgenre of white supremacist bands and assorted fascist groups had surfaced during the early years of punk, and even some of the artier performers and sub-culturalists (including Sid Vicious and Siouxsie Sioux of Siouxsie and the Banshees) had incorporated swastikas into their sartorial styles of shock. RAR was initially organized by some veterans of the 1960s protests and agit-prop who were working within the Socialist Workers Party. Its ability to attract and educate masses of people, however, derived from the growing fan base for punk and reggae music, as RAR concerts headlined by bands like the Clash and Steel Pulse attracted audiences of up to 100,000 in 1978. In the end, although Thatcher’s electoral victory in 1979 represented a defeat for the anti-racist movement insofar as her campaign in part played on racialized fears and resentments, RAR was otherwise quite successful in marginalizing the racist and fascist elements in punk and raising awareness among large numbers of young people, particularly within the working-class (Widgery 1986; Gilroy 1991: 120-135; Frith and Street 1992).

The main mobilizing structures for RAR were live concerts that brought large numbers of people together and a zine called *Temporary Hoarding* that served as the central medium for communicating the movement’s ideas. The first issue of *Temporary Hoarding* was produced for the Mayday celebrations of 1977 and was clearly influenced by the democratic spirit of punk and its do-it-yourself ethic. For instance, the creator of *Sniffin’ Glue*, one of the most widely circulated zines, had famously included a rudimentary diagram showing how to play three basic chords on the guitar and then urged “now go form your own band,” and elsewhere appealed to his readers: “All you kids out there who read “SG” don’t be satisfied with what *we* write. Go out and start your own fanzines” (quoted in Savage 1992: 279). Zines would serve as the focal point for an independent network of communication within punk subculture while embodying its prefigurative politics of participatory democracy. The do-it-yourself ethic articulated in *Sniffin’ Glue*’s diagram was fulfilled and propagated by *Temporary Hoarding* as it became an organizing medium for the RAR movement. The look of *Temporary Hoarding* drew from punk styles like montage photography and ransom note lettering, in which images of racist politicians, anti-racist musicians, and/or popular uprisings could be juxtaposed in various ways to highlight their socio-political connections or historical lineage. Inside, it contained practical advice for organizing RAR concerts, interviews with anti-racist musicians, and the contact information of other anti-racist groups.

Thus, rather than simply providing ideological support, the cultural apparatus of RAR was indispensable for mobilizing an anti-racist movement. Just as other zines encouraged punks to become participants rather than spectators, the pages of *Temporary Hoarding* were also crammed full of letters and poems sent to them by readers wishing to express their viewpoints or experiences with racism. In the fourth issue, the editors wrote:

Everyone wants stickers, everyone wants badges, everyone wants posters, everyone wants T-shirts, everyone wants to tell us their experiences, their fave local band, their ideas about how to fight racism, about their bigoted families, about their mates being beaten up, about anger and frustration, about their town, about racism in their street, their block of flats, about fear. (quoted in Gilroy 1991: 129)

As the editorial quoted above suggests, the mobilization of support for Rock Against Racism was inextricably linked to visual forms of expression and the consumption of commodities (stickers, badges, posters, and T-shirts) which are ubiquitous within many youth cultures. This aesthetic allowed RAR to attract and organize greater numbers of young people than would have been possible with the traditionally more didactic style of the political Left. The circulation of *Temporary Hoarding* is estimated to have reached 12,000 in 1979 (Frith and Street 1992: 71), and RAR claimed to have sold 12,000 badges (Gilroy 1991: 130).

The RAR concerts began in late 1976 with gigs at a London pub and the Royal College of Art. The largest and most outstanding concerts were held in London in 1977 and 1978 along with marches organized with the Anti-Nazi League, with performances by Elvis Costello and the Attractions, the Clash, X-Ray Spex, Steel Pulse, and Tom Robinson. These outdoor concerts/festivals in London attracted as many as 100,000 people and have come to be seen as the acme of RAR's success. But there were also concerts in Manchester, Brixton, Southall, Leeds, etc., totaling some 300 gigs in all during 1978 (Dawson 2005) which may not have drawn the large crowds of the London shows but were especially important for spreading anti-racist messages to young people throughout Britain; indeed, cities like Leeds and Southall had become hotbeds of National Front recruitment and racist violence.

