The Aesthetic Pedagogies of DIY Music

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Abstract

Despite the growing interest in punk pedagogy, or the examination of the educative practices of do-it-yourself (DIY) music and punk culture, extant literature has failed to investigate the embedded pedagogies and curricula within the performative aesthetics of these musical contexts. In this paper, I address this oversight by placing DIY and punk pedagogy literature in conversation with writings on relational aesthetics and Freirean aesthetic theory. In doing so, I propose that the aesthetics pedagogies of DIY music can both uplift and undermine the liberatory nature of punk music and DIY culture. By way of example, I analyze performances by hardcore band G.L.O.S.S. and percussionist Sarah Hennies. While both artists rely on relational aesthetics, the varying use of speculative spaces (McClure, 2013) and conflicting epistemological assumptions lead to divergent responses from the audience that align with the Freirean concepts of codifications and the banking model of education (Freire, 1970; 1973).

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Introduction

Within the growing body of literature focused on the cultural space surrounding punk music, an increasing number of scholars have examined do-it-yourself (DIY) music cultures through the lens of curriculum theory and education research more broadly. In doing so, scholars have produced a constellation of texts under the umbrella of punk pedagogy that examine the curricula and pedagogical practices embedded within the cultural artifacts, relationships, and spaces of interaction that emerge out of punk culture and DIY music scenes. For punk pedagogy theorists, punk culture holds the potential to transform educational spaces into sites of empowerment that instill agency and critical thinking skills (see Haworth, 2010; Miklitsch, 1994; Santos & Guerra, 2018). To use Torrez's (2012) words, "punk pedagogy is a manifestation of equity, rebellion, critique, self-examination, solidarity, community, love, anger, and collaboration. It is space where the teacher–learner hierarchy is disavowed and the normative discourse of traditional education is dissembled" (Torrez, 2012, p. 136). This framing then positions punk and the broader DIY music culture as a powerful site to further explore liberatory educational practices.

Yet despite this assertion, extant research into punk pedagogy has largely failed to investigate one particular cornerstone of DIY and punk culture: the live performance. Although theorizations of DIY concerts do exist within broader examinations of DIY music scenes, studies that examine the pedagogies of live performances do not. To this end, I use this paper to investigate the epistemological assumptions embedded within DIY music as a means towards uncovering the aesthetic pedagogies of DIY music performances. In particular, I act on Furness' (2012) call to move beyond narrow readings of punk culture and examine two aesthetically

distinct (but thematically connected) performances that fall under the wider umbrella of DIY music: hardcore band G.L.O.S.S.'s set from San Jose, California in 2016 (B., 2016) and experimental percussionist Sarah Hennies' set at the 2017 End Tymes festival (Herting, 2017). I begin this analysis by contextualizing these performances within extant literature related to punk pedagogy, relational aesthetics, and the aesthetic theories of Paulo Freire. While punk pedagogy provides a rich lens to examine the underlying curriculum of and pedagogies behind DIY music, relational aesthetics and Freirean aesthetic theory contextualize the visual and relational aspects of music performance that may further (or complicate) the educative practices of DIY music scenes. I then differentiate between these two performances by arguing that the artists adopt two highly divergent aesthetic pedagogies. While the approaches taken by G.L.O.S.S. and Hennies hold a number of similarities, substantially different epistemological assumptions enacted within these performances result in two drastically different understandings of how performance aesthetics can pedagogically engage audiences, resulting in two widely disparate theorizations of punk pedagogy.

DIY Music as Learning Ecology

At first glance, the aural and visual aesthetics of G.L.O.S.S. and Sarah Hennies appear different enough that these two artists would not hold any significant overlap. The raucous, rock-oriented approach taken by G.L.O.S.S. sits in opposition to the meditative slow-build behind Hennies use of percussion. But beyond these aesthetic differences, two key intersections exist. First, both create works exploring themes of trans-identity and gender politics. Second, both produce work within the context of DIY music. To further develop this connection and contextualize these performances, I will now turn towards extant literature on DIY music and punk pedagogy.

