

Exploring Punk Subculture in China

By

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Abstract

This thesis explores the punk phenomenon in China. In order to examine punk members and practices, an ethnographic research was conducted in large-scale cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, and small-scale cities, such as Wuhan and Huaihua in China, as well as on the Internet. In particular, the thesis focuses on two prominent themes – subculture and resistance – as the main directions of analysis. Through discussing findings from the three dimensions of the individual, collective and online, it is argued that the Chinese punk phenomenon exists as a subculture and punk subcultural practices can be regarded as manifesting forms of resistance in China.

First, this study presents a detailed individual biography of one punk musician and then further examines those of other participants. It is discovered that subcultural resistance can have a different impact at different stages of a person's life. Second, this study demonstrates forms of collective practices and how they are manifested, and reveals how Chinese punk subculture members collectively produce different forms of subcultural resistance. Finally, this study examines Chinese punk online. It focuses on how online group members produce meanings of their activities and deploy specific techniques to resist online norms and censorship.

Overall this thesis contributes to the ongoing discussions in current field of subcultural studies. By providing a study on punk subculture in China, the research engages empirically in the question of power relations in a society from both individual and collective levels, which has rarely been undertaken before.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Focus of the Thesis—Chinese Punk

In 2010, Shaun M. Jefford produced a documentary film called *Beijing Punk* which recorded the punk performances and the personal lives of punk musicians during the period of the 2008 Olympics in China. It explores the lifestyle of punk musicians that involves drugs, poverty, alcohol and dissatisfaction about the police and Olympics. Beijing punks have their own dress code and performance style, and they also hold strong political opinions – about the Chinese government in particular. This film, however, has been banned in China and has only been circulated within the punk circle.

A year later, a book titled *Inseparable: The Memoirs of an American and the story of Chinese Punk Rock* (O'Dell, 2011) described the punk scene in China since the 1990s. As a contributor to the punk scene, the author himself had experienced hardship along with the first generation of punk musicians in China. Specifically, the book contains much information about the distinctive music style as well as the conflicts between punk musicians and the government. From this emotional biography it can be seen that Chinese punk musicians copied the Western punk style and their punk philosophy was not really formed from the Chinese context.

These two cultural productions about Chinese punks have shown that there is interest in the Chinese punk phenomenon, a music phenomenon that has existed in China for more than twenty years. More importantly, an initial impression of Chinese punks is constructed in the embodiment of dress, performance, and political attitude, and as being controversial in a conflicting relationship with the Chinese government, particularly illustrated in how the film about Beijing punk was banned. With a strong interest in its uniqueness and notoriety, this thesis focuses on researching the punk phenomenon in China today.

My original contribution to the existing body of knowledge is to present research on punk subculture members in China and their practices as a whole. With

exploration into different cities and groups, together with offline and online settings, I have provided detailed ethnographic findings as well as focusing on the most prominent theme – resistance – as the main direction for the analysis. Moreover, it also serves to complement current subcultural studies by reflecting on the concept of subculture and providing a case study of a subculture in a non-Anglo-American social context.

1.2 Importance in Relation to Western Literature

According to a press article produced by Jonathan DeHart (2013), punk music can hardly be regarded as a subculture because of the lack of suitable political and economic conditions for its development in China. This claim asserts that there is a problem regarding the Chinese punk phenomenon within the conceptual framework of *subculture*. However, the process of defining Chinese punk as a subculture can be seen as providing the first step to discovering the academic value of this phenomenon. To achieve this goal, a review of relevant Western literature about punks is needed since discussions of Chinese punks are few. Moreover, as indicated, the first generation of Chinese punk musicians copied the Western punk style, which reinforces the importance of looking at Western literature to aid understanding of the punk phenomenon in China.

Regarding the punk phenomenon in the West, Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay (2011) in their book *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* state that white punk's rejection of the whiteness creates a universal sense of subcultural citizenship in terms of building up an alternative and do-it-yourself style. J. Patrick Williams (2011) develops his subcultural theories in an analysis of how subcultural resistance has taken a significant role, based partly on his research into Straight edge subculture – a sub-category of punk subculture. In this sense, the punk phenomenon in the West can be seen as being closely related to a wider issue – subculture.

Theoretically speaking, the concept of subculture has generated debate in the West for decades. While this will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, two noticeable aspects need to be pointed out here. First, whether and how to interpret subcultural practice as a form of resistance is a primary concern in subcultural theories. Second, the dominant subcultural studies, which primarily focus on the relevant phenomena in Anglo-American¹ countries, may generate ethnocentric problems. From this sense, a subcultural study conducted in a different social context seems to be significantly important.

Informed by the Western literature, this research on the punk phenomenon in China will be particularly focused on three wider issues: subculture, resistance and the Chinese context through the interpretation and analysis of punk activities.

1.3 Questions of Subcultures and Resistance in China

Although Anglo-American academia has a dominant position in generating subcultural theories, attempts to research subcultural phenomena in other social contexts can also be found. For instance, Chinese academics have rushed to research *cyber subculture* and direct subcultural studies towards a new stage where subculture, especially when led by young people, appears to be emerging and growing online with little connection to the offline world (Cai, 2007; Yu, 2008; Cai and Huang, 2011). This research scope is problematic since it focuses on the online aspects of subcultural phenomena, but neglects the possibility that subcultural phenomena may be manifested through both online and offline activities.

By applying subcultural theories produced by Anglo-American scholars, the analysis of subcultural resistance can also be seen to interpret online subcultural

¹ Anglo-American: used to refer to something involving the UK and US. (Available at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/anglo-american> accessed in June, 2014)

practices. For instance, Cai and Huang (2011) explored an SNS (Social Networking Service) group and regarded its online existence as a form of resistance against the restraints in expression in mainstream Chinese culture. In this sense, subcultural resistance has also become a concern in Chinese academia.

In contrast to Anglo-American academia, Chinese scholars focus on online forms of subcultural phenomena while ignoring other types of subcultural phenomena. Since research on the punk phenomenon is rarely conducted in China, I wish to offer a detailed examination of punk subculture, which has shown its research value in Anglo-American academia and developed in both offline and online settings, to expand the research scope of subcultural studies in Chinese academia.

1.4 Overview of the Major Questions in this Thesis

The above discussions have shown that the punk phenomenon can be related to wider issues: subculture and resistance. By studying the Chinese context, these issues can be researched to a deeper extent, as, in a wider sense, the research on a subcultural phenomenon in a different social context can supplement current subcultural studies, which mainly focus on the Anglo-American area.

With the goal of understanding the punk phenomenon in China, the research will look into the formation of the punk group, punk activities and the meanings of these activities. To further understand whether and how the punk phenomenon exists as a subculture in China, the research will adopt a subcultural theoretical framework based on a critical review of different subcultural theories, discussed in Chapter 2, and focus on subcultural practices offline and online, and the shaping factors of these subcultural practices.

Moreover, with a particular interest in subcultural resistance, this research will discuss whether and how punk subcultural practices can be interpreted as manifesting forms of resistance. This further leads to the question of whether the

analysis of resistance needs to fall into a subculture member's punk career. In which case, how do we understand individual biographies of a subculture member as well as the subcultural phenomenon as a whole?

Finally, research into a subcultural phenomenon in a different social context, i.e. China, needs to carefully address the broader society in which the phenomenon is manifested. Thus this thesis will also explore how punk subculture relates to the broader social system, especially through the way of resistance.

1.5 Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 will provide a critique of previous subcultural studies, the analysis of resistance within subcultural theories, and their theoretical applications in China. In particular, it will consider the debates among CCCS subcultural theories², post-subcultural theories, and also J. Patrick Williams' subcultural theories on how to approach a subcultural phenomenon, and whether and how to interpret a subculture through the analysis of subcultural resistance. Combined with the discussions of subcultural studies within Chinese academia, the guiding theoretical problems in this thesis will be presented.

Chapter 3 will discuss methodological approaches, i.e. ethnographic methods applied in this research. As the significance of the ethnographic method in conducting a subculture will be explored, based on the deficiency of previous subcultural studies methodologically, it will offer a detailed depiction of my fieldwork and the further process of data analysis, with a further discussion of the reflexive process adopted throughout my research.

Chapter 4 will present an outline of the Chinese punk phenomenon along with further discussion of how its existence can be regarded as a subculture. In this chapter, punk group members, punk activities offline and online, and the

² Hebdige examined the Western punk phenomenon in the well-known book *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* and explained it as a resistance to the mainstream through style (1976).

interactions among the punk group members, the relationship between Chinese punks and the mainstream will be discussed as a whole. As a prelude to the detailed ethnographic findings of Chinese punks, this chapter mainly serves to provide an initial impression of this group and the importance of defining it as a subculture.

Chapters 5 to 8, will focus on discussing punk subcultural practices in different forms, including the individual, collective and online.

Chapter 5 presents a case study of punk musician Mr L in order to discuss individual punk subcultural practices. By exploring his individual biography and subcultural career as a Skinhead Oi! Punk, it will be seen how individual subcultural practices can be regarded as manifesting forms of individual resistance. Two important dimensions in interpreting Mr L's case will be discussed: the life changes and the gradual deepening commitment to punk subculture.

In Chapter 6, a discussion of individual subcultural practices will be further explored based on other participants' individual biographies and subcultural careers. Two dimensions in particular will be explored: the influence of one's educational background in a subcultural career and the relationship between one's professional life and punk life, and these will be used to interpret various forms of individual subcultural practices of different participants, where subcultural resistance plays a significant role.

Chapter 7 will focus on an exploration of collective subcultural practices. Two forms, punk-style performance and hanging out, where certain acts can be interpreted as subcultural resistance, form the primary discussion. Moreover, the question of punk authenticity and how it motivates my participants' behaviour of moving to a suburb and establishing a community will also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 8 will discuss online subcultural practices of punk forum members and punk musicians, with a particular focus on the norm-establishing process to form subcultural resistance in two punk forums, 'Punk' forum and 'Punk Is Not Dead'³ forum. Moreover, this chapter will present online participation in punk subculture and explore how the Internet breaks down the boundaries between insiders, i.e. forum members, and outsiders, i.e. the mainstream, thus expanding online punk groups. The chapter will also explore how punk musicians and forum members use special online techniques to produce a form of resistance to the online censorship and the government.

In Chapter 9, a conclusion to this thesis is provided, with the particular intention of answering the research questions outlined at the beginning. It will present a summary and overall assessment of the ethnographic findings shown in the previous four chapters. With a general summary of the punk phenomenon and punk subcultural practices, the chapter offers a theoretical reflection on subcultural studies, a discussion of subcultural resistance, and a discussion of Chinese society reflected through the relationship between the punk group and its surrounding social environment. The limitations of this thesis and the suggested future research directions will be discussed in the final section.

³ The naming of the website 'Punk Is Not Dead' is after the landmark Scottish band, The Exploited (1981) LP *Punks Not Dead*(sic) LP. Secret Records. In response to the Crass(1978) proclamation that 'Punk is Dead' on *The Feeding of the Five Thousand* 12" Small Wonder Records.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces subcultural theories and analysis of resistance within Anglo-American subcultural studies, and their current theoretical application in Chinese academia in a different social context, i.e. Chinese society, with a further theoretical discussion of the Chinese social background. It is hoped that, through this chapter, the study of punk subculture in China, with particular regard to the focus of this thesis, subcultural resistance, can be contextualised into current subcultural studies.

With a review on previous studies in the area of subculture, this chapter is organised into four parts:

First, there will be a critical review of subcultural theories⁴ including post-subcultural theories, CCCS subcultural theories, and J. Patrick Williams's theories within Anglo-American academia, with a focus on the debates around the question of how to approach subcultural phenomena in a society.

Second, the analysis of resistance in those subcultural theories discussed in the first section will be reviewed. The main focus will be given to changes regarding the analysis of resistance in studying a subculture.

⁴ A key debate regarding conceptual issues within subcultural studies on the notion of 'scene, subculture and tribe' can be found in the works of Straw (1991) and Bennett (1999). Straw (1991) argues that a music scene is about a range of musical practices that co-exist in cultural space and interact with each other and therefore can better explain how those forms of communication happen in the process of building musical alliance and drawing musical boundaries. In Bennett's (1999) discussions, neo-tribalism can serve as a better theoretical concept than the notion of subculture to explain the fluidity of youth cultural group.

Third, there will be a discussion of previous theoretical applications of subcultural theories in Chinese subcultural phenomena, with a consideration of the deficiency in current research.

Fourth, one theoretical approach to interpreting Chinese society will be provided as the social background to the research of punk subculture in China. It will focus on the concepts in Confucian philosophy used to interpret Chinese society.

2.2 Subculture Study in Anglo-American Area

Subcultural studies have had a long history and have experienced considerable changes as a result of critical debates over the decades in the Anglo-American area. The 1920s to the late 1960s witnessed the original studies of subcultures by the Chicago School. Albert Cohen, one of the crucial Chicago School-Style scholars, explored the delinquent members of 1950s male gangs (1955). While his thinking of collective problem-solving, which is shared by other scholars including Cloward and Ohlin (1960) and Downes (1966), provides the basis for the later subculture studies as well as forming the research tradition of the Chicago School, analysts from the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) criticise it. The CCCS analysts hold the opinion that the attempts of the Chicago School to situate delinquent subcultures within a larger social structure are not adequate (Hall and Jefferson, 1976).

The contribution made by the CCCS analysts mainly consists of applying a broad social system to the formation of subcultures, which are particularly identified by age, i.e. youth subcultures, and further research on the marginalised and deviant youth from the mainstream. In CCCS studies, youth subculture is analysed in its social and cultural conditions, which points to a localised and class-based sub-set culture with a resistance to the mainstream through style.

Criticisms of this work have been made in a recent body of work known as 'post-subcultural studies', which questions and readdresses the previous subcultural

theory and the empirical research done by CCCS subcultural analysts (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). The concept of subculture starts to be explained as pragmatic without fundamental relation to class and the mainstream. Compared to the CCCS analysts who define subculture as being in opposition to the mainstream, post-subcultural scholars prefer to view the mainstream as being a fragmented entity instead of being united (Williams, 2011).

The debates in subcultural studies never end. The defenders of the CCCS model find problems in the post-subcultural model in the ignoring of the social context in the process of theorising subcultures in contemporary society (Blackman, 2005; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). This brings back consideration of the reasons behind the consumption behaviours and choices of certain groups of people.

The latest subcultural model can be found in the most recent book *Subcultural Theory: Traditions and Concepts* by J. Patrick Williams (2011). For Williams, the concept of subculture is problematic if simply relying on demographic characteristics since 'not all people in a particular category share values, beliefs, or practices' (2011: 39). In other words, people who share the same subcultural values and conduct subcultural practices may be from different generations and ages.

The next section will begin with a review of the critique of CCCS studies by the post-subcultural theorists and then discuss the value of CCCS theories for subcultural studies. Finally, the recent, reclaimed theory will be discussed.

2.1.1 Post-subcultural Studies: A Pragmatic Approach

Although it has been argued that post-subcultural studies are not unified, two main strands in this field can be identified (Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003). In Muggleton and Weinzierl's opinion, the first strand criticises the CCCS work and establishes a new framework. An example of this is Sarah Thornton's (1995) use

of Bourdieu's work to theorise the concept of subculture capital and ideologies. The main criticism is that the CCCS's concepts of 'resistance' and 'incorporation' are too limited, ignoring the internal stratification of subcultures, the subcultural participation in commerce and the significant role of the media in subcultural formation (Gelder & Thornton, 1997). Muggleton also points out that the second strand abandons CCCS theories completely and attempts to replace the term 'subculture' with other terminologies such as 'subchannels' (Singh, 2002), 'temporary substream networks' (Weinzierl, 2000) and 'neo-tribes' (Andy Bennett, 1999). Meanwhile, by applying the urban tribes theory, 'tribe' identities are also explored (Winge, 2003).

Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003) argue that post-subcultural analysts criticise the CCCS's conceptualisation of class-based subcultures, such as working-class subculture, as being homological and illegitimate. In summarising Stanley Cohen's opinion of subcultures, Gelder said:

Subcultures have more to do with how one gets by in the present moment, with apathy, passivity, conformity and the more mundane 'daily round of life', rather than with the relations to the broader structures of class, capitalism, and so on. (Gelder, 1997:146)

In Cohen's (1997) review of CCCS subcultural studies, *structure* is concerned with the unequal distribution of power and wealth in society and how that appears to be beyond individual control. Structural conditions and constraints constitute the problems of the disadvantaged working-class youth and subcultures become their solution for resolving these problems. Nevertheless, Cohen argues that the general class division in post-war British capitalism appears to be historicised and extracted. He also believes that, by emphasising structure and history, CCCS subcultural theories have removed their individualistic bias, thus the assumption that youth alienation status needs to be recognised psychologically has been removed. Further, Cohen (1997) argues that the CCCS analysis can hardly explain why individual youths respond differently to the same pressures although they all belong to the same class. Regarding this doubt, he believes that the problems come from the CCCS way of studying the

cultural-responses of members of a subculture followed by uncovering their class base. In other words, by *starting* from a class base, a wider range of cultural responses will be discovered (Cohen, 1997). He argues that in the studies based on a specific biographical location, such as schools and neighbourhoods, the youths' cultural responses have been recorded as being broader than in the CCCS purview (Cohen, 1997). In conclusion, for Cohen, it is doubtful that a class position in society can be looked at through class-based subcultures and, instead, the best way to start is from the ethnographic research based on specific circumstances.

Sarah Thornton (1997) also regards CCCS theory as being inadequate; she points out that subcultures are actualised on a fantasy of classless status and then shifts the research focus fully on to the internal structure of club culture (Thornton, 1997).

It can be seen that by refusing to apply structural terms to post-subcultural studies, the CCCS definition of class-based subculture has been replaced by a pragmatic definition of subcultures, which are studied on the basis of specific cases. This may multiply the perspectives investigated in the studies of subcultures, which may be potentially valuable in researching the complicated cultural phenomena in contemporary society. Nevertheless, focusing on the individual subcultural participation and response, without looking into the individual biography of a subculture member, the explanation of subcultural practice will stay superficial and remain inadequate.

2.1.2 CCCS Subcultural Studies: A Reflection of the Period

As Shildrick and MacDonald argue:

Some of the broader goals of the CCCS subcultural approach remain valid ones. Their emphasis upon the relationship between social structure and culture in youth cultural formation and, particularly, the ways in which individual biographies intertwine with, and between, the two seems curiously timely...perhaps, ironically, the rejuvenation of this

aspect of CCCS subculture theory might not only help to broaden and increase the relevance of contemporary youth culture research, but might also aid in uniting it, with transitions research, in a more holistic, lively and telling sociology of youth. (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006:137)

The focus on the social structure by CCCS theory provides a solid explanation of youth subcultural formation. Although the CCCS subcultural theory was criticised by the post-subcultural analysts, it still retained its appeal and has even undergone rejuvenation. Scholars including Blackman, Bose and Loader all reclaim the values of the CCCS model as applying to contemporary subcultures. In Blackman's argument (2005), postmodern analysis interprets subcultural practice as an individualistic way to explore personal emancipation and therefore ignores its collective basis. Loader (1996) examines youth cultural practices in a particular socio-economic context. Pilkington and Johnson (2003), who explore youth subcultural identities in a global context, point out that social class becomes one key determinant for forming the identities globally.

In post-subcultural criticism of CCCS theory, one particular aspect is about its ignoring of the commercial aspect of contemporary society. However, from the perspective of CCCS analysts, the research aim has shown that less focus on these aspects is a consequence of their understanding of the essence of youth subculture rather than accidental neglect.

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University (CCCS) was established in 1964. In the classic text *Resistance Through Rituals* (1976), it was argued that youth culture studies, an important part of CCCS studies, have emerged since 'youth played an important role as a cornerstone in the construction of understandings, interpretations and quasi-explanations about the period' (Hall & Jefferson, 1976: 9). Thus Teddy Boys, Skinheads and Rockers as distinctive groups were discussed and defined by the CCCS as temporary youth subcultures since they can be identified at a particular time but would fade as time progressed (1976: 9).

Being the most influential subcultural model, CCCS studies refresh the traditional theoretical framework and particularly refine the concepts of culture, subculture and class. It is from the perspective of post-CCCS subcultural research that the beliefs of CCCS analysts can be understood. For CCCS analysts, a better understanding of youth culture can only be achieved by discovering the reasons behind the leisure phenomenon. In this sense, the CCCS analysts do not neglect the relation between youth subcultures and other social organisations, as the post-subcultural analysts argue, but conduct their research with a deeper and broader perspective. This can be found in the classic book *Resistance through Rituals* edited by Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson in 1976.

Of course, post-war youth did engage in distinctive cultural pursuits, and this was closely linked with the expansion of the leisure and fashion industries, directed at the 'teenage market'. But the term 'Youth Culture' confuses and identifies the two aspects, whereas what is needed is a detailed picture of how youth groups fed off and appropriated things provided by the market, and, in turn, how the market tried to expropriate and incorporate things produced by the sub-cultures: in other words, the dialectic between youth and the youth market industry... In short, our aim is to de-throne or de-construct the term, 'Youth Culture', in favour of a more complex set of categories. (Hall & Jefferson, 1976:16)

From this perspective, post-subcultural studies, which focus on the consuming aspect of youth subcultures, returns to the research status that CCCS analysts wanted to avoid. The shifted focus of post-subcultural analysts also shifts the potential values of interpreting social structure in a particular period of time and the underlying reasons of the formation of youth subcultures, which is the key purpose and mission of CCCS studies.

This mission leads to a more explicit and clarified CCCS framework, with more explanation than post-subcultural studies of power relations within subcultures. The exploration in this aspect is actualised in three ways: first, the emphasis on class division, particularly the construction of working-class culture, provides the base of the argument of relation between subcultures and social structure. Second, the dominant culture has been discussed within the theoretical

framework of hegemony. Third, the power relation within subculture is structured through the subordinated subculture resisting the dominant parent culture symbolically.

Moreover, as the beginning of this section shows, CCCS subcultural theory has generated the concept of individual biography in the research, which is neglected by post-subcultural theorists.

Biographies are the 'careers' of particular individuals through these structures and cultures-the means by which individual identities and life- histories are constructed out of collective experiences. Biographies recognise the element of individuation in the paths which individual lives take through collective structures and cultures, but they must not be conceived as either wholly individual or free-floating. Biographies cut paths in and through the determined spaces of structures and cultures in which individuals are located.
(Clarke et al., 1976: 57)

Simply put, the CCCS's approach to subculture is a result of its goal to understand the individual biographies of subculture members, particularly involving the aspect of the surrounding social background and the power relations within it. However, this framework may not necessarily be straightforwardly applicable to contemporary reality as well as different social contexts since a social background can be different in different countries, and the power relations within a society by means of subcultural practices may be manifested in different levels and patterns, not merely limited to one category, i.e. class. In this sense, further research needs to be conducted based on specific social and cultural conditions.

2.1.3 J. Patrick Williams' Approach to Subcultural Studies: Redefining Subculture

The latest approach to subcultural studies is from J. Patrick Williams who has conducted many years of research on Straightedge subculture in America. He explores the new features of subcultures that have developed in recent times.

Williams (2011) argues that a combinative way of studying identity and performance with an examination of the surrounding social system is the most appropriate approach to subcultural studies in a contemporary social and political context. Based on this principle, he provides a definition of subculture:

Subcultures refer to culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who come to share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects, and practices through interaction. Over time, their interaction develops into a discourse and culture that shapes, but does not determine, the generation, activation, and diffusion of these ideas, objects, and practices. (Williams, 2011: 39)

Compared to the CCCS model, Williams' conceptualisation does not emphasise the formation of subcultures originating from class culture. Instead, shared interests become the primary reason of an aggregate of subculturalists. To this extent it is in harmony with post-subcultural theory. However, Williams' model is different since he further asserts that subculture members' shared interests also led them to identify themselves as different from – usually in some form of antagonistic relationship with – normal, “square” society. (2011: 8).

Compared to the post-subcultural scholars who regard the society as being fragmented, Williams prefers to view the society as being normal and different. Further, Williams argues that the term subculture is problematic if used to ‘classify people who comprise a social network or a population segment (e.g. scene or gang), rather than a cultural phenomenon that refers to sets of shared values and beliefs, practices, and material objects’ (2011: 38). In this respect, the formation of subcultures is not limited to the static or assumed categories such as location, age or class.

Without a rigid framework, Williams' theorisation with different dimensions can direct subcultural research into new areas that remain unexplored in the CCCS model. For instance, subcultural practices in the online setting are explored; different dimensions of resistance are conceptualised. By framing the society into ‘normal’ and ‘different’ rather than ‘mainstream’ and ‘marginalised’, the

possibilities of exploring contemporary society with a less static structure can be actualised.

It can be seen that the Anglo-American theorists discussed above approach subcultural phenomena differently. CCCS subcultural studies focus on the power relation between subculture and its parent culture, with the inclusion of individual biographies of a subculture member in order to reveal the underlying reasons for the formation of subcultures in a particular period. Opposing CCCS subcultural studies, post-subcultural studies direct their research into other areas, focusing on the individual basis of a subculture member rather than his assumed collective one. As for J. Patrick Williams, he abandons the categories of class and age in defining subculture for a process of sharing and interacting as the focus of his approach meanwhile asserting the perspective of relating to social structure. While the above theories have outlined possible research approaches, the question still remains about how to approach subcultural phenomena in a different social context, with the aim of understanding the formation of a subculture, as well as its underlying reasons, while not being restricted to particular categories in the initial stage of research.

2.3 The Analysis of Resistance within Subculture Study

Within CCCS subcultural theories and J. Patrick Williams' theories, analysing subcultural resistance can be seen as a prominent approach to interpreting a subcultural phenomenon, especially involving the power relation between that subcultural phenomenon and the broader social system. While the first is restricted to one particular form, i.e. 'symbolic resistance', the other develops the analysis into discussing different forms, degrees and acts of resistance. In post-subcultural theories, refusing the analysis of resistance and modifying the previous analysis into a different direction both occur.

2.3.1 Post-subcultural Approaches

In Morley and Robins' opinion (1995), contemporary subcultures are simplified when CCCS theory is applied in such a way that working-class youth are

considered to be resisting the mainstream through subcultural practices. The impression of this simplification is drawn from two aspects, according to post-subcultural analysts: first, the mainstream cannot be seen as united since the margin and the mainstream interact and overlap, thus creating a space with subcultural practices. Secondly, the concept of resistance cannot explain the complicated stratifications that exist in contemporary subcultures that are formed in close relation with other societal formations (Morley & Robins, 1995).

By refusing to acknowledge the power relation between the dominant cultures and the subordinate cultures, post-subcultural studies have shifted the concept of symbolic resistance to other levels. Two tendencies need to be pointed out. First, the focus of Sarah Thornton's (1995) work on club culture shifted from the CCCS resistance model towards the study of the subcultural ideologies. Therefore, her work is no longer about 'dominant ideologies and subversive ideologies'. The concepts of domination and subordination still exist in Sarah Thornton's analysis, however, these two concepts are situated at a micro-level rather than a macro-level. She intends not to 'de-politicise popular cultures' but to research the politics inside the subcultures (1995: 9-10). Continuing with this intention, Sarah Thornton formulates the concept of subcultural capital and studies the power relations within the subcultures.

Second, Ueno (2003) believes that overhauling the concept of resistance will be more productive than simply abandoning it. Instead of applying symbolic resistance, which consists of the ideal of subversion and implies political revolution in contemporary youth cultures, he claims that resistance can be reconceptualised on an everyday scale rather than a macro political level. Ueno generates an overhauled concept of resistance through relativisation in contrast to the CCCS concept of resistance through rituals. From this perspective, the concept of resistance is regarded as 'a constitutive element within power relations' (Ueno, 2003) which takes various shapes rather than being a passive movement against the dominant power. More specifically, this notion points out that resistance becomes a means of empowering a subculture and enabling the relativisation of it by resisting and othering different cultures. In this sense, the

relations among different forms of cultures and subcultures can be explained as one's own native culture and open-ended alternative cultures. Through experiencing the subcultures, an alternative identity can be established by young people.

In Ueno's argument, the concept of resistance through relativisation needs to be understood with Zygmund Bauman's concept of 'the stranger' and 'the Other' (Bauman 1995:190; 1997: 33). It is argued that 'the Self' and 'the Other' conflict and negotiate with each other in a social spacing resulting from a self-consciousness constructed through the existence of the Other. However, this relationship can be exclusively antagonistic caused by intolerance, or can be reasonably positioned such that '[t]he stranger who has different cultures could be recognised as just the other or another self' through resisting intolerance (Ueno, 2003: 104). In this sense, the native culture and alternative cultures exist equally in a dynamic relationship.

Although the idea of resistance through rituals is criticised by post-subculture analysts, a portion of the CCCS research approach has been retained. It is true that Thornton provides a thorough piece of research on a subculture itself but she also approaches it by revealing the internal power relation while Ueno generates a new concept of resistance through relativisation, which is related to resistance through rituals proposed by the CCCS. Subcultures, in Ueno's eyes, can no longer be defined as merely being subordinated; rather, they can empower themselves by resistance and can therefore be analysed without referring to societal class division. More specifically, Ueno has attempted to interpret subcultural practice as a daily resistance in the life of a subculture member.

2.3.2 CCCS Subcultural Approaches

The resistant feature of subcultures, an important concept in CCCS studies, is heavily criticised by the post-subcultural analysts. The main criticism concerns the linear analysis of the concept of resistance without considering the supportive subcultural practices, the commodity-orientated type of subcultures and the relations to other societal organisations, i.e. media. Nevertheless, if

explored carefully, the concept of resistance rarely appears independently. In fact, the CCCS analysts never explicitly define the term resistance in subcultures. It also appears frequently with other terms such as adaption and negotiation (see, for example, Hall & Jefferson, 1976). As the CCCS analysts have discussed the 'negotiated' feature of subcultures with relation to the dominant culture, the 'resistant' feature is a more advanced form of negotiation.

While analysing the resistant feature of subcultures, the CCCS analysts took the resistant working-class parent culture as their starting point, in line with their approach of tracking back historically. It was argued by the CCCS analysts that the resistance of the working-class 'finding its political expression in a community, non-industrial politics rather than in electoral politics and the Labour Party,' has been devalued (Hall & Jefferson, 1976.: 26). This outlines the background for the argument of resistance by the CCCS analysts. The term resistance in the CCCS studies refers to subordinated classes resisting the dominant classes. The solution is an imaginative way of solving the problems between different classes or their own class experiences (Hall & Jefferson, 1976). More specifically, 'symbolic resistance' is carried out in post-war subcultural practices. There is no specific definition for symbolic resistance in CCCS studies; however, its meaning has been fleshed out which is adequate enough for its purposes.

Post-subcultural analysts argue that symbolic resistance is not justified because of the symbols lacking contexts and being analytically subjective. In fact, symbols, which are crucial in identifying the acts of resistance in CCCS studies, have been situated in specific contexts and larger social structures. In the cases of the Teds and the Mods, the possessions and objects, such as bootlace ties and parka coats, are identified as symbols (Hall & Jefferson, 1976). The act of Teddy Boys appropriating an upper-class dress style serves as an imaginary solution to the problems of their working-class experience, such as the lack of career potential, unlike the situation of the real upper classes (Hall & Jefferson, 1976). Compared to post-subcultural studies, the symbol analysis by the CCCS explains the reasons behind the appropriation of objects, which serve as symbols for

young consumers, in a better way due to the inclusion of a larger picture of the society. More specifically, symbolic resistance does not simply refuse any symbolic objects relevant to the dominant cultures. Rather, in the circumstances of a consumer society, the appropriation of the objects and then the changing of them into new forms is the true case.

The problem of CCCS studies is not about the absence of supportive or commodity-orientated subcultures other than the resistant ones but about the lack of different forms of resistance in terms of acts, the degree and the subjects. In parallel to the class analysis, the resistance analysis in the CCCS studies is a linear model, which follows the principle of class conflicts. In view of the necessity of reconsidering power relations, the concept of resistance can possibly be conceptualised into different dimensions apart from the core concept of symbolic resistance existing in the CCCS studies.

2.3.3 J. Patrick Williams' Resistance Theories

In Williams' (2011) argument, a theory is required to be established to explain different types of resistance. Specifically, subcultural resistance is divided into three dimensions by Williams: passive and active, micro and macro, overt and covert. He asserts that:

It does not matter whether an individual or group intends to engage in an act of resistance; rather it is up to some outside observer—perhaps the target, perhaps a researcher—to decide. (Williams, 2011: 95)

Resistance is conceptualised as a reaction to something occurring in mainstream society or culture. Yet resistance also demands a reaction from its target and therefore needs to be understood as a moment in the larger frame of everyday life. (ibid:106)

By arguing that the outside observer can decide the category of resistance, Williams demonstrates different dimensions of resistance based on the previous theorisation of resistance.

In terms of the first dimension, Williams points out that the CCCS firstly theorises the consumptive acts of youth resistance; in other words, resistance through appropriation. The passivity in symbolic resistance is in its 'magical' solution to the class conflicts. In other words, symbolic resistance through consumptive appropriation is unable to achieve any substantial consequences and, finally, remains impotent. Speaking of active resistance, Williams exemplifies Willis' (1977) study and his conceptualisation of 'opposition' which means that the delinquent youth holds an oppositional attitude ideologically without remaining in the consumption level (Williams, 2011).

To discover how the direction of either passive or active resistance is formed, Williams proposes a second dimension: micro and macro. Speaking of macro-oriented subcultures, Williams mentions Robert Merton's (1938) argument that 'rebellion occurs when emancipation from the reigning standards, due to...marginalist perspectives, leads to the attempt to introduce a "new social order"' (Merton, 1938: 678). He further summarises the research on middle-class cultures which are believed to be more overtly political and framed as counter-cultures, for instance, by the CCCS theorists (2011). Nevertheless, although macro-oriented resistance tends to be more ideological, Williams argues that it does not necessarily require formal political protests. It can be seen that the subcultural group members may join appeals for environmental protection, etc., thus joining a social movement. From this perspective, the macro-oriented resistance can transcend class while not limiting itself in overtly political behaviours.

The third dimension in Williams' discussion concerns whether the resistance is covert or overt. While overt resistance, normally in the form of macro-oriented resistance, can be easily recognised, covert resistance happens more in a private subcultural space (Williams, 2011). However, these two types of resistance may overlap depending on the ultimate intention of the subculture members.

Compared to the theorisation of resistance in the CCCS model, Williams' model of adducing different types of resistance in three dimensions is more complete and thorough. As he argues, the CCCS conceptualisation of symbolic resistance through rituals can be categorised as passive resistance.

Through enriching the concept of resistance, the research can be directed to other categories such as the members' relation to social movements as well as personal engagement at a micro-level. Simply put, Williams' model defies the linearity of the CCCS model in terms of resistance.

In conclusion, the CCCS subcultural approach aims to explain the underlying reasons behind subcultural phenomena through discussing a particular category in individual biographies, i.e. class, while also limiting the research perspective to the division of class; the post-subcultural approach tends to direct the research in a pragmatic way without trying to find out the underlying reasons. Williams' approach solves the problem of conducting research based merely on the dimensions of class and age, thus opening up more research directions.

Through the analysis of resistance, the CCCS subcultural approach reveals the significance of power relations between a subculture and its surrounding social system. Comparatively, Williams attempts to provide a more concrete and detailed explanation of different forms, acts and degrees of resistance while one post-subcultural theorist, Ueno, provides a way to analyse daily resistance in subcultural practices. As Anglo-American scholars have pursued different approaches to explaining subcultural phenomena in the West, the primary question becomes how to approach subcultural phenomena in other social contexts since the focus of this thesis is on exploring punk subculture in China.

2.4 The Application of Subcultural Theories in Chinese Academia

As a recent research area in China (Clark, 2012), two tendencies can be seen concerning research scope and focus of current subcultural studies in Chinese academia. Firstly, Chinese academics have hastened to research *cyber subculture* and direct subcultural studies towards a new stage where subculture, especially

where led by young people, is argued as emerging and growing online with little connection to the offline world. Secondly, debates in China exist about whether subculture can be interpreted as a form of resistance (Cai, 2007; Yu, 2008; Cai and Huang, 2011) or as a manifestation of post-modern times (Lu, 2002; Ma, 2011). Theoretically speaking, subcultural study in China finds its roots deeply in Anglo-American research traditions. Thus a discussion about how the Anglo-American theories are applied in the earlier Chinese subcultural studies will be provided.

2.4.1 The Application of CCCS Subculture Theories in China

As a recently translated theory in China during the twenty-first century, CCCS subculture theory has started to become popular in Chinese academia for conceptualising the diverse forms of subcultures (Ma, 2011). CCCS subcultural theory is applied to explain the reasons behind the activities of entertainment and consumption among young people. Although the Chinese scholars who follow the CCCS model do not define subculture, the resistant aspect of subcultures has been extensively analysed.

