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Way, L. (2019). 'I don't go to the gigs to go to the gigs – I don't give a shit about the gigs!': Exploring gig attendance and older punk women. *Punk & Post Punk*, 8(2), 257-141.

'I don't go to the gigs to go to the gigs – I don't give a shit about the gigs!': Exploring gig attendance and older punk women

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Abstract

This article considers gig attendance amongst a sample of twenty-two older punk women. A feminist methodology was employed, with qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviewing with seventeen older punk women, and an additional five women answering questions by e-mail correspondence. With the majority of the research sample attending gigs on a regular basis, it could be assumed that this meant music was a significance part of 'doing' punk but this was realized to be quite a simplistic assumption. The article will consider this in more detail through discussing two key questions: What are the key reasons and motivators behind older punk women attending gigs? What barriers do these women face when it comes to gig attendance?

Keywords

ageing

gender

gigs

music

punk

social ageing

Background

Commonly, punk was theorized as both a male-dominated subculture and one that was 'youth' centred (Hebdige 1998). There is now growing recognition of the presence of women within punk (see, e.g., Leblanc 2002) and the association between punk and youth has begun to change with research on older punk fans within the wider context of 'post-youth' subcultural work (Bennett 2006; Bennett and Hodkinson 2012). This reflects an increasing academic interest in the ageing popular music audience more generally over the last twenty years (Bennett 2018) and there now exists a growing body of literature on ageing punks (e.g. Andes 2002; Bennett 2006; Davis 2006). However, the very limited inclusion of older punk women in research samples, and minimal consideration of gender more broadly, means that knowledge produced can be critiqued as being 'malestream' (Gurney 1997; Oakley 1998). Existing theoretical and conceptual understanding of punks fails then to consider the interaction between ageing, gender and subcultural affiliation and leaves various questions unanswered – what punk means to older punk women, the role that punk plays in their everyday lives and their identification, how punk has intersected with their experiences of gender and ageing, and so forth. The voices of ageing/older punk women continue, therefore, to be marginalized.

My research utilized a methodology informed by a feminist and inductive approach. Induction can be defined as 'a bottom-up approach through which a researcher analyses data in order to construct a theory or model' (Constantinou et al. 2017: 573), with an example of induction being grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Grounded theory is

'grounded' in the perspectives of the research participants and focused on how they experience and resolve their everyday problems (Gibson and Hartman 2014). My exploration of the construction and maintenance of identity amongst older punk women is grounded in their perspectives. During the research process I took influence from some of the core aspects of grounded theory, namely openness, discovery and an interactive research process (Gibson and Hartman 2014). In addition ,the research here can be seen as feminist as it was completed by a feminist and incorporates particular core feminist concerns into the research process: a focus on women's lived experiences, challenging unequal power dynamics and practicing 'strong reflexivity' throughout the research process (Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leckenby 2004). Despite the move within feminist research away from women-only samples, the rationale for a focus solely on older/post-youth punk women was justified through an examination of the existing literature on punk and the notable absence of a consideration of specifically older/post-youth punk women.[1]

In this article, data were analysed from sixteen semi-structured interviews (one paired) and five e-mail interviews. I achieved my sample of 22 research participants through a mixture of purposive sampling on social media and snowballing (whereby initial contacts passed on my call for participants to others and them onto others and so on). With the focus of this research being older punk women, a minimum age of 30 was noted on the original call for participants to distinguish these 'post-youth' punk women from the younger women that previous research has focused on (Andes 2002; Leblanc 2002). Some women in their late 20s wished to take part as they saw themselves as 'older' punk women and so this self-identification was taken into consideration in the construction of the research sample.

Why go to gigs?

When speaking to the women in my sample, gig attendance was a common occurrence. A handful of the women felt that their gig attendance had declined in regularity over time, but only a few said that they now rarely went to a gig. Eighteen of the 22 women said that they went to gigs – three of these described their attendance as 'pretty regular', five as regular and the rest did not quantify their gig attendance. This regularity of gig attendance could indicate a way that music played a significant role in the women's 'doing' of punk but as the discussion below illustrates it would be wrong to assume such a simplistic relationship.