DIY Music

Stated simply, DIY refers to “ordinary people build[ing] or repair[ing] the things in their daily lives without the aid of experts” (Wehr, 2013, p. 1). It therefore follows that DIY music involves novice, untrained, or otherwise amateur musicians starting bands, playing shows, releasing albums, and touring outside of professional music channels. A DIY approach to music also expands beyond making music to all aspects of music production: labels, venues, journalism outlets (in the form of zines), and merchandizing all hold counterparts that contribute to a broader DIY culture (see Makagon, 2015; Verbuc, 2014). While this independent approach to cultural production has existed within a wide range of musical traditions (see Spencer, 2005), punk music (along with its subgenres, such as hardcore and post-punk) in part distinguished itself from these other musical forms by framing DIY as a counter-cultural and political ideology. Punks do so by conceptualizing DIY modes of production as a means towards undermining oppressive social forces by instilling individuals and communities with a sense of autonomy in the face of controlling institutions (Blush, 2010; Reynolds, 2005). For Perry (2011), this ideological stance within DIY produces an “insistence that participants become active, in whatever way possible, in challenging dominant social structures and enacting positive change in their local communities” (p. 77-78) both in and outside of musical contexts.

However, these counter-cultural claims do not always exist in practice. As both Bestley (2018) and Schwartz (2015) contend, punk’s aesthetic practices (both in terms of visual and aural aesthetics) routinely build on and draw influence from mainstream music and arts traditions rather than acting in opposition to these cultural spaces. Similarly, countless artists have used DIY culture as a steppingstone towards broader commercial success (Verbuc, 2014), in turn contradicting the political ideologies espoused by some punks. But rather than undermining the

counter-cultural claims proposed by practitioners and scholars, these assertions indicate a polysemic cultural space that embraces multiple understandings and enactments of a DIY ethos within punk cultures (see Gordon, 2014). Extending this argument, a multifaceted understanding of DIY allows for a conceptualization of DIY music outside of a particular musical aesthetic, genre, or tradition despite DIY being almost synonymous with punk (and punk-adjacent) scenes (see Makagon, 2015; Oakes, 2009). Bailey's (2009) historical analysis of contemporary electronic music, for example, shows that noise and industrial music subgenres have always employed DIY modes of production that often intertwine with DIY punk networks. Further still, free-improvisation groups like the Art Ensemble of Chicago have engaged the same ideology of self-sufficiency promoted by punk-oriented DIY scenes as a means towards a politics of racial equality (Basu, 2014). All told, DIY music exists not as a single musical tradition or monolithic ideological formation, but rather as a cultural space defined by a shared DIY ethic that routinely draws on an egalitarian politics of cultural production (Makagon, 2015; Woods, 2017).

Punk Pedagogy

Building on this DIY approach to cultural production, scholars have explored the intersection of punk scenes and education under the banner of punk pedagogy. The majority of this research has examined the potential influence punk culture might have on schools, asserting that the anti-authoritarian ideology of punk and DIY culture can act as a means towards a more communal and agentic approach to formal education (Khan-Egan, 1998; Miklitsch, 1994; Niknafs & Przybylski, 2017) which in turn empowers formerly alienated students (Haenfler, 2012; Sirc, 1997). But punk pedagogy literature also reimagines DIY scenes and "punk places" (ad hoc music venues, anarchist collectives, zine libraries, etc.) as educational spaces that embody these ideologies. DIY scenes in particular act as a space for individuals and

communities to develop countercultural ideologies and political philosophies through identity development, community building, and cultural production (Niknafs, 2018; Romero, 2019; Torrez, 2012). Cordova (2017) conceptualizes this pedagogical process as “educative healing,” an ongoing practice in which DIY cultures create space for participants to critically examine and unlearn oppressive and dominant discourses. The broader DIY music scene therefore exists as a unique learning ecology, one in which communal forms of critical pedagogy emerge outside of formal or intentional educational structures and through a wide array of cultural production inherent to these communities.

Turning towards the pedagogical role of physical space within DIY communities, framing DIY scenes as unique learning ecologies subsequently situates punk places “as heterotopias of resistance that function as sites of subject-constituting knowledges and practices; not as firm structures outside dominant power, but as ad hoc shelters in which members of a subculture can experience some semblance of freedom” (Tucker, 2012, p. 210). According to Makagon (2015), this occurs because practitioners of DIY music conceptualize venues and punk places as physical spaces that embody the egalitarian aims of punk and DIY. As Niknafs & Przybylski (2017) attest, the reimagining and reconfiguration of physical learning spaces (classrooms, DIY venues, etc.) not only shapes the pedagogies within learning ecologies but can also acts as its own form of political activism. But punk and DIY scenes reconceptualize the space outside of the venue’s walls as well, producing expanded cultural geographies where community members can engage, develop, and learn the egalitarian and transgressive politics of DIY cultural production (Grazian, 2013; Woods, 2019). This results in a decentralized learning ecology that “offers youth unique and diverse experiences where critical knowledge is produced and, in some cases, acted upon” (Haworth, 2010, p. 183), an ecology manifested in the material