A popular form of cyber subculture which has been discussed is Kuso subculture (Cai, 2007; Yu, 2008). According to Yu's (2008) explanation, 'Kuso' is a Japanese word, which means 'shit' and 'disgusting'. The popularity of this Kuso subculture in China started from an online video, 'A Bloody Incidence Caused by A Steamed Bread' (一个馒头引发的血案), which is a collage and a parodied version of the big budget Chinese film, *The Promise* released in 2005. A young freelancer produced the online video in the same year. Following this style of parody, more online videos emerged, such as 'red classics' produced by freelancers, university students, etc., which specifically mock government propaganda. This deconstruction of the serious content and its reconstruction in a humorous, mocking, and entertaining version is Kuso culture.

Cai (2007) and Yu (2008) argue that Kuso subculture is about how youth resist the authority that exists in the mainstream movie-making elite culture and in

government propaganda. In the Chinese movie-making culture, the trend of making big-budget films by elite directors and the monopolising of the film market indicates the existence of authority. Although the films are big budget and regarded as being of high quality by the elite directors, youth audiences are more likely to criticise them for being low quality. In fact, this criticism is not only about the quality of the films but also about the acclaimed elites who are seen as authorities by the youth. Therefore, Kuso subculture is believed to be motivated by the anti-authority attitudes held by the youth. Speaking of the manner of resistance, Yu (2008) follows the CCCS model and singles out the way of producing collages as symbolic resistance, which is to criticise and change the existing system by replacing them with a different version produced by the youth. More specifically, Yu believes that the resistance is actualised by parody, as a manner of refusing to accept the style of the higher class and reversing the meanings produced by them.

Lu (2002), from another perspective, applies the CCCS subculture theory to Chinese subculture during the 1970s and 1980s, when the communist ideology dominated both political and economic fields. As China was experiencing reform in the realms of politics, economics and culture following the spread of capitalism, the young also sought to change their lifestyles. Subcultural resistance in this period manifested itself in two areas: the first was in daily life. Youth started to wear non-mainstream clothes and refused to wear the traditional uniform style, the Zhongshan uniform, which can be regarded as symbolic resistance. The other area was a non-symbolic resistance against government management through student social movements such as parading in front of government offices to demonstrate their disappointment about the ideal politicised version of youth culture fed them by the government. The second style of resistance, nevertheless, was never as widespread as the first. Thus it is fair to say that this period's symbolic resistance signifies the formation of youth subculture in China.

As shown above, the analysis of resistance in the Chinese context is mainly about subculture as a symbolic form to resist authorities such as the government.

However, current research tends to apply the theory casually in any emerging phenomena to do with young people. For instance, producing collage videos can possibly be seen as a resistant act but would arguably not constitute a subcultural resistance unless a definition of subculture is conceptualised based on this phenomenon, which is lacking in current subcultural research in Chinese academia.

2.4.2 The Application of Post-subcultural Theories in China

Compared to CCCS subcultural theory, post-subcultural theories are less popular in China. The reason for this may be because post-subcultural theories are less unified than CCCS theories.

Zhonghong Ma is an important scholar who supports post-subcultural theory. She is a professor, specialising in cultural studies, from Suzhou University in China. She singles out two important aspects: consumption and media roles which are believed to be ignored in CCCS studies but emphasised in post-subcultural studies (Ma, 2011). In her argument, *postmodernity* has shaped contemporary society and contains a variety of stratifications internationally and locally (Ma, 2011). More importantly, Ma emphasises postmodernity in order to criticise the CCCS subcultural model, which is the crucial part of post-subcultural analysis. She argues that being in a society influenced by global consumption and media forms, subcultural practices can no longer be concluded as class-based and resistant. While her main contribution follows from her emphasis on appealing for a new focus on cyber subcultures research in China, so providing a more detailed framework in that area, cyber subculture serves as the sole evidence of her statements about subcultures being mostly postmodernised and classless in contemporary China.

Ma chooses the same Kuso subculture with Cai who follows CCCS theories (Ma, 2010). In contrast, she criticises Cai's applied concepts of anti-authority and resistance, and asserts that young people focus on establishing their own spaces rather than connecting to the offline world with authorities in any sense. While the new style of interaction emerges due to the Internet, interpreting cyber

phenomena as a form of consumption, which is similar to the approach in post-subcultural theories, is arguably superficial because of its lack of exploration into the underlying reasons behind the consumptive behaviour.

In conclusion, the application of subcultural theories produced by Anglo-American scholars can be found in Chinese academia, mainly in discussing cyber phenomena. When applying CCCS subcultural theories, resisting the control of authorities is used to explain cyber phenomena. Meanwhile, post-subcultural theories are applied in a way to emphasise the consumptive aspect of a phenomenon and the media roles in the new age. While this suggests that subcultural theories in Anglo-American academia can be applicable in the Chinese social context with its distinctive characteristics, it is also fraught with danger in its careless application of these theories. To avoid this danger, research needs to be conducted carefully in China to explore subcultural phenomena with the goal of understanding their formation as well as their relation to the surrounding social background. Enlightened by the research conducted by Anglo-American scholars, analysing subcultural resistance can serve as an approach to interpret subcultural phenomena in Chinese society.

2.5 Interpreting Chinese Society

By finding out what kind of society a subculture exists in, the distinctive characteristics of its social context can be found. In this section, one theoretical approach to interpreting Chinese society, i.e. Confucianism, will be discussed. In Williams' (2011) view on subculture, normal society is what subculture members identify themselves as being different from. Through providing concepts from Confucian philosophy, an understanding of the Chinese punks' 'normal society' can be appreciated.

Confucian or Neo-Confucian philosophy once dominated Chinese society, and still plays a significant role (Yin, 2002; Hwang, 2013; Leung & Nann, 1995). In Cai's (2010) discussion, the central party-state has a priority to build a harmonious and stable society which uses Confucian philosophy as a source of

legitimation. Leung (2010), for instance, attributes the psychological and social beliefs of Chinese people to Confucian philosophy. The same is the case with Weber (2002), who discusses the collective behaviour of Chinese people within the framework of Confucianism. According to Hwang's argument (2013), Confucian philosophy is no doubt the most influential philosophical system of thought in East Asia. Nevertheless, he argues that the status of Confucianism is declining due to the rise of Western power and a lack of desire to revive its value. Taiwanese professor Haiguang Yin's, *Reappraisal of Cultural Change in Modern China* (2002) has intensely analysed the declining position of Confucianism in Chinese society.

It is true that Confucian philosophy has not explicitly maintained its position in framing the dominant moral standards of Chinese society. Nevertheless, even though the argument provided by Yin (2002) focused on the decline of Confucian philosophy, he still emphasised the significant role that it continues to play in Chinese society. In this sense, realising the conflicts and struggles of Confucian philosophy in its development does not mean denying its effects. As Leung and Nann (1995) suggest, discussing a set of concepts related to Confucian philosophy could be more relevant to modern society in considering the Chinese status quo. In this sense, a set of concepts derived from Confucian philosophy is examined in the following discussion.

Yin (2002) notes that family is the core concept in Confucian philosophy. As Leung and Nann also commented: 'Traditional Chinese society comprised a multitude of family groups which formed the basic unit of the social, economic, and political structure.' (1995: 1) The father-image, for instance, is especially constructed in a family and serves as an authoritarian figure. In Leung and Nann's (1995) analysis, the principle of filial piety (Xiao, 孝) not only means the moral obligation that junior members have to fulfil but also a reciprocal system. The elderly, for instance, are in the position of disciplining non-conformists, arranging the careers, marriages, etc. of the junior members. In essence, the elderly exercise ultimate control over junior members and maintain domestic order. In a broader sense, Leung and Nann argue,

The family in China served as the prototype of all social organisations including that of government. This stemmed from Confucian principles which prescribed an hierarchical order of status and roles, and a clearly defined system of vertical relationships within society. (Leung & Nann, 1995:2)

The relation between the state and the individual follows the same principle since the state serves as an ultimate authoritarian figure. From another perspective, a conforming society with a hierarchical system is formed with the state and the elderly identified as the ones at the top of the social hierarchy. It is also this feature of conformity that builds a 'we' network, which is the basis of a collective culture. As Weber (2002) mentions, sentiments such as 'If one wants to establish himself, he should help others to establish themselves at first' appear in Confucius. Thus, Chinese society is defined as a society framed by 'we' culture and a collectivist system.

The concept of collectivism essentially defines the arrangement of social interaction in Chinese society. Except for depending on individuals, a rigid social framework is formed. In Weber's words:

People count on their in-group (family, relative, clan, or organisation) for support. Thus, the in-group becomes the major source of identity. Within this social structure, collective interests prevail over individual interests, identity is based on social networks, children learn to think in terms of 'we', harmony is maintained, and direct confrontation avoided. (Weber, 2002: 352)

In fact, this in-group can be expanded into a larger network, such as neighbourhoods or acquaintances. The basic discipline of harmony or avoiding direct confrontation is maintained by the national character of conforming to social norms. Within this discipline, submitting to authority and social expectation are significant norms. Consequently, the social structure is conservative and stable in China since changes made by individuals are usually categorised as the elements that potentially destroy harmony.

Simply put, authority and social norms have their established and unshakable position in Chinese society. While the concept of authority is specifically constructed in two sets of relationships – junior members of a family subordinate to the senior members, and citizens submitting to state power – the social norms are generally maintained in a collective network that is shared by neighbours and acquaintances.

Chapter 3: Methodological Approaches

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to discuss the methodological approach adopted in this thesis for exploring the punk phenomenon in China. The significance of the ethnographic approach adopted will be discussed and a detailed explanation of how I gained access to research Chinese punks, how I spent my time with them and how I found out the characteristics of this group, will be provided. More importantly, the problems I encountered on my field trip and the way I solved them will be outlined, with a further reflection on how my own biography may influence this ethnographic study of Chinese punks. This chapter is organised in three parts.

First, methodological approaches in previous subcultural studies, especially in Anglo-American academia, and the ethnographic approach adopted in this thesis will be discussed. It is hoped that the significance of the ethnographic approach in studying a subculture in a different social context will be revealed through this section.

Second, different stages of conducting this ethnographic research, which includes gaining access, getting into the punk scene, building mutual trust and relations will be presented. In particular, I will discuss the problems that I encountered and the way that I solved them.

Third, I will reflect upon my own biography, including my background and professional experiences, with regard to its effects on this ethnographic study of Chinese punks.

3.2 The Significance of the Ethnographic Approach in Studying a Subculture

As we saw in the previous chapter, CCCS subcultural studies are particularly criticised by the post-subcultural theorists for their lack of empirical research.

While the goal of CCCS subcultural study in understanding the underlying reasons of subcultural phenomena is appreciated, and its approach of considering the value of individual biographies of subculture members is appealing, the concern is focused on its rigidity in terms of applying class analysis to subcultural phenomena without understanding subcultural practices according to the perspectives of subculture members. In fact, even post-subcultural analysts such as Sarah Thornton and Stephan Tyler, who conducted fieldwork by entering into subcultural scenarios and talking to subculture members, are exceptions in studying a subcultural phenomenon.

As a consequence, the problem in subcultural studies is a lack of validity. By validity, it is the question of whether there is enough evidence to support the research argument and whether or not the research is credible (Hammersley, 1998). In this context, evidence to support arguments about subcultural phenomena and subculture members is arguably not enough since it lacks an important perspective from subculture members themselves. In Karen O'Reilly's (2012) opinion, ethnographic research can solve the problems of validity since it focuses on 'native's' perspective (Fetterman 2010: 20-22). Therefore, conducting ethnographic research became a favoured means to explore the Chinese punk subcultural phenomenon, with a particular focus on the articulations of subcultural experiences by the native punk subculture members.

Inspired by the theoretical discussions in the previous chapter, I bear in mind that my guiding theoretical problem is about finding punk subculture in a different social context, i.e. China, as well as using the dimension of resistance as a possible approach to interpret this phenomenon. Before entering into discussion of my methods and experiences, I need to provide a reflection on how this guiding theoretical problem was consciously embraced in the whole process of research, even before conducting the field study, and how it influenced my ethnographic practice.

Being considered as 'the founder of modern social anthropological methods of fieldwork and participant observation' (O'Reilly, 2012:12; Macdonald, 2001), Bronislaw Malinowski wrote in his book *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*:

Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies. (Malinowski, 1922: 9)

Good training in theory can lead to a research mind with foreshadowed problems. In Malinowski's opinion, this is particularly important for an ethnographer since he can thus enter into a critical process of 'moulding his theories according to the facts' because of those existing problems in previous theories (1922: 9). In other words, conducting ethnographic study requires a constant reflection on the relation between the findings and the theoretical problems. By doing this, the self-questioning process can also enable a research to be objective.

With a basic principle of listening to how punk subculture members articulate their subcultural experiences, two particular guiding theoretical problems remained in my mind when conducting the ethnographic study. First, while subcultural resistance is one interest of this research, the question became how to avoid suggesting or implying to my participants the use of 'resistance' for interpreting subcultural practices in the conversations while desiring to hear the articulations of resistance from them. Although J. Patrick Williams (2011) argues that a researcher can decide whether a subcultural practice or act should be regarded as being a resistant act or not, a realistic approach at the stage of fieldwork is to carefully develop the strategic areas of questioning, which will be discussed later. Meanwhile, paying attention to the spontaneous articulation of resistance by subculture members becomes a necessity in the interviews to reach the goal of understanding subcultural resistance. Second, as subcultural theories are mostly developed according to subcultural phenomena in the Anglo-American social context, this research, which is conducted in a different social context, i.e. China, depends on other perspectives, particularly with regard to

power relations between a subculture and society, based on the facts of the Chinese social context. As a Chinese national who has been living in England for almost seven years, I have ambivalent feelings of familiarity and strangeness when visiting China. While I have to constantly remind myself to abandon my stereotypes of China, these ambivalent feelings also give me an opportunity to re-discover Chinese society, with its distinctive characteristics, from the perspective of Anglo-American societies. This will be discussed in the third section in more detail.

In conclusion, the ethnographic approach not only enables a study of subculture to include the perspectives of subculture members, thus ensuring the validity of the research, but it can also develop a strong relation between the ethnographer and his other findings since guiding theoretical problems need to be constantly reflected according to the facts, with a reflexive process in thinking of the role of the ethnographer himself or herself.

3.3 Conducting Ethnographic Research

During 2012–2013, I spent three months in online Chinese punk forums and four months in the offline Chinese punk scene in order to conduct ethnographic research on the Chinese punk phenomenon, involving ethnographic methods including participant observation and interviews, two important methods of ethnography (O'Reilly, 2012). At this stage, the main purpose was to learn about the subcultural experiences of Chinese punks from their own perspectives. Meanwhile, I identified myself as a learner and a participant in the punk scene rather than just a researcher approaching the scene while remaining a complete outsider. With this in mind, building trustworthy relationships and collaborating with my punk participants became my strategic practice of research. By the end of the fieldwork, I had also transitioned from a person with limited knowledge about the Chinese punk phenomenon to one who has not only become familiarised with it, but also equipped with a deep understanding and sympathy towards it. After the fieldwork stage, I started my data analysis, including transcribing, translation, generating themes from my data, and writing up my

findings into different chapters. In this section, different stages of my conducting ethnographic research on Chinese punk subculture will be presented.

3.3.1 Access

Gaining access is the first step to studying a group (O'Reilly, 2012). In my research, I made two major moves in gaining access to punk groups in China. First of all, I used the Internet to familiarise myself with the punk phenomenon in China. Online fieldwork research was conducted from the beginning of October to the end of December, with exploration into online punk forums, engaging with online forum posting, commenting and chatting, as well as interviewing 10 online group members, who were active in online forums and identified themselves as punk fans, via online chatting software, including QQ chat software, Weibo chat software and forum private messaging. With this process, I gained information about Western punk bands that they discussed and learned about the views on punk identity and authenticity from the online group members' perspectives. Moreover, I visited punk band webpages and punk musicians' personal webpages for further familiarisation with the offline punk scene in China. Through this approach, I gained a large amount of information about punk musicians through the Internet, including the historical introductions and the updates of music performances, and experienced descriptions through their own eyes. This step is crucial since I made initial decisions on the cities where I was going to conduct my ethnographic research, the punk musicians I was going to interview initially, and the performance events I was going to attend according to the updates on band webpages. A detailed explanation of this step will be provided later.

Second, I chose Mr L, a punk musician with long experience in the punk scene according to what I found on the Internet, as the first person I interviewed, and paid a visit to the rock-style restaurant he has opened in Beijing. It turned out that he became my key participant and his place became a primary location to meet punk musicians and engage with them. Being able to meet a key participant is lucky and significant in doing ethnographic research since he or she is

normally very experienced and respected in a cultural group and can therefore provide opportunities to meet other participants and accelerate the establishment of a meaningful relationship between an ethnographer and his participants. For instance, Alice Goffman (2014) in her book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* wrote about her experience of meeting Mike, who took this white ethnographer under his wing to conduct research in a poor black neighbourhood. In her case, Mike was the key participant who assisted her in engaging with the studied community to a great extent. Similarly, through Mr L's help, I was introduced to different punk musicians and swiftly gained their trust because of him. As I hung around in his restaurant quite often and used it as a location for interviews, I started to gain knowledge and understanding through the punk musicians' own eyes.

After spending the first few weeks wandering on any websites with 朋克 (punk) via the online search engines Google and Baidu, I entered into a stage of being able to sample aspects including people, time, settings and contexts as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggested an ethnographer could do. It was found that not only fans who love punk music and culture gather in virtual spaces but also punk musicians who use online platforms to present their productions and reflections. According to preliminary research with activeness and relevancy being the main criteria of selection, the most active websites I found were the 'Douban' website and Baidu forum. The online forums including 'Douban Punk Club' (朋克俱乐部), 'Punk Forum' in Baidu (百度朋克吧), and 'Punk Is Not Dead' in the Baidu forum (百度朋克不死吧) were chosen for further research on the group members who are interested in punk scene. Meanwhile, a website called 'Chinese Punk Union' (中国朋克联盟) was chosen initially to learn about Chinese punk musicians. In order to promote their brands, different punk music bands have gathered and the collected information can be found on the website. Nevertheless, the function of this website is not limited to just commercial promotion but also provides the means of getting to know the performance and dress style of punk musicians. More importantly, it can be regarded as a daily archive as well as an archive of performance information for

each year and month. The focus was then changed to the personal websites of four punk musicians, Mr Y, Mr W, Mr D, Mr WW, on 'Douban', mainly searching for their diaries in December of 2012.

After I had gained a general idea of the group I was going to research offline, I obtained ethical approval from Loughborough University. In January 2013, I started to make contacts with my potential offline participants through email and online messaging. At this stage, I got permission from two primary participants, Mr L and Miss LZ. As a punk musician, Mr L's name appeared not only in his band webpage but was frequently referred to on other punk bands' webpages. Thus I emailed him for an interview at the very start. As Mr L responded to me quickly and invited me to his restaurant for a conversation, one of my friends, Miss LZ, who liked attending punk performances, was contacted and she started to arrange meetings for me with other friends who were interested in punk. This made my journey into the Chinese punk scene easier than I expected.

As I decided to participate in punk activities and learn from my participants, two ethnographic methods, participant observation and interviewing, were used as my main research strategies. Rather than rushing to get an answer, I decided to take time and adapt myself to their pace, for getting to know their individual biographies and understanding their thoughts. This decision led to two practices: first of all, I suggested that all of my participants decide the time and the location for interviews of their own will; second, I outlined my interested areas of questioning, for instance, my participant's personal experience and performance experience, for an open and collaborative conversation rather than conducting a closed and fixed-response interview.

Generally speaking, gaining access to the Chinese punk group was not as challenging as I expected. Being similar to Western punk, anti-authority is a significant theme in the Chinese punk style of music. In the Chinese context, anti-authoritarianism in punk songs covers such aspects as anti-government, anti-education system, and anti-police from what I can hear. As a researcher from a

higher educational institution, I was quite concerned about being refused completely by punk groups because of potential hostility. However, the result of my gaining access made me realise two things: first, the Internet has facilitated easy access to the punk group and therefore creates the potential for breaking boundaries between a person who has limited knowledge of punk but desires to learn about it, and a punk group member who has adequate experience. As the findings regarding the Internet will be presented in Chapter 7, the significant facilitation of the Internet to my offline fieldwork needs to be pointed out. Online articles produced by punk musicians mentioned above, some of whom can be taken as those that shape their punk lives, were used to determine some of the interview questions so as to swiftly build a trustworthy relationship with my participants. Second, my method of finding a key participant straightforwardly assisted my future fieldwork massively, but also shaped my way of engaging with punk group members. The closer relationship with Mr L allowed me to become more familiar with his close friends, who belong to one sub-group within Chinese punk. This familiarity generated my sensitivity to other sub-groups that may have opinions different from his sub-group. While this can be regarded as an advantage in terms of accurately and insightfully understanding the complicated reality, I also have to constantly reflect on my position as a participant with no preference for any sub-groups and their beliefs relating to punk.

3.3.2 Getting into the Scene

Over the course of the four-month field study, from March to June 2013, the following locations were visited for the purpose of the study: Zhujiajiao, a suburb of the top-tier city Shanghai; the capital city Beijing; the second-tier cities of Wuhan, Hubei Province and Changsha, Hunan Province; and the third-tier city Huaihua, Hunan Province. Compared to the pre-fieldwork plan, three more places were added to the study as a result of the snowball sampling. Initially, Beijing and Wuhan were regarded as the main cities for the development of punk subculture, which inevitably became the focus of the field study. Five weeks were spent separately in each city. In Beijing, 20 punk musicians and 2 punk fans were interviewed, with participant observation at four live music events and three

informal gatherings. In Wuhan, I interviewed 7 punk musicians, 1 punk fan and around 10 students of one punk musician (he is also a music lecturer and the interview was in order to understand what outsiders think about punks and their subcultural practices), with participant observation at three live music events. In the suburb of Shanghai 'Zhujiajiao', I interviewed 3 punk musicians and attended one informal gathering. Four punk musicians were interviewed in the two cities in Hunan – Changsha and Huaihua.

3.3.2.1 Participant Observation

My first stop of the fieldwork was Mr L's restaurant. From when I first entered the restaurant opened by Mr L and introduced myself to him I started to observe the environment and Mr L. The restaurant was covered with punk rock posters, with loud rock music playing in the background. Mr L was sitting by a table and talking with his friends; I found him to be bald, wearing Doc Martin's boots and a black T-shirt printed with the slogan ACAB (All cops are bastards). It was afternoon and the restaurant was quiet. As I became more familiar with Mr L, he told me that the busiest time is from the evening when customers, many of whom are rock musicians, like to have drinks there. With Mr L's heavily tattooed body, I had the first impression that this place was more like a rock-style bar rather than a normal restaurant. As I sat down and asked Mr L about his restaurant, I found myself participating in his life activity of that afternoon, resting and chatting with others. In other words, I started my participant observation from that moment.

Sara Pink (2009) has introduced the concept of sensory ethnography, which means that this type of ethnography engages such senses as touch, hearing, smell, sight and taste. Karen O'Reilly (2012) has also pointed out that conducting all ethnographic research involves senses and engages the body for interpreting unspoken meanings and establishing a meaningful relationship with participants. In my fieldwork, I found that it was crucial to engage in a versatile way. For instance, I interviewed Mr L two times on separate days and we were interrupted a few times during the conversation as Mr L had to look after his

customers. Rather than seeing it as annoying, I took the chance to observe Mr L's professional state. More importantly, as this restaurant was playing rock music and had a good deal of unique decorative detail, I paid particular attention to the music and the environment. Based on his working style and the environment, Mr L and I discussed more topics, such as how he thinks of the relation between his current job taking charge of a restaurant and his music performance, which turns out to be an interesting area to explore as part of the life experience and individual biography of a subculture member.

Another plan of my fieldwork was to attend live punk performances, a punk activity that is essentially important to Chinese punks. For instance, the first punk gig I attended was held in Beijing's 'Mao live house'⁵ in March. The contrast between daytime and night time was obvious, as Mao live house is a quiet music venue with an almost unnoticeable sign in the daytime, but becomes remarkably noisy and bright when performances start in the evening. As I passed through the entrance and went inside, I started to observe the decorations on the wall, the happenings in different areas, and sometimes talk to punk musicians who were introduced to me by Mr L. This filled the waiting period before the performance. By participating in and observing the pre-performance environment, it was not only the type of audience, the fashion, the performance preparation from punk musicians, the design of audience area and the stage that could be acknowledged. I could also become familiar with the punk scene and become aware of the distinctive characteristics of punk-style performance, shown in the few hours ahead of the performance. When the show started, I began to enjoy the performance while observing the stage performance style of punk musicians, the interaction between punk musicians and the audience, the distribution of the audience and their way of participation in the live show. This is important since live punk performance is an essential means to construct a meaningful relationship between punk musicians and audience/fans, and a practice that consists of the creation of collective punk identities. As a participant, I also joined this creation by conforming to the performance norms and rules,

⁵ Live house: Music venue. The term is often used in East Asia, such as Japan or China (by author).

such as 'moshing'⁶ or 'pogoing'⁷. The details were then written into a fieldwork diary for future analysis.

By becoming familiar to punk musicians and fans after I hung out with them more often, I started to be invited to small-scale and private gatherings. For instance, I attended one barbeque event in May in a Beijing suburb with five participants and several punk fans. It was organised in the corner of a public park. While it was interesting to see how my participants behaved in a relaxing environment, particular attention was paid to the contrast between my participants and the wider public, including people who were playing in the park and passersby. Within this particular context, the reaction to this group from the public, which may have no understanding of punk, was observed with a comparison of how group members in this gathering interacted with their peers. My observation of this participation led to my looking into the interactive relationship between subculture members and the wider public.

In *The SAGE Handbook of Fieldwork*, Dick Hobbs and Richard Wright wrote about one concern in the method conducted in a fieldwork,

The more successful fieldworkers are in reducing the perceived distance between themselves and those they are studying, the less 'objective' they become in gathering and reporting their data. (Hobbs & Wright, 2006: xi)

Studying a group requires a constant adjustment of distance. It is true that a fieldworker needs to balance familiarity with the field while maintaining the adequate distance to keep objective about what he has seen and felt. In my situation, as I gradually became more familiar with the scene, I started to lose my curiosity, which could be seen from the decreasing extent of my field notes in

⁶ Mosh: Dance to rock music in a violent manner involving jumping up and down and deliberately colliding with other dancers. (Available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/mosh> accessed in April, 2014)

⁷ Pogo: Jump up and down as if on a pogo stick as a form of dancing to rock music, especially punk: *everyone was pogoing like crazy to The Sex Pistols. (Available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/pogo> accessed in April, 2014)*

line with a deeper understanding with the scene. More importantly, I started to be influenced by what I saw in the punk scene, accepting subcultural norms and somehow feeling hostility towards mainstream norms. This made me concerned that I would start to interpret the punk scene in a supportive style rather than from a sufficiently detached perspective. With this concern, I became careful and cautious with my writing, hoping to interpret my findings objectively.

3.3.2.2 Interview

In order to know what my participants articulate about their subcultural experience, I conducted interviews with them and brought with me consent forms requiring signatures, informing them of my purpose and responsibility, and their rights in and after the interview. Occasionally, I had opportunistic chats with my participants while eating or walking. In Sarah Pink's view (2009), the moments of casual walking or eating give an opportunity of observing unspoken gestures and meanings and therefore the ethnographer can gain a deeper understanding of the situation that he is studying. In this section, I will also talk about my opportunistic interview and discuss their advantages and disadvantages.

Generally, interviews were pre-planned by making appointments with different musicians by email, phone or social media (Chinese chat software or Sina Weibo, a Chinese version of Twitter). Some participants were contacted according to their online information while others were contacted through the participants who had been interviewed. It was found that pre-arranged appointments were especially important since a semi-structured interview can then happen in an appropriate environment and information can be gained systematically and thoroughly. To achieve these qualities, it was decided that conversations were to take place in coffee shops, bars (at relatively quiet times), rehearsal rooms, backstage at live houses and in participants' homes. I asked my participants to choose the places so that a collaborative conversation with maximised participation might readily happen in an environment familiar to them. In addition, since most of my participants are not full-time musicians, this way was

suitable in order to grasp moments of their punk lives that constitute part of the Chinese punk's whole life. With the aim of covering different areas of interest, questions about a subculture member's subcultural career and experiences were particularly asked while more improvisational questions were proposed during the conversation, based on the context of each participant and their responses. The articulation of resistance was paid attention to particularly since it is meant to constitute an essential section for the thesis.

In O'Reilly's (2012) opinion, ethnographic interviews 'take place in the field as part of ongoing development of trustful, ethical, sensitive relationships' (2012: 127). Reflecting on the planned interviews with my participants, I became a person who was trusted by them because of my active interactions with different people in the punk group to which my participants generally had a sense of belonging. Moreover, Mr L's restaurant served as an important location for me to conduct planned and unplanned interviews. For instance, there was one time when his friends who were punk musicians came to have dinner and I then took the opportunity for a group interview. The whole interview was completed in a casual manner while having dinner. With the presence of the whole band, my participants interacted with each other to a great extent. The interview went well and I not only gained understanding of each member's story but also of their relationships with each other.

By sticking to the decision of asking my participants to choose the locations for planned interviews, I also gained opportunities to chat with my participants in other natural settings, such as while having dinner, and especially when the planned interviews happened after band rehearsals. These chances were significant since the frame of the conversation was completely led by the participants, thus a completely *native* perspective could be gained. This happened in the later stages of my fieldwork when I had gained more confidence and become readily familiar to them. In these situations, my role was more like that of a friend.

More specifically, despite sometimes being in the same bands, my participants had different schedules in their daily lives. A pre- or after-performance party is popular with them, while having lunch or dinner becomes a social chance for them to catch up with each other's lives, especially for those who have not had so much time to participate in rehearsals. On these kinds of occasions, alcohol and cigarettes are important to shape an informal and casual atmosphere for open expression. Interestingly, I found that some of my participants became more open and talkative in contrast to their rigid attitude when being interviewed in a planned setting. Moreover, they became more critical and emphasised the distinction between them and 'the others', which was constantly interchangeable with the term 'mainstream'. In other words, although punk musicians claim to be true to themselves, they still have a safer space for expression and behaviour that would be adjudged as deviant from a mainstream perspective. According to my findings, punk musicians maintain a good consistency in their opinions towards the mainstream.

Initiated by my participants, I joined passively in the conversations and heard more details of a punk's daily life and sometimes a continued response to my previous questions. Although the information I gained was often chaotic and excessive during these conversations, it was a great opportunity to see the consistency/inconsistency of the answers provided in the previous interviews by my participants and to add concrete material to the frame that I established through my semi-structured interviews with punk musicians.

From my experience, punk musicians are generally expressive and friendly. It was interesting to see that my participants liked to correct my phrase of 'having an interview' into 'having a chat'. This manner and attitude enabled the conversation to be more engaged and active. It was not always successful. One punk musician and two punk fans refused my interview requests. The punk musician has two identities: punk drummer and punk researcher/activist. I learned his reasons for refusing me from his acquaintances: he had a number of interview requests from the press as well as people who are interested in him and he thought my request was of no value to him, therefore he had no intention

of sparing time for me. As an old punk activist, he published the first punk magazine in China and wrote several articles about anarchism and the squatting in punk subculture. His profound experience and knowledge had gained him a reputation as a 'real active punk' as defined by other punks (observed from the conversations I had with others) but also as an 'idealistic person' as stated by one of my participants. Although I had no chance to interview him, I could still analyse his personal diaries and articles, which he put online. Moreover, he had established a community that followed the squatting, and anarchic Western punk style, which can be analysed based on the activities he organised and the one person from the community that I have been able to interview. The reasons for the two other punk fans' refusal were that they thought they did not have much information to share with me, and that they were not punk enough.

Ethnographic interviewing is a time-consuming method (O'Reilly, 2012). In my case, I spent a considerable amount of time on travel. To fit my interviews into the schedules of different participants, I travelled to the locations that they wanted me to go to. As I had mentally prepared for this before my fieldwork, I would sometimes meet unexpected situations that required my immediate decision. For instance, when interviewing Mr F, he asked me if I could follow him to the city centre and conduct the interview in the car since he and his wife needed to take their dog for an operation and so had much waiting time to consume. While I felt slightly uncomfortable in joining such a private and personal activity, I was also intrigued to see the outcome of interviewing in this kind of setting. On that day, I sometimes had to help them to hold the dog, and ate a packed lunch with them to save time. It was a bit chaotic in general, but Mr F and I talked a great deal in the car when things became quiet. On the way back, he also expressed his views about the urbanisation of the city (Shanghai) and used it as a justification of his choice to live in the suburbs and participate in subcultural activities most of his time. The whole day was tiring and time-consuming but it was fruitful. We built a good relationship after my participation in his daily, non-subcultural activity and the long conversation. That evening, he invited me to his rock bar and introduced me to his friends, who were also punk musicians. From this experience, I realised the importance of being versatile and

flexible with an open mind, even if it can sometimes be quite difficult to adapt to the situation.

3.3.3 The Need to Build a Meaningful Relationship

In the discussions above, building a mutually-trustful relationship has revealed its significance in terms of reducing the distance between an ethnographer and his participants, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the field. In fact, the process, from gaining access to the stage of conducting participant observations and interviews, can be regarded as a manifestation of building a meaningful relationship with my participants. The approach I have taken, such as finding key participants and joining personal and private activities, may be different from those of ethnographers who are from the group they study and have had a long-term experience with the field. For instance, the ethnographer Gloria Gonzalez-Lopez (2005), who studied Mexican immigrants and their sex lives, identified herself as an insider since she is a Mexican immigrant and is heterosexual. While it is easy for her to gain access to the group and earn trust from them, she has to deal with her 'own bias' which has a great relation to how to objectively interpret the studied group (Gonzalez-Lopez, 2005: 265).

In my situation, I may not need to consider reflecting the adopted perspective from the punk group in the beginning since I was not familiar with my researched group, although I found similarities between us in the later stage of my fieldwork, and this will be explained in the section of self-reflection in this chapter. Before I entered the field, the primary concern for me was to build a meaningful relationship with my participants, who may be in different sub-groups of the punk group with different opinions of *punk*. With an awareness of my pursuit, a reflection on the process of building a meaningful relationship, including integrating into the group and tackling bias among different bands, will be provided in the following discussion.

3.3.3.1 Integrating into the Group

Although my key participant Mr L assisted me in the fieldwork, I still experienced two stages in terms of integrating into the group, including breaking down boundaries and being regarded as one of them. As I have discussed a great deal of how I approached the group in the previous discussion, I will focus on how they approached me in this section.

Despite being loosely connected, the Chinese punk group has kept an eye on the emergence of newcomers in China. It is mainly the small size and the stability of fans and musicians that gives group members chances to notice new faces. One of my participants told me that it would be great if I stayed in Beijing so that they would have another loyal fan. This may constitute the fundamental reason for my successful integration into the group, i.e. holding a welcoming attitude to a supportive and enthusiastic newcomer to become one of them.

In the initial stage, my participants showed their interest in my academic background and high-level education, and the fact that this involves Britain, where punk music originated. Some made jokes about my education and wondered about the meaning of the research. This overlapped with their critical opinions of authority figures in Chinese education institutions. In addition, conversation was easily steered in the direction of discussing the development of punk-related activities in Britain and their performance experiences in other countries. In other words, I was regarded as a person who possessed knowledge and information that they were interested in.

For those who lived in the suburb of a city or a third-tier city, and realised the effort that I needed to make in travelling there, I was particularly appreciated as a researcher who seriously attempted to understand their thoughts, dreams and lives. One of my participants believed that it was good to see how the marginalised group led life, as he identified himself as being in a marginalised position in Chinese society because of his punk identity and also having an unsatisfactory living status.

In the second stage, my frequent presence in the punk scene had resulted in me becoming familiar to punk musicians. As I interviewed more musicians and hung out with them more often, I became regarded by some of them as a punk myself. It was particularly interesting when one of my participants was inspired to pursue a PhD degree because I was believed to be the one who had the highest education qualification in the punk circle in China. If I requested new interviews through an already -known musician, the new ones would start to call me a punk.

In conclusion, the driving force in the process of integrating into the punk group came partly from my participants, and this may be due to their pursuit of a collective punk identity, which lead them to include me as a member as soon as possible.

3.3.3.2 Tackling Bias among Punk Bands

During my fieldwork, it was not difficult to realise the conflicts between different punk bands, which resulted in the formation of different sub-groups within the wider punk group in China. As a punk musician, it is understandable to choose a particular lifestyle to maintain or a sub-group to find a sense of belonging, where the group members share a similar or even opposite critical opinions to another sub-group. Therefore, bias is also formed between different groups and, accordingly, miscommunication occurs.