The most common motivator for attending gigs for the women I spoke with was 'engagement', with 26 references to this theme. This theme, amongst others, was also identified in recent research by Brown and Knox (2017), who considered the reasons behind attending pop concerts. Engagement could include motivation concerning the sub-themes of fan–artist relationship maintenance, emotional aspects and social dynamics (Brown and Knox 2017). In addition, from my sample, some further sub-themes were identified – 'local scene support' and 'new music discovery'.

Concerning engagement the most significant motivator for the women when speaking about going to gigs was centred on the social aspect (or social dynamics) of gig attendance – socializing or meeting new people. Naja spoke, for example, of gig attendance not being about interest in the music but being used as an opportunity to meet up with her fellow punk friends who were also women:

> I don't go to the gigs to go to the gigs, I don't give a shit about the gigs. I go
>
> because I meet up and go 'Ay, you going to that gig?' 'Yeah, your husband's

playing' 'Oh, that's great, well my husband's playing' 'Oh we'll meet up and have

a bit of a laugh', you know?

Here too is a sign of the gendering of punk, with Naja's husband and her friends' husbands

being the musicians, whereas they are the spectators. This speaks towards Leblanc's (2002)

suggestion that punk remains a masculine subculture and a site where women remain

marginalized.

A similar sentiment of going to gigs to socialize was expressed by Christine:

[…] it's definitely more about a group of people getting together kind of thing

for me rather than music […] I definitely think I'm the kind of person that if I'm

home I actually don't listen to music. I only listen to music either when [her

husband] is playing music or when I'm out and I'm with people and it's more of

an event I guess.

Attending gigs not providing this opportunity to socialize was raised by Jen. Jen spoke of not

going to gigs sometimes because of numerous friends no longer going to gigs:

[…] a lot of my friends don't go to gigs anymore, a lot of them have settled

down, maybe got more sensible jobs, stopped going out as much, had children

[…] and their time is not really dedicated as much to gigs and so for me going to

gigs is more than just about the music, it's about socialising as well and I don't

always feel I wanna go out on my own […] I will do but, I'd rather go out with

friends and then the people that used to go out don't anymore so there's not as

much opportunity to go out and socialise.

Jen interprets her friends' reduction in gig attendance as resulting from things that

might be associated with ageing or adulthood – 'settling down', prioritizing a career,

having children. Such aspects will be considered from my sample's own experiences

later in this article.

My research participants' emphasized the social aspect of attending gigs and linked this

with how punk had become a set of beliefs and values for them. All of the women I spoke

with saw punk as a 'state of mind' that comprised of particular core values. As Naefun said:

It's about an attitude, it's about a state of mind, it's about who you are on the

inside more so than who you are on the outside […] or how you look like, you

know, or the colour your hair is or the style your hair is or the boots you're

wearing or the band t-shirt that you're wearing.

This idea that punk had become an attitude, a way of thinking, is similar to what is

proposed by Andy Bennett (2006) in his sample of older punk fans (all of whom were

men). Bennett (2006) talks of internalization in which participants shift from externally

communicating their punkness (e.g. through clothes) to punk becoming a lifestyle of

ingrained ideas and beliefs. With punk becoming viewed in such a way, it is logical,

then, that the actual music might not have such a significant place in the women's

lives or be the main pull for gig attending. Although I found that music was central in

the majority of the women's entry into punk, the importance of music as expressed

through gig attendance was only demonstrated by a few.

> Related to this social aspect of gig attendance (and perhaps alluded to by
>
> Christine above) is the suggestion that attending gigs also served to reinforce an
>
> idea of a collective amongst punk participants. Morag said that: "Going to gigs is
>
> more about being around being among like-minded people, seeing friends and
>
> meeting new people. It's reassurance that my own world view is shared by many
>
> others in the scene".

