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Abstract

This thesis takes the example of two scenes of activity—a *punk house* in Huntington, West Virginia and a 2016 DIY punk rock festival—to investigate the material-spatial influences that play out across the worldmaking performances of DIY Punk counterpublics as they oscillate across spaces that range from the intimate underground to the public writ large. Drawing on a mass of data including field interviews from punk house residents and fragments gathered from the festival and the internet, I render these scenes as radical activist worldmaking spaces that organize and prepare the international DIY punk community to do instrumental activist work. This work intervenes in counterpublic theory (Asen; Brouwer, Squires; Fraser) through an interface with geography (Blomley; Harvey; Mitchell; Staeheli) and performance studies (McKenzie; Taylor) by emphasizing space and mobility's importance for the development of counterpublics and by pointing out the role of performance for understanding stylistically shared knowledges and counterpublic efficacies in general. Finally, this thesis draws on Lester Bangs to introduce a new counterpublic modality for thinking about enclaves that are primarily art communities and secondarily activist ones: the DIY punk *party*.

Getting Out of the Basement:
Space, Performance, and the Oscillation of DIY Punk Publics

by

Ryan Bince

B. A. Ithaca College, 2013

Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Communication & Rhetorical Studies

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Thank you to my sister, father, and mother for your unending love and encouragement. I promise I'll come home soon. Thank you to Irene Thomas, Glenn Morris, Marilyn Rogers, Christine Almeda, and Larry Almeda. Quite literally, these words would not have been written without you.

Finally, thank you to the wild and loving community of punks and artists who do the incredible work that I have only written about. Keep loving. Keep fighting. Hold on.

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*This thesis is dedicated to Samantha Jane Dorsett, Erik Petersen,
and all those other punks lost to the road that never ends.*

Preface

It is 1999. A person dressed in black runs through the intersection. Her arm rears back. Her heart pounds. Her torso contorts and her shoulder pulls forward. Glass shatters and fists rise. Chants echo through the streets.

In New York City, a journalist speaks into a microphone, reporting news of the World Trade Organization protests that have overtaken Seattle. Her voice is stolid and fierce.

In a quiet kitchen, an artist carefully carves letters backwards into a block of wood. Amy Goodman's voice fills the room. When the carving is done and the wooden refuse swept away, what remains of the wooden block gets covered with ink and pressed onto paper.

It is 2016, and I am in Spencer, IN. People surround me with fists in the air. As one party, we yell the words that Dalia Shevin carved into that block of wood all those years ago:

Your heart is a muscle the size of your fist.
Keep on loving. Keep on fighting.
And hold on, hold on
hold on for your life. (emphasis added)

Our voices were hoarse; our faces wet with sweat and tears. It was the last night of Plan-It-X Fest and I had spent the weekend meeting new friends, interviewing, taking notes, and preparing to write this thesis.

The following pages will develop a conversation in the field of rhetoric. They intervene in bodies of theory. They do all the things that scholarly writings are supposed to do. However, they also serve to work through the affective experiences that come with

life in a punk scene. The words that follow are an attempt at discovering what it is about the DIY punk community that feels so strikingly personal, so full of promise, and so tremendously powerful.

This long effort has brought me back, repeatedly, to that phrase, “your heart is a muscle the size of your fist.” Dalia Shevin’s aphorism is central to this piece’s juxtaposition of the affective and performatic modes enacted at punk shows and the instrumental modes enacted by punk activists.

If there is any final idea that I hope you, reader, will take from this thesis, it is this: the left needs both instrumental activism and loving social support. We need the enclave just as much as we need the streets. Solidarity is about fighting together just as much as it is about surviving together. Every person suffering from oppression and alienation deserves support. Our infighting too often makes us weak. Our alliances make us strong.

Introduction

Every neighborhood has its secrets. Whether those secrets are hidden in the bedrooms and closets of lovers, the attics of local coffeehouses, the alleyways behind pub and restaurant facades, or the basements of nearby houses, what appears in the (sub)urban environment as exchangeable, abstract, or repetitive is always slipping toward material and cultural differentiation. That differentiation seeps out of locked garages and dark basements. It hides from the grid of streets and electrical wires by seeking solace under the ground. Sometimes, on late-summer nights, you can hear it blaring from the little ventilation windows installed among the cinderblock foundations of a house down the street. The beams rattle up through the walls and into the higher floors. The house shakes against the bars of its infrastructure to the rhythms of bands like Andrew Jackson Jihad, Against Me!, or Defiance, Ohio. Voices echo down the halls,¹ out into the neighborhood, and then across the country. They carry the words of artists like Kimya Dawson and Jeffrey Lewis and Theo Hilton. Heat and sound pour out as poetry into the night.

The sound and the smoke filtering out of the basement foreshadows the movements of the bodies inside—which are obliged to leave that basement and interface with the public once again. They move back and forth between the carnivalesque parties underground and the world above it. This thesis is focused on the questions surrounding that oscillation—the movement of punks and punk crowds into and out of the intimate enclave in the house, larger enclaves like festivals, and the public in general.² These are

¹ Nana Grizol, *Voices Echo down the Hall*, Love It Love It (Orange Twin Records, 2008), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGI6uCZaHBk>.

² For the sake of clarity, all references to “the general public,” “public in general,” “the public writ large,” or “society writ large” in this paper refer to the totality of publics and counterpublics that offer competing discourses and actions in society.

the key material and discursive movements that can clue us into the efficacies of punk performance and punk spaces. In this thesis, I investigate two overarching research questions: first, what can the movement of punk bodies between different spaces (clubs, community centers, houses, festivals, and the general public) teach us about space and its constraints on performances of publicness, enclaved and otherwise? Second, how does the DIY punk counterpublic, which operates primarily through socially and economically enclaved modalities, strive toward efficacious performance and instrumental action?³ By answering these questions, this thesis intervenes generally in the study of rhetoric by grounding the discursive and performatic works of publics and counterpublics in space and by arguing for the incredible importance of exercising discursive and material *mobility* for bringing on social *movement*.

Questions of efficacy and instrumentality in counterpublic performances are particularly appropriate for us now as neoliberal capitalism tightens its grip on global countercultural phenomena. Punk is an indicative case study of the way that the neoliberal ethic can insinuate itself into resistant practices and incorporate them. To answer the above questions, I turn to a specific subgenre of contemporary punk that, contrary to the popular adage that “punk is dead,” is gaining international popularity and maintains expansive underground networks that are very much alive: DIY punk.

The iconic punk of the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced by a many-faced stylistic form, more a series of disparate subgenres than a coherent genre in and of itself: there is pop punk, grunge, hardcore (or *hardcorn* in the Midwest), crust punk, riot grrrl,

³ By “instrumental action,” I mean actions that directly or indirectly affect resistance at a material level. In a direct sense, these actions include blocking or hindering the flow of capital, strike, boycott, et cetera. In an indirect sense, they include discussing tactics, building networks, and organizing for agitational practices that will be directly instrumental.

queercore (or homocore), afropunk, straightedge, folk punk and DIY (do-it-yourself) punk, to name a few. These categories are distinct in some ways and ambiguous in others. For the most part, bands and promoters use them today to help potential attendees anticipate the style of music that they will be listening to at a show—handbills will often sport band names followed by a slough of subgenre tags under them (“DIY straightedge riot grrrl hardcore” or “banjo crust folk punk”). These subgenres formed for various reasons, most having to do with disagreements about racism, patriarchy and capitalism across the end of the 20th century. Today these groups regularly find themselves in overlap, syndicate and collaboration, but also in conflict.

More particular than just focusing on the subgenre, though, my objects of study are particular instances of the oscillating cycle of DIY punk counterpublics: a punk house in Huntington, West Virginia and a 2016 festival called Plan-it-X Fest (“PIX” or “PIX Fest”). I will describe both in further detail below. The methodologies I use for interrogating these objects draw from various literatures: I use a performance-oriented, spatially focused rendition of publics theory to analyze a series of performative and cultural transformations that have taken place in the enclave of underground punk since 1991 (“the year punk broke”).⁴ My argument is that movement across space and between different kinds of venues—like the house and the festival—is imperative for allowing counterpublics to navigate spatial constraints strategically, enabling the performance of a range of counterpublic modalities that are each useful for the various functions of counterpublicity. Further, DIY punk counterpublics operate through a modality that oscillates between protopolitical social and cultural modalities—which I will call modalities of “party”—and more traditional activist tactics. Considering counterpublic

⁴ David Markey, *1991: The Year Punk Broke*, Documentary, History, Music (Geffen Home Video, 1992).

performances of various modalities as oscillations is especially productive when mapped across the notions of enclaving, agitation, and mobility. This paper, on a larger level, is about the radical power that can be drawn from performatic oscillation across various dialectic tensions and across space itself.

Through the remainder of this introduction, I provide a short history of DIY punk for the purpose of situating it within a larger history of punk rock. I then elaborate on the significance of PIX. Next, I present my research questions and argue for their importance to rhetorical studies. Following that argument, I offer my intended methods for answering those questions, briefly review relevant literature, and conclude with an outline of how I intend to address those questions across the chapters of this work.

Short History of DIY Punk

There are many points in space and time from which the history of punk can begin. I might start with the aesthetic and participatory roots of punk that trace back to dada in the 1910s. I also could begin in Greenwich Village in December of 1965, where Paul Morrissey convinced Andy Warhol to sponsor Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground.⁵ I could skip to Detroit in the Fall of 1970, where Lester Bangs first used the word “punk” as ironic praise for 1960s garage bands who play music “so simply that it seems like anyone with rudimentary training should be able to play it.”⁶ Bangs’ contemporaries at the then-burgeoning monthly rock magazine *Creem* all quickly followed his lead by using “punk rock” to signify the fast, distorted and rude musical trends surfacing around the United States and United Kingdom. The origin story of punk

⁵ Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (United States: Grove Press, 1996), 6–7.

⁶ Lester Bangs, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung: The Work of a Legendary Critic: Rock ‘N’ Roll as Literature and Literature as Rock “N” Roll*, Reprint edition (New York: Anchor, 1988), 33.

is contested, to be sure, but by spring of 1974, The Ramones, The New York Dolls, and Television were all playing venues in the New York City circuit and a recognizable genre had come to be.⁷

Early punks did not necessarily live by the anti-capitalist ethic that we will see as typical of contemporary DIY punks. Contrarily, punk had a well connected and more or less well funded origin. As mentioned, Warhol himself paid for the Velvet Underground's production, distribution, equipment, and living space.⁸ The Ramones all lived near one another in Forest Hills, a wealthy neighborhood in Queens,⁹ and had access to an industry-standard recording studio through a well-placed acquaintance.¹⁰ The New York Dolls signed a major record deal on Mercury Records in less than a year after their first gig.¹¹ Rather than "doing it themselves", the major original punk bands were largely well-financed and willing participants in larger economies of production and distribution. These bands played in rock and roll clubs and medium-sized venues all around the world.

⁷ George Gimarc, *Punk Diary: The Ultimate Trainspotter's Guide to Underground Rock, 1970-1982*, Pap/Com edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

⁸ McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*, 6.

⁹ McNeil and McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*, 177. Granted, Joey and Dee Dee were habitually kicked out of the house and spent a lot of time sleeping in the stock room of an art gallery before the band started to make money.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹¹ Gimarc, *Punk Diary, 1970-1982*, 2-5.

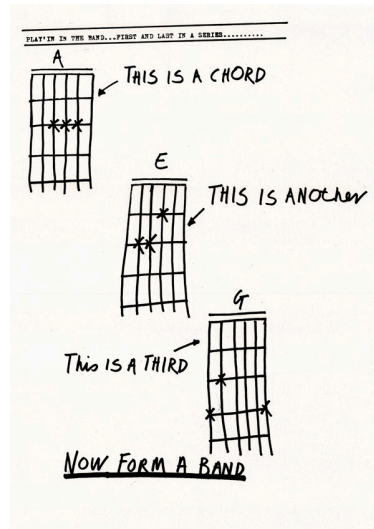


Figure 1: Sniffin' Glue Zine Page

The do-it-yourself ethic surfaced soon after the start of punk, however. Handmade fanzines first started to circulate through record stores and shows in the mid 1970s—most punk histories credit Mark Perry's July 1976 issue of *Sniffin' Glue + Other Rock'n'Roll Habits* as the first punk zine.¹² Punk was not the first community to produce fanzines, but the adoption of zines signaled a particular sort of prosumer (a person who performs as both a consumer and producer of media¹³) spirit. Anyone with scissors, glue, a stapler (hopefully long-arm) and access to a copy machine could make and circulate a fanzine, and the horizontal disposition of the medium did the work of providing nearly anyone in the punk community with a voice in punk public discourse. This sort of DIY ethic is best exemplified by fanzine *Sideburns'* infamous January 1977 issue, which featured a page with three guitar chord shapes and a caption: “this is a chord, this is another, this is a

¹² Ibid., 33.

¹³ Mark Andrejevic, *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 29. Marc Andrejevic does a great job of complicating and analyzing the rise of prosumerism in the neoliberal context in *iSpy*.

third. Now form a band.”¹⁴ Such an injunction opened up space for a flood of “shitty three-chord high school punk bands”¹⁵ that saturated the world of punk for decades to come. These bands, distinct from their well-traveled ancestors, were often limited to their neighborhoods; they would sometimes venture to surrounding towns, but would rarely leave their regional homes. The big international names in 1980s punk—Black Flag, Minor Threat, Hüsker Dü, and Fugazi—were exceptionally successful bands that started in the DIY scene and found accommodation in the global economy.¹⁶

Through the remainder of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, punk experienced a great deal of change. It grew in popularity and diversified its sound. In small clubs, community centers, warehouses, public parks, and basements, sonic innovation was happening. Further than sonic diversification, though, as punk grew it also began to diversify demographically. Through that diversification, it became increasingly apparent that punk was made up of a predominately misogynist, whitewashed, homophobic and often upper-middle-class population that contradicted itself in its obsession with *low-life chic*. Bangs was one of the first writers in punk to offer this criticism.

When he moved from Detroit to New York City, Bangs was startled by the rampant racism, sexism and homophobia present in the NYC punk scene of the 70s. In a piece for the *Village Voice*, Bangs took punk to task for its status as a *seemingly* radical community that excluded people based on racist, sexist, and homophobic norms: “one of the things that makes the punk stance unique is how it seems to assume substance or at

¹⁴ Rachel Brett, “Philosophies of Punk - English and Drama Blog,” *British Library*, September 15, 2016, <http://blogs.bl.uk/english-and-drama/2016/09/philosophies-of-punk.html>; “Punk a Photographic Journey The History of the Melbourne Punk Scene,” accessed November 18, 2016, <http://www.punkjourney.com/fanzines.php>.

¹⁵ The Wingnut Dishwashers Union, *Picking Sides*, Burn the Earth, Leave It Behind (Crafty Records, 2010), <https://diybandits.bandcamp.com/album/burn-the-earth-leave-it-behind>.

¹⁶ Michael Azerrad, *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Indie Underground 1981-1991*, 1 edition (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002).

least style by the *abdication* of power: *Look at me! I'm a cretinous little wretch! And proud of it!*¹⁷ Bangs went on to point out the irony of abdicating power and taking up a *low-life chic* style while simultaneously excluding people who already lack the privilege and power of straight, white, middle or upper class masculinity. Further, Bangs reminded punk of the musical trends that punk descended from: the blues and reggae sounds of the black diaspora. Finally, Bangs attacked the disturbing appearances of swastikas and racism in punk acts and lyrics and asserted, “No matter how harmless your intentions are, there is no reason to think that any shit that comes out of your mouth is going to be . . . happily received.”¹⁸ Despite Bangs’ efforts, these patterns still persist in some punk scenes today, and have led to schisms in the punk art movement. These schisms resulted in the appearance and growth of communities like riot grrrl,¹⁹ afropunk,²⁰ queercore,²¹ and folk punk.²²

Issues of class and economy led to another schism that culminated in the early 1990s. In 1991—a year oft described as “the year punk broke,”²³ which is a double-entendre signifying that punk both *broke into* the mainstream and *fell apart* (such a contradiction occurs in the histories of many bands in punk and elsewhere)—Nirvana blazed the trail for alternative music to finally overtake what Daniel Makagon called,

¹⁷ Lester Bangs, “The White Noise Supremacists,” in *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*, ed. Stephen Duncombe and Tremblay Maxwell (London ; New York: Verso, 2011), 107.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁹ Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution*, Original edition (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010).

²⁰ Yumii Thecato, *Slash They Ass Up: A Black Punk Manifesto* (BookBaby, 2013); “Afropunk: The Movement,” Blog, *AFROPUNK*, accessed November 28, 2016, <http://www.afropunk.com/page/the-movement>.

²¹ David Ciminelli and Ken Knox, *HomoCore: The Loud and Raucous Rise of Queer Rock* (Los Angeles, Calif: Alyson Books, 2005).

²² Tommy Hall, “Tommy’s 101 Rules of Folk Punk,” *Fullthrottelazy*, May 21, 2013, <http://fullthrottelazy.tumblr.com/post/51013149305/tommys-101-rules-of-folk-punk>; Sarah Shay, “An Introduction To Folk Punk,” *Razorcake*, June 5, 2008, <http://archive.razorcake.org/columns/an-introduction-to-folk-punk-by-sarah-shay>.

²³ Markey, *1991: The Year Punk Broke*.

“hair metal’s decade-long dominance of the radio airwaves and MTV’s video rotation.”²⁴

The new popularity of alternative music made clear punk’s potential for marketability. After Nirvana’s Kurt Cobain died in 1994, major labels began picking up punk bands and recreating them with a Nirvana-esque sound and a more modern edge; pop punk²⁵ was born. Makagon writes that whereas “The beginning [of punk] had no clear rules and could be shaped by participants in any way they wanted,” after 1991

punk had either lost all meaning because the culture became a target for corporate culture vultures or had been seduced by new business models that radically changed the sound and experience of punk. But I think there’s another story to be told ... the supposed breaking of punk is actually a time of *re-focusing on DIY punk* ... The year 1991 was not an end or the beginning of an end; rather, the changes that congealed in 1991 set in motion an opportunity for punks to re-imagine what it meant to do DIY punk.²⁶ (emphasis added)

Makagon is here pointing out that “the year punk broke” was a moment where a schism formed between those in punk who were interested in playing a role in the larger capitalist economy and those in punk who wanted to be part of a music scene that participated in a more horizontal, and thereby less exploitative, economy. The former would go on to play massive stadiums and festivals. The latter doubled down on the house as their venue of choice. I should note that my intention is not to spend any time in this thesis leveraging judgment against those bands that chose to participate in the larger capitalist economy—this isn’t going to be a multi-chapter tirade against the “sellouts” of contemporary punk—but I am instead interested in examining DIY punk as an enclave that can teach us about the efficacy of counterpublic performance in spaces with varying degrees of enclosure.

²⁴ Daniel Makagon, *Underground: The Subterranean Culture of DIY Punk Shows*, 2015, 16, <https://microcosmpublishing.com/catalog/books/5401/>.

²⁵ Pop punk bands include the likes of Green Day, Blink-182, Sum 41, New Found Glory, and My Chemical Romance.

²⁶ Makagon, *Underground*, 19.

DIY festivals often host a wide range of punk subgenres, including folk-y, crust-y, and hardcore sonic aesthetics, riot grrrl bands, queercore²⁷ bands, and more. As you might expect from a DIY community, they produce a rich variety of zines, self-published CDs and vinyl albums, home made videos, and hand-pressed shirts and patches. DIY punks have close ties with many activist groups—especially those focused on prison-related issues, sexual and gender advocacy, environmentalism, and economic supports for people living precarious lives. Today’s punk scene does not resemble either the well-heeled expressions of the 1970s or the misogynistic brutality of later years. Instead, we find a number of evolving expressions of an explicitly politicized punk ethic. This thesis focuses on these new DIY scenes to discover how they navigate the tensions between privacy and publicity, DIY and popularity, politics and commerce, the local and the global.

Focal Objects & Research Questions

The house is DIY punk’s primary venue. The DIY punk subculture depends on people making their homes available to host shows in order to avoid the cost of renting music halls or having to negotiate the costliness of running a community center. Houses that play this role are called *punk houses*. DIY punk bands navigate international networks of punk houses to sustain independently planned tours. Punk houses do more than support an independent live music economy, though: they also play a central role in activism and radical politics in their communities. For instance, the punk house that I use as my central focal object in Chapter 1, a house in Huntington, WV called *Funky Towne*, actively held consciousness raising and educational meetings in their home. They grew

²⁷ Many of the DIY punk scenes around the nation, especially those based in Pheonix, AZ and Bloomington, IN feature bands that explicitly identify as queer bands, and their venues are exceptionally queer-friendly spaces.

and donated food to homeless people in their community. They played a major role in running a solidarity network dedicated to advocating for working class people in the Huntington community. The activities of *Funky Towne* demonstrate the promising capacity of punk networks and spaces for developing strong networks of radical activists all over the world. My investigation of *Funky Towne* in this thesis seeks to discover how that might happen.

The house also poses a number of physical constraints that have influenced DIY punk culture in both positive and negative ways. One such constraint is a clear limit on the potential size of a crowd that can occupy a house. DIY Punk is an international countercultural movement, but local scenes tend to primarily be connected by the media they distribute online and the bands that pass from scene to scene as they tour. In an embodied sense, the community cannot become visible to itself in a way that represents its size if it is always relegated to the household. Such a problem gives way to a solution offered by the potential of a festival space, and provides a convenient segue into a description of my next focal object: PIX Fest 2016 was a music festival, yes, but it was also an internationally attended gathering for an artistic counterpublic. It was a movement of bodies from houses all over the world to a private festival property outside of Bloomington, IN called *Stable Studios*. These bodies were not quite oscillating from the intimate space of the house out to public space, but were instead traveling to a space in between those two: PIX was a festival that offered opportunities for the international DIY punk community to become visible to itself while organizing, raising consciousness, teaching tactics, sharing art, and spreading knowledge. While at PIX, many attendees took advantage of that opportunity by attending activism workshops and DIY skill

teaching sessions, by talking with DIY or radical publishers who were tabling the fest, reading new zines, or just talking about their experiences. All, though, worked together to co-construct a model of the kind of world that they might like to live in.

The two major questions of this work, mentioned above, are separated as questions of theory and praxis. The first (What can the movement of punk bodies between different spaces—clubs, community centers, houses, festivals, and the general public—teach us about space and its constraints on performances of publicness, enclaved and otherwise?) deals with advancing theories of publicity and space by developing an understanding of the movements of the DIY punk counterpublic. The second (How does the DIY punk counterpublic, which operates primarily through socially and economically enclaved modalities, strive toward efficacious performance and instrumental action?) deals with the question of explicitly naming and analyzing the practical tactics that DIY punk counterpublics invoke so that we can learn more about means of putting theory into practice and simultaneously letting existing practices shape theory.

Questions that deal with the problems of modality, mobility, and performance efficacy are central to the field of rhetoric, whose major telos is the question of how discourse both reflects the conditions of the material world and, in turn, continues to affect those conditions. These questions, then, are important for rhetorical studies in both a material sense and a theoretical one. On the one hand, investigating the material and social dynamics that move between the punk house, the festival, and the public writ large will offer lessons about (a) the nuanced influence of space on enclaved performance, (b) the limits and benefits of art communities as a means of enclaved consciousness-raising, and (c) the means and access to intimate public discourse—

something Habermas might have called a contradiction—and the potential for efficacy therein. On the other, this work brings two particular theoretical developments to rhetorical studies and counterpublicity: first, this work brings further attention to the significance of *space* as context for public work—here, *spatial* context will be treated as distinct from but also entangled with *temporal* context and *discursive* context. The spatial turn in rhetoric shows great promise for helping to conceptualize rhetoric as straddling the registers of the material and the imagined. Second, my analysis makes clear the importance of the challenge of performance efficacy for counterpublic theory. Putting these bodies of theory in conversation with each other, I show, strengthens each of them for use in the larger field of rhetoric and communication studies.

Through the length of this work, I show that mobility is a key consideration for the ability of DIY punk counterpublics at least—and counterpublics in general at most—to navigate spatial constraints strategically, enabling the performance of a range of necessary counterpublic modalities. Further, I demonstrate through a case study that DIY punk counterpublics operate through modalities that oscillate between protopolitical modalities of party and more traditional instrumental activist tactics. Counterpublic performances oscillate across different modalities in order to strategically build networks, determine their interests through discourse, plan for agitational actions, and execute those actions. Each of these functions can be mapped onto different modes and requires different levels of mobility. This paper largely expands on Nancy Fraser’s powerful assertion that, “It is precisely in the dialectic between [the] two functions [of enclave and agitation] that [the] emancipatory potential [of counterpublicity] resides.” This thesis draws on that assertion and expands it to consider the importance of discursive oscillation

and material mobility as likewise essential for the emancipatory potential of counterpublicity.