Being an ethnographer, I was trusted by punk musicians. They told me about their experiences and their thoughts about the conflicts they were confronted with. In the process of gaining knowledge of punk musicians' lives, I also started to carefully share some thoughts of punk musicians in one sub-group with those in an alternative sub-group, since punk musicians were interested in others' thoughts. My strategy was to confirm what kinds of opinions my participants currently had about alternative sub-groups while revealing no details or actual words since I had the responsibility to protect my participants' privacy.

The situation gave me a chance to differentiate the opinions held by different punk group members despite being influenced, resulting in choosing sides sometimes. From those interpreted versions of conflicts, I gained a deeper understanding of the insistence of punk musicians sometimes connecting to punk-related ideas or their punk identities. In other words, without the limitations of staying with a single sub-group, I could gain a broader picture and reflect on different interpretations, especially those about conflicts.

3.3.4 Data Analysis

In the field, I used my spare time for interview transcription and finished five of them. After I came back from my fieldwork and finished the data collection, I devoted my time to data preparation for analysis from July 2013. With 37 interviews recorded with an iPod device, I used software ExpressScribe to transcribe my recordings. As one interview was conducted online through social media (QQ), I simply copied the text from the software. The transcription process took me around three months to finish. As most of the recordings were around two to three hours, Mr L's interview was recorded over two days with each session being around two to three hours. For other data sources, I used my field diaries and notes, which were recordings of my participant observations of performances and gatherings, as well as my reflections on what I saw and felt in the field.

Before translating my transcribed interviews from Chinese to English, I sorted my transcriptions into themes based on their content. As O'Reilly (2012) points out, analysis of data involves the process of sorting. In my case, the theme of punk resistance is my primary interest and therefore I had a direction when sorting my data. To do this, data in areas such as the individual biographies, subcultural careers, or the relations with authorities from my participants were sorted together, while the spontaneous articulation of resistance from them was highlighted. Reflecting on the existing theories, how to interpret theme-based punk subcultural practices became the main concern. Meanwhile, the great bulk of fieldnotes primarily served to describe the background and the collective

punk subcultural practices. Williams' (2011) argument of a researcher possessing the right to interpret subcultural acts as being resistant was critically adopted as a fundamental justification of my later interpretation of punk resistance.

At this stage, the challenge was to decide which information should be included in my chapters on findings. My aim was to present a picture of Chinese punks, meanwhile keeping the focus on punk resistance. By reading books based on ethnographic findings, such as *Street Corner Society* by William Foote Whyte (1943), I started to come up with a strategy of including descriptions of the field and analysis of the data. Deciding and choosing what to present is significant since the perspectives of analysis are clarified in the process. The transcribed interviews in Chinese were then translated to English only when necessary.

3.4 Self-Reflection

In the above discussions, challenges that I confronted throughout the whole ethnographic research have been mentioned, particularly the aspect of the possibility of becoming biased and less objective about the field, such as sharing similar attitudes with my participants, and becoming hostile to the mainstream and the authorities. This gradual identification may be problematic since I may start to embrace what I have seen and heard rather than critically consider how my participants interpret and articulate their own experiences. As a consequence, I may be unable to explore the underlying reasons for their articulations and identify the relationship between my participants and the mainstream from a broader sense because of my own sympathy to the field. Moreover, I found myself sometimes feeling uncomfortable with some of the manners that my participants displayed as well as some of the content in our conversations. In the stage of sorting and analysing my transcriptions, I started to reflect on myself deeply, with a reference to my own situation. Thus, in this section, I will provide a self-reflection on how my educational and family background, and my professional training, influenced me in conducting the research.

In Gloria Gonzalez-Lopez's reflection (2010) on her ethnographic research of incest in Mexican families, the process of identifying and accepting her own discomfort during the conducted interviews assisted her to become open-minded and to explore the fictitious line between herself and her professional life. More importantly, the realisation of her own complexity further made Gonzalez-Lopez explore how her lived experiences played a role in the research. This inspired me to explore my own complexity, which played a significant role when conducting my ethnographic research.

First of all, I want to talk about the concept of authority. In the field, my participants discussed *authority* and *anti-authority* extensively. This was shaped through three forms of relationship: with educational organisations, with the Chinese government, and with parental figures. As this finding will be discussed in detail in the following chapters, I have to point out how my background played a role at the stage of conducting ethnographic research. One factor I ignored in the field was my discomfort when my participants brought up the topic of the Chinese government and people who work for it. After reflecting on it, I found it was my own family background that created this ambiguity towards government authority. Growing up in a family with my father and other relatives working for the government, I was aware of the power of governmental authorities and used to feel comfortable with it. Having left that environment for more than five years to stay abroad, not only had I lost some degree of familiarity with it, but I also lacked a chance to reconsider it properly in my adult life. The ethnographic research on Chinese punks gave me a chance to hear how my participants articulated their views about Chinese governmental authorities in a typically negative way. As a consequence, I had to start reviewing critically the organisation I used to feel comfortable with. This made me feel reluctant and struggling to express my views on the Chinese government, thus reducing engagement with my participants.

Regarding parental and education-related authority, I would sometimes amplify my emotions in the conversations with my participants. As a person who had experienced strict parental control and a strict style of education, I had moments

in my life of being both a conformist and a rebel. In fact, I chose to listen to heavy metal music and played guitar while in high school because of the pressure and the desire to be different from my peers, but at the same time I had the pursuit and result of good grades in my educational career. This complexity resulted in me feeling that my experiences constantly overlapped with those of my participants. While this became an advantage in understanding them and creating an engaged and reflexive conversation collaboratively, the interaction may also have become over-emotional and less objective. However, there is no perfect situation and I have to just reflect on my research in the stages of data analysis and writing up to ensure objectivity as best as I can.

Second, I want to talk about my professional training in the method of interviewing, which may have a closer relation to my part-time job as a journalist rather than my identity as a full-time research student. As a part-time journalist with five-years experience in the area of art and culture journalism, I am used to conducting an interview based on a specific set of questions to fit a preset storyline. When applying the interview method in my ethnographic research, I had to adjust my mindset to that of a person who writes the story based on progress in the field. While journalistic experience has certainly conferred on me advantages such as being encouraged to ask for interviews and being comfortable with talking to the participants, I also had to jump out the comfort zone and avoid using strategies of guiding the conversation too much. Bearing this in mind, I had an open-minded attitude to what I have seen and felt.

In conclusion, my journey of being an ethnographer has made me realise that approaching a group needs skills to gain access to the field and to stay in the field. Most importantly, it needs from an ethnographer a constant reflexive process to the experiences so that a substantial and reliable ethnographic finding can be presented. In the following chapters, I will present my ethnographic findings and hopefully build a picture of Chinese punks with a focus on their resistance.

Chapter 4: Punk in China

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 4 to 7 will present the ethnographic findings about Chinese punks, based on the four months of fieldwork and three months of online research. In this chapter, an overview of punks in China will be provided to outline a detailed picture of punk bands, punk practices, and punk networks and groups. It is organised in two sections.

First of all is an introduction to the development of Chinese punk music, the distribution of Chinese punk bands, different types of live houses playing punk music, and punk activities.

Second, there is a discussion of the interactions between members in the Chinese punk group. The function of these interactions will be focused on shaping punk identity and creating a sense of belonging, leading to a discussion of the existence of Chinese punk as a subculture.

4.2 An Outline of Chinese Punks

Throughout my process of conducting research on Chinese punks, I needed from time to time to explain the topic to my parents, relatives, and friends. It turns out that my family members who work for the government or educational institution have little knowledge of the concept of punk, and my friends, who are mostly journalists, have never paid attention to punk music in China. During the period of my fieldwork from March to June 2013, one surprising event that happened was when I had a conversation with a group of students who were taught by my participant Mr T, a punk musician who is also a college lecturer. Without any knowledge about their lecturer, with whom they had an otherwise close relationship, they believed that punk was about a particular fashion style such as wearing leather jackets and boots. In this case, punk music seems to exist in a marginal space with limited interactions with the mainstream.

According to my findings, there are punk bands in different cities, from large ones to small ones, although the distribution seems quite fragmented. While there are almost ten punk bands in Beijing, only two or three bands can be found in each of the other cities, such as Shanghai, Wuhan, and Changsha, where punk bands exist. In other words, the punk style of performance is not centralised in any particular city in China, although it enjoys a larger presence in Beijing. Moreover, it is difficult to classify punk styles in China. Among those punk bands I interviewed, I have met Skinhead Oi! Punk style⁸, hardcore style⁹ and street punk style¹⁰, etc. In line with the diverse forms of punk music, other related styles such as dress and performance style varied. In the following sections, I give a detailed picture of Chinese punks.

⁸ Skinhead: youth subculture characterized by aggressively masculine hair- and dress styles, including shaved heads and heavy boots. In many countries skinheads are commonly viewed as extreme right-wing nationalists or neofascists who espouse anti-Semitic and other racist views, though the skinhead phenomenon is not always overtly political and not all skinheads are racists.

(Available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1055287/skinhead>, accessed in March, 2014)

Oi!: is a subgenre of punk rock that originated in the United Kingdom in the late 1970s. The music and its associated subculture had the goal of bringing together punks, skinheads and other working-class youth (Available at <http://en.ko.kwizy.org/wiki/Oi!> , accessed in March, 2014)

⁹ Hardcore punk: is a punk rock music genre and subculture that originated in the late 1970s. Hardcore music is generally faster, heavier, and more abrasive than regular punk rock. (Blush, 2001)

¹⁰ Street punk: is a working-class-based genre of punk rock which took shape in the early 1980s, partly as a rebellion against the perceived artistic pretensions of the first wave of British punk. Street punk emerged from the Oi! style, performed by bands such as Sham 69, Angelic Upstarts, Cockney Rejects, The Exploited, and Cock Sparrer. (Glasper, 2004: p.9-10)

4.2.1 Punks Offline

A definition of Chinese punk can be found on the Chinese website Baidu.

Chinese punk is the Chinese style of punk. Due to the specific country context, Chinese punk is relatively implicit and not so straightforward as in other countries. Therefore those phenomena related to violence and anti-government tendencies cannot be explicitly expressed. They can only criticise and express their views in secret. Their way of 'talking bullshit' has become a particular way of criticising socialistic modernism. (Baidu, 2014)

According to 'An Introduction of Punk History' (2011), the first punk He Yong emerged in Beijing in 1994 and the first two punk bands Underbaby and Catcher in the Rye emerged at the same time. Since then, punk club *the Scream* opened in Beijing and the punk scene can be considered as having experienced two waves, the first of which was between 1994 and 1996, the second from 1999 until now.

The earliest punk bands appeared not only in Beijing but also in Wuhan. In the same introduction to punk history, it was claimed that 'in 1997, SMZB is formed in Wuhan, one of the first punk bands of China and the first in Wuhan, paving the way for Wuhan to become known as the 'Punk City' (2011). In an interview, Wan Li mentioned that Wuhan was an industrial city with numerous workers and punks felt the same anger as those people at the bottom of society. This city attracted punk fans and scholars to study the punk phenomenon in Wuhan.

A punk musician who has stayed in the punk scene for many years produced a detailed introduction of punk bands in the whole of China. He called himself Punk Grandpa (朋克姥爷) on the popular Chinese social media website Weibo (a so-called micro blog) and his position can be seen from his connections to all other punk musicians that I have met or interviewed. In some way, this introduction can be regarded as a punk map of China, although it lacks completion. Beijing has attracted more people to form punk bands, and several live houses exist here for punk performances, although none of them specialise

in it. Two years ago, one live house called D-22, which performed mostly punk style, was closed and transformed into a live house called XP, which embraces all different sorts of music performances and holds fewer punk music performances. According to my participant Mr L, the closing down of D-22 was a consequence of financial difficulties, since punk performance was not as popular as before. This move was particularly significant since it suggested a tendency of punk-style performance to become marginalised in China's music scene.

Among different live houses, Mao live house is the most desirable for all kinds of musicians including punk musicians due to its professionalism and high-standard sound system. During my stay in Beijing, I only went to Mao live house once to attend a punk-only performance, which was also the first performance of a series of monthly punk-only performing activities produced by one punk band. Nevertheless, the following punk performances were mostly held in another live house called School. After I talked to a punk musician, I understood that there was a particular reason behind it. For Mao live house, the punk-only performance was not profitable and therefore not in line with the aim of this consumer-orientated live house. For the same reason, it hardly ever offers the opportunity for punk bands to hold their album-launch performances. Comparatively, the other live house, School, though being small and having a lower quality sound system and performance equipment, has shown its enthusiasm for holding punk performances. Not only does it hold a series of the paid monthly punk-only performances but also a series of the free monthly punk-only performances, which are initiated by other punk bands. More importantly, since both the owner and manager of School live house have previously or currently performed in punk bands, this place demonstrates an informal but intense mode of social networking and interaction among punk musicians. Regarding other live houses, one called Old What was mentioned by several punk musicians. While some criticised its extremely low standard as a live house, some praised it for its intimate performing environment and the enjoyable interactions that happen there between audiences and musicians.

In fact, it may not be the best approach to deem live houses as a signifier in terms of the location of punk gatherings. Live houses in China have become commercial, thus embracing all different sorts of music styles, privileging the most popular ones, according to my participants. The same situation could be found more explicitly in other cities such as Shanghai, Wuhan, Changsha and Huaihua during my field trip. As fewer punk bands are active in those cities, an impression can be gained that the punk music scene in China is limited. The contrast in the musician's age and experience can be seen, with older punk musicians (around 35 years old) who have stayed in the punk scene for a long time, and young punk musicians (around 20 years old) who have been playing for only two or three years.

In some ways, the punk music scene in China is in decline. However, this situation also generates a particular manifestation of the punk music scene in China. As old punk musicians started to establish bars and create their own spaces for networking with other punk musicians, the young ones mostly followed the older ones. It is not unusual to find punk musicians gathering in bars rather than performing; they discuss ideas and entertain themselves by simply hanging out together. In Beijing, Mr L's restaurant has particularly served this purpose. Interestingly, the bar door is covered by heavy curtains. With different kinds of punk music playing, the dim light and the rock-themed posters, the restaurant creates an underground atmosphere. Mr L, who is also a 37-year-old punk musician, is famous for his long time on the scene and has also become a key figure in networking and socialising with other punk bands. In the suburbs of Beijing, punk events also happen quite frequently and the key organiser is a 30-year-old punk musician with a considerable reputation who has stayed on the punk scene for a long time. Similarly, he too opened a new bar in order to socialise with other musicians.

The same thing has happened in other cities, including Shanghai and Wuhan. Two bars were established by two senior punk musicians in each city. Interestingly, the one in Wuhan is located in an area filled with bars and skateboarding shops, which are owned by these previous punk musicians. In one

of my interviews, a young punk musician spoke frankly to me about her desire to enter into this circle before becoming part of one punk band. In this sense, although some punk musicians have stopped playing in bands, they still identify themselves with punks and are recognised by others as being punks. In the suburbs of Shanghai, one punk musician established a bar while the owners of two live houses in the cities of Changsha and Huaihua are all punk musicians. In Wuhan, former punk musician Mr D established a place called Our home, which is similar in concept to the punk practice of squatting. The house was rented at a cheap price from a nearly-abandoned area, and became the birthplace of an autonomous style community. But this is an exceptional case and there is no other similar squatting phenomenon in other cities in China.

In conclusion, punk bands are loosely widespread in large-scale and small-scale cities of China. As a music style with twenty years' history in China, the popularity of punk performance has recently experienced a decline in the current Chinese music scene. In this situation, large live houses aiming to be profitable show little enthusiasm for holding punk performances while small live houses are more willing to provide opportunities; this can be attributed to an established, intimate relationship with punk musicians. Live houses enable social interactions between punks and their audiences – in other words, the general public. For instance, this style of space provides an emotional release and a way to express punk ideas physically to a general audience. Meanwhile, a growth in the number of bars or restaurants founded by experienced punk musicians can be seen, and those places serve as venues for informal and private punk activities, such as pre-parties or after-parties. In fact, bars or restaurants serve a very important role in forming punk norms since they are relatively closed spaces for allowing social interactions to happen among punks themselves as a group. Within such intimate and safe environments, a coherent pattern of thinking is easily formed. Moreover, a special case of an autonomous community being built in Wuhan suggests the possibility of someone following punk philosophies in order to guide their way of living in China.

4.2.2 Punks Online

It is impossible to ignore the punk development in virtual cyber space in China, especially as my initial process involving contacting punk musicians was through a website called 'Douban Punk Club' (朋克俱乐), which lists most of the active Chinese punk bands. From this perspective, the important role of the Internet in the punk phenomenon in China can be seen.

By searching on Google, I found many punk forums and chose the most relevant and active ones such as 'Punk Forum' in Baidu (百度朋克吧) and 'Punk is not Dead Forum' in Baidu (百度朋克不死吧) as sites to conduct my research. After a three-month study, not only did I understand the formation of online punk norms, but also gleaned further information on punk musicians offline, based on the conversations I had with the punks online. It was also through 'Douban Punk Club' that I found some punk musicians who liked to write diaries on the blog section of the Douban website. The Internet provided a platform for me to explore punk practices online conducted by both punk fans and punk musicians.

During the course of online exploration, I met two groups of forum members: the ones who only gather online without conducting offline practices and the ones who participate in both online and offline activities. Bearing in mind the idea of finding punks online, the first question that came to me was how to judge the forums. Both of the forums belong to Baidu and possess the same style. On the right hand side of the website, the function 'sign here' encourages group members to show their presence by simply clicking the button (see the picture in appendix). It is a way to judge the activeness of the website since people can see directly how many users are interacting with the page by signing up. More importantly, in order to have the opportunity of signing up, a person needs to first register as a group member. After a process of producing a suitable name and providing personal information, signing up becomes a stronger gesture in showing a sense of group belonging. Since a person can see the members who have signed up, it is easy to detect who the most active members are.

Both of the forums, 'Punk Forum' in Baidu and 'Punk is not Dead Forum' in Baidu, are text-oriented. The mode of communication is message threading of a particular topic, which is followed by the discussions among group members. In the threads, members can reply in general or directly interact with other respondents by replying under their answers. Pictures are also allowed. As each member can set up their own username and signature, their level will also be automatically changed from low to high depending on the time spent on the website and the number of messages posted. A forum leader, normally chosen by the members, can emphasise the topics that they like by promoting 'elite' topics or placing them at the very top of the webpage. Those most active members can be easily recognised since they have a high volume of message posts. More importantly, the familiarity among those active members increases through social networking by simply greeting and joking with each other as well as organising small gatherings offline. All of these interactions construct an online community, where group members have their own constructed identities, positions in the group and opportunity to engage in dialogue with group members. The lack of physical presence may limit the forms of contact but it can increase topical discussions due to a large-scaled and continuous participation, which is attributed to the easy access and flexibility of computer-based communication.

When I first browsed 'Punk Forum' in Baidu, I found little discussion about punk, although it is the largest punk-themed website, established in 2006, and also became the first choice for outsiders to search for punk-related forums. The website was filled with chitchat and seemed of no value for my research. After talking to several group members of this forum, I gradually changed my attitude alongside gaining more knowledge; this will be discussed in the next section. I realised that little information could be gained from the conversation in order to judge whether or not they are punk fans. The whole atmosphere of this website gave me an impression of being non-serious and filled with conflict.

Comparatively, the size of 'Punk is not Dead Forum' in Baidu is much smaller than 'Punk Forum' in Baidu. Established in 2009, the aim of this forum was to

create a new and more serious punk website since 'Punk Forum' in Baidu was regarded as 'too much chitchat and not punk enough', according to one group member of this website. When I first browsed this website, I found that the topics were related to punk musicians, styles and discussions about the authenticity of punk. As with 'Punk Forum' in Baidu, socialising is an important aspect of this website and active members can also be recognised. However, it was difficult to find any enthusiastic and intense discussion on this website. Compared to the first one, the members of this website hardly participated in offline activities. While the group members of these two websites do not seem to overlap, most of them are high school and university students, which can be seen from their informal conversations in the websites. Generally speaking, the members of these groups are punk fans rather than punk musicians. More importantly, they possess a stronger interest in Western punk music than in Chinese punk music.

I have also explored the websites closely related to Chinese punk musicians. One of them is the website 'Chinese Punk Union' (中国朋克联盟). In order to promote their brands, different punk music bands have gathered and an abundance of information can be found at the website. In fact, since most of the content on this website consists of introductions to punk bands, it can be regarded as a lyrics and diary archive as well as an archive of performance information for each year. Through the 'Chinese Punk Union' website, I found more personal websites of punk musicians, which were also discussed in the interviews with those musicians at a later stage. As for 'Douban' personal websites, musicians can write diaries, like pages, and join online communities. For them, 'Douban' becomes a space for personal expression and a place for advertising their gigs.

4.2.3 Punk Activities

As discussed above, Chinese punks launch activities in live houses, bars or restaurants, or on the Internet. In this section, different sorts of punk activities will be presented in detail.

It is not hard to find that, based on my observations, Western punk culture has impacted Chinese punk to a great extent. For instance, the Western music genre is generally adopted or imitated by almost all of the punk bands in China. In one of my interviews with a punk musician, I found that the American punk rock band Anti Flag was the band's idol. An interesting suggestion from this band was that preparing a question such as 'who is your music idol?' was necessary for the interviews with Chinese punk musicians.

As imitating music style serves an important role for Chinese punk musicians, maintaining a particular punk style of dress and visual appearance has become a particular practice that is generally conducted by punk musicians, although it varies depending on situations and locations. During my several attendances at live houses, punk musicians would choose clothes fitting to their varied music styles such as street punk, skinhead Oi! or hardcore punk. It was easy to notice that people wore boots, leather jackets or Mohawks on the day of performing. In a punk-only performing event, a unified impression can be especially gained once musicians gathered in a corner or backstage.

It is reasonable to suggest that wearing punk clothing is more likely to be a gesture of creating punk identity and a sense of group belonging rather than a simple commercial move. In my first visit to the punk-only performance in Mao live house in Beijing, a notice associated with the ticket rule came out as 'those who wear Mohawk can enjoy free entrance', which was supposed to encourage the audiences to adopt a punk dress style. For punk musicians, seeing audiences wearing punk dress is an encouragement for judgement if the environment is familiar enough. Nevertheless, the encouragement of the dress codes in that particular event was a failure since there were very few people who had a Mohawk hairstyle or wore a leather jacket. In another live house, School, more audience members were willing to have or wear a Mohawk hairstyle or leather jacket based on my observations, perhaps unsurprisingly given that School is believed to be a hub for punks in Beijing. Surprise from punk musicians was expressed when they also observed a full house of people dressing as punks at the annual Punk Music Festival. 'I have no idea where those punks come from. I

never met them before but I am also very happy to see them', said one punk musician. As analysed before, Mao live house, as a relatively commercial venue, attracts a greater variety of audiences while School is less popular with the general public. In other words, the latter environment is more encouraging for punks to conduct the practice of wearing punk style clothing. For punk musicians, wearing punk style clothing, together with tattoos and piercing, is a significant way of identifying themselves as punks.

Through my observations and interviews in the field, I encountered different attitudes to the practice of 'dressing as a punk' from punk musicians and fans. Their differentiating attitudes can be particularly seen in their ways of dealing with non-performing occasions. While Mr L insisted on wearing a skinhead style to maintain his skinhead identity, even in his working time, another punk musician, Mr DF, believed that wearing punk style clothing was not necessary since he valued the 'inner side' of living as a punk and emphasised the contrast between the visual appearance and inner belief. To those punk musicians who have professional jobs without relation to music, wearing professional clothes is deemed to be the only choice in normal situations.

No matter what kind of clothes punks choose to wear, they typically like to attend punk performances and informal social gatherings. In Beijing particularly, the Punk Music Festival, which normally happens every year in August, is the punk event that most punk musicians like to attend, according to my interviews. As with live house School, this festival is normally filled with punks who like to wear punk clothing in order to emphasise their punk identity and are willing to show it in this environment. After ten years development, the punk festival is not simply regarded as a cultural endeavour but is viewed as a space of equality and freedom, with activities such as moshing and pogoing resulting in breaking down human boundaries, in contrast to an outside world full of hierarchy and constraints. This will be discussed in the following chapters in detail.

Holding gigs or tours is an important activity for punk musicians, while attending gigs is similarly important for punk fans. One punk musician shared a story with

me. While his band was invited to attend a gig containing mostly popular music bands, they broke the performing norms by rushing onto the stage rather than slowly walking to the stage along the red carpet, and thus invoked a disturbance among the audiences. For punk musicians, holding gigs means actualising their performing rituals and norms to express, as well as maintain, their identity as punks.

In their daily lives, punks often choose bars or street corners for hangouts. It has been mentioned that one punk musician's restaurant, which is structured as an underground live house with a closed and curtained door and with loud punk music playing all day long, serves as such a daily space for punk gatherings. During my stay in Beijing, I had several dinners and a BBQ with these punk musicians. It seemed that familiar restaurants would usually be chosen, which meant that they had been there quite often. The BBQ event happened in a public garden and the scene was quite interesting. While most of the punks dressed up and occupied a corner of the park to drink beer, eat food and discuss topics such as music performances, tours, or political issues, other people were doing exercises or simply wandering around. As those people passed by, they would pay extra attention to the punks. Through hanging out with other punk musicians or fans, other activities such as holding gigs and tours, creating albums and music videos are discussed and scheduled. More importantly, political views, punk cultures and the DIY philosophy are exchanged and shared, leading to a mutual reaction to all different forms of authorities.

For punks online, the environments of two different forums including 'Punk Forum' in Baidu and 'Punk is not Dead Forum' in Baidu shaped different practices. In the first forum, the punks wrote anything they wanted or started threads on anything but punk-related topics. They even started message threads to criticise people who were thought to take punk too seriously. One member I interviewed showed his anger with this forum since his approach to discussing punk music or beliefs kept being criticised by other members. As he emphasised, one of the most important norms in this forum was *not* to talk about punk music 'talking like a punk', for instance, shouting or using abusive words. In the other

forum, rather the opposite, a discussion of punk music was more welcomed. Therefore, those who had displayed an abundance of knowledge gained respect from other group members. For punk musicians, one important online practice is to write diaries. The example of one punk musician's diary mentioned above formed a discourse. The political message in the form of text was believed to be a weapon for punks to express their ideas since it did not only contain criticisms but also 'forbidden' knowledge or messages.

In conclusion, punk activities such as wearing a particular style of clothing, or performing, gathering and interacting in a particular way can be seen in the current Chinese punk scene. Those activities can be profoundly meaningful. For instance, dressing as a punk can be used as a way to actualise the Chinese punks' pursuit of group belonging, but also becomes a concern for them about the authenticity of punk identity. In fact, it is the way of Chinese punks socialising with each other that enables the production of meaning in punk activities. Therefore, a general discussion of punk interaction will be provided in the next section.

4.3 The Interactions in the Chinese Punk Group

My ethnographic findings show that most Chinese punk musicians are not full-time musicians due to limited performance income, thus finding another job becomes a common way to support themselves during difficult periods, with the occasional punk performance. In this situation, for Chinese punks, active participation in punk activities and interactions with the rest of the punk group members are significant in order to demonstrate their commitment to punk activities. More importantly, punk identities and norms are shaped mainly through the interactions with group members or those who have similar interests.

It has been discussed above that informal punk gatherings or hangouts tends to occur in certain areas and places such as bars, restaurants or street corners. The interactions between punks in those different spaces have led to a formation of

shared meanings and practices in Chinese punk. In detail, the punk interactions allow the formation of two frames of reference for subculture members to establish shared core values, which frequently assist the members in their life stages. The first of these emerges from the process of the localisation of punk music and its culture in China attributed to the interactions within the local Chinese punk group. The second one is more about Chinese punk musicians interacting with punks in Anglo-American countries and finding out what they believe and how they behave. These two frames of reference can overlap and inevitably impact each other, resulting in a relatively static frame of reference in punk group.

4.3.1 Interacting with Local and Overseas Punks

Mr L's punk band was established in Beijing in 1999 and is known by most of other punk bands I met. Three interviews including six people were conducted in the restaurant opened by Mr L. The intense connection of his band and other bands is exhibited in several aspects: first, the introduction to my participant Mr J's band shown on its website was written by Mr L. Second, another participant, Mr C, has taken on the shared responsibility of holding the Punk Music Festival which was originally created by Mr L. Third, several other participants such as Miss K and Mr F became acquainted through him. Particularly, after I had interviewed Mr L's and Mr J's band members separately, I had a strong impression of them being closely connected. Themes such as emphasising visual resistance, including anti-government comment in the songs and fantasising about the Western lifestyle can be seen as being shared by them.

According to my participants, the period when punk shows were popular among the masses has gone. As a consequence, the punk group remains relatively small, and somewhat marginalised within the wider music scene. Regarding the composition of subculture members, the age range of my participants is from 19 years to 37. It was noted particularly that there are a number of punk musicians who are still very active over the age of 30. The number of young people (i.e. below 25 years of age) who join the group has reduced over the years. For those

who attempt to participate, having an interest in punk music and a punk lifestyle serves as the main reason for people wanting to join the punk group. It is argued however that the opportunity of joining such a culturally-bounded group is limited. It is understandable that utilitarian motives are less obvious for joining within the Chinese context. One feature that was identified from various participants is the desire to keep the punk performance 'independent' so that they have freedom to choose the content to express and the style. For instance, the musicians were found to be proud of the non-commerciality of punk and resisted opportunities to participate in more commercial or mainstream activities, as for example if a band was invited to participate in a pro-government style of performance.

Outside the local punk interactions, Chinese punks also interact with punks in Anglo-American countries. The Western punk-related lifestyle is particularly appealing to those musicians who once experienced performance tours in European countries, and almost half of my participants have overseas experience and contacts abroad. Typically, Western countries are considered to be democratic, to have free speech, to be environmentally-friendly, and to be diverse while China is described as being heavily polluted, constrained, commercial and singular. While Western society is seen as independent, Chinese normal society is viewed as being brainwashed and following blindly the status quo.

Mr L, for instance, has a strong connection with German punks as a result of his band's music tour of Germany in 2007. In the interview, Mr L mentioned the treatment while performing in Germany, i.e. being treated to free drinks, and the environmentally-friendly festival theme. More importantly, he was welcomed by German punks. By contrast, he experienced visa refusal initially, for 'unspoken political reasons', from the Chinese government when applying to travel to Germany to perform, but gained financial help from German punks to cover the financial loss. Because of the help received from the German punks, this interviewee stated, 'I don't know which my real country is, China or Germany'. Through frequent interaction with German punks, particularly in comparing the

situations in the two different countries over such issues as government reactions to graffiti, he has formed a strong critical stance towards China resulting in his argument that the establishment of a new society operating without government is necessary. Another participant, Mr F, described the cyber environments of the Western countries and China as being in opposition. According to him, Thailand is an example of a democratic Eastern country following the Western model. He was willing to have the concept of an ideal country, with European countries quoted as the ideal. For Miss K, Western people knew what they were going to achieve even when they were squatting (in the punk movement, punk musicians squat in deserted houses to live in a state of anarchism or hold music festivals). Comparatively, Chinese people or punks had already lost their direction, and the general public is brainwashed.

In conclusion, interactions between punks can be seen in different cities, particularly Beijing and Wuhan, through music performances, music festivals or simply hanging out to discuss and share interests. On the one hand, interacting with other punks locally provides a frame of reference, such as attitudes to visual appearance and to the Chinese government. On the other hand, interaction between Chinese punks and Western punks provides a frame of reference guiding Chinese punks to appreciate the attitudes and lifestyles of Western punks.

4.3.2 The Division of Subgroups within Punk Group

The influence from those Western punk idols that Chinese punk musicians admire and imitate can be clearly seen in Chinese punk. However, understanding and approaches of how to apply this imported culture to a Chinese context varies among the different bands. Sometimes, this difference can invite conflicts within and between different bands. From another perspective, different cities or districts within one city different punk bands are divided not only on geographic level but also a psychological one.

In Beijing, one focus of many disagreements among different punk musicians is the debate about whether the lyrics should be sung in English or Chinese. Normally, this was discussed along with other issues – for instance, the punk musician’s economic or educational background. When I talked to one punk musician, he expressed the belief that those who insisted on singing in Chinese had more potential to be successful. Moreover, he criticised those who sang in English as having no background of high-level education thus not only losing their Chinese identity but also trying too hard to emulate Western punks. Since some musicians being criticised were from wealthy family backgrounds, this background would also be criticised for being mismatched with songs appealing for equality and freedom, as they were perceived to represent a higher social class. When I first stayed in Beijing, I went to the monthly punk-only event, which was not free. At a later stage, a free monthly punk-only event emerged, organised by the punk musicians who held oppositional attitudes to those who organised the non-free punk-only performances. It seemed like an assertion of battle for the territory, resulting in the formation of subgroups within Chinese Beijing Punk. In a broader sense, it involves how punk musicians locate the concept of localisation in the punk group, which originated in Western countries. This argument raises an essential concern: the authenticity of being a punk.

During my stay in China, there were two experiences that impressed me. I once took a 90-minute subway journey to a suburb of Beijing in order to interview a punk band. In another interview, I took a five-hour train to interview a punk musician, who lived in a third-tier city a long way from the capital of a province of China. The long journeys and those small and less prosperous areas reflected the potentially marginal positions of the participants within Chinese punk subculture. After talking to them, I realised that they deliberately chose to live away from the so-called punk centres, in these cases, Beijing centre and the capital of Changsha. Moreover, they also purposely established their own subgroups, and were supported by a respectable number of punk musicians and fans. It was also interesting to see their responses to my interviewing them. While both of the punk musicians seemed quite surprised, they especially

expressed their gratitude for my visit. According to one of them, 'it is good to see that there are people who care about marginal people like us'.

The motivation of the punk musicians who moved to the suburb of Beijing was to escape from the city centre where most of the punk bands gathered and a punk circle had formed. Returning to a 'utopian place' was the hope, as this could fulfil the desire of creating an intimate and free environment for punk musicians. Moreover, the suburb also provided a relatively quiet place for musicians to reflect on how to live as a punk. For the punk musicians living in the third-tier city in China, the main concern was to keep their punk identity alive. Compared to the punk musicians who lived in top- or second-tier cities and possessed all the resources they needed, the punk musicians living in the third-tier cities believed in their own authenticity of being punk since they psychologically felt it to be a struggle in their position as lower class members of society.

4.3.3 Punk as a Subculture

The above discussions provide an outline of the Chinese punk group and show that studying the punk phenomenon can be interesting due to its complexity. In a broader sense, whether the Chinese punk phenomenon can be regarded as a subcultural one is a concern, which can be quite influential to the further analysis of my findings. With a reflection on previous subcultural studies, a discussion of the existence of Chinese punk as a subculture will be provided in this section.

There is no consensus on how to define punk as a subculture in the current Chinese context. In the limited press discussions of punk phenomena in China, one article includes it as a general form of Chinese alternative music and of a music subculture (A.A., 2013). Jonathan DeHart (2013), nevertheless, is reluctant to deem punk music as a subculture since he believes that the lack of suitable political and economic conditions slows its development and expansion in China. When I occasionally asked my participants whether punk culture/subculture exists in China without providing them with a definition, I had different responses. Some of my participants told me that there was no punk

culture/subculture in China since this imported foreign culture had no roots and had never fully developed here; another noticeable response involved a sceptical attitude to the term *culture* since the musicians felt this term was too ambiguous.

In China, punk bands remain small in number and loosely distributed in different cities. This fragmented reality largely shapes the thoughts of those of my participants who hold the opinion that punk culture/subculture is absent in China. However, one cannot ignore the reality of the interactions within punk groups at different levels. Locally, Chinese punks have informal gatherings that happen in specific places such as bars opened by punk musicians, or at park corners. In different cities or among different subgroups, punk musicians interact with each other and maintain an interesting network, even manifesting occasionally in conflict.

Reflecting on previous subcultural studies, the most recent scholar, J. Patrick Williams, provides a definition of subculture that has been discussed in Chapter 2. His definition of subculture refers to '*culturally bounded, but not closed, networks of people who come to share the meaning of specific ideas, material objects, and practices through interaction*', leading to their identifying themselves as different from '*the normal society*' (2011:39). As the discussion in Chapter 2 has already emphasised the advantage of this definition compared to the definitions provided by other scholars, especially in the initial stage of identifying a subculture, its application to the Chinese punk phenomenon seems to be reasonable and appropriate, based on the initial discussions of my findings above.

In conclusion, it is important to define punk as a subculture in the Chinese context. The practices, interactions and subdivisions of this punk group form a particular subculture that needs to be further explored. Crucially, the reasons underlying the formation of punk subculture need to be uncovered. In other words, it is through a detailed analysis of subcultural practices, meanings and norms that one can sensibly understand punk subculture in China, as will be discussed in the following three chapters.

Chapter 5: Individual Punk Subcultural Practices: A Case Study of a Punk Musician

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the existence of Chinese punk as a subculture. This chapter and the next three will flesh out the concept of punk subculture to achieve a deeper understanding of it in China. These four chapters will present punk subcultural practices from three different dimensions: individual, collective, and online, based on my ethnographic research. This chapter will examine individual punk subcultural practices.