RAR thus represented an advance for the British Left in its ability to mobilize resources through youth culture. As Paul Gilroy (1991) has argued, British Left movements had previously dismissed youth cultures as merely epiphenomenal, much in the same way that they analytically reduced issues of race to class. In this case, however, punk was not merely a cultural expression of support for the anti-racist movement; it provided the structure and social network(s) that allowed the movement to mobilize. RAR was effective in treating punk subculture as a relatively autonomous entity while using young people's preoccupations with identity and consumption to help organize their movement.

PEACE PUNKS BACKGROUND

In the U.S., the punk scene took a political turn, especially in its connection with the peace movement, beginning in the late 1970s and continuing with punk's mutation into a "hardcore" subculture during the 1980s. As with Rock Against Racism, the independent media created through the do-it-yourself ethic provided mobilizing structures that facilitated political communication and action. The hardcore scene that developed in Northern California during the 1980s was supported by an infrastructure including radio, zines, independent record labels, and performance

venues, all of which were characterized by a fierce ideological commitment to commercial independence. Founded in Berkeley in 1982, the fanzine *MaximumRockNRoll* served as a crucial medium for the hardcore scene across the U.S. and even globally, as it featured “scene reports” about local music everywhere from mid-sized California suburbs to entire Eastern European nations. These scene reports, along with hundreds of reviews of recordings sent by independent labels and large numbers of unedited letters contributed by readers, played an indispensable role in allowing hardcore to subsist through the 1980s, long after the music industry and mainstream media had lost interest in punk. *MaximumRockNRoll* helped politicize hardcore by including feature stories about issues pertaining to the nuclear arms race, U.S. policies in Central America and South Africa, sexism and violence against women, and the history of anarchism.

The emergence of so-called “peace punks” in San Francisco reverberated with an upsurge of political activism in the hardcore scene in Washington, D.C. The Washington D.C. scene which began to develop in the late 1970s included the bands Bad Brains and Minor Threat, with the latter helping to launch a “straight-edge” movement within punk in which adherents refused to partake in drugs, alcohol, or promiscuous sex. In its incipient years, straight-edge wasn’t “political” in any overt sense, although it has since become linked to animal rights, feminism, and the peace movement (Haenfler 2006). In the early 1980s, straight-edge represented a refusal of the “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll” hedonism embedded in rock music, as well as the spirit of indulgent consumerism that had emerged in Reagan’s America, but it wasn’t yet connected to movements for social change. A punk-based social movement organization known as Positive Force was later established in Nevada through the band 7 Seconds but quickly established a strong presence in Washington, D.C. (Andersen and Jenkins 2003: 168-71). Positive Force DC, as it came to be known, expanded considerably as it linked itself to an especially vibrant scene centered around the steadfastly independent label Dischord Records, founded by two members of Minor Threat in 1980. Punk and political activism developed symbiotically in the DC scene during the mid-1980s, as the growing popularity of the local punk bands meant increasing visibility for Positive Force, while the demonstrations and organizing efforts of Positive Force and other activists clearly had a politicizing effect on the bands and their audience.

The merger of punk music and political activism culminated in what participants called “Revolution Summer” in 1985, as local punks participated in regular protests against apartheid outside the South African embassy in Washington, D.C. The punks brought an element of novelty to these demonstrations in the form of “punk percussion protests” where they would pound on drums, trash cans, and buckets outside the embassy, thus mobilizing punks’ noise-making capacities for the purposes of political dissent. This tactic included an element of ironic appropriation as the demonstrators sometimes drummed while singing Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not Gonna Take It,” a heavy metal song that took on a politicized meaning when performed in this context. Some twenty years later, Positive Force continues to advocate in the Washington D.C. area, identifying itself as “an activist group that works for fundamental social change and youth empowerment”.¹ Punk music, particularly the popularity of DC band Fugazi, has been indispensable to Positive Force’s ability to mobilize financial resources, as the group claims to have organized nearly 300 benefit concerts which had raised \$200,000 between 1985 and January 2000. Positive Force has in turn established links with a variety of grassroots

¹ Retrieved March 21, 2009, from <http://www.positiveforcedc.org/about.html>.

organizations in the Washington D.C. area, particularly groups who provide assistance to the homeless, low-income people, battered women, and the elderly (Temple 1999; Andersen and Jenkins 2003).²

Led by Fugazi, Dischord Records, and Positive Force, the Washington D.C. scene set the example for do-it-yourself cultural production, commercial independence, and political activism which many others all over the U.S. would follow during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In San Diego, for instance, a politicized punk scene formed with an anarchist fanzine called *San Diego's Daily Impulse*. Published bi-monthly by a collective of punks, students, and activists, this fanzine combined reviews of the latest punk concerts in San Diego with articles on everything from how to resist the draft to the history of the Haymarket strikes in Chicago in 1886 to reprints of essays written by the American anarchist Emma Goldman. The *Daily Impulse* also included a "Community Bulletin" which announced upcoming demonstrations or boycotts and provided contact information for local activist groups, periodicals, punk bands, and bookstores. On a more personal level, it also featured a regular column called "Dealing with Family Life," written by social workers who advised young people about how to cope with physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in their families.