Being present at a punk gig where you feel you are among others who hold the same punk

values can help in creating a sense of being part of a collective and can also be, as Morag

expressed, a source of reassurance that there are others who think like you. This feeling of

being part of a wider group that share the same beliefs and values conjures Durkheim's (in

Tsitsos 2012) idea of social solidarity and highlights the collective/community feel of punk (a

punk value my sample spoke of). This collective/community feel of punk links to the

motivator 'local scene support' that three interviewees referred to, demonstrating how

being affiliated with punk can take on the feeling of being part of a collective or community.

This was one of two sub-themes identified from my research sample that was not present in

Brown and Knox's (2017) study. This collective/community feel came through amongst

Elizabeth, Kristianne and Katie and the belief that they were supporting local venues or the

local scene by attending gigs. Elizabeth worded this as 'giving back to the venue' whilst

Kristianne explained that:

[…] we could be looking at losing even more venues and we've already had some, a number, closed down in the last year so and the problem then is, you know, the venues that are closing down are the ones that were letting people put punk shows on for nothing […] I try and go to as many shows as I can and […] I guess support the community as much as possible.

This links too to the DIY value in punk expressed by participants whereby supporting smaller, independent venues and gig promoters becomes important. Katie also spoke of this but instead reported that, for her, currently there was no felt need to contribute to keeping venues going, hence not needing to attend gigs:

I know if I don't turn up to shows they don't get cancelled whereas back in other places like if five people didn't turn up to a show like the promoter would lose a lot of money and (laughs) you wouldn't get any more shows […] the feeling like I'm part of a community isn't, doesn't exist here at the minute.

DIY as being part of a community that helps each other achieve things (e.g. putting on gigs) really comes through here. In the large city in which she currently resides, Katie no longer feels that sense of being part of a DIY collective and also recognizes the reduced struggle for gig promoters/venues. As noted, local scene support was not a sub-theme of engagement identified by Brown and Knox's (2017) research and I would argue that this reflects their

focus on live pop music. First pop music is a commercially driven industry that does not have the independent venues and/or gig promoters characteristic of the punk genre, nor a notion of localized scenes. Second, as I have already argued, this idea of supporting the local music scene is interwoven with the DIY value associated with those who have a punk mindset. Whilst this DIY value might not necessarily be unique to punk, it is unlikely that such a value is as important to pop artists or fans.

'Emotional aspects' emerged as a motivation for gig attendance from three of the interviews including Deedee's. Deedee's accounts of gig attendance evoked a feeling of passion and emotional investment in the music or the performer. Deedee described how, for example, she felt about those who bought gigs to tickets with the aim of selling them to make a profit: '[…] they get you know bought by touts and people who don't really know anything about the music? You know, they're not passionate about it'. There is the clear idea here that for Deedee going to particular gigs is because of her passion for the music or performer. This was further supported through other references that Deedee made about this particular performer – some of which are demonstrated below under 'fan–artist relationship maintenance'. Here an overlap in themes can be highlighted with emotional aspects and fan–artist relationship maintenance sometimes being difficult to untangle. Emotional aspects could concern more broadly the emotional responses felt by the women on hearing/watching live music. For Sharon, for example, a pull of attending gigs seemed to be the fun that she associated with them. She talked about not attending certain festivals, for example, because they were out of her 'fun zone' and a sense of gigs being about having fun and 'having a laugh' came through in her interview. An absence of emotion was highlighted by Milly as a contributing factor for her reduced gig attendance. Milly had described her initial attraction to punk music being due to its 'exciting' nature and it seemed

appropriate to assume that this was a motivator for gig attendance, given what she later
said in her interview:

> I do still like the music and I do listen to it but I think I did go off um the music
> […] when it became just it just became too monotonous […] it was one band
> after another at a gig, they were just sounding the same, and it just put me off I
> got bored with it and I wanted more really than going to the gigs standing there
> bored.

What appears above, then, is an absence of excitement (suggested by the descriptor
'monotonous'), which means that there is no longer the emotional motivation for Milly with
regards to gig attendance. In the context of what she had said about her initial attraction to
punk, it is only fair to assume that, for Milly, excitement had once been a reason for gig
attendance. Milly still liked the music and would listen to it outside of a gig context, but this
was not enough in itself for her to continue to attend gigs.