This chapter provides a case study of punk musician and organiser Mr L, an important figure in the Chinese punk scene. It highlights his gradual process of deepening his commitment to punk subculture. Through analysing the intertwining of this punk musician's individual biography and his surrounding society, it is hoped to achieve an understanding of how individual punk subcultural practices can be regarded as different forms of subcultural resistance in China.

5.2 The Case Study of Mr L

In the previous chapter's discussion of methodological approaches, I mentioned my key participant Mr L, a member of a Skinhead Oi! Punk band, in Beijing, who contributed greatly to the success of my ethnographic research. It turned out that not only was he helpful in finding other contacts but he is also a figure who has a long-lived subcultural career. His involvement in punk subculture has gradually intensified over the past fifteen years. In this section, Mr L is chosen as the subject of a case study due to his key role in forming punk norms and values in China.

Mr L's band was formed in 1999 and is well known by most of the other punk bands in China. Mr L has been active on the scene since, and he has attended

most punk activities in China. He has also organised a punk festival himself. Mr L has a strong international connection with punks in Germany, which he attributes to his band's music tour of Germany in 2007.

During his early period of participating in punk subculture in 1999, it was Mr L's interest in this particular style of music that shaped his decision to enter the punk scene. After his initial participation, Mr L chose to stay in the punk scene and to continue his subcultural career. As Crewe and Maruna (2006) pointed out, the life history of an individual can explain the deeper meanings of the interactions in the field. In my case, Mr L's subcultural career has served this purpose. In other words, although the analysis is based on Mr L's punk life, it is representative of other's punk lives. While the journey that lives take may differ between individuals, the turning points that my participants have experienced, which relate to the punk scene, have some similarities to Mr L's experiences, according to my ethnographic research. Therefore, the interpretations of his life should be appreciated as representative and a means to provide a holistic vision of subcultural practice.

5.2.1 Individual Choice

The construction of Mr L's punk identity began when he attended a punk gig 15 years ago. The music drove him to form his own skinhead band, attain knowledge of punk music and adopt the punk visual style in his leisure time, which later become an important practice throughout his life. His punk consciousness was shaped by the sources he drew on from the Internet and the live shows he attended. As he spoke about his choice to become a skinhead punk musician, he said:

I like punk music because it is straightforward and simple. We are not professional punk musicians and never trained to be. Punk music is relatively easy to start. I also felt punk music was revolutionary. For instance, you can fuck the government and other stuff. It is such a great release!

I chose the skinhead style mainly because of what I listen to. There was a very important British band called Hard Skin. We were first attracted to the music and it was Oi!, Oi!. It is very powerful. Hard Skin is pure Oi! punk. We felt it is very powerful and it feels working-class. It is very complete and very good. After we knew the music, we started to look for that kind of culture. Some friends also liked it and they told us about the Skinhead or Sharp skin style. Then we explored it deeper and found out that they also had Ska and Reggae. We started to know Skinhead culture, then the clothes. We like boots, braces, Levis trousers and a simple working-class style. I don't think that I am very suitable to wear studs, lapels and a Mohawk. I prefer a simple and powerful unity of music and clothes. We then learned that the Skinhead style originated from the black working-class Rude Boy¹¹ style.

There were a lot of misunderstandings about Skinheads. Skinheads are always blamed for bad things. Even when we were in France, we would hear some French people say, 'fuck skinheads'. In fact, Nazi's will blend in with the Skinhead group by wearing Mohawks, so you cannot really tell who the Nazis are.

I personally feel the Skinhead image fits the Chinese working-class. The working-class in the whole world is simple. The West is very different to the East. Western people are very united to resist government and society. In contrast, Chinese people are very selfish, numb and cold-hearted. They do not pay any attention to things outside their own little world. It is a tradition.

From the time that punk music experienced its first wave in China in 1997, Mr L started to pay attention to imported music from the West. From what I gained from conversations with him, Mr L's first profession was as a bartender in a bar opened by Westerners in the early 1990s. This opened him up to Western culture sooner than many other Chinese people at the time. In addition to benefits from his working environment, punk music satisfied his political and expressive desires while overcoming the limitations in his music skills. In

¹¹ Rude boy: (In Jamaica) a lawless urban youth who likes ska or reggae music (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/rude-boy> accessed in April, 2014)

particular, Mr L emphasised two factors in his personal choice of being a skinhead: the suitability of image and his self-identification of social class.

I interviewed Mr L twice and hung out with him five times; most of the time he wore Dr. Martins boots. With his bald head, Mr L always maintained a Skinhead look, i.e. with braces and boots. What was important to Mr L was the music, followed by adopting a new identity and lifestyle; this active choice is a manifestation of separating himself from traditional society and focusing on conforming to an alternative lifestyle instead.

The significance of this individual choice can only be understood through the Chinese cultural context and the responses of different related actors to punk including parents, neighbours, peers and the wider society. It is at this point that resistance emerged as a part of Mr L's life and led him to further identifying himself as being a Skinhead Oi! Punk.

For Mr L, insisting on maintaining a constant Skinhead appearance, which has always been a crucial part of his punk life, is a statement in itself, as is his rejection of the responses of the mainstream, in his case, particularly neighbours and the rest of the society. He said:

My parents didn't really control what I was doing. But in 1999, I dyed my hair different colours. My way of dressing was also a bit weird, which my parents didn't like since we lived in a residential area with many neighbours. In the beginning, my parents neither supported nor opposed it. They simply required that I didn't cause any trouble.

If you have a Mohawk abroad, you will have no problem walking in the street. If you have a Mohawk and walk outside in China, you will attract everybody's attention.

All Chinese people behave the same. For instance, a lot of my friends would wear Dr. Martens boots to go to my place. One day, the lady who was responsible for opening the elevator asked me if I had a decent job as she thought those boots came from a company I worked for. Chinese people have this feature: they particularly like to comment on something that they don't understand. For instance, once I sat near the

street and a person came to criticise my shoes as being too old. He asked me how many years I had worn my shoes and I replied: 'it's none of your business, fuck you and I don't know you.' In fact, production of authentic Dr. Martens boots has stopped. You would be really lucky to own the ones produced in Thailand. Nowadays you will only see the ones made in China... I normally wear ones with 14 holes. These two days I just felt a bit too tired to change into boots. I drank with my friend until 3 am yesterday and wore a pair of casual shoes and left at 9 am.

As seen above, while Mr L is critical of the general public and wider Chinese society, he spent more time explaining the types of Dr. Martens to me to show his profound obsession with these things. It is interesting that this insistence on a particular punk appearance is only a signifier to show or prove the division between 'the West' and 'the Chinese' conceptualised by Mr L. Implications can be detected from the above words. As Chinese people conform to a particular feature, i.e. ignorance, 'the West' serves as a justification of Mr L's choices and practices.

Mr L's choice of dressing as a punk invokes the conflict between him as a subculture member and the mainstream, but it has to be pointed out that the impact on Mr L's life is relatively small in this context compared to another context, which will be discussed below. Interestingly, in Mr L's case, his parents, who typically serve as authority figures in general Chinese people's lives, have not constituted the biggest obstacle in Mr L's punk life, at least in his understanding. Instead, it is the wider Chinese society that generates problems for him.

Even in later life when working for a company, Mr L chose not to conform to the dress code that the company required but, rather, maintained his Skinhead style at work. However, this insistence on keeping his identity as a Skinhead Oi! Punk nevertheless generated a conflict between Mr L and his boss and colleagues, which finally lead him to escape from the traditional working environment, and to open a small restaurant in Beijing as an alternative form of employment.

In particular, Mr L enjoys this form of self-employment since it gives him a freedom to choose the way he likes to dress, for instance, tattoos and boots, and it also gives him a relatively loose schedule and therefore time to play in his band. I went to the restaurant several times and the afternoons were generally not busy, so Mr L had opportunity to surf the Internet or rehearse for his live performances. As a man who is over 35 years old, Mr L has had several professional experiences, whose failures were strongly associated with his insistence on maintaining his punk style of dress and behaviour.

When I was at school, I would feel I had failed if my teacher didn't criticise my clothing style. When I went to work in a company, the boss came to tell me that he recruited the wrong person because of my 'unique' behaviour. My response was, 'okay'. I always feel one sentence can conclude the situation in China, which is that the Cultural Revolution hasn't really finished. I was a playwright before and my work was always censored. China is like a fascist state.

Chinese punks really have a problem insisting on their identities. You wear like this, and then you can't find a job. Most punks cannot find a job so they have to cut off their Mohawks, and therefore they are institutionalised.

Mr L has experienced a life change. Originally, Mr L's attitude in his youth was simply one of rebellion against his teachers. In his later adult life, Mr L experienced further hardships, for example due to his boss and the censorship system. In this context, insisting on maintaining a Skinhead visual style has had a stronger impact on Mr L's adult life. When he was under pressure from his boss – an emerging authoritative figure in his life who had the power to end Mr L's financial support, Mr L had to make more effort to actualise his subcultural resistance. By connecting the issue of his non-conforming dress style being criticised with the issue of censorship, Mr L argues that punk subculture members in China are experiencing a process of institutionalisation into the mainstream. By avoiding this process of being institutionalised, Mr L's insistence on keeping his visual style broadened and became an insistence on living a particular lifestyle with more freedom of dress and expression, that of a Skinhead Oi! Punk. In this sense, opening his own restaurant, which gives him

the benefit of having more time to play in his band and of dressing the way he wants, actualises this insistence. However, this choice invites conflict from the mainstream again.

I am now over 35 years old. When my old friends ask me, 'What are you currently working on?' I tell them, 'I am playing in a band.' Then they would be extremely surprised. They will comment, 'Playing in a band is supposed to be for a 20 year-old guy. You are over 35 years old and you can still play in a band?' It is always the case in China. People feel you are crazy. They feel you should have a job or a business when you are 30 years old. This is my job. Every day I need to rehearse. We have albums and write songs, we need to spend a lot of time on it. Nearly 90% of people don't understand. For instance, you can sing popular songs after you are 30 years old because you earn money. When you play punk music, you don't earn money. In China, the social values are very strange. They will wonder why you do something if it doesn't earn you money. When I invited a very famous Japanese band to perform here, they performed for free and didn't ask for money.

There was a time I was on Channel V and I was very disappointed when I went there. It is indeed very famous but nobody really cares about music. They would believe it was good music if they found that your music could sell. I worked there for one year. Then I quit and went to Germany to perform. A lot of people didn't understand it. My monthly earnings were 10,000 Yuan and I went to Germany. They asked me how much I would earn and I said it was for free. Chinese values are about how much money you earn.

Some people came to my restaurant to eat and asked me to turn my music down and complained it was too loud. I refused since they came to my space and have no right to tell me what to do.

If you are a punk, you have to look like a punk. If you are a sportsman, you have to look like a sportsman. If you are a chef, you have to look like a chef. You can't ask people to guess what you are.

The stable 9-to-5 working schedule, accompanied with the emergence of another authority figure, a boss, was seen as a compromise in order to blend into mainstream society. Thus, withdrawing from that lifestyle and spending more

time in the punk scene became Mr L's way of escaping. In fact, it seems particularly important for Mr L to have the identity of working as a punk musician as he chose not to tell his old acquaintances about his restaurant. More importantly, a holistic approach may be adopted in his way of viewing Chinese society, thus the mainstream society as a whole becomes problematic.

At this stage, the conflict between Mr L and the mainstream changes from just an alternative visual style against so-called 'normal' fashion, to an alternative lifestyle against a mainstream lifestyle. Specifically, Mr L has a problem with the societal values expressed in comments from his friends, previous boss and customers. It can be seen that Mr L defies the Chinese social expectation of having a stable lifestyle. In his opinion, the fundamental problem is what this stable lifestyle requires: money-driven values and a high social status. He thus resists this norm by giving up a high-paid job and insisting on a punk lifestyle instead, the punk lifestyle being the opposite of the stable lifestyle and, in his explanation, resulting in a lower-income status.

It is interesting that on the surface the behaviour of Mr L in opening a restaurant does not fit the typical expectation of someone trying to live a classic punk lifestyle. Nevertheless, it appears that he has established his own norm by setting up the restaurant in an unconventional manner, playing loud rock music and ignoring complaints coming from others, even his customers. This behaviour is significant since it can be interpreted as a form of resistance to the mainstream norms by creating and maintaining an alternative space and norms. More specifically, in this new space that he has constructed, Mr L can wear what he wants to wear, play what music he wants to play, and express himself more freely than he used to be able to. By insisting on living his alternative subcultural lifestyle, Mr L actualises his individual resistance to the mainstream, i.e. his previous boss, old acquaintances, customers, and ultimately, the normative patterns he perceives in Chinese society.

J. Patrick Williams (2011) once said, 'resistance is conceptualised as a reaction to something occurring in mainstream society or culture' (2011: 106). He further

pointed out that resistance should be understood as ‘a moment in the larger frame of everyday life’ since it also needs a reaction from the target (2011: 106). It can be seen from Mr L’s case that two forms of resistance are exhibited – insisting on a Skinhead Oi! Punk visual style, and insisting on establishing an alternative subcultural space. As seen from the above discussion, the same form of resistance can have a different impact on Mr L’s life in different contexts; i.e. confronting with the refusal of reactions from different targets in different stages of his life, which can shape his subcultural experience accordingly and have a distinct influence on his life choices. More specifically, his interest in punk music which is the main reason for his participation in the punk scene, influences Mr L less in his later life. Instead, Mr L’s individual subcultural practice, which can be regarded as a form of resistance, not only serves as a response to cope with the wider mainstream elements in his everyday life but also results in a construction of his identities in different life stages, ultimately, his life history and biography.

5.2.2 Involvement in Punk Activities

Over time Mr L’s participation in different kinds of subcultural practices intensified. His commitment to punk subculture deepened, enhanced by these punk activities that provided him opportunities to meet the general public. Each of these activities shaped Mr L’s subcultural experiences in a different way, which will be discussed in this section.

On a daily basis, punks congregate in bars or on street corners for hangouts. These gatherings are an important part of punk activity and deepen bonds between group members. Mr L’s restaurant, which is structured as an underground live house with a closed door, covered by a curtain for exclusion, and loud punk music playing all day long, serves as a space for punk gatherings. A punk style of dress invokes more fear from the mainstream due to the number of people who wear this same style in the group hangouts. In Mr L’s case, he said:

We once had two chefs who had their whole backs tattooed. In the summer, they would take off their tops when they cooked. People would think we had gang gatherings. Also

my friends sometimes came to chat with me in the summer showing their tattoos and Mohawks. Those people who live in the Hutong (胡同) feel it is extremely weird here.

In this context, *Hutong*¹² represents a space of mainstream values but the perception of the Hutong residents that the restaurant is 'weird' is based on the – unusual to them – sight of tattoos and Mohawks. Compared to Mr L's individual insistence on wearing Skinhead Oi! Punk style clothes, the behaviour of a group and their style of dress appear to be offensive and threatening to outsiders, in this context, the *Hutong* residents.

Through hanging out with other punk musicians or fans, practices such as holding gigs and tours, creating albums and music videos are discussed and scheduled. This is particularly important since this group activity augments the chances to re-emphasise punk values and encourage more people to follow them.

We are filming a music video called 'you are punk'. I have told a lot of young people. If you are a punk, you need to wear your Mohawk in the street. Don't be afraid of others because punk is about visual resistance. You have to ignore other people. However, a lot of people cannot do this. They have a Mohawk but would wear it down (rather than up). A lot of people feel ashamed and I encourage them to make their Mohawk stand up.

It can be seen that involvement in filming punk videos has a deeper meaning for Mr L, as it is an approach used to establish one of the punk norms – visual resistance. It is interesting that Mr L used the term *visual resistance* to interpret the meaning of punk and the act of dressing as a punk in this particular context of discussing group behaviour, in contrast to his previous description of visual style in the context of his experience, which is then interpreted by me as a

¹² Hutong: a narrow lane or alleyway in a traditional residential area of a Chinese city, especially Beijing.

(Available at

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hutong?q=Hutong>
accessed in April, 2014)

resistant act. In this sense, the articulation of resistance serves as an encouragement for other subculture members to follow, which assists the formation of the frame of reference for subculture members. On a personal level, the frame of reference that emerged from the conversations also assists subculture members to construct their punk identity and cope with their daily life. In this context, this helps them to live through being hated, mocked and misunderstood by mainstream society.

In Mr L's case, video filming has another function, which is to directly oppose authority figures. In one video specifically about the Chinese police, the filming almost ended in a fight with the police, who serve as authority figures and representatives of the Chinese government. He described the filming process to me:

We were filming in front of Tiananmen Square. At that time, a police officer said we would only be allowed to shoot if we had permission. I told him we didn't. We were then told we should go find People's Square. Then I said I was a citizen and that there was no sign saying 'no photography'. In the end, he confiscated my video camera. There was a big crowd at that moment.

The lyrics went, 'you take money you send people, you send people to the fucking jail. We are never afraid, we are never afraid. You are a fucking gun. We will fight, we will fight until we are dead. We don't care about you, fucking cops. We don't need you, fucking cops. We wanna kill you, fucking cops; we wanna kill you, fucking cops. We wanna kill you, fucking cops.'

Compared to his insistence on wearing punk style clothes or living a non-conformist lifestyle, Mr L's involvement with the production of music videos was more influential politically since they were a direct political statement. This act of completing the video filming was an act of political resistance; meanwhile the target of this resistance is shifted from the mainstream in general to the police or, in a wider sense, the Chinese government, which can be seen as the most powerful authority figure in China. Through this collective practice of completing the video filming, Mr L and his band members committed a momentary

politically-resistant act, as opposed to 'political resistance' since it was rather brief and too dangerous to constitute a long-lived and frequent act in the Chinese context.

Two other important areas for Mr L are punk music performances and punk music festivals. Punk performance can be seen as a crucial aspect of a punk musician's life. It consists of stage performance, interactions with the audience and the audience's reaction. From the several trips I made to his gigs, I realised that Mr L's performance style was popular with the audience since it was full of energy and entertaining with a combination of dancing and singing and visual performance. In one performance, Mr L poured alcohol on his body while drinking (picture seen in appendix 4) – a kind of on-stage visual spectacle. In some way, it was an emotional occasion with a lot of audience members' pogoing and wielding their fists high. More importantly, punk music performance can be seen as an expressive space controlled by punk musicians. In actuality, this kind of event is often stopped by the government due to political sensitivity to the messages contained in the lyrics. As Mr L's says:

There is almost no freedom in China. As soon as I went on stage to perform, people would remind me to be careful since police might come. Sometimes people from the Cultural Department will come. People will remind me that I should pay attention to what I want to say. They know I like to express a lot on stage. Bad situations exist in China but we still have to express ourselves. If we don't do anything, then there would be nobody. At least I can let ten people understand the situation. That is enough and better than nobody.

Before we would fight in the live performances and now the situation has become much better. I don't feel that part has any problem. People like to fight when they are drunk. Audience members will fight with each other. The musicians will fight with the audience. Different bands will fight with each other. Unlike in foreign countries, watching live performances in China is not civilised. In other countries, you may drink or have drugs. You have a lot of ways to release. In China, young people have less ways so a drink will make them crazy. If I don't feel you are right, I will beat you up. The point is that a lot of people misunderstand punk. For

*instance, if you have tattoos, people will think you are bad.
My friends often ask me if I have joined a gang.*

As the number of people involved in punk performances is relatively large, pressure is manifested through control and scrutiny from the government. In this situation, a speech from the stage before a performance, which normally consists of criticising government policies and social injustice, becomes a form of political resistance against the Chinese government. It is interesting that Mr L has adopted an explanation of emotional release to justify punk's violent behaviour. As anti-government sentiment is shaped by the desire for free speech, especially in the aspect of criticising the government, I detected a sense of pride in saving people from blindly following the government. The speech before a performance can be especially risky since punk musicians have to confront the potential of being punished by the government. In fact, this has happened to some of the participants, which will be discussed in later sections. Compared to the resistant act of insisting on filming a video while being stopped by the police, this form of resistance, i.e. stage speech, happens more frequently since it is relatively safe because of the environment and the form, which is oral rather than physical. More importantly, the stage speech can be regarded as a prelude to the performance, which contains ambiguous and various meanings, such as being entertaining or emotional-release or political. Because of this ambiguity and the punk performance's potential to be profitable, the government treats this stage speech with versatility and thus providing opportunities for punk musicians to try their luck in conducting this form of resistance. For Mr L, locating himself in a punk performance activity drives him to convey political criticisms to two types of audience: those who are punk fans or musicians and those who may only be interested in punk performance rather than committing to become members of the punk scene, or identifying themselves as punk. In other words, the second type of audience is regarded as *outsiders* or from the mainstream compared to the first type, insiders from the punk group.

After establishing his band, Mr L became the founder of the only and longest-running *Punk Music Festival* in China. After ten years' development, Mr L defines

the *Punk Music Festival* as a space with free speech. In line with punk music gigs, audience engagement such as moshing and pogoing, resulting in breaking down human boundaries, also shape the whole festival, which is in fact an event of with a large number of gigs from different bands at the same time. Due to its size, the *Punk Music Festival* has experienced difficulties in applying for a location and has also come under intense scrutiny and control from the government. The value of holding the *Punk Music Festival* thus comes out of these struggles and the reflections on the motivation behind holding such a festival.

After experiencing other, different music festivals, Mr L and his companions decided to establish a punk music festival, which aims to be less commercial than mainstream music festivals and to encourage people to know punk culture, In Mr L's articulation, music festivals have problems in China.

I think it is a fake prosperity. The audience in the music market is bigger than before. But people who know the music have become fewer than before and they just like the crowd or pretending to be trendy, for instance, Strawberry Music Festival. I saw a three-person family who went there for the sunshine and drinks. They had no idea or intention to know who was performing on stage. It is very strange. At the moment I am holding Punk Music Festival. Last year it had 100 people and this year it has increased to 1000 people. But not too many people sincerely know the music. Most people normally just dance and sing for entertainment. I remember an experience in Midi Music Festival. It was real. My bassist and I saw a girl dancing to the music. So we asked the girl what the band was. She said she didn't know. They would tell you instead that they were happy for the sake of being happy. If you laughed at them, they would not be happy.

I was previously interviewed by international press and asked about the differences between the lyrics in China, Britain and America since the things that we appealed for seemed the same. I said that what we sang about was our true lives while foreign lyrics were just lyrics. I wrote about resisting this society because the government was unfair. Conversely, drugs are legal abroad. In foreign countries, the government will support you to hold a music festival. This is not the case in China. Chinese resistance is the authentic one. My German friend told me that my country was a real

battlefield and we were resisting. We just sang about the unfair histories.

My friends and I want to hold a touring-style punk music festival for its 10th anniversary to expand our punk circle. Hopefully we can stop in Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan.

According to the above quote, other music festivals, such as *Strawberry* or *Midi Music Festival*, are full of ignorant audience members. As a founder of a punk music festival, Mr L not only hopes to expand the punk circle, as mentioned above, but also demands the audience's true appreciation of punk music, which can be seen from his later posts online encouraging audience members to know punk music and to talk on stage about their criticisms of the Chinese government. Speaking out about grievances against the government is an essential feature of the festival. More importantly, Mr L terms the act of holding the punk festival as *authentic Chinese resistance* in comparison to foreign punk festivals. The quote from his German friend, who describes China as a battlefield, serves as a further justification. Mr L has received several warnings from the government and has suffered difficulties in gaining the permit to hold the festival. In other words, the cost of insisting on organising the punk festival and is the potential oppression and severe punishment from the government. The punk festival is a collective experience but, from Mr L's perspective, insisting on organising the punk festival can be seen as a form of individual resistance that manifests itself politically and culturally, as fighting for permission from the government to organise a punk festival can be seen as a political move to resist cultural control by the Chinese government. The punk festival is deemed an alternative to the current culture of music festivals, which follow mainstream norms, such as being only commercial and entertaining, and catering to the ignorant mainstream audience.

In particular, music festivals outside China provide a frame of reference to define Mr L's 'better festival'. This frame is further applied to resist the norms of Chinese music festivals in general.

I feel music festivals in China are quite boring. The bands are always the same. New bands have a very limited chance to

perform. When you go to a music festival, the audience normally only pays attention to the famous ones. The music festivals in China are bad. Their environment is particularly awful. Plastic bags would be thrown everywhere and nobody really cares about environmental issues. In Germany, people really care about the environment. Apart from the tiring experiences, such as having to perform seven days in a row last year, it was great. In contrast, good music festivals don't really exist in China; they are basically the worst. The festival holders don't really respect music. We even had to ask the bar to provide us drinks while they normally give them to us for free. They don't even care that we are here to perform. In Germany, they would prepare a fridge with a label stuck to it with our band name. Inside we could get red wine, white wine, champagne and whisky. You could ask for what kind of drinks you want to have. They will then prepare them for you before dinner or performance.

When I am asked how many music performances we have a year in other countries, I say that there would be none if I didn't personally organise or apply for them. I feel I am excluded from the mainstream rock circle in China.

Our performance is influential. Big festivals won't ask us to perform because they know that this band has a strong political attitude.

It can be seen that practices such as no free drinks for performers and poor environmental control in Chinese music festivals have been complained about and are despised by Mr L. This leads to his conclusion that a lack of respect for music and bad organisation are typical of Chinese music festivals. His experience of German music festivals has strengthened this impression. Mr L encourages audience members who attend punk music festivals to dress and behave as punks. As a festival holder, Mr L regards being an authentic punk as essential. In Mr L's opinion, the mainstream rock music circle also excludes punk bands on purpose. Thus, creating a punk festival is a practical way to energise his band and also punk music. This estrangement between Mr L and the mainstream rock circle shapes punk music and the punk subcultural experience in China.

A life of being intensively involved in the punk scene has led Mr L to further develop different forms of individual resistance to the government and mainstream society. Compared to visual resistance to mainstream culture the

other forms of resistance tend to be more political, including stage speeches criticising society and organising the *Punk Music Festival* which directly challenge the Chinese government. Mr L intends to use the relevant opportunities to expand the punk group and establish a punk performance norm, which may lead to a stronger impact on influencing the mainstream.

5.2.3 Talking about Resistance

In the field, I noticed that Mr L's talk has a particular style, especially when he started to lead the conversation and choose what he wanted to talk about spontaneously without my interruption. This section will provide a discussion of his particular style of talk.

Wilson and Stapleton (2007) found that 'the dominated rejecting material and [a] linguistic setting up of alternative discursive forms of resistance' happened in the nationalist community of Northern Ireland (2007: 419). In the context of policy change (2007: 419), the discourse form of resistance, which is about sociolinguistic choices in a conversation, results in a block to accepting the change. Here the concept of a discursive form of resistance is adopted to understand the contents and style of Mr L's speech.

While Mr L talked about his life history and subcultural career at my request, he also chose to spend a long time criticising the Chinese government and society, seemingly without any relevance to his experience. For instance, the extracts below from my interviews with Mr L can be seen as a response to the current situation in China.

The most horrible thing is that everybody knows about awful things but no one is willing to say anything about them. If you post something online, it will be deleted. There is no law protecting free speech in China. People neither have the conscious of what is right or wrong nor a sense of justice. You can't use Twitter, Facebook or YouTube in China, which are very commonly used abroad. Of course a country definitely would not wish anything related to anti-party or anti-society sentiment to be written. The

Tiananmen Square¹³ incident, for instance, proved this. Many people don't know about it. For those who know, they will not be happy to be interviewed. 90% of people won't talk about it. Chinese people won't even talk about Free Tibet. That would be a big no for them.

Sometimes my wife, the business manager who is responsible for my punk performances, will remind me not to mention it. People know that I will talk about a lot of forbidden things, but my opinion is that even if you may not have the ability to take care of it you can always speak about it.

It can be seen that the discursive process of resistance happens together with reflexive accounts on the right of free speech in China. While he believes that it is forbidden to discuss the Tiananmen Square incident, Mr L speaks about it boldly and comments on the mass fear or taboo of talking about it. By setting up an entirely new pattern of discussing this event, Mr L, who represents himself as the dominated, resists the dominating frame of keeping silence and eliminating the memory of politically sensitive issues. Moreover, the frame of reference assists Mr L in coping with the problems brought by his identity and insistence. Essentially, he regards this bold behaviour as a way to differentiate himself from the ignorant mainstream.

While the theme of anti-government protest as one motivation for punk practices is quite clear in one discourse, citations and examples cover other relevant stories about the Chinese government, such as its censorship of talk about the Tiananmen Square incident. The Chinese government is an extremely negative figure in this discourse.

I have a friend from Ireland, who teaches English in a university. He said he came to teach English but nobody

¹³ Tiananmen Square incident: also called June Fourth incident or 6/4, was a series of protests and demonstrations in China in the spring of 1989 that culminated on the night of June 3–4 with a government crackdown on the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

(Available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/594820/Tiananmen-Square-incident> accessed in April 2014).

talked to him. He also asked students if they knew about the Tiananmen Square incident. This incident is known by many foreign students, for instance, Korean students. But a lot of Chinese kids have no idea about it. I think maybe people all over the world know about this while only Chinese kids don't know. Chinese kids won't talk about things that aren't allowed. It is unimaginable. Chinese kids are worse than the last generation. An American professor I know commented that he felt tragic after staying in Peking University for a week. He found that no one used drugs nor knew about music bands. They even had no idea about the Ramones. Their life was simple, from canteen to dormitory. They wouldn't go to music gigs or entertain themselves. They were stupid. Students abroad play in bands, go touring the world or have relationships. Most Chinese are stupid. University students are extremely ignorant. At that age, they should have dreams but instead all they want to think about is buying a house and a car. Then people from other cities want to stay in Beijing, which invokes conflicts between locals and migrants. The locals would normally exclude migrants. It's neither locals' fault nor migrants'. It is the government that we should blame.

Compared to general complaint, a normal form of expressing dissatisfaction, the discursive resistance is a systematic and characteristic means of communication, including the way of intentionally exemplifying a politically-sensitive issue that is restricted by the government. As discussed in the last section, stage speech before a performance constitutes a form of resistance within the context of punk performance which is scrutinised by the government. Mr L's talk has a similar role, as it is also about challenging the Chinese government and is essentially about a way to fight for freedom of speech in China, although this challenge is in the form of bringing up historical issues sensitive for the government. Nevertheless, this talk in a similar style plays a different role in shaping Mr L's daily life. From how Mr L addressed his style of talk, for instance and from his wife's reminding him not to talk about political issues too much, it can be seen that he talks in this way often. In this sense, the discursive form of resistance, which is applied to the current stage of Mr L's life, increases his chances of demonstrating resistance from occasionally to perhaps every day. Moreover, this form of resistance seems to be at a potential risk of being punished by the government but in reality faces less danger than the two forms of political

resistance discussed in the last section, since it is an individual act happening in a conversation in a normally private environment, without the potential power of agitating the general public – in Mr L’s case, the audience in punk performances.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, from the early stage, when Mr L began to be interested in punk music until the opening of his restaurant, his aim was to avoid conformity with the mainstream. Two forms of cultural resistance occurred, including him insisting on his Skinhead Oi! Punk style and insisting on his punk lifestyle, responding to criticisms and bias from his neighbours, boss, colleagues, acquaintances and, ultimately, the mainstream. To some extent, it is cultural resistance that shapes Mr L’s life history. In another stage of deeper involvement in punk activities, Mr L’s resistance tended to be political. In this period, two forms of resistance to the Chinese government can be seen: stage speeches before punk performances and organising punk festivals. While the potential oppression from the Chinese government puts Mr L at risk, the collective form of punk activities also gives him opportunity to influence a wider audience. The last stage in Mr L’s case is about how he talks about resistance – talking about politically-sensitive issues – in his daily life. It assists him to cope with the restriction of expression as imposed by the government and to actualise freedom of speech at a personal level. It has to be pointed out that subcultural resistance may be manifested in the same way but can have a different impact in different contexts, especially with different targets of the resistance, which has been shown in the discussions above. Thus particular attention needs to be paid to the different situations where resistance lies.

Chapter 6: Individual Punk Subcultural Practices: The Path to Becoming a Punk and Being a Punk

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 provides a discussion of individual punk subcultural practices in China. It is organised in two sections.

In the first section, the individual subcultural practices of my research subjects and their various individual biographies will be presented. This section will focus on the influence of educational background on a subcultural career and the relation between professional life and punk life. It is hoped that through this section broader themes relating to individual biographies can be examined.

Second, there will be an exploration of how my participants constructed their punk identities. In particular, acts such as moving to a suburb and establishing an autonomous community will be introduced and examined in this section.

6.2 Individual Biographies of Punk Subculture members

The different trips to meet punk musicians in different cities over a four-month period made me realise the variety of the individual biographies. Similarities and differences can be found with Mr L's biography, in particular, the point about the multi-level and contextual feature of resistance. From the personal experiences of different punk musicians, the social roles that they play and political or economic environments that they live in are unveiled, which provides a context to the struggles and conflicts that these people experience, particularly as a result of their punk identity.

6.2.1 The Significance of Educational Backgrounds

My participants varied in their professional, educational, and economic backgrounds and professions. In particular, their articulations showed the significant influence of their educational experiences in the early or current stages of their punk lives.

In one conversation I had with a punk band, they mentioned that their motivation to establish a band was a sense of helplessness, as “there is nothing else we can do since we never had higher education.” After I told them that I am a PhD student, one of the punk musicians mocked me by calling me “PhD” the whole time. The whole interview process also contained a huge amount of rhetorical questioning of me, which showed a sense of anti-intellectuality. In summary, they felt strong pressure from society because of their low educational backgrounds, which resulted in low expectations of the future. This may explain their negative attitudes to the concept of higher education. More importantly, this is despite thinking that it is their poor educational background that drove them into a marginal social position.

The discussion about educational experiences with Mr C further illustrates the relation between educational experience and the life history of a subculture member. In Mr C’s case, educational experience has played different roles in his life stage before and after college. Mr C’s previous educational experience before college was a turning point in his life and directly influenced his individual choice to pursue a punk lifestyle; this resulted in his leaving the mainstream education path at some point. Prior to interviewing him, I read Mr C’s posts on his personal blog, which contained information about how he became a punk when he was 14 years old, leading to his choice to become a person involved in the creative industries. When I asked him about this in my interview with him, Mr C presented a more detailed answer:

Music influenced my life. It is that kind of unruly spirit, which is basically different from the normal path. This is very Chinese. My father works for the government in a small

place. People like to compete in a small place. My neighbour was a girl who was older than me. She had great grades and was always the top student in her study. She also went to a great university afterwards, which was very good. What kind of pressure did that bring upon me? My father had a very good relationship with her family so he criticised me a lot by comparing us. I gradually came to know music and read lyrics. They all went "it's okay and whatever" or "fuck it, fuck it". So I started to feel 'whatever' and play the guitar. I was this bad and I couldn't do anything about it. I didn't successfully pass the exam to go into a high school. This resulted in my father shouting at me and blaming everything on me playing the guitar. I still felt 'whatever'. Then I went to a high school opened by my uncle. My father sort of accepted my behaviour and bought me a guitar. I still didn't do very well and didn't have good enough grades to go to university. I told my father I wanted to go to play in a rock band in Beijing. So my father applied to two universities for me. One was a music university while the other one was the Advertisement College. I finally went to study advertisement, which was the normal route. I would say that my father had a vision. I can now play in a band but also have no problem of living.

In fact, punk is about disobedience and resisting authority. That's why I opened an advertisement company and compete with the larger ones. We are not afraid of them. That's punk. Compared to other punks, I feel much better.

For Mr C, his educational experience played a big role in his life before college. The pressure from parents, the demand to achieve good grades, became his first motivation to escape from the normal education route to pursue a rebellious way by playing guitar, which is somewhat similar to the other band members mentioned above. More importantly, this pursuit developed into a form of opposition to the expectations from his parents, and in a wider sense, the social expectation from the mainstream in his youth. A difference occurs later after college, where his attempt to blend into the mainstream shaped his life. It can be seen that Mr C chose to compromise for a mainstream lifestyle meanwhile retaining what he feels is a punk identity. In his articulation, the meaning of punk, which is about resisting authority, is brought up to describe its influence in Mr C's professional life. In other words, punk resistance, particularly to authority, is a philosophy and mindset penetrating Mr C's individual biography.

For those participants who are currently being educated in a music educational institution, or have recently left one, refusing the normative pattern to approach music production seems to be the cause for choosing to play in a punk band. For instance, when I interviewed a female punk musician Miss S who is a first-year undergraduate student at a music university, her description of her education experience highlights her marginalised music taste, compared to the mainstream in her university.

