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STAGE DIVES AND SHARED MICS: ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON  
COMMUNITY AND NETWORKING IN THE CENTRAL FLORIDA PUNK ROCK SCENE

by

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B.A. Florida Atlantic University, 2017

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science  
in the Department of Anthropology  
in the College of Sciences  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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## **ABSTRACT**

Music remains an important aspect of culture and society, proven by copious academic studies exploring how humans create, experience, and utilize it. The emergence of punk rock as a music genre and scene of interconnected individuals in the mid-to-late 1970s provides significant insight into social and political attitudes of the time. Punk rock's continued existence in the present day reflects similar themes to its first incarnation besides forging new directions for the genre and the scene. In this study I examine social factors within the current Central Florida punk rock scene that contribute to its evolution and longevity. I used participant observation and semi-structured interviews to obtain ethnographic data from punk rock scene members and understand their experiences in the scene. I found two prevailing themes in the Central Florida punk scene, community and networking, which serve to unite scene members and ensure punk rock as a DIY, underground scene remains relevant at present time. Based on this, I conclude that the current punk rock scene exists as a critique to contemporary societal norms around the world as well as an example of mixed-mode complex social networking and information sharing.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Punk rock, in the popular consciousness, appears as a musical genre that rose to prominence in the mid-to-late 1970s in North America, Europe, and Australia promoting anti-establishment political ideologies. Largely driven by young, working-class, novice musicians who wrote and performed songs based on a “do it yourself” (DIY) approach, this genre garnered considerable sensationalized media coverage that lead to mainstream misunderstandings that persist to this day.

Despite the brevity of punk’s initial and largely dismissive mainstream attention in the 1970s, numerous punk movements have since emerged in non-Western societies (see Dougherty 2017, Rohrer 2014, Trott 2018, and Wallach 2008). Besides these active foreign punks, there remain DIY and “underground”—non-mainstream, smaller, often locally-based—punk groups scattered throughout the U.S. (e.g. Black Flag, from Los Angeles; Minor Threat, from Washington D.C.; and Bad Brains, from New York City). Though the survival of punk music itself is unsurprising considering how many choices contemporary music listeners have for finding and enjoying new singers and groups from any period or genre, more than the music alone fuels the continued existence of the scene.

Today, much of the academic punk rock literature focusing on the U.S. emphasizes either the societal conditions that fueled its initial rise or the ways in which its first generation subsequently coped with remaining or moving away from its original incarnations (see Bennett 2006, Davis 2006, and Fox 1987). Although the genre as it exists now musically echoes its 1970s

origins, contemporary punk rock bands still draw new and youthful audiences interested in its evolving nature.

A crucial part of punk rock's evolving nature lies in the scene that has remained resilient through changing conditions over time. Scenes like those focused primarily around music consist of networks of individuals connected through local, trans-local, and virtual spaces (Glass 2012, 695). Scenes typically depend on foundations of corresponding music to unite them, even though music can exist independently.

The viability of punk rock's multiple subgenres raises significant questions regarding what factors keep it unified. If punk rock, as a DIY, underground scene is no longer united by loud guitars, novice musicians, angry lyrics, and spitting on performers, it becomes less tangible in the minds of individuals familiar with the tropes of first-wave punk. Further identity loss ensues when considering the aesthetic changes punk has undergone over the past 40 years—mohawks, studded leather or jean jackets, chains, colorful hair, and combat boots are no longer prevailing signifiers of what does and does not define punk (Prinz 2014).

My research explores the current Central Florida punk rock scene, combining firsthand data from local concerts, festivals, a punk flea market, and individual scene members to form an understanding of how the scene operates on a day-to-day basis. Utilizing findings from this research, my thesis addresses the following research question: What social factors facilitate the continued existence of the punk rock scene in Central Florida and why do scene members feel it remains relevant today?

I utilize midlevel theories to explore themes in my data and discuss my results instead of drawing connections to larger and more complex theories. Proceeding in this manner feels more representative of the studied population and ensures my work remains accessible to them. Themes including acceptance, family, live performance, social networking, and DIY convey the tone of my data and greater understandings I detail within the punk rock subculture.

The remaining chapters of my thesis follow this order: Chapter Two presents and evaluates relevant literature pertaining to my subject matter, situating my research among previous works in anthropology and related fields. Next, Chapter Three describes my research process, detailing my data elicitation techniques and setting for a comprehensive view of the overall project. Chapters Four and Five address my findings in two broad categories. Chapter Four considers aspects of community in the punk scene as they appear to me and how they inform interactions among local punks. Chapter Five outlines the extensive networking system that underground music scenes such as punk rely on for communicating information. Chapter Six synthesizes my thesis findings vis-a-vis my original research question and lists some of the limitations I encountered during this project. Finally, Chapter Seven states my conclusions and situates my work within the broader context of anthropology and social sciences, noting future research directions made possible via this work.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are numerous anthropological writings on punk rock, yet few address the current state of the scene. Existing works hail primarily from sociology and anthropology, but also represent niche areas of research in international studies, musicology, and philosophy. Many more unscholarly materials exist on punk, written by scene members reflecting on their own experience in punk rock (Attfield 2011), than research produced by academics. My research aims to bridge the gap between punk's understandings of itself and the ways in which academia represents punk. The following sections explore the available body of work on punk, outdated and current, as well as themes of community, sociality, performance, and resistance.

Prior to discussing punk's impact on academia in depth, it is useful to historically contextualize it as a music genre, movement, and scene. As mentioned in Chapter One, punk began in the mid-to-late 1970s as a reaction to political and social circumstances of the time, emphasizing anti-establishment ideologies and resistance to mainstream culture. Bands such as the Buzzcocks, Clash, Ramones, Sex Pistols, and Saints played loud, fast, and simple music with protest-oriented lyrics that served as a distinct response to the popular and formulaic music of the times (Prinz 2014, 583-584). Young, working class men and women forged a new genre and new scene rooted in confluence of elements including self-taught musicianship, DIY mentality, detachment from mainstream society, and a penchant for attracting disapproval (Hebdige 1979).

Despite the sensationalized attention it initially received, mostly for its members' striking visual appearances and loud guitars (Prinz 2014), punk's initial iteration did not remain in the mainstream spotlight for long. As the 1980s emerged, original punk rock music arguably

diminished in mainstream relevance, fading back into the fringes of society as less musically abrasive genres such as post-punk and new wave emerged. These genres integrated aspects of punk rock with pop, disco, reggae, hardcore, and electronic music, effectively morphing into new styles of music.

As a music genre, punk rock has undergone numerous changes and refinements as new subgenres continue to emerge, subdividing what was once a mostly unified sound. If punk rock functions metaphorically as an umbrella, it then shelters various subgenres that are distinct despite sharing certain core features. It is in and of itself a subgenre of rock and roll music which is in turn a subgenre of popular music. The creation of diverse punk subgenres such as pop punk, skate punk, Afropunk, anarcho punk, and garage punk<sup>1</sup> further diversifies the punk rock scene.

Current punk scene members have a vast music library to peruse, the sounds evolving with the nature of the scene itself over time. More than a shared community of music, punk has developed its own scene capable of manipulating space and identity to cement its members together (Glass 2012). Further, social and political awareness have evolved to include previously underrepresented groups, as shown by the Riot Grrrl movement (Rosenberg and Garofalo 1998). I explore the implication of this in Central Florida's punk scene, describing its current state as told by participants, in Chapters Four and Five. Regardless of disjuncture between its beginnings and current multiple incarnations, the scene contains many areas of interest to academia as an example of community, sociality, and resistance.

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<sup>1</sup> These are but a few examples of subgenres spawned from punk rock. A Google search provides a litany of others that rise and fall in popularity across decades.



## Punk

Anthropological studies of punk tend to focus on its original 1970s or first wave incarnation (Wallach 2008; Clark 2004; Fox 1987; Hebdige 1979). Relying on information spanning at least three decades, these works consider things like punk authenticity, scene membership, style, and cuisine. Despite its original publication date, Dick Hebdige's (1979) volume on subcultures and their styles remains a seminal introduction to punk rock.

Examining various subcultures including hip hop, reggae, glam rock, and Teddy Boys,<sup>2</sup> Hebdige (1979) constructs an entire book around the “moment” of punk rock and how it is situated in relation to other subcultures (19). He believes punk serves as a viable model for other subcultures seeking to distance themselves from mainstream culture. Though Hebdige's (1979) description of punk style and aesthetic features no longer applies to most of today's scene, his understanding of punks' motivations, especially with regards to their self-segregation from the mainstream and intolerance for injustice, ensures his work's ongoing relevance. The book's central thesis suggests that punk is an amalgamation of all the major postwar subcultures “stitched together haphazardly with safety pins” in both a physical and metaphorical manner (Hebdige 1979, 26). This core view of punk as the lovechild of diverse subcultures informs much of my work on Central Florida's current punk scene.

While Hebdige (1979) remains a seminal work on punk, other anthropologists have since approached it as a topic of inquiry. Chronologically following Hebdige (1979) is Fox's (1987) analysis of a local punk scene's hierarchy and composition. She identifies a membership

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<sup>2</sup> British subculture of young men wearing clothing and hairstyles associated with dandies in the Edwardian period.

stratification schema based on perceived commitment to the scene, ranging from hardcore to peripheral membership. Moreover, she outlines the functionality of each categorical type to the scene's perpetuation (Fox 1987, 365-66). While hard- and softcore punks remain central to her analysis, she argues that peripheral members act as buffers between the more committed members and conventional society, allowing hardcore punks to avoid engaging mainstream society (366).

The rigidity of Fox's (1987) classification schema seems to disregard any notion that individuals can traverse her typology by moving among strata or simultaneously encompassing characteristics of multiple strata. Such thinking arguably subverts the DIY mentality inherent in the punk scene, which ensures many scene members can carry out similar tasks and functions regardless of membership status. Though Fox (1987) provides an early foundational view of the punk scene, her findings remain directly relevant to past versions of punk alone; her portrayal of punk as a parasite subculture, relying on peripheral members, or "fans," to bridge the divide between punk and mainstream for survival, implies the scene may be temporary. Parasitic relationships are beneficial to one party only and result in harm to the other, which does not fit in with punk's values or current functionality.

Another anthropological take on punk is Clark's (2004) work regarding punk dietary habits. This study recognizes the distance punk puts between itself and mainstream society and explores the way this affects scene members' food consumption. According to Clark (2004), punks carry their identity and values into their food choices, rejecting mainstream food options and cooking techniques in favor of options that do not fill them with "white, male, corporate supremacy" ideals (19). He finds that punk diets exclude foods used in mainstream society at

large, cooked and prepared by mainstream methods, in favor of raw or wild options, circumventing the moral “pollution” of capitalism (Clark 2004, 19).

Food options for punks include locally grown produce, unbranded mass quantities of store-bought foods, self-grown food items, and even foodstuffs salvaged from supermarket dumpsters, which removes part of the capitalistic stench (Clark 2004, 21). The idea that the punk identity of subversion manifests in dietary choices illustrates punk’s attempts of total separation from the mainstream, and the café at the center of Clark’s (2004) research proves a certain level of self-sufficiency within the scene.

An anthropologist focusing on ethnomusicology, Jeremy Wallach (2008) provides a slightly more current picture of punk, on a global scale. Since its inception in England, the U.S. and Australia, punk has spread across the world, picked up by disenfranchised groups in countless countries. In his specific ethnographic work, Wallach (2008) explores the way Jakarta, Indonesia adopts and adapts punk rock to their own culture. Young men in Jakarta face two choices of lifestyle, strict religion or gang life, and the introduction of punk provides a third option, according to Wallach (2008, 113).

Similar to how it manifests in other countries, punk in Jakarta articulates similar frustrations of working class youth, allowing them to express themselves outside of mainstream culture. An interesting detail Wallach (2008) points out is the rigidity of dress and performance in Jakarta’s punk. Such adherence to specific codes of dress and sound are at odds to Hebdige’s (1979) idea that punk is always transforming and evolving. Wallach (2008) argues that Indonesians use the defined aspects of punk for their physical stability, which helps them

articulate a “coherent subject position” as they fight to find meaning, community, and self-expression in their world (113).

Beer (2016) also considers matters of fighting for community and self-expression in her anthropological study. She focuses on current Chicago punk, particularly its patterns of secrecy and information sharing as a DIY music scene. Following the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conference in 2012, a time characterized by increased police activity and crackdowns on crime and subcultural expression, Chicago punks were forced to subsist in secretive ways as they maintained their scene (Beer 2016, 3-4). Assumptions that punks equaled crime and anarchy gave police reason to shut down numerous punk houses, resulting in the scene’s retreat further underground (Beer 2016). Since then, Beer (2016) notes the ongoing secrecy verging on elitism that abounds in Chicago punk. Even if finding and entering this subculture requires the approval of local gatekeepers, it remains a loud, expressive, anti-establishment scene (Beer 2016). The level of self-protection present in Chicago’s punk rock scene reiterates how subcultures can threaten mainstream society.

Comparable to Beer’s (2016) reliance on house shows, Glass’ (2012) sociological study also focuses on small venues within a local scene. He describes experiencing punks create a small scene of their own, renting a house in a marginal area and turning it into a punk house defined by décor and presence of punks. Glass (2012) highlights the microprocesses involved in punk’s use of space, arguing that through manipulation of space, punks create and shape their identities. Punks establishing, transforming, and managing space, as exemplified by the “Pirate House” in this study (Glass 2012), shows the efforts involved in maintaining a scene. Glass (2012) saliently points out that, “instead of being a location that is found and used, participants

actively create and maintain scene spaces through shared activity” (712). In this way, punk perhaps claims spaces but does not rely on fixed space to exist as a scene.<sup>3</sup>

Though punk does not require formal spaces, primarily existing in house shows and minds of scene members, it retains several prominent venues. One such place, New York City’s CBGB’s,<sup>4</sup> is the focus of Rosenthal’s (2008) sociological study on authenticity in the punk scene. Authenticity remains a hefty topic overall, with variable definitions and subjectivity. The idea of classifying an “authentic” punk is nearly impossible due to the scene’s mercurial nature and evolution over time. Rosenthal (2008) uses the club as a vantage point in determining how punks participate in the scene and how their behaviors contribute to creating authenticity. He (2008) argues that the “authenticity” for which CBGB’s has become widely known is, at least in part, staged (170). He contrasts this deliberate staging with a con game, insisting that those manufacturing such false authenticity lack an intentional desire to deceive. According to him, these actions simply reflect a yearning to maintain the club and scene’s expected image (Rosenthal 2008, 170)<sup>5</sup>.

Concerns about selling out and authenticity are minimal in comparison to concerns regarding aging in punk. Sociologist Andy Bennett writes extensively on how individuals age and continue to interact with music scenes, punk included. Bennett’s (2006) argument for a recognized elder generation of punks and their significance spawned an even broader inquiry into older music fans and scene members across music genres (Bennett 2018). Punk remains

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed view of scenes and their construction, see Bennett and Peterson (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Historic venue showcasing punk, rock, bluegrass, and other musical styles in New York City from 1973-2006.

<sup>5</sup> For more on authenticity, including the popular fear of selling out in the punk world, see Pearson (2018).

largely understood as a youth movement or subculture. Not only are original punks aging, but Bennett (2006) argues they are finding ways to incorporate punk in a more internal (as opposed to external) way, absorbing it into themselves as a “part” of them (233). Despite the presence of teenagers and college-aged adults, these first generation punks still contribute to the current scene through their punk knowledge, traits, and experience (Bennett 2006, 233).

Another sociologist interested in punk and aging, Joanna Davis (2006), draws similar conclusions. She highlights the balance aging punks maintain between their current lives and the punk scene, arguing that fluidity in identity and scene are necessary to maintain membership of older punks (Davis 2006, 63). According to her, those punks unable to reconcile matters of identity and financial support for themselves over the long term eventually “age out” of the scene (Davis 2006, 65-66). Yet, living entirely within the scene is unnecessary for aging punks to remain members. Davis (2006) refers to those who work outside the punk scene but still prioritize and retain ties to it as “corporate incorporators” (68). Such labels are perhaps anti-punk in referring to mainstream employment even as the group it represents remain an important part of the punk scene.

Other social science studies examine punk by considering diverse topics such as DIY (Moran 2010), performance (Maskell 2009), aesthetics and art (Prinz 2014), as well as providing an overview of the scene (Sabin 1999). Sociologist Paula Guerra contributes to the literature on DIY punk in discussing its economic implications (2017) and ability to create spaces of resistance (2018). Outside of social science, scholars in history (Hayton 2013), international studies (Dunn 2008), literature (Henderson 2015), and media studies (Dougherty 2017) utilize

their own lenses to view punk rock. With so many studies spread across multiple disciplines, punk remains an enduring area of academic interest.

### Community

Community is a useful theoretical construct for considering the punk rock scene. Anthropology and other social sciences have long recognized the concept of community and the importance of studying how individuals physically and socially group themselves. My interest lies instead with the way we define the term and how that affects the individuals in defined communities. Beginning with German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in the 1880s (2001[1887]), ideas of how to define “community” have multiplied, creating a massive bank of information and opinions with no clear consensus.

Tönnies himself views community from a physiological perspective, noting that relationships of shared space and ideas form based on biology and family: parent-child, spouse-spouse, and sibling-sibling interactions (Tönnies 2001[1887]). A colleague of Tönnies, and fellow sociologist, Max Weber also contributes an opinion on community, stating that a social relationship is “communal” if it is “based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together” (2013, 40).

Since both Tönnies and Weber are German, some of their conceptual ideas do not readily translate outside of their native tongue. Translators of their original works often note that English notions of community cannot be directly conflated with the German terms *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*, which both scholars use to denote ideas of groups coming together with a

collective identity. Even at the beginning, it would seem “community” was a term destined to be contested.

Subsequent social scientists have built upon the seminal ideas of Tönnies and Weber.

Anthropologist James Brow claims his definition of community belongs to the same school of thought as Weber:

"Community" refers simply to "a sense of belonging together"...Since the term is often very loosely applied either to a place or to a collection of people, it is necessary to insist that...community is defined by nothing more or less than this subjective state. The sense of belonging together typically combines both affective and cognitive components, both a feeling of solidarity and an understanding of shared identity (1990, 1).

Beyond directly quoting Weber, Brow echoes notions that community involves a shared sense of emotional bonds. That is, a mental tether as opposed to Tönnies’ physical or spatial understanding.

Fast et al. (2013) provide a more recent perspective on community, pointing out its “notoriously ambiguous” nature as a term. They argue for a cautionary approach to using community, listing unique, sometimes conflicting, understandings by other scholars. These include parameters of shared ethnicity, lifestyle, socioeconomic status, and connection to place, as well as acknowledgement that community, as a lived experience, can be temporary (Fast et al. 2013, 98). Abundant conceptions of community obfuscate any central idea of the term, but also allow for diversity. Two conceptions hold interest for the punk rock scene in my thesis: imagined communities and assumed communities (Fast et al. 2013, 98-99). I expand on these in Chapter Four, elucidating how they fit into my research.



It would be erroneous to neglect those who resent the multifaceted and fluid way anthropology entertains the notion of community. Amit and Rapport (2002) argue against the concept on principle, finding it “too vague [and] too variable” to be useful for analytic purposes (13). Despite this reluctance to use concepts with no formalized definition, including culture and nation, the authors note the heaviness such terms carry “[community] evoke[s] a thick assortment of meanings, presumptions and images...ensur[ing] that the invocation of 'community' is likely to have far more emotional resonance than a more utilitarian term like 'group'” (Amit and Rapport 2002, 13).

Another understanding of community comes from Brint (2001), who proposes a typology of communities. Brint’s (2001) stratification consists of eight distinct community types, divided by geographic versus choice-based communities. Geographic types are small scale communities of place and neighborhood groups; local friendship networks, primarily activity based; communes and collectives; and local friendship networks, primarily cultural. Choice-based communities include activity based elective communities; belief based elective communities; imagined communities; and virtual communities.