space of DIY venues and the relationships that construct surrounding scenes. To this end, the sociocultural learning practices of punk pedagogy remain interwoven with the political and ideological formations within DIY music and the physical spaces that house these communities.

Scholars have also positioned punk music as a learning technology in itself, enacting the same critical and anti-authoritarian pedagogies described by those studying the overlap between punk and formal education (O'Hara, 1999; Schwartz & Robertson, 2018). According to Dines (2015), "punk is treated as the educator – the facilitator – that provided a framework of enquiry, questioning and interrogation" (p. 21) in his own experience within DIY scenes. This framing mirrors both Tucker's (2012) reimagining of punk places as heterotopias and Wright's (2019) notion of utopian pedagogies within music education, an approach to learning that embraces experimentation and autonomy through emergent musical forms and creates space to resist hegemonic forces by enacting alternate ways of being. However, as Schwartz (2015) contends, the musical aesthetics within punk do not represent a rebellion against or complete break from popular western music and its associated knowledges and hierarchies. Instead, punk critiques the musicological tenets of western music from within, pushing the boundaries of writing, performing, and conceptualizing music. This produces a self-negating alternative to a musical status-quo. Punk's aesthetic pedagogies therefore emerge as a process of forming or becoming, one that does not have a linear process or end goal but rather an embrace of multiple ideologies that produce a pedagogy within the act of making and listening to music (Schwartz, 2015). Taken as a whole, the matrix of people, spaces, artifacts, and ideologies that comprise punk and DIY scenes produce a rich and unique learning environment that often expands beyond the borders of the scene itself as practitioners move into and through other education contexts.

The Aesthetics of Punk Pedagogy

Although Schwartz's writing on punk pedagogy does provide rich insight into how the musical aesthetics of punk act as an educational technology (Schwartz, 2015; Schwartz & Robertson, 2018), these texts do not comment on the visual aesthetics of performance within DIY music or the aesthetic pedagogies of DIY musical forms beyond punk. As a way to address both of these aspects of DIY music, I turn towards the aesthetic theory of Paulo Freire and the notion of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998). I do so for two reasons: first, punk pedagogy scholars have routinely relied on Freire within their work (see Haworth, 2010; Santos & Guerra, 2018; Torrez, 2012) but have rarely engaged his aesthetic theories and, second, the notion of collective empowerment behind relational aesthetics (see Rancière, 2009) provides a clear analogue to the egalitarian nature of DIY communities, venues, and performances (Makagon, 2015; Verbuc, 2014). I will therefore use this section to situate both of these aesthetic theories within the context of punk pedagogy and DIY music more broadly.

Relational Aesthetics

In his original conception of relational aesthetic, Bourriaud (1998) pushes the notion of aesthetics beyond the sensory by shifting the locus of both meaning and communication within an artistic work from the object itself to the newly formed relationships between people witnessing or experiencing an event. For example, the meaning of a musical performance under relational aesthetics does not solely emerge on stage. Instead, it comes from the newly redefined social arrangement engendered by the audience, the band, the people organizing the show, the venue, and all other actors that contribute to the construction of the performance. For Rancière (2009), relational aesthetics produce a political understanding of experiencing the arts, one where "art consists in constructing spaces and relations to reconfigure materially and symbolically the

territory of the common" (p. 22). Art is therefore political not because of its message but because of the way that art reconfigures the world around it. An artist who engages relational aesthetics does not imagine the audience as a group of passive observers but instead works to redraw and interrupt the lines of relation between people engaged in that experience. Considering that DIY scenes embed the egalitarian politics of DIY within their performances and venues, it follows that DIY musicians would take these considerations to heart whether or not they use this precise terminology. By purposefully acting against the divide between audience and artist through spatial orientations (e.g. a lack of a stage) as a means towards collective participation (Verbuc, 2014) and using non-traditional venues (such as houses or basements) to create space for personal relationships to form at shows (Makagon, 2015), DIY scenes align with the aims of relational aesthetics by foregrounding and fostering relationships via performances.