The people in my university are very narrow-minded. What they listen to is very narrow. As a student majoring in composition, we don't listen to popular music but only classical music. For those who particularly study music, what they like to do is to show off their technique, so the style that they choose is usually death metal, to practise playing at speed. One friend of mine, who is studying electroacoustic music, always feels angry when he sees punk. He doesn't like punk. Rather, he hates punk. He refuses to play this style with his electric guitar even though he can play it very well. I don't know why he is so biased. There is no punk band in my university. Nobody wants to play in a punk band. I really feel disgusted. They have perfect technique but they only play death metal. But my question is what do you want to express through playing death metal? I envy the students in Wuhan University. As long as they can play guitar, they will be admired. For me, I just want to find people who are the same as me, with the same hobby. The people who play punk won't despise its simplicity. If everybody tries to compete with each other, no one will really enjoy punk. This phenomenon is very interesting and that's why I want to escape from it. This university is awful. We particularly want to come out and form a band so that we can despise those narrow-minded people in particular.

Miss S has come from a competitive and utilitarian environment, which frames her pressure to pursue an alternative musical taste and performance. For Miss S, her interest in punk music grew after being introduced to the *Sex Pistols* by a friend in middle school. This interest in playing punk music, a relatively simple style, defies the norm of playing more difficult styles of music in her university. Thus she chose to deviate from this approach to music and actively blended herself into the punk circle by playing in a punk band. In nature, she is sticking to a lifestyle of simply enjoying the *pure thing*, which can be found in punk music,

and resists the opposing lifestyle of competitiveness, which exists in her music university. Nevertheless, as long as she stays in her current educational institution, Miss S has to keep balancing her subcultural identity of being a punk with her identity as a music university student since the latter exerts a constant pressure on her choice. In fact, I didn't know about the power of this pressure at that time, but found out later when I heard that Miss S quit the band because of it after I came back to England. Nevertheless during the period of my fieldwork, Miss S resisted peer pressure and the orthodox approach to music by choosing to play in a punk band instead.

Contrary to Miss S, Mr N only noticed his distinct choice after talking to his peers and reflecting on his own thoughts. In his youth, Mr N actualised his rebellion against education by playing drums in order to escape from school. His dropping out made his parents worry so they arranged for him to go to music school to continue his education. Mr N joined a punk band and stopped going to the music school, which he described to me:

Compared to my friends, I am much older, and more mature. There was one time I was standing in front of the school entrance. My friend came to me and judged me as being too old.

This comparison with his peers was justified with his changes of status after joining the punk band.

I hope to stay in this band. He (the main singer of the punk band) told me that my technique was not very stable. Before I liked to play hardcore style and changed a lot. The situation was a bit disgusting. He told me that this style may be popular today and that another would be popular tomorrow. The popular bands would also change style with the times. If you follow the trend but can't stick to it, you have to change. A lot of my classmates are exactly like this. They start something and change in a very short time. He (the main singer) said that if someone can play something until his forties that would be so cool. I agree with him and don't want to be like my classmates. I want to stick to punk music.

It can be seen that Mr N was influenced by the main singer's ideas and started to follow what he saw as an alternative route rather than just follow his classmates. Similarly to Miss S, Mr N, who was once educated in a music school, challenges his peers who choose to play popular music by sticking to punk music. He is often judged as being too old, in other words, being different from his peers. In this sense, his choice of excluding educational experience also invites a particular attitude from his peers, which is about excluding him.

While the discussion above has shown how my participants' educational experiences were mainly negative, some of my other participants had positive experiences. For instance, Mr Y wrote on his personal blog online:

I had a dream that I lived happily at school. I told my friends that I liked to go to school. They were all very surprised because they didn't. I told them that I liked to go to school because I never went to learn knowledge. I simply believed that school was much purer than society in general and the so-called "rock circle".

After I asked about his specific thoughts behind this blog entry, he said:

It is actually a bit silly. I just wanted to express that I was very happy. Although there were things I disliked, I didn't pay attention to them. There was no pressure from my teachers and no control from my parents. I just studied while playing music and painting. I liked that kind of status. Later playing music was more like a job and I gradually felt it was not interesting. It might narrow your circle. Before, you could be friends with different people, such as painters or dancers. Now you can only play with punks. I wish I could be the same as before, to have friends in different circles and not just stay in one circle.

It is interesting that Mr Y framed his previous educational experience as "a happy thing". More importantly, this sense of happiness about school distinguished him from his friends in the same circle, who mostly wanted to escape from school. Later, his educational experiences became a cherished memory that enabled him to escape from living a punk lifestyle and being friends with only punks. In other words, he was inspired to choose a marginalised

lifestyle from the rock circle as a whole. His educational experience was embedded into his individual biography and formed a basis for him to feel regretful or nostalgic, and to escape from his current punk life.

The interview with Mr Z took place in a coffee shop. He showed surprise at my identity of being a PhD student in our first meeting. As a postgraduate himself, Mr Z claimed that he felt ashamed of having a lower level of education than me. Similarly to Mr Y, Mr Z's view of his educational experience has a relevance to the punk scene. Specifically, having a high standard of education is something that makes him distinct in the punk scene. In the interview, Mr Z also emphasised the role of education:

Punk musicians with different standards of education, high school or undergraduate or postgraduate, see things differently. Actually you can see at which level the punk band lies from the kinds of songs that you see them perform. If you just criticise the government in a brutal way, you just want to attract attention from the public. There is nothing to you. It's like just because you really hit another person while fighting, you are not the one with the advantage. As a Chinese, he may not easily accept the non-mainstream culture but may like the look. So what you have to do is to use the visuals and rhythm to invoke others' feelings to interact with you. Through this, they may be willing to understand you and ask you to attend their musical activities. For the audience members, they may start to ask about your lyrics. This is a stage-by-stage process to enable you to understand from the bottom of your heart... it is also through empowering yourself that you can start to think about how to challenge the government.

In Mr Z's statement, education plays a role in defining a person's perspective. Ultimately, he believes that the actualisation of challenging the mainstream is through a process of attracting mainstream people to become punks, rather than through criticism of the government and the mainstream. While Mr Z identifies himself as a person who follows a non-mainstream cultural style, he chooses what he calls a 'non-brutal' way to influence the mainstream, which is not through telling them how bad society is, but rather by instead showing them how good punk music and culture can be. While Mr Z believes that he has found the

right way to influence the mainstream and attributes this to his high level of education, his approach is not really valued by other punks aside from his own band members. As I have received negative comments about Mr Z and his band from other punks, such as that Mr Z's band's performance style is 'too light,' I noticed more criticisms from other punk members about him later. After I came back to England, I had another conversation with him after seeing his signature on a social media platform had become "I will gain a PhD degree". Mr Z told me that he had this idea after being interviewed by me. More importantly, he wanted to challenge the stereotype of punks as being a low-educated and non-intellectual group. As he had received several responses from his peers about this decision, Mr Z believed that only one person understood him while other punk friends just laughed at him as usual.

In conclusion, educational backgrounds seem to play a significant role in a musicians' path to becoming a punk. As the typical social expectation for Chinese young people is to strive for a high level of education, those who choose not to would normally be seen as non-mainstream. Most importantly, they are stigmatised and made to feel strong pressure from the mainstream to conform. In the cases mentioned above, this pressure on punk musicians comes from a variety of sources such as their peers, parents or the musical norms. From the views of the musicians who I interviewed, it can also be seen that only one punk musician identifies with a general stereotype of punks held by mainstream society as being uneducated. Additionally, resistance ideologies emerge in these contexts. Being a punk becomes an approach to guide those who suffer from pressures to live in an alternative manner. In this context, joining a punk group can be seen as a primary form of individual resistance. For those who have low achievements in their education, choosing to play in a band is a way to resist social expectations from the mainstream and to resist peer pressure, or the normative pattern of approaching music for those who study in a music educational institution. Moreover, the above cases also show that punk musicians not only challenge the mainstream by leading an alternative punk lifestyle but also may not conform to the norms within the punk scene by establishing their individual approaches, for example, blending into the

mainstream educative path, to cope with their daily lives. In these cases, an educative path is imagined and framed as a way to escape from the chaotic and less effective punk scene.

6.2.2 Professional life and Punk Life

During my fieldwork, I found that most of the punk musicians had a job besides playing in a punk band. My key participant Mr L for instance identifies himself as a professional chef in his restaurant. A variety of professions can be found from my participants from the most common profession such as a white-collar worker to the controversial ones such as a lecturer who works for an educational institution and civil servants who work for Chinese government.

6.2.2.1 Holding Different Opinions to Professional Life

Different punk musicians have different opinions about being a punk musician and having another job. According to Miss G, playing in a band is a balance with her professional life.

The music can give me energy. I do administrative jobs. I am very clear about my job. After the professional time is over, I can lead an alternative life. When I am rehearsing or performing, I am normally more passionate and rational. I like that sort of uncontrolled and free status but you know, you can't lose control in your work.

Miss G sees punk music more like as a hobby than a lifestyle. Although she admitted that she preferred another uncontrolled style of life, she showed her determination to separate her punk life and activity from her professional life, thus preventing each from conflicting with the other. Mr H however, who sometimes has a Mohawk at work, sees his professional life in a more practical way.

I opened a hotpot restaurant. I tried to work as a magazine editor once but hated having my time under so much

control, so I decided to start my own business. Maybe it is a bit more tiring but I can earn more money.

The customers come to my restaurant. When they see my look, they may just think I am a weird owner. But this won't influence their mood to eat here. Compared to Mr L's restaurant, mine is more traditional, for making money so that I can support my family and myself. My money is for my hobby. Sometimes it is very hard to achieve a win-win situation. This is a non-mainstream thing. Unlike in Western countries, we can't just do it.

Similar to Miss G, Mr H regards playing in a punk band as a hobby but also further points out that the lack of economic support prevents this punk lifestyle from becoming the main part of his life. According to Mr H, having a professional life is necessary to support his alternative punk lifestyle. Additionally, it can be seen that he experienced a change in his professional life. As he refused a normal professional working style, a professional life that gave him more free choice with his time was chosen to suit the band rehearsal and performances.

Mr M's reaction to the topic of professional lifestyle was more dramatic. He talked to me about his professional life twice. Mr M's opinion is similar to that of Mr H. In my first interview with him, Mr M said he had to work to support himself and his hobby. At a dinner I had with him later, Mr M complained about his professional life, which depended on human contacts and relationships. He regarded this as unauthentic and false compared to his alternative punk life. Mr M felt that his goal in professional work is to earn enough money to escape from it and to prepare him for performance trips. In fact, it is a compromise for Mr M to have a professional life at all and his ultimate purpose of having a professional life is to own his alternative punk life.

6.2.2.2 Being an Authentic Punk in the Combined Lifestyle

Some punk musicians do not separate their professional lives from their punk lives, but blend the two into a single alternative life. In this case, the concept of

'punk spirit' plays a significant role in unifying these two parts. Mr W, for instance, exemplifies this combined lifestyle and its role in his professional life.

You will blindly follow other people if you don't like punk. You study, you work, you marry. This becomes your life purpose and a personal task. You may think about doing something else some time step by step, but then your life has passed just like that. Because I knew punk, it guided me to choose a lifestyle I want. I work and I also choose how to work. This is my temper. I will not give in. People go to work because it earns them a lot of money or it is stable. I won't and I have changed my job many times simply because I value something. If a job can't give me that, I won't keep it.

It can be seen that Mr W regards his frequent job changing as a way to resist the normal approach to a professional lifestyle. In his opinion, knowing punk gives him the guidance and power to do this.

Before I went to interview Mr T and Mr LC, their professions surprised me. Mr T is a lecturer in a university and Mr LC is a civil servant who works for the government. Since punks are generally thought of as being against institutional education and anti-government, these two professions can be seen as unusual in the punk circle. To my surprise, Mr T had worked out how his punk life could exist alongside his lecturing life. For Mr LC, the sensitivity of being a civil servant seemed to have little impact on his becoming what he thought of as an authentic punk.

My punk identity and my profession as a civil servant are the same. It feels funny though. I have to live in this world and I can't depend on this music job because of the incomplete music industry in China.

Mr LC holds a similar opinion to the above punk musicians, Mr M and Mr H, and regards his profession as a way to support his alternative life. In his case, it can be seen that the profession itself has no direct influence on his interpretation of living an alternative punk life. For Mr T, his job has the advantage of effectively giving him a platform to promote the punk concept and has also become a way to reflect on his alternative punk life.

I joined the punk group in 2005. It was the first time that I got to know punk culture. I thought it was some gang-like society. I was scared and I had no concept of punk, but then I knew more and more about punk. Now I feel everybody should have punk spirit.

People in China have been brainwashed. They have no independent thoughts. I told my students that they have to resist and rethink. You have to doubt the system. If my students criticised my words, I would be very happy. I still think about if I am an outsider or insider. I am trapped in a system that I have defined as the Confucian system. Before I knew punk, I was the same as other students. There is no resistance in this university. It is absolutely a very bad-quality university. Since the outside world is blocked, there are no people to guide the students to get out of the system. For me, it is a bit tricky. I am inside the Confucian system. At the same time, I am also inside a punk band. I have to criticise it but my system has not been established properly.

Mr T frames being a lecturer in a university as being amongst the brainwashed while punk concepts provide him an alternative mode of thinking. He reflected on his situation and concluded that his position is as both an outsider and insider in a punk group. I also sensed his implication that he feels he is a different educator to the norm and consciously nurtures critical thinking in his students. In some way, he blends his conceptualisation of 'punk spirit', i.e. criticism of the Chinese authoritarian systems, into his professional life. Applying 'punk spirit' in his professional life is his unique approach to resist the norms of the education system.

It is interesting to discover the significance or insignificance of a normal professional life to some of the punk musicians, while for other punk musicians a normal professional life is absent. By "professional", it is meant those mainstream jobs other than being a full-time musician. The division is based on the abundance of economic support. As most punk musicians cannot support themselves financially, the profession of being a full-time musician attracts criticism from parents and peers. This dilemma causes musicians to regard the profession of full-time musician as a dream that is hard to achieve. It is this struggle that causes them to reflect on the status of being a punk to a greater

extent compared to those who have a normal profession with which to balance their life. Some punk musicians have the ability to support themselves from various sources including from their parents or by depending on the music income and keeping a humble lifestyle. As a result they sometimes have to confront pressures from their parents and peers. Although punk authenticity has become a reflexive concept for them, being a full-time musician doesn't necessarily make them feel they are being authentic.

Mr J is a full-time musician. In his description:

Punk is a lifestyle. It should be anti-government. I don't like the current social status. I should do my own things. Nowadays times have changed. We have our own thoughts, which should not be disturbed. We will not go to work like normal people. We will endure the pressure from society and stick to ourselves.

Mr J is from a wealthy family, which provides him economic support. He points out straightforwardly that devoting himself to his punk life represents choosing a different life from normal people. He didn't specify it but the interviews from other punk musicians may have provided a clue. When I interviewed Miss YG, she had just quit her job and had no professional life. She said:

I have two roles. One is authentic. But you can't deal with your colleagues in your company. You have to play another role. In fact I can. It is not very hard. But you have to cater to other colleagues and their attitudes. But I like the real me.

To be 'authentic', she quit her job. It can be seen that the conflict between her professional life and punk life arose from her negotiation of these two identities. Despite having to maintain a 'fake' self when she faces her colleagues, Miss YG considers the punk lifestyle to be something she likes. This conflict led to her giving up her professional life, an act to resist the professional lifestyle and to enable her to be true to herself. As she is from a relatively wealthy family, Miss YG is determined to maintain this lifestyle for a while. After interviewing Mr ZY and Mr P, I found that they kept a distance from their family. They both

described their families as having “no feeling” or “no understanding” which was attributed to their age. Mr ZY said:

They can never understand. They tolerate me a lot. But if I ask them whether they support me or not, they will say they don't. They don't give me pressure but always believe that there is no point to being a punk. They don't understand. They worry about your insurance, especially when you get old. They worry about your work and the housing insurance. They don't care about your interest and hobby. They feel you are doing something useless. If you talk to them about the meaning of lyrics, that generation doesn't understand. They can't break through. The generation they live in is too different from ours.

Mr ZY seems to have found a reason to explain the attitudes of his parents; that the difference between their generation and his generation creates this misunderstanding. As a result, Mr ZY has inherited a sense of remoteness from his parents, who refuse acknowledgment his punk life. . Mr P's parents hold a similar attitude. Mr P's describes:

They only like to say one sentence, “Find something real to do”. My parent's generation always likes to judge my generation based on their values. They feel you have to find a job and work until your retirement. But in my family, I still do what I want. They can't do anything about it.

Mr P has the same problem as Mr ZY, that his parents do not recognise the value and significance of his status as a full-time punk musician. From another perspective, the criticism from the parents of these two punk musicians indicates the perceived and typically real instability of being a punk musician in the aspect of income and economic status. Compared to Mr ZY, Mr P's opposition to his parents is more obvious since he has refused his parents' education. While the conflict between male punks and their parents have been smoothed by the males' rationalisation of their choices, the female punk seems to have more issues to deal with regarding their parents. An example of this can be seen from Miss K's experience. The extreme opposition to her parents arose from Miss K's deviation from the normal parental expectations of Chinese females. When I

interviewed her and asked the question of how her parents think about her status, Miss K responded:

For over ten years, they opposed my decision to be a full-time punk musician. I can feel that kind of conflict, insult and pressure. The pressure they give me comes from their pressure because they can't tell those so-called friends that I am a rock musician. They think it doesn't satisfy their status. Apart from this, I can understand the love they give to me. They worry about how I can live when I am old but the status they show me is very furious. For girls, the parents may not want you to be too successful but to become stable. My parents are intellectuals. They behave like authorities. They are also afraid of authorities. For instance, if you tell them about Picasso's painting, they may criticise it if they don't know about it. But if you then tell them Picasso is a top artist, they may start to be afraid. They would like me to work in a normal institution. It would be a protection. The first time that the relation between my parents and me became better was when I went abroad. They were shocked that I could go abroad because of my musician job. To them, only rich people go abroad.

As Miss K articulated, the expectations from her parents regarding professional life not only included her having a 'normal' job that could provide economic support, but also a stable one that suits girls. Additionally, Miss K's parents are from a higher educational background with a similarly educated social circle. Their anger about Miss K reflects the mainstream social attitude toward the punk lifestyle, which is regarded as being inferior to the professional lifestyle. In choosing to become a punk musician Miss J defied her family but also the norms of mainstream society whose values are based on the accumulation of money and status.

In my interviews with punk musicians, no matter whether they had a normal professional life or had become full-time musicians, they had an idea of an authentic punk lifestyle in addition to reflecting on themselves as being authentic or not. There are different versions of authentic punk and its lifestyle that have been interpreted or implied by those musicians. In a group interview, one band member talked to me about the drummer and Mr PS, whose lifestyles they regarded as being authentic. Meanwhile Mr PS just smiled at me without a word.

He is a Chinese Punk. He left school at a very early age. He joined gangs and he fought. You can see his scars, which were cut by knives in fights. It's all like performing in the films. After he escaped from the gangs, Mr PS joined the punk circle and became different. He had experienced a time when he was ambushed by ten or more people and almost died because of that. He does not seek a stable lifestyle. That makes him punk.

It was interesting that the whole time Mr PS stayed silent. When I asked him if he agreed with the comments or not, he nodded with a bit of confusion. After I finally turned to him he said that he had no thoughts about it because he didn't receive a higher education and thus has no deep things to say. He lived this kind of lifestyle, which invited others' comments except his own. A complete escapism from the professional lifestyle and judgmental system further idealises him as an authentic punk. In fact, this also fits into the ideal of being a punk musician in most other punk musicians' eyes; having a low level of education but acting powerfully and being free from various systems. This may have nothing to do with if the person is a punk musician or not. Mr Y, for instance, once commented that he was guilty of being less of a punk than a hairdresser he met (along with a restaurant owner).

The hairdresser really talked a lot about politics. Every time I went to Chengdu, I met them. One was a hairdresser while the other one opened a restaurant. I said, "Fuck, cut my hair like this. Be serious." But he would continue to talk. He liked to release his emotions. It was only a release. He really understood China. He liked to analyse China. They lived at the bottom of society so they had the feelings I could never have. I am a punk musician and I am protected. I think they are more authentic than me.

Mr Y identified two aspects of being an authentic person: being at the bottom of society and engaging in open political criticism. This also made him reflect on his position as a punk. From another perspective, the implication in his interview shows that a punk needs to criticise the political issues experienced from the bottom of society. Mr X shares the same opinion. He said:

My band is representative of a third-tier city's rock band. The condition is not that brilliant, especially compared to the top-tier cities. But I think that the punk spirit in us is more powerful because of the difficult circumstances. In fact, we belong to the same class as migrant workers. My parents are all farmers. Unfortunately, migrant workers don't have that kind of consciousness. The guitarist in the band Rancid was also once a worker. But migrant workers in China don't have that kind of consciousness because they don't have time.

Mr X aligns himself with migrant workers, who are considered to be in the lowest of social positions. This leads to one important condition of becoming the ideal authentic punk, i.e. being at the bottom of society. For Mr P, being an authentic punk is more like actualising a person's dream. As a Beijing local, he compares himself with the migrants who he believes to be authentic.

I think that the authentic punks are those who seek for dreams and give up everything else. Or maybe because I am a local, as a musician I really feel that those migrants are really hard working.

One important message is that being authentic punk needs full devotion, in Mr P's opinion. In this case, the insistence on playing without economic support has become a particular way to actualise their authenticity as punks. In this sense, the struggle at the bottom of society is the source of some authentic feelings that a punk is expected to experience.

It is important to point out that the punk musicians who have a normal profession are between 22 and 35 years old. In other words, they are at a relatively mature stage of life. Rhetorically, they like to interpret the choice of keeping a normal professional life and punk life as a compromise. Nevertheless, the core value is centred on maintaining a distance between their punk life and professional lifestyle. Meanwhile, giving up jobs or changing jobs can be regarded as a resistant act to the mainstream and to maintain an alternative lifestyle. In particular, for those who choose to practice 'punk spirit' in their professional work, resistance is actualised by criticising the system.

Similarly to Mr L's case in the previous chapter, it is typically from an initial general interest in punk and/or punk music which leads to an individual choosing to become a punk. Resistance normally arises after facing disapproval of this choice from peers and parents. However, it can also be seen that an ideal version of being a punk is to escape from everything and to follow one's own desires. This further leads to an important practice for some of the punk musicians, which is to attempt to establish what they believe to be their ideal worlds.

6.3 The Ideal Punk Lifestyle

Among the punk musicians interviewed, several of them have mentioned the concept of an "ideal lifestyle". This is usually in conflict with pressure that they feel from professional life, which is manifested in the urban money-seeking values or socialist values of China. Two patterns of establishing an ideal punk lifestyle can be seen: one is to move to the suburbs from the city centre or to a foreign country from China, the other is to establish a community based on squatting, an idea from the West.

6.3.1 Moving to Suburbs

When meeting punk participants, I had to travel a long way from the city centre on several occasions, for instance, in Beijing and Shanghai, where some punk musicians live or even play in the suburbs. In their opinions, suburbs are the opposite of the city centre. As the former is regarded as an idealised utopia as well as marginal, the latter serves to be representative of the mainstream.

It should be noted that Beijing or Shanghai suburbs are less prosperous than their city centres and almost like autonomous second or third-tier cities. For Mr ZY, he regards his previous lifestyle in a suburb as a utopia.

My friends and I formed a band. We were friends at that time. We went to a place far away from the city centre where all of the shops were closed. Our guitarist bought a house at that time. It was very cheap there. So we lived

together and rehearsed there. We continued this lifestyle for a whole summer.

We had a utopia even before this. At that time, we had 14 punks together. We lived in a one-bedroom apartment. Some slept in the bed while some slept on the floor. We insisted on playing music. At that time, Sanlitun (an area near the centre of Beijing) was especially good and free. There were not too many extra things. It was very pure and cheap. We didn't go inside anywhere, we only drank by the roadsides. We continued doing this kind of thing for nearly one year.

From what Mr ZY described, the ideal punk lifestyle is about sharing the same kind of life with people with similar interests. Additionally, he resists the 'busier' lifestyle in the city centre. He described his past to me with a sense of nostalgia about him. The similar concept of utopia has been mentioned in Mr Y's interview. The difference is that Mr Y has manifested it through singing. Mr Y's songs contained messages such as "the abandoned" and "utopia". In interviewing Mr Y, he told me that he felt it was a nice thing to intentionally visit him as someone who was in the marginal position.

I sang the song 'When the Utopia Ended'. I am a rather pessimistic person. I may not be a person who will remember something when I have it. Instead, I will only start to think of it when I almost lost it. In the early days, my friends and I lived together in a small apartment. People all lived there. Nobody worked but we played in a band. At that time we consumed little. We rehearsed and enjoyed our simple lives. Then we separated after a while so I started to feel bit of solitude.

The reason I sang about abandonment came from a comparison between the years 2005 and 2006. At that time, I felt that Beijing was neither that crowded nor that half-modern and half-ancient. Nowadays Beijing has become weird. For instance, an old building is normally surrounded by a lot of modern buildings. I feel the sky is too grey. At that time I stayed near the city centre and then moved here. The people here are poor. They are not educated. While I live with them every day, their lives are still without any changes. In comparison, the city centre is rapidly changing. Sometimes, I feel we are all abandoned or deserted although we belong to the country.

It can be seen from Mr Y's description that utopia is about having no boundaries among people. The punk lifestyle without too much pressure is also one feature in this utopia. However, Mr L's feelings are more complicated. For him, the ideal punk lifestyle is a combination between the escape and the abandoned. While he prefers a lifestyle without mainstream values, Mr Y also identifies himself with the marginal people who live far away from the city centre. In fact, he once lived near the city centre and then moved away. For him, the city centre represents a space exclusive for punks. In other words, it becomes the mainstream punk circle with too much chaos and hidden conflicts. In this sense, he seeks a transparent environment. The attitude to the act of moving to the suburbs is more explicit in Mr F's statement. There are two important ideas in Mr F's thoughts. One is about moving to the suburbs, which is embedded in his life experience, the other one is about establishing a utopia.

The dream of utopia is about going to another country and establishing a utopia. It is not only me that goes there. I will guide a lot of people to go there. The utopia is a hard dream but it's okay. My health condition allows me to do that. If I wait for another few years, maybe I will have problems. I have planned this for two years. People have joined in this team already. I only have this ideal. I know it is enough for me.

For Mr F, establishing a utopia contains two layers of meaning. One is to escape from China, which he considers a polluted country without any sense of freedom; the other is to have a dream, which is also mentioned in the above statement. The latter is a response to Mr F's disappointment in the result of his experiment. In retrospect, he was not satisfied with the answers that he received from young people when he asked them what their dreams were. The general answer was to buy a house or a car. For Mr F, this sort of answer does not live up to his ideal. As a 36-year old man, Mr F believes that living in a free status with a lot of friends is the ultimate and reasonable dream. In a broad sense, Mr F's disappointment not only comes from the attitudes of young people but also the whole country, which leads him to actualise his own dream. This escape was previously displayed in his act of moving to the suburbs from Shanghai city centre.

I was holding a music festival. But after a lot of effort from different parts, it failed because the government didn't allow us to hold it. I was so disappointed that I went to the suburb. After staying there for two months, I decided to stay there a bit longer. Before I noticed, one year has passed. The work that I did in the city centre supported me for a year in the suburb. Now I want to leave again because it has become more commercialised because of tourism.

My friend L once sang a song that we could do anything but we didn't. We just danced and sang while waiting for you to perish. Ultimately, it is a resistance. We will not unite to do something violently. That is not a real power. The real resistance is to urge people not to follow the wrong policies from the bottom of the heart. In fact, in this kind of chaotic and selfish society, the best approach to resistance is to do nothing.

It can be seen that commercialisation is an important feature by which Mr F judges if an environment is ideal or not. In some way, moving to the suburb from the city centre is an act of trying to find his utopia. However, the conflict arising from the government restrictions and the mainstream materialistic values interrupted Mr F's process of establishing his dream utopia. As a consequence, he constructed another dream, one of actualising a fair and easy lifestyle. Ultimately, resistance ideologies can be identified in his justification of the lifestyle of "doing nothing" in this world.

In Mr F's bar in the Shanghai suburb, there were a few people who came to his place in the evening. It could be seen that they were all quite familiar with each other. Mr F told me who those people were and claimed that they were similar to him in terms of their desire to escape from the mainstream. Although not all of his friends were punks, Mr F considered them to be living a punk lifestyle, which is individualistic, free, rejects mainstream values and advocates keeping to themselves. In the interview, Mr F had his own opinion on the significance of anarchy in current Chinese society.

If anarchy is achieved, people will know when enough is. They can also distinguish what is necessary. If anarchy can be achieved, all of the powers will be very powerless. If

people know that living is a natural thing itself and enjoy it, politics will disappear. The housing market will go away. We don't need so many houses and cars. When people feel they are happy and wealthy because of living, nothing is really needed. Now people just try to take everything.

His ideal of anarchy is closer to what O'Hara asserts is "a belief formed around the anarchist principles of having no official government or rules, and valuing individual freedom and responsibility (who doesn't)" (2013: 71). In essence, Mr F emphasises the importance of living without rules. This is the basis for Mr F to actualise his utopia. It can be seen that the ultimate purpose in Mr F's case is to achieve the free and individualistic lifestyle that he desires. In nature, moving to the suburbs or establishing a utopia has become a form of opposition to the current mainstream culture and values.

6.3.2 Establishing a Community

Before I commenced my fieldwork, there was a particular figure - Mr D - that attracted my attention. Not only has he published an article about punk anarchic education in China, but he has also established a community called "our home" which follows the model of punk squatting in the west. Since only the government has the right to actually own a house in China, Mr D can only rent an almost deserted building at a very cheap price. In essence, he has created a special Chinese style of squatting. Particularly, "our home" is a community where punks, painters or musicians live. In fact, as long as there is an empty room, anybody can live there. The whole community is based on self-governing rules. Within the punk circle, Mr D is the only one who not only advocates an anarchic model but also acts on it. In this case, it may not be appropriate to say that Mr D is representative in this respect but he is definitely influential in terms of attracting people with the same ideals to join in some specific activities and is well known in the punk circle. Therefore it is worth discussing his activities.

It was interesting that I had come across his name several times before my attempts to interview him. The first time I heard about him was from Mr W who told me that Mr D had a good reputation in the punk circle because of his active

contributions to punk culture in China despite his almost exclusive status from the mainstream. For Miss K, Mr D's squatting behaviour is automatically connected to her experiences living in the squats of France. As Mr D's squatting was motivated by his ideal of living, Miss K first provided her understanding of the French style of squatting. In her words, those squatters clearly knew what they wanted to do in a day. They were relaxed and determined. This led to her criticism of Mr D's version of squatting:

Mr D and I have discussed this. I think he is also a promoter of anarchy. At that time, we both had enthusiasm for finding ways to change this world. He started to do something like communist experiments. But the whole plan gradually came to fail. All of the people lived together but the participants started to show their true attitudes. They didn't really fight for anything but just spent their time playing for fun. They didn't think it through.

The same sentiment is shared by Mr WW who feels Mr D's behaviour is simply idealistic. In fact, he doesn't count Mr D's behaviour as squatting since he feels it is more like just renting a place. It can be seen that Miss K and Mr D have their own different ideas about squatting and what it constitutes. In Miss K's opinion, those participants in Mr D's area have none of the required determination to actualise something. As she values Mr D's community as a supposed anarchic community, the people in reality haven't really followed this ideal of anarchy. While I met one of the people who once lived in that community, he described the community as a gathering of different sorts of people. He also attributed his leaving to gradually feeling no purpose. In some way, his claim has exposed some of the problems. It seems that there is a mismatch between Mr D's ideal of anarchy and his followers' behaviour.

6.3.2.1 “Our Home”

As Mr D described the physical space of his community:

We decided to rent a house. If you want complete control over a place, the only choice is to rent. Fortunately, we were able to find a secluded house outside the city that had basically been abandoned. The rent was next to nothing. Although the house was a bit old, the surrounding scenery had a natural beauty we found invigorating... On a pillar of the outer wall, we mounted a red and black five-pointed star, and gave the house a name: “Our Home’ Autonomous Youth Centre”

...

The village where “Our Home” is located had been plagued by a garbage problem for four years, and no one had done anything about it.

The location of ‘Our Home’ is in a suburb of Wuhan. To be specific, it is inside a village of the city, which is far away from the centre and has become a near-abandoned area. As mentioned in the description, the only way to own a place in China is to rent rather than to squat since the behaviour of squatting is not recognised and protected by law. However, Mr D’s choice of renting a cheap place almost functions in the same way as squatting in the West since this almost abandoned place is regarded as being secluded but at the same time big enough to accommodate a certain amount of people at a low cost. In one interviewee’s experience of staying in “Our Home”, it is completely free for those who want to stay there for a few days or even longer, totally depending on their own will. At the same time, they can communicate with the usual residents but need to arrange schedules by themselves. In fact, this place welcomes different kinds of people to join to create dialogue and to practice the idea of establishing an autonomous style community.

From the very beginning, Mr D and his followers have asserted that:

We must find a place within our own lives, a space to serve as a meeting ground and intermediary, to circulate information, to discuss the “symbols” of action we have

*encountered, to share the connectedness of our plights, to interpret it, and to attempt to act to the best of our ability.
(From "an alternative education of punk")*

It can be seen that discussion is the noticeable activity in this space. The online blog of "Our Home" has advertised various themed workshops, on topics such as women's rights, gay rights or social movements. Other activities such as film screenings or music performances are also frequently held there. The discussions not only happen among the local residents in "Our Home" but also spread to other countries. In one letter to a squat in Switzerland published on the blog of "Our Home", questions were asked such as what they are doing or how they influence their neighbours. Similarly, the activities that the Swiss squat holds are performances, discussions, film screenings and growing vegetables. Nevertheless, the Swiss squat can be seen as being more radical due to its other activities such as organising protests, a feature totally absent from the Chinese scene. In the view of one member of "Our Home", "daily revolutionary" activity is used to describe the behaviour of seeking food in the supermarket bins or growing vegetables without working. Moreover, conflict with the government over the right to squat exists in Switzerland, but has not been constituted as a problem in "Our home". Also protesting for women's rights or for immigrants' rights has no prominence on the Chinese scene compared to the Swiss squat.

The comparisons between the Swiss squat and "Our Home" have shown that political-related activity in "Our Home" is based heavily on discussion rather than direct action such as by joining in with social movements or guarding their own rights through resisting the government in some way. However, the organisational manner of "Our Home" is described as, "Trying to organise daily life through an anarchistic manner in order to form a life recognised by everyone." The political aspiration of "Our Home" is thus implied from the term "anarchistic manner", which did not appear in any description of the Swiss squat.

As different social contexts result in different approaches to actualising an anarchistic community with political aspirations, one major concern is the relation between the organisational members and government institutions. For

the Swiss squat, the members had experiences of being arrested by the police. Confrontations and violence with government officials or police rarely happen in “Our Home” although officials have been sent to investigate them, especially when they advocated action on environmental-related issues. While Mr D had the experience of almost being arrested by the police, other members believed that they were not powerful or influential enough to attract attention or to generate a social disturbance. However, a reflection from the online letter produced by “Our Home” on the Chinese political environment highlights the internal conflict and control over such an autonomous place.

There is no obvious behaviour of control; but the whole environment is oppressive. In this sense, the government suppresses autonomous places. The time that the government really starts to suppress specific activities is when it is believed that they “block” its development.

The Chinese political environment is defined as generally being oppressive in this letter. Autonomous management is regarded as a danger to a country with an authoritarian government. One of the specific activities of “Our Home” which faces some challenge from the authorities is the organisation of protests through artistic activities in aid of protecting a lake. The lake protection activity is an ongoing scheme that had entered into its third round at the time of my fieldwork. The subject of these protests is a lake which is in the process of being filled in, in order to develop profitable construction projects. This development activity is regarded by many as heavily damaging to the local environment, particularly by those who grew up near the lake. The members of “Our Home” are appealing to create a piece of artistic work that can be published online, with the purpose of resisting the government policy towards this development work. Throughout this process, Mr D and his friends have engaged with different parties including the media, government and the masses. “Our Home” also continuously holds workshops to discuss the event.

It is worth noting that since this artistic act involves political aims, the activists are scrutinised by the government. The relevant members of “Our Home” as well as the participants have had experiences of receiving phone calls from officials.

Practically speaking, the act has failed to stop the lake from being filled in, but the participants have not lost their motivation and enthusiasm to continue this project. From another perspective, this act can be considered relatively safe since this peaceful approach of defending and resisting does not really irritate the government. Nevertheless this fits the Chinese social context as well as Mr D's approach to actualising resistance.

6.3.2.2 Mr D's resistance

A statement from Mr D indicates the ultimate reason of establishing the community:

Like the boundless affection I felt for punk music when I first encountered it, I developed a similar enthusiasm for all kinds of activism related to social resistance. I sought out and began to translate whatever materials I could get my hands on, about "new ideas" such as "direct democracy" and "autonomy," and through comparison, I began to clarify my own positions. Eventually, the social propositions of pacifist-anarchists, and the concept of "I" promoted by certain media activists, left the biggest impression on me. Inspired, I decided to explore the possibilities of peaceful acts of resistance.