One example of how the DIY ethic of punk influenced and shaped political action can be seen in the case of Bob Beyerle, an important figure in San Diego's political punk scene, proprietor of the independent label Vinyl Communications and former candidate for mayor of the nearby city of Chula Vista. Beyerle was introduced to punk as a young man during the 1980s, and recalls that he was immediately attracted to its political message: "I liked the music, the whole kind of 'fuck you' thing. I was more into the social change aspect—if people hear this, they're going to think differently. And I still believe that" (interview with Ryan Moore, 6/29/98). He and some friends soon formed a band, Neighborhood Watch, and Beyerle created Vinyl Communications to distribute their music. At that time, Beyerle was also working in construction and learning to become a plumber, and he utilized those skills to build a rehearsal space and recording studio in the backyard of the house he was renting. Dozens of bands have since rehearsed, recorded, and even temporarily lived in this space, and Beyerle has also allowed it to be used by local political groups for organizing and fund-raising. For Beyerle, the do-it-yourself ethic embodied by Vinyl Communications, which released over 150 records during its tenure, is an extension of his commitment to a politics of democratic participation:

I really like starting with something that isn't there and then turning it into something that people can hear. It's a form of communication. . . . Basically, I think a lot of it to me was like, 'I think society will be better off if this stuff is out there'. . . . I like to support people who are doing things that are a little more off the beaten-path. . . . I just realized if we could just keep it honest and real down to earth and just put out people that a lot of people won't touch, if we can support people whose views most people don't want to hear, or haven't heard, at least we're making them available. . . . A lot of it is that it's friends and friends of friends, I like the people, I like some of the stuff they have to say, and so let's just do it. I don't love every song on every album, and anyone that runs a label and does has either put out less than five releases or is a liar. When you're supporting those people sometimes you just have to let them do their own thing, make their own mistakes. Sometimes it's worked out great. And I've learned to like a lot of styles of music. (Interview with Moore, 6/29/98)

In 1991, Beyerle undertook a full-fledged campaign to become mayor of his hometown of Chula Vista, located about 20 miles south of San Diego near the

² Retrieved March 21, 2009, from <http://www.positiveforcedc.org/projects.html>.

Mexican border. Twenty-six years old and now working as a professional plumber, Beyerle presented himself as the only working-class candidate to the largely blue-collar and Latino electorate of Chula Vista. In an interview with *MaximumRockNRoll* (1991), he stated: “I felt I am basically a working class person and realized that there is a lot of class struggle in Chula Vista. I figured if attorneys, deputy district attorneys and financial consultants and other type of executive people, real estate developers and their friends had their candidates . . . why can’t regular people have theirs?” During the campaign, Beyerle attacked the incumbent city government’s role in subsidizing the construction of a bayfront yacht club and a luxury hotel at a time when the majority of Chula Vista’s citizens were suffering from fiscal cuts to public services. He also drew from his experiences in the punk scene to offer some alternative programs for dealing with Chula Vista’s gang and drug problems: “You need to channel your rebellion into creative directions, rather than fight each other and fight your other gangs, which I think the police happen to enjoy..You can channel your creativity a little more constructively and still say what you want without being violent about it or just going nowhere and then end up having to join the military and be disciplined rather than teaching yourself discipline” (quoted in *Maximumrocknroll* 1991). Despite a lack of funds or the ability to take off work, Beyerle received 475 votes and finished fifth in a pool of 11 candidates.