To situate relational aesthetics squarely within the context of music, it helps to draw parallels between this theory and Small's (1996, 1998) concept of musicking. According to the author, musicking "is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing" (Small, 1998, p. 9). The social value and significance of music therefore does not exist in a particular composition or piece of music but rather distributed across a network of actors and relationships through the performance and reception of music within social contexts. Musicking therefore mirrors relational aesthetics by shifting the locus of meaning within music away from the cultural artifact itself and towards the interpersonal relationships that surround music. Importantly for this analysis, Small (1998) connects musicking to practices of learning by claiming that "musicking is in fact a way of knowing our world— not that pre-given physical world, divorced from human experience, that

modern science claims to know but the experiential world of relationships in all its complexity" (p. 50). Engaging in musicking and, by extension, relational aesthetics therefore exists as its own process of learning, one in which audience members (as agentic actors, not merely passive recipients) and artists alike co-construct new knowledges. Building on this assertion, Small (1996) argues that a truly democratic approach to music education, one that challenges the hegemonic and dominating forces embedded within neoliberal enactments of formal education, must engage students through musical traditions that embrace musicking. Although Small (1996) focuses on free-improvisation in this analysis, I contend that DIY music provides an alternate space for emergent democratic approaches to music education. Since punk places create space for musical experimentation and communal knowledge construction to occur (Tucker, 2012), DIY scenes could potentially provide a rich context for musicking-based education practices.

However, as Wright (2019) acknowledges, hegemonic and oppressive forces often seep into supposedly liberatory approaches to music education despite the best intentions of practitioners. This raises the question of whether or not relational aesthetics (and the performances/artworks that embody them) can result in the "redistribution of the sensible" (Rancière's, 2009, p. 21) towards an egalitarian end and create space for new knowledges to emerge. According to Bishop (2004), this realignment of interpersonal and social relationships can occur but only through antagonism. By antagonizing the audience, works relying on relational aesthetics force audiences to either defend their ideology or (hopefully) change how they exist in the world. Without this antagonism, the worldview of the audience remains not only unchallenged but reinforced. Considering that DIY music (and punk in particular) take the notion of antagonizing the audience very seriously (Bailey, 2009; Blush, 2010; O'Hara, 2001), it follows that DIY culture would align itself with this reading of relational aesthetics. Taking a

different approach, McClure (2013) proposes that artistic works might instead construct a speculative space or "subjunctive mood" where audience members and artists exist temporarily and, hopefully, strive to enact in the future. Rather than using art as a means towards reconfiguring the social relationships of the here and now, the subjunctive mood asks the audience to temporarily experience a possible future and build towards this end within the broader world later on. The temporal and ephemeral nature of DIY venues (especially those that only host shows intermittently, such as record stores or skate parks) allows for a reading of DIY shows as speculative spaces. Rather than existing outside of the dominant culture, punk places create heterotopias where scene members can enact a desired, egalitarian politics during the time span of the show (Tucker, 2012). Considering the ways in which punks and other DIY scene members routinely reconfigure the cultural landscape beyond the walls of the venue (Grazian, 2013; Woods, 2019), it follows that DIY scenes act on this subjunctive mood beyond the moment of performance by attempting to instill a DIY ethics in other social arenas.

A Freirean Approach to Aesthetic Education

Shifting from literature on aesthetic theory to writings explicitly centered on aesthetic pedagogies, I now turn towards Paulo Freire's writings on the aesthetics of education. But to engage Freire's aesthetic theory, it helps to first consider his distinction between traditional models of education and liberatory approaches to learning. Specifically, Freire (1970) argues that the standard approach to teaching, known as the banking model of education, rests on the assumption that teachers can deposit knowledge into the heads of students through lectures, textbooks, and various other forms of distributing truths about the world. The author argues against this approach, claiming that students do not have the opportunity to apply this knowledge and only file away disconnected facts that they eventually retrieve for the sole purpose of taking

a test (making this information useless beyond the classroom). More importantly, this approach to education also denies the full humanity of students and leads to the reinscription of oppressive relationships between teachers and students (Freire, 1970). In response, Freire (1973) advocates for a dialogic model in which teachers and students construct knowledge of the world together. This process involves codifying and recodifying understandings of the world in collaborative settings through an ongoing dialogue between people and artifacts, moving towards a richer, fuller, and emergent understanding of the world where teachers and students learn from each other (Freire, 1970; Shor & Freire, 1987).