In considering the term community, it is also useful to explore anthropologist Victor Turner’s concept of *communitas*. Scholars widely use the term *communitas* to identify groups wherein members share equal status, creating connection between them (*cf.* Letkemann 2002, Bloom 1997, and Kemp 1999).

## *Communitas*

*Communitas*, formulated by Turner in 1960, relates to Arnold van Gennep's *rites de passage*, wherein van Gennep (1960) outlines three stages of passing from one social or cosmic status to another. Van Gennep divides these rituals into three distinct phases: 1) separation, 2) transition, and 3) incorporation (van Gennep 1960). The first, or separation, stage is characterized by the initial segregation of ritual subjects from the rest of society. The second, or marginal, stage consists of them existing in a transitory state in between their prior societal status prior and where they will be once it ends. The third stage, or reintegration, covers the transformed ritual subject's reintroduction back into society (van Gennep 1960).

Turner further explores the transition stage, referring to it as a "liminal" phase, defining it as a temporary state "betwixt and between defined states of culture and society" (Turner 1969, 106). This shared status allows ritual subjects to cultivate resilient social bonds that effectively increase group cohesion and reinforce feelings of *communitas* (Turner 1969, 96). While Turner uses the liminal state to describe a rite of passage's transitional period, referring to *communitas* as the sense of total equality achieved in such a transitory state (Turner 1969, 97), subsequent anthropologists have applied liminality and *communitas* to contexts and settings beyond those of traditional societies.

## Sociality

Unlike the term "community," which scholars in various fields explore, anthropologists exclusively study sociality in humans. Marilyn Strathern coined the term in her 1988 ethnography of Melanesia. In this text, she describes sociality to be "the creating and maintaining

of relationships” (Strathern 1988, 13), recognizing the human need for socialization and forming ties with other humans. She utilizes examples of Melanesians’ relationships to each other and their beliefs about these relationships to describe an array of sociality types (1988, 14-18). Each type is culturally specific, carrying baggage of identity and cultural understandings, but Strathern (1988) simplifies to several generalized concepts for readers: public and domestic socialities (76).

Though Strathern (1988) remains a principle voice on sociality, more recent anthropological thoughts regarding the concept are complicated. Much like community, scholars widely use sociality as a theoretical concept with varying definitions, as Long and Moore (2012) explain. Their agreed upon definition adds to Strathern’s (1988) work, citing sociality as a “dynamic relational matrix within which human subjects are constantly interacting in ways that are coproductive, continually plastic and malleable, and through which they come to know the world they live in and find their purpose and meaning within it” (Long and Moore 2012, 41). This definition reframes sociality from a system to be understood to a process by which humans create and shape their own realities. Though this increases variability in described socialities, it also allows for cultural differences in using the phrase “the world they live in,” expanding its potential for use across societies.

When the term “sociality” came to be in the 1980s, social science had yet to unpack what it means to be a “person” or how they might interact with and define “others” and “things” in relation to themselves and the world around them. Long and Moore (2012) argue that these lines of thought in current sociocultural anthropology, as well as other social sciences, act as potential roadblocks to greater understandings of sociality (42). The human condition to imbue mental

meaning and significance in an individualistic manner, they insist, makes Strathern's (1988) and any other "simplistic" definition of sociality incomplete—without acknowledgement of the individualistic and imaginative aspect of humanity's own process of conceptualization, we cannot hope to accurately describe the human process of sociality (Long and Moore 2012).

Debate on the nature and definition of sociality has not prevented scholars from using this concept as a means of explaining human behavior and culture. Anthropologist Rebekka Klein (2011) ties economic, philosophical, and theological perspectives to her own unpacking of sociality, arguing that only by utilizing multiple perspectives are we able to see and describe sociality as part of the human condition. Amit (2015) remains in opposition to the notion that we may ever fully grasp sociality. Providing concepts by which to view and analyze sociality anthropologically, he (2015) argues that by expecting each ethnographer to conduct their own analyses and interpretations of theory, we create diversity and varying perspectives but may never reach consensus.

Following Long and Moore's (2012) example, Street and Copeman (2014) also envision an anthropological view of sociality past Strathern's (1988) ideas. They argue Strathern's work should be used as a foundation on which to build theoretically, not as an endpoint to use indefinitely. Several current examples of sociality in anthropological literature include Ochs and Solomon's (2010) use of autism as a frame for types and systems of sociality as well as McGranahan's (2017) study on political sociality and its response to lying as exacerbated by President Trump. Just as with community as a term, conflict in definition and utilization of sociality does not hinder its usage in past or present academic literature.

## Resistance

Punk rock, by nature, remains rooted in resistance to mainstream culture and society. A key political scientist and anthropologist, James Scott (1990) writes on the dynamics of power and resistance that occur in societies around the world. His fixation lies in what he terms the “hidden transcripts” of the repressed, which refers to the sentiments disadvantaged peoples share among each other but cannot express in the presence of those more powerful than them (Scott 1990). These hidden transcripts, Scott (1990) argues, act as resistance in the face of suppression, allowing us to understand power relations in a different light, as more than a suppressor-suppressed relationship, illuminating the details of how the oppressed fight back and seek to undermine their oppressors. Scott (1990) also describes the way repression acts as motivation for victims to create ways of getting back at their repressors; the stronger the repression, he argues, the stronger the counteraction. This links directly to the way punk rock resists or subverts many aspects of mainstream culture and politics.

Keeping Scott’s (1990) work in mind, anthropologists have studied resistance in many forms across many cultures. Whittaker (1992) describes the struggle of HIV positive Australians to change the stigma against their disease status. She argues that a shift in discourse is necessary to upset the power imbalance against the stigmatized group, exploring how different demographic groups band together for the common cause of resisting the current, negative societal gaze (Whittaker 1992). This type of resistance, though more public than Scott’s (1990) hidden transcripts, showcases the way marginalized individuals and groups can assert agency by subverting those in power.

Looking at Apartheid in South Africa, Jelly-Schapiro (2014) notes the boundaries between colonial power and anti-colonial protest. He argues that the organization and utilization of space as demonstrated in anti-Apartheid protests may provide a framework current anti-colonial movements may find useful (Jelly-Schapiro 2014, 46). Spatial means of resistance are echoed by Boeykins (2019) in her study on Guatemalans displaced from their homes following violence and government force. As residents return to their homes, they continue to fight for their territory against a government that threatens to install a hydroelectric dam in place of their homes (Boeykins 2019). Seeking assistance, the residents enlist Boeykins to make a documentary film about their struggle in hopes of gaining support and preserving their territory (2019). Space remains an important aspect of resistance, especially in subcultures such as punk; without spaces to perform resistance, organization of individuals for a common goal is difficult, if not impossible.

From a medical anthropology standpoint, Ahmadi (2016) discusses the phenomenon of Iranian women having their hymens surgically repaired in order to preserve the illusion of virginity culturally necessary to prevent severe social repercussions. Although women appear to adhere to strict culture-specific sexual norms in having this surgery performed, Ahmadi (2016) contests they are in fact circumventing them entirely; they need not remain virginal until marriage if the surgery will alleviate their problems. This serves as subversion and resistance, though in a less outspoken manner as the last few examples<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> For further studies on resistance in medical manners, see Halliburton (2011) and Nahar and van der Geest (2014).

A final area of concern for anthropologists studying resistance lies in Abu-Lughod's (1990) work on Bedouin women. Unlike each scholar above, Abu-Lughod believes anthropologists and political scientists romanticize the idea of resistance, portraying it as some sign of resilience and creativity of the human spirit (1990, 42). Grand gestures of rebellion and subversion with wide impact and effect, she (1990) argues, trample the notion of small resistances like Ahmadi (2016) and Boeykins (2019) describe. She proposes instead that scholars use resistance as a tool to monitor power, citing philosopher Michel Foucault's writings on power and sexuality to underscore her point (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). Her concluding sentiments stress respecting the "everyday resistances," as opposed to large, revolutionary acts, allowing us to learn through their practices about changing structures of power (Abu-Lughod 1990, 53). Few things are more applicable to the current punk mindset of resistance than the idea of everyday resistance building practices that model how to exist amidst fluctuating power.

### Addressing the Gap in Literature

Though each of the theoretical lenses above (community, sociality, and resistance) describes an aspect crucial to the foundation of punk rock, none fully encapsulate its current existence. I evaluate them here as background themes present at the birth of punk that remain active at deep, underlying levels of the current punk scene. Literature centered on punk itself has yet to describe the present day working of the scene and its members from more than a handful of perspectives, few of which are anthropological, displaying a gap in knowledge. The above backdrop of foundational lenses allows me to explore the current state of the of the punk rock scene, discovering themes that presently occur within it as a result of ingrained qualities of community, sociality, and resistance but not focusing on those exclusively. My work contributes

to the anthropological and social science literature on punk rock, building on previous studies as well as highlighting original findings in the Central Florida punk scene.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODS**

To better understand Central Florida's punk rock scene, I employ the following methodological techniques to collect data relevant to my research question: semi-structured and conversational interviews, participant observation, and analysis of social media platforms (publicly accessible Facebook posts). Data collection occurred across varying sites in the greater Orlando area. Participant observation sites are based on concert availability and accessibility. Interview locations are determined by my interlocutors, based on their levels of personal comfort in responding to interview questions.

#### Research Timeline

As a topic of anthropological inquiry, this project's preliminary research design emerged in September 2018, partly through knowledge and skills attained in an ethnographic methods course. In February 2019, I compiled a list of announced local punk rock concerts scheduled from May through December 2019. Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, my research ran for six months (May-November 2019), entailing 22 semi-structured interviews with scene members, attendance of 11 punk rock concerts or music festivals, and participation at one punk-themed flea market.

#### Insider Status and Reflexivity

I have been actively involved in the Florida punk rock scene for approximately five years. I enjoy attending concerts of this music genre, buying merchandise, and interacting with performers and fellow audience members. Over the past five years I attended more than 90

shows across Florida, Georgia, and Minnesota. I purchased meet-and-greet packages four times for larger-scale pop punk bands including Neck Deep, State Champs, and All Time Low, chatting with band members in small personal settings with fewer concertgoers present. Twice, I have attended multiple concerts on the same band tour: once for All Time Low and once for The Story so Far. This entailed traveling from city to city to see the bands perform the same set over the course of a few days.

This experience confers some level of insider status, allowing me to study a subculture in which I actively participate. However beneficial, this insider status constrains me as a researcher, necessitating both critical reflexivity and awareness of my positionality vis-à-vis the group I am examining (Sherif 2001, 438). Accordingly, I am attentive to the details I record in my field notes so as not to inadvertently omit anything that may prove relevant (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 168) or overlook instances of my own bias (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 203; Sherif 2001, 437). Any conclusions or assumptions I draw over the course of this project relate directly to collected data, avoiding reliance on personal background knowledge as an informational source.

Beyond reflexivity, the benefits of my insider status prove useful for multiple reasons. Although insider status poses several research risks, it also provides opportunities to reach and interact with communities that could be suspicious or unwelcoming to outside researchers. Since the lines between “self” and “other” are blurred for researchers in my situation, the targeted population is arguably more accepting of researchers (Sherif 2001, 438). My baseline knowledge of and sincere interest in concerts, punk rock music, and band touring seemed to set scene members at ease, facilitating immediate rapport with them as interlocutors.

Given my intimate understanding of punk rock scene members, my insider status has helped me more accurately represent a group in ways that no outsider could easily obtain through research alone (Clifford 1986, 9).

### Ethnographic Methods

#### *Participant Observation*

Participant observation is crucial to my thesis research. It allows me to not only interact with other audience members but also with performers. My observing the concert as a process from start to finish, noting information such as audience demographics and venue layouts adds ethnographic granularity to this work. In recording my impressions and observations as well as the information audience members provide me, I rely on jot notes (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 160) using a smartphone notepad application. This approach helps decrease the personal discomfort and external suspicions that sometimes occur with public notetaking by anthropologists (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 163). Once finished taking notes, I move them to a secure folder on my laptop, protected by a passcode. Later, I flesh them out into full-scale accounts of the sessions.

As in other subcultures or musical genres, certain fashion attire is associated with contemporary punk rock. Based on my past experiences going to shows, I know wearing dark clothes and flat shoes such as punk rock band T-shirts and Vans footwear conformed to this prevailing style. Thus, I dress accordingly and react to the music in ways consistent with other audience members. By doing so, I move up and down the scale of participation described by

Spradley (1980, 58-60), actively participating at times and reverting to passive participation at others.

For the most part, this participation allows me to blend in at my research sites not just mentally but also physically. This may appear as covert research since I am largely indistinguishable from others present (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 32). However, data collected from shows does not contain personal identifiers and my in-depth interviews take place outside of show venues where I identified myself as a researcher to my interlocutors.

### *Interviews*

I utilize two types of interview approaches in my thesis research: conversational (n=2) and semi-structured (n=20) (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 139). Conversational interviews provide opportunities for gathering small bits of information during informal conversation while semi-structured interviews sacrifice complete informality but allow for much more expansive answers to a set of established questions.

Obviously concert venues are not conducive to in-depth interviews, as they only provide opportunities for brief conversations with fellow show attendees amid excessive noise, poor lighting, and varying levels of audience intoxication. Brief contact with other concertgoers allows me to engage directly with audience members, gauging their feelings on the current venue, bands, or other audience members without performing full-scale interviews or needing any identifying information from the participants. Since conversation-style interviews have “total lack of structure or control” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 138), however, I likely do not receive the most reliable or pertinent information.

Due to the inability of conversational interviews to provide the data I necessarily need, I rely heavily on semi-structured interviews that take place outside of concert venues at agreed-upon times and places. I schedule these interviews with my interlocutors ahead of time and pose open-ended questions and prompts based on an interview schedule approved by UCF's IRB (See Appendix A) to encourage detailed answers in a more organized fashion (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 139, Spradley 1980, 124).

Interview participants include punk rock scene members in bands, booking roles, and audience capacities, as well as those in local and national media, fashion, and tattooing. These interviews typically last between 30 and 60 minutes; the shortest at about 25 minutes and the longest an hour and a half. I record them with participant consent, using an application on my phone for in-person interviews and the Google Voice application for phone calls. For participants who do not wish to be recorded, I take notes instead. I protect the recorded audio from in-person interviews on my phone with a passcode and fingerprint scanner, which I later transcribe into Word documents. The phone interview recordings transfer straight to my computer from the Google Voice application and are protected with a passcode. These are also transcribed later and placed in password-protected Word documents on my computer. The data stored in each place contain no identifying information.

I offer no form of compensation for participation in my research. Each interviewee is provided the opportunity to review a consent form and willingly volunteered their time for this project. Each of my 22 interlocutors receive a pseudonym for privacy purposes. Of the 22 interviewees, 14 are male, 6 are female, and 2 are nonbinary. Their ages range between 21 and

57 years. Table 1 below features the full, individual demographic information of all study participants.

*Table 1: Participant Demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>
August	26	M	White
Bernard	25	M	Not Provided
Caleb	30	M	White
Duncan	33	M	White, Jewish
Elliot	43	M	White
Florence	28	NB	Costa Rican
Gino	45	M	White
Hana	29	F	White
Hugh	28	M	White
Isaiah	29	M	White
Jenson	37	M	White, Jewish
Kiran	26	M	White
Lili	25	F	Peruvian
Mark	34	M	White
Nessa	34	F	Puerto Rican
Oscar	57	M	Indian
Quinn	26	NB	White
Rachel	29	F	White
Violet	21	F	White
William	42	M	White
Yasmin	41	F	White
Zack	46	M	White

### Research Setting

As mentioned previously, this study takes place at several music venues, various interview locations chosen by participants, and one punk-themed flea market. Most in-person interviews took place in local coffee shops. Music venues varied in location and maximum occupancy but generally fell into three categories: 1) small, 2) medium, and 3) large. For the purposes of this study, I define small venues as places that can accommodate up to 50 people; medium venues can accommodate up to 300 people; and large venues can hold up to 2,000 people. I provide detailed descriptions of the aforementioned categories of venue below, enhancing understanding of the spaces utilized by Central Florida punks.

#### *Small Venue: Uncle Lou's Entertainment Hall, Orlando, Florida*

Located on North Mills Avenue near downtown Orlando, and adjacent to other clubs hosting live music, Uncle Lou's remains one of the more sought-after local venues, as scene members explain. Though it essentially doubles as a dive bar with a pool table and several stools, most locals know its influential purpose in the punk rock scene. According to one participant, it attracts attention from local and national punk bands, as well as acts in other genres. Largely nondescript from the outside, Uncle Lou's exterior appears as just another door in a strip of joined businesses with a covered front window to control light sources for shows. The venue's interior, however, evokes the history and sweat of countless punk concerts. When prepared for a show, the floor stands empty, with a tiny bar in the back corner, and an even smaller single bathroom near the back door. Musical instruments and gear litter the room, backed up on the opposite wall as the bar. There is no stage here. Against a backdrop of hanging tapestries

featuring local and national punk inspirations, bands play at eye-level and within an arm's length of their audience. Uncle Lou's close-quarters environment remains one of the main factors underpinning fame and popularity. As another scene member, Oscar reminisces, "It was tiny, where anybody could play. Anybody, just anybody, just like Uncle Lou's is now, which is Uncle Lou's power. [It's] the closest thing that I've ever seen that harkens back to those days."

Each show that I attend at Uncle Lou's, though differing in band, sound, and attendees, all adhere to the apparent venue standards: dim, multicolor lighting, loud music, high temperatures, sweat, cheap alcohol (frequently spilled on floors, mixing with dirt to create a grimy mess), and raucous audience support.

*Medium Venue:  
Soundbar., Orlando, Florida*

Another popular local venue, Soundbar. is located in downtown Orlando on West Pine Street. A brick façade and an ever-present bouncer mark the otherwise nondescript entrance. This venue's history entails performances with both touring and local punk acts, and Soundbar. hosts shows in many other independent (indie) and underground music genres, serving as a nightclub on non-show nights. During a previous incarnation when it was known as Backbooth, it could have been a twin to Uncle Lou's in levels of alcohol (spilled or ingested) and sweat. However, following an ownership change a few years back, Soundbar. has revamped operations, cultivating a cleaner reputation. Complete with two bars and expanded stage, Soundbar. makes good use of its larger space. This venue also contains a sound mixing booth, arguably putting it a step above Uncle Lou's in terms of potential sound quality of music.



Though Soundbar. management has taken pains to improve its stage, thereby insulating performers a bit from audience members, such efforts did not seem to hinder concertgoers from enjoying the experience or climbing onto the stage at any of the shows I attended. The stage remains easily accessible, allowing for ample audience interaction as they climbed up and then jumped off back into the crowd. Venue walls are painted black, enhancing the dim colored lighting encountered here. Large speakers broadcasting house music in between sets of different bands keep the venue loud throughout setup of the stage for different acts.

Depending on the number of attendees, Soundbar. continues to rival Uncle Lou's in quantities of cheap alcohol, sweat, high temperatures, and different, but no less raucous, support for the bands onstage. Greater floor space allows for more physical displays of support and enjoyment, ranging from the aforementioned stage diving and crowd surfing to dancing and more violent crowd movements. Bloody noses or mouths are common on those leaving the pit during particularly rowdy shows.

*Large Venue:  
The House of Blues, Lake Buena Vista, Florida*

The House of Blues is a large venue servicing the Central Florida music scene in general, hosting a variety of touring acts as well as some local events. It is located in Lake Buena Vista, and between its size and the fact that the Walt Disney company owns it, it stands apart from the rest of the local venues. The venue itself connects to a restaurant of the same name and is easily recognizable due to the large faux-rusted water tower stamped with its name, as well as the rock and blues-themed Southern décor on the exterior and interior of the venue.