> Fan–artist relationship as a motivator for gig attendance also appeared across
> three interviews. Most commonly this would be expressed by naming a
> particular artist, or artists, and speaking about attending their performances.
> Sam expressed a fandom, for example, aimed at a particular artist and it
> appeared that by attending their live performances she maintained that fan–
> artist relationship: "[the] first album I ever bought was *Adam and the Ants'* 'Dirt

> Wears White Socks' […] and I'm still a massive fan, I've seen him twice in the
>
> last couple of years, absolutely love him".

Similarly this was seen when Jess spoke about her 'love' of Patti Smith before leading

on to speak of attending her last tour, and Deedee's ongoing relationship with the

Manic Street Preachers that was helped by attending their gigs. As noted above this is

where an overlap in the categorization used by Brown and Knox (2017) occurs as Sam,

Jess and Deedee were attending particular gigs to maintain their relationship as fans

of a particular artist but there is emotion being expressed too. The fan–artist

relationship maintenance as a motivator for gig attendance may then have an

emotional aspect to it, making it harder when trying to separate these motivators out

as Brown and Knox (2017) have attempted to do.

Moving away from naming references to specific artists/performers, Naefun spoke of how

she was more likely to attend a gig if an 'old' band were playing, a band she 'knew and

loved', rather than an unheard of, young band. Similarly Kristianne said that being familiar

with the band playing would be a motivator for attending. Perhaps again the importance of

emotion is coming through in these examples, particularly with this idea of going to gigs by

'old bands' whereby 'old' is being used by the interviewees to categorize bands that were

around in their youth or when they were younger. There can be an emotional investment at

play here (being a fan of a band for years and years because of some investment in them)

but there can also be a nostalgia attached to such bands, reminding one of a previous time,

for example. As Breeden and Carroll (2002) note, nostalgia is often bound up in reflections

concerning our youth.

Whilst there was a notion of fan–artist relationship maintenance for some, there could also be the idea of 'new music discovery'. This was the second of the two sub-themes identified from my research sample that had not occurred in Brown and Knox's (2017) study. Only one participant, Kristianne, spoke of this. There might have been more discussion around this had my research focused specifically on identifying motivators for gig attendance as Brown and Knox (2017) had done; however, the absence of specific questions in my research interviews on this meant that there might have been lots left unsaid. However, this could serve to support the women's stressing of punk as a belief system. If punk is more about holding a set of particular beliefs and values than just expressing musical fandom, it makes sense that going to gigs to discover new music would not be as important.

Above I have laid out the theme of engagement and the various sub-themes of this that emerged from my research sample. Engagement was the most prevalent theme across my interviews and this was largely because of the many references to its sub-theme 'social dynamics' as a motivator for attending gigs. Attention will now turn to the barriers that my research sample spoke of concerning attending gigs.

Barriers to gig attendance

Discussion of practical reasons for (not) attending gigs suggested some barriers to gig attendance. In my research practical reasons could be further divided into the sub-themes of work-life balance; location and accessibility; cost; childcare responsibilities; and health. Most of the practical reasons that my participants spoke of can be understood further in the context of ageing. Work commitments and childcare responsibilities may be a reflection of social ageing, for example, whilst discussions concerning health may be in the context of

physical ageing. Work-life balance was the second most prevalent theme across all the interviews, whether referring to practical factors or not.

A perceived conflict between employment and the desire to attend a gig was raised by five of the women I spoke to. In terms of reasons for or for not attending gigs, this was the second most prevalent theme to 'social dynamics' that was discussed earlier. Most commonly this work-life balance was framed around tiredness. Katie said, for example:

> [I could be] either standing in a pub on my own watching a band or going home after a long day at work […] part of it's just I'm knackered and I'm old now so I go home with a cup of tea and read a book (laughs).