FRAME CONSTRUCTION

While drawing on the concept of mobilizing structures to account for the organizational aspects of punk’s (generally) contentious politics, we also utilize the notion that framing processes are linked to the construction of collective identities among punks in the same way they are within social movements (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). Again, our aim is not to pit structural factors against cultural ones or vice versa, but rather to respond to the challenge initiated by McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) and Polletta and Jasper (2001: 382) to demonstrate how mobilizing structures and framing processes interact in dynamic fashion. Within punk, the “schemata of interpretation” (Goffman 1974: 21; Snow et al. 1986: 464) is strongly anti-authoritarian and suspicious of corporate and state power, while conversely valorizing localized and small-scale forms of cultural expression (Middleton 2002; Thompson 2004; Gosling 2004; Moore 2007; O’Connor 2008). Thus, when punk addresses political issues, this frame of anti-authoritarianism and anarchism serves as the means of interpretation that “enable individuals ‘to locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Snow et al. 1986: 464). Punk readily lends itself to an “injustice frame” (Gamson 1992) that includes not only an ideological but also an emotional component of righteous anger and outrage that can be mobilized for political action. As our case studies reveal, punk protests have been characterized by unique “tactical repertoires” (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004) that are similar to the spirit of provocation and satire found in punk music and style.

In sum, the collective identity of punks is initially forged through common tastes in music and style but can be subsequently mobilized for political actions that draw from the frames of meaning, outraged emotions, and provocative tactics that circulate within the subculture. In other words, even if consumption is the gateway to political action, the methods of cultural production known as the do-it-yourself ethic have facilitated the creation of commercially independent media for communicating ideas and forging social networks. It is in this sense that we have spoken of punk culture’s role as a mobilizing structure. These mobilizing structures

were organized for action in a broader political context when the Right had gone on the offensive against the achievements of the movements for racial justice, peace, and sexual equality. As punks began to enter these social conflicts, they utilized frames, tactics, and emotions that derived from their subculture, in doing so they changed or augmented the cultural dynamics of the pre-existing anti-racist and peace movements. It is for these reasons that we believe that punk represents an instance where culture and structure must be seen as reciprocally influencing rather than opposing variables in social movement studies.

ROCK AGAINST RACISM

RAR and its concerts provided multiple opportunities to communicate anti-racist ideals to its audience: there were speeches by prominent musicians, songs with lyrics critical of racism, and of course *Temporary Hoarding* and all the other media produced by RAR. One participant recalled: “Rock Against Racism were very good at politicizing the people who came along to the gigs... Many people who came along didn’t have any political persuasion, but they responded to the statements by musicians, that it was necessary to challenge people who were putting forward racist ideas” (quoted in Savage 1992: 482-3). Yet perhaps nothing was more symbolically meaningful or socially consequential than the mixture of punk and reggae music itself, with black and white musicians playing together for racially integrated audiences. Musically, much of punk was “white noise,” (Garofalo 1997: 304) as many people have called it: music which radically cast off rock’s associations with the blues and other elements of black music. Though it was generally represented as a wholesale rebellion against society and oppression, punk’s cultural politics were actually quite ambiguous, especially in matters of race. As an anti-immigration movement was growing during a period of economic crisis and gaining a following among white working-class youth, there was a considerable danger that punk could be articulated with the ideology and anger of white supremacists. RAR was critically important in this context, as it enabled reggae to permeate through punk music and subculture, and in doing so it introduced white youth to Afro-Caribbean perspectives on oppression and redemption.

The collective identity of punks had been forged through the development of a particular style of music and a provocative mode of personal appearance. But while this collective identity was culturally based on a rejection of conformity with society at large and authority, this did not necessarily translate into “progressive” politics, for nihilistic and even fascistic components were also growing in punk’s early days in the UK. Thus, the ideological work of RAR was to reframe the meaning of punk so that its rebellious collective identity came to be seen as incompatible with racism. A “true punk” was therefore someone who was willing to transgress social boundaries by taking the stage with black musicians or attending concerts with racially mixed audiences. Conversely, RAR sought to reframe the meaning of punk so that there was nothing “punk” about wearing a swastika or joining the National Front; these were de-legitimated as acts of conformity and authoritarianism as opposed to provocation and transgression. So at the same time when RAR mobilized an anti-racist movement by drawing on punk and its do-it-yourself ethic, in turn it offered a new frame to the meaning of punk by accentuating certain tendencies within the subculture and de-accentuating others.