This venue was noticeably colder than all others, which was not a bad thing in the summer months of my research. The three full bars on the ground floor alone make for easy access to a limited food menu as well as pricier versions of alcoholic drinks offered at the other venues. An open second floor with VIP viewing areas to the stage below also features another bar and merchandise tables for the bands performing that night. The large open pit in front of an expansive stage, with steps on either side to enter and exit the viewing area, allows for plenty of room to pack in concertgoers. A metal barricade, common at large venues like this, separates the stage from the audience. No stage diving occurs here though crowd surfing and other forms of physical support and excitement still exist. The venue's security team polices these actions carefully to avoid major injury or other possible causes of lawsuits for the Walt Disney company. Unsurprisingly, the House of Blues remains one of the cleanest venues with the best technical sound in the area. Although sometimes difficult, *House of Blues* audiences can still work up a sweat, get physically involved with the performances, and end up in a sticky and grimy mess.

*Orlando Punk Rock Flea Market 2019*  
*Will's Pub, Orlando, Florida*

A final location of note was a recently developed annual punk rock flea market, a brainchild of my participant, Gino. As its name suggests, the market offers wares from a wide-ranging variety of punk rock scene members. As I browse the two empty lots and one concert venue on Mills Avenue that are littered with booths, stands, and food/beverage carts, I notice several familiar faces in the steadily amassing crowd—other participants out to support a fellow scene member's endeavor. Flea market booths contained everything from self-crafted art and pottery to clothing (used and new), trinkets, toys, shoes, buttons, records, cassettes, and even a

booth for a local youth organization supporting young girls' and nonbinary youths' interest in music.<sup>7</sup> The primarily outdoor market boasted tents and booths of all shapes, sizes, and colors. Each one contains lively local vendors that are happy to chat and even haggle over pricing or trades with anyone who approaches them. I was hard-pressed to guess an average age of attendees, as there were young punks with children as well as older punks rummaging through bins of goods. A brief conversation with the organizer confirmed the success of the event and the plan to host it the following year as well.

### Recruitment and Sampling

Interview participants are recruited for this study via three methods: 1) by email, 2) by Facebook message, and 3) by face to face interaction. Although I originally planned for distinct “types” of scene member interviews (e.g. musicians, audience members, and booking agents), this approach soon proved infeasible seeing that within the Central Florida punk scene there are very few scene members who can be classified neatly into one “type” or role.<sup>8</sup> Lacking this level of organization and general knowledge of scene members, I rely instead on a snowball sampling technique. Three interviewees gladly point me towards other scene members who may be interested in or of interest in my work. I receive contact information for these potential interlocutors and with their permission, extend them interview requests. Since nearly every suggested participant was willing to speak, in-person meetings or recorded phone calls were scheduled based around the participant's availability.

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<sup>7</sup> The Orlando Girls Rock Camp. More information on this organization can be found on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OrlandoGirlsRockCamp/>

<sup>8</sup> For more on this phenomenon, see Chapters Four and Five.

My study inclusion criteria are participants of age 18 or older who self-identify as being involved in the Central Florida punk rock scene and give their informed consent. No exclusions are made based on demographic categories such as race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality.

### Analysis

Following data collection, I transcribe each interview and field notes entry, ascribing codes to significant themes and perspectives in the data. I achieve this via a close reading, line by line, of each text and summarizing the sentiment, meaning, or idea behind each line. I then track these codes across all interviews and observation sessions, noting frequency of occurrence of each. Recognizing and uncovering themes and perspectives that emerged in my data helps to reveal key findings for addressing my research questions (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 190).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PUNK IS DEAD: LONG LIVE PUNK**

Go to local shows.  
Learn local band lyrics.  
Grab the mic during sets.  
STAGE DIVE.  
Buy local band merch.  
Slap a sticker in a bathroom somewhere.  
Go to more local shows.  
That's what keeps a community alive.  
GO TO LOCAL SHOWS.  
-Amber Jameson<sup>9</sup>

In addressing the underlying social factors that contribute to the Central Florida punk scene's ongoing vitality, I explore two prevailing themes: community and networking. Both the punk scene's communal nature and socially constructed network that binds it together provide ample room for critical consideration in subsequent chapters. The fact that these themes are crucial elements of the Central Florida punk scene inform my decision to pursue this research topic.

In this chapter, I begin with a brief overview of the current scene, juxtaposed against some original characteristics of seminal 1970s punk rock scenes. I then explore various external pressures that encourage social bonding among scene members, including identity, inclusivity, and family. Next, I describe factors within the community that favor cohesiveness among scene members such as accessibility, attitudes on ethics and politics, live performance, and DIY aesthetics and approaches. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the presented data and its

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<sup>9</sup> Quote accessed from a public post on Facebook. Used with permission of author.

relevance to my argument that a sense of community socially supports the punk scene in Central Florida.

### Visual Divergence

Due in part to its provocative nature and mainstream notoriety and/or ambivalence, just about anyone can offer a visual description of the original 1970s punk scene. Absorbing elements from American bikers, glam rock, jazz, and the BDSM community (Prinz 2014, 584), original punk rock forged a visceral image of itself that set it aside from each of those fashion sources alone. Theoretically, punks could recognize other punks by their display of attire—leather biker jackets; skinny jeans; colorful hair; mohawks; dog collars and bracelets with spikes and chains (Prinz 2014).

Today's punks no longer adhere to this superficial identifying dress code by default. My interlocutors agreed that mohawks have disappeared, along with many of the original hallmarks. However, this lack of current popularity does not prevent anyone from displaying that style. Of my 22 research participants, one, Lili,<sup>10</sup> presented herself how an original punk might—choppy black and red hair, several nose piercings, visible tattoos, black combat boots, chains, and dramatic eyeliner. The rest of my interlocutors bore little resemblance with each other or the original aesthetic, aside from the occasional brightly colored hair or tattoos. In fact, when asked about the possibility of a recent unifying aesthetic, one punk, Nessa says this:

You know the mohawk and the studded jacket—like that's not punk [to me]. I remember one time I said something like 'I don't fit into the punk scene because I'm blonde and don't have any tattoos and I don't dress like that [referring to the original punk style]' and he [a fellow punk] was like 'That's the most punk rock

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<sup>10</sup> All names within this work are pseudonyms, to protect the identity of my participants.

thing you've ever fucking said, because you just don't give a shit and you just are who you are. That's punk.' And I'm like 'You're right, that *is* punk. I'm being who I am, even if it's not what fits in. That's punk.'

Another punk, Gino, who has been in the scene much longer, watching it change, says "It is different from then...back in the day, you'd see somebody with a Black Flag<sup>11</sup> tattoo and you were friends like, you know, we at least have some things in common....Now that kind of doesn't matter right now." Based on the above comments, it seems that within Central Florida's contemporary punk scene, the distinction between punks and non-punks has transcended appearances.

### Sonic and Spatial Divergence

Punks' appearance is not the only thing that has changed over the years. The music and the performance spaces have also changed. Unlike fashion choices, however, today's punk has not abandoned the original sounds and spaces that made it, merely adapted new sounds and growing in size and scope. The fast, harsh, and short songs known for their loud guitars in 1970s punk are still in evidence nowadays, amid various subgenres and self-styled descriptors such as Quinn's "twinkly emo riff set" and their friend's band's "unapologetically heavy pop."

A widely encountered subgenre, pop punk, has helped redefine both the sound and spaces of punk music. Pop punk, as the name suggests, is one of this music style's most popular forms. Responding to my questions about the possible reasons for this, my interlocutors explain that it is a "tolerable" subgenre of punk for the mainstream, with closer musical ties to pop music. They credit the overall success of pop punk to bands such as Green Day, Blink-182, and Paramore,

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<sup>11</sup> Popular American punk band formed in 1976.

who came about in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, respectively. Pop punk typically consists of fast-paced, short songs with catchy melodies and simple chord progressions peppered, as in most punk, with loud guitars.<sup>12</sup> Recognition of these bands brought about the change of spaces available to pop punk. Today, Green Day regularly sells out arenas on their global tours, a considerable leap from the tiny house shows<sup>13</sup> the overall genre usually hosts.

Though not as profitable as such pop punk acts, the many other punk subgenres have carved out spaces in the Central Florida area that are larger than the underground house shows off-mainstream music genres utilize. As mentioned in Chapter Three, venues such as Uncle Lou's, Soundbar., and the House of Blues frequently host punk shows. Other local venues include the Plaza Live, Will's Pub, The Abbey, the Beacham Theater, and The Social. These spaces vary in size from a 50-person limit to a capacity of over 2,000. As explained by local punks involved heavily in booking,<sup>14</sup> bands looking to perform in Central Florida have a good chance of landing a gig<sup>15</sup> depending on a variety of factors, such as popularity, crowd turnout, venue availability, and connections to the right individuals. Further research such as a full spatial analysis of the punk scene may elucidate issues of access and class in punk.

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<sup>12</sup> No comprehensive research on this subgenre or its definition exists at this time.

<sup>13</sup> A house show is a concert performed in a house, typically owned, rented, or otherwise occupied by scene members. These shows offer a more personal experience, as there is no stage and no real separation between performers and audiences, but do not offer quality sound.

<sup>14</sup> "Booking" refers to the act of securing a performance at a venue and can involve numerous factors. For more on booking in this scene, see Chapter Five.

<sup>15</sup> Securing a performance.



### Ideological and Definitional Divergence

Another notable shift from the original 1970s punk is scene members' ideology. Since its conception, punk has been characterized as a rebellious, angry, and violent subculture. It emerged in part from the dissonance between the working-class sensibilities and the hegemonic system under which they felt exploited. More than the promise of reform, many original punks espoused anarchy as a viable remedy for a corrupt society, fueled by violent ideas. They often saw their cause as the only just cause, loudly separating themselves from the struggles of ethnic minorities and other disenfranchised groups. Due to this, the early punk scene had factions of white supremacists, as well as anti-Semitic and anti-LGBT groups. Much of this has changed as the punk scene grapples with changing times. As longtime punk Gino sees it:

Back then it was like kind of fuck everybody, nobody cared about anything. That was one of the main factors of the first wave of punk, and now it's the opposite. Now it's absolutely, like the most caring, like left leaning, politically correct movement that I can think of. It's better for it. It's a much better movement because it's far more inclusive, which does bring great things into it. I'm, especially at my age, I'm stoked I don't have to go get punched by some Nazi skinhead<sup>16</sup> at a show anymore. Like I already did that. I don't want these kids to have to do that... That is one of the great things now about, the true scene. [The] community is super accepting... it's gotten really wonderful because that wasn't the case for early on. I mean, I didn't start going to shows until maybe '87 or '88... and it was really violent... I can remember seeing things here in Orlando at the Beacham Theater and just the things that were happening downtown, the SWAT team would run in, people getting slagged, people ending up in the hospital. I knew I wasn't supposed to be there, it was kind of dangerous. But it was exciting. I loved everything that went with it. Now, I don't so much look at it that way. Now, if I'm [at] the show, and I see any of those people, I have to be on guard watch. Now, I don't want any of the younger people that really have to go through that. That's not a place for that. It's something... it's kind of morphed into something else.

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<sup>16</sup> "Skinheads" refers to, typically white, men who have shaved heads and in the early days of punk were largely known for being white supremacists. Besides this, they frequently caused physical harm to others they had conflict with or discriminated against at shows or other scene spaces.

Gino's account details the shift from an isolated and physically aggressive scene to the open, accepting, physical and mental "safe space" the punk scene has become, as vocalized by many of my interlocutors. For Central Florida punks, a safe space not only fosters an expressive freedom that insulates one against outside judgement or retaliation but also provides a bonding experience with those whose self-expression coincides with their own.

More than ideology alone, the very notion of punk has changed. Each of my 22 interlocutors gave different accounts of what punk actually encompasses or entails, adding to the sense of disconnect from original punk rock. Further, it is possible that a divide has occurred between the music style and the ideology. Several scene members associated punk rock music with the music alone, not any of the trappings of rebellion, change, and unrest. Similarly, a handful of scene members reported following punk rock for the express purpose of that mentality, opposing the current state of the country and the world and accepting individuals of all class and creed with no heed to the musical sound.

Unsurprisingly, there are also scene members who believe in both the music style and the mindset collectively define punk, though a more contemporary version of each. Punk's debatable definition conundrum sheds light on the popular phrase "punk is dead," often used to describe the state of the scene today. Though punk has never truly "died"—been completely inactive, without new music, ideas, and other means of support—the first wave of it has ceased to exist in the state it began, causing friction between old and new punks on definitional and ideological grounds.

The above differences are certainly not the only ones between the original punk scene and today's punks, but they remain the most striking and frequently mentioned by the scene members I interviewed. These differences portray a refinement of what punk used to be. One of the more reflective scene members, Florence, puts it this way, "So yeah, punk is dead or whatever. And you can buy Dead Kennedys<sup>17</sup> shirts at Hot Topic,<sup>18</sup> but that's just looking at the early portions of something that is not going to stop. And it might be referred to as different things over time."

### From the Outside

Throughout my interviews, a recurring theme among scene members was the shared experience of being an outsider, outcast, or otherwise unable to "fit in" with mainstream society<sup>19</sup>. The punk scene has always attracted marginalized individuals and groups. This tendency is reflected in popular band names such as the Misfits and Outcasts. While first generation punks identified as outcasts for similar reasons as today's scene members (political ideology, dress, or attitude), the current Central Florida punk scene does not adhere to these alone. Singer's (2006) depiction of an assumed community, a group of people linked by outsider conceptions, fits the way mainstream society characterizes punk rock. Assumptions regarding

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<sup>17</sup> Popular American punk band formed in 1978.

<sup>18</sup> Mall-based store catering to borderline popular/mainstream alternative, punk, emo, and geeky interests. They sell themed knickknacks as well as select jewelry, clothing, and figurines and each store has dim lighting and plays some variety of off-mainstream music.

<sup>19</sup> Central Florida punks use the collective term "mainstream" as a benchmark for setting themselves apart from what they individually view as normative society. From my research alone, I was not able to find a common definition of "the mainstream," simply a common term used for individual purposes.

various attributes of punk create the popular misconceptions of the scene; as Singer (2006) emphasizes, an assumed community is rarely representative of the people it includes.

Jenson, a longtime scene member and former touring musician, echoed the sentiments of eight other scene members when he described his induction to punk:

It was kind of cool...to I don't know, find something...I was a chubby kid when I was younger, and I was in gifted, which is cool, but also very nerdy. So, I always felt not very cool. So, I think there was something about discovering punk, and especially underground music, that made me feel like, 'Oh, I feel like I don't fit in because I'm not cool or whatever, but I'll find my little niche where, you know, I know all about this stuff.' And that makes me feel cool my own way.

In Jenson's case, concerns regarding weight and appearing "nerdy" or smart fueled his sense of being outside the bounds of society. Other scene members recount experiences of being bullied for having such traits at middle and high school ages. Quite a few also describe finding punk through skateboarding or the subculture surrounding it<sup>20</sup> (see Figure 1 below). Though the term "outcast" carries a negative connotation, punks often use it as a badge or marker separating them from mainstream society. For those not part of the original punk era specifically, the introduction to punk in early adolescence (Sabin 1999) acts as a catalyst for change and growth via membership in a subculture that allows them to freely express themselves and perform their identities. Additionally, joining the punk scene fosters the creation of an identity all scene members share, as I describe in the next section.

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<sup>20</sup> Skateboarding reached peak popularity in the early 1990s through the 2000s, specifically professional skater Tony Hawk. With this success came a series of video games with his name on them that allowed players to "be" a famous skateboarder and perform tricks in-game. The soundtracks to these games frequently included punk, emo, and hardcore music styles that players became familiar with. The music genre "skate punk" also appeared around this time.



"So where does your love for metal and punk come from"

Me: "you ever play Tony Hawk's Pro Skater as a kid?"

*Figure 1: Skateboarding and Video Games as Introductions to Punk.*

Image accessed Nov 24, 2019 via Facebook; no source creator listed.

### *Identity in Punk*

Joint agreement over the notion of punk as an outcast subculture culminates in a shared identity for scene members. Whether they originally labeled themselves as outcasts or not, through their membership in the punk scene they become “punks,” synonymous with existing outside mainstream culture and society. Further, current scene members often described themselves as tied to punk in deep, unshakable ways related to their identity. When asked about what punk means to him, August laughed and said, “God, everything. I wake up, I eat, sleep, breathe it. I wake up, I put on punk music. I'm gonna shower? Punk music's on. In my car? Punk music.”

Shared identity under the “punk” label is difficult to accurately describe. I did not meet a single scene member who looked, spoke, or thought like the one before them throughout the course of my research. Yet, they are all punks. They recognize each other as fellow punks and

support each other accordingly. As I fumbled, trying to understand how scene members recognized such individual forms of punk identity, Florence explained it like this:

I have let hundreds of people that I met for the first time stay at my house with all of my belongings, on the day [I met them], simply by nature of knowing them through people and knowing their art. Maybe I only feel this way because I'm an artist, but I feel like you can tell a whole lot about a person by the art that they make. And I'm not talking about like, whether it's good or bad art but simply as like a piece of information to dissect, you know? That much in the same way that you find a piece of pottery from a civilization thousands of years ago and you're not really discussing like, is this good art or bad art? You're just discerning information from it, whatever information you can. I think that the art that people make now functions much in the same way.

Thus, by knowing another person's "art," or music, scene members can gauge who is part of the scene and who is not. It becomes a step-by-step process of determination. On the surface, if music or art looks and sounds like an expected avenue of punk, it moves on to the second step. Scene members then consider if the person creating the art is of a punk rock mindset or identity. If so, they are recognized as a scene member. In other cases, scene members judge art that is not blatantly punk-themed (by popular, original punk standards) by its creator's mindset alone, or by the artist's connections in the scene. Connections serve as votes of confidence and secure a scene member's status and recognizability to other scene members. In this way, each scene member functions as a gatekeeper to potential outsiders seeking entrance.

While assessing another person's mindset or identity seems a hefty task, the scene members I met are lenient in acceptance. They admit to acknowledging nearly anyone claiming punk status. A pivotal figure in the Central Florida punk scene, Quinn mentioned that they make it their business to meet and greet any new faces they see at local punk shows, actively

attempting to grow the scene population. They describe their thought process regarding scene membership as follows:

Everybody has a lot of love and support. Everybody just works together. And the bands that don't support the other bands usually don't continue to play shows. It's like we know this vibe, and we just want everybody to be supported. On Twitter, there's like a monthly thread pretty much where one person will just tag like six bands like, 'give me a music recommendation!' And then everybody from those six bands tags another like 10, 15, 20 bands and we just keep tagging each other and it's like...it's 'Florida DIY Day.' So, I have a long, compiled list as well as a playlist on Spotify of all the Florida bands...Like, that mentality, it comes back to the mentality of, we just want to make music and rock and roll, baby. That's what we want to do, just make music and not be a square.

Quinn addresses the need for fellow bands and scene members to be supportive of others in the scene; in a DIY or underground music scene, support from within is critical to the scene's survival because outside or mainstream support does not exist. On a more personal level, bandmates Nessa and Mark agree that they are choosy about who and what local booking venues they use. They describe themselves as avid supporters of scene diversity and inclusiveness but explained that not everyone in the local scene feels the same, stating there are still issues with gender and racial stereotypes at present. Due to this, Nessa says "[We believe], if you have a platform at all you have a responsibility to use that in ways that it's not just selfish, for your own gain. Making sure that everyone else has some space [is important]." Despite encounters with these few punks, who they do not recognize as true scene members, Nessa and Mark are optimistic that the scene overall is continuing to evolve for the better.

### *Inclusivity in Punk*

Part of the evolution that scene members like Nessa and Mark describe is inclusivity and acceptance in punk rock. Its status as a subculture composed of outsiders allows for differing

*types* of outsiders to find their way to punk rock. Presently, the local scene has members that traverse the sexuality spectrum, identify themselves with binary and nonbinary genders, and represent varying ethnic minorities. This is a trend that does not go unnoticed by scene members. In referring to what she believes is unique to punk, Lili describes the atmosphere for queer people in specific:

Sexuality is like a big topic too you know, and like the punk community is full of queers, which also is a safe thing...That is unique, you're not going to have... like you do have a lot of queer people in other genres but they're not... I feel like not all of them are welcoming and our community is like, we take you in, like, if you're a queer, Hell yeah., you probably have a better chance to be a part of the crew if you're queer than if you're not in that way. But I'm saying like we would... you don't have to worry about opening it up to us, like I'm queer, a lot of our friends are queers like it makes you...it's a home so it's good. That's the thing that we've been known for is we're the ones who take the outcasts, you know?