While I do distinguish material and imagined concepts in this paragraph and in many other instances throughout this thesis, I also recognize that those concepts are deeply entangled. I separate the material and the imagined for the purpose of theory and analysis, but this thesis deals with the tensioned interdependence that weaves the two together. The material points I highlight above inform and influence theory (just as materiality first influences discourse), and theory, in turn, entails consequences for the material (just as ideas and discourses do).

When I refer to the material register, I am referring to each the materiality of bodies in performance (singing and dancing in a show, or gathering to teach skills in activist and DIY workshops), the materiality of space (the walls, water heaters, neighborhoods, streets, office buildings, and festival grounds that bodies move between), and the material resources (food, water, clothing, shelter, vehicles, equipment) that circulate through space and bodies respectively. I consider media (sound, writing, images, videos) to be material, but not the ideas that are triggered by those media. I refer to those categories in terms of materiality in order to emphasize, in a Marxist sense, the ways in which bodies and their performances, space and its design, resources and our relationships with them are each tied to economic interests, motives, and effects. Generally, this definition of the material contrasts with the “ideal,” or the domains of consciousness, ideology, ideas, and imagination.

When I refer to the imagined register, I am referring to all those meanings and ideas that we glean from and project onto the material register. The gestures of an

embodied performance can induce imagined meanings in an observer or performer. The design of a material space might induce imagined meanings for subjects occupying or observing that space. The presence and presentation of resources or capital might cue imagined relationships with that capital or that resource. Likewise, the goings-on of the imagined can, in turn, prompt material performances, (re)constructions of space, and ways of generally interacting with (especially distributing) resources. Finally, my separation of the material and imagined in no way means to diminish how ideas matter or are consequential to the world, but instead means to aid in the process of understanding the interplay between these two registers. Because my research questions are so focused on the relationship between imagined cultural meanings and material behaviors in counterpublics as they interface with larger publics and economies, careful consideration of materiality and imagination are key for my analysis.

Data, Methods, and Political-Ethical Commitments

In my discussion of punk houses, I draw primarily from original interviews from residents of the *Funky Towne* punk house. Because such a small population of people lived at *Funky Towne*, I found that the snowball sampling method would be appropriate for learning the details of punk house life in Huntington. The interviews were conducted in accordance with IRB standards, and the research project itself was found to be exempt from in-depth IRB review. In addition to original interviews, I also draw on recorded video footage of shows that took place at Funky Towne and other DIY venues as well as accounts of life in punk houses printed in other media.

In order to offer detailed analysis of the moment of PIX Fest 2016 and the movement from houses around the world that made PIX possible, I draw from an

assemblage of artifacts. Among those are videos, photographs, and a short documentary that was made about the event; first hand accounts of the event from attendees, performers and organizers acquired via interview; posts on social media about the event from attendees; organizational literature distributed at the event; and, finally, I draw on personal experience of the event—having been an attendee myself. After closely sorting through this diverse and fragmented data set, I highlight instances of data wherein punks speak to the question of mobility and the opportunities it offers for meeting one another and building networks. Further, I underscore gestures toward or articulations of the telos of DIY punk and discourses about methods for pursuing that end. With guidance from Sara McKinnon et al.'s recent edited volume on field methodology titled *text + FIELD*, I assemble this diverse set of artifacts to construct a textual representation of PIX that aids in discussing the intersection of my two research questions: what can mobility teach us about space and its relationship with performances of publicness? And how does the DIY punk counterpublic strive toward efficacious performance and instrumental action?

In executing this research, I have, to the best of my ability, maintained a series of ethical and political commitments: first, it is of the utmost importance that I am careful about maintaining a balanced relationship with my object of study. On the one hand, scholars who do field research in performance studies, cultural studies, and ethnography have faced troublesome histories of positioning themselves in relation to the people and practices they study. Some move too far to one side, positioning themselves above the observed people or practice, peering down from the ivory tower and thereby understating the magical, affective, or embodied cultural experiences of those inside of and fully experiencing the cultural performance. Others overcommit in the other direction by

positioning themselves too deeply inside the culture itself, claiming to have undergone the full experience of a cultural event without having the lifelong cultivation as an in-group member that is necessary to the full experience.²⁸ I am, whether I like it or not, in between these two stances:

On the one hand, I grew up identifying with the punk movement in the San Francisco Bay area, but never was more than a kid who went to a lot of shows. I never made a zine, hosted a show, or played in a band. I was a part of the scene there, to be sure, but only in a marginal way. I might qualify myself as an in-group member, but just barely. That being the case, I embark upon this project knowing that it is incredibly important to be critical, and somewhat sober as I assess these artifacts and my personal experiences. I must refrain from glamorizing an art form that I know myself to have historically been attracted to.

On the other hand, I am clearly playing the role of an academic in executing this research. I engage with relatively complex theory, and I use my knowledge of DIY punk to complicate arguments about performance, publicness, and space. While I value the importance of recognizing the impossibility of full abstraction and cold-hard-rationality in conducting critical analysis, I also recognize that at least some level of abstraction is necessary for this, and virtually any, critical project. In this work, I attempt to do this in a way that is respectful to the DIY punk community. I further attempt to relate this research to the community in such a way that I do not position myself above it, but also not *too much* inside of it. To those punks who might read this work, I hope you find that I have been adequately careful in my analysis of the DIY punk community.

²⁸ Dwight Conquergood, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research," in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial and Sara Brady, Third (London ; New York: Routledge, 2016), 37–47.

Finally, I approach the execution of this research with a specific commitment to questions of material praxis. So to speak, while it might be appealing to entertain a highly theoretical discussion at the intersection of questions about publicness and the oscillation of artistic counterpublic enclaves, I rather situate that conversation as close as possible to the point where the boots meet the basement floor. In the pages to come, I ask questions about publics theory while continuously resituating the punk counterpublic as a collection of individual bodies that come together and come apart through interfaces that range from actual embodied encounters to digital sharing and everywhere in between. This also means that I talk about space in terms of abstractions like intimacy and publicness while simultaneously talking about space in terms of measures like the size of a basement, the sturdiness of the walls, the objects and bodies inside of the basement, the owner of the space, and the others in the neighborhood who have material stake in the space and the objects in or around it. This discursive movement from the theoretical and the imagined to the practical and material, I show, mirrors much of the rhetorical oscillation in the world of DIY punk itself.

Performing Publics, Affecting Cultural Space

This research is situated at the intersection of contemporary conversations in counterpublic theory, public space, and performance studies. In this section, I contextualize this research within those bodies of literature, thereby setting up for a discussion of my anticipated theoretical contributions.

Counterpublic Theory

Public sphere theory was first pioneered by Jürgen Habermas and then hotly criticized by a large number of Habermas' respondents. Foremost among those critics is

Nancy Fraser, who asserted the existence of a multiplicity of publics and coined the phrase *subaltern counterpublic* to describe those publics that function as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.”²⁹ Fraser’s work has since been built on by a larger number of counterpublic theorists. The theorization of (counter)publicness used in this work will be drawn primarily from Fraser. Fraser’s original definition of the *subaltern counterpublic* is particularly useful for this work in that it points out that subordinated social groups are circulating counterdiscourses for the distinct purpose of formulating “oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.” That is to say, someone (the party to which those in the counterpublic are subalternates) is *already* interpreting the identities, interests, and needs of the group and the group has found that they do not identify with that interpretation and need to discover an alternate way of representing themselves.³⁰ This narrative clearly parallels the narrative of DIY punks, wherein individuals are realizing that they do not support existing sets of social and economic relations. Thus, DIY punks go about discovering new ways of relating to one another and performing those customs instead. Fraser’s acknowledgment of the importance of having a “venue”³¹ and emphasis on the dialectic movement from “withdrawal and regroupment” to “training ... for agitational activities directed toward wider publics” further accentuate the arguments that I make about DIY punk as a group that is moving between venues that parallel those dual purposes.

²⁹ Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Second (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 123.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

When dealing with publicness in a material sense—which means considering the material bodies that come together in a material space to share discourse or resources, communicate to co-construct a group identity, plan for material actions in the future, and execute those actions—spatiality becomes a key consideration. A public can be treated as an imaginary “sphere,” but might be more productively thought of in terms of bodies that situate themselves around some kind of actually occurring performance or discursive artifact localized in space-time and transmitted through sound, paper, canvas, or other sorts of technology. Habermas began some of the work of dealing with space by discussing coffee houses and salons,³² his public/private divide necessarily picked up much of the spatial work provided by Arendt³³ and responded to by contemporary feminist scholars of publicness.³⁴

Geography and Public Space

The study of public space in the context of human geography tends to deal more distinctly with questions having to do with which spaces are private, which are public, when, and for whom. Kurt Iveson suggests a “procedural” approach to answering this question, saying that spaces change between being private and public based on how people use them.³⁵ Geographers who study public space also often focus on the question of who gets to use public places, at which times, for what “procedures,” and with whom. While public sphere theory makes consistent appearances in geographical approaches to

³² Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 32.

³³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: Second Edition* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 30.

³⁴ Seyla Benhabib, “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Second (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 73–98; Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Mary P. Ryan, “Gender and Public Access: Women’s Politics in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Second (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 259–88; Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” 123.

³⁵ Kurt Iveson, *Publics and the City* (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 9.

public space, those works tend to foreground contestations over space as the driving force between public discourses about space. One particular geographer, Kurt Iveson, brings the question of discourse forward and argues,

if we accept that all forms of public space have a distinct ‘material structure’, then we ought to explore the particular materiality of different forms of space, asking about how this materiality is made and remade, and considering the consequences of this materiality for different forms of public address and for different publics.³⁶

Iveson argues that public space is closely entangled with public address and the performances of publicness that occur within it. The line of inquiry that Iveson proposes—an investigation of the making and remaking of space as it is affected by publics—is exactly the line of inquiry that I subject DIY punk to in Chapter 1 of this work.

To navigate that line of inquiry, I will draw on David Harvey’s *The Urban Experience*, which takes a distinctly materialist look at the way cities develop in order to aid the flow of capital and makes the urban environment into the site in which the political struggle over public space and its uses materializes. Harvey illuminates struggles over who can be in public space at which times, what they can do there and how, what the space will look like and who that design is meant to serve, who can live in which neighborhoods, and what behaviors are appropriate in a neighborhood. Importantly, Harvey connects all of those questions back to the central issue of *what all of this has to do with capital*.³⁷ This conversation foregrounds publicness in a material and behavioral sense, but discourse is always at work in the background of Harvey’s writing. Some geographers since Harvey have worked a little more with explorations of discourses about publicness and how “physical space (and its structuring) matters to the kinds of

³⁶ Ibid., 12.

³⁷ David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

publics and public spheres that can form.”³⁸ In this research I add to the works interrogating that relationship between physical space and the (counter)publics that can form within it offering an example of close analysis that interrogates the roles that a (counter)public plays in the urbanization of capital and by further discussing the repercussions of mobility in terms of that role.

In drawing on these geographers, my analysis in this thesis demonstrates the relationship between space and publicity—between space and rhetoric itself. Fraser asserted that publics are about discursively determining a group’s identity, needs and interests and then asserting those needs before society writ large. Warner’s treatment of publics asserts that they are constituted in the act of being addressed and only exist so long as cycles of communication continue to circulate. If we follow those theorizations, thereby making publics out to be discursive phenomena, then the study of space’s relationship with publicity becomes a study of the *spatial context* of those discursive phenomena. In focusing on a spatial rendering of publicness and performance, this research adds to the turn towards spatiality as an important consideration in crafting rhetorical analysis. However, I echo the point Carole Blair made in her remarks at the 2016 Public Address Conference, wherein she argued that working with spatiality entails much more than “identifying not only the when but also the where of rhetorical practice.”³⁹

³⁸ Don Mitchell and L.A. Staeheli, “Public Space,” in *The International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. N Thrift and R Kitchen, vol. Vol. 8 (London: Elsevier, 2009), 514.

³⁹ Carole Blair, “Conceits of Context: Diffident Reflections” (Keynote, Public Address Conference, Syracuse, NY, September 29, 2016). Blair invokes the work of the late Doreen Massey to support her arguments. While I recognize the incredible utility that Massey’s work can offer in support of the effort to intersect rhetoric and space, I consciously choose to include the work of other geographers in this thesis in order to (a) broaden the range of geographers that rhetoricians might invoke and (b) solidly ground the use of spatiality in rhetoric by using more explicitly materialist theories of space.

Performance Studies

Finally, I draw upon performance studies' rich analytical vocabulary for inspecting focal objects that are not necessarily textual and persistent, but instead local to a time, space, and assemblage of bodies or artifacts. To reduce DIY punk to the status of a text and treat it to a scriptocentric analysis would not only result in a poor representation of the DIY punk community, but would also result in a deeply flawed and incomplete analysis of DIY punk as it is enacted in different spaces. Therefore, I adopt a number of concepts and a vocabulary from performance studies in order to more effectively explore the performatic⁴⁰ elements of DIY punk.⁴¹

In particular, I borrow from Diana Taylor's project in *The Archive and The Repertoire*, which focuses on reconstructing the relationship between enduring textual artifacts and more ephemeral embodied performatic ones to claim that "performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated...behavior."⁴² In Chapter 2, I will support Taylor's argument through the case of PIX Fest and use some of Taylor's rich performance vocabulary to discuss transfers of knowledge that take place at PIX and the significance of performatic acts of transfer for counterpublicity. Taylor's work is useful for thinking about more than merely the performatic transfer of knowledge, though. In her discussion of the relationship between archival materials and performance, Taylor asserts that archived knowledges historically served as mnemonic cues for triggering and guiding performatic

⁴⁰ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Second Printing edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2003), 6.

⁴¹ In my treatment of DIY punk, I am particularly inspired by Dwight Conquergood's piece, "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." Conquergood's assessment of domains of knowledge that position themselves above—in the style of looking at a map—rather than "in the thick of things"—in the style of feeling, living, or hearing a story, which "cuts across" the map—strongly informs the way I position myself in relation to DIY punk. Further, I think the map metaphor is apt for a geographical approach to performances of publicity—especially an analytical approach that takes the narrative form of the urbanization of capital to be its cornerstone.

⁴² Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 2–3.

knowledge sharing. This relationship endures in punk music, whose archival recordings tend to directly gesture toward live performances by embracing imperfect production quality and by featuring group singing to simulate the presence of the crowd in the recording. The show is the primary cultural event for punks. Recorded music tends to be treated like a secondary archived resource that refers to the primacy of live show space. The immediate and performatively shared knowledges at shows offer a new way of thinking about public discourse. Whereas public theory has traditionally referred to “literary publics” to discuss publics whose discourse about social issues were based in the circulation of archived knowledges (books, magazines, newspapers), I am using Taylor and punk to think about “performatic publics” that share knowledge primarily through performances that are proximately located within a particular time and place. Performatic publics, following Taylor’s line of thought, tend to still have archival materials and circulate them, but the primary instance of publicity is based in performance..

The usage of efficacy that I maintain throughout this thesis is inspired by Jon McKenzie’s book *Perform or Else*. In his work, McKenzie suggests that the study of cultural performance (which he juxtaposes against organizational performance and technological performance) is always faced by a *challenge of efficacy*. McKenzie explains that challenge by first pointing out,

Performance Studies scholars have constructed cultural performance as an engagement of social norms, as an ensemble of activities with the potential to uphold societal arrangements or, alternatively, to change people and societies.⁴³

The problem with cultural performances that aim to change people and societies, McKenzie argues, is that those efforts themselves become incorporated into existing structure of power. After each cycle of incorporation, then, the resistant performers are

⁴³ Jon McKenzie, *Perform Or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (Routledge, 2002), 30.

faced with the task of innovating new modalities for performing efficacious resistance. In other words, McKenzie reconstitutes efficacy itself as a moving target. Achieving efficacy, then, becomes the central challenge of cultural performance. That being true, this thesis is not merely an *evaluation* of DIY punk's *efficacy* ("they set out to resist, but they are/aren't successful"), but more an *analysis* of *how DIY punks strive toward efficacy*, how close they are getting to it, and what that can teach us about the need for new and innovative performance modalities ("they set out to resist, they succeed in some way and fail in others, here is what we can learn from them and some ideas about what can be done in the future"). Further, while I recognize the normative nature of efficacy as an analytical concept and the potential conflict it can have with the volatility of the relationship between rhetoric and its effects, I uphold that efficacy—imperfect as it is—is still a necessary and useful tool for thinking about resistant performances and counterpublic tactics; in other words, goals are good, we should have them, and we should strive to efficaciously reach them. This thesis uses McKenzie's conceptualization of efficacy to investigate the degree to which punk spaces are liminal in an instrumental and resistant sense or liminal in a normative sense and how punk spaces might move back and forth between those two polarities.

The bodies of research rehearsed above—publics theory, public space, and performance studies—intersect upon DIY punk rock in a powerful way. Together, they provide a vocabulary for critically analyzing DIY punk as a cultural and political phenomenon that varies in function and style as it occurs in different spaces. Publics theory provides a means of considering the public and political efficacy of DIY as an enclave. Public space theory grounds that discussion in material and spatial context while

also providing a means of thinking about the spatial constraints that play a role in DIY punk gatherings and performances. The performance studies discipline helps us to think about and analyze punk performance as it functions both expressively and pedagogically, while we also consider the structural relationship between liminal punk performance and the ongoing functioning of the larger public. Using these vocabularies to consider DIY punk not only allows us to critically assess it as a cultural phenomenon, but also enables us to intervene and add to those bodies of theory in general.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 sets the stage for PIX fest by considering the venue that pre-festival punks tend to occupy: the punk house. This chapter investigates DIY punk as it has functioned with the house as its primary venue through a case study of the earlier-mentioned punk house formerly based in Huntington, West Virginia called Funky Towne. My analysis uses interviews and artifacts from Funky Towne tenants to develop an historical treatment of the punk house as a space that straddles the imagined divide between intimacy or “the private” and publicity or “the public.” Central to considering DIY punk as it is performed in the household is the house show or house party—a gathering that is always already political, but does not necessarily claim to be. The political nature of the party is, of course, tied inextricably to the implicitly political nature of any assembly of bodies. In addition, though, there are political and material effects that come with the context of a house and infringe upon the spatial economy of (sub)urban geography. This chapter explores both the larger political and economic forces that contextualize the punk house in space and also the performatic micro-economy that functions within the punk house: an economy that takes DIY and anarcho-communist

sharing to be its primary ethical foundations. Finally, with respect to my earlier-established research questions, this chapter theorizes the connections between these material, political, economic, and cultural trends to discuss the efficacy of DIY punk enclave performances. In all, Chapter 1 will do the work of responding to the question of how the DIY punk counterpublic, which operates primarily through socially and economically enclaved modalities, strives toward efficacious performance and instrumental action. This discussion of efficacy will also set the stage for a discussion of movement between spaces, providing a smooth segue into the second chapter: a discussion of how DIY punk enclaves prepare their participants to leave the house show or house party and interface with society writ large.

Chapter 2 centers on this paper's primary focal object—Plan-it-X Fest 2016—to develop discussion of how DIY punk enclaves prepare their participants to leave the house show or house party and interface with society writ large. The festival is treated as a sort of half step from the intimate enclave of the house to a larger, more established and better organized enclave, but not necessarily out and into the general public. This chapter focuses on the question of mobility by considering PIX Fest as a destination for punks going between their local communities to gather as an internationally represented group. By examining PIX in those terms, Chapter 2 will do the work of assessing what the movement of punk bodies between different spaces can teach us about the relationship between geography and performances of publicness, enclaved and otherwise.

Chapter 3 concludes this thesis by synthesizing our two research questions and the preceding two chapters into a discussion of the efficacies of movement itself. I do this by pointing to the importance of mobility for the ongoing functioning of the international

DIY punk counterpublic. In addition to mobility, I tie up other loose ends from the thesis through a discussion of two dialectic tensions (resistance—accommodation; escape—engagement) that revealed themselves over the course of conducting research for this project. After discussing those tensions, I finish with a brief gesture toward the powerfully productive capacity of the theoretical framework I develop throughout this thesis and the work that framework does in guiding existing turns in rhetorical theory toward spatiality and materialism..

This thesis is about movement in several senses of the word. My research questions focus on what movement can teach us about space and its constraints on performances of publicness as well as the efficacy of the enclave and of the movement that happens within enclaved spaces. I started with a discussion of bodies moving in a basement, and the travel of sound and steam and smoke as it seeped through the windows. Sooner or later, the bodies leave the household and move around the world—sometimes going between the home and workplace, or from the workplace to a festival, or between any other set of places. In discussing the movement of DIY punk bodies between spaces, I also inevitably consider the movement of resources within and across space. I contemplate the more abstract movement of counterpublics as they oscillate between enclave and the public writ large or the state. I scrutinize the movement between theory and practice; between imagined meanings drawn from artistic or academic expression and more material sorts of action. I theorize the sway of liminal performances back and forth between resistance and normativity. In the end I hope this discussion of movement will prompt larger considerations about not only the repercussions and

implications of moving through space, but also the all-important question of *where all this movement takes us*.

Chapter One

Public Punks in Private Pads: Mapping Modalities across DIY Punk Performances

The rows of houses that populate a quiet suburb in Huntington, West Virginia all suggest fairly normal suburban life. Sure, the facades are opaque. The neighbors mostly keep to themselves. We cannot know for sure what happens behind drawn blinds and closed doors. However, one house stands out: The lawn is unkempt. The recycling piles high in their yard. It is waiting for the only resident with a car to drive its cans, paper, and recyclable plastics to a processing plant. On occasion, a racket of noise emanates from the shed or living room. The couches on the porch are starting to smell. Kids smoke cigarettes in front of the house. Once in a while, a young bearded punk dressed in femme drag appears on the porch, yelling out something like, “Hey, everyone! Come inside for the Free Store fashion show!” The porch dwellers stand up and disappear behind the façade. They go in to partake in countercultural performances of all sorts: drag fashion, punk music, consciousness raising, radical feminist education, and DIY projects abound.

Neighbors’ eyes glare through window shades and ears perk up and down the street. A complex geography of flowing visuality and aurality, of resources and discourses, navigates about the neighborhood. The bodies and materials that make up this geography are looking at, listening for, speaking about, and investing in or against the glaring evidence described above—evidence that proves a once hotly contested assertion: *Punk’s not dead.*

In this chapter, I focus on these questions: what are the modalities that punk house residents use to establish themselves as a counterpublic and to strive toward efficacious performances of DIY punk lifestyles in their communities? What can these modalities

teach us about the role of performance and space in counterpublicity? To answer these questions, I focus on a punk house called *Funky Towne* that operated in Huntington, West Virginia from 2011 to 2014. I have conducted interviews with former Funky Towne residents and collected a variety of social media fragments from Funky Towne's history such as public Facebook event pages and public Instagram posts. As a supplement, I also draw from a small number of other resources that provide accounts of life in punk houses. I conduct analysis of these fragments using counterpublic theory, performance theory, and theories of spatiality. My argument is that the residents of Funky Towne have enacted an oscillating modality that moved between activist tactics focused on affecting the world directly at the material register and a specific set of tactics focused on cultural work whose goal is to make radicalize and mobilize change at the level of the imagined register. Respectively, I call these "activist" modalities and "party modalities."

To demonstrate these findings, I first situate the punk house as a historical DIY punk phenomenon. Second, I set up the particulars of my conceptual apparatus that were not offered in the introduction. Third, I offer analysis of the role that a punk house plays in the local geographical economies and at the scale of the enclave.⁴⁴ Here, I unpack the work that punk houses direct to the immediate material register and the effects that they have at a microeconomic level. Fourth, I offer analysis of the cultural performatic⁴⁵ and pedagogical modalities that punk house residents enact. In that section, I discuss the work that punk houses do at the level of the imagined register. I conclude by discussing the entanglement of these two registers and the importance of targeting both while doing

⁴⁴ I will scale up to a discussion of the public writ large in Chapters 2 and 3.

⁴⁵ "Performatic" is a neologism developed by Diana Taylor to be used as an adjectival form of performance that does not carry the theoretical implications that J.L. Austin, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler attached to the word "performative."

resistant work. Finally, I offer a gesture toward what this analysis means for the instrumental political potential of enclaved counterpublics.