For Katie there is the additional social dynamic element here. It is the tiredness after a day at work coupled with the lack of people to go to gigs with. Katie sees this change in activity (e.g. no longer attending gigs regularly) and tiredness as part of getting 'old' despite being in her early thirties. It could be understood then that Katie is conceptualizing her behaviour through an awareness of normative understandings of ageing.

Ces spoke of the physical toll going to a gig on a work (or as some termed it 'school') night would have on the next day:

> I would go to more now if I didn't have work basically […] but like when I lived in […] I was working full time but I'd go to a gig a week if not more um but obviously in [resident city] it's less available like so we drive to […] all the time

or to […] so I think it's due to work but also location cause the bands are all out

there still it's just harder to see them […] it's like the more adult you get […]

like when I went to see The Bronx I was looking at my watch and thinking 'oh

god I'm not going to get home to like midnight or 11 o' clock now' and I was so

tired whereas if that'd been 10 years ago I would of been jumping around not

giving a shit (laughs).

As demonstrated by Ces above, it is not just the physical toll of going to a gig on a work

night but, as felt by Katie, the added tiredness that she feels that comes with being older.

Naefun also developed the work/gig relationship further:

I've sort of like progressed in my career and stuff like that it's about kind of

thinking 'I don't want to go into work with a bit of a hangover' and stuff like that

do you know what I mean? So […] I will go out on a school night but it has to be a

pretty special band to get me out I think.

Two things can be drawn out from what Naefun says here. First the suggestion that the

reduced desire to go out on a work night comes from an increased sense of professionalism

with respect to her employment, which she may have not been so concerned about when

she was younger. This could demonstrate Naefun responding to societal expectations

around what 'being an adult' entails e.g. recognizing the responsibility of having a

job/career. In addition to this alcohol consumption is referred to here. Across quite a few of

the interviews alcohol consumption seemed inextricably linked to gig attendance and the desire to not have a hangover the next day at work was explicitly commented on by Naefun. Again this can tie into the increased sense of being professional within her working role […] rather than 'not giving a shit' as Ces puts it above. It appeared, therefore, that for Ces and Naefun, this was not just a case of not wanting to be tired for work the next day. It was more that they saw themselves now feeling a need to take more responsibility to be professional in their work, something that perhaps might not have been the case when they were younger and were less concerned about the impact on their work. They might, then, be engaging in what Andy Bennett (2012) terms 'sustainable fun'. In research with dance party participants aged 40–55 years Bennett (2012) found that they used a strategy of 'sustainable fun' that allowed them to successfully manage their clubbing activities and professional workplace responsibilities. Being selective about gigs (when and who) can therefore act as a strategy for the women I spoke to for them to successfully manage their gig attendance and their working roles/responsibilities. It was noted, however, by two participants how employment had had a positive impact on their gig attendance and opened up the possibility of attending more gigs due to the increased financial opportunity to pay for attendance. Deedee said that she was now able to go to more gigs due to having more money and Kristianne noted 'I can choose now which ones I want to go to because I can afford to!'.

Accessibility of gigs, or their location, was framed as a push factor by Ces, Lindsey and Naefun. Lindsey explained how she lived 'a bit out of town so buses are quite irregular an' you know once the last bus has gone well that's it, you just end up kind of leaving at 9 o'clock which is […] sad'. But greater accessibility and ease of location did not always entail gig attendance as there could be the weighing up of push and pull factors. Katie described

living in a city where an abundance of gigs happened in close proximity but that did not necessarily mean that she went to more. When I asked her to clarify whether she felt she did not get to go to many gigs because of where she lived now Katie said:

> Um I don't think it's getting to go cause there's definitely lots of gigs that go on (laughs) […] I'm less likely to go to a small gig, no matter if I really want to see the band cause it's rare that I can find people that I wanna go with and I really can't […] either standing in a pub on my own watching a band or going home after a long day at work like I'd much rather just get the bus and go home which is quite sad (laughs).

Katie highlights again that importance felt by some of the research sample of the social aspect of gig attendance. Despite there being a number of gigs that are accessible to her, Katie does not see this accessibility as outweighing the desire for gig attendance to be something to do with other people and not alone.