In China, the present system does everything in its power to prevent us from exploring even those fads that have already grown way out of proportion, and from effectively expressing ourselves in those public places that uniformed powers tightly control – like avenues and parks.

The possibilities of participating in peaceful acts of resistance are what Mr D has been exploring until today. For Mr D, establishing an autonomous community not only serves the purpose of providing relatively free vocal expression and discussion but is also a practice to resist government control and the wider authoritarian system.

Mr D has fully experienced punk practices from creating fanzine magazines, playing in a punk band, translating books related to anarchist themes, giving

presentations in universities and establishing an autonomous community. It has been mentioned in one interview that Mr WW commented that Mr D is an idealist. Nevertheless, the series of practices conducted by Mr D show that not only is he an idealist but also a practitioner who applies his theories to reality. For a long time, Mr D has been in the process of contemplating the possibilities of resistance and anarchy in the Chinese context.

In one of his articles, a combination of individual biographies and theoretical reflections is fully displayed in a textual form. Mr D experienced an upgrade in his relation with punk, i.e. from the status of simply enjoying punk music to one of seeking an alternative political path inspired by punk philosophy. In Mr D's realisation, the marginal position of punk music which can be shown from the limited channels through which one can find this style of music in China guides him to explore the underlying alternative punk philosophy, which happens to be discussed in other countries but is seemingly excluded in China.

Mr D subscribes to the idea that "punk is not merely noise, but it is interwoven with a profound alternative sociology and philosophy." In his opinion, the way to change the situations of marginalised people is to increase their awareness of the power possessed and abused by the Chinese government. Mr D suggests adopting the concept of *radical education* as proposed by John Holloway, a radical scholar at the University of Puebla; he also professes himself as a follower of punk DIY philosophy after contemplating of different sorts of activism, he has formed a belief that the world can be changed through revolutionising daily life and relying on an individual's self-consciousness and power. It is through this belief that a community can be established respecting the individual's will to autonomously manage himself when living, and depending on the individual's power to implement peaceful resistance. Maintaining an autonomous community is seen as a resistance to the authoritarian system with its hierarchy and control of speech. The flow of meaningful discussion and conversation in "Our Home", with its capability of designing and promoting small-scale social movements, frames its possibilities of resistance in different aspects, for instance, from the

unfair treatment from the ruling class at a micro level or the authoritarian system as a whole at a macro level.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the experiences throughout an individual's life and his/her social position can be regarded as relevant to understanding the concept of punk and its practices. The theme of punk subcultural resistance stood out during my fieldwork. Guerra (2014) argues that punk resistance is a theme in the forefront of previous subculture studies. Haenfler, for instance, argues that "resistance is contextual and many layered rather than static and uniform." (2004: 408) Indeed, resistance is contextual and multi-dimensional; it is not a static concept but one that relates to different practices, contexts and situations. In the case of punk subculture, the intentions, formats and targets of punk resistance may possibly evolve with changes in an individual punk's total time of staying in the punk scene, or his social positions, age and relations to outsider networks.

It is salient to note that punks follow the principle of valuing individual freedom. This directs them to oppose the perceived blind-following of mainstream values and authority and to stick to their own rules, even in professional life. Within the punk subcultural group, the members possess different understandings of insisting on punk visual appearance all of the time. As some of the group members persist in dressing as a punk in all of their life situations, others prioritise the internalisation of punk values, such as being critical of authorities and the mainstream. Moreover, subculture members have different perceptions of their environment after being involved in the scene over different lengths of time. Resistance to the mainstream punk values can be identified in the form of releasing other alternative modes of thinking and lifestyles.

From the individual biographies of different subculture members, it can be seen that the variety and intensity of punk practices differ. Although it would be abrupt to judge the social meanings and consequences of different activities, the

pursuit of being an authentic and ideal punk is most strongly and intensively presented in those who establish communities. All in all, the personal choices of punk members and their individual subcultural practices have been presented in this chapter. In the next chapter, collective subcultural practices will be discussed.

Chapter 7: Collective Punk Subcultural Practices

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses collective practices of punks, drawing upon ethnographic materials gained through participant observation of the Chinese punk scene and interviews with punks. It is organised into three parts.

The first part is a detailed ethnographic account of punk-style performance, focusing on the performance environment and the interactive rituals such as pogoing and moshing.

The second part explores the inherent conflict between punk performance and the Chinese political and economic environment and social morality. It also examines the different perceptions of an authentic punk approach to a performance, leading to a further exploration of the ideal version of punk performance held by punk musicians. This section highlights how punk musicians subvert the performance norm.

The Third examines punk hangouts as one form of collective practice, in particular, how punk musicians construct a subcultural space and produce a form of resistance to the mainstream.

7.2 Punk Performance

The first time I went to a live house in Beijing called Mao was for the monthly punk-only performance. Although Mao is a desirable and popular place for music performance with its advanced equipment, it was not as obvious to find as I expected. Located in a relatively unprosperous area, Mao has a black iron door with graffiti on it, and empty beer bottles placed by the window; it lacks a striking or noticeable logo and generally gives a feeling of being deserted. While it is not open in the daytime, I noticed people discussing what it was when passing by. I had the same experience when I went to another live house in

Beijing called School, which was quiet in the day time with no indication that it is there, although it is located in a popular tourist area. As live houses are normally only busy at night, this feature enables the construction of a relatively private environment for music performance.

7.2.1 Punk-style Performances in Different Live Houses

There was a long queue in front of the Mao live house at night. The whole house was lit up and busy crowds gathered. Before the show started, musicians and their friends drank beer and chatted with each other, forming into different groups. A significant number of audience members were musicians' acquaintances while the others were mainly students.

There were two audience areas, divided by a handrail, one closer to the stage, the other further back. During the performances, the audience members in the front area were much more active than the ones behind the handrail. When audience members in the front area had started moshing, a central 'mosh pit' was formed. Those who wanted to mosh would enter the pit while others would stay outside it and merely watch the scene. The most active audience members, who would choose to sing along with the musicians, occupied the area nearest the stage. Another punk ritual, the pogoing, happened from the very beginning of the performances, especially when a popular punk band was performing. In those moments, intense interaction between punk musicians and their audiences occurred. In some way, the environment was full of joy, release, and violence and was achieved by direct and simple forms of body touching among strangers.

There are punk performances in other locations that have more intimacy and spontaneity. During my stay in Beijing, I went to a private punk party in the suburbs. As the performances happened both inside a musician's apartment and in a public playground, the whole scene was extremely alive and crowded. People who attended this event were either the long-term supportive audiences or the active punk musicians. Strong personal networks and a highly interactive performance including pogoing and moshing could be observed.

Other intense moments of interaction between punk musicians and audience members were initiated by the musicians. In one performance, a band that sang 'Beijing Power' and held their fists high really stirred the emotions of the audience, especially the Beijing locals. Before performing it, a musician shouted 'Beijing punk is not dead' and was applauded by a large number of audience members. Another band performed a song called 'Bruce Lee'. The lyrics, 'Let's practise Kung Fu well so that we can fight with the Communist Party' were met with much cheering from the audience. This style of stage speech has become a ritual in punk performances, and I have experienced it in other live houses.

In the live house School, punk performances invited a strong sense of intimacy. It is a much smaller venue compared to the Mao live house, where the upper floor is for musicians' preparation and the lower for performance. For a space containing no more than around 100 people, the extremely crowded environment suits punk performances, and is preferred emotionally by punk musicians. During my visits I found that most of the audience members were very active in attending punk performances and generally maintain good relationships with the musicians. The relatively small stage without barriers enables intensive interaction between audience members and musicians. Occasionally, audience members would join the musicians to sing. Moshing happened frequently, with almost full-house participation, although pogo was limited due to the low stage. One of my participants stated that he preferred playing in School because it was a more intimate live house. In fact, his emphasis on this sense of intimacy contains the close understanding, sense of sincere support and identification with being a punk that is felt by the audience members.

Punk performance style, which is usually rough and loud, can sometimes be changed into a quiet one. One of my participants, Mr CC, who is obsessed with a particular band, comments on the best performance that he has ever seen:

It was the time that they performed some old songs in the rehearsal. It was very quiet. I have a deep impression about it. You will find something that is usually Zao (noisy) becoming quiet. It feels really nice.

This sentimental expression not only displays the variety of punk style performances but also shows that the taste of audience members in punk performance is contextual. In this case, a contrast in performances can have a considerable impact on the audience.

7.2.2 The Meaning of Pogoing and Moshing in Punk Performance

In my interviews, both punk musicians and audience have discussed the meanings of *pogoing* and *moshing*, two important interactive manners witnessed between audience members and punk musicians and which are also perceived as rituals in the punk scene. Mr CC told me that it was a good way to express and release emotions. For another participant Miss LZ, the meaning of pogo has an impact on how she views the human relations.

CC and I went to punk performances four times. In fact, we met each other while moshing. I felt moshing showed me that people could break boundaries. Even if I bumped into you briefly, you would not regard it as being intentional. It even became a bidirectional thing. Nobody really cared about the hurting part.

As mentioned above, intimacy and equality from the behaviour of moshing are the perceptions as well as the goal for Miss LZ. It can also be seen that she agrees with the direct and violent way of interacting with other people with the same interests. From the various times I attended punk performances, I could see an extreme enthusiasm and pleasure in the crowd, especially when moshing and pogoing were happening. In the description from Mr SL:

In my opinion, you can do whatever you want in that place. You can shout as much as you want. It may look a bit chaotic. For instance, moshing and pogo seems like people are fighting with each other. But people still help each other. When my glasses fell on the floor, somebody picked them up for me. I was moved by it. The boundary was broken by people.

Similar to Miss LZ, Mr SL emphasised the boundary breaking in terms of human relations and the good nature of pogoing and moshing as distinctive from their

superficial chaos. From another perspective, Miss K's words contextualise the behaviour of pogoing as it appears to Chinese government officials at a music festival:

Even the term Rock is dangerous to this country. That constitutes a fear. Pogo, for instance, is regarded as a revolution. This country thinks people are idiotic with no feelings. You can have no expression; you can also have a sweet smile. But it will become a problem if you laugh out loud. If you laugh to an extreme, that makes them confused and worried, you will have a big problem.

Punk style performance has a different norm compared to other styles. Within this style, its activeness and directness, with the nature and power to seek for interactions on and off stage, easily leaves an impression of possibly agitating audience members to stir up revolt in the country. In this sense, punk-style performance poses a perceived threat to the Chinese government, thereby generating attempts to control and regulate it.

In the punk musician's interpretation, the essential aspect of appreciating a punk style performance is to be present in the scene, since the power of punk style performance comes from the interactions between musicians and their audiences. In fact, the current situation keeps surprising punk musicians in a particularly ambiguous way. As Mr HY said:

Audience members may have different motivations when attending punk performances. Some simply seek for emotional release while others may have a true feeling about it. But I think people who come to the performance are those who truly like it. The time is different now. In the old times, you didn't need to make a lot of effort to have 200-300 audience members. Nowadays, only around 30 are the frequent ones. I don't know where those people have gone.

I also found an interesting phenomenon. In the punk festival or Midi festival, you can see a lot of audience members with Mohawks or wearing leather jackets. We never saw those people before. We are generally quite familiar with those who come.

It is acknowledged that the number of attendees who come to performances has reduced over the years. One explanation could be that their preferences have shifted from watching the performance of one single band to attending music festivals; this way, those audience members can enjoy a variety of performances and be more motivated to dress as a punk for a self-identification in the hybrid environment.

7.3 The Conflicts within Punk Performance

The main concern for punk musicians lies in whether or not the performance is motivated by commercial reasons. It is the nature of punk performance, which challenges the norms of conventional musical performance and contains strong political messages, to create conflicts between their own ideals and the demands of commercial imperatives.

7.3.1 The Opportunities to Perform

Ideally speaking, punk musicians prefer performing in a completely trustworthy environment. This includes sincere enthusiasm from the organiser for promoting punk music, and emotional synchronisation as well as mutual understanding with the audience. However, this preference normally results in a mismatch with reality since not enough resources are available to support punk music performance, given its decreasing popularity in China. On a practical level, there are chances for punk performances, either at music festivals with a mixture of different styles, or in commercial performances for companies. As discussed above, in most cases, punk musicians perform in the live houses. This is normally actively organised by those musicians and their affiliates. But some punk musicians have the desire to perform more often – to try and influence more audiences or to gain greater economic benefits. Those contradictions are constantly constituted in the choices to perform for punk musicians.

Miss K's band is relatively popular in punk circles, compared to other bands, although it is not hard to hear criticism of her music, being as it is on the edge of

punk music and distinct from other styles from other punk musicians. As a more successful punk band, more commercial chances will be encountered. In the interview with me, Miss K said:

In previous years, I would completely refuse commercial performances. Combined with the experiences in Paris, I believed I needed to seek something eternal, which was the punk spirit. At that time, we wouldn't think of becoming some more influential band. I was afraid of making myself dirty. But nowadays I have become more mature and calm. I need the right of expression. My way of actualising my right of expression is to impose my mind on others. In other words, my words need to be heard. You may start to use alternative ways to actualise it. You may call it tricks, which may relate to commercial stuff. A commercial performance will have more audiences. Also, you have better support economically so that you can have more time to do things you want to do.

But I am clearly aware of my bottom line to commercial performances. For instance, I won't do something black to actualise my white dream. If nothing particularly discomforts me, I would carefully consider it.

Miss K's viewpoint on commercial performance has experienced a change. A simple and direct refusal was easy for Miss K in her early days in the punk scene. However, an intentional identification developed after the emergence of a variety of choices. It is clearly shown that the right of expression is what she seeks, and utilising the power of commercial performance is necessary to achieve this purpose. In fact, this partial and cautious acceptance of performing for commercial reasons, with an emphasis on the right of expression, challenges the norm of keeping punk performance underground while defying the simple pursuit of money. By integrating into the current situation of musical performance, Miss K and her band produce a resistance to it via a devious route.

For another participant, Mr ZY, how to obtain access to a performance becomes a test of a band's resistance to the mainstream values and, thus, their authenticity as punks. The conflict arises from his ideal sense of performing and the reality of this:

If I go touring in other places, it is often very simple. I contact them and get permission to perform. Even though we have to live in a cheap hotel and earn nothing from the tour, we still have to do it. But on other occasions, such as attending a music festival, it becomes more complicated. You have to befriend the organisers by buying them alcohol and cigarettes. But what's the point? We always tell others that punk is resistance. If we follow this practice to achieve the chance of performing, the resistance to the mainstream norm becomes meaningless. If you start to conform to those rules, you are no different from the popular singers.

China is a country that values social networking very much. Sometimes the quality of relationships overruns the quality of music itself.

By 'music festival' Mr ZY means the prestigious and commercial music festivals in China which feature a mixture of musical styles. Mr ZY has realised the significance of social networking in terms of obtaining access to some festivals. It is worth noting his judgment of the value of the Chinese mainstream – emphasising human relationships more than quality and ability. More importantly, he believes that the 'fake' gesture of getting closer to the performance organisers for access to music festivals would produce an inauthentic punk identity because of the underlying conformity and compromise with mainstream values. Compared to Miss K, who makes use of the power of commercial performance, Mr ZY chooses to resist the idea of 'greasing his palms' in order to gain access, especially at music festivals.

In a broader sense, the conflicts are mainly founded in the relationship between punk performance and the authoritative institutions. This includes the controversial themes, alternative style, and political aspirations of a punk performance, which often challenge the norms established by the authoritative institutions.

7.3.2 Alternative Norms in Punk Performance

In my interviews with punk musicians, two cases especially relate to the destructive power that the punk style of performance brings to a particular performance occasion, which featured a variety of musical styles. Mr C showed me one of the articles that described his experience in one performance:

The thing that happened there really made us feel ridiculous. We would put every single thing into our lyrics and sing it out loud.

The location was a lawn in front of the entrance of a university. Everything went as normal after we adjusted into the right tune. The previous three bands also played normally. But when performing a song called 'Fuck', the main singer expressed his dissatisfaction towards the system of college entrance examinations and grief about a recent suicide committed by a student. This suddenly irritated some of the organisers who were from the propaganda department. The purpose of this performance was to praise the governmental achievement. Since we sang against this purpose, our microphone was cut off.

When we were about to leave after finishing the tour, one of the organisers called us to take back the performance fee they paid us since he claimed that the government had fined him. Despite this situation the performance was still very successful. Cutting the microphone off means somebody feared us.

Although the government does not forbid the punk style of performance, it does not accept non-conformist behaviours such as criticising and challenging authority, as happened in this performance. However, for punk musicians from Mr C's band, cutting off their microphone by a government official indicated the success of their challenge to the authorities. In this case, the choice of raising the sensitive and controversial topic threatened the government and musicians felt happy rather than fearful that they had engaged in such activity.

The same thing happened with another punk band. It was interesting that three out of the four members of the band mentioned one particular example to me after being asked to talk about their best performance. In Mr M's description:

There was a particularly good one. It had 300 people and three bands. The audience sat still when the first two performed. When we started to perform, we encouraged people to stand up and pogo. The audience members were mostly students and were encouraged to bump into each other. We said, 'Fuck, we will lead you to smash the Academic Administration and hit the lecturers.' After the performance, there was a thick layer of beer. It was me who messed it up. I poured my beer after finishing. The audience members started to copy my style and poured beer everywhere. It's wet everywhere. Those lecturers who were behind the stage were so threatened by us. They worried that something dangerous would happen.

Mr HY, another member of the same band, offered a description of the same gig:

There was even a red carpet spread across the whole stage. I only felt 'what the fuck'? So we started to mess around. We didn't like the funny style of performance, where people just sat there and listened to us like watching a pop music performance. So we just broke the performance rules. It made the university very unhappy but we felt it was a success.

These two cases reveal that the similarities lie in the type of performance and the reaction to the particular performance norm. In the punk musicians' descriptions, the previous bands in this type of mixed musical-style performance were interpreted as normal and fitting. However, the punk musicians were disgusted by this and the lack of political talk on stage and punk-style interaction between the musicians and the audience. Thus the first band chose to raise political topics while the second band stirred up the audience. By engaging in their punk-style performance, both of the bands actualised their resistance to the mainstream norm. On the surface, the conflict is outlined by the distinction between the norm of punk style and the norm of pop style. Essentially, the conflict is rooted in the resistance to the current authoritative system in China from punk musicians.

Although punk performance has experienced a decline in China due to its strong political aspirations, punk musicians can still receive invitations from the local government or music festivals. This is mainly for two reasons: first, punk music can add to the variety of a music festival; second, some punk musicians and

bands are popular within the general rock scene, thus inviting them can increase profits. In this case, the conflict becomes more intense due to government restrictions, followed by more serious consequences.

Mr WW's band enjoys great popularity in the punk scene and has therefore been invited to several performances organised by the local government. In the interview, Mr WW told me:

I will choose to attend those music festivals less and less. It is always very troublesome to attend this kind of music festival organised by the local government. At that time, we were planning to perform ten songs. When we arrived, we were told not to perform two songs in the ten. On the second day when we had lunch, we received a phone call that another song was forbidden to be performed. So we only had seven songs to perform. Before the performance, another song was cancelled. We had to perform for a certain time and worried that there were not enough songs to fit the time. Then I said I could just play the rhythm of songs and get rid of the lyrics. One of the organisers said okay.

After half a minute, my broker came to the stage and shouted at me not to play. I said I knew it. I wouldn't sing it. But when he stepped off the stage, he was hit by one of the officers. The reason was that he didn't effectively stop me from playing.

One of my other participants added more description of this case. It was Mr WW's comment on the local government's violent housing demolition that irritated the local government officer. Mr WW later provided an explanation himself after being asked to describe the music that was forbidden.

Some of the songs that contained strong political messages were definitely forbidden. But one called 'Big Wuhan' was also forbidden. I didn't understand. The music festivals nowadays are very messy. Most of them just use the opportunity to earn money or do money laundry. The organiser had no knowledge of music. The key thing is not to say anything when playing on the stage.

As a popular punk band in China, the local government already knows its style and the way it delivers political messages. Thus Mr WW's band suffered severe

restrictions in terms of the songs they could play. The several warnings before and during the performance have shown fear from the government and the relevant organisers of Mr WW's band. Compared to the previous cases, the control and punishment by the government were both increased. In this case, Mr WW's band had made a compromise in the later stage by changing the performance style although the political talk remained. But from later contact with them, the performance style has not been changed a lot. Mr WW still talks before performances and refuses to attend a music festival with too many restrictions.

The conflict between the government and punk musicians is centred on the political aspects of performance. It is difficult to say whether the collective power of punk performance can produce effective resistance to the authorities but, clearly, the authorities feel threatened by such collective behaviour. In other words, the stage performance comes with the potential of actual political resistance to the authorities, mainly through conveying strong anti-authority messages to the audience.

There is another observation that needs to be emphasised. During my three-month field study, I found that scrutiny from the government of punk performances was not always as intense as in Mr WW's case. In one of the punk performances there was a musician who said, 'Let's practise Kung Fu well so that we can fight with the Communist Party.' This sentence is clearly anti-government and was met with cheers from the audience but was received without any complaints or punishment from government officials. From some of my interviews with punk musicians, it was acknowledged that government officials are occasionally present to supervise the performance in order to prevent the communication of political messages to the audience. However, unlike small-scale gigs the relatively popular bands and music festivals are prone to strict control and threats from the government.

A result of the declining popularity of the punk style of performance is the growth of small-scale performances that are normally organised by punk musicians themselves. However, those organising punk gigs can experience

difficulties with the authorities due to either the surprisingly non-mainstream themes or the known particular performance style. For instance, one of my participants told me that an application to the government is needed to hold an outdoor music festival. Punk-style music festivals often have to confront restrictions and censorship. Therefore there are occasions when punk musicians cannot help but choose to hold their performances indoors. On other occasions, punk performances can be cancelled or experience problems.

Miss K told me about one of her experiences when holding a punk performance. The theme was respect for homosexuality. Although homosexuality as a phenomenon exists in China, it is certainly not widely accepted by the mainstream, thus communicating such a cause in performance is extremely difficult to achieve. As Miss K said:

It was a promise. I met a friend in the summer. People have different opinions on homosexual relationships. We had our own values and deep respect for homosexuality. My friend and his partner had a great passion and affection for each other, but they had to separate because of the social pressure. I have great sympathy for this couple. I don't think it is wrong or right, but people around me despise it. Therefore I decided to organise a performance to encourage them to seek for the true love.

At that time, I consulted different people about organising the performance with the theme of homosexuality such as having a film discussion or seminar. But they all told me that it would be very difficult when applying for it with this theme. The location was very difficult to find since live houses were afraid to hold this kind of performance.

Miss K met two major obstructions: the government and the live houses. The biggest obstructions were mainstream values and government control. However, this also constitutes the purpose of Miss K's performance. The final result of successfully holding the performance and advocating this theme can be seen as an opposition to the mainstream value of opposing homosexual relationships.

Mr F's experience displayed how troublesome it is to negotiate with the government in organising a punk performance. He told me:

The government didn't allow me to organise a music festival. It was not only because of the American bands but also because of a lack of networks with the government. More importantly, the political messages brought by those American bands would particularly bother the Chinese government. At that time, I told the police that they could detain me temporarily. I had a good relationship with the police and they promised to release me after the music festival finished. But this plan still couldn't be actualised because somebody didn't earn money from this.

Despite his efforts, the government stopped Mr F for two reasons. One was the potential political harm that could be brought by the proposed music festival inviting politically-strong American bands. The other reason was due to the lack of material profit for the government. Simply put, the commercial reasons are usually used to make up for the political flaws in permitting a punk performance from the government, which apparently didn't happen in this case.

In terms of political conditions, punk musicians are in a disadvantaged position in China. The performance style contains certain political gestures that can be perceived as harmful to the government and, therefore, the object of particular attention. Regarding the commercial aspect, the popular punk bands can be exposed to more opportunities though less popular ones can also be invited because of the variety requirements in the music selection for music festivals. However, the demand to be politically safe and to follow the mainstream norm style of performance generates conflict for punk musicians since they prefer to stick to their distinctive rules or standards. In some ways, punk musicians also take advantage of these situations to conduct their resistance to the government or authorities, either through breaking the norm in the music festivals by stating their position, or by insisting on holding a performance with non-mainstream themes or strongly political messages. Compared to individual punk subcultural practice, collective punk subcultural practice threatens the government to a greater extent.

7.3.3 The Ideal Version of Punk Performance

During my four-month field study, it was not surprising to find that punk musicians recalled the previous punk performances and compared the current performances to the old ones. In fact, punk music has undergone a change in terms of its popularity and acceptance in China. The current situation shows that the popularity of punk music is decreasing, resulting in earlier times being idealised by some punk musicians. Comparisons are also made between the experiences of performing abroad and in China. In fact, some punk musicians are motivated by those idealised versions of punk performance. More importantly, the ideals become the goals and also the motivations of the acts of resistance for punk musicians.

Mr XZ is from a punk band located in Wuhan. Wuhan has lost its glory as a 'punk city', nowadays leaving memories and old punk musicians who tend to tell stories. Mr XZ said:

We define ourselves as Old School punk musicians. Actually Old School is not that easy to perform and needs to be explored. The disbanding of the band Aberration showed the ending of those glorious times in punk history in Wuhan. At that old time, there was a particular building. The band AV Okubo was rehearsing together with other bands in that building. The environment was very good. The musicians met each other quite often and felt that kind of culture. That period was not the same. The bands kept more underground. Everyone dressed in Old School style. They had Mohawks. Audiences came to pogo. They described that it was okay even to hit each other's faces.

At that time, they would understand the music better. The environment was there. People listened to it and performed the same style of music. A lot of punk bands existed at that time.

Today, only two punk bands are active in Wuhan. Mr XZ is from one of them but has had a lot of difficulties in keeping the band alive. From what Mr XZ told me, there are several criteria to achieving the idealised version of punk performance based on the experiences of the older generation of punk musicians. As the environment needs to be supportive, the right environment is also required to follow the norms of punk performance, such as keeping it underground and

being understood by the audience. These rules bring more expectations to the performance environment and the behaviour of audience members. This may explain why punk musicians usually see the commercial opportunities to perform as a compromise with their values. Regarding performance, Mr XZ also mentioned the intense interaction between audience members and musicians. In his opinion, an ideal performance environment needs the understanding and the resulting practices, including the interactive rituals and outlook, from the audience.

Mr WW, who had the chance to perform in a foreign country, has another idealised version of punk performance, which is linked to the performance values and norms abroad. Mr WW explained:

The differences between performing locally and overseas exist. When you perform overseas, people who come to listen are those who really understand. Some are those who have come before. Some are those who want to know this band. But in China, no matter where you live, there are always people who are not interested. They just come to drink or play without any knowledge of the band or the music style. Those audience members always give me a feeling of being immature and childish.

In Mr WW's case, a requirement of being understood by the audience is also emphasised. Normally the quality of audience members at a punk performance is different from the one required in other styles of performances. This is understandable since punk performances have a different norm compared to other styles of performances, such as requiring pogoing, moshing and the delivering of political messages to the audience by the punk musicians. Simply put, a high level of cooperation from the audience is required (and desired) by punk musicians.

Punk musicians also have an idealised version of performance. For instance, Mr XZ compared himself to Mr WW's performance style, since the latter has a prestigious reputation and therefore serves as his ideal. Mr XZ said:

I personally don't think that I am suitable for speaking in front of the public before a performance. I normally sing and

play through the whole performance. But I do feel that there should be a person standing and talking in front of the audience. Have you ever met Tudou (one of the members in his band)? I think he is very suitable.

Mr XZ is reluctant to speak before a performance but he still hopes to have a band member speak. His behaviour strengthens one particular norm, which is to deliver political messages in front of the public, as happens in punk performances. In fact, Mr XZ's band is relatively new, and the band members assert an 'Old School' identity and have been influenced to a great extent by Mr WW's band. In this sense, the norms of punk performance, inherited from the previous generation of punk musicians, has become the standard by which one can have an authentic punk identity.

My findings show that most of the punk musicians had no demands of the live houses when performing, although they did prefer more popular venues to accommodate more people and have a wider influence. However, they do have a higher requirement for a private gathering. Mr WW told me about his motivation to establish a bar in this way:

I am thinking about holding after-parties and that's why I opened the bar. I had that idea when I performed at the Vox live house. There was no such place at that moment. We just sat on the steps and chatted to each other. Therefore I thought to open a small bar and play rock music.

It can be seen that privacy is a significant concern since the punk group particularly requires a mutual understanding of each other. Establishing a bar is an effective way to satisfy this need for a private space. From my meetings with several participants, a pre- or after-party is always welcomed since it provides an opportunity to interact with each other based on the mutual understanding and knowledge of punk, something which cannot often be achieved on other occasions.

The idealised versions of punk performance explicitly emphasise the demands and requirements of Chinese punk musicians. From the emphasis on having an appropriate environment, it can be seen that punk musicians have realised and hope to maintain a particular norm of punk-style performance, either inspired by

the old generation of punk musicians or by foreign countries. This norm not only requires cooperation from audience members to follow the rituals, such as pogoing and moshing, but also understanding from them to produce a perfect environment in terms of communication and interaction.

From another perspective, these interpretations of the ideal punk performance can be seen as a source of conflict, while they also explain the insistence and resistance from punk musicians. In some sense, punk musicians conduct their practices at a collective level. The realities, which consist of restrictions from political and economic conditions, do not fulfil their requirements of performing in their ideal way. However, it is also this dissatisfaction that motivates punk musicians to oppose the current commercial and political environment.

7.4 Hangouts

When I asked if a punk circle exists in China, most of the punk musicians answered 'yes', although it was normally followed by rhetoric to describe its exclusiveness. From what I observed, one remark to justify the existence of a punk circle is that punk musicians themselves create opportunities to hang out with each other. It is easily understood since the punk subcultural group is interest-based. This type of hangout happens in specific locations and is usually surrounded by a few similar themes that have been discussed quite often. More importantly, the hangout can also be seen as creating a sense of belonging through the display of a unified dress style or distinctive behaviour. In this sense, subcultural collective practice naturally becomes an exclusive and undisturbed activity in the eyes of outsiders. Its nonconformity and non-mainstream status challenge mainstream societal values. With its own initiatives and intentions, the hangout of a punk group opposes the imagined mainstream.

7.4.1 Mr L's Restaurant

In previous chapters, I have mentioned Mr L, a significant figure in the Chinese punk scene. His restaurant serves not only as his second income but also as a

private space for punk hangouts. The hangouts happen often before or after performances, and on afternoons when the restaurant is not busy. The location is particularly favoured for two reasons: first, Mr L has a reputation and a strong network within the Beijing punk scene. Moreover, this kind of space is also rare since Mr L has purposely shown his punk taste in his restaurant. Second, the restaurant serves alcohol, Western-style food and plays punk rock music, thus matching the punk musicians' leisure style. His acquaintances that are punk musicians come to eat, drink and chat.

Mr L once described his relationship with others in the same location. In his interpretation, others feel it is 'extremely weird' here because of the people gathered. It is Mr L's friends' tattoos and Mohawks that surprise and threaten others who connect these symbols with notorious gangsters. As the outsiders' views of the punk group are fixed, so punk musicians also have their own opinions about the mainstream. At this level, the interactions often become less straightforward and rely heavily on the discussions within the group rather than with the outsiders.

The process of group bonding is especially important in punk circles. From my attendances at the informal gatherings with punk musicians, I found that punk musicians like to share performance information with each other. In Mr L's restaurant, the punk friends would come to spread the performance information. As the restaurant is not very far from one live house where punk musicians like to play, Mr L and his friends normally gather to see each other's performances. From the experiences of having lunch or dinner with punk musicians, themes such as discussing the tour performances or rehearsals, exchanging viewpoints on different punk musicians, especially foreign ones, or commenting on the techniques or instruments, are usually brought up. While this shapes the musical experience, other themes also stand out to impact their thoughts on outsiders, the mainstream or authorities. For instance, Mr L has formed a strong stereotype of university students as a result of his discussions with the university professor who often attends punk performances from the same punk circle.

In fact, the judgment of university students or the mainstream as being stupid or brainwashed can be heard quite often in the informal gatherings of punk musicians. In Mr L's interpretation, differing lifestyles can be observed between punk musicians and university students. The first is more about finding pleasures such as alcohol or joining in music bands, but the latter is thought of as simply seeking material goals, and accepting mainstream values. These kinds of discussions, which contain strong bias and criticism towards the current young people and the mainstream, happen mostly during these hangouts before or after performances, while drinking alcohol together or having social dinners. As Mr C said, the pre- or after-party was constructed into a supportive environment, where people could communicate with each other and share the same kinds of ideas. Simply put, the choice of hangout by punk musicians becomes a justification of the non-mainstream lifestyle. The communication within the group also emphasises and forms the stereotypes and bias against the mainstream.

7.4.2 Informal Gatherings

Punk musicians also organise private gatherings in specific settings. For example, there was a BBQ event which happened in a suburb of Beijing. The information spread throughout the punk network. For instance, I knew this information from having lunch with several punk musicians. The location was in a park that was for residents to exercise, walk their dogs or simply relax. When I arrived at the park, the members who had already arrived came to greet those punk musicians with me. In other words, people who came to this event were generally familiar with each other. The idea behind choosing such a venue was that the intention was to construct a private space in public. As old and young people wandered around without any apparent purpose in different parts of the park, the punk group seemed to be distinct due to its unified visual appearance and behaviours. While most of the punk musicians or audience wore T-shirts of their favourite bands, only some had Mohawks. Regarding their behaviour, every single one held a bottle of beer and toasted each other. In fact, as soon as I sat down on a bench, someone came to offer me a beer and started to chat with me. Being

adjacent to the other parts of the park, the space in the corner of the park was constructed by punk musicians and audience in a particular manner.

It was easy to differentiate between the subculture group and the outsiders, and observe the different attitudes of these two groups. When outsiders walked through the group, they would always pay attention, with an obvious questioning and confused attitude. The older they were, the more their attitudes could be discerned. Sometimes people would choose to bypass the gathering instead. While there were no direct interactions between the two groups, an indirect sense of scrutiny and suspicion could be discerned on both sides. As the hangout continued until late at night, the conversations among people started to involve sensitive topics such as criticising unfair societal decisions by authorities. As there was a punk from Canada, a discussion of the musical environment between the two countries became prominent. In those discussions, words such as 'Chinese people are brainwashed' could be heard many times. The justifications came from their experiences of interacting with their audiences or outsiders, and comparing those with their understanding of the performance environments in other countries. It was difficult for the outsiders to join in, and not just because of discussing sensitive issues. In fact, it is not unusual in China to see a group of people complaining about political decisions and authorities while drinking alcohol. However, the distinction between them and the punk group in this respect is that there is a tendency to rapidly rush into a process of defining outsiders as well as the mainstream through mutual consent within the subculture group. More importantly, this process is practised with a mixture of discussing instruments, punk musicians or special techniques, which is exclusive and difficult to follow for non-punk musicians or audience. For punk musicians, simplifying their concept of the mainstream serves to justify their behaviour of highly valuing 'variety' including political sensitivity and distinctive expressions. Through deliberately adopting a punk appearance in public, the punk subculture group challenges and resists the mainstream. This type of hangout generates questions from the mainstream due to its exposure. Therefore there is a potential for punk musicians to suffer from social pressure, which then contributes to raising their level of resistance.

An interesting phenomenon involving a punk hangout happened in Wuhan. The location is in a laneway in a busy area where several shops including a bar, skateboarding shop and vintage shop are located. The location's proximity is an advantage for punks in Wuhan who wish to gather and share without much effort. When I stayed there three times for interviews, I could see that the punk musicians were very familiar with the shop owners. Those shop owners also frequently visited each other's places. In the evenings, they would sit together on the bench outside the bar or simply squat on the steps. They would share cigarettes or drink beer with each other. As one of my participants, Miss S, once commented, this area was mysterious for outsiders, especially for university students.

In fact, most of those shop owners or bartenders were previously punk musicians in Wuhan. With a long punk history which has experienced substantial change, this city has witnessed a number of punk musicians turning to professions different from playing in a punk band. However, the strong social networks impact upon the punk musicians, who then choose to open shops together with non-mainstream features. After talking to them in a group, I found most of them believed that they had chosen a lifestyle matching their punk spirit although none of them explicitly stayed within the punk scene. In other words, the change from being a punk musician to becoming a non-mainstream shop owner justifies the authenticity of being a punk for those previously-punk musicians. The shops and bars provide great opportunities for them to hang out together, thereby maintaining a punk identity. More importantly, this type of lifestyle is interpreted as being free from mainstream values, which include maximising the value of money and despising the value of seeking after ideals, dreams or alternative lifestyles. Additionally, those punks also constantly exchange their ideas about other punks who come to perform. For instance, compared to the punk circle in Beijing, they did not believe that a hierarchy or small groups within the group existed within their punk group in Wuhan. Indeed, the old punk musicians have shown comparatively more enthusiasm in guiding and encouraging the young generation of punk musicians and supporting them

in many different ways. This has become more like a norm serving as a reason for Wuhan punk musicians to resist Beijing punk musicians. Since punk musicians regard pursuing equality as an important standard by which to judge the authenticity of being a punk, their distancing themselves from the Beijing punks also becomes a method to maintain their sense of authenticity. The Wuhan punk circle can be seen as being formed through the process of those previous and current punk musicians identifying themselves as punks. In this sense, working and hanging out together creates an opportunity to form a framework to support punk musicians involved in resisting the mainstream, as well as those groups within the wider punk subcultural group.