Situating the punk house

A punk house is a home that is shared, usually for cheap rent, by a community of people who identify with punk subculture and want to live in alignment with DIY ethics. Punk houses provide spaces for musicians to play and for touring bands to sleep while they travel.⁴⁶ Many punk houses run DIY music recording and distribution operations, as well as printing shops for zines or for t-shirt, patch, and button making.⁴⁷ Dozens of punk houses around the United States, and a handful around the world, embark on all sorts of different projects: Some punk houses offer community services like gardening space, libraries, community movie showings, free vegan dinners, babysitting services, and more. Still others collaborate with local activist or community groups to offer their space for use in preparing meals for Food Not Bombs,⁴⁸ storing supplies for books-to-prison programs, or hosting community meetings. In practice, then, many of the activities that are carried out in punk houses seek to intervene in the typical flow of resources under capitalism by providing goods and services to their communities at little or no cost. These interventions are foundational to the teleologies of DIY lifestyles choices.

Punk houses are not unique to contemporary DIY punk. One area where these sorts of intimate social performance spaces existed early in punk's history was New York City's Lower East Side in the 1970s, whose disinvested buildings housed squatters of all

⁴⁶ Makagon, *Underground*.

⁴⁷ Alan O'Connor, *Punk Record Labels and the Struggle for Autonomy: The Emergence of DIY* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008); Travis Nichols, *Punk Rock Etiquette: The Ultimate How-to Guide for DIY, Punk, Indie, and Underground Bands* (New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2008).

⁴⁸ Brian Tucker, "Punk Places: The Role of Space in Subcultural Life," in *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower*, ed. Zack Furness (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2012), 204.

sorts. One famous punk venue, *ABC No Rio*, started as one of those squats.⁴⁹ The idea of a ‘punk house’ gained major momentum as a house in Washington, DC called Dischord House—the home of Dischord Records⁵⁰—gained a reputation through their record label, and by hosting band practices, shows and traveling punks.⁵¹ By the mid-1980s, several more punk houses had gained notoriety: Calgary’s “Calgary Manor,”⁵² Carbondale, Illinois’ “Lost Cross,”⁵³ Oakland’s “The Ashtray,”⁵⁴ and Olympia’s “Phoenix House,”⁵⁵ to name a few. These houses continue to inspire young punks today who rally together to sign leases, squat properties, or purchase homes and use those spaces to embark on their own DIY lifestyle experiments.

Indeed, punk houses are now a fairly well known phenomenon in United States subcultural and radical leftist circles—if not because of their occasional appearances in news exposés, punk history books or academic writing, then at least because of their prevalence in cities around North America, Australia, and Western Europe. Many people have seen, heard, or smelled punk houses before, regardless of whether they knew what a punk house was at the time. Even further, many people’s lives have been affected by punk houses in less direct senses—punk houses play a role in public life, in economies of space, and in the cultural development of neighborhoods. It is the goal of this essay to

⁴⁹ Committee for the Real Estate Show, “The Real Estate Show: Manifesto or Statement of Intent” (*ABC No Rio*, 1980), http://www.abcnorio.org/about/history/res_manifesto.html.

⁵⁰ Although Dischord Records was hardly the first punk label run out of a home (see: Dangerhouse Records).

⁵¹ “Dischord Records: Dischord History,” accessed February 19, 2017, <https://www.dischord.com/history/>.

⁵² Adam Small and Peter Stuart, *Another State of Mind* (Time Bomb, 2004).

⁵³ Janis Esch, “Lost Cross Celebrates 30 Years as Punk Scene Mainstay,” *The Southern Illinoisan*, accessed February 19, 2017, http://thesouthern.com/entertainment/music/lost-cross-celebrates-years-as-punk-scene-mainstay/article_ae74529f-af8b-576e-a6e8-5beed1812f5c.html.

⁵⁴ “DWK & U.S. Thugs « Gimme Something Better,” accessed February 19, 2017, <http://gimmesomethingbetter.com/excerpts/dwk-u-s-thugs>.

⁵⁵ Nikki McCoy and Adam McKinney, “Behind the Band Practice Pad Garage Door - Music - Northwest Military - Home of The Ranger, NW Airlifter & Weekly Volcano,” accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.northwestmilitary.com/music-and-culture/features-and-columns/2012/12/band-practice-spaces-in-olympia-and-tacoma/>. Abby Banks and Timothy Findlen, *Punk House: Interiors in Anarchy*, ed. Thurston Moore (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2007), 8.

discern how punk houses do that and what that means for the way we theorize spatiality and performances of publicity.

Conceptual Apparatus

In order to deliver this argument, I rely on a conceptual apparatus that infuses publics theory with theorizations of the urbanization of capital from geography and stylistic performance efficacy from cultural studies. Put in conversation with one another and with my data, these theories provide insights to the productive, and yet contradictory, performances that punk houses enact in public space.

Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere" essay, places special emphasis on the importance of counterpublic groups having a "venue in which to undertake communicative processes"⁵⁶ for the purpose of becoming visible to themselves as a counterpublic, discovering their interests by sharing discourse, and planning agitation for the realization of their interests. This essay is about punk houses playing the role of that venue.

Additionally, I will be drawing from Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Asen's conception of "public modalities,"⁵⁷ which refer to the various stylistic (humor, formal argument, et cetera) or technological (corporeal, verbal, visual, et cetera) means by which a public engages internally or with outside groups. Punk houses and their residents use many modes. My argument here sweeps them into the two broad categories of traditional activist tactics and party in order to make a more significant point about the importance of each instrumentality and sociality in counterpublic work.

⁵⁶ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," 123.

⁵⁷ Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Asen, eds., *Public Modalities*, 2 edition (Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 2010), 16.

Before analyzing the rhetorical and performatic functions of the punk house, we must first attend to the contextual situation of the house: the neighborhood that constitutes it and the larger geographies of power and resources that in turn constitute the neighborhood. Further, we need to attend to the cultural performances taking place in and around the house. These considerations ought to offer us a strong understanding of the modalities that punk house residents employ in order to strive toward efficacious performances of DIY lifestyles.

First, I contextualize the punk house in the spaces surrounding it using David Harvey's *The Urban Experience*. In that text, Harvey theorizes the urbanization of capital as the process by which capital materializes itself across the urban landscape, (re)shaping the landscape in whatever way is most productive or expedient in that urban environment's particular physical and economic situation.⁵⁸ Harvey complicates that process by pointing out the contradiction of such materialization that puts capital into tension *with itself*: each investment capital makes into the built environment simultaneously creates a barrier to both the flight of that capital and any future investments that might take place in the event of technological innovation. In other words, those material investments hinder the exchange value of the space being invested in. Harvey explains,

accumulation for accumulation's sake spawns continuous revolutions in transportation technology as well as a perpetual striving to overcome spatial barriers—all of which is disrupting of any existing spatial configuration. We thus arrive at a paradox. *In order to overcome spatial barriers and to annihilate space with time, spatial structures are created that themselves act as barriers to further accumulation.*⁵⁹

Capital disposes of excess accumulation through investments into the built environment

⁵⁸ Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 21–22, 53.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

that act to shrink spatial barriers, but ironically morph into barriers themselves. This internal tension constitutes the urbanization of capital as a balancing act between designing (sub)urban space in as abstract and malleable a manner as possible to increase exchange value while simultaneously designing it to provide specific material advantages for the production and dissemination of goods. When that balancing act fails, capital's best option is to let an aging and irrelevant section of the built environment fall into disinvestment until the value of the property is low enough make gentrification⁶⁰ profitable.

The urbanization of capital, though, deals with more than the construction of factories or transport infrastructure. Capital requires laborer-consumers. As such, this same process shapes residential neighborhoods inasmuch as it shapes business districts and transport infrastructure. Thus, housing districts are produced such that they become conducive to the production of the right kinds of people in the right amounts; neighborhoods and school districts become spaces designed to aid in the social reproduction of ideological class relations.⁶¹ Likewise, the differentiated production of housing districts—and the people in them—brings on barriers of its own. Patterns of cultural resistance like the countercultural activities that surround punk houses become barriers to the smooth social reproduction of laborer-consumers. Resistant cultural practices are addressed through a process of policing and (re)colonization that relies on the development of social pretexts whose purpose is to cue an ideological reaction to social transgressions. In other words, when social expectations are transgressed in the

⁶⁰ The rhetorician in me finds it particularly important to remark upon the meaning that this word gains when thought about etymologically: *gentry* + *-fy* gestures to the process of the return of the *gentry* to a space they once abandoned and the renovation of that space to make it useful to them once again.

⁶¹ Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 111–12, 118.

neighborhood, residents tend to respond negatively and police the transgressors. I will expand on that process using works from Nicholas Blomley and Don Mitchell in my analysis.

Next, this chapter draws on performance theory to think through how Funky Towne performs itself to be outside of capitalism and brand culture. Jon McKenzie asserts that the central analytical challenge of cultural performance is the challenge of efficacy:

[cultural] performance can best be distinguished...by its *challenge of efficacy*.... Performance Studies scholars have constructed cultural performance as an engagement of social norms, as an ensemble of activities with the potential to uphold societal arrangements or, alternatively, to change people and societies.⁶²

Here, McKenzie makes efficacy out to deal with upholding or dismantling social systems. The *challenge of efficacy* is the challenge of discerning which function the performers are aiming to execute and how close they come to executing it.

DIY punks, in particular, place tremendous emphasis on the act of stepping outside the boundaries of global market capitalism and working to dismantle social systems from there. Considering the efficacy of that performance brings on the question that Sara Banet-Weiser responds to in *Authentic™: the Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. In that work, Banet-Weiser asserts that advanced capitalism has created a social situation wherein the authentic—which she constitutes as a realm of human behavior “positioned and understood as outside the crass realm of the market”⁶³—has *itself been branded*. In other words, Banet-Weiser treats both authenticity and the positioning of the self outside global market capitalism as unattainable goals (which we

⁶² McKenzie, *Perform Or Else*, 30.

⁶³ Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic™: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 10.

pursue nonetheless, oftentimes through consumer culture). This critique problematizes the DIY punk telos of living outside of the market, to be sure. However, DIY punks still pursue a life outside the market to the best of their ability and that performance continues to do cultural and economic work in the world. Unpacking that performance and its work is a central task for this essay.

In the coming sections of this paper, I use this geography and performance studies infused take on publics theory to discover the modalities that DIY punk publics use to offer resistant cultural performances, and—scaling upward—the larger effects that those performances might have on the spaces that surround the punk house. The first analytical section will concern itself with mapping the punk house as a hub of activist modalities that affect the neighborhood materially. The second analytical section will offer analysis of the cultural performatic and pedagogical modalities that punk house residents enact through party modalities that affect the neighborhood culturally and then materially.

Finding Funky Towne

In this section of analysis, I discuss the first group of modalities that DIY punk publics perform: traditional activist tactics designed to exercise sovereignty through DIY voluntarism, organized labor actions, and consumer sovereignty. Before discussing those practices, though, I first situate the punk house in the geographical flow of capital. That contextualization aids in analyzing DIY punk's performance efficacy. After offering that contextualization and explanation of the punk house's role in the cyclical (re)construction of the built environment, I explore the activist modalities that DIY punks use in an effort to directly affect the distribution of goods and resources in the material register.

Situating the punk house in the built environment

The area that it was in ... it's not like a high income—it's not like where all the rich people live. But it's like super middle class ... I know that the police were called a couple times before I moved in. But I don't remember any times that the police were called while I lived there. Let me think—but there was a sort of constant awareness of noise and stuff. People were like, "okay, we have to make sure that it's not too noisy," because neighbors and stuff. ... Because we didn't want to get the police called on us.

-Funky Towne Resident

In a social sense, what is the place of a punk house in a community? Is it an artistic and social resource to be valued by community members one and all? Or is it a loud and unsightly nuisance to be disciplined or ejected from the space? This analytical subsection seeks to discover these social roles by analyzing the more material situation of Funky Towne. Funky Towne was located in Census Tract 13 of Cabell County and, according to Census data, can be classified as a "lower income tier"⁶⁴ (median income: \$32,861⁶⁵) neighborhood. That neighborhood's median household income has been steadily decreasing since 1990. In interviews, Funky Towne residents reported discomfort with talking to their neighbors and an acute self-awareness brought on by their initial exposures to the police. That self-awareness resulted in on-going self discipline. That disciplinary behavior is directly related to the spatial situation of the house and the importance of the urbanization of capital in the (sub)urban environment.

Fitting the punk house into the flow of capital through cities and neighborhoods requires that we start by looking at the way those neighborhoods are built and rebuilt across generations. Harvey, using a Marxist class framework for his analysis, theorizes residential differentiation as a materialization of the process of reproducing different

⁶⁴ Richard Fry and Rakesh Kochhar, "Are You in the American Middle Class? Find out with Our Income Calculator," *Pew Research Center*, May 11, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/05/11/are-you-in-the-american-middle-class/>.

⁶⁵ <https://www.census.gov/censusexplorer/censusexplorer.html>

classes of laborers and consumers.⁶⁶ Different classes are zoned into different neighborhoods through price differentiation, and those classes then share their respective ideological commitments, educational resources, consumption habits, and market capacities with one another, in effect, reproducing themselves as a class across generations.⁶⁷ Through this interpretation, Harvey argues, “The preference for suburban living [is] a created myth, arising out of possessive individualism, nurtured by the ad-man and forced by the logic of capitalist accumulation.”⁶⁸ This ideological formation spawns what Harvey calls “community-consciousness,” which he juxtaposes against class-consciousness. The former is focused on divisive competition between communities and, through fragmenting across residential differentiation, works to foreclose the likelihood of an emergence of the latter.⁶⁹

Foreshadowing instances of cultural resistance like the punk house, Harvey points out that despite capital’s role in the production of residential differentiation as an interpellative, class-based, class-divisive disciplinary force, individuals subject to the socialization processes therein continue “searching to express themselves in their day-to-day life-experiences in the workplace, the community, and the home,” and that, “Much of the micro-variation in the urban fabric testifies to these ever-present impulses.”⁷⁰ In other words, people who are confined to certain expectations of social performance continue to pursue opportunities to express themselves in ways that challenge those confines. These opportunities, when found and performed, offer resistance to the process of social reproduction as it materializes in the environment—thereby simultaneously offering

⁶⁶ Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, 111–12.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 122–23.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

resistance to capitalism per se.

The punk house fits into the cyclical structure of residential differentiation as one of these resistant opportunities, but is oftentimes responded to and policed into seclusion or dispersion—Funky Towne’s experiences with the police and behavior thereafter testify to this. That process of policing and the (re)colonization of behavior by power can be helpfully explained by a combination of two theories: Nicholas Blomley’s work on the frontier, the survey, and the grid and to Don Mitchell’s construction of paranoia as a pretext for colonization and policing. First, Blomley formulates the frontier, survey, and grid in such a way that they fit together into a sort of narrative of colonization: the *frontier* represents an alien land outside of the known civil world,⁷¹ which is then sought out by the state or the interests of capital and *surveyed*, or rigorously measured and divided⁷² into a *grid* of well-defined places that “serve to reflect and reinforce social relations of power through complex and layered spatial processes and practices that code, exclude, enable, stage, locate, and so on.”⁷³ Mitchell develops a conception of paranoia—suggesting paranoia to involve fear of uncontrolled space⁷⁴—that we can map onto the grid and the frontier, pointing to instances where the social relations of power reflected and enforced by the grid are transgressed as potential cause for paranoia and apt pretext both for colonizing uncontrolled frontier spaces and for policing behaviors in internal spaces that do not conform to the social relations of the grid.⁷⁵ Such a pretext enables the ongoing repression of those individuals Harvey referred to earlier, the ones who search to

⁷¹ Nicholas Blomley, “Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93 (2003): 124.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 127.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷⁴ Don Mitchell, “Pretexts, Paranoia, and Public Space: Rethinking the Right to the City after 9/11,” in *Urban Spaces: Planning and Struggles for Land and Community* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 26–27.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

express themselves in ways that push the boundaries of social expectations. In the case of the punk house, every visit by the police, passive aggressive note from a landlord, comment from a neighbor, post on nextdoor.com, or fine from a neighborhood association is an attempt at disciplining and reintegrating the residents into the cycle of social reproduction.⁷⁶

A discussion of colonization and integration into a grid of social relations is importantly related to gentrification—a process wherein a built environment is allowed to depreciate and decay until the exchange value of the land is low enough to make purchasing, renovating, and capitalizing on land or buildings in that environment profitable.⁷⁷ Gentrification typically involves the mass displacement of precarious populations of people who inhabited a neighborhood before it was gentrified. Gentrification is also often a racialized process—a lower class neighborhood lived in predominately by people of color is priced out of the space by wealthier and predominately whiter people who are interested in taking advantage of cheap property. It is important to note that gentrification oftentimes begins with a so-called “creative class”⁷⁸ of artists or young people—typically white—who don’t mind living in poorer neighborhoods. This group of people, the *frontiersmen* of the gentrification process, bring the attention of speculators, developers, real estate agents, potential homebuyers and businesses to the new “up and coming” neighborhood. Punks can play that role, despite that the gentrification process is notorious for bringing upscale nightlife businesses into a neighborhood and forcing out what Laam Hae calls “vernacular venues” that feature

⁷⁶ Mischief Brew, *Citizens Drive*, Smash the Windows (Brooklyn, NY: Balkan Beat Box, Firewater, 2005).

⁷⁷ Neil Smith, “Towards a Theory of Gentrification: A back to the City Movement by Capital Not People.,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45 (1979): 542.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 566.

“local, alternative, or experimental music, dance and subcultures, and/or Do-It-Yourself philosophy”.⁷⁹ In other words, punks are often among the first to move into a gentrifying neighborhood and also some of the first to be forced to move out.

The urbanization of capital is a cyclical process by which spaces are colonized, developed, and continuously reproduced in whatever shape proves most expedient for the continued flow and accumulation of capital. The colonization process can be thought of in terms of the frontier, survey, and grid. Likewise, ongoing processes of policing social relations can be put into terms of frontier, survey, and grid with the help of Mitchell’s conceptualization of paranoia. Finally, gentrification enables this cycle to repeat itself through ongoing (re)colonization of spaces that have depreciated in value enough to allow lower-income households or “vernacular” communities to occupy.

On a slightly smaller scale, it is important to consider the foundation of the relation of a punk house to the other houses in a neighborhood: the proximal relationship of property. Indeed, the predominant model for thinking about property under contemporary capitalism is the “ownership model,”⁸⁰ which Blomley describes as assuming most property to be privately owned by a distinct and identifiable owner, who maintains a monopoly over the property that is only constrained by relevant governing institutions (mainly the state, but potentially institutions like neighborhood associations). Exceptions to this model include co-operatively owned property and state owned property, each of which is subject to ongoing marginalization by advocates of private property.⁸¹ Under the ownership model, the owner has direct material interest in keeping

⁷⁹ Lam Hae, “Gentrification and the Politicization of Nightlife in New York City,” *ACME: An International E-Journal of Critical Geography* 11, no. 5 (2011): 568.

⁸⁰ Blomley, “Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence,” 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

both the use value and exchange value of their property as high as possible through the maintenance of the property. However, the land nearby also affects property value. The proximal relationships between properties incentivize property owners to develop material interest in the value of the parcels of land surrounding their own parcel. In other words, punk neighbors can affect the value of every property in a neighborhood.

Mitchell's conceptualization of paranoia can help us to understand the cultural impetus for the material effects of punk "antisocial" behavior. The DIY punk subculture aims to perform itself as outside the grid of mainstream social norms. Part of this is accomplished through disinvestment and by adopting "dirty" as a stylistic statement. This performance induces paranoia in the neighbors who encounter punks. Further, proximity of a parcel of land to any object that induces paranoia is liable to decrease the value of that parcel. As a result, neighboring landowners develop an interest in *surveying* and assimilating the punks into the *grid* of social order and capitalist intelligibility.

One Funky Towne resident interviewed for this project described the effects of the neighbors' efforts to discipline Funky Towne's residents and their comrades as causing a sort of "modulated" (or controlled, modified, altered) punk performance, wherein punks attempted to strategically meter their visibility and audibility in the neighborhood so as to avoid conflict. In other words, they tried to keep their activities quiet and more or less out of sight. Such a modulated performance limits the extent to which the punks can reach outside of their immediate circle to do community building work. In this way, punk publics that operate out of punk houses straddle the line between publicity (being seen outside the house *as punks per se*) and privacy (performing punk as an enclave behind the walls of the house itself). The punks at Funky Towne shifted their

weight back and forth across this line strategically.

Funky Towne only existed in Huntington for three years. Most punk houses tend to appear and disappear in a short amount of time. Punks are strikingly mobile (we have freight trains to thank for that) and notorious for getting evicted by landlords. Those punk houses that do last oftentimes trigger art communities that build up around them and eventually price the punks out of the space. This ephemerality makes it difficult to measure census or assessor data about neighborhoods where punk houses appear, but the logic of capital and urbanity explains many of the phenomena reported by punks themselves. Stories about the pressures applied to the punk house residents by neighbors, landlords and police, are telling. One interviewee confided that Funky Towne was a disaster when it came time to move out: the punks used cardboard, mesh, and spackle to repair holes in the walls and struggled to erase and paint over thick graffiti. Another punk house in Huntington called “The Elimination Chamber” was allegedly demolished after the punks moved out.

The behaviors of DIY punks can be further considered in terms of abstraction and differentiation. The exchange value of a space is at its highest when that space is malleable and abstract—when the space can be transformed and interchanged with others without too much difficulty. Abstraction is counterposed against differentiation, which resists interchangeability. Punk houses are usually strongly differentiated from other houses in a neighborhood: the basements have stages built in them, the walls feature custom murals, and the backyards often have large planter boxes for community gardening. Furthermore, punk houses visually resist abstraction by contrasting themselves with other houses. Their exteriors also oftentimes sport murals on their

façade, unkempt front lawns, or are otherwise decorated to excess. Such differentiation counteracts the exchangeability of the house and lowers its total value, thereby affecting the value of the properties in proximity to it.

So far, I have framed the effects of a punk house on the urbanization process of capital as being fairly negative for stakeholders in a neighborhood where DIY punks might decide to live. The visible and audible elements of punk house performances have real material effects that manifest in space across the neighborhood. We can already see some of the material repercussions of punk's stylistic modalities as they manifest across the punk house's spatial context. The remainder of this analytical section will look at the modalities that punk publics perform in order to strive toward efficacious, well-meaning struggle against capitalism. We will see in the next section that, despite the potential for the presence of a punk house to lower property values, disturb neighbors and trigger gentrification, the DIY ethic and activist lifestyle that punks strive toward redeems many of those negative points. After all, DIY is about building community, not destroying it.

The microeconomics of DIY punk lifestyle performances

Some people ran a solidarity network in Huntington and I went to a couple of their actions. A solidarity network is like a ... it's a leaderless leftist sort of organization that helps tenants and workers who can't—who've been wronged by their landlords or employers—and can't get recourse through legal systems and tries to help them get recourse. The actions that they took were like—they would basically just meet with these people and be like, 'okay, we're going to take on this fight.' And then they would get a whole bunch of people together with a letter that had all the demands on it and they would go and personally deliver the letter. And if nothing happened after that then there would be a series of escalations. ... In Huntington, the leftist and punk communities are sort of like the same thing because there are so few people. So [the solidarity network] was people who were—they started before the house that I lived in started and [they] continued through and then sort of fell apart after [our house did]. It fell apart for different reasons. There were a couple meetings and sign things and phone drives that happened at the house, but they generally met at a Unitarian church in town. But

on occasion they met in our house. And two important people in the solidarity network lived in the house.

--Funky Towne Resident

Juxtaposing the organizing work that the Funky Towne resident describes above with some of the negative affects a punk house can have on a neighborhood reveals a major dialectical tension that is central to the efficacy of punk house performances: punks houses must balance the beneficial goods and services that they offer to a neighborhood against the harm or inconvenience their presence can cause. Even as punks enter a community and begin performing cultural work, paranoid neighbors tend to write them off as being bad for the community. Also, they are loud, unsightly, and they smell. To maximize the longevity and effectiveness of their resistant practices, it is on the punks to do their best to balance the negative effects they might have on their neighbors with the positive community building labor that they offer. This section is about that labor and the combination of helpful and hindering outcomes it can yield.

The primary draw to living in a punk house is the benefit of cheap rent and communal living as a means for avoiding the necessity of working full time. Residents in a punk house can spend their time making art, working on community projects, volunteering, or doing nothing—which can sometimes feel like an act of resistance in and of itself. For instance, one account of life in a punk house called the “309 House” in Pensacola, Florida describes a living situation where rent was \$25 per month, most of the food was free (gathered from dumpsters behind bakeries and supermarkets), and the majority of residents volunteered at a vegan-punk café located across the street from the house called End of the Line, where they would make spending money through tips.⁸²

⁸² Penelope Green, “Anarchy Rules: The Dishes Stay Dirty,” *The New York Times*, January 3, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/03/garden/03punk.html>.