Money could also be another practical factor. The lack of it could be a reason for not attending gigs as highlighted by Christine, Kristianne and Milly. Christine said how:

> Yeah it depends on when the shows are as well and if we know in advance cause [her partner] and I [are] sometimes really bad towards the end of month where we're just kind of like 'well […] we could get food or we could go to a punk show' (laughter). Sometimes we go to punk shows instead of buying food, we

have done that before, um, it was probably not like the best way to go about it (laughs). So sometimes if it's like a really good gig […] it's like […] can we afford to do that? Because we're also the two of us, he's worse than I am about going to shows and then not drinking […] that can be [an] expensive night out then so you have to think about that kind of thing as well but that's why punk shows are really good because you're not having to worry about buying drinks at a bar you can go to Tesco and buy two litres of cider for one pound ninety-nine and be 'golden' for the night.

As illustrated above, then, a lack of money did not necessarily mean that Christine (and her partner) would not go to a gig – there had been occasions when going to a gig might be valued more highly by Christine (and her partner) than necessities such as food. There is also the point being raised here on the nature of some punk gigs, namely 'house shows' where there is an absence of a charging bar and you are welcome to take your own alcohol. House shows are not an anomaly within punk or more broadly DIY music scenes and Glass (2012) notes that this transformation of places (e.g. residential buildings) into non-traditional venues can be a means of counteracting a lack of resources to create their own place. Such a practice has its roots in the DIY value and can be seen with Christine as providing an opportunity here for those who may otherwise have been priced out of attending a gig to still engage in punk music fan-ship.

The impact of children and/or childcare on scene participation has been noted by Hodkinson (2013) with respect to ageing Goths and some of my research sample also spoke around this. Some relationship between managing childcare and attending gigs was raised by Briony

for example. When I asked whether going to gigs was an important part of her life still she replied:

> Yeah, it's really important – like me and my boyfriend take it in turns to go to gigs like we don't have a strong like support network around us for childcare and stuff but we definitely take it in turns so I've only been to one festival this year but it's really nice to get away and be stupid for a weekend.

Despite childcare being limited for them, Briony and her partner negotiated this by taking turns to go to gigs, thereby limiting the impact that having a child might have on their continued gig attendance. Becoming a parent did not necessarily mean the curtailing of going to gigs but, as seen with Briony, could lead to a reduction in the levels of gigs attended. Milly also spoke of money in relation to the money required for childcare and how this had in the past been something that constrained gig attendance: "[…] when our children were very young we lived on a very low income and couldn't afford to go to many gigs. We also needed a babysitter".

Although Milly is reflecting here on how their financial situation coupled with parenthood impacted both on her *and* her husband's ability to go to gigs, she added: "[…] when our children were young my husband played in a band. Often I would stay at home whilst he was gigging".

Presented here is another indicator of the gendering of punk, as seen earlier with Naja's husband and her friends' husbands playing in bands, again supporting Leblanc's (2002) proposition of punk as a masculine subculture. Walby's (1989) concept of private patriarchy is also relevant here. Private patriarchy is a type of patriarchy that 'is based upon the relative exclusion of women from arenas of social life apart from the household' (Walby 1989: 228). This notion of private patriarchy emerges through McRobbie and Garber's (1991) work on girls and subcultures in which they suggest that young pre-teen girls have less access to public freedom than their brothers and therefore create bedroom cultures rather than participating in street cultures outside of the home. For women, parenthood could then be a way that access to public freedom (e.g. playing in a band) becomes restricted.

Some of the women I spoke with perceived certain barriers to their gig attendance, where negotiation did not appear as possible. Jess cited her mental health, for example, as having an impact on her gig attendance:

> I used to go to [a gig] every couple of weeks and now I think I can probably count
> on one hand how many I think I've gone to in the last year or so. There's plenty
> of reasons, I think, I've got social anxiety as well so it's like going out in public it's
> a bit of a [night]mare sometimes.