Although Freire specifically frames this argument within the context of formal schooling and not artistic communities, the author provides a potential connection between these two educational contexts when discussing the aesthetic qualities of education. According to Freire, "education is simultaneously a certain theory of knowledge going into practice, a political and aesthetic act. These three dimensions are always together, simultaneous moments of theory and practice, art and politics" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 31). This leaves the door open for both educators and artists to think about how aesthetic acts may also exist as educational technologies. Freire (1973) provides an even more concrete means through which artists can reimagine their work as an educational praxis when discussing "codifications." A crucial part of dialogic teaching, codifications are works of visual art that transpose social realities into metaphors through which students and teachers can discuss the world around them (Freire, 1970; 1973). The educational praxis that emerges from these codifications involves three major steps: first, an educator or artist would codify the world into these images; next, teachers and students would decodify these images, reflecting on the world through the use of codifications; and, finally, the learning community would recodify these images, adjusting the codification to better reflect both

the existing social world and a future they hope to engender (Freire, 1973). By crafting works that codify the world into various artifacts, performances, or social events, artists can begin to mirror this process and lay the groundwork for an artistically inclined Freirean praxis (both through visual art and other art forms).

Although Freire frames his understanding of aesthetics within a more traditional use of the term, a number of direct connections to relational aesthetics also exist within this conceptualization. Primarily, Freire uses codifications as a way to broach the goals proposed by Rancière, Small, and McClure: the dialogic model of education reimagines the social relationships within the classroom by challenging the teacher-student dynamic while also using this experience as a means towards imagining an equitable, democratic, and just future. This connection also positions the banking model and the dialogic method as an interesting (albeit overly binary) framework to think through the aesthetic pedagogies of the performing arts. With this in mind, I now turn towards videos of performances by hardcore band G.L.O.S.S. and experimental musician Sarah Hennies. I chose these videos because both artists explore themes of transgender identity within DIY contexts but do so through highly divergent musical aesthetics. To further investigate these videos, I conducted a close reading (or, more accurately, viewing) of these videos (see Smith, 2016) and paid particular attention to how audiences responded to and interacted with the performers on stage. I then aligned this reading with Freire's pedagogical models and notions of relational aesthetics to unearth the aesthetic pedagogies of each.

DIY Aesthetic Pedagogies in Practice

The Relational Aesthetics of G.L.O.S.S.

Starting with a straight forward, punk-oriented approach to DIY, the video *G.L.O.S.S. live San Jose (Full Set) 8/12/2016* (B., 2016) captures the band G.L.O.S.S. performing in a non-descript venue space in front of a packed room. The set starts with vocalist Sadie Switchblade addressing the audience without a microphone, asking if the people listening can hear her without the PA (they respond in unison, saying yes) before launching into a monologue about the cruelty of the modern condition that often extends into radical communities through an unwillingness to forgive others or oneself. The audience sits silently, listening to Switchblade's words and applauding at certain moments. However, this sense of passivity from the audience ends abruptly as Switchblade begins screaming the opening lyrics for the song 'G.L.O.S.S.' (G.L.O.S.S., 2016). As soon as she shouts the opening line, the audience immediately joins in, pushing towards the front of the stage and screaming along into Switchblade's microphone. Shortly after, the rest of the band begins playing and the pit opens up.

The rest of the set continues as one would expect to see at a hardcore show, creating a visually oriented performance that speak as strongly to the themes of gender equality as the lyrical or musical content. The musicians throw themselves into their instruments and maintain a high level of energy throughout, only occasionally pausing to catch their breath. The audience seems similarly enthused as they dance, mosh, head bang, and jump around. While Griffin (2013) might argue that the actions captured on video trade in masculine performance acts (a common theme across hardcore and punk concerts), the video depicts a relatively high number of assumedly women audience members participating in these actions. This notion runs counter to O'Hara's (1999) depiction of punk as a spatially divided community in which scenes often

relegate women to the edges of venues, reinscribing the assumption that they only exist as audience members or the significant others of male performers. Considering that G.L.O.S.S. often uses lyrical content to aggressively advocate for the rights of marginalized gender identities within a patriarchal society, this visual shift towards a female dominated performance space holds just as much thematic importance as the music. Under this reading, the aesthetics of the performance (and the meaning behind those aesthetics) emerge from a matrix that includes the music, the performance acts of the band and the audience, the space itself, and the relationship between all of these. G.L.O.S.S. therefore employs a relational aesthetic within their work.