Lili's words convey a distinct correlation between non-heteronormative sexualities and outcast status, as well as the notion of punk as a home. This illustrates the base sentiment of the original punk scene (individuals gathering as a community who did not fit into the norms of the time) and provides an example of its evolution to include new forms of outcasts. Lili also highlights the idea of safety in the punk scene, which she believes makes it a home for queer people. She feels this idea is a novelty of the punk scene—though she admits other scenes and genres of music have queer populations, she believes that punk is the safest and most welcoming for them due to its very nature and what it has provided for her, as a queer person.

While factors such as sexuality, gender, and minority status display some variance in types of outcasts drawn to the punk scene, many other factors exist. Hair style and color, the presence of tattoos, and number and type of piercings are commonplace visual factors for punk scene members that often occur alongside deeper ideological factors that punks share. Nearly



every scene member I spoke with conveyed some way they or other scene members they knew were living in opposition to the traditional “American dream.” During my interviews, when this sentiment came up, it reminded me of a punk/hardcore song with lyrics that express what some of my interlocutors echoed:

*Go ahead and keep it, go ahead and keep it  
Go ahead and keep your American dream  
Can you go the distance, I don't wanna see  
Can you make a future, without maturity  
I'm doing fine as far as I can see, so go ahead and keep your American dream<sup>21</sup>*

While this is an extreme rejection of the “American dream” stereotype, it also demonstrates the outcast nature of the scene. The questions “can you go the distance?” and “can you make a future without maturity?” in the song excerpt represent dissenting voices of non-scene members, or members or normative society, questioning and making judgments about the scene and its members’ mentalities. Outside criticism as depicted in the song can further cement the feelings of community among scene members; outcasts such as those in the punk scene have developed close ties, typically sticking together when faced with an outside aggressor.

Returning to the rejection of the “American dream,” scene members frequently articulated their opposition to accepted notions of an ideal American life. For Quinn, it does not align with their vision of life. They explained this as such, “...I don't want a family. I don't want, you know, the American dream of the white picket fence and the house...I want a house but I want my house to be a venue and a place where my friends can stay.” In this excerpt, Quinn displays greater concern in maintaining lasting relationships with friends and fellow punks than

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<sup>21</sup> Lyrics from the song “Keep Your American Dream” by Beartooth. Copyright belongs to Red Bull Media House NA, Inc.

with the idea of a starting a family or with their existing blood relatives. Isaiah voiced a similar sentiment, noting that the punk scene is a community, but more so an extended family for those who need support. He goes on to say, "...Other people that have no reason to feel excluded [can] still enjoy punk music, but a lot of people that tend to be very immersed in the scene have some type of troubled upbringing or some type of reason to feel like they need an external family to feel happy." In this example, a "troubled upbringing" represents another type of outcast that the punk scene embraces.

### *Family in Punk*

Family issues or concerns, as Isaiah states above, are common to members of the scene. Its origins as a youth movement (Hebdige 1979) highlight the importance of the trials of adolescence in recruiting new members to the scene. Going through adolescence, a rite of passage between childhood and adulthood (van Gennep 1960), frequently brings out feelings of unrest, rebellion, and anger, particularly within the liminal phase, when adolescents are most subject to criticizing their society (Turner 1969). Each of these factors variously inform the punk scene. Due to outcast status or not, fractures between adolescents and their blood relations cause stress. In losing the support of once-pivotal figures, adolescents may turn to outside sources of support such as communities, friend groups, school clubs, etc. to regain that lost connection to others. Punk continues to be a haven for adolescents experiencing this type of situation.

Scene members belonging to a band or performing act had similar sentiments regarding their fellow bandmates and scene members. An important factor in choosing bandmates<sup>22</sup> is the ability to get along and feel close to them. In fact, although my interlocutors embrace varying types and styles of punk, they all describe intimate relationships with their bandmates, some outright saying they consider them family. Group video game playing, support for benefit shows, and similar practices and ideologies provide opportunities for closeness and bonding that mimic and may replace lacking relationships with blood relatives and others not involved in the scene. I emphasize this not to say that every punk has fractured relationships with their blood family but to stress the importance of relationships forged within the punk community and their parallel to the type of relationships our society considers normative. “We’re still so close, in such a tight knit family,” singer, booking agent, and all-around punk Rachel says, referring to previous bandmates. The falling out of her former band due, in part, to ideological differences does not sour her opinion of individuals she grew close to through shared membership in the scene and a love for music.

### On the Inside

A large and obvious part of the glue holding punks together entails their outsider status vis-à-vis mainstream society. An even larger part depends on the inner cohesion of scene members—what intentionally brings them together. Ideological values such as shared ethics and politics combine with personal motivations in the scene to create the “punk mindset.” Similarly, the concrete elements of performing shows and the ever-present DIY nature of the scene help

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<sup>22</sup> People who spend inordinate amounts of time with each other, often cramped into a rental van in touring circumstances. See Chapter Five for more on touring.

guide how the punk scene functions and carve out the space it operates within. One of the most critical details allowing for all these functions is the level of accessibility that has always accompanied the punk scene.

### *Accessibility in Punk*

As I briefly discussed earlier, although each scene member can function as a gatekeeper to the outside world, they typically prefer to embrace newcomers. As both a DIY and an underground scene, punk is a small, tightly knit community by nature and the scene members in Central Florida are mostly enthusiastic about welcoming more individuals into their midst. Quinn's penchant for introducing themselves to new faces at shows is a perfect example of this. Nearly all the scene members I met acknowledge the need for a steady stream of new faces to keep things running smoothly. Booking agent and entrenched local scene member, Duncan spends his time carefully planning local shows, spanning across genres and local versus nonlocal acts, all for the sake of keeping the scene alive and doing what he loves—"...the high you get from playing or doing something you love...I get the same feeling from doing this [booking shows]. It's just on a different side [of the event]...I curated that."

Duncan's endless stream of shows emphasizes the other half of accessibility: physical accessibility. Not only is the scene open and welcoming in mentality, but it remains extremely easy to insert oneself into the events and spaces the scene produces and occupies, once there is an awareness of them. When I began this research endeavor, I had no idea what the small-scale punk scene looked like in Central Florida. I knew it existed because larger touring acts often come through in punk and other rock music genres, but I was at a loss for where to begin

entering the local scene. Through the gracious efforts of Duncan and a few other well-connected and helpful punks, the entire scene appeared before me in a matter of days: I knew which venues to go to, what Facebook pages to follow for show announcements, and who the most connected scene members were. In fact, if I had had a few more weeks of steady activity in the scene, I would feel confident calling myself a full-fledged scene member.

While this easy access and acceptance happened at an accelerated rate for me, as a researcher and fellow punk, I questioned how a regular person might find out about the local spots and bands. Much to my surprise, a quick internet search of “local punk shows Orlando” brought up nearly every local venue I visited, and their social media pages all advertised upcoming events, shows, and activities. This presents a stark contrast to the Chicago punk scene Beer (2016) finds, which operates in secrecy and mainly via word of mouth, hiding from the authorities and mainstream eyes. The Central Florida scene’s impressive accessibility also reaches much farther than Central Florida, with connections spanning the entire country.<sup>23</sup> Ease of access in an underground music scene, in this case, allows for an inviting and cohesive community of punks.

### *Ethics and Social Issues in Punk*

As in the original punk movement, contemporary Central Florida punk holds values that distinctly “rebel against the prevailing climate” as one scene member, Elliot, puts it. While punk is widely known to hold opposing political beliefs, through my research I find that a large section of what traditionally classifies as politics does not always hold the same term within the punk

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<sup>23</sup> For more on Central Florida punk scene connections, see Chapter Five.

scene. Issues including gender, sexuality, and ageism are a few topics that several punks term ethics, not politics.

### *Gender and Sexuality Issues*

The earlier subsection discussing inclusivity in punk exemplifies the scene's overall beliefs about gender and sexuality. Acceptance, support, and empathy are pillars of determination in treating others of any gender or sexuality with the same respect one expects for themselves. This is, of course, made easier by the comparatively high number of queer and nonbinary people involved in the Central Florida scene. Local scene members do not tolerate instances of hate speech or acts of violence based on these characteristics. Scene veteran Gino remembers a time when this was not the case, "I just remember...It was scary. There's still elements there [of prejudice], but for the most part it's a lot better...I'm glad that no rednecks walk into Uncle Lou's and beat the shit out of everyone there and then drive away."

A more famous social issue within the punk scene was lead singer Laura Jane Grace of punk band Against Me! and her transition from male to female in the 2010s.<sup>24</sup> Quinn references this well-known figure and her struggle transitioning in the public eye in passing as they discuss the merits of using the phrase "selling out."<sup>25</sup> A casual reference, with no opinion added, but the look in Quinn's eyes and the tone of their voice conveyed all the significance their words did not: this was a huge event, for punk and perhaps for them, too, and they were gauging my reaction. As open and inviting as Quinn presents themselves, the small measure of caution in

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<sup>24</sup> For more on Laura Jane Grace and the punk scene, see Rolling Stone's article on her, following up four years after she came out in an article they also published: <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/laura-jane-grace-a-trans-punk-rockers-fight-to-rebuild-her-life-111470/>

<sup>25</sup> This term refers to punk bands who sign to big name records, aiming for fame most punk acts will never know

broaching a sensitive topic such as trans rights is a sad reminder that although inside the scene is typically safe for trans individuals now, other spaces are not.

Safety and recognition are not problems exclusive to trans scene members. Of the six female scene members I spoke with, five mention gender issues they face in the scene on a regular basis. Nessa, discussing diversity again, puts it this way:

It's still male dominated for sure. I mean, punk is more open sometimes, but there's still a long way to go...The entire world makes music, yet there's still a lot of, you know, white men punk bands that people worship and that doesn't appeal to me as much...Representation is important because that's how you get diversity, you have to be like, 'Hey, I can see myself doing that because I saw a female up on stage.' You don't [always] have that. It's just white men.

As progressive as punk aims to be, women in the Central Florida scene are not impressed yet. While a full evaluation of gender issues is outside the scope of this research, in this local scene, inclusivity and representation are not on the same level. Time may alter this, as it has with so many aspects of punk rock, but for now hope lies with current female scene members and organizations like the Orlando Girls Rock Camp to spread the awareness of punk music and secure the accessibility that will draw more women and girls to the scene.

### *Punk and Ageism*

The popular notion that punk rock is youth movement and members will “age out” of it or “grow up” and move on displays another social issue: ageism. Ageism, though typically used to represent prejudice against older individuals, is twofold in the punk scene; it also discriminates against younger individuals. Believing that the youth are “in a phase” to justify not taking their opinions seriously is a large concern for punk and the world in general.

Outsiders treating the youth in punk as if they know nothing yet perceiving elder punks as “suspicious” or as if they do not belong, as Gino describes, makes for a bit of a catch-22 situation. Inside the punk scene, this issue divides scene members as well—each person I interviewed has a different view on age and how it relates to punk. Scene members do agree that youth is important to continuing punk, providing the crucial new perspectives that allow for change within the scene, but when it comes to ageing in punk, they are not so sure.

Original punk Oscar looks back on the Manchester punk scene he participated in growing up, “[There was] openness...There was aggression. I mean, we were teenagers. So, we had a certain amount of testosterone that we had to release. So, there was there was an element of camaraderie, and the whole...dancing like maniacs and things...It was a way to let off steam.” He reminisces about the political aims they had and the change they hoped to enact, but ultimately feels the original punks fell short of their goals. As a longtime punk, now, he struggles with the continued desire for change and the question of whether today’s youth are the ones who can accomplish it. Oscar has reduced his involvement in the scene over time, remaining connected but not at the forefront, and does not consider any of the bands he currently plays in to be outright punk in musical style. When asked if he thinks punk is still political, he notes:

It’s always going to exist...Of course, the elements are there...I don't know everybody. I'm old. You know, I'm not young anymore. But I do hang out with kids and I do listen to their opinions. You know, [I] talk to them. So, I think a lot of younger people have their hearts in the right places. As far as making a change...I don't think it's too late. But I'm saying...I don't know. Punk rock as a vehicle for change? That's not there.



In the above excerpt, Oscar struggles with the idea of today's youth making a difference in the political arena yet acknowledges his own withdraw from the thick of it. He wonders, *If the original punks could not achieve their goals, can today's youth? And, if not, then who can?*

Other longtime punks describe their continued participation in the punk scene as unplanned or minimal, often downplaying their contributions. Gino, who speaks of being on the fringes of the scene and removed from active status, is the founder of the Orlando Punk Rock Flea Market, which has been successful each year of its existence. As a participant of this 2019 event, I encountered individuals of all ages supporting the scene, overhearing countless remarks about the event's significance.

Similarly, long-term punk Zack, who boasts a long history of entrepreneurship and DIY in the punk scene, talks about his current status in terms of "only" putting on an annual show called Foreign Dissent for the past six years (see Figure 2 below). This event, comprised of international punk bands present in Florida for Gainesville's punk festival The Fest, has nearly sold out tickets in a 200-person capacity venue on a Monday night several years in a row—no small feat for an underground scene's show.



Figure 2: Foreign Dissent 6 Poster.

Image accessed via Facebook event page for Foreign Dissent 6. Copyright belongs to ForeignDissent.com.

Scene members aged 35 and below have a different idea of how they might age within the scene. Isaiah views aging this way,

You know, there are people that are 50 years old that are still punk dudes. They still love it. I love that...I would love to see myself become that, I have no problems with being involved with the punk community for the rest of my life. It's a nice family. And I mean, I have learned so many values in life because of some of these other communities, not necessarily related to music...different groups and scenes of people tend to be very ignorant, you know, very problematic. One thing that's really cool about the punk scene is the awareness of problems with the world.

Isaiah's comments above display an understanding of his personal growth since becoming a scene member. He does not envision himself deviating from the values he has adopted and uses the existence of elder punks in the local scene as an example for his own future. Other younger scene members echoed Isaiah's willingness to remain in the scene long-term. This contrasts with current long-term punks, whose concerns are appearing out of place or too old for the punk scene.

Though varying opinions persist regarding aging and punk, the fact remains that the scene features members of all ages. My interlocutors ranged from 21 to 57 years old. Younger and older scene members appear at shows and events simultaneously; this demonstrates punk rock's diverse group cohesion.

### *Benefit Shows*

A final social issue central to punk are benefit shows. These are concerts organized for a specific purpose, usually to support someone(s) in need or a cause the organizer wants to recognize. Typically, at these performances the venue hosting and the bands performing agree to put on the show for free, with all or most of the proceeds from ticket, merchandise, or alcohol

sales going directly to the specified person(s) or cause (see Figures 3 and 4 below). For example, Lili talks about concerts she had organized and booked for causes such as a local scene member's court fees as well as donations to individuals suffering in Venezuela during times of political and social upheaval. She explains her feelings as such, "I want to make sure every show that we [her band] throw is beneficial, to help...because that's what we are about. We talk shit about our government, so let's help the people who are being affected by it."

Benefit shows, as described by Lili, are a form of community service. They assist in alleviating frustration and feelings of helplessness that come with punk's rebellion from mainstream society and politics. When asked what punk means to her, Lili responds,

Punk is a community of people who are involved with each other, trying to help each other. It's not just about the music, it's something that they've been doing for years, helping each other. That's what they do...we practice what we preach. We don't just say we want change, we make a change out of it. And we see a lot of punks at protests and doing stuff like that. Why? Because...we want to feel like we're doing something, not just sitting on our asses and talking about how shitty everything is. So, punk is a bunch of people with balls, and we all use ours to fight for each other. And even if people hate us, we're still going to be there to help [them].

Adding to her dedication to community service, Lili also notes her work with organizations like Food Not Bombs<sup>26</sup> and her excitement over projects such as West Oakland Punks With Lunch,<sup>27</sup> whom she encountered on a trip to California for a punk festival.

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<sup>26</sup> Food Not Bombs is a volunteer organization that provides vegetarian and vegan food for free to those in extreme poverty or victimized by war. They operate in over 65 countries around the world. For more information, see their website: [http://foodnotbombs.net/new\\_site/](http://foodnotbombs.net/new_site/)

<sup>27</sup> West Oakland Punks With Lunch is a volunteer organization in California that services vulnerable populations such as the homeless and drug users, providing free lunches, sanitary kits, needle kits, dog food, etc. to those in need. For more information, see their website: <https://www.punkswithlunch.org/>

Lili is not the only Central Florida punk working to serve the community or help others; anyone involved in the scene can throw a benefit show and many individuals do. Bandmates Nessa and Mark admit they often think about the punk scene's political connotation. Mark describes his thought process in this way,

We've talked about this [politics] in our band a lot, we'll get into these long drive conversations through the country, and just talk through some issue. And we'll get really into the minutiae of it and then, you know, kind of step back...I was thinking, not every band has to be...does everyone have to be an advocate, does every person have to be so political, so conscious? But, you know, I think maybe, yeah.

Punk's history is enmeshed with politics, and Nessa agrees, "Not all punk music is super political... [but] if you have a platform at all, you have a responsibility to use [it]. Even [if] our platform is not that big, it's still a platform and we try to use it for support." These firm beliefs may not characterize every punk, but local scene members of all ages and backgrounds come together in support for those in need at benefit shows. In doing so, the community displays overall capacity for service much in the way larger, more powerful groups organize food drives, silent auctions, and other types of fundraisers.

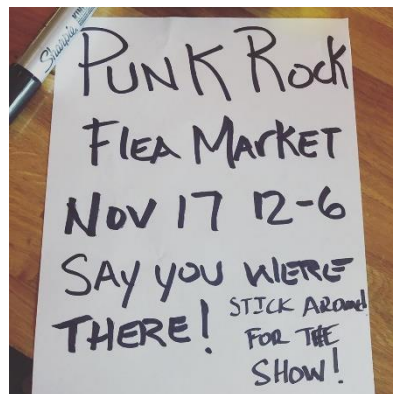


Figure 3: Punk Rock Flea Market Flyer.

Image accessed via Will's Pub Facebook page. The caption posted with this photo read "DIY till we die! There's a great charity show for pancreatic cancer afterward, cause punk cares!" Copyright belongs to Will's Pub.





Figure 4: Punk Benefit Show Flyer.

Image accessed via Punk Pro Wrestling's Twitter page. Copyright belongs to Punk Pro Wrestling.

### *Politics in Punk*

Given punk's origins, it is nearly impossible to separate punk, as a music or a scene, from politics. Though not all current punk bands write political lyrics, speak openly about political beliefs, or take public stances against policies, being part of the punk community brings a political connotation they cannot shed. While my research does not focus on this aspect of punk, it would be remiss of me not to include what I observed in the Central Florida scene.

When asked if politics still play a role in punk, each scene member responded positively. Some, like Lili, are adamant about their own personal involvement in anti-government speech and actions, but some are cynical. Isaiah prefers not to discuss politics, citing a lack of belief that any politicians are inherently good or competent. He describes his band's music as avoiding politics, as well, whereas Lili's, Kiran's, and Quinn's music all includes political lyrics. A third sentiment, expressed by Florence, strongly ties into the origins of punk,

Punk music began as a reaction to sociopolitical environments that caused people to feel powerless, so they felt the need to act out. I think that music that does not act out in a similar way, that does not seek to exist to essentially empower people that feel oppressed is just performing an aspect of it. „So I think that people can say that their punk music is not political, for example, but I don't really think that apoliticism is real...as a political stance as far as I'm concerned...I do think that a lot of bands exist that you could listen to them and at face value, say ‘this sounds like punk music.’ They have these particular sets of beats and melodies and rhythms; you could argue on paper, this is punk. But I, at the risk of sounding like I'm on a high horse, I don't care about things that. To me, the inherent message of the music is important to what it's categorized as, if that makes any sense.