Issues related to health were also raised by Milly as impacting her level of gig attendance:

> *I've* changed *hugely* [original emphasis] as a person. When I was in a band we
> used to do a lot of gigs, we used to go to a lot of gigs, we'd have friends staying,

we'd be partying every weekend, I'd be drinking an awful lot socially and then I

started getting health problems [...] about ten years ago maybe and I think that

instigated change. First of all I was doing the Ph.D. and I gave the band up

because I didn't have an awful lot of time before the band for practice and so on

and I needed to concentrate on my studies, so I gave the band up and I stopped

going to gigs as much um then I got some health problems so I stopped drinking

as much and when I stopped drinking as much I realised I didn't want to be in

that environment anymore. I also developed tinnitus while I was in the band and

loud music started really affecting me after I'd been to a smallish gig it would

really affect my ears so all those things really together. I think the main thing

probably was the health issues and I started thinking more about looking after

myself and not going to gigs staying out all night drinking.

As Milly points out here, there is no clear identifiable factor that reduced her gig attendance

levels but rather a mixture of factors. Despite this, she felt that the health issues probably

did hold greater significance than others – the desire to reduce alcohol consumption for

health reasons and the desire to not aggravate the tinnitus that she had developed. Here

the concept of social ageing is relevant as Milly could be understood as beginning to fulfil

societal expectations of becoming a 'responsible' adult who takes responsibility for their

health and well-being. The account above also highlights the way for Milly, like Christine,

gigs and alcohol consumption seemed inextricably linked.

What is reflected above is the degree to which practical factors could impact on decisions to

attend (or not attend) a gig and serves to demonstrate the complexity of my research

sample's relationships with music. What has been demonstrated is that my research

participants were reflexive in their gig attendance, considering a range of factors. This was done in the context of their wider lives e.g. work or child-care responsibilities. There was no sense that they would be expected to be attending particular gigs or even attending gigs consistently. It was about gig attendance being made to fit into their lives and as Lindsey commented sometimes 'it just doesn't really "fit" anymore'. In addition it is clear, based on the motivators above and the predominance of the 'sociality' sub-theme, that gig attendance is not inextricably about the music being played – gig attendance is bound up with the participants' punk beliefs and values.

Conclusion

This article opened with the finding that nearly all the twenty-two women I spoke with attended gigs, although the levels of attendance and regularity varied. Social dynamics was the main motivator for gig attendance, suggesting that gig attendance was about much more than just the music, but the complexity of the discussion above in terms of motivators suggests a process of weighing up factors amongst my research sample. The data also show that core punk values identified by the women, such as DIY and community, were drawn upon in terms of understanding or explaining their gig attendance. The findings presented here offer a unique contribution to knowledge and understanding of subcultural activities in its unpacking of the women's motivation for attending gigs, demonstrating that the reasons for gig attendance might be complex and not purely about the music. This reflects the punk values held by the women and the impact of age and gender, and demonstrates how an understanding of subcultural activities such as gigs needs to consider the impact of subcultural values and structural factors.

There was some evidence to suggest that patriarchal culture impacted gig attendance but the women I spoke with more often highlighted ways in which gig attendance could be constrained by issues of social and physical ageing. Pressures to fulfil these age-appropriate societal expectations may be felt more by women if it is believed that their behaviour generally is open to more scrutiny and social control than that of men (Fox 1977). Bennett (2006) suggested that punk women's absence from the gigs that he attended might have reflected the women's privatization of their punk fandom. This is a suggestion that feminist analysis might argue but fails to consider and fully unpack the restraints on public participation in the punk scene that may be placed on (punk) women and continuing to make invisible the experiences of women who do still attend gigs. I hope that this article goes some way towards making such experiences visible.

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Note

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[1] Whilst I argue that in focusing on older punk women I was giving voice to a largely marginalized group within punk studies, it is worth noting here that a significant issue was that my sample comprised of predominantly white punk women. By amending my sampling strategy I could have increased the ethnic diversity of my research sample, rather than contributing to the continued marginalization of black punk women (McGraw 2012) and considering class and sexuality further.