Such a lifestyle is predominantly marked by an attempt to disengage with capitalist life; DIY punks live in punk houses so that they can avoid exploitative labor situations, resist supporting exploitative workplace practices by consuming as little as possible, and spend their time volunteering, learning skills, and making art. These ethical life choices are themselves political, but they also come with limitations.

DIY economic ethics play a central role in guiding attempts at disengaging with life under capitalism. These ethics are rooted in a combination of radical consumer sovereignty ideals (“I will not purchase this item on political grounds and that refusal reflects my influence over how our society works.”) and individualist or tribalist self-responsibility (“Why should I spend money on this product or service when I, or my community members, have the wherewithal to make or do it independently?”). We can see these ethical systems at work in the performed behaviors of Funky Towne residents. Funky Towne was populated by a set of avid dumpster divers; for much of Funky Towne’s history, the majority of food in the house was trash picked, shop lifted, or grown in the garden boxes that the residents built in the backyard. Funky Towne also offered a free store to enable community members to reuse goods.

As such, DIY ethics have the potential to guide a lifestyle that is both impressively apt for performing disengagement—different from the impossibility of actual disengagement—with larger economies and also alarmingly complicit with patterns of offloading labor and responsibilities from the domain of the state, employer, or business to the individual—a significant characteristic of neoliberalism. An example of such offloading practices can be found in the self-assemble model of consumption, wherein a business offering some item (furniture, for example) chooses to sell the raw

materials necessary to make the item and offload the time and labor of assembling those materials onto the consumer. A similar offloading of labor can be imagined from the state. For instance, Funky Towne residents once put an effort into supplying Huntington's homeless population with food and extra coats during wintertime:

There was a thing with milk crates one time! They did do a thing—I just remembered—they did a thing where they made like—they put shit in milk crates for people. Food and other things. It was winter. And they were giving them to people. It was canned food and coats for homeless people.

Such a gesture is indeed powerful, but if the DIY community proves we do not need the state for these specific social services, that proof may not necessarily lead to the eradication of *the state* (a goal for many DIY anarcho-punks), but instead of *the social services* that the state provides. A neoliberal governing body might respond to the DIY community's service provisions by cutting those services offered by the state in order to lower taxes and facilitate the smooth (un-taxed) flow of capital. In this case, the community services offered by DIY punks exasperate the increasing pressure being offloaded by the state and the private sector onto the individual.

On the one hand, it is important to recognize the value of the punk house's role in merging the intimate and private setting of the house with the public work of meetings, phone drives, and offering resource provisions like food, coats, and a free store. On the other, it is likewise imperative that we remain cognizant of the reality that off-loading public works onto private people in intimate spaces may not be a permanently viable response to the pressures of neoliberalism. In fact, it may exacerbate the ever-developing pressures being placed on private individuals to take care of themselves without support from the state or from employers.

Even further, DIY ethics can be framed as an adjustment in consumption practices

that adapts to, rather than resists, the exploitative wage rates that are characteristic of neoliberal capitalism. For instance, if I want a blender but cannot afford one because I am not paid fairly, I might visit Funky Towne's free store and reclaim one that another punk discarded when they left to go hop trains last summer. I would be happy to have this new blender, and thankful for the free store's existence as a means for me to obtain it.

Perhaps, though, rather than developing an independent system that helps me and my friends adapt to our meager wages, I ought to be focusing my efforts on fighting for fair pay. Funky Towne, importantly, did both by performing DIY consumption habits while also working with the solidarity network mentioned above. Granted, the free store remains a good option for reducing environmental waste, but that redeeming point does not lessen the reality that some of these projects aid exploited workers in coping with exploitation rather than fighting it. DIY ethics, then, have great potential for helping a person to distance themselves from the market. However, at least in the developed west, we always remain implicated in the global capital marketplace. Even as punks form co-operatives or enclaves to distance themselves from capitalism, those enclaves have effects on their larger economic contexts.

Finally, Funky Towne exemplifies a major element of the DIY ethic in their music touring and booking practices. Part of the disengagement from mainstream capitalist life also entails disengagement from common performance touring methods. Importantly, the 'backstage' work of booking, hosting, and paying touring bands independently of commercial venues is itself a part of the DIY performance circuit and adds a specific sensation of isolationist, independent subversiveness to the experience of attending a DIY show. DIY punk touring requires that the band members perform all the

labor of planning and booking themselves. These tours tend to be run on a shoestring budget. The band members rely on the people whose basements and living rooms they are booked to play in to help them find a place to sleep, find food to eat, and hopefully earn enough money from the show for the gas required to get to the next town. The goal of doing things this way is primarily to keep the money that the DIY punk community spends on shows within the community. Rather than allowing a large venue or booking agency to take a cut of the value created by touring DIY punks. DIY touring practices aim to keep the show as cheap and accessible as possible while also giving as much money as is feasible to the touring band so that they can continue their journey. Makagon asserts that, “On the whole, however, a commitment to DIY is reflected in the choices made by people to book DIY spaces, bands to play those shows and locals to support the bands by regularly attending show spaces.”⁸³ The tour and show ritual are treated by in-group members as essential to DIY punk community building.

The modalities that Funky Towne employed as a counterpublic seeking to instrumentally improve the spaces around them at the material register are made apparent in this section. The main components of those modalities were fairly traditional activist tactics focused on direct action, the provision of community resources, and DIY consumption practices. In observing the case of Funky Towne, it is clear that DIY publics are enclaves: most of their performances are fairly private, though they do oscillate out to interact with the public write large—the solidarity network and coat drives are great examples of this. More often than not, the social pressures and policing that punks receive from some of their community members might lead to punk house residents feeling alienated from the families in the space around them and result in fewer

⁸³ Makagon, *Underground*, 89.

community-focused projects. That said, the issue of whether Funky Towne's interactions with the public writ large brought on lasting change is in question among the Funky Towne residents themselves. At least one interviewee believes that Funky Towne did not bring lasting change to their environment. In this sense, DIY punk lifestyle performances display good intentions and resistant tactics. It seems that the extent to which punks can make their idealistic performances efficacious is dependent on their dedication to the community building and activist modalities that they employ.

Funking Sh*t Up: Cultural Work at Funky Towne

And tonight, when I dream it will be
 That the junkies spent all the drug money on
 Community gardens and collective housing
 And the punk kids who moved in the ghetto
 Have started meeting their neighbors besides the angry ones
 With the yards, that their friends and their dogs have been puking and shitting on

And the anarchists have started
 Filling potholes, collecting garbage
 To prove we don't need governments to do these things
 And I'll wake up, burning time's square as we sing
 "Throw your hands in the air 'cause property is robbery!"
 --"Proudhon in Manhattan" by The Wingnut Dishwashers Union

The Wingnut Dishwashers Union's front person Pat "The Bunny" Schneeweis, who would later play shows at Funky Towne with a different band called Ramshackle Glory, wrote "Proudhon in Manhattan." Schneeweis' writing often describes life under capitalism and the importance of pursuing radical new ways of relating socially and economically. The importance of songwriting and performance to cultural work becomes evident in the instances of punk shows like those that Schneeweis regularly performed: crowds of people gather together in the intimacy of their friend's homes to sing/scream about the better worlds that they might want to live in. This is the hot and sweaty side of

the DIY punk enclave's oscillating modalities. This is what counterpublic party modalities look like. These sorts of group performances—juxtaposed against the more instrumentally focused modalities explored in the last section—generate political and affective alliances that bring tremendous strength and solidarity to the DIY community. This solidarity is based in the very intimate relationship building space that the privacy of the punk house provides as a venue for performing enclaved counterpublicity. Affective alliances lay the groundwork for further community action. Indeed, punk house parties like this one offer a specific sort of affective modality that is unique to artistic—and even to musical—publics.

Building Affective Alliances through Social Support: Successes and Failures

Lawrence Grossberg's notion of an *affective alliance* can be helpful for answering the question of how DIY punk can influence the public writ large. How might DIY punk resist those exploitative forces of neoliberal capitalism that punks position themselves against? What are DIY punks doing in the effort to reclaim the urban environment for people as human subjects, rather than allowing it to continuously be built for people as merely laborers or consumers? In this section, I will use a combined reading of Grossberg's work on affective alliances and Antonio Gramsci's description of intellectual discourses that can, on a large scale, serve to form a counter-hegemonic bloc and also Gramsci's "war of position" to discuss the efficacy of the DIY cultural and artistic practices as they circulate around the punk house.

First, Grossberg uses the term "affective alliance" to describe "an organization of concrete material practices and events, cultural forms, and social experience that both

opens up and structures the space of our affective investments in the world.”⁸⁴ Grossberg would assert that the affective alliances that are constructed through the practices of DIY punk are powerful not so much in relation “to *what* one feels as to the boundary drawn by the very existence of different organizations of desire and pleasure.” In other words, DIY punk’s performances of striving to step away from the exploitative relational structures of capital and re-framing systems of desire to be directed toward a sort of anarcho-communist lifestyle inscribe a separation between punk systems of desire and those systems of desire that are imbedded in mainstream life. The instance of the show offers a moment wherein DIY punk community members gather to perform their affective investments in different structures of desire and build solidarity across the communal affective alliance. These moments of alliance are visible in many photos of live performances by DIY punk bands.

⁸⁴ Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1997), 31.



Figure 2: Ramshackle Glory



Figure 3: Ramshackle Glory II

The two stills above were taken from a Youtube video documenting a performance by Ramshackle Glory, the band mentioned earlier who played at Funky Towne in 2014. This video was captured at a different location on the same 2014 tour. I am using images from it as an example because they are exceptionally high quality and the venue is well lit. These two stills are taken from a performance of a song called “Never Coming Home” that is about Schneeweis’ struggle against heroin addiction and regretting the way he treated the people close to him while he was high—a topic that many punks can identify with. The stills above show an audience experiencing intense affective bond and, importantly, performing that bond through their bodies and voices by *moving together*.⁸⁵ The bearded person in the foreground is yelling the lyrics and crying with his arms around the people on either side of him. In the middle ground, we can see two lines of people singing and jumping up and down in unison to the song—the lines stretch in both directions well beyond the frame of the camera. While this photo provides clear evidence of the demographic problems that accompany punk—nearly everyone at this show is white—it also evidences the intense community bonds that are often forged or reinforced at punk shows and house parties.

Party modalities are not only about having a good time. They are also about relying on peers for social support. Parties afford punks a space to get together and talk about their troubles. This happens as much on porches over cigarettes or on living room couches as it does in punk music itself. The song, “Never Coming Home,” and the crowd’s passion for it gestures to the importance of the DIY punk community’s ability to

⁸⁵ Dana L. Cloud and Kathleen Eaton Feyh, “Reason in Revolt: Emotional Fidelity and Working Class Standpoint in the ‘Internationale,’” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (August 8, 2015): 300–323, doi:10.1080/02773945.2014.965338; Erin J. Rand, “‘What One Voice Can Do’: Civic Pedagogy and Choric Collectivity at Camp Courage,” *Text & Performance Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (January 2014): 28–51, doi:10.1080/10462937.2013.853825.

function as a social support system. Bands that write about drugs often frame them as a means of attempting to escape the stressful and alienating pains of contemporary human life—pains like labor exploitation, alienation from the resources that you need to use to survive, not to mention sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, and colonialism. That interest in using drugs or alcohol to escape parallels the sort of escapism that fuels punks' interests in setting up spaces—like punk houses or festivals—where they can perform the transcendence of the same social ills I just listed. Punk houses and DIY activist performances, though, tend to be a more instrumental response to that urge than drug use. Some drug users end up moving to punk houses in order to seek social support from a strong community. This happened at Funky Towne when one residents' sister revealed to her family that she was addicted to heroin:

She ended up going to rehab briefly. She went through a detox program and then could not go back [home] because she needed to be away from the people she was around using. Anyway, the roommates agreed and she moved in with me. And that was—I don't know—that was one example of this, but I felt like I was putting my own personal family issues on the community when they didn't have enough resources to be taking that on. To be taking her on or my issues on. And that happened. That all sort of culminated in—well, money got stolen. This was maybe a month after my sister moved in. Money got stolen.

This resident is gesturing to the reality that punk houses often take on the role of a support system for people who are suffering from the social ills I just listed. Importantly, though, the resident is also pointing out that punk houses lack the resources (and, oftentimes, the training) to deal with problems as serious as addiction or extreme depression. In many cases, like the example above, punks lend social support quite successfully. However, the precarious state of life in punk houses makes the possibility of failing support systems all too real.

As mentioned, the stress-inducing lack of resources at Funky Towne led to rent money being stolen. The fight over resources that took place afterward ended with the most serious of consequences:

There had been a conflict with this friend where people in the house thought that he had stolen money—that he had stolen rent money. It was brought up and then he left. He moved. There were people in that house—most of the people in the house weren't communicating with him. And then a few months later he had been living in North Carolina and he committed suicide. Yeah. And that sort of changed—that was kind of the end of Funky Towne, even though it continued for months after that. It became a very depressing place. And it shifted the entire dynamic of the house. Yeah. It was awful and we all, in varying degrees, felt responsible. A lot of us still do. It was a rough time.

The story of this Funky Towne resident's suicide—may they rest in peace—is as upsetting as it is illuminating. In conducting field research for this thesis, the theme of suicide became increasingly prevalent. Punk is a space of affective alliances built in the context of incredible economic and social pressure. In that context, the continued stability of social support is absolutely indispensable. Punks seek to offer that social support to one another. Yet, they often build the infrastructure for that support on a low-cost, precarious economic foundation. When resources are scarce, punks will sometimes fight amongst themselves for them. In this case, that infighting brought on a devastating end to the community.

Before his retirement from DIY punk, Pat “The Bunny” Schneeweis recognized the trouble with building a resistance without much funding and commented on it in his music. In a song titled, “The hand you reach out is empty, as is mine,” Schneeweis sings, “Egalitarians with empty hands: is it justice to split up the dust? We are damned and

we'll never earn bread, so we shall steal everything that we must.”⁸⁶ This song describes the insularity of punk activism and the tensions that come with attempting to build an isolated anarcho-communist lifestyle contextualized by capitalist infrastructure. The contradictions of a DIY lifestyle built on top of an advanced capitalist economy play themselves out in the lives of the punk house residents. In Schneeweis' narrative, the individual pressures of neoliberal capitalism continue to come down on the heads of those in the house, forcing them to resort to thievery and, eventually, betrayal: “We are damned, and we'll never earn trust, and so we'll betray everything that we can. And so we'll betray everything that we can.”⁸⁷ This has been the case with many punk houses, including Funky Towne. Importantly, though, it has not been the case with all of them. Many punk houses have saved the lives of those who depend on them. Many have brought substantial to change to their communities. Many have built and continue to maintain spaces for parties that are attended by activists from movements all over a city. Many punk houses engage in a productive politic built on affective alliances and executed through instrumental modalities. Here, I segue into a discussion of the political edge of affective alliances.

Affective Alliances and the War of Position

Importantly, at the church show depicted above, Ramshackle Glory performed the profoundly personal song, “Never Coming Home,” immediately alongside more clearly political songs. For example, here is a snippet of lyric from “Exploration of Coercion in Everyday Life,” which the band performed in the same set list:

⁸⁶ Pat “The Bunny” Schneeweis, *The Hand You Reach out Is Empty, as Is Mine*, Probably Nothing, Possibly Everything (Los Angeles, Calif: Kitten Robots Studio, 2014), <https://patthebunny.bandcamp.com/track/the-hand-you-reach-out-is-empty-as-mine-is>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

In the space between having nothing and everything.
 Between your tired bones and the empty buildings,
 Between this abandoned lot and a vegetable garden,
 There are people with guns who know how to use them,
 Nothing better to do than hop in their cruisers,
 And go crack the skulls of some dropouts and losers,
 And get congratulated on restraint when they do it.
 So if we can't blow up a social relationship, we also can't reason with bullets,
 So let's not be confused who uniforms and badges work for.⁸⁸

This song, Ramshackle Glory's more mature take on Schneeweis' continual anti-policing rhetoric,⁸⁹ displays a clear class-conscious critique of police forces and their protective relationships with capital. Here, we can see an oscillation between the intimate and deeply affective rhetoric of "Never Coming Home," and the unapologetically political rhetoric of "Exploration of Coercion in Everyday Life." By oscillating between songs that are intimate and songs that are overtly politicized, Ramshackle Glory appeals to a wide range of affective possibilities for their audiences to invest in. Simultaneously, the band's performance begins the discursive work of collapsing the divide between the intimate and the political.

This sort of oscillation is central to the work of punk houses like Funky Towne, which likewise straddle the line between private and public space, between intimacy and publicity. That oscillation enables the DIY punk community to build strong personal relationships between group members who then translate those relationships into solidaritous activist energy. The key question here, though, is how that translation happens. How do DIY punks who are attracted to the scene for the purposes of affective expression and art consumption end up receiving radicalizing educations?

⁸⁸ Folk the System, *Ramshackle Glory - Exploration Of Coercion In Everyday Life (Live)*, accessed February 22, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYCLgCEY_Lw.

⁸⁹ The Wingnut Dishwasher's Union, *Fuck Every Copy (Who Ever Did His Job)*, Burn the Earth, Leave It Behind (Connecticut: DIY Bandits, 2010).

It was one of Funky Towne's "stated goals" to make radical education available to the public and to hold consciousness-raising sessions. The trouble with those sorts of sessions was getting attendees from the shows to also come to the educational events. One interviewee described the difficulty of doing educational work without the affective appeal of live music to enjoy at the event:

I mean, like, that was a stated goal. We planned—there were a lot of times where—well, there were a lot of times—not a lot of times, but a couple times—where we planned to do specifically educational events. Generally they didn't end up working out.

Despite the difficulty of organizing explicitly educational events in an affective and art focused community, the same interviewee suggests that radical education was still happening through regular sociality at shows and parties, saying, "there were probably people who were like, "I'm gonna try being a vegetarian now" after talking to people who lived in the house or talking to people who were at a show or something." In other words, education was happening through varying modalities. What all of this suggests is that, despite the difficulty of doing educational work in a formal sense, it happens in a social sense nonetheless.

Gramsci's writings on the intellectuals famously make intellectuality accessible across all levels of education by positing, "all men are intellectuals."⁹⁰ However, Gramsci also bifurcates intellectualism into two categories: the "traditional" intellectuals tend to be institutionally educated and framed as being trans-class, a rhetorical move that serves to mystify the attachments that traditional intellectuals often have to petit bourgeois or bourgeoisie interests. The "organic" intellectuals, on the other hand, theorize and communicate about the world based on their lived—and classed—experience, as opposed

⁹⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Smith Geoffrey Nowell, Digital Edition (London: Elecbook, 1999), 140.

to traditional education. They use that experience to organize and direct the aspirations of the class to which they organically belong.⁹¹ DIY punk artists and zine writers tend to be of the latter variety and use their access to publicity in order to go about the work of raising consciousness and developing discourses that spread counterhegemonic ideas—ideas that oppose the ideological and pervasive ideals of the currently dominant class.

Party modalities are apt for spreading organic intellectual discourse. The party space is an opportunity for people to get together and openly share their experiences and interests. In sharing those discourses, organic knowledges can be spread between attendees and taken back out to the world when the party is over. When a party gathers together around a particular performance or art exhibition that sets up a structure of feeling that attendees identify with and is counterhegemonic, it can be a short step to turn that party from protopolitical to explicitly political. This transformation highlights the utility of the phrase “party” itself: party is a double-entendre that can signify *both* a gathering of bodies for fun, conversation, network building, or the construction of affective alliances *and* an expressly political, organized group of likeminded people bent on accomplishing some particular goal. Both of these meanings of party are key concepts for the development of counterhegemony.

The question, then, is how we can turn counterhegemonic ideas into instrumental activist work. Clear tactics for transforming DIY punk’s cultural work into widespread, coordinated instrumental resistance to neoliberal capitalism remain to be seen. Despite this, it is helpful to consider the work of raising consciousness in DIY punk discourse as a tactic suitable for a “war of position.” In discussing revolutionary strategy, Gramsci describes two categories of tactics: the first category is comprised of tactics to be used in

⁹¹ Ibid., 131.

a “war of maneuver,” these include tactics that are meant to physically overwhelm the coercive apparatus of the state and the market through the disruption of the flow of capital or the reclamation of space and resources.⁹² The second is comprised of tactics to be used in a “war of position,” these include any tactics that resist domination with culture and discourse, rather than physical might.⁹³ These two can be likened to frontal assault (war of maneuver) and trench warfare (war of position). Importantly, the war of position is focused on the development of alternative institutions and networks that have the potential to viably replace the state. In considering the efforts that punk houses put in to developing community services and the international networks that punk houses sustain in order to tour and host bands, the potential for the DIY punk community to mobilize their networks into a better organized institution that orchestrates effective resistance against the forces of neoliberal capitalism becomes apparent. Such advances in organization would dramatically change the role of the punk house in the urbanization of capital. Those changes, however, are profoundly contingent on the ideological content that might be taken up by a more organized DIY punk counterhegemonic bloc and the changes in tactics taken up by the DIY punk community.

We can already see the beginnings of this sort of affective organization and cross-community collaboration at work in the community that surrounded Funky Towne. Funky Towne’s cultural and microeconomic work gestures toward tactics that might foreshadow a more serious “war of position.” By participating in the spread of revolutionary discourses and working toward the recruitment of show-goers to the parties in and around punk houses, we can see potential for ever-larger factions of DIY punk

⁹² Ibid., 446.

⁹³ Ibid.

activists in neighborhoods far and wide. By providing services like the free store or goods like food crates and coats to homeless people in the area, one can see how radicals in punk houses are developing an infrastructure that provides a select few of the same services that people might desire from the state. By collaborating with the other punk house in Huntington—“The Elimination Chamber”—and with the Solidarity Network, we can see that Funky Towne is not only recruiting people for its own DIY community but also is incorporating those people into a larger network of activists. Further, already-mobilized activists oftentimes gravitate toward punk houses as a social scene to complement their political work. That social scene can then become a hub for collaborating with other activists or meeting potential new comrades who were originally attracted by the music. The question, now, is whether these sorts of movements will be able to grow large enough to sustain themselves and potentially interface with punk houses between and across nations, rather than merely neighborhoods.

Party Modalities

All those early songs about rock’n’roll were successive movements in a suite in progress which was actually nothing more than a gigantic party whose collective ambition was simple: to keep the party going and jive and rave and kick ‘em out cross the decades and only stop for the final Bomb or some technological maelstrom of sonic bliss sucking the cities away at last. Because the Party was the *one* thing we had in our lives to grab onto, the one thing we could truly believe in and depend on, a loony tune fountain of youth and vitality that was keeping us alive as much as any medicine we’d ever take or all the fresh air in Big Sur, it sustained us without engulfing us and gave us a nexus of metaphor through which we could refract less infinitely extensible concerns and learn a little bit more about ourselves and what was going on without even, incredible enough, getting pretentious about it. We didn’t exactly know what it meant in the larger, more “profound” scheme of things (although we really did know in our bones and just hadn’t gotten around to turning it into a form of scholasticism and self-psychoanalysis yet), but we damn sure knew what we needed.⁹⁴

--Lester Bangs, “James Taylor Marked for Death”

⁹⁴ Bangs, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, 65.

Lester Bangs was writing about party as a protopolitical counterpublic modality long before I came around. The difference is that he refused to transform the party from its protopolitical nature into an act of straight political performance. And for good reason. Bangs, like many punks and rock'n'roll fans, used rock as an escapist art platform whose goal was to transcend the politics of older generations and form an independent enclave that isolated itself from postwar western life. His perspective on the platform of rock'n'roll was typical of postwar transcendentalists. At the same time, though, he left room on the platform for the creation of new performed knowledges (known in the "bones") and alternative was of relating. Bangs called this transcendent platform "the Party." For him, the Party was meaningful in a profound sense, but that meaning was ignored in the moment because making anything too meaningful might ruin the playful bliss of isolation. The Party had to continue, and the best way to keep it going was to not think about it. Like Wile E. Coyote attempting to bridge a gap, if the party-goers were to look down and doubt or at any time be too self-conscious they would fall from their transcending position.