Returning to Bishop's (2004) claim that the realignment of interpersonal and social relationships within relational aesthetics cannot occur without at least a sense of antagonism, G.L.O.S.S.'s aggressive performance seems to indicate a similar philosophy. Although the band's stage presence and sound does not seem overtly antagonistic within the context of hardcore, the fact that the band engages in these performative acts in the face of a male dominated scene while directing their aggression towards patriarchal systems (see G.L.O.S.S., 2016) accounts for a sense of antagonism within their work. The band not only antagonizes larger social mechanisms for reproducing gender norms, but hardcore, punk, and radical communities' insistence on reinscribing patriarchal values as well. To this end, G.L.O.S.S. does not attempt to challenge the broader social regime directly but instead creates a subjunctive mood (McClure, 2013) which audience (and band) members can exist within temporarily and, hopefully, strive for in the future.

This approach relies on the pedagogical ability of punk places to embody and enact the popular knowledge of DIY communities (Cordova, 2016; Tucker, 2012), allowing punks to assert their own experiences, ideologies, and knowledges as valid. Switchblade's speech at the

beginning of the set seems to hint at this notion: the speech begins with her asking and subsequently answering the question “why are we here?”, claiming that “I think we're out here because we've been hurt one way or another by this world, and also we have all hurt each other” (B., 2016). She then ends the speech by asking audiences to forgive themselves during a moment of silence, allowing them to reach out to others and provide for them in ways the world cannot. While this call to action may hold some resonances outside of the performance within society at large, it focuses on those immediate relationships to the self and others within that community and, subsequently, that space of performance. This is especially true when she asks “everyone to remember that because our community can be so unforgiving” (B., 2016) Although change in the outside world plays into this declaration, it starts with reimagining the community of people at that show, a process that sits at the sociocultural heart of both formal and informal enactments of punk pedagogy (Torrez, 2012).

Beyond the Speculative in Hennies’ *Falsetto*

While still falling under the category of DIY music and connected by similar thematic elements, the performance of *Falsetto* by Sarah Hennies at the End Tymes Music Festival (Herting, 2017) contrasts sharply with that of G.L.O.S.S. in terms of its musical, visual, and relational aesthetics. The piece starts with Hennies, the only performer on stage, sitting behind a bass drum and an assortment of other percussion instruments. She moves across the makeshift wooden table in front of her, hitting a series of woodblocks and shaking a collection of maracas before pushing down on what looks like an industrial stamp and using a kick pedal to hit the bass drum. She then repeats this sequence in the exact same order but does so while constantly ringing a small bell with her right hand. The ringing continues endlessly, unaccompanied for a long period of time, until she finally plays the same woodblock, maraca, stamp, and bass drum

sequence (while continuing to ring the bell) again. And then again. And again. Finally, she picks up another bell with her other hand (which she also rings endlessly) and, again, repeats the same sequence with the wood blocks, maracas, stamp, and bass drum. Then she starts kicking a set of chimes with her foot and ringing a number of other bells with her now overburdened hands, adding each one to the collection slowly over the course of the performance. All the while Hennies tries to repeat the same (increasingly arduous) sequence of maraca shakes and wood block hits. As she picks up more and more bells, her ability to play the other instruments rapidly deteriorates as maracas fall off the table, the bass drum shifts across the stage, and her chair drifts backwards. Eventually, at a seemingly random point, she stops, says thank you, and walks off stage.