An excellent example of the ambiguous racial politics of early punk and its vulnerability to manipulation by racist and fascist movements is The Clash’s “White Riot.” This song was written after the white members of The Clash found

themselves in the middle of a riot between police and Afro-Caribbean youth at the Notting Hill Carnival during the fiery summer of 1976 (D'Ambrosio 2004b). The song was a call for white youth to have their own riot, but one that would be directed against the class system and unite black and white youth, not to instigate racist mob violence. Joe Strummer sings in "White Riot": "Black people gotta lotta problems/But they don't mind throwing a brick/White people go to school/Where they teach you how to be thick." However, "White Riot" was also one of many punk songs which the National Front latched on to in its recruitment of young people with the allure of racist mob violence. Even a cursory consideration of the lyrics would have revealed that it was not a racist song. It is not impossible, though, to imagine how some audiences could have heard it as a racist salvo for white working-class youth in the way that it sounded as music, with its aggressive tempo and football-style chorus of "White riot/I wanna riot/White riot/A riot of my own" sung in Strummer's thickened working-class, Cockney accent. At the same time, a white supremacist movement of punks and skinheads had also begun to form around bands like Skrewdriver. While the white supremacist elements have never amounted to anything more than a small niche on the margins of punk subculture, punk's dystopian iconography of negativity and destruction does make it susceptible to ideologies based on hate. As the preeminent rock critic Lester Bangs wrote after observing racist tendencies in the New York punk scene of the 1970s: "anytime you conclude that life stinks and the human race mostly amounts to a pile of shit, you've got the perfect breeding ground for fascism" (1990: 275).

Punk thus became the object of a "struggle over the sign" (Volisnov 1973) as it emerged in the midst of intense conflict between the social movements of the National Front and Rock Against Racism. Like many other forms of culture and language, punk was sufficiently ambiguous or "multiaccentual" to be appropriated by these radically opposite movements that were competing for the hearts and minds of British white youth in the 1970s. In the end, RAR was more successful of the two movements in mobilizing opposition to the racist elements within punk and bringing punk into a cultural and political dialogue with reggae and Afro-Caribbean culture.

PEACE PUNKS

In the U.S., the partisans of hardcore were younger than the original cohort of punks. They largely surfaced from the sprawling suburbs rather than urban bohemian enclaves. Hardcore music was louder, faster, and angrier than its punk predecessors, and hardcore shows were frequently more violent and male-dominated. And yet for all its stylistic homogeneity, hardcore represented even more divergent political possibilities than punk: in some circles it could be not simply nihilistic but shamelessly homophobic, misogynist, and racist, while others used the do-it-yourself ethic to mobilize resources into one of the very few social movements to challenge the Reagan agenda of militarism and "trickle-down" economics from a radical, multi-issue perspective.

The California hardcore punk bands that had emerged represented a self-parody of the sense of meaninglessness and purposelessness among suburban youth as discussed earlier. This sense of boredom and anomie had originally been expressed by the Ramones in the US and the Buzzcocks in the UK, but it seemed especially relevant to punks growing up in the California suburbs. Thus, as was the case with the original British punk scene, American hardcore did not necessarily lend itself to progressive political identities, and so activists working within the subculture had to reframe the meaning of "punk." As RAR had done, *MaximumRockNRoll* attached a

politicized frame to the hardcore scene while seeking to de-legitimize the nihilistic and violent tendencies that had also taken hold of the subculture. For instance, an editorial in the zine's inaugural issue included a statement that defined punk as a politicized form of collective identity:

The only thing that threatens a society based on dividing and conquering—pitting sex against sex, race against race, subculture against subculture—is unity. If the system stresses anti-intellectualism, then we must become intellectuals. If it stresses isolation and ignorance of each other, then we must learn to trust. If it stresses individualism, we must collect ourselves. If it stresses blind respect for authority, we must only give respect to those who earn it. If punk is to be a threat, different from society, then any so-called punk who flirts with racism and sexism, proudly displays ignorance, resorts to physical violence and is afraid of knowledge or political action, is not a threat at all, but has gone over to the enemy.³

Tim Yohannan, one of the principal founders of *MaximumRockNRoll*, and others eventually established a volunteer-run, non-profit, all-ages community center in Berkeley located at 924 Gilman Street, which held its first performance on New Year's Eve 1986 and continues to host shows to this day. The founders of this Gilman Street Project designed it to be an extension of the participatory and egalitarian spirit of the DIY ethic and accordingly refused to book performers associated with major labels (Edge 2004).