At the same time as he denied the political nature of party, Bangs simultaneously gestured toward it. His critique of the scholastic-ization of rock'n'roll was clearly steeped in class conflict that pitted the organic intellectualism of party life against the traditionally intellectual position of cultural theorists:

If we didn't go to the festivals, too timidly academic or whatever to root with the hogs for three days, we bought books with titles like *Free People*, or *The Making of a Counter Culture*.... These books told us that we were something more than what we might have thought, that our very existence and lifestyle was of vast crucial importance to America and maybe the survival of the planet. So we bought that bilge and started running off in all the directions that people are currently hurtling to Do Something, even if it's only hide out in a commune in the northern woods to pretend you're a visionary who has transcended the problem.... You

can...be very serious about it all together so people won't buy your records just to throw them on or go to your concerts just to get ripped and holler—if not to actually *learn* something, your fans will at least approach your products with unusual respect and the implicit constant reassurance to themselves that it is Good Music, more advanced or important, of so much higher quality than that alleycat racket the teens and proles⁹⁵ wallow in.⁹⁶

Bangs is asserting that focusing too much on the political and academic merits of an art movement can itself kill the movement by transforming the art from organic performed discourse to traditionally intellectual writing that attempts to adhere to the theorization of subculture. In other words, the relationship between art and theory is upended: *self-conscious art follows theory* when it is supposed to be *theory that follows art*. Bangs' disdain for traditional intellectualisms invasion of rock has carried itself through punk and all the way up to the present day scene. Schneeweis asserts in a *Wingnut Dishwashers Union* song that, “the last who make the moves are the first to say the words.”⁹⁷ Erik Petersen wrote lyrics about “students of higher schooling” and their ambivalence toward the accomplishments of post-war activism.⁹⁸ Even in my experience attempting to do interviews at PIX Fest, I remember overhearing someone say how they “fucking hate people who went to college.” Such an experience reminded me that my role at the festival needed to be one where I participated in the Party, rather than invading it with the self-important air of an academic in the field.

⁹⁵ I can only hope that Bangs is using “proles” in gesture to George Orwell’s famous scene of his traditionally educated petit bourgeois character Winston watching a proletarian mother from his window. Winston contemplated how the only chance of revolution rest in the bellies and bones of the “proles.” Importantly, the proles in 1984 were only permitted to sing state approved tunes. The repressed and oppressed working class of the contemporary world can sing whatever they please. So long as that right remains protected, perhaps our working class is closer to revolution than that of Oceania. The key to protecting revolutionary music, though, is to mask and deny its revolutionary potential.

⁹⁶ Bangs, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, 66–67.

⁹⁷ The Wingnut Dishwashers Union, *Never Trust a Man (Who Plays Guitar)*, Burn the Earth, Leave It Behind (Crafty Records, 2010), <https://diybandits.bandcamp.com/album/burn-the-earth-leave-it-behind>.

⁹⁸ Mischief Brew, *Gratitude and Thanks*, Songs From Under the Sink (Philadelphia: Fistol Records, 2006), <https://mischiefbrew.bandcamp.com/track/gratitude-and-thanks>.

The point of all this is that the modality of party is something that punk enclaves perform in order to both *escape* from the political and social pressures of modern life and to *perform*—without the imposition of traditional intellectual theorizations and didactic lecturing—new and different ways of relating. In Bangs’ words, “this ain’t the kind of party you join or carry around a card for, this is a kind of party you LIVE.”⁹⁹ The knowledges being performed through modalities of party evade archival. Writings about them, like writings about any affective experience, consistently fail to pin them down. The Party does not have a list of guiding principles, demands, or declarations. Its only injunction is that you keep the Party alive and don’t take it too seriously.¹⁰⁰

Bangs’ idea that taking the Party too seriously will destroy it seems to be silly and politically castrating at first. However, Bangs points to two key functions of the protopolitical Party that make continuing its “*a*-political” ethos expedient for revolutionary agendas. First, Bangs points out that politicizing Party will alienate many potential party-goers who just want to spend a night out escaping their own troubles. Second, Bangs points out the resilience that comes with silliness:

All this “art” and “bop” and “rock’n’roll” and whatever is all just a joke and a mistake, just a hunka foolishness so stop treating it with any seriousness or respect at all ... don’t worry about the fact that it’s a joke and a mistake and a bunch of foolishness as if that’s gonna cause people to disregard it and do it in or let it dry up and die, because it’s the strongest, most resilient, most *invincible* Superjoke in history, nothing could possibly destroy it ever, and the reason for that is precisely that it *is* a joke, mistake, foolishness. The first mistake of Art is to assume that it’s serious.... What’s truest is that you cannot enslave a fool.¹⁰¹

Here, Bangs shows his hand. The whole program behind the apolitical nature of the Party is the preservation of radical sociality within the “alleycat racket [that] the teens and

⁹⁹ Bangs, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, 73.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

proles wallow in.”¹⁰² In order to avoid being reincorporated into the grid of intelligibility, Party-goers mask their performed knowledges behind a disguised ethos of harmless foolishness. In constituting the Party as harmless and foolish, Bangs is encouraging others to work with him in making the transcendental platform of party into a “null enclave” that, drawing from Dana Cloud’s “null persona,”¹⁰³ uses self-negation to preserve itself in the context of a state and economy that represses any possible threats to its own functionality. Embracing foolishness allows the Party to go on and to continue attracting new people. Bangs ends his discussion of Party by discussing the mental gymnastics it takes to treat an art movement as apolitical while also quietly believing in its potential as a protopolitical movement:

While I mean every word I say or most of them anyhow and intend 75% of this kidney pie in total seriousness and passion that’s not in the least feigned, I also take it with absolutely no seriousness at all. That is, I believe in rock’n’roll but I don’t believe in Rock’n’Roll even if I don’t always spell it the same way, and I believe in the Party as an exhilarating alternative to the boredom and indifference of life... as it provided alternatives in the form of momentary release from the repression and moral absolutism of the fifties. The Party is one answer to how to manage leisure in a society cannibalized by it, but it’s not bread and circuses either because you can’t co-opt jive because jive is the true folk music that liberals can never appropriate or master and only an urban aborigine will understand.¹⁰⁴

Bangs takes the Party seriously but he also takes it with no seriousness whatsoever. He believes in the music. He also does not believe in it at all. The Party is not meaningful, but the party-goers can feel its meaning in their bones. The Party is important and it is also a joke, silly, foolish, a mistake. In this passage, Bangs embraces the contradiction as

¹⁰² Ibid., 67.

¹⁰³ Dana L. Cloud, “The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of ’34,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (January 2010): 200.

¹⁰⁴ Bangs, *Psychotic Reactions and Carburetor Dung*, 75.

a means of preserving the protopolitical nature of the Party. By feigning foolishness, Bangs also preserves the serious performatic knowledges hidden behind the racket.

This chapter's thesis proposes the modality of party as a counterpart to traditional activist modalities. I use the word "party" with explicit gesture toward Lester Bangs and his theorization of the party as a protopolitical space where escape from repressive and oppressive normative life can be performed. However, my usage of party is different from Bangs' Party in that contemporary punks do acknowledge the political nature of their performances. That said, the DIY punk house party still collapses private space with public space and so productively continues the contradiction of performing itself as a merely playful gathering but continues to be political by nature. In those contradictory performances, radical knowledges about solidarity, different structures of feeling and desire, and different ways of structuring and acting our social relations are shared. So are smiles, songs, dance moves, drinks, and hugs! The intimately protopolitical nature of the modality of party is key for its survival and also for its ability to attract new people to come and dance, sing, swing, jive, support each other, love each other, and keep each other alive.

In this section, I have introduced the notion of a modality of party for enclaved counterpublics as a means of gathering together and forming affective alliances between new friends and reinforcing those that exist between community members. The modality of party is one end of an oscillating pair, whose counterpart is constituted by a range of traditional activist practices. Importantly, the modality of party creates space for organic intellectualism to spread naturally between party-goers. Indeed, this shows that organic intellectual leadership is not constrained to the same formal educational processes that

traditional intellectual leadership uses. Rather, it seems just as likely that radical education could take place in a friendly conversation at a party as it could take place in an organized consciousness raising group meeting or community education initiative. The central advantage of doing educational and radicalizing work through the modality of party is that this modality so clearly straddles the line between public and private. The private setting of the house is conducive for building the intimate relational connections that underwrite the bond of solidarity itself. As more people become connected to the leftist community through the modality of party, the DIY community will have the opportunity to further dedicate itself to the traditional activist modalities that they also practice, thereby enhancing the benefits they might bring to the neighborhoods that contextualize them. In other words, the efficacy of the cultural performances happening inside the punk house will, to a great extent, constitute the efficacies of the activist modalities of the punk house as they affect the larger community. This ongoing effort to build connections and strengthen networks is indicative of an ongoing—though, at the moment, fairly small—war of position. However, only as those networks grow can the interconnected resistant communities gather the strength necessary to transition into waging a new war of maneuver.

Importantly, a caveat that has the potential to foreclose upon DIY punks' ability to grow or sustain themselves has revealed itself in this section as well. Punk houses attempt to take on a lot of roles for their communities. Residents find themselves attempting to support one another through difficult problems like depression and addiction while simultaneously trying to do community work. All of this is taking place on precarious structures with limited resources, that are themselves struggling to exist in

the larger context of the capitalist environment. If DIY punks aren't able to accrue enough resources through the micropolitical practices discussed in the last subsection, then the social and economic pressures that come with attempting to perform disengagement from capital descend upon the punks. Those pressures have caused infighting, ended communities, and ended lives. If punks intend to meet the challenge of efficacy, it is integral that they be able to sustain themselves economically. In other words, the revolution will have to be financed somehow. Luckily, the growth of the international scene holds great promise for increasing the sustainability of the DIY movement.

Conclusion

DIY punk is a stylistic and performatic repertoire of lifestyle choices. From activism to DIY production and consumption habits—and especially the performance of affective alliances—punks perform both resistance and community building. Jon McKenzie was right to suggest that the challenge of cultural performance is a challenge of efficacy. The efficacy of DIY punk performance is widely varied, and has the potential to counteractively aid individuals to accommodate the pressures of neoliberal capitalism, rather than resist them. Punk houses are oftentimes in material and social conflict with the interests of their neighbors. Those conflicts trigger paranoia as a pretext for policing the anti-normative social practices prevalent in DIY punk culture. Those policing practices aid in the ongoing cycle of surveying spaces that are unintelligible to the interests of capital and incorporating them into grids of spatial intelligibility. In other words, the punks are not always welcome in the neighborhood.

Despite that this tension between punks and their neighbors is usually based in

anxiety over falling property values, punks are often one of the first signs of the beginning of a gentrification process. That process, on its own, is liable to eventually displace not only the people who lived in the neighborhood originally, but also the people living in the punk house—after all, they are seeking to live with as little cost as possible.

While the role of the DIY punk house in the urbanization of capital is contradictory and contingent on the punks' dedication to traditional activist and outreach modalities, the discursive strategies being employed by punks are indicative of a small Gramscian war of position. As the punks develop stronger networks and organizational strategies, the likelihood of their practices becoming more efficacious increases. Both the cultural work and community services that DIY communities are attempting to provide have the capacity to radically affect the urbanization of capital in communities with local punk houses. The question of *how punk houses can sufficiently organize to effect greater influence over the urbanization of capital* has many potential answers, and each may be contingent to the particular context of any given punk house.

One important tool, which is the onus of this paper, is the need for an oscillation between different modalities. On the one hand, the punks at Funky Towne show that they are making efforts to affect and interface with their larger environment through activist modalities. On the other, they are attracting people to punk and doing radical work through a modality of party. Nancy Fraser argued that it is precisely in the oscillation between the two functions of “withdrawal and regroupment” and “activities directed toward wider publics” that the “emancipatory potential” of counterpublicity resides.¹⁰⁵ I would like to conclude this piece by echoing Fraser's sentiment while simultaneously offering a new problematic. If the punks are already attempting to perform that oscillating

¹⁰⁵ Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” 124.

work, but continue to have a difficult time bringing on lasting change, what sorts of new movements can the DIY punk community execute to further build and strengthen their networks? I will explore this question in the following chapter.

Chapter Two

“Follow your toes”: DIY Punk Enclaves Go to PIX Fest

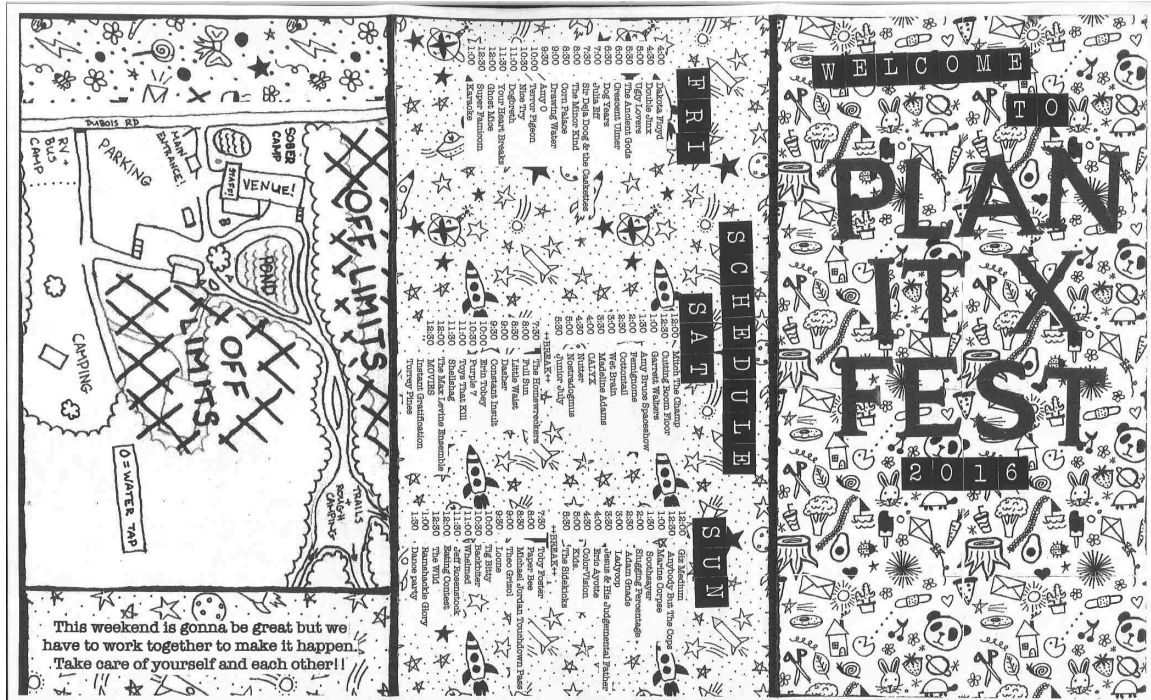


Figure 4: PIX Fest 2016 Pamphlet - Side 1

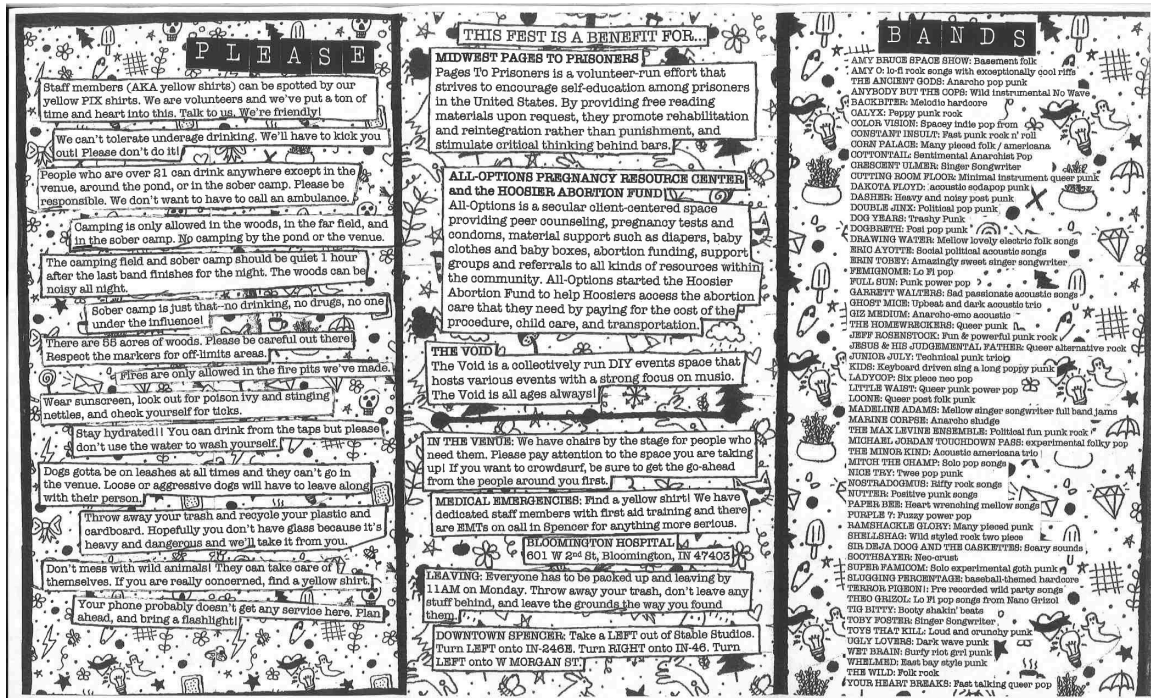


Figure 5: PIX Fest 2016 Pamphlet - Side 2

OTHER STUFF

Tangerines: Wanna be extra helpful? Pick up trash, keep an eye out for trouble, or help us move something cumbersome. Tell someone at check-in you'd like to help, get an orange bandana so we can spot you, and then return it when you're done!

Pie/Water Balloon Booth: Pay \$2+ to throw something at your favorite PIXies. All money raised goes to the Erik Petersen Memorial Fund.

Catch-a-Zach: Pay \$5 to attempt to catch a big oily Zach Rapattoni in 2 minutes or less. If you can catch and hold him, you'll get your money back and win a prize! Entry fee goes to the benefits.

Eating Contest: Race to be the first of eight contestants to finish a 16oz jar of Vegemise on the big stage!

Karaoke: Hosted by karaoke connoisseur Dave Walter. Limited spots based on a lottery, so sign up early!

Instant Gratification Movie Challenge: A monthly movie challenge based on a theme. Anyone can make and submit a short movie (<5 minutes) or attend the screening. This month's theme is Gimme Gimme Gimme!

Open Acoustic Stage: A little acoustic stage in the woods for whoever wants to take turns playing songs. 10 minutes or 3 songs, whichever is first. No Johnny Hobo covers.

Zine & Mixtape Trade: Bring something to trade with folks. Boxes available so swapping can continue through the weekend!

Letterpress Printing: Stop by the vendor area to print a PIX poster, or stop by a workshop to set your own type.

Food: Vegetarian and vegan food will be for sale in the lot by the check-in barn. Coffee, too!

Post-fest Cookout: Come to Bloomington on Monday to bask in the fest afterglow at The Void! Veggie potluck cookout, some bands, general chill hangs. 7pm-2am @ 1607 S. Rogers

WORKSHOPS

Friday:

3:00-4:30 Zine & Mixtape Trade @ the venue
9:30-?? Insect Extravaganza @ the chicken coop across from the office

An unofficial National Moth Week Gathering! Hang out and look at/learn about cool insects in the area.

Saturday:

11:00-11:45 Yoga & Meditation @ Workshop Site A
 Early morning yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises to help prepare you for the day.

6:00-7:30 Letterpress Printing @ the vendor area
 Print your own goods with wood and lead type on vintage printing presses.

6:00-6:45 Pregnancy Options @ Workshop Site A
 Information about different pregnancy options, and a discussion about how to provide non-judgmental support. Presented by All Options.

6:00-6:45 Radical Self-Healing: Make Your Own Medicine @ Workshop Site B

How to create your own medicine with plants and education on stress relieving pressure points.

6:45-7:30 Prisoner Support @ Workshop Site A

Discussion about why prisoner support is important, and information about how to better practice it.

Includes info on how to write with prisoners. Presented by Bloomington's Anarchist Black Cross

6:45-7:30 Creative Nonfiction Writing @ Workshop Site B

Learn various writing exercises centered around personal experiences written in a creative and narrative manner. Bring a notebook if you have one!

Sunday:

6:00-7:30 Letterpress Printing @ the vendor area

6:00-6:45 How To Start A Books To Prisoners Project @ Workshop Site A

An introduction to books to prisoners projects and the steps involved in launching one.

6:00-6:45 LUPE: A Union in the Community @ Workshop Site B

TA community union that organizes members of the low-income community to advocate for issues and factors impacting their lives - explore ways for it to engage in future revolutionary activity.

6:00-6:45 Dog Safety and First Aid @ Workshop Site D

How to respond to common emergencies that occur when traveling with dogs.

6:45-7:30 Whiteness and Anti-Racism @ Workshop Site A

How anti-racist white people can break their collective silence surrounding the oppression against people of color.

6:45-7:30 Survivor Support and Accountability @ Workshop Site B

A discussion about what sexual violence looks like, how it is manifested in activist communities, and how we can hold each other accountable for harmful actions.

Figure 6: PIX Fest 2016 Workshops / Other Stuff - Front & Back

I don't want to be another yuppie.
No, those bastards won't get me.

Those bastards won't get me.

Stick to the freedom of the open road.
Don't you stray. Don't deviate. Follow your toes.
One of these days I know we'll find a better home
but until that day, I want that home to be the road.

And at last we've arrived.
This place un-deprived
of comrades, sisters and brothers alike,
congregated all in your basement,

drunk and belligerent
and that's how we all like it, right?

--"Leaving" by Malpais, performed live at PIX Fest 2016's open stage¹⁰⁶

The young crowd responds with a vigorous "right!" and one punk in the back heckles, "debatable!" Malpais' performance of the song "Leaving" found a particularly fitting audience in the woods outside Spencer, Indiana. The song was performed well after midnight at the Plan-It-X Fest open stage. The scheduled acts at PIX had finished playing and a crowd of punks sat cross-legged with their backs to a fire. Food cooked over the flames and was shared among the congregation. The fire's light flickered across the stage, which was further illuminated by the flashlights of punks watching their comrades play. Malpais' song exercised a sort of magical poiesis¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸ there in that forest.

"Leaving" is about a particular sense of spatial alienation that punks experience as they recognize—consciously or not—an environment to be built for the convenience of capital. When the roads, the businesses, and the gridlines of homes all become too clearly

¹⁰⁶ Punk With A Camera, *Malpais - Leaving - Live At Plan-It-X Fest*, accessed March 2, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQdHmr6cVNA>; Malpais, *Leaving*, vol. B-Town Single (Bloomington, IN: Recorded from my Honda Accord in two separate parking lots in Bloomington, IN on my phone made by children., 2015), <https://thesouthwestmalpais.bandcamp.com/album/b-town-single>.

¹⁰⁷ This ancient Greek word literally translates as "a making" or "fabrication." Poiesis, then, is a making of something through words.

¹⁰⁸ "Online Etymology Dictionary," accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=poesy>.

centered around the disciplinary needs for industrial production and social reproduction, wayward punks seek to disengage from that system altogether through transience. Rather than stay behind and live out the yuppie's contradiction,¹⁰⁹ the punks leave to seek a better home.

The final stanza of “Leaving” formulates an end to the search for a better home by describing a sort of mythical ideal space. In the original lyric, that space is a basement party, where punks can escape from the troubles of everyday life. In the context of the live performance on that sweltering night in July 2016, however, the song became about the performance of DIY punk community that happened that weekend. The ideal space was taken out of the basement and scaled up to reimagine the venue, a festival ranch called *Stable Studios*, as a utopic DIY punk forest, removed altogether from the flow of capital—if only for the weekend. Poïetically, Malpais' performance of “Leaving” was one key element of the collective rhetorical construction of PIX Fest as a whole.

This paper is about those rhetorical and performatic¹¹⁰ constructions of punk publicness that happened at PIX. I will pursue the questions of, first, what modalities were used in performances of punk publicness at PIX Fest and, second, what the significance of PIX Fest is for the ongoing functioning of the DIY punk community. These questions guide this work on a wayward journey through the problematic of separating oneself from capitalism and brand culture in order to critique and combat those things. These questions will drive this chapter across the intersections of enclaved publicity, performance theory, and geography.

¹⁰⁹ This refers to the liberal contradiction of willingly engaging with capital, seeking affluence, and abandoning radical instrumental activist work while still stylistically performing a “progressive” or even “radical” politic. Punks often associate yuppies with domesticity and homeownership, the antithesis of transience.

¹¹⁰ “Performatic” is a neologism developed by Diana Taylor to be used as an adjectival form of performance that does not carry the same theoretical implications of the word “performative.”