Florence, unlike some of their peers, has kept with a definition of punk heavily reliant on politics. They also mention the idea of making music that sounds like punk, which is, as several other scene members note earlier, becoming more difficult to identify with the splitting into subgenres and overall evolution of the scene. Without knowing each individual scene member's

personal beliefs regarding punk and politics, it is beyond my ability to explain how politics is currently involved in the scene. Opposition to the government and mainstream society are still valid motivations in punk, and threads of politics are woven through many aspects of daily life in the scene (several of which are mentioned previously), but perhaps Rachel puts it best when she says, “generally, people in [this] world...we’re not Trump supporters” (see Figure 5).



*Figure 5: Anti-Trump Button.*

Photo by author. Found at Will's Pub following a show.

### *Live Performance in Punk*

Live music in today's punk scene remains a critically important part of the scene overall. Just as punk began with politics, it also began with live music. The Central Florida punk scene is no exception, housing tens of venues willing to put on punk rock shows and even more bands eager to perform. Scene members acknowledge the importance of live music for their community in varying ways.



Elliot, a longtime punk working in the media industry, says part of the appeal of a live punk show is its ability to “demystify the music for people,” allowing them to see fellow scene members, friends, and family performing in ways they can achieve, in an accessible space. To Elliot personally, punk is more humanistic in nature than other music genres, its smaller venues creating intimacy and connection among audiences and performers over the course of a show. In fact, when asked what makes a good show, Elliot responds “that connection, when the performers and the people in the audience have an intense emotional, physical, intellectual connection.” He also chalks it up to a band’s commitment to the performance itself; whether they play well or not, they should be committed to performing for their audience. At its core, Elliot sees punk as “raw, a shock to the system” that only live performances adequately convey. After a brief pause, he draws a comparison between punk rock concerts and sports events:

It’s a communal activity [a concert]. Sports events are maybe the closest alternative...People are all present, even if they’re on their phones, their bodies are present...It’s a specialized event that plays out in the moment. It’s mostly unscripted, and the outcomes are uncertain...there’s alcohol involved, and people are emotionally invested in what’s going on.

Elliot’s comparison, though perhaps unorthodox on the surface, captures some of the details involved in the making of a community, recognizing the universal human need to form groups (Tönnies 2001[1887]).

A current musician in the scene, Kiran touches on something about live shows that many other scene members bring up: energy. As a performer, Kiran notes that sounding good while playing always means a lot, but more important than that is the energy performers give off. Specifically, he references “doing crazy things...they’re jumping around, they’re headbanging, they’re spinning around, or doing whatever they do.” The act of performing in a way that is both

physically high in energy and displays the performers' enjoyment is key in making the connection Elliot describes. Kiran says he frequently takes achieving that sense of connection outside of the stage performance, itself,

I love to hang out [after shows], especially when we're on the road. I mean, the band usually has to pull me out of the bar, like 'Kiran it is time to go, come on.' And I'm like busy talking to these people. I'm always [the] one sitting around hanging by the merch talking to people. I love it. And it's funny too, because you can see [the results]. If you go on the road and you're an outgoing person, you like to talk to people...The amount of Facebook friend requests you get is just ridiculous...I had to change my name on Facebook a little bit...It's really funny and it is good way to make new fans for sure. [It] just shows you genuinely care that they caught your set and they bought your shirt, you know?

By spending time talking with audience members and getting to know them, Kiran is “demystifying the music,” as Elliot puts it, and placing himself on level with other scene members. This allows for connection between performers and audiences that manifests in verbalized thoughts I overheard such as *wow, they're just people like me* or *we have a lot in common, they understand me*. In an underground music scene, establishing physical closeness for performers is easier than in larger, more popular music styles: venues are small and some do not have stages to separate them from the crowd, which creates close proximity (see Figure 6 below). Establishing mental closeness requires the kinds of interactions Kiran describes and an underlying desire to be in a community of likeminded others that is unique to smaller scenes; when there are only so many venues, bands, and scene members, connecting to them is key to a band's survival. In this way, the connection that keeps the scene together resembles a mix of relatability and empathy; being unable to maintain levels of either trait makes for a short stint in the scene. Drawing from Quinn's earlier words, “bands that don't support the other bands usually don't continue to play shows.”



*Figure 6: Cool Grandma at Uncle Lou's.*

Photo by author, taken during Florida Underground Fest 2.

Yasmin, scene member and concert photographer, has her own perspective on the connections happening at live shows. An experienced eye shows her when audiences are “going wild” and performers are feeding on the crowd’s energy and vice versa. These kinds of shows make for a more interesting shoot, and Yasmin believes, “the whole point of live music is for everyone to share that experience together and just be in that moment.” Speaking about the punk scene overall, as someone who has experienced many genres, she has this to say about live shows:

There's definitely an intense sense of community at those kinds of shows. Generally speaking, if you go to a lot of those kind of shows within your own local neighborhoods and local scenes, you'll see the same faces again and again. So, it forms this sort of almost like a secret club that everyone's kind of part of and it's just a feeling of camaraderie, you know? Which can be just really a beautiful thing.

Yasmin's comment on seeing familiar faces rings true—over the course of the six local level shows I attended, I noticed familiar faces in each crowd. Several I had interviewed, and we exchanged a few words of recognition. A constant across each interview with an actively involved scene member were the daunting number of shows they attend per week. Elliot, at the time of our interview, attended seven shows in the seven preceding days. When I sat down with them, Quinn had been to four shows in a row that week. Duncan, as part of his booking responsibilities, frequently attends every show he books, sometimes 3-5 a week, and sleeps during intervals in the early hours of the morning. As a fellow scene member, those numbers make me cringe in horror. A concert is an experience that lasts anywhere from 4-6 hours, dependent on number of bands playing, which entails being on one's feet, frequently pressed up against others in a sweaty environment. Arrival at home following a show is never prior to midnight. Personally, I have always forgotten to eat dinner beforehand and then end up in a drive-thru afterwards. On top of those details, which do not typically bother me, many scene members, including myself, have a day job to wake up and be ready for the morning after a show. To go through the process of a show more than twice a week seems a monumental task, indicating the level of dedication for the scene and enjoyment Central Florida scene members receive in being a part of punk.

Even newcomers to the scene grasp the interconnectedness involved. As Violet, who has only been to a handful of punk show thus far puts it,

I'm a very energy driven person...I love feeling happy people around me and people who are super pumped up. That's how I get very into stuff. And pop punk shows always have a lot of people like that who are just ready to jump onstage and have a great time and I love that.

She describes her experience of crowd surfing at the first punk show she ever attended, just a few weeks prior, with a wide smile on her face though the story involves the loss of both her shoes, her phone, and her keys (all of which she later recovered). Violet, who has training in theatre, takes note of the way live shows and performers function in the punk genre,

I pay a lot of attention to stage presence and if someone's just standing there singing the song and isn't really getting into it, [it] definitely affects how the song is perceived. Because if somebody's singing about their parents or...their town that they didn't enjoy living in...an ex or breakup they went through...you can really feel the passion in their voice and in their performance. And I feel like that really does affect the show as a whole. Because when you're connected to the music you're performing, you put that energy out into the crowd and I feel like just being up there and singing the song and not feeling it will definitely affect how you come off to people, especially if it's your first time performing at a venue or the first time someone [is] seeing you perform.

Live shows provide a space for scene members to play and perform music while also making connections with others that help sustain the scene. According to scene members, energy and connection in a performance are part of what makes a successful live show. This is critical for making impressions and relationships within the scene, as the live show is one of the few communal spaces where the scene consistently exists, gathering a group as in Figure 7 below.

### *DIY in Punk*

A final tenement of the punk community remains its DIY foundations. The DIY ethos typically comes from origins of poverty, wherein individuals creatively make do with what they have in ability or supplies and fashion for themselves things that affluent individuals may easily afford. Punk is still a class-based scene at its core—every scene member I interviewed told stories of learning to do something on their own, making their own product(s), or otherwise figuring out a way to succeed without using money as an avenue for training or as capital.



Figure 7: Sweet Cambodia at Soundbar.

Photo by author

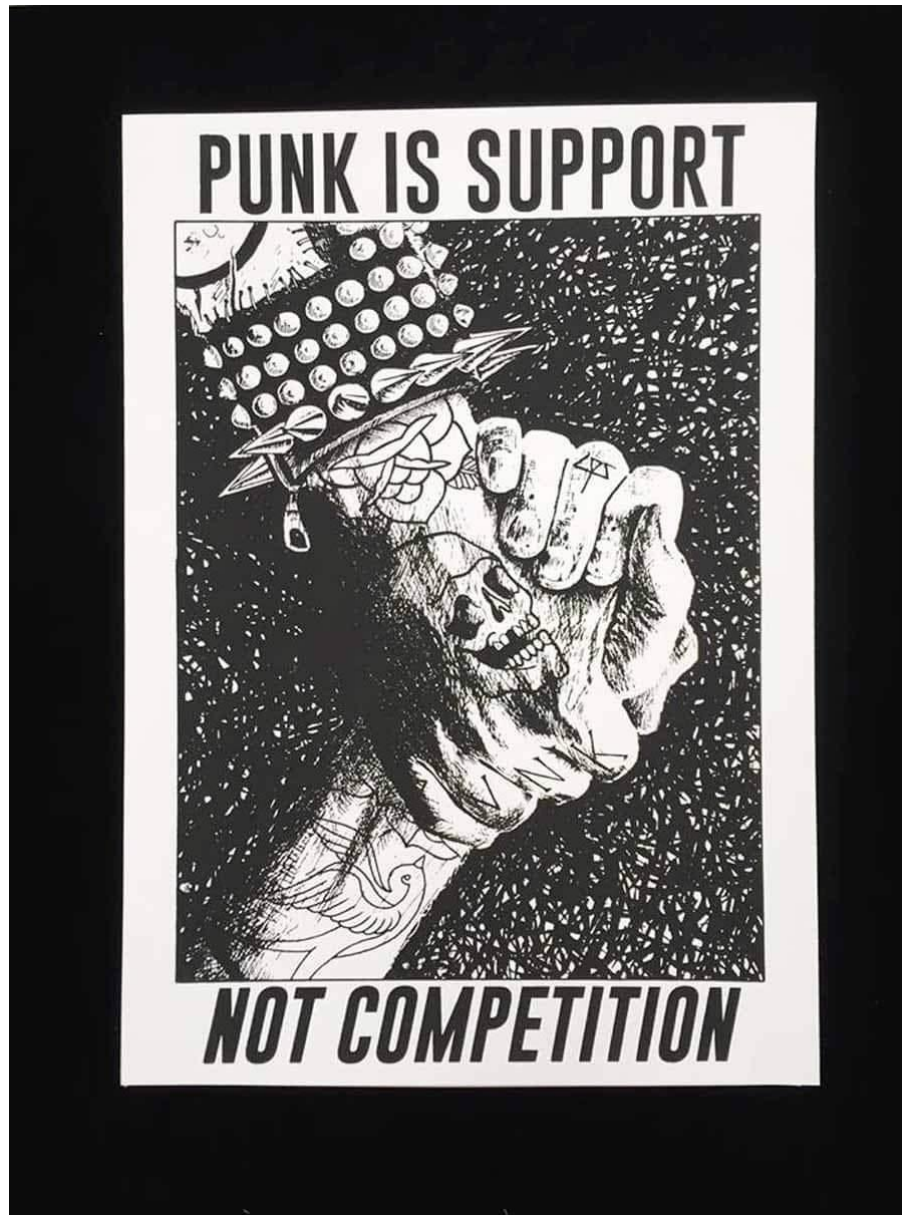
Sharing the experience of working for something and failing as often as succeeding, regardless of what it may be, brings punks together as a community. As Figure 8 displays below, punks pride themselves on supporting other punks instead of vying for more profit, fame, or success at another's expense.

Zack, the longtime punk in charge of the annual show hosting international punk bands, shared with me a little of his DIY background in the scene,

There was a there's a magazine...called *Maximum Rocknroll*. [It] was like the Bible for Punk. And so we would get *Maximum* and read the record reviews and mail order records and we realized, well, if you buy wholesale you can get, records at the time for like \$6.75 instead of the \$10-12 you're paying in the store. And so we decided to see what it meant to wholesale—how much did you actually have to order? And the [wholesale company] did wholesale for a bunch of the cooler punk labels from back then including Lookout Records, which was really important...because that's who was putting out all the good stuff. That's what Green Day started on, and Rancid. So, we decided to purchase records mail

order and we ended up having a mailing list of about 800 people all over the world that we sold records to for a couple years, and we'd invite kids over to the house, we had a turntable so you could actually listen to it before you buy it, and we'd go sell records at shows.

This mail order record business was just the beginning of Zack's entrepreneurial forays in the punk scene. He started and operated a college magazine while at UCF, and later a political magazine. He also dabbled in booking shows, creating Foreign Dissent as a final recent project.



*Figure 8: Punk is Support.*

Image accessed Nov 24, 2019 via Facebook; no source creator listed.



The time and effort Zack put into his ventures and the passion behind each one resonates within other scene members as well. Musicians such as Kiran, Jenson, Lili, Rachel, Nessa, and Isaiah all explicitly describe a large portion of their musical knowledge and talent to be self-taught, whether it be from YouTube videos, testing sounds on their own, or learning from a friend. Though his performing days are behind him, Gino remembers what piqued his interest in learning to play, "...Not knowing how to do something is a look, not knowing how to play something is a sound. It's creating all these things out of not knowing how to do that, that's why it was relatable to me...I could do that. It made me want to do it because it didn't seem so out of touch."

Besides musicians, the punk scene houses DIY individuals of varying trades. While the concert photographer I spoke with (Yasmin) has formal training, many do not. Isaiah, introduced to me as a musician, also runs a T-shirt printing company out of his home, handling merchandise orders for many local bands and several local businesses. On top of this, he also rents a recording studio where his band, and other local acts, records their own music. Duncan's successful booking agency did not exist prior to his hard work and forging connections with members of the scene across the country. Hana owns her own clothing company, servicing punks in 47 U.S. states and 12 countries after just two and a half years in business.

Addressing the diversity of local punk trades and businesses, Quinn notes the self-sustaining nature of the scene as they list names and services fellow punks provide. Included in the list are Duncan and another booking agent, Isaiah, and his affordable merchandise, Hana and her designed clothing, several hairdressers, tattoo artists, nail artists, digital artists, flea markets, restaurant and/or venue owners, and more. Suffice to say, if someone in need of a service or

product asked, Quinn could likely point them in the direction of a punk or at least punk-friendly local vendor. Reliance on punk-centered goods and services, as well as adherence to punk spaces, makes punk an example of an intentional community, as described by Miller (1999).

Local events such as music festivals are another common DIY product of the punk scene. As previously mentioned, Foreign Dissent has been successful for its short life thus far. Other festivals such as Florida Underground and Pulp Fest (see Figure 9), run by different scene



WILL'S PUB		GRUMPY'S		UNCLE LOU'S	
TAKE LEAD	1:10 - 1:35	SLEEPLESS	1:00 - 1:25	SPORTS REFERENCE	1:20 - 1:45
JOSH GLUCK	1:55 - 2:20	PLANET LOSER	1:45 - 2:10	TIDEPOLS	2:05 - 2:30
KINDER THAN WOLVES	2:40 - 3:05	SOMEDAY RIVER	2:30 - 2:55	SUPERHAUNTED	2:50 - 3:15
THE GANGLY YOUTH	3:25 - 3:50	TWO-POINT CONVERSION	3:15 - 3:40	SAGE	3:35 - 4:00
STRESS FRACTURES	4:10 - 4:40	INTERVENTION	4:00 - 4:30	PHOTO FIRE	4:20 - 4:50
VIRGINITY	5:00 - 5:30	ELDERS	4:50 - 5:20	GILT	5:10 - 5:40
CICALA	5:50 - 6:20	LIKE FATHER	5:40 - 6:10	TEEN DIVORCE	6:00 - 6:30
TAKING MEDS	6:40 - 7:10	WOOLBRIGHT	6:30 - 7:00	OVERTHINKER	6:50 - 7:20
WORST PARTY EVER	7:30 - 8:00	BOSTON MARRIAGE	7:20 - 7:50	DEAD SELVES	7:40 - 8:10
PALOMINO BLOND	8:20 - 8:50	THE WELZEINS	8:10 - 8:40	SNACKING	8:30 - 9:00
SPOON DOGS	9:10 - 9:40	ABSINTHE FATHER	9:00 - 9:30	RICKOLUS	9:20 - 9:50
AWAKEBUTSTILLINBED	10:00 - 10:30	WITCHBENDER	9:50 - 10:20		
GOUGE AWAY	10:50 - 11:30				

Figure 9: Pulp Fest Poster.

Each column in the graphic represents a music venue, and each line shows a band name and their time slot in the festival. Accessed via Facebook event page, copyright belongs to Pulp Fest

members, display the accessibility of booking such DIY events in the local scene—if one knows the right individuals. The flea markets (see Figure 10), as Quinn mentions, are another DIY event bringing local punks together to exchange goods and support in a positive, friendly environment. In this way, DIY interconnects with the punk scene’s network, which I explore in Chapter Five.



*Figure 10: Orlando Punk Rock Flea Market.*

Photo shows one of many booths set up selling used merchandise. Records in crates, as well as record players and boxes of CD’s, decorate the table in the foreground. In the background, a rack of used clothes is present. Photo by C. Mazer, used with permission.

This chapter highlights the aspects of community my research touches on. I began with an account of how contemporary punk differs from its original state and used this as a springboard to explore today’s punks. Forces of identity, inclusivity, and family bind the punk

scene together from an outside perspective, while scene qualities such as accessibility, ethics, politics, live performances, and DIY create a communal inner framework to hold it. These core social attributes contribute to the survival and relevance of the scene today, as demonstrated by the shift from original to new ideas, aesthetics, and practices. The next chapter will discuss a different framework in the punk scene—the network it utilizes to spread information, support, and strategies of survival.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### “A HOBO NETWORK”

In the last chapter, I introduced a community of individuals and some of the social attributes that bind them. Through this, people in the Central Florida punk scene are familiar with each other; they speak unprompted about other members of the scene and how they know them. Many scene members attribute the survival of an underground, DIY scene like punk rock to knowing each other—resulting in a multifunctional network of individuals tied together by scene membership and good will.

This chapter explores the characteristics of this multifunctional punk network, beginning with a description and brief explanation of why it formed. Subsections following the description address network member qualifications and beneficiaries, circumstances that prompt use of the network, and the manner in which the network functions.

#### What is the Network and Why Does it Exist?

Scene members rely on the network for daily life in the scene, as detailed later in this chapter. Such commonplace reliance and use of the network displays its utility and conveys a level of accessibility, at least for scene members. As I prodded and poked, trying to understand what form the network takes, it became apparent that there is no true form to it—it is simply the organization of individuals for a common purpose. No detailed list, platform, or other tidy organizational method exists to contain it and my participants are confident that none ever could. Individuals in the scene *just know* who else is in the scene, who they can contact for the needs they have, and how they can reach them.

Though the network has never existed in a concrete place or form, its beginnings were slightly more obvious to an untrained eye. Gino talks about accessing the network in its earlier days:

They [*Maximum Rocknroll*] used to put out a magazine called Book Your Own Fucking Life. And it was just people and kids in every city worldwide, that you could call that would book your show, or they would help you book a show and they would carry your records and put whatever punk out in the world. It was pretty amazing that that even existed.

A published list of contacts in the scene, while extremely conducive to the DIY aspect of punk, becomes unmanageable as the scene grows and evolves, members changing with time. A national-level publication monitoring local-level scene membership and dissemination of contact information quickly became outdated as new technologies emerged. The exchange of phone numbers at touring stops or cassette and record sale locations as Gino remembers, while not entirely abandoned, greatly decreased over time. He mentions the use of illegal dialers<sup>28</sup> in the 90s as a necessity for bands to keep in touch with contacts in the scene who were helping them on tour, but these are rare if present at all in today's punk scene.