7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, punk subcultural practices largely centre around the punk style of performance. Due to the distinctive musical environment in China, punk musicians have different attitudes to the commercial performances and Punk ones that they feel are more authentic. The other important collective practice for punk musicians is to hang out with each other in a particular venue. Being authentic is important to both practices. Conflict is also an important aspect of punk and conflicts between the government and punk musicians arise from the strict control by the former and collective resistance from the latter. While the government pays special attention to the anti-political aspect and aggressive rituals of a punk performance, punk musicians stick to punk style norms and destroy the norms that the government prefers in terms of performance style. In the practice of hanging out, punk musicians exchange opinions about the mainstream culture and the other groups, thus reinforcing a group bonding to judge these things. Compared to individual punk subcultural practice, collective practices have the potential to concern authorities more since they create more chances to interact with outsiders, thereby having a greater impact. In this context, the same form of resistance, for instance visual resistance, can become more aggressive towards the mainstream since it can invoke anxiety within the public.

Chapter 8: Punk Subcultural Practices Online

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the practices of punk online forum members in China. The Internet provides a space for member gatherings. It is easy to find punk musicians who write diaries online, post their lyrics and complaints about the government. In different forums, members generate topics and invite discussions to generate threads about punk. In order to avoid or circumvent common censorship, punk forum members often have to use special techniques.

The forum members may have no physical contact with each other or specific intentions to have any. Nevertheless, the text-oriented mode of communication creates alternative means for members to establish meaningful and punk-related relationships, normally through following and commenting on the discussion threads in the forums. Based on three months of research, this chapter is organised in three parts.

The first part is a detailed description of two popular forums for punk. It examines their motivations as well as the processes of their formation, before discussing the possibilities of breaking cultural boundaries between forum members and non-forum members on the Internet. Particular attention will be given to the conflicts between these two forums and the underlying reasons for them.

The second part looks at how forum members participate in these forums. In establishing their punk identities, forum members have experienced opposition within the group and exclusion from the offline world. In this section, how the Internet assists forum members to form resistance to the mainstream and authorities in their offline lives will also be discussed.

The third part is an analysis of online diaries produced by punk musicians. In exploring anti-censorship techniques adopted by punk musicians; one textual form of resistance to the government will be highlighted.

8.2 Two Forums: 'Punk' Forum and 'Punk Is Not Dead' Forum

Using the Google search engine it was possible to identify several punk forums. I initially decided to conduct my study of a forum called 'Punk'. After a while, I found another forum called 'Punk is Not Dead', which was established, according to one of my participants, for 'discussing punk seriously'. During a three-month period, I read and followed various discussion threads from old ones to current ones. Combined with other interactive measures, such as commenting on or starting threads, I realised that a relationship can be simply established by showing interest in or sharing information with others in this virtual community. The virtual gatherings are convenient and temporary since individuals choose to join the conversations according to their own schedules. More importantly, this type of gathering is displayed in a textual form rather than a physical form. Nevertheless, it was found that online punk forum members follow very similar principles to the offline punk community.

8.2.1 'Punk' Forum

The 'Punk' forum is much larger than the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum in terms of the number of registered members and pages. 'Punk' is the older forum and has more than 9,000 members with 3,000 pages of discussions while 'Punk is Not Dead' has around 400 members and 400 pages. Over a three-month period, I looked through all of the pages in 'Punk Is Not Dead' and pages 1 to 93 in 'Punk'. Based on what I have seen, I recorded all of the pages and divided them into categories such as social networking, sharing music resources, punk-themed topics, judging the forum environment and commenting on the government. There was a third category – sensitive topics – especially for the 'Punk' forum.

When I first entered the 'Punk' forum, I rarely found discussions about punk. Bearing this doubt in mind, I started to question if those online members who started threads in the forum were truly interested in punk music; more importantly, whether they can be identified as punks. To answer this question, the characteristics of the online setting in the forums need to be considered. While anyone who has access to the Internet can potentially find these forums, online registration is required if one wants to participate, such as by starting threads or commenting on posts and discussions rather than simply viewing the website. From the act of registration, not only can a person show their interest in the forum, but they also obtain a virtual identity, i.e. a forum member. In the case of 'Punk' forum, those who have completed the online registration possess the virtual identity of being a forum member and have an interest in punk music to different degrees. As it is impossible to define every single member as *punk*, the composition of forum members can at least be categorised into two groups: those who have interest in punk and want to find out more, and those who are knowledgeable about punk and come to share opinions. While these two types of members have the potential to play different roles in the 'Punk' forum, it is hard to tell this from the content in the forum, which will be discussed in the following section. In this sense, in exploring punk subcultural online practice at this stage, one may first look at the general environment of the 'Punk' forum and the active forum members based on the frequency of thread posting and the interaction with other members.

To explore the general environment of the 'Punk' forum, I started to look at chitchat threads. According to the forum members, the chitchat type of thread is referred to as 'Shui' threads, which means 'non-sense'. A typical thread went like this:

Impossible! Sister 'Loving Rain' (the account name of a member) is actually a male!!! Please tell me it is not true. I never doubt his gender but today I found out he is male (Zhuai Zhuai Baobei).

In the discussion following the thread, a few of the forum members started to show their confusions. It served as a social function for the different group members. More importantly, the people who were most likely to start this style of thread were those who played a key and active role. In this case, 'Zhuai Zhuai Baobei' was the head of the forum that maintained a good relationship with a lot of group members. However, this style of chitchat thread became the main style. Compared to other categories of thread, this style was also much more popular with group members, who were actively and constantly joining in.

This situation also incited complaints, which focused on discussing the environment of the 'Punk' forum. Some of the threads went as:

Why is nobody discussing punk in the 'Punk' forum? (Shinya)
Is this a 'Punk' forum? Why has nobody discussed music?
(Bingtai Baobei)
'Punk' forum is the as same as before filled with non-serious
chitchat (_Bad_Egg)

The usual style of subsequent comments had a strong sense of sarcasm such as 'this is an academic forum'. In other words, they maintain the same frivolous style to avoid entering into a punk-related discussion. One of the comments pointed out that those punk fans did not want to discuss punk in a serious way because of a belief in their own authenticity of being a punk. As this may possibly be seen as an explanation for the environment, a further exploration can only be actualised after exploring the inner thoughts of those group members and the interactions among them. This will be discussed based on the observations and the interviews with group members in the next section.

Although the chitchat threads represent the prominent style of discussion in the 'Punk' forum, serious topics related to 'punk spirit' and music occasionally emerged. The shared music materials from prominent musicians as well as emerging ones are also introduced. It is through the uploaded rare and complete material that a reader can feel the enthusiasm and seriousness of the members who produce those threads. These 'high-quality' threads can be normally found at the top of the 'Punk' forum website in a section marked as 'best posts'; a

designation which can only be granted by the head of the forum (in essence, this is the same concept as a 'pinned thread' in English-language Internet forums and message boards). For instance, the diaries of musician Kurt Cobain were uploaded for group members to access.

In another case, one of the group members made a so-called entry-level punk album composed of different punk musicians' songs. There was not only a list of punk music but also a thorough introduction to those musicians, with the aim of sharing knowledge among other members. Interestingly, the member who made this list is the same group member, Zhuanzhuan Baobei, the head of the forum, whose post was exemplified above as a 'non-sense' thread. In this sense, it is not sensible to judge if a group member is knowledgeable or active in punk subculture simply by one post or thread since he or she may show knowledge about punk-related topics when necessary.

Apart from those who discussed punk music seriously, threads about topics such as the social system or the government could also be seen in the 'Punk' forum, and they constituted another relatively serious aspect of this forum. Examples of discussion threads went as follows:

Socialism...socialism!!!! Americans want to rebel and they want socialism. British want to rebel and they also want socialism. We have socialism...why do we still want to rebel? The practical solution is to drag China back to the road of socialism from the road of materialism. If all of Chinese punks are members of the Communist Party, they can start to get rid of those who are not brilliant...let punk spirit become the new driving force of our mother country. (PU dan NK)

Why China [using Chinese term 'na ge' meaning as that to divide Chinese term 'zhong guo' meaning as China, showing in the form of 'zhong na ge guo'] has to be harmonious [adding the Chinese term 'na ge' meaning to divide the Chinese term 'he xie' as harmonious, showing in the form 'he na ge xie']. (Li Ze Rui)

In the first thread, the member questioned the social system through comparing China with other countries. Although a jocular tone can be found in the thread, concern was aired about both the Communist Party and so-called fake socialism,

which is used to conceal materialism. In one of the following comments, a member mentioned this fake socialism as distinctively Chinese, coming from the phrase 'a socialist country with Chinese characteristics' created by the previous Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. To avoid online censorship, a euphemistic sentence, 'everybody knows what I mean', followed the sarcastic comment. It should be noted that this thread was encouraging the implementation of a socialist system in China rather than attacking the concept. Therefore, the member who started the thread did not use any tactics to avoid online censorship. Comparatively, the second one used a normal tactic to avoid being deleted because of using sensitive words. 'He xie', which means 'harmonious', is a sensitive word since it is from the phrase 'harmonious society' created by Chinese leaders. The member used a word 'na ge' (that is) so that the post would avoid censorship.

Compared to offline punk-related practices, which need a private space to start a conversation criticising the Chinese authorities, or challenging them directly from a stage through a speech, online practice of the same kind can be conducted in a simpler way. As a space that allows more people to interact, the only concern is to avoid the online software finding the sensitive words in the 'Punk' forum. In this way, forum members not only actualise free expression to some degree but also successfully produce a form of resistance, which is about criticising the Chinese government and society in a textual form while avoiding control by the Chinese authorities and attempts to maintain an online environment that favours them.

8.2.2 'Punk Is Not Dead' Forum: an Opposite Establishment

According to those interviewed, the original motivation of 'Punk is Not Dead' was to open a new space for punk fans and provide an alternative to the 'non-seriousness' so rampant on the 'Punk' forum. The primary focus of threads are punk-related topics and the sharing of materials between group members. However, group members are less active than those of the 'Punk' forum, although threads can occasionally be found serving the function of social networking. Thus,

there is a larger proportion of punk-related topics with a smaller section of social-networking threads compared to 'Punk'.

In the first of the three categories I have looked, the category about sharing materials, the recorded threads have titles such as 'list your favourite punk bands', 'please share some nice punk music', 'a full album of the Ramones', 'a comment on the classic album 'Never Mind The Bollocks' from the Sex Pistols', 'sharing the document 'Punk Is Not Dead', etc. Group members regularly shared material and offered answers to the question-orientated posts. However, sarcastic comments such as 'go to listen to "mouse loves rice" [a popular song]', 'I like folk songs', or 'go marry the musicians if you love them', and other such comments have appeared from time to time. Group members also recommended or discussed punk bands from abroad more frequently than local Chinese punk bands. In this sense, group members sought to guide each other's listening to punk music or understanding of the 'punk spirit'. Offline punk musicians and fans tend to have two frames of reference: one influenced by foreign punk bands, and one formed through interacting with local punk bands. In the forum, concern with international bands seemed to be to the exclusion of Chinese local punk bands. If a group member puts a post about a local Chinese punk band, one could expect comments such as 'be more serious or thoughtful' to be posted. This preference is also discussed later in some of the interviews with forum members. A tendency of regarding Western punk bands as ideal and authentic punk can be seen in the forum; it is reified both through an almost complete idolising of them and through pejorative criticism of Chinese punk bands by the forum members. One of the comments about the style of Chinese punk bands was:

I personally think that a punk music band should have some thoughts. They should not be like those celebrities who can only smile at the cameras and say some perfunctory words. The punk we are discussing here should not only be a musical form but more about the spirit...every time some celebrities' new song is introduced as rock style on TV, I will always feel something is lacking. I think it lacks punk spirit. (Peng rock Ke)

It is interesting that this member mentioned those musicians on TV, which normally represents a channel for spreading mainstream information. In other words, this member has perceived rock or punk style to be the same as the mainstream popular style in China, while ignoring the fact that Chinese punk musicians can still maintain an underground status. More importantly, this perception, which is acquired by most of the group members, leads to their rejection of Chinese punk performances and remaining in virtual space.

The comment above also mentions the 'punk spirit', which is a rather abstract concept. Recalling my four-month offline field study, I found that punk informal gatherings were not necessarily concerned with discussing an abstract issue and practical issues such as touring, instruments, politics or social networks were more often discussed. Comparatively, online group members easily initiate topics about 'punk spirit' since the text-oriented virtual space enables members to concentrate on the topics they sincerely care about. One thread titled 'what is PUNK' went as follows:

I always found that a lot of people doubted if this was punk or not. I want to ask everyone here. Can only those people who can't even survive be called punk? Playing music is about burning money. If you can't even buy instruments, you can never play music. In this materialistic society, a person who can sing himself out loud is a rocker. (Fen Nu Xiao Mian Pian)

In this thread, material comfort is prioritised over other things. The member regards the expression of self as the most important criterion in judging the authenticity of being a punk. One of the comments points out that over-commercialisation may lead one to a situation of accommodating markets or audiences rather than expressing themselves; this member's reply showed that he lacks belief in the possibility of fully expressing oneself.

In another thread, a member wrote:

I have made my compromises to our life. I once thought I would fight until the very end. But when I looked back, I just kept making compromises. I have lost what I should have for survival. (Lian V Yu)

Although this member did not discuss in any depth the meaning of compromise in his context, other members who agreed with him in the following comments pointed out that being institutionalised became the biggest obstacle in fighting the system. Age was attributed as the reason for choosing a compromised approach to a person's life. In this sense, fighting a system can be seen as what a punk should do. The struggle interpreted by the member shows that a reflective process can often happen in the way of attempting to become the ideal punk in his or her own mind.

A post titled 'What punk spirit is' invited a lot of discussion from group members. The discussion went as follows:

First of all I believe I am a fake punk. Punk spirit is about rebellion. If you like or don't like something, you speak it out loud. (Dong Xiao Yang 1991)

There is no fake or authentic punk. My personal opinion is that punk lifestyle is casual, and punk spirit is about seeking for authenticity and opposing unfair social phenomena...this is my reflection on my life. (Lian V Yu)

According to a lot of people, punk spirit is about destroying. I don't want to deny it, but I think they should be regarded as extreme perfectionists. At the same time, they should also feel no need to think, having a simple character. They only like to follow themselves... (Peng Ke Bi Mu Yu)

In my understanding, there are only three words to describe it: simple, casual, being true to oneself (Leng Dong Xi)

This discussion illustrates the similar viewpoints shared by the group members. Being simple has been mentioned as a characteristic punk approach to life, while being brave enough to express one's true self, such as opposing unfairness in society, is also regarded as a constitutive element of punk spirit. In this sense, this online punk practice has served the function of forming a frame of reference through sharing and absorbing the opinions of other group members. As a forum is rather like a database, the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum has the potential for non-punk outsiders and punk insiders to learn about punk culture.

Social networking appears to follow a different pattern in the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum compared to the 'Punk' forum, Beginning with 'do you guys remember me',

the posts that are from previously active but currently inactive members, seem to serve a function of reconnecting individuals with forum members. This suggests that members are likely to retreat from the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum. In this forum, posts with the topic of finding musicians are also easily found. This style of invitation suggests that group members take this forum seriously.

In the second discussion category of 'government', members share their thoughts on ideas such as freedom of expression and personal experiences. One thread went as follows:

I am just a normal person who is doing normal things. But I have the same hurts like anyone else. We accept the education and thinking of this Celestial Empire. We follow the mainstream to go to kindergarten, primary school, middle school, and high school. Like anyone else, we go to university and think about life, painfully without any answer. The past will become the past and the label of 'not dead' of this forum becomes the biggest sarcasm. I almost feel 'why bother in the first place.' (Punker_hunter)

This post came from a member who belonged to the founder group of the forum. Using the term 'Celestial Empire' to describe China showed his emphasis on the sense of authoritative power that the Chinese government possesses. This member's word imply that part of his motivation behind creating the forum was to establish an alternative space for activities that can be deemed as being non-mainstream. Although he interpreted the act of creating a forum as a failure, his motivation shows that it was a move to resist the mainstream lifestyle that he believed he was stuck in.

8.2.3 Breaking Boundaries between Insiders and Outsiders

As a forum attempting to resist the non-seriousness of the 'Punk' forum, the motivation to seek a better quality of discussion has become the primary driving force in discussing the aspect of environment. Regarding the content, a few threads complain that the engagement of group members is not enough, while others focus on the details of forum acts such as deleting posts, classifying the

posts as elite, or regulating the acts of group members. One thread discussing whether or not posts should be thoughtful went as follows:

Being thoughtful needs time and patience. The important part is to nurture a good environment for group members. After all punk is not simply music. Simply talking about music is also very shallow. The reason people stay is not a handful of materials. The key is about the environment and a feeling of discussion. (Lian V Yu)

Don't make others feel that the punk group is full of people who have no thoughts and insights. (Lian V Yu)

It can be seen that the requirement to have thoughtful posts and discussion might be related to challenging the stereotypes outsiders have of punks. In subsequent responses to the above comments, another member challenged member Lian V Yu's appeal to write more thoughtful posts and argued that punk is the truth in the eyes of punks, but in the eyes of outsiders, punks are 'rubbish people who are violent and dirty'. From the two different opinions about how to write an online post, it can be seen that online space is regarded as a constructed space possessing the power not only to expand the knowledge of an insider, i.e. the forum members, but also to shape the mind of an outsider, i.e. non-forum members. More importantly, concern about the manner of writing online posts suggests the great possibility of breaking boundaries between insiders and outsiders; for example, Lian V Yu's appeal particularly shows an intention to promote outsiders' understanding of the punk group through forum posts.

In another thread discussing the development plan of the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum, some members suggested attracting people from the 'Punk' forum, while others believed that a better solution was to develop new groups. Another member expressed a sense of belonging after finding the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum and complained about the non-seriousness of other forums. In this respect, a tension exists between the 'Punk' forum and the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum, where the latter regards the first as a competitor. Although the 'Punk' forum has an advantage in terms of possessing a large number of punk members and a longer history, its non-seriousness can potentially stop new members from

joining in and turn to the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum instead. In this sense, expanding forum members is a necessity for the 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum. More importantly, this act has implied a strong intention and possibility of breaking boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

In the process of producing a punk-related topic, discussing it, and reflecting on a person's life experience, the question of what a punk should be seems to invite more curiosity from group members, especially newer ones. Compared to the offline punk scene, it is more difficult to find consensus on ideas such as the authenticity of punk, since new members join with new topics and discussions, leaving the previous posts and discussions behind. However, this may also add a new perspective from which to view punk subculture in China. In this sense, what has happened in the 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum has proved how the Internet can assist the development of punk subculture just as was shown with the 'Punk' forum. Although both online forums create a new problem of identifying forum members as punks, it is no doubt that the virtual space is characterised by easy access and variety, which provides opportunities for more people to get to know punk, resulting in the possibility of breaking cultural barriers between insiders, i.e. the already existing forum members, and outsiders, i.e. those who are not forum members.

The 'Punk' forum demonstrates the possibility of breaking down cultural barriers via the Internet. As discussed in the previous section, for a large number of forum members, the posts are largely frivolous, mainly functioning as social networking among forum members. Because of this, the process of differentiating different types of forum members based on the criteria of being knowledgeable about punk-related topics becomes difficult, causing a further problem of identifying forum members as punks. Meanwhile, serious posts with great relevance to punk topics, which imply the writer's deep knowledge and strong interest in punk, exist and are sometimes produced by the same forum member who at other times writes mostly frivolous posts. Another type of post seen on the forum is the anti-government post. The combination of frivolous posts, punk-related ones and politically-oriented ones shapes 'Punk' forum into a

hybrid environment. More importantly, while producing frivolous posts is found to be a meaningful act, which will be discussed later, the ambiguity of the forum members and their uncertain punk identities suggest the possibility of changing the traditional way of developing a subculture, where a cultural boundary is formed between subcultural members, i.e. insiders and non subcultural members, i.e. outsiders, into a new pattern, where breaking boundaries can possibly happen between both sides and therefore the development of the subculture becomes faster and multi-dimensional.

In conclusion, 'Punk' and 'Punk is Not Dead' both possess their own distinctive character. The former is less serious in tone and contains more general chitchat; the latter has more actual discussion and content related to punk bands and albums. Interestingly, both forums regulate their environment and deploy tactics to maintain their respective norms. The 'Punk' forum is constantly updated with a large number of chat posts, while those who attempt to write serious posts or start serious discussions receive non-serious or cynical responses. Alternatively, the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum members choose to publish high quality posts and in-depth discussions.

Moreover, the pattern of forming a virtual group with members who are interested in punk that is distinctive from an offline punk group adds a new perspective for reflecting on the concept of punk subculture. In the previous chapters, punk in China is defined and discussed as a subculture through its sharing process, interaction and practice in different live houses, bars and cities. While the recruitment of new members is a need for the punk group, a cultural boundary is clearly formed and the outsider, who is usually interpreted as the mainstream, is excluded and mostly criticised. In contrast, online forums make it possible to constantly break boundaries between insiders and outsiders, readily accepting those who are interested in understanding punk. By either discussing the authenticity and identity of being a punk or not mentioning punk at all, the forums are shaped into a subcultural space where a quickly growing group of members can interact with each other, establish norms and produce meanings through the established network as well as the boundary-breaking process.

In the process of forming a subcultural space in the 'Punk' forum, forum members avoid online censorship by rephrasing sensitive words aimed at criticising or mocking the Chinese government, together with appealing to punk spirit or ideas. This subcultural form of resistance, which exists on the Internet, will be discussed in subsequent sections. For the 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum, the establishment of the forum with the aim of creating a different, serious space compared to 'Punk' forum can be regarded as a resistant act to the popular norm in approaching punk on the Internet. In the next section, a discussion will focus on the underlying reasons behind the formation of the two forums, and the meanings of group participation in each forum, leading to a further discussion about resistance on the Internet.

8.3 The Participation in the Two Forums

To get a better understanding of the formation of 'Punk' and 'Punk Is Not Dead', I interviewed a total of 10 active group members, six from 'Punk', three from 'Punk Is Not Dead' and one group member active in both forums. This was done via online messaging software during the period from October to December 2012. Through the interviews, I started to understand the meaning of group participation in both forums. More importantly, as the previous discussion showed, the expansion of group members on the Internet brings out the problem of identifying a group member as being a punk. In this section, it is hoped to understand this problem by presenting how group members approach punk.

8.3.1 Different Approaches to Punk

The underlying reasons behind the distinction between the two forums can be traced back to the history of their formation. One of my participants, Mr LV, who is active in both forums, including having the title of head of the 'Punk' forum explained:

A long time ago, there were two forums called 'Punk' forum and '朋克'[punk] forum in Baidu [a large Chinese forum website]. A number of group members liked to argue with each other about the authenticity of punk, such as who is authentic or fake. Then the 'Punk' forum gradually served as a social circle of punk fans. They would chitchat inside. When they met something disturbing or annoying, they would start to complain like a punk does. After a while, people started not to chat about anything to do with punk on purpose. Then the '朋克' forum was combined into the 'Punk' forum. In this case, when people went into the 'Punk' forum, they found the posts were full of chitchat. The new group members started to pick up the habit of chatting and arguing with each other over nothing. At last the whole of the 'Punk' forum became a mess.

According to Mr LV, forum members choose to complain like a punk in the 'Punk' forum. He also provides another explanation for the group members' act of avoiding talking about punk-related topics, which they disdain, like the simple act of talking about punk music. According to my observations and interviews, some of the group members have established a substantial and meaningful relationship with each other through meeting privately offline. Nevertheless, for most of the group members, the relationships have not been extended to offline and exist only in the virtual space. The transformation from strictly talking about punk music to frankly speaking about their lives in general among group members has shown that they are comfortable with their punk identity through conducting online practices. This gives them a sense of living as a punk. Taking this into account, it might now be easily understood why a range of sex-related topics exists, and terms such as 'fuck' or 'sex', either in the form of text or pictures, occasionally appear in the 'Punk' forum so that an image of speaking frankly can be established as fitting their punk ideals.

Mr LV also said:

This is also the reason the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum was established. The 'Punk' forum is too messy. That's why someone started to establish the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum so that group members could concentrate on discussing about punk. But the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum has the problem of

not being easily found, so not really a lot of people have joined.

Apparently, not every group member agreed with the approach to punk in the 'Punk' forum. Although it is hard to say that group members have successfully established a punk identity through a serious learning and sharing process, the move to establish a new forum can be seen as a resistant act within the group. By opening a new space, group members are able to practise alternative norms and allow their voices to be heard. Essentially, the conflict is rooted in the identification process of living as a punk. For group members from the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum, simply replacing the practice of talking about punk with the practice of talking about personal issues or engaging in chit-chat should not be identified as deeds that a punk forum should conduct. In fact, group members have chosen the approach of exposing themselves and each other to punk knowledge and reflecting on it to establish their punk identity in the 'Punk is Not Dead' forum.

As seen from the above discussions, the primary conflict between the two forums involves the subject of the authenticity of being a punk. Although it would be incorrect to argue that every single forum member is a punk, how to approach punk is a definite concern for the members of both forums.

8.3.2 Forum Norms

Compared to offline punk activities, online forum activities take fewer forms, such as producing texts or pictures and inviting discussions. Although the forum can be diverse in content, the simplifying of the form, normally, to text or pictures limits other possible aspects of developing a punk identity for group members, such as establishing a punk band or forming a closely-connected punk group geographically. The easy access for online activities also results in a relatively weak relationship between group members of the forum. Accordingly, the punk forum is shaped in a simple way, resulting in a singular norm.

The discussion has shown that refusing to conduct a serious discussion about punk itself and maintaining a frivolous style of posting has become normal in

'Punk'. In particular, forum members have deployed tactics to enforce this group norm. One of my participants had an experience of being excluded by group members, especially the senior ones in this forum. The forum head used several techniques such as deleting his posts, as well as stopping members from starting new threads or commenting on others. Mr O said:

I went to the 'Punk' forum quite often half a year ago. I just went there to fight with them. No one listens to punk music in that place. For so many years, they keep the 'good' tradition of not discussing about punk. They just went there for finding a sense of concrete existence. They knew each other. All are losers though. They agree with each other but I would like to tell the truth that they are all wrong. As long as I write the posts about punk-related topics, I would get no response from group members at all. Thus my posts would be covered by all other bullshit. They are the losers cultivated by the Chinese system and Chinese education. They have no real thoughts; they just follow each other. They will oppose any famous music bands. Reality cannot give them a chance to have a pretend image so they have to pretend online.

As shown in the statement, conflict between group members can sometimes become quite serious. In Mr O's case, his act of posting punk-related topics to challenge the norm of not discussing punk resulted in antagonism with other forum members. Although often ignored, he continued to post punk-related threads and comment on others' threads in order to irritate them. This intense resistance finally caused him to be completely banished by the other group members. During the period of my research, I could only see his threads in the form of 'being deleted or blocked' with no contents. As Mr O was mostly attacked by senior group members, the power relation could be seen in the 'Punk' forum. Moreover, Mr O categorised the members as belonging to a brainwashed group, which was the result of Chinese education. This criticism directly defied the punk identities that were established by those group members through complaining about Chinese society. Meanwhile, Mr O brings the question of the relationship between online and offline activities in terms of their developing punk identity. For Mr O, the attempt to maintain a strict norm of not raising punk-related topics has shown the lack of credibility of this space for the establishment of punk

identity, as it may expose an actual failed development of one in their offline settings.

In contrast, those active forum members in the 'Punk' forum hold different opinions from Mr O about the norm. To find out how the forum members think, I started a thread in the 'Punk' forum with my questions, inviting them to answer. In this respect my participants, Miss FG, the head of the forum, and Mr GH both believed that the Internet was very important to them since, from the moment they learned about punk culture from the forum, they started to be influenced by it. In the interviews about their punk lives, they did not make a clear distinction between online and offline settings but did focus largely on the 'Punk' forum in which they were both active. When commenting on the environment of the 'Punk' forum, they said:

There are a lot of interesting friends who have the same common interests in the 'Punk' forum. We are connected because of punk and talk about a lot of interesting stuff and things happened around us without stopping. We are very familiar with each other and feel like old friends. It is free, intimate, disordered and casual. (Miss FG)

Punk is free. That's why the 'Punk' forum is formed in this free-style way. There are no rules here. Those who are obsessed with or inspired by punk have their independent mindset and inner world. It is stupid to restrict the act of punk. (Mr GH)

The interpretations of the 'Punk' forum from these two group members were more likely to be a process of justification as well as an exposure of their viewpoints on punk. These positive answers led me to ask them further questions about their offline punk lives for reference. While Miss FG had attended music festivals and small live shows several times, Mr GH had never participated in any offline punk-related activities. In both cases, conducting online activities became an important part of their punk lives. More importantly, the belief in punk as being free-style explains their intentional acts of maintaining a disordered status while participating in the 'Punk' forum. In this sense, sticking to a frivolous style in discussion online can be regarded as a form

of resistance to the style of talking about punk which is the accepted and orthodox way of establishing punk identity held by Mr O and the 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum.

On exploring further, it can be seen that some of my participants have a concrete opinion about the authenticity of being a punk.

Punk is about being yourself. What you think equals to what you do. I don't think that punk is simply about music. It is more to do with attitude, life and belief. I neither listen to those so-called punk songs nor go to rock live shows. Those are just fake things, including having Mohawks. People around me are multi-faced and compete with each other for power or money. I despise them. I am like a child and unable to learn those 'skills'. I want to find something real (Miss WH).

I don't like to go to music festivals because they are too tiring. I only went to a music festival once. I didn't get a sense of Utopia and all I got was tiredness. I like to listen to punk music but no one around me listens to it. Speaking of punk spirit, I feel it is true, simple, violent and straightforward. For instance, I need to break all of the rules in school. To those things I want to resist, I can't really change them, so I never put my thoughts into action (Mr O). I get punk resources from the Internet. Punk spirit has also influenced me a lot. One important thing is that I have learned not to compromise and to express what I find unreasonable. If I had not been influenced, maybe I would have become a teacher after graduation. But now I have gone to Music school and learned to play the guitar. I wouldn't do that if I had no idea of punk (Mr LV).

China never gives us enough space to develop a new space. No matter how loud we shout to revolutionise the whole world, we can only shout. Actions don't work here. My classmates around me only listen to MP3 popular music. I want to play music. But I know I can't really walk this road; even I don't want to blend into the group I don't like. I can't endure the failure but my dream is still in my way (Mr R).

From the above responses, it can be seen that punk spirit has influenced group members' offline lives, and the Internet was the original source of this influence. In fact, attending offline punk-related activities plays a minor role in their punk

lives. Instead, resisting authorities, peer pressure, and trying to choose their own ways has become essential in defining their connection to punk life. Mr O and Mr LV who are both active online also place more emphasis on the parts of their personal lives influenced by punk culture. In this sense, for them, living as a punk is more related to acts in the offline world. Meanwhile, it can be seen that they found hardly any peers with the same interest, since people around them generally listen to popular music. Therefore, punk spirit is closely linked to the personal history of a group member in the forums.

In conclusion, the establishment of subcultural spaces – ‘Punk’ forum and ‘Punk Is Not Dead’ forum – suggests the possibility of breaking down boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Nevertheless, this does not mean that punk identity and authenticity, which are greatly relevant to offline punk groups, are not concerns of online forum members. In fact, it is this concern that shapes these two forums in a particular way. In the process of establishing a punk identity, group members establish different norms when conducting activities in different forums. Compared to offline punk members, the online ones have less desire to attend music performances or festivals because of their distrust in the authenticity of Chinese punks, especially Chinese punk musicians. Staying online results in the group members lacking the dimension of forming their identity through offline activities, thus a rigid norm is exerted in both forums, although taking different forms. While several standards exist for assessing the authenticity of a punk in offline settings, the two forums both adopt the idea that, whether or not punk itself is discussed, the links to their particular idealised version of punk are the main factors by which one’s authenticity of being a punk can be judged.

By establishing the norm of keeping a frivolous and chaotic style in discussion, the ‘Punk’ forum forms a resistance to the orthodox way of establishing punk identity through talking about punk, while the ‘Punk is Not Dead’ forum produces a form of resistance to the ‘Punk’ forum by opening a new forum and establishing a serious style of discussion. With different beliefs about punk, forum members practise almost opposite tactics from each other and maintain

their norms by excluding those who do not follow them. Those who have no intention of attending offline punk activities have little trust in Chinese punk musicians. However, the punk spirit, which is about freedom, resistance and self-expression, guided those forum members to produce different forms of resistance to peer pressure and authoritarian control in their offline lives, which are similar features of the offline punk group.

8.4 Online Diaries Produced by Punk Musicians

Apart from conducting research on 'Punk' forum and 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum, I also explored online diaries produced by punk musicians that contain their thoughts, reflections and explanations. The diaries were an important part of establishing punk identities as well as composing techniques that reject the mainstream.

8.4.1 Self-narratives of Punk Activities on the Douban Website

Douban is a social networking website. As a website focusing on music and artistic events, it contains a forum called 'Chinese punk network'. This website has the most complete information about current punk bands in China and thus became my research focus. It shows that there is more information about some of the punk bands than others, and the personal websites of some punk musicians can be found through this. In Mr C's writings, he produced a self-narrative to describe events that his band had attended:

On July 21st 2012, we started the second performance of a series of music performances called 'Noisy City Tour' in Xi'an. We were unable to buy the train ticket because of the summer holidays, and the plane tickets were too expensive for us. So we had to choose to drive there together.

It was five o'clock in the morning. We were waiting for a guy to pick us up to take us to Xi'an... We suffered a heavy traffic jam for 15.5 hours. There was heavy rain, which couldn't be cleared by the car wipers. We passed the Yellow River, and saw the heavy industrial factories beside it... we finished this performance with an audience of only 20 people. We performed one song after another. The audience members were cooperative in the beginning. They applauded after

every single performance. We felt moved by the sole pogo by a guy. But after 15 seconds, he restricted his inner impulsion due to being influenced by the big environment.

After performing half of the songs, it was extremely quiet. There was no applause or anything, just a complete silence... Xi'an, the previous rock city, you were changed by time... we will prove what is Beijing punk, punk spirit and rock city in Mao live house in Beijing!

It can be seen that Mr C describes a performance in detail, including information about how he travelled to the venue and the interactions that were had with the audience while performing. Mr C's expectations of a punk rock performance can be discerned from his accusations that Xi'an was not 'rock enough'. In fact, the statement at the end reveals Mr C's understanding of what types of actions can be taken as proof of punk spirit. These textual reflections not only become a way of exploring the punk spirit as well as an idealised version of performance, but also enable punk musicians to publicise their ideas and music to a broader audience. To some extent, the online platform seems like another stage, which completes the before-and-after process of punk performance, thereby strengthening one's self-belief in being a punk as well as spreading information to a broader audience.

For Miss K, the band website becomes a platform to not only expose recent punk performances but also to explain what has happened during the performances, especially those so-called bad experiences. There are some posts that are produced by her relating to themes such as 'the right of falling in love: celebrating a festival for both homosexuals and heterosexuals' or 'wearing no real fur and having no affection for [Mercedes] Benz'. It can be seen that she uses this platform to express her opinions and attitudes about various topics, including supporting homosexual relationships and protecting animal rights. According to my interview and offline meetings with her, the posts that she chooses to produce overlap with her construction and establishment of a punk identity, which served as a point of reference for me to conduct the interview. Moreover, she uses the platform to express her own thinking on certain issues to a broader audience, which cannot be achieved from a performance stage. Miss K

reflected on one particular event. It was after she was touched by a security guard when pogoing. As this irritated a large number of fans, she gave this response to them:

There are more and more misunderstandings and vituperations about our favourite rock festival. It is too stupid... As a girl/female singer who has pogoed a lot, I should state the truth:

1, it is the first time that I've met impolite hands and,

2, it is just a few hands among hundreds and thousands of audience members.

To those few hands in this incident, my team members and I haven't said anything awful. We feel that they were probably just too happy in that moment (it is not sitting inside the office, watching TV and laughing passively like a can) thus taking the wrong approach to express. It was not as horrible as some people thought...