To answer these questions, I use a variety of data including interviews conducted at PIX Fest and several months after the fact, print materials from the fest itself, post-fest media spread across Youtube, public Facebook groups and events, and a variety of blogs. I also draw on my personal experiences at PIX as an attendee. I have combed through these fragments seeking evidence of different modalities that were enacted both at and after PIX Fest between punks, coding pieces of media and Facebook posts based on the different functions they performed. Based on that cataloguing effort, I argue two major points: first, PIX scales up the work of the house; it demonstrates further use for the modality of party while also offering opportunities for enclaves to participate in *and discuss* activist strategy. Second, PIX enacts disengagement from capitalism as its own performatic modality. That performance still does not escape from its context in capitalism, but it simulates it through mobility and isolation. By the end of this chapter, we will arrive at a clear understanding of the importance of mobility for the functionality of the DIY punk counterpublic in particular, and for rhetoric and the construction of social movements in general.

This trek begins with a short history of Plan-It-X Fest. Second, I add to the conceptual apparatus I have established in my previous chapter and in the introduction of this thesis. In that section, I discuss punk as it is situated in post-war youth culture and I further elaborate on the importance of performance studies for understanding the rhetorical work being done at PIX. Third, I offer analysis that details the performatic work done in the act of traveling to PIX, the counterpublic and rhetorical work done after arrival at the festival, and the aftermath of those previous two sections that takes place

during departure from the event. My conclusion focuses on the importance of performances of mobility for counterpublic work.

History of Plan-It-X Fest

The story of PIX Fest begins in Bloomington, 1994. The two founders of Plan-It-X Records met after a mutual friend told one—Chris Clavin—that the other—Samantha Jane Dorsett—swore that they had spent five years in an alien prison on Deimos—one of the moons of Mars.¹¹¹ Dorsett referred to Deimos as Planet X. Months later, the two were working on designing a tape label for a cassette they were making for the band Clavin played in at the time—*The Ted Dancin' Machine*. Clavin describes the moment in his memoir, *Free Pizza For Life*,

[Sam] slid the scrap of paper across the table. It was a lopsided planet with a huge X-shaped crack in the middle, and a Saturn-like ring surrounding it. A crooked radio tower stuck out of the topside, broadcasting something, and there was a small banner below the planet that read *Plan-It-X Records*. “Great, let’s shrink it down and put it on the back,” I said. I thought it would be cool to try to fool people into thinking that we were on a real record label.¹¹²

As Chris Clavin’s network of punks in bands around the Midwest grew, he began collaborating with them to produce tapes. Plan-It-X Records transformed from being a one-off joke to a lifelong project. The tapes they produced, in the beginning, cost 90¢ to make and were sold for \$1.00 each.¹¹³ Plan-It-X Records continues to perform its commitment to financially accessible art through both discourse and material praxis: after the label began producing CDs, it sold them complete with artwork and stickers for \$5 each and has since marked that figure up to \$7. All of these decisions are made in

¹¹¹ Chris Clavin, *Free Pizza for Life*, 1st edition (Secret Sailor Books & Plan-it-x Records, 2012), 44.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 68–69.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 69.

accordance with the label's popular slogan, which echoes Samantha Dorsett's words: "if it ain't cheap, it ain't punk."

A decade after the label was founded, the first Plan-It-X Fest happened in Bloomington. After the success of that 2004 event, the fest went on a month long school bus tour in 2005. By its third iteration in 2006, PIX was being discussed as a place to make connections across a national punk network. One interviewee in a documentary-style video at PIX 2006 described the benefits of attending the event:

It's just so good to see everybody here. Back in our individual cities I think we all start to get kind of bogged down and then when you come here and see that there are other people who are just as hopeful and idealistic and trying so hard to change that I think it just—I'm ready to go back to Pittsburgh and try to start the same thing going on there, that sense of unity and community.¹¹⁴

The same documentary video shows a series of Plan-It-X Fest "Activities," including a screen-printing lesson, a workshop on repairing amplification equipment, and a DIY comic book printing and circulation workshop. Indeed, PIX Fest maintains a long tradition of providing space for networking and skill building opportunities that punks use to improve their efforts toward performing the DIY lifestyle at home.

Even further than offering those opportunities, though, Plan-It-X Fest is also a rhetorical center of self-discovery for the DIY movement. One such instance of that happening historically shows itself in the 2006 PIX Fest as well, where a workshop of punks gathered to discuss the problems of exclusivity, privilege, and counterproductive behaviors that DIY punks perform in their efforts to enact resistance. The title of the workshop, which ended with brainstorming tactics for working against those

¹¹⁴ Joe Biel, *Plan It X Fest Activities*, accessed March 3, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDEGpXK-22I>.

counterproductive behaviors, was “Making Punk a Threat Again!”¹¹⁵ The symposia that occurred at the 2006 PIX Fest have evolved all the way through to the 2016 PIX, and the community has pushed forward, likewise evolving alongside its rhetoric.¹¹⁶¹¹⁷

Finally, a major detail about the history of Plan-It-X Records and PIX Fest is this: Samantha Dorsett committed suicide on June 20th, 2009. While it is romantic to think about punk as a community wherein people expel the stresses of neoliberal capitalism through transgressive high-energy performances and radical politics, those details can distract from another indispensable truth: punk rock is a support community for people who cannot find space for themselves within the context of a heteronormative racist patriarchal exploitative capitalistic social structure. PIX Fest is directly involved with that sort of work. The wayward punks that Malpais described in “Leaving” search for anti-capitalist communities just as much as they search for queer, feminist, and anti-racist ones. Affective alliances deal with joy and bravery inasmuch as they deal with sorrow and fear. Since Samantha Dorsett’s death, Clavin has been going about the work of directing the affective energies of punks with his best friend in mind. This segment of Clavin’s eulogy, delivered online on Dorsett’s birthday—the 4th of July—speaks to that effort:

The world is worse than it was. There was talk of people sending money. It won't help. It won't change anything. If you want to honor Samantha today, on her birthday, burn a flag. Burn it and say, this is for Samantha. If you want to memorialize her in some way, spend your life fighting against the evil white businessmen who control our world. Fight homophobia. Fight sexism, racism and all forms of stupidity. Read more books. Write more books. Live as free as you

¹¹⁵ Joe Biel, *Plan It X “Making Punk a Threat Again!”*, accessed March 4, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfaVIXDq378>.

¹¹⁶ For further examples of rhetoric at work at PIX Fest, try enjoying the fine oratory performed by Spoonboy and Bepstein at PIX 2011 in their speech, “Rumba Speech at PIX Fest.”

¹¹⁷ Lisa Dorazewski, *RUMBA SPEECH AT PIX FEST 2011*, accessed March 4, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lqZ1niXRC0>.

can without hurting anyone else. Tell your friends you love them.¹¹⁸

PIX is about love inasmuch as it is about mobilizing people to create a better world. This oscillation between intimacy and activism, bridged by affective alliances, is at the very center of the Plan-It-X Fest tradition and, as I argued in the previous chapter, DIY punk itself.

Conceptual Apparatus

While the literature I have reviewed in the previous chapter and the introduction would be quite satisfactory for a bare-bones mapping of the material and cultural work being done at PIX Fest, this section briefly draws on two existing bodies of theory to further enrich the analysis to come. First, I refer to Jon Savage and Lawrence Grossberg to offer a brief review of the role of punk rock in post-war youth subculture to contextualize the movement and discourse of contemporary DIY punk. Second, I further draw on Diana Taylor, alongside earlier cultural studies writer Dick Hebdige, to underscore the importance of performance studies for thinking about transfers of knowledge in performatic situations at PIX Fest in particular and for counterpublicity in general.

Disengagement and Post – WWII Youth Subculture

PIX 2016 happened just a few days short of the 71st anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. While few at PIX likely had thoughts of nuclear winter on their mind, the event itself—like most western contemporary cultural events—was haunted by the long-lasting tremors of Japan’s destruction. In his book, *Teenage*, Jon Savage discusses the

¹¹⁸ “Anarchist, DIY Punk and Activist, Samantha Dorsett Died on June 20 in Oakland California | Anarchistnews.org,” accessed March 3, 2017, <http://anarchistnews.org/content/anarchist-diy-punk-and-activist-samantha-dorsett-died-june-20-oakland-california>.

prehistory of western youth culture as it unfolded through industrialization and the two world wars, leading up to the first usage of the word “teenager” and the founding issue of the first teen magazine, *Seventeen*.

Savage’s history suggests that the phrase “teenager” was originally used as a “marketing term... that reflected the newly visible spending power of adolescents.”¹¹⁹ Further, Savage points out that the realization of the teenage segment of the population as a culturally discrete group became especially apparent after the “A-bomb’s apocalyptic revelation precipitated a new kind of global consciousness and a new kind of psychology. Faced with the prospect of instant vaporization, many humans began to focus totally on the present, if not the instant.”¹²⁰ This new existential mentality brought on a willed youthful disconnect from the ugly past—an “act of forgetting necessary for the Western world to continue.”¹²¹ In focusing on the present, many youths became disconnected from the grounding narratives of the past, the cohesive imaginary of citizenship, and the disciplinary schema of social customs. Post-modernism lifted the beat generation from the Earth and youths have floated along since, occasionally touching down for moments of clarity. Contemporary punks often live in the same condition. They—like the beats, the situationists, the pop artists, and the punks before them—fretfully seek a sense of place and purpose, removed from the dark and alienated histories that contextualize their historical moment.

Savage’s pre-history of youth culture—ranging from 1875 to 1945—lets off at the moment where Lawrence Grossberg’s era of expertise begins. In *We gotta get out of this*

¹¹⁹ Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Prehistory of Youth Culture: 1875-1945*, Reprint edition (New York etc.: Penguin Books, 2008), xv.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 464.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

place, Grossberg describes how the war spurred the development of a breakneck economy whose only norm was change—“a moment in which ‘everything that is sold melts into the air.’”¹²² This lack of grounding inhibited the post-war generation’s ability to affectively identify with the structures of feeling being passed on to them by previous generations:

It was as if one had to live two lives: one defined by the interpretations and institutions of the adult world and their attempts to incorporate youth into them; the other defined by an affective uncertainty that gradually became the common discourse of youth.¹²³

The affective uncertainty Grossberg is describing eventually found an outlet in the form of a new musical genre uniquely capable of differentiating its listeners from earlier generations and articulating the historical experience of postwar youth. Rock music became the central popular art form for a generation, and its relevance continues to blare across the globe.

DIY punk is one of rock’s many offspring and the tradition of searching for a place and a purpose lives strongly through it. That impulse to search is just as much of a politically charged artistic performance today as it was in the early days of rock n’ roll.

Performing Style, Performing Publics

As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Taylor’s project in *The Archive and the Repertoire* is to resituate the place of knowledge in performance studies itself by developing a stronger understanding of performance as “a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge.”¹²⁴ Taylor grounds her project in historical relationships

¹²² Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 202; Karl Marx, “Communist Manifesto,” *Marxist Internet Archive*, 1848, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>.

¹²³ Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 204.

¹²⁴ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 16.

between writing and performance, “Writing, though highly valued, was primarily a prompt to performance, a mnemonic aid...[that] depended on embodied culture for transmission.”¹²⁵ Through the basis of this historical relationship, Taylor develops the model of the *archive*—consisting of “documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change”¹²⁶—and the *repertoire*—constituted by “embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing...all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge.”¹²⁷ Taylor suggests that the archive and the repertoire, less of a clean binary than a loose and overlapping dialectic tension, are entangled with one another and likewise exceed one another’s limits.¹²⁸

Taylor’s project maintained an acutely anti-colonial telos by investigating the roles that these two knowledge systems held in relation to the forces enacting and resisting colonial conquest. The written form served as a means for the organizing and discrediting of the oral or embodied knowledge systems of the colonized. Taylor describes how performatic repertoires, more often used by colonized groups, could be used to warp and reassign meanings across repeating iterations of performance; a gesture in one scenario could slyly change significance in another. This notion—the repertoire’s slippery capacity for repurposing and resistance—offers a productive model for thinking through knowledges being performed in the scenario of PIX Fest. In coming sections, Taylor’s work will support analysis of PIX Fest as an instance of performed resistance

¹²⁵ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 21.

against larger efforts to survey punks and incorporate them into existing grids of intelligibility.

Taylor's work, as well as Grossberg's, is reminiscent of Dick Hebdige's formulations on the significance of style. Hebdige asserts that,

The struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings within ideology is therefore always, at the same time, a struggle within signification: a struggle for possession of the sign which extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life.... commodities are indeed open to a double inflection: to 'illegitimate' as well as 'legitimate' uses. These 'humble objects' can be magically appropriated; 'stolen' by subordinate groups and made to carry 'secret' meanings: means which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination. Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance.¹²⁹

Here, Hebdige emphasizes the capacity of stylistic performances to reassign signification to practices and, through that reassignment, build a new and resistant way of being inside of another more regimented and oppressive one. This is just what takes place at PIX Fest: situated in an environment built by and for the needs of capital, punks attempt what Sarah Banet-Weiser rightly calls impossible. They perform the construction of a space inside of and simultaneously delimited from capitalism. Through style and reassigned meanings, the punks build the home they have been searching for.

Subcultures that perform themselves to be counter to mainstream hegemonic ideals have the capacity to both continue the existence of those ideals and to destroy them. The aim of this paper is to closely interrogate those performances of counterpublicity at PIX Fest in order to learn as much as possible about the modalities enacted at PIX and the challenges of efficacy that they generate. Considering those modalities in terms of the historical moment of punk as a postwar youth culture and in

¹²⁹ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Revised ed. edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 1979), 17–18.

terms of the varying sorts of knowledges—both of the archive and of the repertoire—will aid us in that interrogation.

Mobile Modalities: DIY Punks Go Camping at PIX

The analysis in this chapter is structured based on an experiential narrative. My analysis will tell the story of PIX 2016 through the data I have collected. First, I focus on the road to the festival. The road is significant in a geographical sense as well as an ideological and cultural one. Second, I offer description and analysis of performances at the festival itself through both a performance studies framework and a counterpublics framework. In that section, I will bring those two vocabularies together to demonstrate the productive potential of performance theory for thinking about countercultural enclave modalities, especially in anti-capitalist movements. Third, I present the departure from and the aftermath of PIX through the language of networked publics. In the end, I conclude with two major points: first, I show that PIX enacts disengagement from capitalism as a performatic modality. That performance still does not escape its context in capitalism, but simulates it through mobility, isolation and stylized discourse. Second, I show that PIX performs much of the same material and cultural work of punk houses, only at a much larger scale: it demonstrates further use of the modality of party while also offering opportunities for enclaves to participate in and discuss activist strategy. The change of scale and the movement of punks themselves to and from PIX shows the incredible importance of mobility for counterpublicity and efficacious cultural performance.

Too Many Miles

Class traitor? What fucking ever!
 I'm just another middle class kid, too.
 But if I'm not good at changing, I'm good at self loathing
 So I'll class hate myself with you.

May our only occupation be not having a job
 May the only cocktails that we make be Molotov
 May that day be now,
 And for as many days after that as we know how

It starts in this parking lot,
 And in my dreams, I am dirty, broke, beautiful and free.
 My hands clenched in a fist, and my face in a smile,
 After hitching too many miles.

--"New Mexico Song" by Johnny Hobo and The Freight Trains

PIX can be taken to begin at different times for different people. For many, it started on Friday, July 22nd, when people began arriving at the venue. For some, it started a day or two before with a bus ticket, a ride from a friendly stranger, or a freight container. For a few, it started with a passport scanner and a long trip across an ocean. For me, PIX started with a backpack and a night spent on the floor of the Indianapolis International Airport's baggage claim. An airport shuttle brought me to a Bloomington hotel. I wandered until I eventually found the bus depot and a friendly *Rural Transit* bus driver to take me to Spencer. There, I met an Australian punk in a McDonalds and we made a sign from some cardboard we found in the parking lot. The Australian and I hit the streets of Spencer and thumbed a ride to the venue in no time. For all, PIX started with a kind of journey—and that journey was an integral part of the performance itself.

The practices of hitchhiking and train hopping are tropes in DIY punk rhetoric and performances. While it takes a certain kind of punk—usually called crust punks or gutter punks—to embrace hitchhiking and homelessness as a long-term modality, the

performances of those who do it still generate enormous stylistic and rhetorical influence over the DIY community as a whole. Crust punks oftentimes inspire romanticized fantasies of the road in their DIY comrades. They offer tales of adventure and transcendental freedom. DIY punk is not unique as a subculture for its fascination with transience and independent travel, though. These punks hold a close relationship with the international squatter movement,¹³⁰ whose early history remains fairly contested but dates back to some time between the late 1940s in Britain,¹³¹ the 1960s in Puerto Rico, and the 1970s in New York City's Lower East Side.¹³² Squatter and hobo culture has been closely related to a number of post-war art movements. The beat generation and the new age ("hippie") movement, in particular, romanticized the road as a space for seeking transcendence and disconnection from normative life.

In the instance of PIX, we can see punks engaging with opportunities to perform independent travel in their own ways. In my case, I flew from visiting family in CA to Indianapolis with no plan for getting from the airport to the festival in Spencer, IN (almost 70 miles, when routed through Bloomington). Many other punks worked online to coordinate travel plans with one another. In the days leading up the fest, a flurry of posts on the festival's Facebook event page advertised empty seats in cars coming from cities as far as Quebec, Saskatchewan, Connecticut, California, Oregon, Washington and Florida—not to mention cities all over the Midwest. Many commenters arranged with drivers to split gas and be picked up in odd towns along the paths of those who were

¹³⁰ Justin Hampton, "Punk Nomads," *Vice*, April 11, 2012, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/punk-nomads; Jeff Ferrell, "Contemporary Freight-Train Drifters Have Found the Unlikely Antidote to America's Problems," *Quartz*, September 8, 2016, <https://qz.com/776600/freight-train-drifters-and-gutter-punks-have-found-the-unlikely-antidote-to-americas-problems/>.

¹³¹ Howard Webber, "A Domestic Rebellion: The Squatters' Movement of 1946," *Ex Historia* 4 (2012): 125–46.

¹³² Arun Gupta, "A Brief History of Squatting," *In These Times*, August 1, 2013, http://inthesetimes.com/article/15231/a_brief_history_of_squatting.

advertising empty seats.¹³³ While organizing rideshares is not quite the same thing as full-on train hopping and hitchhiking, the spirit of collectively pooling resources in order to provide for other members of the DIY punk community was performed through this sort of message board activity. In that performance, many DIY punks had the opportunity to experience a sort of in-group self-sufficiency, exposure to strangers (who would soon become new friends), and the adventurous life that they hear about so often in music about transcendental travel experiences.

While these ridesharing experiences are stylized as adventurous opportunities to save money and participate in a sort of communist performance of mobility, the actual functioning of the board looks alarmingly similar to a number of neoliberal business ventures that follow the same model. Zimride, for example, is a message board platform that offers private communities associated with a specific company or university a space to post offers or requests for rides. Zimride's participants work together to manufacture the experience of participating in a communal sharing economy, which Zimride then profits off of by contracting with community administrators—the university or company. In the case of the PIX ride sharers there is no business appropriating profits from the community, but the group is nonetheless manufacturing a particular lifestyle experience and then participating in it themselves.

A critique similar to the one I raised about Funky Towne's free store acting to *accommodate* the pressures of neoliberalism and wage labor exploitation through communist infrastructures rather than *combat* it might be leveraged against PIX ride sharing. However, I will rather acknowledge that critique and continue to focus on a more

¹³³ Chris Clavin et al., "Plan-It-X Fest 2016," Event Page, *Facebook*, (2016), <https://www.facebook.com/events/1669960276598130/>.

positive aspect of this ride sharing work. Zimride's participants, again, manufacture Zimride's product and then consume it. The PIX ride sharers similarly manufacture the experience of alternative travel and consume it for themselves, but in this situation they have—for the most part, considering Facebook's appropriation of data and advertising revenue—cast off the class of capitalist appropriators who originally designed the predominant model for contemporary private community ride sharing. As such, the punks here are indeed performing an escape from capitalist individualism by *doing it themselves*.

That said, it is important to remember the reality that this performance is still nestled atop a capitalist infrastructure. Again, the ridesharing posts were shared on a Facebook page. The cars they drove, the gasoline they burned, the roads they traveled, and the trains they hopped are all part of the infrastructure of the built environment. Therefore, as Harvey would acknowledge, they were all a part of the materialization of capital in space. The tensioned contradiction here is apparent: these mobile punks performed, to the best of their ability, disengagement from the very systems of capital that made the performance itself possible.

Contradictions, though, can be productive. The performance of collaborating communal transportation online brings with it a repertoire of performatic knowledges. Sure, the initial act of the performance is digital and textual, but that textuality cues the performance of driving to a designated meeting place, welcoming a stranger into a vehicle, sharing resources for gas, and driving together to the event. Embedded within those performances is a kind of overall knowledge of what it means to relate to others in a more communal way. The fact of that performance being perched atop a larger

capitalist context provides a dissonant contrast that productively shows the different structures of experience between performances of capitalist individualism and sharing communalism. That dissonance, even further, tends to induce desire for more experiences of communal sharing and a desire to enact new—less individualistic and more communal—ways of being.

Finally, the performances of travel outlined in this section of analysis harken back to the notion of travel as a trope signifying transcendentalism in DIY punk song lyrics and culture. That performance is historically contextualized within the larger tradition of transcendentalist travel in post-war youth subcultures. To be a hitchhiker or ridesharer entails placing yourself in a new circumstance that has little or nothing to do with where you came from. Independent travel entails leaving behind your home, your past, and sometimes your future. It is a way of placing oneself in a liminal sort of in-between or off-track space. Many of the travelers heading to or from PIX eventually return to the regular tracked narrative of their lives, but the experience of disconnecting from that track for a time is a first step toward disconnecting from the historical and social context of life in neoliberal capitalism altogether.

The next section of my analysis will focus on the performances of DIY punk counterpublicity that took place at the festival itself. In doing so, I pay closer attention to the productive capacities of the contradictory nature of DIY punk's performed disengagements with capital. Those capacities, I argue, involve the building of radical networks, sharing of discursive and experiential knowledges, and the execution of instrumental activist work. While I recognize the impossibility of an anti-normative, anti-capitalist event's full departure from its normative and capitalist context, I still assert that

the performance of such a departure is itself productive. Finally, in the coming section, I will centralize my assertion that PIX Fest performs oscillations between modalities of party and traditional activist modalities that are similar to the modalities of the punk house—only at a larger scale.

PIX Fest as an Instance of Counterpublicity

Hey man im angry and I know you think its annoying
Yeah, I know you hate the way you have to see the places were going

...

So whats up with the repression of our sexualities?
I thought this was that other world where inhibitions seize?

...

we don't want, to be pacified, I don't want, to be classified
As demure, As incapable, As not alright
WE DON'T WANNA LICK YOUR BALLS TONIGHT
We wanna own our abilities, our bodies, our rights
WE DON'T WANNA LICK YOUR BALLS TONIGHT
We wanna dance on your grave and make it out alive
We wanna scream
Without fighting for what we mean
To sound alarming cause being loud
Is often categorized as being CRAAAZZYYY

...I wanna be myself, inside of this place, where im supposedly “free” and supposedly “safe” to enact on organisms inside of myself; free of degradation, free of your help

--“Secret Agenda” by The Homewreckers¹³⁴¹³⁵

The Homewreckers describe themselves as “a queer-core/ pop-punk/ rock’n’roll outfit from the salty depths of Brooklyn, NY.”¹³⁶ At Plan-It-X Fest, performers often bring to the stage not only music, but also a set of explicit political arguments to

¹³⁴ The Homewreckers, *Secret Agenda*, I Statements (Brooklyn, NY: Mooster Records; Nervous Nelly Records, 2015), <https://thehomewreckers.bandcamp.com/>.

¹³⁵ These lyrics were taken as originally posted on The Homewreckers’ Bandcamp. The usages of capitalization and the grammatical style all come directly from the band and, as such, are significant to the particular stylistic performance of the The Homewreckers’ art.

¹³⁶ “I STATEMENTS, by THE HOMEWRECKERS,” *THE HOMEWRECKERS*, accessed March 7, 2017, <https://thehomewreckers.bandcamp.com>.

communicate through their lyrics or through brief speeches delivered in between songs. The Homewreckers, alongside a slough of other queer, riot grrrl feminist, and otherwise politically oriented bands, brought on stage a critique of punk's habitually exclusive nature as a community of predominately straight, white, middle class people. In "Secret Agenda," The Homewreckers deliver an impassioned argument for the importance of allowing queer folk and feminists to voice their opinions, call out aggressive or otherwise bigoted behavior, and to be themselves without being objectified or lambasted by other punks. The Homewreckers' performance made an explicit statement about what the band members believe that the DIY punk scene ought to be.