At this time, some punks living in the San Francisco Bay Area came to be politically active through their involvement in the peace and nuclear freeze movement, specifically with the direct actions of the Livermore Action Group (LAG) between 1982 and 1984. LAG organized blockades of the University of California's Livermore Labs, where nuclear weapons were being designed and developed. LAG included many veterans of Bay Area activism, and thus it was originally more hippie or pagan than punk in its cultural orientation (Epstein 1991). The increasing presence of punks changed the culture of LAG by introducing a new series of tactical repertoires based on dramatized forms of provocation. During LAG actions, punks, who often formed their own affinity groups, utilized more confrontational as well as theatrical tactics, like staging “die-ins” in the streets and corporate lobbies of San Francisco's financial district, where LAG had organized “Hall of Shame” tours in October 1983 and Tax Day 1984. Punks then played a central role in the acts of civil disobedience and a “Rock Against Reagan” concert at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco in 1984, where hundreds were arrested on the Convention's final day (Goldthorpe 1992: 50-2). The more aggressively defiant tactics used during these actions were consistent with the confrontational style of punk music and fashion, though this did not necessarily sit well with older activists. Epstein (1991: 153), for instance, observed that “Many LAG people were critical of the cat-and-mouse games some of the punks played with the police.”

Over the course of the 1980s, the American hardcore scene would be characterized by a physical and cultural conflict between two groups of self-identified punks who struggled to frame themselves as the “true” punks. While a faction of skinheads and racists had become a vanguard of violence and mayhem within the hardcore subculture, they came to be opposed by the so-called “peace punks” who formed a bridge between their local scenes and progressive social movements. The following

³ MaximumRockNRoll #1, retrieved at http://www.operationphoenixrecords.com/mrrissue01_1IntroandLetters.pdf

exchange, initiated by one of the few racist skinheads to write a letter to *MaximumRockNRoll*, reflects this ideological rift within hardcore in the mid-1980s:

I'm white and proud (if I was black I would be proud too.) I'm a skin. I listen to U.S. bands . . . and some U.K. bands. And I honestly believe that most of the so called "communist" "peace punks" are full of shit! They don't even believe in this, they're just too fuckin' scared to admit it because it's cool to have commie ideas. I suppose it's also real cool to let illegal aliens come over and fuck up OUR (the people that are proud of it) COUNTRY? They deserve an equal chance right? Well fuck them. It's time to start thinking 'bout ourselves (Americans) before it's too late and we gotta fight foreigners just to get a job at McDonalds. Better dead than red! P.S. Yeah fags are gross. (*MaximumRockNRoll* #31)

This self-identified "skin" thus expressed many of the ideas that have consistently circulated within the American right about immigration and homosexuality. His letter was immediately met with a number of responses, one of which came from a former member of the U.S. military:

Attention reactionaries—NAZI PUNKS FUCK OFF! I'm a veteran of both the Navy and the Marines of this country you claim to be so proud of, and I'M A PEACE PUNK. I was a corpsman like you see on M.A.S.H. TV trained for nearly 4 years in NBC—Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Warfare. I know what kind of dangers are prepared for us. I've seen the stupidity of those who believe its effects can be controlled. . . Exercising patriotism by attacking others is nothing less than cowardly exploitive hatred. There are smarter exploitive cowards who can use that hatred. . . Terror rules! It rules macho patriots. It rules skins. It ruled Hitler when he finished exploiting the brown shirts and the SS wiped them out in the Night Of The Long Knives. If history repeats itself the next Hitler will know what to do with the brown shirts and the skins. (*MaximumRockNRoll* #33)

CONCLUSION

We have provide these case studies to reveal how punk rock was able to connect organically to social movements on the Left by means of applying their independent media infrastructure to particular social movements. We refer to the independent media infrastructure of punks as mobilizing structures in this context. Punks also altered the dynamics of movements they joined by way of unique protest practices and frame alignments that helped shape the way political issues are interpreted. We see our work as an interesting contrast and useful supplement to Corte and Edwards (2008) who have also emphasized the political nature of punk music, and the important role that music plays in the mobilization of resources in a given social movement, but their analysis focuses on music as instrument. Their research also focuses on the right wing orientation of punk's relationship to social movements. We seek to show both that the politics of punk are indeterminate, in so far as punk has also had an impact on left wing social movements, and to demonstrate that punk rock music cannot be viewed exclusively as an instrument in the process of mobilizing resources for an existing social movement. Our comparison of the cases of Rock Against Racism and peace punks reveals how extensively the "do-it-yourself" ethic has spread across punk culture, and how effective the infrastructure that grew out of the DIY has been when linked to a social movement. In this way, we situate culture as a catalyst for a movement, and as a key element in the organization and sustainability of a movement, as opposed to earlier analyses that situate music as a secondary phenomenon in social movement organizations.

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