Rock is a miracle in the world. It is music, gathering, lifestyle, wisdom, dream and soul power. In this country, there are only a limited number of rock musicians and even fewer rock stars, gradually increasing but still few fans. Twelve years ago, we started to have the only rock music festival, 'Midi'. All of us went through the difficulties and confronted with the mist...

In the next rock festival, I hope to meet you again. Bask in the sun, the moon, listen to music, be with friends, celebrate and pogo for loved bands. No matter whether you pogo or don't pogo, don't forget to catch me when I pogo.

Through a sincere letter to her audience, Miss K expressed her reflections, worries, hopes and, most importantly, feelings about the rock festival. In the frame of celebrating the rock festival and encouraging fans to stay in the scene, Miss K also implied her views of another, contrasting scenario, which is to have a passive status: sitting in front of the TV to entertain oneself or having an office job. Her attitude of despising that status can be strongly discerned in comparison with her easy forgiving attitude to the misbehaviour and incredible enthusiasm at the rock festival. In this sense, the Internet has provided Miss K with opportunities to expose her inner worldviews to outsiders. With her performances, this exposure completes Miss K's image as a strong and reflective punk musician for others, which also has a better impact on a broader audience.

8.4.2 Expressing Alternative Political Opinions and Ideas

For Mr WW and the 'Youth Autonomous Centre' established by Mr D, their Douban personal website has become an important platform for expressing their ideas and values. Most of Mr WW's writings not only bring out his anti-government opinions, but also challenge Douban, and online censorship. Most of Mr WW's writings follow a similar style:

Douban is fucking stupid! I have a habit to come to it (also meaning fuck it). I feel that doing this thing every day is very refreshing. After this, I begin to scold it and feel even better!

Mr WW wrote this paragraph in the beginning of his everyday diary for a few months. This happened after his posts began to be deleted by the Douban online censorship system. Instead of submitting to this, Mr WW chose to use an anti-deleting technique. The deleting system works by searching for so-called sensitive words, normally anti-government ones. As a result, a post that is supposed to be seen by the public becomes one that can only be seen by the poster. Mr WW would take a photo from the deleted post and repost the next day to avoid the word-searching system (the system is unable to search words in images). In this way, Mr WW resists the censorship from Douban, which is manipulated by the Chinese government. Exploring more deeply, Mr WW provided a full text with different political facts or viewpoints online challenging censorship. Therefore, in this way the Douban platform provides him with an opportunity to post sensitive material, or write alternative content. An example of Mr WW's writings is as follows:

The female weight lifter Jun Zhou has been criticised by different people because of her 0 score. Someone even regards it as Chinese shame. Fuck you! On the one hand, you emphasise the importance of participation. On the other hand, you use these words to describe them. Disgusting. That competition is not amazing, certainly having no relation to a country. When a national player is forbidden to go out and eat in restaurants, instead being commanded to eat pork specially delivered from abroad, this is a national shame.

Watching NBC broadcasting the Olympics, a journalist interviews an American lifter, who has won third place and

became very excited, saying, 'I'm very proud of myself', and thanked their parents. Compared to this, a Chinese weight lifter who has won second place cries a lot because of the belief that they failed the expectations of the country and the team. When can we and our children realise: as long as we surpass ourselves and achieve the involvement of ourselves, we have already received the best.

In this diary entry, Mr WW expresses his criticism of the culture of Chinese sport, extending this criticism to the country and its unbalanced impact on Chinese people. The comparison between the winning behaviour of Chinese players and American players leads to a reflection on the self-encouragement of achievement, which is believed to be lacking in Chinese culture. Another interesting point that Mr WW has made is his defining of 'national shame'. Not only does he point out that losing is not a national shame, but he also implies the issues of questionable pork as a real national shame in China. In this sense, Mr WW has used Douban as a platform to express his criticisms and expose the wrongdoing of China.

In the photos of his deleted posts, one begins with, '*Fuck your deleting! You stupid Douban!*' The content is about the responsibility that the head of a company should take regarding an accident and the escape abroad of a civil servant due to uncertain political issues. The credibility of this content is under consideration, but it has shown Mr WW's determination to expose the manipulation by powerful Chinese. As an influential punk musician who has published an album called 'Ten Years' Resistance', Mr WW has used Douban to complete his resistant act, which leaves a strong impression because of his input into those produced articles.

The 'Youth Autonomous Centre' established by Mr D, Douban has provided an important platform to record the activities held by the centre and to publicise articles about punk-related activities, especially in the West, and about the current political activities that they are preparing. Mr D is a punk musician who not only sings but also promotes anarchistic ideas and follows a Western approach, implementing in the centre he has established. Therefore, it is important to him that there is a platform to put into text his thoughts and to

reveal extracts from the books or articles that the members and he have read. Serving as a data reservoir, several articles about squatting are written on this personal website, including a translated article about squatters in Newcastle, England, a translated article about the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement and a proposed theory from an activist about occupation. In terms of concept support, this is necessary since the Youth Autonomous Centre itself follows the squatting model and has designed a series of programmes for youth to become active in political areas based on these beliefs. It therefore requires more than one platform in order to promote itself. Personal diaries also have been used with the intention of encouraging young people to participate in an activity, , which can be seen from the event of Dong Hu issue – resisting the plan to fill in the Dong Hu Lake for commercial reasons by taking photos and sending them to a special website. Not only have the motivations of the organiser of the Dong Hu plan been elaborated very carefully but the resulting feedback has been recorded in detail. For the Youth Autonomous Centre, online communication is as important as the offline activities. Interestingly, unlike the offline activities that suffer from government monitoring, this style of discussing anarchistic ideas and the Dong Hu issue can avoid supervision and control from the government because the material content is mostly about foreign issues, and the Dong Hu issue itself did not contain any sensitive words identifiable by the online censorship system. In this sense, it corrects the flaws in the offline activities by avoiding government control, thus constituting an effective resistant technique.

8.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the online subcultural space is significant in breaking boundaries between the insiders and outsiders. Both 'Punk' and 'Punk Is Not Dead' forums are easy to access and seek to attract outsiders, i.e. non-forum members, to join in. Both differing in certain respects: the 'Punk' forum is frivolous in its posting and discussion style, which is interpreted as open by forum members and potentially welcoming anyone; the 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum has the intention of deepening non-forum members' understanding of punk. In this sense, the forum provides an open space for discussing ideas, sharing materials and interacting

with online forum members with shared interests. This is an alternative that challenges the traditional offline formation of the punk subcultural group, where a cultural boundary can easily be formed through geographical limitations, and the negative opinion of outsiders, in this case, the mainstream population.

In the process of establishing a meaningful forum, the exploration of punk authenticity and punk identity, which is significant for the offline punk group, is also an important concern for forum members. This leads to the formation of forum norms and results in various resistant acts. As 'Punk' forum members value being free and behaving as punks, they choose to maintain a frivolous style rejecting the accepted way of establishing a punk identity online, i.e. talking about punk seriously. In contrast, the 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum discusses punk seriously through regulating the forum environment to resist chitchat. Exploring deeply, the way of establishing a singular norm in both forums to approach punk can be attributed to the characteristics of the Internet. As online activities involve the means of textualising thoughts, a more consistent and long-term discussion on topics or ideas can be actualised in contrast to the temporary and performance-oriented offline activities. For those participants who do not attend offline punk activities, lacking the offline dimension makes them practise either a chaotic style or a comparatively strict style, which is inclined to be singular in scope.

Moreover, the online platform provides opportunities for discussion, expression, reflection and recording. Through the particular form of online diary, anti-authority thoughts or activities can encourage a broader range of people to comment on them. Online space can be controlled and regulated through the online-censorship system in China, thus an act of criticising the government can be seen in resistance to online censorship and, for instance, members of the 'Punk' forum and punk musicians have been shown to have actualised this resistance in a creative way. All in all, the discussion of online punk-themed activities in this chapter, with the previous three chapters about offline punk activities, completes the picture of the punk phenomenon in China.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary and overall assessment of the ethnographic findings in previous chapters. It also provides a general response to the research questions raised at the beginning of this research project.

First, the findings about Chinese punks will be summarised. Specifically, the development of punk subculture and punk subcultural resistance in China will be discussed, with a comparison of different forms of resistance presented in previous chapters.

Second, the contribution of this study to previous subcultural theories will be evaluated. In particular, the concept of resistance will be used to frame the daily activities of subcultural group members with prominence given to an approach of situating individual biographies into their social contexts, thus revealing both the micro and macro aspects of the research goal.

Third, a reflection on this thesis will be provided, focusing on the deficiency and the possible research directions in the future.

9.2 The Findings about Chinese Punks

Chapters 4 to 8 outlined the development of punk subculture in China, and presented the ethnographic findings from both offline and online settings. Discussion of punk subcultural practices from three different dimensions, including individual, collective and online, has helped to identify the distinctive characteristics of Chinese punks. More importantly, it has shown that punk subcultural practices with Chinese characteristics can be interpreted as manifesting forms of resistance.

9.2.1 Punk Phenomenon in China

The Chinese punk scene started in 1994 in Beijing (see Chapter 4). After almost twenty years' development, Chinese punk bands with a variety of punk styles, such as street punk style or hardcore punk style, are widely and loosely distributed in different cities – large-scale cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan or small-scale cities like Huaihua and Huangshi – although the capital city Beijing clearly dominates in terms of the quantity of punk bands.

In current times, punk-style performance is not popular in China, which can be seen from the limited enthusiasm shown for it by large live houses. Thus intensified punk performances are launched in small live houses, where intimate relationships between the owners and the punk musicians have been established. While a few famous punk bands have opportunities to appear at large music festivals or commercial performances, most punk bands have limited access to these due to the general unpopularity of the music style. In this situation, punk musicians organise their own punk festivals and performances, even though these performance opportunities happen infrequently.

Most punk musicians have a full-time job besides playing in a band because of the need for an income and in order to satisfy social expectations. Of those who have stayed in the punk scene for a long time, some have chosen to open establishments such as bars or a rock-style restaurant in order to maintain a free lifestyle and enjoy informal punk gatherings.

Punk musicians and fans interact with each other in punk gigs. For punk musicians, rehearsals, pre- and after-parties, private gatherings and hangouts constitute the moments and spaces for exchanging ideas, sharing knowledge, discussing plans and socialising with other group members. Interactions also happen between Chinese and foreign punk musicians, which assists the establishment of a frame of reference for guiding the development of their punk group. As the punk group is formed through the process of interacting and sharing, the formation of sub-groups also occurs as a result of different

approaches to the idea of punk identity and authenticity. An exceptional case of establishing an autonomous style of community by one punk musician, who, together with several punk musicians, moved to the suburbs from the city centre, demonstrates a desire of living as an authentic punk.

Apart from the offline settings, those who are interested in punk establish online forums for sharing and discussing punk-related topics. Two online forums, 'Punk' and 'Punk Is Not Dead', are particularly noted and each has its own distinctive characteristics. Compared to the formation of punk groups offline, the online forums have more opportunities to break boundaries and attract outsiders, i.e. non-forum members, to join the forum. Meanwhile, punk musicians use online platforms to write diaries reflecting on their performances or expressing political viewpoints.

9.2.2 Punk Subcultural Practice in China

The chapters exploring the ethnographic findings discussed various forms of punk subcultural practice. One, in Chapter 5, concerning the individual dimension of subcultural practice, presents the case study of punk musician Mr L's deepening commitment to and participation in punk subculture at different stages of his life history and subcultural career. In the further discussion of the punk group in Chapter 6, the conflicts between the professional and punk lifestyles have been shown as shaping the subcultural experiences of group members. Punk musicians produce the ideal punk lifestyle in two ways: one is about moving to the suburbs from the city centre or to a foreign country, and the other is about establishing an autonomous community by imitating the Western punk style of squatting.

Specifically, as a member becomes involved more deeply in punk subculture, moments of intensified participation in the form of collective practices start to take dominance. In a punk subcultural group, individual members experience similarities and differences compared to their peers as a consequence of both conforming to established norms and creating alternative norms with their allies.

In essence, the particularity in the characteristics of Chinese punk subculture is its great diversity within a small group of members in terms of genres, choice of singing language, and performance style. Accordingly, personal journeys can be easily discerned, their value being shown in their influence on collective punk subcultural practices. With an awareness and understanding of individual biographies, it is not only a manifestation of collective punk subcultural practices that is discovered but also those accompanying negotiations and conflicts with individual members, including the organisers, followers and deviants. It is at this point that an understanding of punk subculture in its Chinese context can be achieved at both a micro and macro level.

As introduced in Chapter 7, two main forms of collective punk subcultural practices are punk performance and hangout. Compared to the mainstream style of performance, the punk style of performance has distinctive norms, such as stage speeches about politics before the performance, or seeking straightforward interactions on and off stage between punk musicians and audience members through pogoing and moshing. In the context of the musical environment in China, punk musicians have taken different attitudes to the commercial performances and the small size of other performances. In the form of hangouts, punks construct their private spaces and interact with each other, producing a frame of reference for punk norms and assistance for their daily lives.

Chapter 8 presents two online forums including 'Punk' and 'Punk Is Not Dead', where forum members conduct online subcultural practices, including producing online threads and commenting on posts. Although punk identity and authenticity is a concern for forum members, a lack of offline punk activities leads to their emphasis on writing and discussing the style of posts, resulting in the establishment of rigid norms to creating their idealised version of punk. Moreover, punk musicians use the online platform to record their subcultural experiences or reflections, and express political opinions through writing diaries.

9.2.3 Punk Subcultural Resistance in China

In this thesis, punk subcultural practices are categorised into three forms: individual, collective and online practices, in all of which resistance has played a crucial role. It should be pointed out here that using the concept of resistance as the *only* explanation of punk subcultural practices would be wrong since there are other features of the subculture, such as simple entertainment or performance, without any relation to a resistant response. However, the distinction can be made according to articulations of the experiences by subculture members, in which not only their response is taken into account but also the reaction of their source of pressure, for instance, from peers or authorities. In this sense, an interactive relationship constructed in the process of subcultural practices requires the concept of resistance because of its potential to include both parts for explanation, particularly in the areas of interpreting the daily practices and the individual choices of those punk subculture members as aided by punk philosophy.

9.2.3.1 Individual Subcultural Resistance

The ethnographic findings about punk musician Mr L's case in Chapter 5 have shown that his individual subcultural practices can be regarded as different forms of resistance, which consequently serve to construct Mr L's identities at different life stages. More importantly, the same form of resistance can have different impacts on a person's life choice depending on his context.

For instance, Mr L's behaviour of adopting a Skinhead O! Punk visual style in public was criticised by his teacher, neighbours and peers early in his life. As a consequence, Mr L developed a form of visual resistance – insisting on his particular punk visual style against the mainstream visual style – despite the constant pressure from the surrounding mainstream. At this stage, the mainstream response to Mr L's visual resistance played a role in his construction of his punk identity but did not immediately influence his life choice. It is at a later stage that Mr L's visual resistance challenged his boss at work, causing Mr L to lose his job and thus choose to open a restaurant by himself. In this sense, the

impact of individual subcultural resistance on a subculture member's life has a great relevance to the power of the target.

Another example of individual subcultural resistance comes from Mr L's involvement in punk activities at a later stage, committing to punk subculture to an even deeper extent. One particular form of resistance – political speeches before performances – invited scrutiny and prohibition by the government. Happening in public, Mr L's stage speech has the potential to ignite the fans and audience to hold an anti-government position. In other words, as this political form of resistance has potential power and impact on society, it is subject to stricter control.

Chapter 6 considers further individual subcultural practices from other punk musicians. It was found that many punk subculture members have chosen an alternative lifestyle, mainly because of the pressures caused by mainstream society and culture in China. Occurring in a small-scale environment, subcultural resistance in individual practice is manifested in various forms, such as insisting on dressing in a distinctly punk fashion; living a lifestyle that attempts to resist mainstream bias; joining and staying in the punk group to resist peer pressure and parental expectation; seeking alternative forms of employment and income to maintain a status of expressing one's true self and opinions and to resist what is interpreted as a phenomenon of widespread 'blind-following' in mainstream society.

9.2.3.2 Collective Subcultural Resistance

In the case of collective practice discussed in Chapter 7, two forms of punk style performances and hangouts demonstrate punk subculture members gathering together with their distinctive individual biographies. It is noted that a resistive response does not only occur in relation to something in mainstream or outside society but also to something within punk subculture itself. In fact, this level of response shows the delicate but significant role that individual subcultural experiences play in punk subculture.

Pressure from government authorities, the general public, and the commercial environment generates the potential for resistance for punk subculture members as a collective practice. Usual punk performance styles, such as stage speeches which express the unfairness in society, and moshing with its violent movements, can be regarded as inappropriate in certain contexts, leaving punk performers to choose whether to stick to their normative pattern or adapt to the environment. From the ethnographic findings, it can be seen that they would resist control of expression and style, with the essential intention to resist the authorities. To be more precise, other forms of performance, such as from the 'metal' genre, have also adopted this style so it can be said that a shared experience among certain forms of music genre may exist in China. The act of hanging out tends to more directly issue challenges to authorities, since punk subculture members more often deal with the general public on such occasions. Occupying public space is a normal solution for punk subculture members to resist judgment and bias from the general public.

It is interesting to see that not all punk subculture members behave in the same way in a restricted environment. This is largely caused by the differences in their personal experiences. For instance, compared to less popular punk bands, the more popular ones are prone to use these chances to disseminate their punk philosophy. Those who lack the experience of performing abroad would perform in Chinese, which can be understood as a resistance to the Chinese punk groups' own norm of performing in English. These distinctions in punk members' behaviours are evidence that the variety within the punk subcultural group is a result of their distinctive individual cultural experiences. But, from another perspective, this is still rooted in how punk subculture members view the issue of authenticity of punk identity and how to act on the belief in their practices. For instance, as revealed by these cases, the two characteristics of free expression and independent thinking are particularly related to breaking from the control of authorities and refusing to blindly follow the mainstream. Thus, embracing the chance to spread information to a broader audience can be chosen

and justified by some punk musicians, and insisting on the use of indigenous language has become another way to actualise the belief of being true to oneself.

Punk culture is imported from Western countries into China. In this sense, punk subculture members are more or less influenced by another frame of reference regarding punk philosophy and lifestyle and are therefore being guided in a different direction in their life stage. In my ethnographic findings, the topic of an ideal performance or environment was readily brought up by my participants. Sometimes, it serves to be a justification for their moments of resistance. Therefore, the ideal performance or lifestyle, which is interpreted as being free, honest and equal, can be regarded as a reference of subcultural resistance as well as a goal to achieve after the stage of resistance for punk subculture members.

9.2.3.3 Online Subcultural Resistance

In the online settings discussed in Chapter 8, subcultural resistance is manifested differently, such as by means of using special techniques to circumvent online censorship, which can be said to be representative of authorities. However, similarities can be found between the online and offline settings. To approach punk authenticity, different subculture members established different online forums based on different or even quite opposite rules, leading to a long-lasting resistance against each other.

In the 'Punk' forum, a norm of keeping a frivolous and chaotic style in discussion is established in order to resist the orthodox way of establishing punk identity through talking about punk. Meanwhile, the 'Punk Is Not Dead' forum was established to resist the 'Punk' forum, resulting in establishing a serious style of discussion. Through the Internet, forum members gain an understanding of punk spirit and philosophy, which assists their daily resistance to peer pressure, authority figures and the mainstream in their offline life.

Moreover, punk musicians use online platforms to resist censorship by adopting particular techniques to express anti-government viewpoints in textual form.

Comparatively, the resistance from punk musicians in online punk subcultural practices, which is on a more personal level, can be seen as an addition to subcultural experiences in their individual biographies. Together with the resistance in individual practices, a punk identity with one's own belief is constructed.

In conclusion, various forms of punk subcultural practices can be regarded as manifesting forms of subcultural resistance in China. Individual subcultural resistance has played a significant role in shaping subcultural careers and life histories of punk group members. In other words, this form of resistance has a strong impact on a personal level. In contrast, collective resistance has a strong impact on society since it is group behaviour and actualised through interactions with the general public. As it is derived from conflicts with authorities and the mainstream, the group norms are also revealed and strengthened swiftly in the process of resisting other norms. Although collective subcultural resistance is potentially more effective and influential in relation to the authorities compared to individual subcultural resistance, the consequence of changing society is hard to achieve in China due to political and economic conditions. Nevertheless, a broader sense of the Chinese context can be reflected through these struggles of punk subculture.

9.2.3.4 A Reflection on Chinese society

From the ethnographic findings, it can be seen that the development of punk subculture is deeply influenced by the broad structure of Chinese society. At a micro level, subculture members experience pressure from peers, family, neighbours and authoritative figures, including teachers and bosses, against their decisions to follow an alternative subcultural path and how they should negotiate between their subcultural identity with other identities. At a macro level, a collective subcultural practice suffers pressure from the political environment, underdeveloped music industry and wider social expectations. Meanwhile, traditions and norms in mainstream China can be understood through the position that punk subculture holds in Chinese society. With this

research, a picture of Chinese culture and subculture is presented from an alternative perspective, which can be seen as adding to the field of Chinese studies.

9.3 The Contribution to Subcultural Theories

Chapter 2, on theoretical frameworks, discusses different strands of subcultural theories in Anglo-American academia and their theoretical applications in Chinese society, through which the study of punk subculture is contextualised. In short, CCCS studies conceptualise youth subculture as a class-based sub-set of culture with a resistance to the mainstream through style, but later criticised by post-subcultural studies, which directs research into focusing on the individual subculture member rather than the assumed collective one. The subcultural theorist J. Patrick Williams (2011) abandons the category of class and age in defining subculture for a process of sharing and interacting. In the analysis of subcultural resistance, CCCS studies discusses one particular form, 'symbolic resistance', while post-subcultural studies has taken both routes, including abandoning the analysis of resistance, and modifying the analysis from CCCS theorists. J. Patrick Williams (2011) develops the analysis into discussing different forms and degrees of resistance.

The subcultural theories discussed above inform the guiding theoretical problems in this thesis, which are about how to explore subcultural phenomena in a different social context, and how to interpret it using the dimension of resistance as a possible approach, play a significant role in my ethnographic study of Chinese punks. Based on the discussion of what I have found in my field presented in the above sections, the contribution of this research to subcultural theories will be discussed in this section.

9.3.1 How to Approach Subcultural Phenomena in a Society

With the ethnographic findings, it has become clear that the other two strands of subcultural theories discussed in Chapter 2, CCCS subcultural theories and post-subcultural theories, are restrictive compared to those of J. Patrick Williams. While CCCS subcultural theories limit the research perspective to the division of class, the post-subcultural approach ignores the reasons underlying the formation of a subculture. In contrast, at the initial stage of this research, J. Patrick Williams' (2011) approach of conceptualisation, which emphasises interactions among group members and with outsiders, and, further, replacing the 'mainstream' in previous subcultural studies with the 'normal' society, suits the situation of the punk subculture members in China, as shown in Chapter 4. Specifically, Chinese punks are loosely distributed, forming in online and offline settings and at different stages of their punk lives. Thus it is vital to have a flexible concept to locate and identify the various subcultural practices and members.

However, as the research evolves, J. Patrick Williams' concept of subculture (2011) showed its limitations. In particular, the focus on the sharing and interacting process among subculture members has problems in interpreting the individual biographies of subculture members, especially the life changes that have been influenced particularly by subcultural experiences. To add a framework of discussing individual biographies, as shown in Chapters 5 and 6, the significance of two aspects is recognised; this includes the individual choice to enter a subculture – often resulting in a gradually intensified involvement and a deepening of commitment – and the fluidity of identities involved in switching between a subcultural scene and a normal scene. Through positioning the subcultural experiences of group members into a long timeline, not only can the meanings of subcultural practices be understood in a dynamic and systematic way but also a wider social context can be analysed from the relation between subculture members and society.

In fact, CCCS subcultural studies have emphasised the significance of researching individual biographies (see Chapter 2 and Clarke et al., 1976). In this emphasis, individual biographies 'cut paths in and through the determined spaces of

structures and cultures in which individuals are located' (Clarke et al., 1976:57). Thus the relation between an individual and a societal structure is highlighted, which leads to the class analysis in CCCS subcultural studies.

In this thesis, the ethnographic findings about the Chinese punk subcultural phenomenon have proved the value of looking into the individual biographies of subculture members. Nevertheless, the unsuitability of class analysis adopted by CCCS theorists to interpret subcultural phenomena in a different social context, i.e. China, reveals that individual biographies need to be explored based on the social context in which the research is located. In the case of Chinese punk subculture, for instance, the individual biographies of punk members are explored in their relations with peers, neighbours, and authorities. More importantly, through the exploration of these different sets of relationships, a profound understanding of Chinese society is also achieved.

9.3.2 Enriching the Concept of Subcultural Resistance

In Chapter 2, discussions of subcultural resistance can be seen in CCCS subcultural theories, post-subcultural theories and in J. Patrick Williams' studies. Comparatively, J. Patrick Williams (2011) provides the most comprehensive analysis of subcultural resistance by developing it into different levels of forms and directions. By conducting punk subcultural research with a focus on its resistance, not only is a new way of categorising the forms of resistance developed but also new directions, especially looking into the internal situation of a subculture and analysing the response from the target of resistance, thus enriching the concept of subcultural resistance.

J. Patrick Williams (2011) pointed out that resistance could be regarded as a response to something occurring in the mainstream. In this thesis, the findings show that subcultural resistance can also happen within a subculture. For instance, as shown in Chapter 6, punk musicians in Wuhan, who believe that the Beijing punk circle is full of small sub-groups and issues of hierarchy, resist the Beijing musicians by creating their own equal and intimate group with no

hierarchy. Specifically speaking, as subcultural resistance to the mainstream concerns power relations between a subculture and its parent society, subcultural resistance within a subculture involves punk authenticity and identity. It is through exploring these two layers of subcultural resistance that the internal culture of a subcultural group and the wider culture of a subculture and a society can be understood.

Moreover, analysis of subcultural resistance needs to consider the response from the target of resistance. Depending on different responses in different contexts, a similar form of subcultural resistance can have different impacts and effects on a subculture member's personal life. For instance, Mr L's case in Chapter 5 showed how visual resistance can provoke responses from the targets, such as neighbours or teachers in his youth and the boss in his adult life, bringing two different consequences – the first strengthening his punk identity and the latter directly causing him to abandon the mainstream lifestyle and build up a punk lifestyle.

It needs to be pointed out that the discovery of the dynamics of subcultural resistance can be attributed to the research angles, which look into the individual subcultural career and collective subcultural experiences of subculture members. Compared to J. Patrick Williams' (2011) categorising of three dimensions of subcultural resistance, in this thesis a division of individual resistance, collective resistance and resistance on the Internet is adopted for interpreting subcultural practices. In particular, the additional framework of the individual biography serves to achieve an understanding of the subtlety in subcultural resistance, which is greatly relevant to the life changes of a subculture member.

9.3.3 Understanding Chinese Society and Its Subculture

As seen in Chapter 2, understanding a society through its relation to a subculture is the goal of CCCS subcultural studies. Meanwhile, Chapter 2 shows that one goal of this thesis is about conducting research on a subcultural phenomenon in a different social context. From the ethnographic findings about Chinese punk subculture, it can be seen that the goal of understanding a society can be achieved by conducting a solid study on a subculture.

CCCS subcultural studies once outlined the relationship between the parent class and the subordinated class in an Anglo-American social context through the analysis of subcultures. China, an authoritative country with a socialist ideology, has its own distinctive characteristics. The interpretation of Chinese society based on Confucianism is presented in Chapter 2, leading to possible research directions, such as authority or social norms and expectations in China.

In this thesis, the study of punk subculture actualises an understanding of Chinese society from both a micro and macro level. Through the analysis of individual punk subcultural practice presented in Chapters 5 and 6, the power relationships between a subculture member and his neighbours, peers, and authoritative figures such as parents, teachers and bosses can be understood dynamically through the developed forms of resistance existing in the relationships. Specifically, those relationships reflect Chinese mainstream society, which demands societal conformity, and submission to authority and social expectations. More importantly, here, the societal requirement of conformity can be quite comprehensive, ranging from visual style to life style.

At the macro level, collective punk subcultural practice, presented in Chapter 7, is discussed through the relationship of the subcultural group with the government, the general public and the commercial environment. In particular, the money-driven demand and the correct political pursuit become the current mainstream norms of performance.

Chapter 6 shows that some punk subculture members establish alternative norms through creating their own community or public space, including a

community practising anarchistic philosophies that most value individual judgment and freedom. In this sense, it might be difficult to say that punk norms have been established in a unified and stable way, but punk subculture members challenge the current mainstream norms and practise their own within a small group. As a consequence, new social movements and alternative norms are embedded in Chinese society and may play a role in the new era.

9.3.4 Contributing to Subcultural Studies in Chinese Academia

As analysed in Chapter 2, subcultural studies within Chinese academia are problematic mainly in the careless application of subcultural theories in Anglo-American academia. This thesis has solved the problem by presenting a solid study of punk subculture in China. With studying both offline and online settings by means of ethnographic methods, the formation of a subculture together with its relevant power relations in the internal group and with the society has been understood through the analysis of subcultural resistance.

9.4 A Reflection on the Thesis

This thesis centres around the ethnographic findings about Chinese punk subculture. Studying subculture requires ethnographic research in order to truly understand the characteristics of a subculture and its relation to a society. The thesis has completed this task by researching punk subculture, which can be related to some degree to other subcultural phenomena. However, it is admitted that the method of ethnographic research cannot ensure the same findings if another ethnographer conducts the same study since the research is influenced by the conditions of the ethnographer and requires a constantly reflexive process (O'Reilly, 2012). Therefore, the biggest value of this research in this respect is not about providing a conclusion that can be applied in any circumstances but more about demonstrating the validity of the research angles, and being a reminder of the need for reflexive analysis when conducting ethnographic research.

The focus of this thesis is subcultural resistance. It has to be realised that the process of interpreting subcultural acts as resistance, which J. Patrick Williams (2011) holds to be the task of the researcher, can be quite subtle. As I have presented my relevant reasoning and analysis, it might still cause different opinions. However, I also believe that my thesis is based on my personal familiarity with the Chinese social context, as well as my academically-trained skills and my intention to conduct concrete and reasonable ethnographic research. In this sense, it is hoped to present a picture of the Chinese punk phenomenon, which has never before been fully and seriously looked at in this manner.

Last, but not least, one important perspective of this thesis is to look into the individual biographies of subculture members and how they play a role in a subculture. In this sense, each subculture has its own uniqueness since it is about individuals and groups. With the belief of the significance of individual biographies, this subculture study cannot provide generalised conclusions about all the different forms of subculture in China, or in other countries with different social contexts. Thus it is hoped that studies on other subcultures can fill the gap and present a solid work, thereby further enabling society to be understood through this perspective.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Willingness to Participate Form

The purpose and details of this study have been explained to me. I understand that this study is designed to further scientific knowledge and that all procedures have been approved by the Loughborough University Ethical Approvals (Human Participants) Sub-Committee.

I have read and understood the information sheet and this consent form.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.

I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the study.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any stage for any reason, and that I will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing.

I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in strict confidence and will be kept anonymous and confidential to the researchers unless (under the statutory obligations of the agencies which the researchers are working with), it is judged that confidentiality will have to be breached for the safety of the participant or others.

I agree to participate in this study.

Your name

Your signature

Signature of investigator

Date

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Jian Xiao, LE11 3TU, email and mobile number

Prof. Michael Pickering, LE11 3TU, email and mobile number

Dr. James Stanyer, LE11 3TU, email and mobile number

What is the purpose of the study?

Culture/subculture is getting noticed in contemporary China. It is worthy studying how the culture/subculture is formed and changed in a complicated social environment. The study mainly aims to gain the understanding of the localised punk style and its development.

Who is doing this research and why?

The research will be mainly conducted by PhD student Jian Xiao in Loughborough University (The department of Social Sciences *email address*). Her two supervisors are Prof. Michael Pickering and Dr. James Stanyer. This study is a Student research project.

Are there any exclusion criteria?

The participants should be punk musicians who currently conduct punk cultural practices including punk performances and other relevant activities.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes! After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form, however if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please just contact the main investigator. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing.

Will I be required to attend any sessions and where will these be?

Yes. It will happen before or after the punk performances or in a public place (such as coffee shop, bars) according to the participants' time schedule.

How long will it take?

The interviews should take around one hour and if the participant would be willing to extend, it can reach up to two hours.

What will I be asked to do?

It is expected to take only one session to complete the interviews. In the interviews, you will be asked a few questions related to your punk style of life, your understanding of punk spirit, and your comments of your cultural practices.

What personal information will be required from me?

How many years you have been in the punk field or your experiences of your punk career.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. The interviews will be recorded and the data will be transferred into University computers. It will be kept for ten years. And you have the right to withdraw your data.

What will happen to the results of the study?

It will be shown in a thesis format and will probably be shown in an academic conference or publications.

[http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing\(2\).htm](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing(2).htm)

What do I get for participating?

Exchange ideas and you can have a bigger picture of the punk culture environment and development in China.

I have some more questions who should I contact?

You can contact the researcher and her supervisors.

What if I am not happy with how the research was conducted?

Please follow the steps that the University suggested online at

[http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing\(2\).htm](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/committees/ethical/Whistleblowing(2).htm).

Appendix 3: The Participants

Ages presented were at the time of interview in 2013.

Offline Field from March, 2013 to June, 2013

Participant	Age	Sexuality	Education	Occupation
Mr L Main singer of a Skinhead O! Punk band	37	Male	High school	Restaurant owner Founder of Punk Music Festival
Mr W Band manager of Mr L's band	26	Male	University	Programmer
Mr H Main singer of a hardcore punk band	Around 25	Male	High school	Restaurant owner
Mr S.X Bassist of Mr H's band	30	Male	High school	Shop owner Interview not to be included in this thesis
Mr Z.L Drummer of Mr H's band	25	Male	High school	Full-time musician Interview not to be included in this thesis
Mr Y Main singer of a street punk band	30	Male	High school	Bar owner
Mr N The drummer of Mr Y's band	19	Male	Primary school	Full-time musician
Mr CC Fan of the band "Brain Failure"	26	Male	University	White-collar worker
Miss LZ Fan of the band "Brain Failure"	22	Female	University drop-out	White-collar worker

Mr C Bassist of a hardcore punk band	25	Male	Third-level University	White-collar worker
Miss K The main singer of a punk band	30	Female	University	Full-time musician
Mr Z Main singer of an Old school Punk band	30	Male	University Postgraduate	White-collar worker
Miss S Bassist of Mr Z's band	24	Female	University	White-collar worker
Miss G Drummer of Mr Z's band	24	Female	High school	Full-time Musician
Mr F The main singer of an Old school Punk band	36	Male	High school	Bar owner
Mr LC The main singer of an Old school Punk band	30	Male	University	Civil servant
Mr WW The main singer of an Old school Punk band	36	Male	High school	Bar owner
Mr XZ	21	Male	University	Student

The main singer of an Old school Punk band				
Mr M.E The guitarist of Mr LC's band	30	Male	University	White-collar worker Interview not to be included in this thesis
Mr BX The guitarist of Mr XZ's band	23	Male	High school	Bar assistant Interview not to be included in this thesis
Miss S The bassist of Mr XZ's band	19	Female	University	Student
Mr DF The drummer of Mr XZ's band	25	Male	University	Programmer
Mr PS Main singer of a New school Punk band	23	Male	Third level University	Full-time musician
Mr Hr Bassist of Mr PS's band	30	Male	High school	Full-time musician
Mr TY Drummer of Mr PS's band	23	Male	Third level university	Teacher
Mr X The main singer of an Old school Punk band	30	Male	Third-level University	Bar owner

Mr D The drummer The criminal mind band	30	Male	University	Freelancer Failed to be interviewed
Mr SL The fan of Mr WW's band	30	Male	University Postgraduate	University counselor
Mr T The flutist of Mr WW's band	26	Male	University	Lecturer
Mr DM The main singer of Mr C's band	23	Male	High school	Full-time musician
Mr YY The drummer of Mr C's band	24	Male	University	Popular music producer
Mr HY The guitarist of an Old school Punk band	23	Male	High school drop-out	Full-time musician
Mr P The main singer of a street Punk band	24	Male	High school	Full-time musician
Mr YC The drummer of Mr P's band	26	Male	High school	Bar manager Interview not to be included in this thesis
Mr M The bassist of Mr P's band	23	Male	High school	Swimming coach
Mr ZY The main singer of Mr P's band	30	Male	High school	Full-time musician

Online participants:

Mr L.V: 21 (male) a full-time student in a music school

Mr O: 21 (male) a full-time university student

Mr GH: 21 (male) a full-time university student

Miss WH: 19 (female) a full-time university student

Mr R: 21 (male) a full-time university student

Appendix 4: Photos



Mr D's "Our Home"



Mr L in his restaurant





The performance of Mr L's band



The performance of Mr H's band



Moshing in punk performance



Baidu "Punk" forum



Baidu "Punk Is Not Dead" forum