Like with any enclaved counterpublic, some of the arguments voiced at PIX had to do with the constitution of the enclave itself, others had to do with how the enclave should interface with society writ large after the festival ends. Both of these, harkening back to Nancy Fraser's original formulations on counterpublicity, are central to counterpublic discourse.¹³⁷ In this section, I discuss the counterpublic modalities at work at the 2016 PIX Fest. First, I discuss the importance of the festival for establishing a national discussion about DIY punk as an enclave and enactments of that at PIX. Second, I discuss the instrumental modalities enacted at PIX Fest and the opportunities PIX offered for discussing those tactics in workshops. Third, I recall the modality of party discussed in the previous chapter and point out the significant implications of scaling that modality out to accommodate a full festival. In the end of this analytical section, I discuss these modalities in terms of Taylor's work on performance and Hebdige's formulations of style.

¹³⁷ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," 124.

First, the example of The Homewreckers song above shows an instance where lyrics are being used to assert a position about how people in the DIY punk counterpublic ought to treat one another and what social values that counterpublic should maintain. Several other performers offered music that made similar arguments, demonstrated those values in their music, or worked to further educate the audience about things that are important to the experiences of marginalized members of the DIY community.¹³⁸ Still other performers took advantage of moments between songs to dedicate their art to fellow punks who are in jail and make anti-prison arguments,¹³⁹ or explain the significance of a song from a particular perspective. For instance, Nick Berger of Paper Bee explains the significance of one song for them as a trans person before performing it. Berger's explanation strikes a powerfully vulnerable tone:

This song is called “The Choice to be Heard and Not Seen,” and I wrote it about this thing where when I was a kid my mom didn't want me to watch the *Little Mermaid* movie because she didn't think that it was okay that the thought could be good to give up your voice for a man.... But then it got complicated when I was getting older because I'm trans. So there became this actual conundrum where it's like, “but what if you were the man?” And as some of you know, hormones change your voice. My singing voice is one of my most treasured things that I have. So this song is about that and all of the impossible choices that trans people are forced to make all of the time. And just generally about what it means to decide—or to exist, it's not a decision for everyone—to exist outside of a realm in which you can pass as anything or in which you can be incorporated into the world around you in a way that makes sense to the dominant culture.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ cuttingroomfloor666, *Cutting Room Floor at Plan-It-X Fest 2014, Pt. 2*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJerNQSh8YI>; “The No No No, by Cutting Room Floor,” *Cutting Room Floor*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://cuttingroomfloor1.bandcamp.com/track/the-no-no-no>; PortlandPunkShows, *Garrett Walters @ PIX Fest 2016*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FV4ZEe944DA>; PortlandPunkShows, *Jesus & His Judgemental Father @ PIX Fest 2016*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRhAGZvuLA0>; PortlandPunkShows, *Loone @ PIX Fest 2016*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LH6pMzIDEA4>; PortlandPunkShows, *The Max Levine Ensemble @ PIX Fest 2016*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUC0RsTFdZg>; Shibby Pictures, *Ramshackle Glory - Last Show Ever @ PIX Fest 2016*, accessed March 8, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9N6_kyWzOk4&t=2486s; PortlandPunkShows, *Toby Foster @ PIX Fest 2016*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCnBtKpt5xE>.

¹³⁹ Shibby Pictures, *Ramshackle Glory - Last Show Ever @ PIX Fest 2016*.

¹⁴⁰ Paper Bee and Sunny Jack-O-Lantern, *Plan-It-X Fest 2016 Paper Bee*, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNWQGJxOZgs>.

Here, Berger makes clear the conundrum that the song, “The Choice to be Heard and Not Seen” describes. That description is instructive of the need to be open to learning about the wide variety of issues that appear in trans lives and working to make trans people feel welcome in the community. These demonstrative explanations spark conversations that need to be had in the context of the punk community. Speeches similar to this were delivered at PIX about feminism, race,¹⁴¹ anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian politics.

Conversations aimed at shaping the DIY punk community took place off stage as well. Many of these conversations happened organically, but a few took place in volunteer-organized workshops. These workshops, themselves a kind of instrumental modality, were designed to perform a number of different functions. They were a space for people to share specific kinds of embodied knowledges. On the one hand, people learned to work with tools and produce specific objects with skills like letterpress printing, making medicines from a garden, and writing creative nonfiction from lived experience. On the other, a number of workshops were focused on teaching punks specific ways of relating to important and newly visible members of the punk community—these workshops focused on whiteness and anti-racism in DIY punk and on sexual assault survivor support. These workshops not only provided a space for people to learn new repertoires for producing media or building and maintaining relationships, but also demonstrated values that the festival and workshop organizers aimed to incorporate into the DIY punk ethos. These values are aimed at making punk into a more radically inclusive space—a goal that punks articulated at the 2006 PIX fest in the “Making Punk a

¹⁴¹ Despite that I did personally witness a speech about the need to bring more people of color into the DIY punk community, I have not been able to find any video recordings of that speech online. Further, I am unable to remember which performer delivered that speech. The lack of evidence for that speech in particular is both unfortunate and telling.

Threat Again!” workshop as a necessary prerequisite for DIY punks to work on in order to bring on any sorts of meaningful change in the public writ large.¹⁴²

Establishing values and goals like the ones discussed and performed in festival workshops and through performances on stage at PIX is key for any counterpublic for discovering its interests and deciding how to agitate for those interests. The knowledge being spread and shared through these workshops leads fairly directly to instrumental action on the part of those who participate in the performance.

The instrumental modalities working at PIX 2016 were not wide-ranging, but instead focused on making one powerful intervention. PIX Fest traditionally intervenes in the flow of capital by doing a fundraiser for carefully selected groups that need financial support. Shortly after the 2016 festival, Chris Clavin announced on the festival’s Facebook event page that PIX had raised \$25,000. Further, Clavin was sure to assert, “don’t let anyone tell you that punk never did anything good, because we (INCLUDING YOU: everyone that bought a ticket) did something together that was fun and very good.”¹⁴³ Clavin is careful here to assert the importance of the fact that this festival was not only fun, *but also did something instrumental for the community*. The money that was raised was donated to Midwest Pages to Prisoners (a books-to-prisons program that provides free books to prisoners and promotes self education, critical thinking, rehabilitation, and reintegration), All Options Pregnancy Resource Center in Bloomington, the Hoosier Abortion Fund (a fund run by All Options), and The Void (an all-ages collectively run DIY event space).¹⁴⁴ By pooling resources to significantly impact the flow of capital in the Bloomington area (i.e. infusing these institutions with

¹⁴² Joe Biel, *Plan It X “Making Punk a Threat Again!”*

¹⁴³ Clavin et al., “PIX Fest 2016 Facebook Event Page.”

¹⁴⁴ “Plan-It-X Fest 2016 Information Pamphlet” (Plan-It-X Records, June 2016).

additional resources), the punks at Plan-It-X Fest participated in a sort of consumer instrumentality through the sheer act of attending the festival.

While few other activities at PIX were designed to directly intervene in the flow of capital through the built environment that contextualized PIX, the opportunities for discussion of such tactics were aimed at sharing knowledge that could be used for instrumental interventions later. While some such workshops are discussed above, I would like to further reference, in particular, a workshop titled, “LUPE: A Union In The Community.” Its description in the workshops list read as follows: “TA Community Union that organizes members of the low-income community to advocate for issues and factors impacting their lives—explore ways for it to engage in future revolutionary activity.” LUPE (*La Union de Pueblo Entero*) is a community union founded in 1989 by César Chávez. At the workshop, organizers from LUPE lead a discussion about revolutionary tactics and ways of getting communities organized in the hometowns of attendees. Sessions like these are key for spreading practices similar to the Solidarity Network in Huntington and Seasol (Seattle Solidarity Network) in Seattle.

In addition to the practice and discussion of traditional activist modalities, PIX performed party modalities in ways similar to, but on a larger scale than, those modalities that we saw at play with Funky Towne in Chapter 1. In the previous chapter, the significance of the party modalities was that they offered an opportunity for punk house party attendees to gather together and form affective alliances through music or share ideas in an organic intellectual setting. Affective alliances formed at punk houses help the punk community to fulfill its role as a gathering hub for like-minded people and a support community for people struggling to find their place in the public writ large; the modality

of party is a fun way for house show attendees to see that *they are not alone*. When the modality of party is scaled upward, punks find that they are more than merely ‘not alone,’ they find that *they are part of something bigger than their community at home*. The festival provides a space and opportunity for the international DIY punk scene to gather and become visible to itself. The onus of that gathering, though, is more focused on the notion of party than it is focused on politics.

When it comes to party, Plan-It-X Fest is treated in much the same way as any other music festival. People show up ready to make friends and have a good time. Jokes are told, songs are played together in the woods, and people swap stories of their experiences in their hometowns. Attendees watch bands perform and dance or mosh the night away together. Then they sit around campfires until they go to sleep and get ready to do it all again the next day. The whole experience is very personal, but deeply ingrained in that personability is a feeling, breathing, beating politic. Several punks attest to this in a mini-documentary about Plan-It-X Fest 2016 entitled, “And One For Good Luck – The Last Plan-It-X Fest.” One, for example, attests to the idea that punks get the chance to meet new people and work together to get on the same page while they are all in the same place: “It’s just a place where—like, normally people that are spread out from each other and can’t really communicate can come together and figure out some things and make friends.”¹⁴⁵ On the one hand, this festival attendee gestures obliquely to the protopolitical nature of the festival by pointing out that people get the chance to “figure out some things.” On the other, another better-established member of the DIY punk scene points to the significance of the gathering for affectionate relationships:

¹⁴⁵ Brandon Walsh, *And One For Good Luck - The Last Plan-It-X Fest* (Houston, TX: Punk With A Camera, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUFgvlCgL1g&t=7s>.

There are so many people who I've met on tour and just traveling who I don't see, and maybe I get to talk to on Facebook and see their posts or something, and like, they're all here. It's like a big family reunion! It's great. I get to see friends from all over the country.¹⁴⁶

The connections being made by newer attendees like the first interviewee eventually form into affectionate relationships like the one that the second interviewee describes. The making of new friendships or the reunions of old ones are key for the development of the party. In this sense, the continuing reiterations of Plan-It-X Fest enable the punk community to stay alive. The bodies moving across the globe go from the house, to the festival, and back to the house. This repeating contraction and expansion breathes life into the DIY punk community and enables it to spread its knowledge throughout DIY punk's international network.

Now that we have discussed some of the modalities being used at PIX Fest, it is important to remember that these modalities are indeed a performance. Taylor's formulation of performance as a means of enacting and sharing knowledge can help us to see how these performances are used to spread ideas. At PIX, ideas are spread about issues having to do with the punk community and its historical problems with racial, sexual, gendered, and classed exclusivity. Ideas are also spread about the larger society that contextualizes punk and how punks can go about effecting change within it. All of these knowledges, though, are shared in a performance resting atop and made possible by a contextual framework of racist, patriarchal, heteronormative capitalist exploitation. That truth is inescapable, regardless of how well the punks perform their departure from those conditions. That said, the fact of these knowledges being spread remains. Further,

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

that fact shows that the performance of DIY punk counterpublicity retains value in its ability to stylistically simulate the experiences of different ways of being.

Style, here, is key. Hebdige asserts that signifiers and commodities come with both “legitimate” and “illegitimate” uses.¹⁴⁷ The legitimate use of the roads is to move capital across them and move people across them in such a way as to facilitate their social reproduction. The legitimate use for a venue is to gather people there with the attraction of entertainment and make money. Hebdige asserts, “No subculture has sought with more grim determination that the punks to detach itself from the taken-for-granted landscape of normalized forms, nor to bring down upon itself such vehement disapproval.”¹⁴⁸ I’m not sure that placing punks above all other subcultures is a fair argument, but I will argue that punks continue to subvert the usage of commodities and signifiers today. Through re-stylization and countercultural performance, punks use capital’s built environment to spread knowledge that is not only anti-capitalist, but also poised against all those divisions that the struggle for resources inspires among the working class: racism, sexism, heteronormativity, et cetera. When an escape from the context of capitalism is impossible until fully-fledged revolution, perhaps such re-stylization is one of our best tactics for waging an ongoing war of position.

In this section, I have discussed Plan-It-X Fest as an instance of counterpublicity. PIX is a space full of “kids building models of a world that they might want to live in.”¹⁴⁹ That modeling is in and of itself a sort of building of radical knowledge. Arguments are made through song, speech, and dialogue. Alliances are forged and strengthened through

¹⁴⁷ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 18.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴⁹ The Wingnut Dishwashers Union, *Jesus Does the Dishes, Burn the Earth, Leave It Behind* (Crafty Records, 2010), <https://diybandits.bandcamp.com/album/burn-the-earth-leave-it-behind>.

party. Knowledges are shared through performance. Style is built through the misuse of signifiers and commodities alike. In the next analytical subsection, I will discuss why all of this matters after the punks go home.

Departure Arrival

You know I never could fall asleep on a train
 All the time dreaming about moving away.
 Finally awake, I wonder,
 What if I pulled the emergency brake?
 ...
 Something below me starts cranking to life.
 The platform moves backwards until it's out of sight.
 Tracks start to split,
 Got another ten hours till my next cigarette.
 ...
 When the tape slows down it means the battery's dead.
 May your songs never get stuck out of my head.
 If I ever fall asleep I remember my dream
 Where everybody's there and nobody leaves.
 Where everybody's there and nobody leaves.
 --"Departure Arrival" by Mischief Brew

Erik Petersen called his music Mischief Brew. He was a singer-songwriter who produced music for himself and other bands in Philadelphia on his DIY label, Fistolo Records. After decades spent as a stalwart in Philadelphia's DIY punk scene, Petersen committed suicide on July 14, 2016. The next day—seven days before Plan-It-X Fest would begin—Chris Clavin posted in memoriam of yet another lost friend on the Plan-It-X Fest event page, "PLEASE consider learning Erik Petersen / Mischief Brew songs to cover around the campfire and the lake. Learn them well and learn them right and play them LOUD!" That event and Clavin's Facebook post set an important affective tone for PIX. Petersen's songs are still stuck in my head. May they ever be.

On the last night of Plan-It-X Fest 2016, Ramshackle Glory played a heartfelt set for their final show—another major departure for the DIY punk community. After that

night's performance, Ramshackle Glory's front person, Pat "The Bunny" Schneeweis, was set to permanently retire from DIY punk. Appropriately, Ramshackle Glory played a cover of Petersen's "Departure Arrival" for the first song of their encore. I remember noticing the crowd of people around me swaying as they sang along. Tears were strewn across their faces and mine. The reality of Pat and Erik's departures set in for me during this song. I stopped swaying and covered my face with my hands. A shirtless bald man with a gray beard and a round belly turned and embraced me. The crowd closed in around my body. We all held each other for a moment. Hundreds of us swayed in an affectionate embrace.

"Departure Arrival," like so many punk songs, is about leaving somewhere as much as it is about going to a new place. Petersen and Schneeweis are gone, but there are more punks ready to take on their mantle. After Ramshackle's set was over, the punks packed up their tents and instruments and departed from Stable Studios. Like any departure, that movement away also entailed a movement toward a new era of DIY punk. The festival attendees got the chance to meet and make new friends. They got the chance to strengthen their relationships with existing friends. The key to ending the festival right is ensuring that the network of new relationships held by punks sustains itself. In order to make new relationships last, the punks who leave PIX need to ensure that they continue communicating and collaborating with one another at the international scale, even after they have gone home. In this final subsection of my analysis, I will discuss evidence of those ongoing relationships and their significance for strengthening the DIY punk counterpublic.

So far, social media has been a tool used consistently by DIY punks for organizing events and for spreading art and ideas. It makes sense, then, that many of the relationships made at Plan-It-X Fest would continue to be maintained through social media platforms. In this section, I use data from Facebook and Youtube to discuss the networked counterpublic relations being sustained between punks after their departure from PIX Fest. Importantly, digital technology enables a kind of partial realization of the dream space that Petersen describes in “Departure Arrival,” where “everybody’s there and nobody leaves.” The digital platform enables punks to keep their connections alive and offer collaboration, social support, and grounds for re-exposure to the affective experiences of the festival.

First, immediately after departing from PIX, the punks who attended the festival used its Facebook event page to thank the attendees for spending time with them, post photos from the weekend, and reminisce over the experience. Importantly, Stable Studios is located in an area with no cell phone service, so many attendees had to wait to depart before they could connect with each other on social media. This led to a busy few days on the festival event page after the festival was over, which then subsided to a few posts a month leading all the way through to the present day. Since the festival, 43 punks posted in order to share or request photos and videos of specific performances or events. There have been 53 posts calling for friends they had met to “friend request” them, or describing “missed connections.” One group of commenters had the idea to make a “PIX 2016” Facebook group for attendees to join and use to sustain relationships. These sorts of activities are foundational for building connections that can be used to maintain the livelihood of the international DIY punk network.

Second, that network has been used for collaborative work since Plan-It-X Fest ended. While there have been fewer posts attempting this sort of relational work, a number of PIX attendees have posted in either the private group or on the event page in an effort to plan tours, promote shows, ask for advice or help while traveling or working on art and DIY projects. On the Facebook event page and the private Facebook group combined, there were 12 posts about planning tours and looking for places to play or sleep; 10 posts promoting shows that punks were already putting on; 29 posts asking for advice about general DIY practices; 16 posts about activist networking or fundraising; 2 posts about sharing resources with other punks; 4 posts asking for help with finding a place to sleep in a new city or planning for future travel; and 1 post realistically dedicated to organizing a purchase of property for the beginning of a new punk house in Prescott, Arizona (there were 10 commenters who seemed more or less seriously interested in the project). The DIY punk counterpublics network has grown and strengthened with each Plan-It-X Fest as a result of the discursive space provided by platforms like these pages. The statistics above show that there is real value in hosting a festival or conference wherein members of a counterpublic can gather from around the world, meet for a few days, exchange contact information somehow, and continue communicating after those people disburse back to their communities.

Third, more than collaborative engagement, these pages offered a space for punks to provide emotional and social support to one another long after the festival ended. Combined, the two pages showed 26 posts about finding friends and meeting up in new cities; 2 posts wherein punks sought to discuss the difficulties of staying sober; and 7 posts explicitly seeking emotional support or encouragement from the community. In all,

it is clear that the networks started and strengthened at PIX Fest 2016 have not only remained active for collaboration on DIY punk activities or projects, but also remain active as an avenue for punks to seek out emotional and social support from like-minded people. These two sorts of long-term usages of the international DIY Punk network nurtured by PIX 2016 mirror the two modalities that punk houses and PIX fests themselves oscillate between: the modality of party deals with affective alliances and emotional bonds whereas many of the activities associated with organizing travel and DIY projects contribute to more instrumental activist tactics.

This subsection shows how the international networks established and strengthened at PIX continue to remain relevant to DIY punks after the festival is over. Those networks, especially when they have a platform to use for communication, are productively used for both collaboration on DIY punk projects and actions and for social and emotional support. These platforms are a step toward simulating the sort of idealistic space that Erik Petersen dreams of in his song, “Departure Arrival.” Here, there is a space where people can remain in contact, despite that they are not immediately present in an embodied sense. At first, it seems contradictory that the lasting impact of the development of PIX is contingent on the sustenance of a stable network of punks—who are oftentimes obsessed with transience and difficult to contact. However, contacting someone no longer relies that they stay in only one location; transient punks can be reached regardless of their proximity to a landline phone or a mailing address. It has been shown that squatters, hitch hikers, and train hopping kids spend more of their money earned busking on keeping their data plans functioning than they spend on food or

shelter.¹⁵⁰ Because of that, the functionality of a network is no longer contingent on the spatial fixity of the people who function as nodes in that network. Those communicative avenues make an enormous difference in the relative strength of the international network of punks. Punks dedicated to revolutionary work can only hope that these networks, which connect punk houses and wayward punks all over the world, might eventually grow strong enough for mobilization toward large scale coordinated international instrumental actions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored Plan-It-X Fest from the perspective of counterpublic theory, performance studies and cultural studies, all with a small infusion of spatial theory. By marrying counterpublicity with Taylor's work in performance studies, I have shown that many of the performances that took place at PIX involved performatively sharing experiential knowledges that are integral for the formation of a counterpublic whose goal is to explore and agitate for new ways of enacting social and economic relations. Through performing those social and economic relations, counterpublics can experiment with and discover new ways of being.

That theoretical intervention has greatly aided me in answering the research questions that I laid out at the start of this chapter. First, the performances of punk publicness that I outlined in my analysis showed a scaling up of the same modalities we saw in the punk house: the intimate and personal modalities of party and traditional activist modalities. The change of scale enabled punks to experience the sense of being affectively invested in a community larger and stronger than themselves as individuals.

¹⁵⁰ Hampton, "Punk Nomads."

More importantly, the change in scale enables DIY punks to build international connections and maintain them after they have left the festival. Those international connections continue to remind punks that they are part of a significant community and inspire punks to increase the interconnectedness and significance of that community through collaboration. Further, the change in scale enables punks to make a greater impact on the flow of capital in the Bloomington area and more effectively discuss and share knowledges about instrumental tactics in general.

Second, I have shown how Plan-It-X Fest enacts disengagement from capitalism as its own performatic modality. That performance is contextualized in the history of post-war youth subcultural movements that pursue transcendence of their historical context as a means of escaping the present and seeking something better—much like the narrator in the song by Malpais that opened this chapter. These transcendental performances are significant for the ongoing functioning of the DIY punk community in that they provide a space for punks to experience and experiment with new ways of relating. In doing so, they generate and share knowledges that help punks to work out their ideas about what a “better world” might look like.

Connecting this chapter to the thesis in a larger sense, we have yet to address the all-important question of the efficacies of the cultural performances happening at Plan-It-X Fest. It seems that the punks continuously face a challenge of efficacy for their performances that hinges on their ability to effectively translate the affective alliances built through party into effective instrumental tactics. At Plan-It-X Fest, the money raised is a great example of efficacious action that affects the world around it in a way punks desire it to. It seems that the up scaling of DIY punk tactics has the capacity to make

those tactics better organized and more effective. One important aim of future festivals like Plan-It-X Fest, then, might be to make the gathering as conducive as possible to creating larger and stronger networks of punks that are equipped with whatever tools they need for closely collaborating on DIY projects and instrumental tactics between neighborhoods, towns, states and nations.

Conclusion

“The Nomads are Settling Down”: Mobility and Fixity across DIY Punk Networks

The story I have told in these last two chapters is a story of an oscillation between stillness and movement, the transient and the situated. This tension is illustrated directly by my two chapters, which respectively deal with fixity at home or in the community and with movement or leaving home and seeking that elusive “better” place that Malpais described. Chapter 1 discusses the punk house as a stopping point for punks on the move and as a home base for punks who have settled into a city. The punk house is a hub where ideas can be shared and turned into practices that gather and redirect resources. Chapter 2 demonstrated an intra-enclave gathering of punk bodies, resources, and ideas to a festival in Spencer, Indiana. Punks had the opportunity to perform their capacity for mass mobilization by traveling together to the Midwest, where they built connections, exchanged discourses and enacted knowledges to bring back to their homes.

This story features movement of various sorts: bodies travel on roads and tracks. Objects sneak through the alternative post.¹⁵¹ Stashed in backpacks,¹⁵² they trek across the globe. Ideas move from ears to zines, to patches, to songs, and into ears again. Resources get diverted, gathered, redirected, and offered to people who need them. In this thesis, I have followed these movements on an analytical trek across a range of lenses and through a forest of tensions. I set out on this journey with two main questions in mind. First, what can the movement of punk bodies between different spaces (clubs, community centers, houses, festivals, and the general public) teach us about space and its constraints

¹⁵¹ Ramshackle Glory, *Vampires Are Poseurs*, Live the Dream (Connecticut: DIY Bandits, 2011).

¹⁵² Folk the System, *Ramshackle Glory - Never Coming Home (Live)*, accessed February 22, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVXSr3Twwmg>.

on performances of publicness, enclaved and otherwise? Second, how does the DIY punk counterpublic, which operates primarily through socially and economically enclaved modalities, strive toward efficacious performance and instrumental action?

In this conclusion, I first offer direct answers to those research questions. Second, I make a case for the central importance of mobility for the development of the DIY punk counterpublic and for the growth of large-scale counterpublics altogether. Third, I tie together loose ends in this thesis through the discussion of two dialectic tensions that have revealed themselves over the course of writing this work. Rather than attempting to solve the arguments that these tensions propose, I suggest the importance of sustaining those tensions for their productive capacity. I finish with a review of some overarching theoretical implications of this thesis for rhetoric and cultural studies and with a call for further research executed at the intersections of counterpublicity, performance, and geography.