The new channels the network traverses are, unsurprisingly, through social media and the internet. Several scene members reminisce about the early days of the social media site Myspace as a source of spreading new music and finding contacts in the music scene across the country, but agree that the contemporary site, Facebook, is much easier to utilize. The advent of groups and events on Facebook allows for easy advertising of shows and events in the local scene. Similarly, the ability to create public or business profiles allows scene members to follow these

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<sup>28</sup> Dialers are electronic devices that connect to phone lines and allows calls, often subverting costs for national and international rates.

pages and remain informed as posts from the page appear in their notifications and newsfeed upon logging into the site. Besides streamlining access to news and events in the scene, Facebook allows scene members to connect with each other directly by becoming “friends” on the site, which facilitates messaging and information sharing capabilities.

At first glance, it seems the scene may rest its networking completely in the hands of Facebook, the ease and utility of which is undeniable. However, a closer look shows it is nothing more than a useful tool; scene members still frequently connect in person via attending shows and organizing tours, taking word of mouth more seriously than any social media site. While social media provides a context for connecting individuals in a more permanent or public manner, those seeking connection still rely on person-to-person contact to initiate media contact. Further, although digitally created posters or flyers advertising shows exist and circulate via social media, handmade posters still litter venue walls and serve as parting gifts to concertgoers leaving shows. A creator of such posters and flyers herself, Lili discusses her involvement,

...I help them, bands, with flyers and stuff...It's really cool. Yeah, it makes you feel kinda nice because everybody draws [or] does like some kind of art and they make you feel very needed....Even for a flyer, you [might] think that's fucking dumb but it's kind of cool that you get to draw a flyer with bands you like to listen to or want to help out. So, it's pretty nice...and you get to do whatever you want and everybody respects that...there's not somebody telling you ‘oh that is too gruesome’ or ‘you should draw flowers and butterflies’ fuck that, they're like ‘the more crazy you get, the better’ so it's super cool...everybody in the community is constantly re-sharing pages [on the internet], passing out flyers. [They] even print flyers themselves, sometimes...it's a community thing. Maybe I am booking them, but we're all throwing this show.

In this example, not only does Lili utilize the DIY aspect of punk, but she taps into the network for distribution services as well. Another product in punk heavily reliant on the network for distribution are zines. Small-scale circulating, usually self-published works with focuses on

anything the author desires, these papers incorporate the necessary DIY element of punk. Several of the long-term scene members I spoke with reference well known zines such as *Maximum Rocknroll* and *Slash*, which both utilized the punk network to circulate copies nationwide while in print.

The above examples highlight the nature of the network as a support system for the scene and as the circulatory system breathing life into it. For subcultures, a working network is crucial to their survival. If news, ideas, goods, and contacts cannot pass freely from one semi-isolated location to the next, the scene cannot rely on the network and each location will remain isolated, leading to a potential end to the scene. The current network I observed during my research spanned across the state, country, and even internationally: Oscar speaks about one of his bands taking part in overseas concerts. Duncan handles booking in Baltimore and Central Florida. Lili mentions flying to California for a punk festival she heard of through this informal network.

While it may seem obvious that some form of network exists to connect individuals in a community or scene, the extent to which the punk scene's network affects its inner workings is substantial. An underground scene such as punk fosters deeper connections among scene members, as shown in the previous chapter, which leads to a more attentive and personal network. The following sections delve deeper into what it means to be involved in and supported by the punk network.

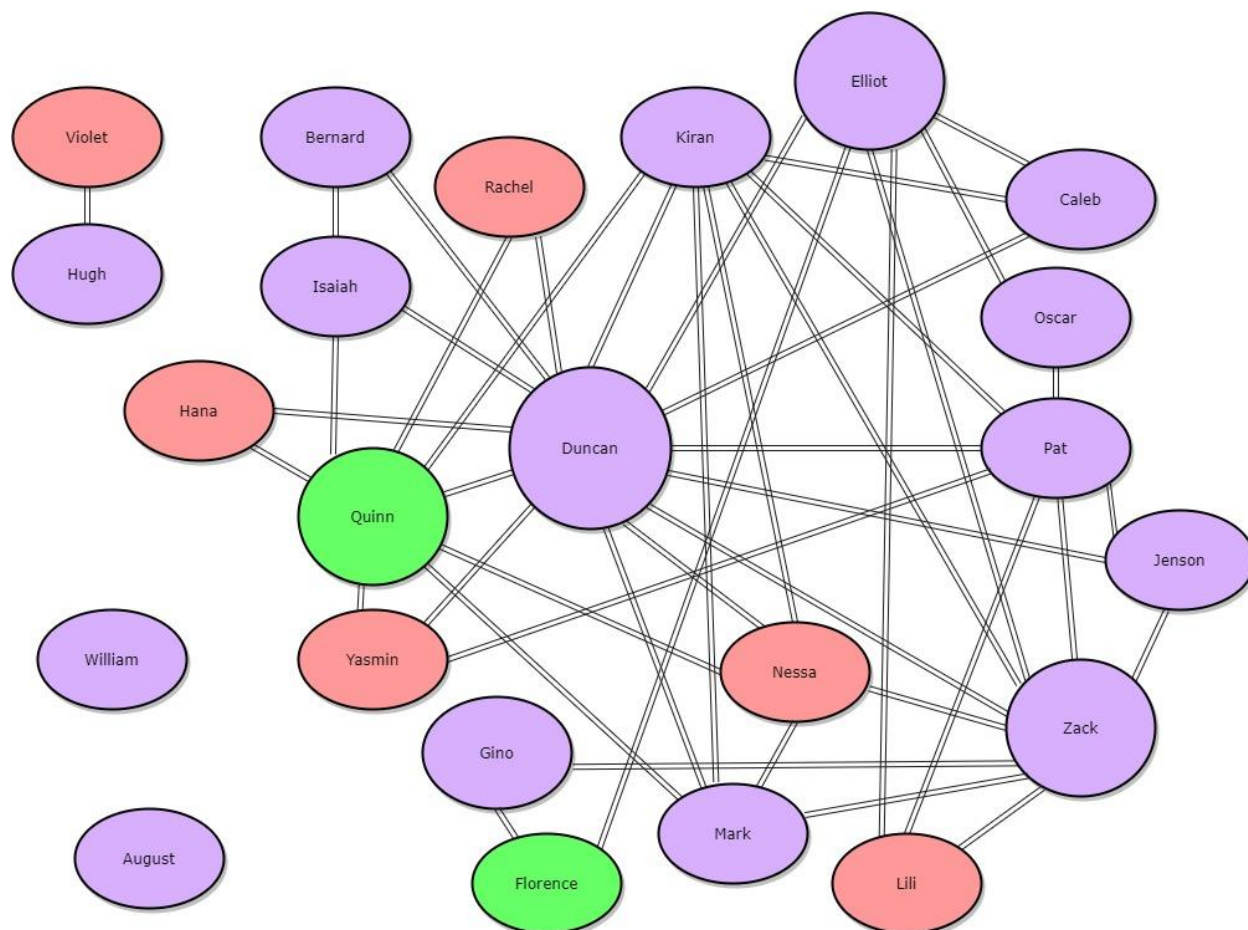


### Who is Included and Who Benefits?

Any full-fledged scene member<sup>29</sup> is a part of the network, simply by association. As I mentioned earlier, knowing others in the scene and gaining their trust constitutes network access. The network is not closed—as in the punk scene itself, gatekeepers exist but are lenient in their judgments of potential new punks—but it is not an advertised element of the scene. Without some form of knowledge regarding the Central Florida punk scene and its main players, an outsider could not readily access the network. While I familiarized myself with the relational threads of the network, I was not confident I could reach out and make use of the network myself, yet. To help illustrate the interconnectedness of the Central Florida scene, see Figure 11 below.

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<sup>29</sup> Based on my observation and involvement within the scene, a scene member is typically considered a full member if they fulfill at least two of the following requirements: attend shows, play in bands, help organize events or book shows, provide monetary support, provide a good or service, or complete service work for the community.



*Figure 11: Partial Map of Scene Members.*

Purple bubbles represent male scene members, red bubbles represent female scene members, and green bubbles represent nonbinary gendered scene members. Circular bubbles indicate more heavily connected scene members, while oblong bubbles represent the remaining individuals. Graphic created by author.

As the above figure shows, most scene members I met have extensive connections to each other, forming a partial view of the web of networking in the Central Florida punk scene. To clarify, the map is partial for two reasons: first, I did not interview every person involved in the scene, and second, these connections are based on data scene members reported to me by

chance—I did not ask specifically who knew whom. Therefore, the true map may look even more complex than what I portray. The true outliers, William, August, Hugh and Violet, are all admitted partial scene members for various reasons and no further connections exist in those cases.

A person must either be a full scene member or have a good relationship with a scene member to receive service from the network. While the network primarily exists to serve punk scene members, punks as gatekeepers in the Central Florida scene are lax and, in my experience, happy to help others. Quinn, whose hair was blue at the time of our interview, excitedly shares their in-scene hairdresser’s information when I express a desire to color my own.

A similar process occurred while I was collecting participants for my research. Two or three of my key interlocutors seemed to judge me a nonthreat, immediately connecting me to others in the scene who have a collective wealth of information and motivation to speak about punk. On several occasions, these initial contacts acted as intermediaries, giving me names but then reaching out to said individuals on my behalf, effectively vouching for me as well as verifying the other scene members’ comfort and willingness to talk to me. Besides these acts of service, several booking agents offered to waive ticket fees for any show I wanted to attend, graciously extending the service of the network. I conveyed my appreciation for the thought but declined these offers. An understanding of the need for money to ensure the scene’s survival kept me from capitalizing on free handouts.

The composition of the scene, as mentioned in the previous chapter, varies. Individuals ranging in age, ethnicity, and background rely on the network to navigate the punk scene. Due to

Central Florida's changing demographics, the local punk scene arguably contains more transient members than its counterparts elsewhere. Though newer scene members show some level of concern regarding inconsistent membership, several long-term scene members voice their thoughts on what this flux in membership means for the scene's longevity. Elliot credits the state of the scene to the circumstances of the group who are here now, acknowledging the cost of living and presence of college students as variables that affect the punk rock scene year to year. He likens the process of losing members and gaining new ones to a cycle, one that runs on a long timeframe and always repeats. He goes on to say that the scene and its network "continually renew" themselves, adding that they are greater than the lifespan of any one band, tied instead to "impulses that cross geographic and cultural lines."

Elliot's point seems fair, given punk's previous history of growth and decline through the years. A higher turnover may be a good facet of an underground scene—with each new round of gains and losses, the network updates itself and adjusts to fill whatever voids appear. As Elliot puts it, punk is "chameleonic and adaptable." He reports that people have been saying punk is dead since the 80s, and his response to those accusations is simple: "It'll be fine." The lively state of the scene and the extensivity of the network within it during my research certainly did not represent a "dead" community or music by any definition I know.

### When and How is it Utilized?

One of the most utilitarian aspects of the network is its ability to provide constant service, 24/7. Due to its lack of a fixed space and source to tether it, or even a time zone to restrain it,

scene members have access to the entirety of the network at any time they may need it.

Frequently, need arises surrounding a band's tour.

### *Touring*

Touring in the punk rock scene remains one of the best examples of the network in action. A typical tour for Central Florida punks consists of bandmates piling into a rented van, along with their instruments and other gear, and driving from city to city where they have booked a show. From a tour's conception and planning stages onward, the network acts as a facilitator in arranging most, if not all, details involved. Bands looking to book a tour reach out to contacts in the network for an idea of the cities and music venues available to them. Ideally for booking agents involved, Duncan explains, bands also have a time frame in mind that includes some extra time to work with,

If somebody is local, it's obviously easier, just in the sense that it's, like, if I only have Mondays available, they're not driving [a long distance]. And so sometimes it's, like I said, setting people up for success. If somebody sends me [a message] and they're like, 'Hey, we only do Saturday's and we have this one in mind.' They might not get it and I can't [promise that].

In this excerpt, Duncan describes the process of juggling local bands and touring bands in the scene. There are a limited number of venues (though plentiful for one area, many scene members note), a limited amount of nights venues are open for shows, and an unlimited number of bands that could potentially want the space at conflicting times. As he explains, Duncan's connection to the local scene places local bands above touring bands in the grab for venues, if conflicts arise.

However, Duncan assures me he listens to samples of music from each band or artist that contacts him looking to book in the local scene. In fact, he has a whole process of determining if

booking a touring act is a good idea or not. First, he says, he looks them up on Facebook to see if they have any mutual friends because, “9 times out of 10, the requests I get come from referrals.” Failing this, he performs a search of their public social media pages to gauge if they advertise and promote themselves. He also asks around among his own contacts in the scene, utilizing the network to see if anyone has heard of the band in question or has any interest in seeing them play. As he states earlier, he prefers to set bands up for success—if no one has heard of them and they do not engage in active self-promotion, they may not draw enough of a crowd to sustain their own costs of putting on a show or Duncan’s expectations.

In this way, a proposed tour must traverse numerous individuals in the network before solidifying on the booking side alone. The act of booking shows, on its own, does not guarantee a feasible tour. Many more factors go into tour planning, as Isaiah touches on here:

...The coolest thing is, when we book a tour, we try to return to cities where we have people that we know, so that we're not playing to an empty room. And it's usually our friends. So, it's cool because they come out, they enjoy the music, they have a good time...Maybe they let us crash with them at their house so we don't have to [rent] a hotel [room]. And it's like you're just on a road trip to see all your friends and hang out with people that you love to see. I've actually made a lot of friends via the Internet, and it's cool to meet them in person [while on tour].

Repeating tour stops in cities they have previously visited, besides securing an audience of fellow scene members connected by the network, allows for possibilities in reducing costs of touring (see Figure 12 below). In this case, scene members in tour-stop cities can offer bands free lodging. Gino also mentions avoiding hotel fees, adding that,

There's almost like a hobo network of sorts, where if you knew you're going to Little Rock, Arkansas, your show is probably gonna suck in Arkansas, but there's going to be 12 people there [and] you would get a number for somebody that would do every single thing when you got there. You can stay with this person, you can eat at [another] person's job, it went from venues to everything...and that was a really interesting part to me, was getting somewhere or knowing ahead of time like, 'Oh we're going to have food...we're gonna have falafel and nourishment because so-and-so works at wherever [and] she'll make sure the bands eat.' Because we don't have a ton of money.<sup>30</sup>

Here, Gino emphasizes another benefit of the network available while on tour, free or reduced-price meals. While this might not seem like much, a breakdown of the cost of touring easily justifies the need for saving money wherever possible. Bands must pay for renting a van, gas from place to place, food, lodging, venue fees, bar tabs (punk rock still partakes in wild partying), and countless other hidden fees that come with an extended road trip. Relying on the network to provide lodging, food, and audience members at shows with low attendance is an invaluable experience, according to my participants.

Similar to how it helps touring, the network facilitates the organization and creation of DIY punk music festivals. The longest running example of this type of festival was the Vans Warped Tour, a summer tour consisting of tens of bands, all crammed into a handful of buses and rental vans with their equipment, that traveled across the continental U.S. every summer from 1995 to 2018 (see Figures 13 and 14 below). This festival hosted underground music styles covering the entire range of rock, punk included, as well as a handful of other genres.

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<sup>30</sup> An understanding of where participants in the Central Florida punk rock scene attain their resources and monetary funds is beyond the scope of this project.



*Figure 12: Dial Drive Tour Poster.*

Image accessed via Dial Drive Facebook page. Copyright belongs to Dial Drive.

While the festival was only mainstream popular during the years MTV covered punk and pop punk (the early 1990s to 2000s), it consistently drew sponsorship in a way that DIY punks rarely achieve. The strong ties of an interconnected network across the country made such a tour possible. Not only did Warped Tour bring underground music, it also hosted vendors and organizations claimed or created by the DIY underground punk scene. Some of these include the



Student Conservation Association, Hope for The Day, Keep A Breast, the American Red Cross, and MusiCares.<sup>31</sup> In the void following the end of Warped Tour, other, smaller, festivals are appearing. I attended one such festival during my research called Sad Summer Fest (see Figure 15 below).

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<sup>31</sup> Full list of organizations on the 2018 Warped Tour, and brief overviews, can be found here: <https://www.sidestagemagazine.com/2018-vans-warped-tour-presented-by-journeys-features-interactive-experiences-thanks-to-sponsors-nonprofit-organizations/>



Figure 13: Vans Warped Tour Announcement Poster 2017.

Image accessed via Vans Warped Tour Instagram. Copyright belongs to Vans Warped Tour.



**VANS**  
**WARPED TOUR '17**  
PRESENTED BY *JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE*

**TICKETS ON SALE MARCH 22<sup>ND</sup>**

6.16 SEATTLE, WA	7.6 CHARLOTTE, NC	7.21 AUBURN HILLS, MI
6.17 SALEM, OR	7.7 CAMDEN, NJ	7.22 TINLEY PARK, IL
6.21 ALBUQUERQUE, NM	7.8 WANTAGH, NY	7.23 SHAKOPEE, MN
6.22 PHOENIX, AZ	7.9 HARTFORD, CT	7.24 MILWAUKEE, WI
6.23 LAS VEGAS, NV	7.10 SCRANTON, PA	7.26 MARYLAND HEIGHTS, MO
6.24 SALT LAKE CITY, UT	7.11 VIRGINIA BEACH, VA	7.27 BONNER SPRINGS, KS
6.25 DENVER, CO	7.12 MANSFIELD, MA	7.28 DALLAS, TX
6.27 NASHVILLE, TN	7.13 DARIEN CENTER, NY	7.29 SAN ANTONIO, TX
6.28 METARIE, LA	7.14 BURGETTSTOWN, PA	7.30 HOUSTON, TX
6.29 ATLANTA, GA	7.15 HOLMDEL, NJ	8.1 LAS CRUCES, NM
6.30 ORLANDO, FL	7.16 COLUMBIA, MD	8.4 MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA
7.1 ST. PETERSBURG, FL	7.18 CUYAHOGA FALLS, OH	8.5 SAN DIEGO, CA
7.2 WEST PALM BEACH, FL	7.19 CINCINNATI, OH	8.6 POMONA, CA
7.4 WILMINGTON, NC	7.20 NOBLESVILLE, IN	

**VANSWARPEDTOUR.COM**

Figure 14: Vans Warped Tour Dates 2017.

Image accessed via Vans Warped Tour Instagram. Copyright belongs to Vans Warped Tour



Figure 15: Sad Summer Fest Poster.

Accessed via Sad Summer Fest Facebook page. Copyright belongs to Sad Summer Fest

Sad Summer Fest mimicked Warped Tour in its cross-country travel with a consistent group of bands, but advertised itself specifically as a pop punk tour, catering to one of the more popular subgenres of punk. Despite the Orlando tour date being in the middle of the week, the crowd looked to be at least 300 individuals directly in front of the stage for most bands and during the 30-minute set of a band called State Champs, I counted 106 occurrences of crowd surfing.

Suffice to say, for the first run of a new tour, this was not a poor turnout. Though a sponsored, national tour is far different in scale than a DIY local tour, Sad Summer Fest kept the underground DIY feeling present through easy accessibility to musicians. Many band members, by choice or tour design, spent time wandering the festival grounds, taking pictures, hugging, and talking to scene members in a relaxed manner. This was a hallmark of Warped Tour as well, the ability to meet nationally and internationally recognized bands and interact with them for free. Thus, although Sad Summer and Warped Tour both exist at the height of popularity and recognition in the current punk scene, their utilization of the network to provide local-level comforts across the country give them DIY and underground clearance.