My journey has raised complex and sometimes contradictory answers to these questions. Regarding the first, analyzing DIY punk through frameworks of performance, geography and publicity have revealed that DIY punk houses are social hubs around which performances of enclave discourse and counterpublicity take place. A dynamic geographical framework of flowing resources and performatic discourses contextualizes those hubs. Unfortunately, that framework is part of an environment built in the interest of capital reproduction. As a result, DIY punk desires to do radical and instrumental public works are in tension with social and economic pressures placed on them by their larger geographical context.

Those pressures bring all sorts of complicated and stressful tensions down upon

the DIY punk community. Punks tend to enclave themselves and their performances in order to hide from the paranoid eyes of their neighbors. In that isolation, punk efforts at improving their communities through activism become muted, if not totally eliminated. As those pressures build, punk houses often begin to struggle with the DIY lifestyle and resource management causes infighting and tension. While many punk houses start out with the goal of developing an internally safe space that externally contributes to its community, Funky Towne showed how those houses can successful accomplish their goals in some ways and not in others. The challenge of efficacy for a punk house seems to be based in balancing their traditional activist efforts against their enclaved performances and efforts at carving out (often isolated) safe spaces. Both are necessary for sustainable and generative performances of counterpublicity. The latter, though, tends to overtake the former. The challenge is to ensure that *both* the enclave functions *and* the oscillating function continue to happen. The movement of punk enclaves in localized neighborhoods shows that tactically maneuvering between enclaved privacy and outward publicity are key for counterpublic efficacies.

Larger movements like traveling to PIX fest teach us other important lessons about space and counterpublicity. PIX Fest is an event that does all sorts of counterpublic work. It does traditional activist work that affects the flow of resources in the space surrounding PIX (mainly fundraising) PIX also does key discursive work for the DIY punk counterpublic as a whole: it offers a space for punks from all over the world to gather and see the size of their international community. Further, it allows punks an opportunity to perform disengagement with larger structures of power and enact new ways of relating—especially in terms of developing stronger affective alliances and

performing sharing as a way of doing economic relations. Finally, PIX functions as a site for building connections between punks from different cities. Those connections are themselves central to the functionality of the DIY punk counterpublic. The relationships that punks build at PIX are later used for collaborating to plan tours, fundraisers, other festivals, seek advice, or do activism. As those relationships grow stronger, the capacity of the international network of DIY punks for performing large-scale agitational activities grows as well. In other words, PIX Fest shows how moving ideas, objects and resources through space is key for developing efficacious counterpublic performances. The constraint, then, is space itself. Space must be traversed in order to build the networks necessary to wage a war of maneuver that can eventually transform into a war of position. The appropriate response to space as a constraint is mobility.

In response to the second question, I have shown that the DIY punk counterpublic strives toward efficacious action through a combination of modalities that oscillate between privacy (the modalities of “party”) and publicity (traditional activist modalities). The party modality tends to be the primary mode of DIY punk counterpublics and that mode performs a number of functions. First, it offers a liminal space for people to perform an escape from repressive and stressful conditions in their regular lives. Second, those performances do more than blow off steam: they generate and spread knowledges about different ways of relating. They allow the kids performing to “build models of a world that they might want to live in.”¹⁵³ Third, the party modality enables people to gather together and form oppositional affective alliances. This process is essentially an opportunity for people to identify themselves as a counterpublic based on their mutual investments in structures of feeling that contradict structures imposed on them in the

¹⁵³ The Wingnut Dishwashers Union, *Jesus Does the Dishes*.

larger community. Fourth, DIY punk enclaves function as internal social support communities: the repressive and oppressive conditions of society writ large can bring on devastating psychological and emotional conditions in people suffering from repression and oppression. DIY punk enclaves offer a space where people can gather in a private social setting and talk about their troubles or support one another through depression, drug dependency, and other sorts of painful situations. Modalities of party are an extremely effective and resilient function for a counterpublic that is waging a war of position. People are oftentimes attracted to DIY punk for the sake of the party and stay long term for the sake of the other side of the DIY lifestyle: traditional activism.

DIY punks do traditional activism in a number of ways: they participate in solidarity networks like the one in Huntington, LUPE, and Seattle's SeaSol group. They raise money through benefit shows. They maintain gardens and donate food to people who need it in their community. They provide resources for free through services like Funky Towne's Free Store. They gather resources together to travel to and plan for protests in the local community or at the nationwide scale. Oftentimes, though, those modalities are secondary to the modality of party. This is reasonable because a counterpublic must first ensure the stability of its own members and discover its interests before it can effectively agitate for those interests.

The challenge of efficacy for these DIY punk modalities is based in their ability to do two things: first, as I mentioned above, balancing the private modality of party with public activist modalities. Doing this is tricky and requires a lot of time, effort, and resources. Accomplishing an effective balance between these modalities will require that the DIY community grow substantially. I am optimistic that this can happen. Second,

performing the DIY lifestyle in the context of larger geographies of capital leads to a great number of contradictions. Those contradictions center on the impossibility of escaping the market. The reality of living in a punk house is that the tenants will almost always be short on resources. Punks have to figure out a way to fund their counterpublic agitational practices. This, again, hinges on the growth of the DIY punk community. Many punks pay rent and fund their activist work by hosting shows or parties and by selling music. The reality of these practices is that they are a part of the capitalist market. However, pragmatically speaking, punks need to fund their lives and their activist work somehow. It will take a large and resilient punk community to make punk house parties and music sales enough to sustain punk houses and enable efficacious counterpublic performances—both in the private enclave setting and in public interfaces with society writ large.

PIX Fest offers an example of what the growth and strengthening of the DIY punk community might look like. Again, the connections being made and the tactical strategies being shared at PIX are indispensable for the growth and collaboration of the international DIY punk community. The notion of mobility is central for understanding the significance of these connections.

Mobility and Counterpublicity

No way, not to so-and-so
 Said he'd never change
 Said he'd never grow
 He'd stay always on a roll
 Run beside the trains
 Past the mossy stones
 Now there's more hope than ever
 And it's all crumbling down
 And the rebels are running for mayor
 In your hometown

As the nomads are dropping their anchors
 Falling into the sea
 As I've stopped throwing rocks at the river
 Now you'll find me a'swimming upstream
 There is power in unions of rambler
 That got nothing to own
 But there's more in one fist-swinging mother
 Swearing, "My children shall never be sold."

Kill off Columbus
 And turn the world around
 After all, the nomads are settling down
 --"Nomads Revolt" by Mischief Brew¹⁵⁴

These Mischief Brew lyrics encapsulate the tensions at the center of DIY punk transience and radical politics. On the one hand, transience offers an opportunity to perform disengagement. It is romanticized by lore in DIY punk and several other artistic traditions. The lyrics recognize that "there is power in unions of rambler." Such power is well exemplified in histories of labor movements, where unions like the IWW would gather their members to a location to do agitational work in support of a striking chapter.¹⁵⁵ In general, nimbleness and mobility is a great advantage for counterpublic agitators. On the other hand, though, there are still arguments to be made for fixity as well.

John Urry explores this tension productively in his book, *Mobilities*. Urry asserts, "the complex character of social life stems from this flux-like dialectic of immobility and mobility, and in particular from...the dialectic of systematization and personalization."¹⁵⁶ The dialectic of mobility and immobility parallels the dialectic of systematization and

¹⁵⁴ Mischief Brew, *Nomads Revolt*, Smash the Windows (Philadelphia: Fistol Records, 2005), <https://mischiefbrew.bandcamp.com/>.

¹⁵⁵ Don Mitchell, "Controlling Space, Controlling Scale: Migratory Labour, Free Speech, and Regional Development in the American West," *Journal of Historical Geography* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 63–84, doi:10.1006/jhge.2001.0374.

¹⁵⁶ John Urry, *Mobilities*, 1 edition (Cambridge; Malden, Mass.: Polity Press, 2007), 25–26.

personalization. Both of these dialectics are key for understanding the productiveness of both movement and fixity for counterpublics.

First, the dialectic of immobility and mobility deals with the tension between things that are fixed (buildings, roads, other infrastructure, and—depending on the scale of fixity, as in whether fixity means more or less local to a town, region, or nation—people) and things that move around. Oftentimes, things that are fixed enable movement or at least reduce the friction of movement. Additionally, the cause of movement is usually what brings on the development of built environments; people who need to move from one space to another or settle a new location build fixed roads and buildings. Mobilities and immobilities depend on one another in various contradictory ways.

Second, the dialectic of systematization and personalization juxtaposes a Marxist critique of systematically organized space-time that facilitates the flow of capital against either the total disengagement from that system through transience or the pursuit of personalization from within that system.¹⁵⁷ Movement through space that is organized based on timetables, mechanized trains and lights, meeting spaces and shift changes are indicative of systematized space. Personalized space can be found in places that are designed to humanize those who move through them; they encourage wandering, and leisurely progression through space-time. This juxtaposition can be found in the narrative of spatial alienation that I offered in chapter two: the systematization of a space causes those occupying it to feel alienated from it. People often depart from systematized spaces in an effort to find authenticity or transcendence.¹⁵⁸ Or, drawing from Georg Simmel or Dick Hebdige, those who do not attempt to depart from systematized spaces tend to seek

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 22–23; Georg Simmel, *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings* (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif ; New Delhi: SAGE, 1997), 178.

¹⁵⁸ Urry, *Mobilities*, 23; Simmel, *Simmel on Culture*, 178.

means of resisting that system by stylistically appropriating pieces of it and personalizing them in an innovative or resistant manner.¹⁵⁹ The systematic and the personal are likewise in tension with one another: modern humans are always implicated in a series of disciplinary social and economic systems that enable their livelihood while they simultaneously seek to diverge from those systems in order to personalize their lives or depart from the system altogether.

The tensions of immobility—mobility and systematization—personalization are essential for thinking about counterpublicity, activism, and organizing. On the one hand, stylistic personalization and performances that simulate the eradication of systematized space-time have the capacity to spread knowledge of the potentiality of instrumental resistance to that systematization. While that knowledge, like DIY punk performances of disengagement in general, is entangled with and built upon the systems of the establishment, the sharing of knowledge through stylistic performance can itself mobilize people to work against exploitative systems.

On the other, mobility and immobility offer a way of thinking about how to organize instrumental resistant efforts. This tension can be understood through the juxtaposition of a traveling crust punk and a punk living in an active punk house. The crust punk oftentimes relies on existing networks of punk houses to find places to sleep, bathe, and rest. The agenda of the crust punk, contingent though it may be, is oftentimes structured around certain events or perceived need. A crust punk will hop trains while en route to be present for a specific protest, festival, or astral event. These travelers will call for meet ups and request companionship or support from fellow travelers using digital communication. Importantly, crust punks and vagabonds tend to offer support to agitating

¹⁵⁹ Urry, *Mobilities*, 23; Simmel, *Simmel on Culture*, 178; Hebdige, *Subculture*.

leftists in protests all over the country. They had a strong presence in the Occupy movement around the world¹⁶⁰ and, more recently, were present for anti-Trump protests on inauguration day in Washington, DC. The inauguration protest gathering for vagabonds was particularly well organized through the message board Squat the Planet, where users posted maps showing caravans traveling from the West coast to Washington, DC and pinned cities where the caravans could pick up crust punks and other travelers.¹⁶¹ Traveling crust punks, then, rely on existing fixed travel infrastructures and networks of people to be able to nimbly and cheaply navigate space and do counterpublic agitational work.



Figure 7: Coordinated Travel to Washington, DC

The modalities that punk houses perform, however, require a certain level of fixity. Developing a community of punks who attend shows and help out with community activist work requires that the gathering space be based in a community itself and have a number of people and resources that stay there for stability.

Finally, it is important to remember that some punks go from living in a punk house to becoming a traveler, or vice versa. Indeed, many punks based in localized punk houses take the opportunities of festivals to perform mobility and transience. They

¹⁶⁰ Hampton, "Punk Nomads."

¹⁶¹ "Trump's Inauguration: Jan. 20th in DC," *Squat the Planet*, accessed March 18, 2017, <https://squattheplanet.com/threads/trumps-inauguration-jan-20th-in-dc.29961/>.

experience and generate some of the performatic knowledges that accompany travel in doing so. The instance of travel from punk houses to festivals—like from Funky Towne to PIX, is central to the point of this thesis and is the onus of my argument that mobility is key for counterpublicity. Mobility and immobility complement each other in the strategic ways I described above, but performing both of them intermittently also enables punks who tend to be fixed in a local area to develop connections and alliances with other punks in other cities. Those alliances have the capacity to transform from being disparate and more or less unorganized punk houses to a formidable and organized international DIY punk counterpublic.

In the same way that mobility is what generates the need for roads that connect cities, it is also mobility that generates the connections from enclave to enclave, punk house to punk house. The construction of those bridges, coalitions, or networks is absolutely essential for the ability of counterpublic enclaves to gain strength and prepare for efficacious agitational practices that rival the systematic forces of the global capitalist economy and the nation-state itself.

Tactics in Tension

There are many dialectic tensions that I explore in this work. Among them are the tension between party and activism, the local and the international. They stretch from theory and ideas to praxis and action. Most of these have been explored in some depth in previous chapters, but a few have tangentially appeared and disappeared. In the course of conducting the research for this thesis, a number of threads surfaced whose overall significance to the work is too great to neglect touching on before concluding. I have organized those extraneous threads into two main tensions: The first tension is between

resistance and accommodation. The second is between escape and engagement, and in a larger sense between death and life. Because I have acknowledged or analyzed some of these in previous chapters, my level of explanation for each one will differ. Each of these two tensions could be targeted for deconstruction, but I will assert that leaving these knots taut and tangled can be productive if we learn how to navigate them tactically.

Resistance—Accommodation

This first tension deals with the problem of enacting performances that are either resistant or accommodating to existing social and economic systems. A clear example of this in the thesis is the problem of accommodation that I point to in Chapter 1, where I point out how Funky Towne's free store seems at once to be a resistant DIY project and also a project that accommodates the building pressure that neoliberalism places on the shoulders of worker-consumers. On a larger scale, we can interrogate punk in general using this tension by asking to what degree punk music is enacting instrumental resistance against existing social systems and to what degree it is reinforcing them by participating in those social systems. Despite that this critique is commonly leveraged against major label punk bands, it is also useful for thinking through DIY punk and its complicity in market logics. Both are, after all, built in the context of a capitalist infrastructure.

Usefully, this tension can be mapped onto performance studies scholar Jon McKenzie's work having to do with liminality (a state of in-betweenness or outside-ness that occurs in performances of transition and can be invoked to either break down or reinforce existing social structures and performance expectations). In *Perform or Else*, McKenzie criticizes the widespread but underspecified adoption of the concept

liminality; he went on to theorize the “liminal-norm” and “liminautic”—two terms that prove very useful for thinking about performances as resistant, accommodating, or both. The liminal-norm signifies liminal and ritualistic practices that perform the function of *maintaining* normative social systems. For example, a punk festival might be liminal in that it offers a time and space for people to step outside of typical social structures and experience what it might be like to live in a different sort of world with different social structures. That festival, though, might aid in *reinforcing* the normative social systems in the non-punk spaces by allowing the punks an opportunity to “blow off steam,” or release the pressures of accumulated during normal life. Drawing out the “steam” metaphor, a high-pressure machine needs a valve to relieve pressure, thereby ensuring that the machine can continue to operate. Otherwise, pressure builds up and destroys the systematic framework containing it. Liminal-normativity gestures toward how liminal performances and rituals that operate outside normative space can serve to maintain normative expectations in that space. In other words, some resistant performances can also be normative because they perform the function of a steam valve for a larger social machine.

McKenzie goes on to theorize an additional term: the “liminautic” to signify a liminal performance genre or site that is always moving in cycles between resistant performances and normative ones. McKenzie uses these terms for considering the efficacies of resistant cultural performances. He asserts that any cultural performances aimed at breaking down existing structures will eventually be folded into those structures and accounted for. Once that happens, a new cycle of innovative performance needs to be triggered before the performance can enact efficacious resistance again. This same

principle can be applied to DIY punk counterpublic performances and to counterpublic agitating efforts in general.

This movement back and forth between performing efficacious resistance and performing resistance that is accommodated for in larger social structures and likewise accommodates those social structures can be mapped onto the larger history of punk itself. Early punk and rock music in general was treated like a legitimate threat to western social structures, especially in the London punk scene after the release of the Sex Pistol's *God Save the Queen*. The avant-garde punk of that era was eventually incorporated into existing social structures, as were the rock aesthetics that developed grunge and the boom of alternative rock in the 1990s. DIY punk is a new wave of innovation characterized by economic ethics of disengagement and isolation ("doing it yourself" rather than letting the capitalist economy do "it" for you, attempting to remove yourself from capitalism so as to seem less complicit in it) in punk that is locked in an ongoing struggle to ensure that its performances are instrumentally efficacious.

McKenzie's liminautic is useful in that it emphasizes the importance of continuous innovation. It is becoming increasingly clear that the DIY ethic has itself become branded as a sort of authenticity, and so is part of the marketplace. With that in mind, shifting out of the mode of disengagement or escape from the context of capital and into the mode of direct action and instrumental engagement seem fitting as a new innovation for making punk a threat again.

The tension between resistance and accommodation is key for thinking through counterpublic performances and agitational tactics. Remembering that resistant performances tend towards becoming accommodating ones reminds performers to

continue focusing on innovating their performatic tactics continuously. Further, thinking through performances in terms of this tension can inform how counterpublic theorists and organizers analyze their actions. With this tension in mind, analysis becomes about more than just how agitation affects resistance. Instead, it becomes about how agitation is both resistant and accommodating of different things in different ways, and how that balance transforms as tactics become intelligible to the establishment or as new tactics are innovated and enacted.

Escape—Engagement

The second tension that manifested over the course of this research is between escape and engagement. This tension can also be mapped onto life and death, transience and fixity. The tension between escape and engagement forcefully showed itself to me as I continued to do research and saw consistent patterns of suicide, drug addiction, and rhetorics of escape. As I have listened and wrote, I have realized that these themes are all part one larger tension at work in the DIY punk community and in post-war youth subcultures writ large.

In Chapter 2, I referenced Grossberg to describe the post-war urge to focus on the instant at hand and detach it from the histories that contextualize it or the futures that might follow it. This habit is indicative of post-war parties. Beyond the postmodern turn, though, the alienating nature of rigorously systematized relations with space, time, production, and social reproduction further induces people to seek authenticity by searching for spaces and temporal worlds outside of that system. That search for escape manifests in all sorts of different ways including chemical dependency, depression, and even suicide.

On the other end of the tension is direct community engagement, instrumental activism, and sobriety. DIY punks are in the midst of wrestling with that tension. A large turn in lyric writing in the last ten years has led to particular focus on the idea that, “the existential feeling is a lie,”¹⁶² and the need to “take the needle out,”¹⁶³ “wake up,”¹⁶⁴ “settle down,”¹⁶⁵ or trade out addictions to alcohol and narcotics for addictions to “coffee, god and cigarettes.”¹⁶⁶ At PIX Fest, I noticed a clear sort of loving animosity between the punks who drank and used drugs in the wooded camping areas and those who occupied the sober camp area. While people respected that drinks and drugs were not allowed near the stage and were ready to support one another’s efforts toward sobriety, punks would still make jokes about raiding the sober camp. There was a clear divide between the punks who were highly engaged with going to workshops or participating in political discussions and the other punks who were aiming to spend the weekend partying and performing disengagement from the community outside of PIX.

Sustaining the tension of escape and engagement is necessary for a performatic public that spreads knowledges by performing disengagement from existing social and economic systems. In order to continue generating and sharing performatic knowledges and building affective alliances in the way that DIY punk party modalities do, punks will have to continue practicing escape in some way or another. At the same time, though, engagement is needed. The key is balancing between them or, better yet, shifting tactically from one to the other. This tension reveals two important questions for the DIY

¹⁶² Nostradogmus, *Gene Wilder Conquers an Existential Crisis* (Asheville, NC: Analog For Dogs, n.d.), analogfordogs.bandcamp.com/track/gene-wilder-conquers-an-existential-crisis-2.

¹⁶³ Ramshackle Glory, *First Song, Part 2*, Live the Dream (Connecticut: DIY Bandits, 2011), ramshackleglory.bandcamp.com/track/first-song-part-2.

¹⁶⁴ Pat “The Bunny” Schneeweis, *Time to Wake Up*, Departures (Tucson, AZ: Cocoon Music, 2015).

¹⁶⁵ Mischief Brew, *Nomads Revolt*.

¹⁶⁶ Mischief Brew, *Coffee, God and Cigarettes*, Songs From Under the Sink (Philadelphia: Fistolo Records, 2006), <https://mischiefbrew.bandcamp.com/>.

punk community. The first is about how best to perform disengagement without also building unhealthy addictions or dependencies on those performances. The second is about to effect balance between escape and direct engagement.

Performing Publics in Space

I constructed the framework of lenses that I used to conduct my analysis in the preceding chapters for two reasons. First, in trudging through the muck of actually occurring discourse, I found that my objects of study triggered thoughts in me that could best be described using the vocabularies of counterpublicity, performance studies, and geography. Second, I sutured these lenses together with the purpose of showing the productive capacity of each in the context of the others. In this final section, I will briefly speak to that productive capacity.

First, considering counterpublicity in terms of performance enables us to think about different relationships with knowledge that performatic counterpublics develop. For enclaves specifically, internal performances can be used for discovering and experiencing simulations of the change that those counterpublics might aim to bring about. Productively, putting counterpublic theory and performance theory in conversation over DIY punk generated the vocabulary necessary think through modalities of party. The notion of efficacy that I borrow from McKenzie's work helps us to think about performance in terms of its productive capacities for reinforcing or breaking down social structures. Finally, performance studies' notion of the liminautic is a productive tool for counterpublic theorists and organizers to think about tactics as they traverse the tension between resistance and accommodation.

Geography productively adds to the conversation I describe above by offering

firmly grounded means of contextualizing a counterpublic performance. Rather than imagining counterpublics to occur in a sphere or field of publicity and counterpublicity, considering them in material space that is contextualized by flowing topographies of objects, resources, and ideas can help us to consider the forces at work immediately contextualizing the counterpublic. In other words, the presence of a counterpublic—a networked assembly of bodies—in space has the power to offset and intervene in the movement of things around it. If you place an object in a stream of water, the very presence of the object adjusts the flow that contextualizes it. If the object moves, its movements intervene in that flow. Likewise, we are faced with the question of *how a counterpublic's movements intervene in the topographies that surround it*. Establishing that question is the point of putting counterpublicity and geography in conversation with one another.

Alongside space comes the question of mobility. Conducting rhetorical analysis with a focus on mobility offers the productive capacity to analyze not only communication, but also the process by which relationships and channels of communication are developed through social meetings. In this thesis, I have described the movements from punk houses to PIX, the generation and strengthening of relational networks among punks, and the productive nature of those networks as they are sustained after departing from PIX. Those networks then facilitate further movement of bodies, ideas, and resources through space. The larger and stronger those networks are, the greater the capacity a counterpublic might have for collaborating effectively to agitate for their interests.

Blending vocabularies from these three bodies of theory has been generative for

my analysis as well as for reinforcing the larger turns in rhetorical theory toward spatiality and materialism. Performance studies' theorizations of efficacy, counterpublic theory's work on oscillation, and geography's focus on the movement of objects, resources, and ideas in and across space allows for productive conversations about the relationship between rhetoric and materiality itself. Counterpublics use performance and discourse to constitute themselves as counterpublics and rhetorically develop their interests. They further use performance to intervene in the geography's surrounding them by asserting their right to be, move through, access, and otherwise interact with spaces, places, and the objects that flow through them. The focus on objects, space, and movement guides further focus on materiality and the relationship it shares with discourse and performance.

That conversation generates the central point that I aim to offer in this thesis: mobility is itself a necessary mode for social movement. To move the social, counterpublics need to focus on doing the work of seeking one another out, breaking down walls and barriers, crossing borders, forging alliances, and building networks. Counterpublics need to mobilize those networks to circulate ideas, objects, and resources. As those networks grow, their capacity to function as a counterhegemonic bloc and be used to wage a war of position—and eventually a war of maneuver—becomes ever more realistic. This thesis is about movement between modalities, movement between theory and practice, movement between punk houses and festivals, and from those spaces out to interface with society writ large. Above all, though, this thesis is about *where all that movement might be able to take us*.

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Vita

Ryan Bince—a native of Alameda, CA—attended Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communication in 2013. He liked the upstate NY weather so much that he chose to pursue graduate study in the Communication and Rhetorical Studies program at Syracuse University in the fall of 2015. His research interests focus on the relationship between rhetoric and instrumentality, or between discourse and material action. He plans to pursue doctoral study in the Fall of 2018. Weather will play a large factor in his decision about where to study next.