### *Complications and Crises*

The support of the network extends past planned circumstances of a tour. Some of the hidden fees associated with DIY touring include crises like the van breaking down, venues or shows falling through last minute, and gear or instrument malfunctions, to name a few. During my research, it was not uncommon to see a band posting on their Facebook page asking for assistance with any one of these issues while on tour, utilizing the network to find individuals in

various places who could provide the necessary help. Often, fellow scene members step up to assist the affected band in whatever way they can. If a tire blows out on the rental van, scene members in the area offer cheap, reliable places in town to get a new one. If a planned show falls through, scene members can ask around and find an alternate venue to host the touring band. If an instrument breaks, local bands who open for the touring act lend their instruments as needed to keep the show in motion.

In orchestrating these rescue moments for touring bands, the network helps perpetuate the DIY punk scene. Large touring musicians typically rely on tour managers and booking agencies to take care of all the details; when the tour bus breaks down, they look to someone else to call for help and when an instrument breaks they buy a new one or pay for immediate repairs. The network in the punk scene eases the burdens associated with DIY touring and allows for opportunities an underground scene may not achieve on its own otherwise. The ability to travel across the country and have support doing it, with individuals waiting in various locations around the country to help, is something many scene members feel is unique to the punk scene. Gino has this to say about the history of the network in punk:

Well, I think it is [unique] now, I don't think early on it was. Because underground music has always existed for some reason, be it segregation or styles of music that weren't particularly...where clubs weren't interested in having whatever style of music it was, so...I don't think it's exclusive, or I don't think we necessarily came up with this, but I definitely think the punk scene perfected it... So I think [what] was definitely more exclusive to punk, was just branching it out in every direction.

The branching out Gino refers to incorporates everything from the rescue efforts mentioned above to the way the network reaches out to any function or service that punks claim—music

festivals, art shows, flea markets, hairdressing, nail art, clothing lines, recording studios, T-shirt printing, and photography. As punks themselves branch out, the network follows.

A final note on complications associated with touring lies in the possibility of profits. As multiple scene members emphasize, there is not much money, if any, in being in a band. Former sources of income for musicians included paying for records, CDs, and when bands first started uploading music to the Internet, consumers would buy songs. Now that streaming services offer music for free or nominal sums per month, musicians search for profits primarily through touring. For scene members outside the touring band(s), this entails ticket fees and merchandise sales.

The punk scene's philosophy on ticket sales is complicated. As a community built on DIY and lower-class income, punks are aware of the financial struggles fellow scene members face. Perhaps the same motivation that fuels community service work affects ticket costs. Shows are typically between \$10-20 a ticket, sometimes less. Lili discusses her personal experience with taking money for entry to shows,

...Everybody pays, even if they do the same amount of work as I did [as a booking agent] ...They are all very nice about that. I have so much anxiety taking people's money. I'm like 'it's \$5' [mimes looking distressed and uncomfortable] ...I remember since my first time doing it I hated it, that's why my friends a lot of times have to step in and they're like, 'Lili, get out of here.' I'm like 'But they didn't have any money!' and they're like 'They did, they just bought a 6-pack.' And I was like, 'Ah!' so like, it's [a problem for me] ...Like, as long as you come out, give me \$2. Even if you don't have the \$10 to get in or the \$5, I'm like 'Do you have change?' And they're like 'Yeah' and so I'm like 'Give me that.' It doesn't matter. You're not going to be rejected to come into the punk show. We say that [entry] is \$10 because we want you to pay that, but if you don't have it and you're a kid too...mostly kids who come from high school or something, and they literally just saved all of their money for their lunch and they're like 'All I have is \$3' I'm like, 'Hey get in.' Everybody's welcome and we just want people to at least try [to pay], to show that they care as much as we do.

This excerpt covers a range of sentiments, the first of which assures that every scene member pays their fair share for entry to shows, regardless of the effort they may have put into it or if they know the person collecting ticket money. Scene members expect each other to pay the deliberately low fees to ensure the show's success and keep the scene functioning. However, when it comes to outsiders or new punks, not yet full scene members, Lili feels differently—her anecdote about letting high schoolers in for whatever change they have in their pockets is telling. While not all shows allow for negotiating fees, the existence of it in any respect further marks punk as different from other larger scenes and genres, which stick to hardline prices and enforce ticket purchases.

The existence of the network permits such acts of kindness; even if several audience members get in free, there are scene members who will buy tickets in support of local bands, even if they cannot attend the show. Hugh mentions this in discussing his experience with the New England punk scene,

There were a lot of local shows where the New England scene was real crappy and you had pay to play. So, in order to play the show, you have to sell so many tickets. So, the amount of times there were like bros in a band that my band was tight with, [who] needed to sell so many tickets, even though I couldn't get to the show, I'd buy a couple tickets. It's like yeah, I might be strapped for cash, I might be eating hot dogs off of a roller at the Circle K. But if dropping \$20 means that you guys can play...a show [so] that you get more fans, more traction, just anything? Yeah, I'm gonna drop that money.

Solidarity and support from fellow scene members, as Hugh describes, goes a long way in preserving the scene. Not only does this monetary support allow bands to play, but as Hugh states, it exposes them to new fans and helps them spread their influence and name throughout the network. For many bands, spreading their music and their message outweighs concerns over



ticket sales and monetary profits, anyway. It is common knowledge that bands do not make hefty profits, yet there are dozens of bands in Central Florida alone that vie for play time in venues—the spread of music and knowledge is still more powerful to punk rock than fame and fortune.

### How Does it Function?

As previously mentioned, the network acts primarily as a vehicle for the exchange of music, information, and ideas in the punk scene. Word spreads in a grassroots manner, from individuals to bands to larger groups, in contrast to the top-down approach mainstream music and society utilize. Underground scenes, by necessity, all function in this way; however, while it may be troublesome to quickly spread information, it has allowed punk to spread what is sometimes termed subversive or forbidden information without interference. Florence expands on how they view punk's role in this type of information sharing,

Once I realized that it was not a top-down situation, but a bottom-up one, wherein you at the bottom essentially have to move around to make a connection with people that may not have heard [of] you...It made it all suddenly seem very accessible...And, again, that is part of what I think makes punk...appealing to people, is that it makes accessible all these things that had been presented as either impossible or off the table or foolish by musical society and society at large. I think that maybe you can carry that analogy to the actual ethics of punk music where it makes accessible all these, hopefully, new and radical ideas that may have seemed inaccessible to people for reasons outside of their control. Like, if you think about, for example, a lot of punk music is affiliated with leftist politics like anarchism, socialism, communism, so on and so forth...But all of those ideas are actually, were first discussed in like, really intense theoretical treatises by people 100 years ago, that were like very philosophically literate. And I don't think that a non-wealthy person that is not already well educated by their family or their peers or by a good schooling system really has access to ideas like that...So, I think that's part of what draws people to it, and then there's always been an allure for forbidden knowledge, or forbidden behaviors and such. And I think that you also see a lot of like extreme, "evil" imagery associated with punk because it leads on to the kinds of like, forbidden things that people are often interested in.

While not every scene member taps this deeply into the foundations and symbolism of punk in their daily lives, Florence brings up a valid point: views considered radical or forbidden in some way by mainstream society spread unhindered throughout punk via the network. Anarchy and communism have phased out over time, at least among Central Florida punks, but elements of socialism and blatant frustrations with capitalism abound throughout my interviews. Cautionary tales of the big label music industry pass among scene members as reminders not to trust corporations. Mark and Nessa talk about prominent labels approaching bands they know and offering record deals, only to leave the band indebted to the label and without the rights to any of their own music. Mark and Nessa have made a point to spread word of these instances whenever possible. Nessa says, “sometimes when we meet bands and they have this dream, ‘I just want to do this full time and get signed,’ we warn them, it just might actually be the destruction of what you love doing, which is making music. Keep that first. Don't let that go.” The network, in this way, works to protect itself and all its members from the perils associated with mainstream culture, society, and, in the above case, corporate greed.

### *Networking Within the Network*

Outside of promulgating hidden information, the network also works to sustain itself through person-to-person networking, as many mainstream social and professional networks do. Though membership in the punk scene grants access and membership to the network, the degree to which the network recognizes members is based on individual efforts. Just because someone can utilize the network and others can find them through it does not guarantee said person is a well-known member or that others will reach out to them first if they need something.

As I briefly mentioned earlier, Duncan's thriving booking agency is not random success—he worked, and continues to work, diligently to maintain and expand his influence in the scene. Duncan was one of the first scene members I spoke with and the first to suggest a list of others who might be willing to talk to me. Upon meeting some others in the scene, the phrase “Duncan knows everyone” became a common utterance. In fact, the more individuals I spoke with, including scene members I found through my own efforts, the more it seemed he *did* know everyone in the local scene. A self-described social butterfly, Duncan was happy to discuss his start in the business side of the punk scene, which aligns with every other punk I met involved in booking shows: booking is not something they consider as a career or even a way to make money, but it is a necessity to learn for practical applications. If a band wants to play shows when first starting out in the scene, they need to learn how to book them on their own. That is, unless they already know Duncan.

At the beginning of his booking experience, Duncan explains that he was not making any profit from booking, simply doing it as favors for friends and for his own band at the time. However, as he learned the intricacies of the business and the people in his hometown scene, honing his skills, he realized it might be something profitable as well as rewarding. Upon his settlement in the Central Florida scene, Duncan already had a wealth of knowledge and experience behind him, allowing him to dive right into the scene and begin working within the network. Although Duncan is one of the most entrenched, if not *the* most entrenched, in the local scene (refer to Figure 11), he still takes every new viable opportunity he gets, and says, “I pride myself on answering every single email as quickly as I can.” His visible presence in the punk

scene, if anything, fuels his desire to keep putting together shows and ushering new bands through the scene.

As all-encompassing as Duncan's grip on the booking market may seem, in the bustling Central Florida punk scene, several other agencies have room to operate without conflict. Based on the number of available venues, days, and the sound or style of shows, there is plenty of booking to go around. Kiran, another punk currently involved in booking, has this to say about Duncan: "I love that guy. Me and him do a good amount of co-pros [co-productions] together, we will run the show together. I gotta do more Havoc Underground and Montgomery Drive co-sponsoring. Yeah, Duncan's a good dude." Many other scene members echoed this sentiment, expressing their appreciation of Duncan. Maintaining positive working and personal relationships with an ever-increasing amount of punks remains a solid foundation for Duncan's place in the network.

Quinn is another punk similarly entrenched in the network. They describe the current position Duncan occupies as what they did before he arrived. Quinn now focuses on their own musical endeavor as well as supporting the existing scene and welcoming newcomers. True to their word, I observed Quinn at several shows they were not performing, always directly in front of the stage, dancing, cheering, and otherwise motivating both audience and performers alike. Quinn's was another name that frequently came up in interviews with other scene members, implying their multiple positive relationships with other local punks (refer to Figure 11).

As these two scene members demonstrate, maintaining the network is an ongoing affair. Due to the fluctuation of members in the Central Florida punk scene, the central relationships

that comprise the network must remain strong, providing a foundation on which newcomers build. The existence of pillars such as Duncan and Quinn, long term contributing members to the scene, allows for new members to learn from them and in turn assist in maintaining the scene and the expansive network that holds it together.

### *Overlapping of Roles*

A final aspect that attests to the strength of the network is the multiplicity of roles each scene member possesses. The nature of each punk's involvement in the scene bleeds throughout this chapter and the last. At the beginning of my research, I had partitioned my interview schedules (see Appendices C and D) based on types of scene members I expected to encounter. On entering the field and conducting several interviews, it became apparent that my perception of how the scene functioned and how scene members connected within it was wrong. Not only did neat categories not exist, but each punk performed different roles in different situations. The scene's DIY ethos often requires punks to learn and juggle various roles over the course of their membership.

As mentioned, Duncan not only books shows but attends every one of them, frequently filling in as needed in managing sound, lighting, or other stage details. He also appreciates most shows as an audience member for at least part of the time and infrequently plays shows of his own. Kiran is part of an active touring band as well as a booking agent and has created a music festival (Florida Underground Fest) that will expand to multiple days in 2020, on just its third year. Zack, though semi-retired from the scene, at one time managed zines, magazines, and booking. His current contribution, the Foreign Dissent festival, is an anticipated annual event.

Lili hosts benefit shows and performs service projects to give back to those in need while also performing her own shows and booking for other scene members. Yasmin photographs for a local media company but spends each concert also enjoying the show from behind a lens. Hana relates to the punk rock mindset and aesthetic, manufacturing her own punk line of clothing besides apprenticing at a local tattoo shop. Quinn plays their own music and attends numerous shows every week in support of the scene as an audience member. Isaiah combines singing in a band, attending shows of fellow punks, running a T-shirt printing business from home, and managing a recording studio for his and other local bands.

The above examples include scene members who openly described their involvement in the scene in terms of performing more than one role. This list is not exhaustive and likely misses some of the more nuanced ways these punks interact with the scene; however, it clearly showcases the great amount of effort that goes into the daily maintenance of the scene. Being a member of Central Florida's punk rock scene is more than a title or an idle hobby. These punks seem to care about each other and about the network of support they maintain and build on together. Florence kindly informs me of the innocent error I made at the beginning of my research,

One of the interesting things I would say about punk and the punk scene...is that there's really serious overlap between all of the categories of person that you just delineated...You mentioned bands, you mentioned booking agents, and you mentioned people that are attending the shows, and I think more so with punk than a lot of kinds of other music...It encourages, by its very nature, other people to do that. I think that, in some sense, that is one of one of the ways that I would describe what punk is. It's music that in some sense encourages people to act upon their own impulses in a similar way...Whereas you listen to pop music...I don't think [it] has anything to do with your involvement as a listener changing in any way from being a listener to being involved in in any other format.

The network of support behind the punk scene continues to inspire others to take things into their own hands, create, and claim the DIY spirit. At the same time, the network works to spread information, music, and ideas that keep the inspiration alive. Each person in the network is crucial to its survival and, with it, the survival of punk.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION

*“You don’t look to the higher issues – punk is localized, it’s about the group as a whole and the group you’re a part of. I keep going back to the ivory tower image...to throw it back to these old, dead white people...it’s not representative. The trickle down doesn’t work.” -Anonymous punk<sup>32</sup>*

In discussing my work, I must acknowledge that it would be anti-punk to look at grand theory and try to draw this research to something bigger—punk represents the opposite of an ivory tower. Individuals created punk for others like them, to spread ideas and frustrations in an easily digestible manner accompanied by loud guitar riffs. Therefore, in this thesis if I were to draw grand conclusions based on high level theory, it would no longer be necessarily relatable to the punk community. As a member of the punk scene and self-identifying as a punk, I cannot in good conscience reduce the community to a result or an example of theory. It would be a disservice to myself and the community to connect this scene to broader hegemonic theory. Therefore, I use midlevel theory as the highest interpretive level to maintain a balance between punk and anthropology discourse and narratives.

The preceding two chapters detail my findings regarding the overarching question posed in the introduction of this work: What social factors facilitate the continued existence of the punk rock scene in Central Florida and why do scene members feel it remains relevant today? In this chapter, based on the data collected, I use midlevel theory to argue that punk is both sustainable and relevant because it fills the need for a subculture that welcomes the outcasts of mainstream

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<sup>32</sup> This scene member preferred to be completely anonymous for the usage of the quote.



society and allows them to exist self-sufficiently outside of what they view as mainstream culture.

### The Outcasts

As I explain in Chapter Four, punks frequently identify as outcasts of mainstream society. People are driven to seek out spaces they fit into and in which they feel comfortable expressing themselves by occurrences of bullying and uncertainty on where they fit in mainstream culture or outright rejection of it. As a subculture, punk rock has always attracted those on the outskirts of mainstream society (Hebdige 1979) and it continues to function as such today in Central Florida. Part of the appeal of being a punk lies in the freedom: doing, wearing, being, playing, singing, creating, sharing what you want without the fear of judgment or repercussion, so long as it resides under the punk umbrella.

### *Acceptance, Relatability, and Safety*

Previous iterations of punk, best described by Gino in Chapter Four, were inherently violent and judgmental. The passage of time has greatly impacted this, turning punk into a safe and accepting community. This is evident in the populations that coexist within punk—binary and nonbinary genders, varying sexualities and sexual preferences, and varying ethnicities and ages. This amount of diversity demands elevated levels of acceptance among scene members, who interact with each other often in such a small, tightly knit community and share similar ideals and goals. Further, a scene comprised of outcasts may have inherently higher levels of sympathy, empathy, and acceptance of others because they know the feeling of being isolated. Sad as it may be, it is rare to find someone who joined the punk scene and knows no personal

struggle. In fact, the current scene thrives on sharing personal stories of pain, anger, and suffering through song lyrics and musical performances. The relatability of these songs among scene members fuels a deeper connection than the appreciation of music.

My participants express their relief in finding a community that not only tolerates them as they are but also helps them relate and connect to others. Punks are especially close to other punks they with whom they share traits or ideologies, as Lili exemplifies when she says queer people are more likely to fit in with her and her fellow punk friends than heteronormative people. A queer person herself, she highlights her ability to relate to other queer people in the scene, having dealt with similar challenges for queer people in mainstream culture. Due to its wide acceptance of any outcast, punk attracts disenfranchised groups of all natures<sup>33</sup>. Continuing with Lili's example, while queer and LGBT communities exist outside of punk, the close ties today's punk scene prides itself on forging may create more personal experiences and relationships than other communities. Conversely, as steeped in anger as it is, punk may provide a release for the rage injustice fosters in any type of outcast.

Acceptance, relatability, and empathy for others create a feeling of safety within the punk scene, allowing scene members the freedom of expression. Whether mainstream culture would accept them or not, punks do not have the guarantee of safety in mainstream culture that they do in the punk scene; what they cannot find in mainstream culture, punks build for themselves within their own community. Knowledge that other punks will not judge, out, or otherwise target them for any personality, behavioral, or physical trait comforts scene members and fosters

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<sup>33</sup> My data exclusively displayed sexuality and gender, but the issue of race also appears in the punk scene. For information on this angle, see Ambrosch (2018), Duncombe and Tremblay (2011), and Malott and Peña (2004).

support and care between punks<sup>34</sup>. Similarly, lack of comfort or trust in safety enforces the boundary between punk and mainstream culture, solidifying punk's status as a subculture.

Acceptance, relatability, and safety are three crucial facets of the punk community, but on a broader scale, these represent human social needs. People are social creatures and the tendency to form groups of similar individuals allows for physical and mental support in times of need. The punk scene provides that support for individuals who cannot find it in mainstream culture or other communities and for those who need protection from the current political and social climate in the U.S. Punks reject what they view as the mainstream, which often marginalizes them, and create their own subculture to satisfy basic human social needs, thriving despite the negative perception the community is subjected to.

### *Family*

Strong bonds form between punks via shared membership in the scene, but some bonds run deeper than those I describe above. For many of my participants, the punk rock scene supplies them with a family external to their blood relations. Isaiah and Rachel explicitly refer to their bandmates as family in Chapter Four, while Quinn expresses their disinterest in creating a family outside of punk. More than a scene or a community, punk acts as family for those in need of higher levels of support, acknowledging that a person's blood relations may not be present or sufficient to support them. Familial care is possible due to the elevated levels of acceptance, relatability, and safety the punk scene harbors, which allow for punks to openly communicate

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<sup>34</sup> My participants did not note any significant conflicts within the scene or what such occurrences may look like among scene members. This may be an avenue for future studies.

and seek guidance from each other regarding personal issues. Much the same as scene members choosing to separate from mainstream culture, they also choose to adopt fellow punks as family.

Choosing family outside of blood relations is not unique to punk; mainstream culture and other subcultures allow for this as well. However, this practice is more prevalent in the punk scene due to its status as an outcast subculture. Members may be outcasts from their blood relations as well as mainstream society, leaving a void of familial support that the punk scene steps in to fill. These claims go beyond superficial; scene members forge deep relationships, relying on each other for social support as well as monetary and practical support as evidenced in Chapter Five's explanation of network utilization. The familial ties formed among punks supplement or replace the ties they share with non-members. In-group relationships are often stronger than those maintained with other groups. Within an outcast subculture like punk, similarities in mindset and behavior exist to support them. They also already contain elements of trust which remain critical for building lasting relationships.

### *Live Performance*

The previous two subsections illustrate the profound support members of the punk scene display for one another. Punks also demonstrate support for the scene itself through avenues such as concert attendance. Live music remains as inextricable from punk as politics, necessitating audiences for the high volume of shows. Despite daily work, school, and home schedules of their own, Central Florida punks consistently attend multiple night concerts a week, often several days in a row, exemplifying their prominent level of commitment and support for the local scene.

Support from the scene positively impacts performers but is not the driving cause of the music itself. Bands articulate a desire to share what they love with others regardless of the audience size at a show. Live music performances mesh the gentle attributes of punk (acceptance, safety, or trust) with the strong undercurrents of anger and discontent still present in song lyrics and monologues between songs at concerts. In this way, live performances perpetuate the feelings responsible for the creation of punk in the 1970s. Each show allows for the venting of performers' and audience members' frustrations in a contained, demarcated space that encourages expressions such as screaming (lyrics or otherwise), body movement (dancing, jumping, crowd surfing, moshing, etc.), consuming alcohol or drugs, and engaging with others (be they performers or crowd members).

Besides marking support and venting frustrations of scene members, live shows facilitate the exchange of ideas necessary to keep the scene evolving and expanding. Music performed in a live setting differs slightly with each performance, as do performers' interactions with their audiences and the messages they spread. Nessa and Mark touch upon this in Chapter Four when they describe the way they use their platform as performers, consciously working to make sure every person has a voice in punk. Monologuing for brief moments in between songs, as the band tunes instruments and takes a break, provides the punk scene embedded time to speak on issues and bring up topics important to them. Isaiah's and Kiran's bands currently speak about mental health between songs, while Quinn encourages their audiences to vote. Performers do not always use this time for altruistic purposes or influence, but when successful bands such as Green Day spend their breathing moments inciting entire stadiums to chant against racism, sexism,

homophobia, and President Donald Trump, smaller punk bands have an established example to follow.<sup>35</sup>

### *Counterculture*

As the Green Day example in the previous subsection demonstrates, punk remains a counterculture firmly against many aspects of current mainstream society. The punk scene's stance on politics, economics, and social issues are its most obvious departures from the mainstream.

Most scene members I spoke with openly reveal their political leanings, framing them in contrast to the current political climate. Rachel does this when she declares that punks are not Trump supporters. Unsurprisingly, conservative politics do not align with the punk mentality, which stresses equal opportunity for all, departs from traditional values, and resists overt authority. Thus, punks' feelings on the current administration range from a need to distance themselves from it to outright anger (as displayed by Figure 5). Though the topic did not come up by name in any interview but one, class issues are still at the root of American punk; a political system spearheaded by a self-described billionaire does not appeal to or represent the working class, DIY punks I met. Similarly, a capitalistic economic system does not work in the punk scene's favor. The original anti-establishment sentiments of 1970s punk partially revolved around the capitalistic need to turn everything into an opportunity for profit. Since that format has not changed, punks remain at odds with the political and economic systems in place.

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<sup>35</sup> This is based on a personal experience. At the 2017 *Revolution Radio* tour stop in West Palm Beach, FL, the band stopped the show mid-song to raise a chant, which most of the crowd participated in.

Punk's stance on social issues corresponds to the acceptance and relatability I discuss in an earlier subsection of this chapter. An offshoot of its anti-authority nature, the punk scene advocates for personal freedoms to do what makes one happy, if it does not impede or harm someone else. Issues such as the gender binary, transgender rights, racism, sexism, homophobia, and abortion disproportionately affect punks, many of whom have experienced these issues or complications with them firsthand in mainstream culture. This calls back to the safety punks feel within their own scene, the understanding and lack of persecution based on the above reasons. The punk scene is not just outcast from mainstream society but built in direct opposition to many of mainstream culture's values, which do not match punk values.

Punk as a counterculture represents the ability to visibly oppose a dominant system while providing critique and feedback in the name of underrepresented populations. Similar to the hippie and feminist movements, punk exists in direct conflict with majority values and stands up for its members. While punk is not overtly activist (I have not found any punk-specific rallies or marches), its unique use of networking allows for similarity of mind and a togetherness between scene members that may not exist in other, larger scale countercultures. The data in Chapters Four and Five shows the spread of anti-mainstream ideas and practices at local levels outward, one area at a time as bands tour and punks interact. This grassroots networking approach replaces more typical activist approaches as a method of social movements. Punk's otherness, as described above, and the reasoning behind its outcast status support its members and delineate the boundary between itself and the mainstream.

### Self-Sufficiency

Part of the boundary between punks and mainstream society relies on the self-sufficiency the punk scene produces. As a counterculture, punk defines itself in opposition to what the majority believes. Therefore, it follows that punks create their own ways of existing outside of the mainstream. Social and economic self-sufficiency, in addition to a DIY mentality and accessibility within the network, maintain the highest distance possible from the mainstream, marking punk as an intentional community (Miller 1999).

### *Social Networking*

Extensive social networking present in the local punk scene encompasses business as well as social needs. Chapter Five's overview of the network reveals how deeply punks connect to one another within the scene, relying on each other for support in times of crisis. Not every scene member requires complete immersion in the network to use it or exist within it. This promotes getting to know local punks, as a new band without touring connections in other states can reach out to local bands and glean insight or information as needed. Although many punks *are* extremely well-connected locally and nationally, this remains more a side effect than a goal for the network—the ability to understand and utilize the network itself is the greater victory. Anyone can increase their awareness of others in the punk scene, but it takes an understanding of the network's process to know who to ask about each specific need and whether they can help directly or pass someone along to a qualified contact.

Punk's elaborate networking remains a characteristic many members feel is unique to their scene. Admittedly, punk did not invent the method of networking it uses. Other DIY and



underground scenes also rely on ties of a close network for support. However, as scene member, Gino, muses in Chapter Five, while punk may not have created its own networking, but it perfected and popularized it. The current state of the network surpasses comparable scenes' networks in both geographic area and depth, expanding from one side of the U.S. to the other and even crossing borders (as shown by Zack's Foreign Dissent and Gainesville's The Fest). Punks consider themselves a family, since scene members fill a social need and provide economic support that set the scene apart from what they consider mainstream society.

### *Economics*

Businesses belonging to the punk scene, such as those Quinn brings up in Chapter Five, represent the scene's push for economic independence. Scene members prefer to patronize members of their own scene when possible, rather than seek goods or services from mainstream society. Isaiah's T-shirt printing business exemplifies this best—at the time of our interview, he had a waiting list of customers that would not receive products until after his band's tour. Instead of finding another vendor, his customers opt to wait; his pricing and his scene membership make his business the best option for their needs. This directly conflicts with the predominant expectations in the U.S. today, which include instant gratification via websites like Amazon.com in addition to their choice of vendors for their purchases.

On the business side, Isaiah did not begin his entrepreneurship with delusions of grandeur. He portrays the start of the business as a necessity in securing affordable merchandise for his own band. Traces of wonder and disbelief color his tone as he goes on, describing the process of one person asking for an order as a favor snowballing into many customers and many

orders from local punks, resulting in the current success of the business. His benchmark for success, much the same as mainstream small business owners, was the realization that he could quit his job and fulfill orders full time. Thus, from consumer and entrepreneurial perspectives, Isaiah's business subsists outside mainstream society and remains one of many examples of this within the scene.

### *DIY and Accessibility*

The DIY mentality ingrained in punk represents both economic resistance and anti-establishment values in the scene. Punks pride themselves on the knowledge and ability to create goods and services that support the punk community, separating it from mainstream society. Necessity breeds learning in a scene short on funds but high in creativity and motivation—booking shows, creating merchandise, and learning an instrument are all skills punks teach themselves to fully participate in the community. Often, punks spend no money in learning these skills and receive no money in exercising them, utilizing their knowledge for their own contribution to the scene's success. Formal training requires funds scene members typically do not have as members of lower economic classes, as shown by Hugh's casual reference to eating hot dogs from gas stations for survival (see page 93).

Aside from its practical applications, DIY allows punks to reject the rampant consumerism in the U.S. that leaves many unaware of the steps that go into creating. Learning something such as playing an instrument opens mental pathways to learning other skills. Isaiah describes his process of learning to play guitar as watching one YouTube video after another and trying until it works, which is exactly how learning any skill progresses. Quinn, after already

teaching themselves various instruments, was also learning to knit at the time of our interview. This demonstrates the relatability of a DIY mentality; there is no end to what one can do for themselves if they try. In a society where consumers buy things already made and individuals learn from what educators teach them, DIY provides a necessary shift in thought towards greater self-independence. While punk rock champions the DIY mentality and the ability to learn self-sufficiency, it also acknowledges that this is not exclusive to the punk scene. In fact, several participants view DIY as a punk mindset that can exist outside the scene; the act of achieving independence from the mainstream itself is “punk rock,” whether a person is a punk or not. Punks applaud others learning multiple skills, regardless of the reasoning behind it.

Punks rely on the acquisition of multiple skills and roles per person for the local scene to survive. Knowing how to play an instrument or form a band or book a show does not guarantee people will attend; punks must market and advertise the show, provide merchandise for sale, and earn enough money to pay the hosting venue. The DIY mentality prepares scene members for this litany of tasks that coincide with arranging a single concert, training them how to use the network. As Chapter Five discusses, any scene member qualifies to access and use the network, provided they actively engage with the scene. This allows any punk to utilize the resources necessary to put on a show, create an event such as a festival or flea market, or otherwise involve themselves with key local punks.

Many of my participants cite ease of access as a foundational reason they joined the punk rock scene. Feeling as if they can achieve what they see performers and veteran punks achieving remains a driving force in recruiting new punks. Central Florida punk’s openness to new scene members carries its accessibility past the boundaries of the scene, encouraging anyone to attend a

show and participate. As I mention in Chapter Five, social media plays a large role in assisting the spread of this encouragement, significantly widening the target audience of concert and other event announcements and prompting interest from non-scene members. In the same vein as DIY, accessibility is important to punk because, as Florence notes, other music genres and communities do not generate the '*I can do that*' thought in scene members. Accessibility reassures current punks and future punks that they can do whatever they put their minds to. Once they decide what to pursue, they have an entire network of support behind them. This provides both confidence in themselves and others as well as fulfills a societal need for support.

In this chapter I highlighted the aspects of punk that anchor it to society today. Its outcast, counterculture nature and driven self-sufficiency tie together the themes my data uncovers, displaying the necessity of punk as a subculture. I argued that punk rock exists and remains relevant today due to the societal needs it meets as described above. If I were to try to draw these themes back to anything higher than the midlevel theory employed, it loses its relatability to the scene; punk is about what directly affects individuals in the moment. It acknowledges and rejects high theoretical ideas head-on through music, networking, and community to carve out a space for itself where individuals can relate to each other in a way everyone understands. In my goal to create literature both about and for the punk community, I utilized anthropological views and engage with midlevel theory to elucidate the results of my research.

### Research Limitations

Several factors limit this study, the most notable being time constraints. My initial perception of the scene, including the types and locations of concerts in it, led to my attending

more national touring bands than local, Central Florida-specific shows. Regretfully, by the time my perception lined up with the reality of the local scene, most of my time for research had passed. Additionally, although I interviewed a total of 22 scene members, I did not reach saturation, wherein each additional interview provides similar themes as previous ones with little or no new insight. There remain at least two to three prominent members of the local scene whose schedules did not line up with mine for interviewing that may have provided yet more distinct perspectives on the local scene.

Another limitation I discovered upon finishing research is my own lack of knowledge in studying and analyzing networks, one of the core themes of this study. Training on network analysis, which falls outside my current anthropological training, requires additional time and effort but would provide quantitative insights not currently attainable from the data I collected on the punk scene's network. As such, I analyze the data using solely qualitative methods.

From these limitations, I see an avenue of research and analyzation still available within the Central Florida punk scene. The themes I explore in this chapter may run deeper than my current understanding or be more diverse than I currently show. However, I have reviewed and synthesized my data within the scope of this thesis research to the best of my ability and find the midlevel theories in the above subsections to be sufficient tools to explain my findings. The following chapter contains my concluding remarks, the significance of this project with respect to global concerns, and possibilities for future research developments.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Throughout this research I emphasize the significance of punk rock as a community of outcasts. By and large, they sustain themselves and reinforce their identity through a complex social network. Such factors support my argument that today's punk rock scene is an active subculture; one that fulfills human needs relevant to members and non-members alike. Aspects of community and networking I identify within Central Florida's punk scene also apply to wider society.

Individuals unable to form lasting ties with a community in mainstream society often seek these relationships elsewhere. As an enduring subculture, punk rock welcomes many individuals harboring discontent with mainstream society. Ideas and motivations for embracing punk rock translates to almost any country experiencing political upheaval or where dissatisfaction with the current societal system prevails (see Guerra 2018; Dougherty 2017; Wallach 2008; Dunn 2008; Hayton 2013; Rohrer 2014; and Gololobov, Pilkington, and Steinholt 2014). Building and maintaining a community of like-minded individuals allows for organization and expression of discontent, a hallmark of punk. Whether punk scenes utilize this organization for activism or not, the existence of punk challenges the mainstream, providing a counterpoint to emphasize punk's perceptions of its faults. Punk's criticism of mainstream systems offers healthy opportunities for growth and change in any society.

Punk's unique use of networking fuses person-to-person exchange of information with the spread of information via social media and the internet. These pathways, coupled with the motivation present in maintaining an underground scene, personalize a network that fits the

needs of the current punk rock scene. Interconnectedness of scene members, who perform multiple roles within the scene, creates both a dependence between punks as well as a self-sufficiency that allows it to distance itself from mainstream culture. Tracking the spread of information and ideas throughout the worldwide punk network may illustrate current processes of globalization, providing insight regarding the spread of entities such as disease, cultural practices, and economic products.

My research on the Central Florida punk scene contributes to the anthropological body of work on punk rock. While academics in sociology (Bennett 2006; Bennett and Peterson 2004; Guerra 2018), philosophy (Prinz 2014), and even international studies (Dunn 2008; Attfield 2011) highlight current aspects of the punk scene, most anthropological views thus far remain centered on the original 1970s punk movement, its attributes, and the ageing of its members (see Rosenthal 2008; Davis 2006; Clark 2004; Fox 1987; Sabin 1999; Hebdige 1979). Thus, my work adds to the small but growing corpus of research in anthropology encompassing current punk rock, which includes scholars such as Beer (2016), Hancock and Lorr (2012), Moran (2010), and Glass (2012). Besides growing the base of punk-related literature, I hope to provide a balance between the colloquial books written by punks, for punks and the academic literature of outside scholars looking at the punk scene; my insider status provides me an exclusive opportunity to bridge the gap between punk and academia, reporting on themes that demonstrate importance to society in a manner that punks can understand.

Future anthropological studies encompassing punk rock have multiple avenues to explore. Punk in Central Florida differs from punk in Chicago, as evidenced by Beer (2016). Thus, factors such as geographic area and the history of punk in each area would provide distinct

perspectives on the current state of punk. If punk differs from city to city within the United States, it follows that differences exist between countries as well. Though several scholars have touched upon international punk scenes (see Guerra 2018; Dougherty 2017; Dunn 2008; Hayton 2013; Rohrer 2014; and Gololobov, Pilkington, and Steinholt 2014), academic literature would benefit from a cross-cultural comparison. Researchers wishing to focus on the U.S. punk scene may consider delving deeper into the economic success or failure of specific punk scenes and the ensuing long-term sustainability. Alternately, anthropologists or sociologists with training in social network analyses may decide to apply their skills to the punk rock network, illuminating information outside the scope of this study.

Punk rock has outgrown its original roots, evolving as a viable and persistent subculture. My participants describe a scene that cares about its members, providing support and purpose for countless individuals who do not receive it from mainstream society. They display sincerity in discussing their lives within the scene and their perspectives on it, hopeful that by sharing their views with me, they might begin a new understanding of punk. Not an understanding that compares punk to mainstream society, which they continue to rail against, but an understanding that removes the negative connotation of their scene. Throughout this research, punks have proven to me, as both an anthropologist and a community member, that they work to preserve a scene that remains a home for any individual who needs it.



**APPENDIX A**  
**UCF IRB EXEMPTION APPROVAL LETTER**



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

**Institutional Review Board**

FWA00000351  
IRB00001138  
Office of Research  
12201 Research Parkway  
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

**EXEMPTION DETERMINATION**

May 3, 2019

Dear Lauren Friedman:

On 5/3/2019, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Exempt Category
Title:	Stage Dives and Shared Mics: Ethnographic Perspectives on Audience/Performer Interactions at Punk Rock Shows in Central Florida
Investigator:	Lauren Friedman
IRB ID:	STUDY00000458
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu). Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Kamille Chaparro  
Designated Reviewer

**APPENDIX B**  
**EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH**



UNIVERSITY OF  
CENTRAL FLORIDA

## EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

**Title of Project:** Stage Dives and Shared Mics: Ethnographic Perspectives on Audience/Performer Interactions at Punk Rock Shows in Central Florida

**Principal Investigator:** Lauren Y. Friedman

**Faculty Supervisor:** Ty Matejowsky, PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

The purpose of this research is to understand how punk rock concert attendees, performers, and venue operators think and feel about the genre and the concerts themselves. In the case of concert attendees and performers, behaviors during shows are also of interest.

You will be asked to answer a series of open-ended questions in interviews anticipated to last no more than 60 minutes. Interview location will be of your choosing. You should answer questions truthfully and in as much detail as you are comfortable relating. Your participation time will be limited to the length of the interview with no additional action needed.

You will be audio recorded during this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you will be able to be in the study. In cases of non-recording, the researcher will take written notes of your answers. You may discuss this option with the researcher before the interview or at any point during the interview if you no longer wish to be recorded. If you are recorded, the recording will be kept in a locked, safe place. The recording will be erased or destroyed after it has been transcribed, which will occur approximately 1-2 days after the interview.

Study participation requires the collection of your first name and contact information (email address or phone number), which will be available to the researcher alone and stored securely on their mobile phone behind a passcode and fingerprint scan. This information will be discarded following the interview and your name will be replaced by a pseudonym of your or, if you fail to provide one, the researcher's choosing.

The de-identified interview data collected will be retained for the minimum of 5 years following the study but will be discarded following this time period and will not be used for further studies.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints you may contact: Lauren Y. Friedman, Graduate Student, Master's Program, Department of Anthropology, (407)823-2227 or Dr. Ty Matejowsky, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Anthropology at (407) 823-4611 or by email at lfriedman44@knights.ucf.edu.

**IRB contact about your rights in this study or to report a complaint:** If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or have concerns about the conduct of this study, please contact Institutional Review Board (IRB), University of Central Florida, Office of Research, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901, or email irb@ucf.edu.

**APPENDIX C**  
**PERFORMER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. Can you tell me about how you started playing/singing punk rock music?
2. What do you enjoy about playing music of this genre?
3. Can you describe your relationships with your band members?
4. What goals do you set, if any, for each concert you perform?
5. Can you describe how you feel about your audiences?
6. How do you interact with your audiences?
7. Can you tell me about a time you felt connected to your audience?
8. What do you feel is the most important part of performing a concert?
9. How do you measure the success, or lack of, for a concert you've performed?
10. What does punk rock mean to you?
11. What, if anything, do you feel is unique to punk rock?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

**APPENDIX D**  
**CONCERT ATTENDEE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. Can you tell me how you first discovered punk rock music?
2. Can you tell me how you first started going to punk rock shows?
3. What do you enjoy about attending concerts of this genre?
4. How do you decide which concerts to attend?
5. How do you feel about other concertgoers during a show?
6. How do you feel about band members during a show?
7. Can you tell me about a time you felt connected to other concertgoers during a show?
8. Can you tell me about a time you felt connected to band members during a show?
9. What does attending concerts of this genre mean to you?
10. What does punk rock mean to you?
11. What, if anything, do you feel is unique to punk?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to share?



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