During all of this, the audience remains almost entirely motionless and silent, producing the visual opposite of the G.L.O.S.S. performance. While this act of intently listening may not naturally evoke a sense of relational aesthetics, I propose that this inaction from the audience remains crucial to the piece. As Hennies' performance becomes increasingly difficult, the audience remains set in its role as a passive spectator, watching her struggle to accomplish the task of playing a basic percussive sequence while ringing a collection of bells. This task would prove exceedingly easy for a group of performers, each one grabbing a bell or two while Hennies plays the other instruments, but she instead bears this burden without the help of the audience. Even in those moments when she drops or moves her instruments, the audience remains motionless. This passivity continues despite the common reaction from audiences at DIY shows to breach the imagined, and often dissolved, boundary of the stage and help performers adjust and account for their collapsing instruments (Verbuc, 2014). The power and meaning behind *Falsetto* therefore emerges through the distributed process of musicking (Small, 1998). The

significance of the performance does not come from the composition behind this piece of music but instead forms within the relationship between the audience and the artist, one in which spectators watch Hennies struggle with a seemingly simple task and look around to (possibly) see if others will help. This (lack of) interaction in the face of struggle subsequently challenges audience members to contend with and reflect on their own inaction.

While the abstract nature of this performance and the affect it produces might allow for multiple interpretations, the title of the piece ("falsetto" being a vocal technique in which singers with lower voices sing notes higher than their usual range) in relation to Hennies identity as a trans woman thematically centers this work around gender identity and, specifically, an understanding of gender as performative. As Butler (1988) notes, "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (p. 519). Of course, these repetitive acts become far more difficult for trans people if social norms ascribe certain gendered acts exclusively to heteronormative bodies. For instance, the mere act of "talking like a woman" (according to existing societal standards) proves far easier for most cisgender women, as their vocal chords often develop in such a way that speaking in a higher register comes naturally. The increased challenge of juggling performative acts then metaphorically maps on to *Falsetto,* as Hennies inevitably fails to handle all of the percussion instruments simultaneously, much in the same way that trans woman may never receive full recognition as women under a heteronormative ideology because of their inability to convincingly or repetitively engage gender performance acts (Butler, 2011). Instead, Hennies continues to struggle in the face of futility through her performance and the audience complicity observes.

Under this reading of the work, Hennies approach to engaging themes of trans identity inherently relies on a relational aesthetic that distributes the meaning of the piece across the audience and venue space through musicking. Moreover, *Falsetto* relies on Bishop's (2004) understanding of relational aesthetics through antagonism, an antagonism enacted through Hennies' ability to affectively challenge audiences to sit with their own decision to help (or not). The product of this antagonism exists in how audiences respond to the musician's challenges in that moment, grounding the dialogue about trans identity in Hennies herself and not an abstracted or lyrical description of the hardships faced by trans women within a heteronormative society. Although the abstracted nature of the music may result in some audience members failing to grasp the commentary on trans identity, spectators still have to grapple with their (un)involvement in the performance which easily translates to situations outside the confines of the venue as well as the embodied DIY ethics (Woods, 2017) and egalitarian politics (Makagon, 2015) within the individual and venue. *Falsetto* therefore creates space for the audience to enact a new set of social relations. In this performance, however, no one lived up to that challenge.

The Construction of Knowledge Within/Through DIY Performance

Expanding on their aesthetic differences, I also contend that the performances from G.L.O.S.S. and Hennies embody contrasting pedagogies. Starting with Hennies and using Freire as a guide, a clear alignment with the dialogic method emerges when considering *Falsetto* as its own form of codification. In this piece, Hennies has transformed the act of playing percussion instruments into a codified social reality (see Hennies, 2018), reproducing her experience as a trans woman in a heteronormative society in such a way that audiences need to experience and manage an affective response to this codified performance. The connection to Freire further develops when considering the reliance on relational aesthetics. Since the piece itself emerges

through social interactions beyond the stage, *Falsetto* demands a certain level of dialogue between artist and audience (even if that dialogue does exist as a spoken one). While I have argued that experimental music often fails to achieve these Freirean aspirations because communities do not work towards a recodification of the world, this failure often rests on the actual environment in which artists perform and not the work itself (Woods, 2018). To that end, Hennies has produced the first step in the dialogic process and concert organizers and attendees need to catch up. For theorists such as Freire (1970), education as a form of enacted liberation should not only describe the social world but challenge and reconfigure that world as well. Hennies work aspires to do just that by codifying the existing world (qua her experience) and creating space through which audiences can challenge, investigate, and respond to that codification. Instead of just inviting audiences to reconsider their understanding of a reality beyond the performance, *Falsetto* creates space for normally invisible assumptions about and relationships to gender to reveal themselves. The performance then challenges audiences to utilize the affordances of the DIY venue by engaging a communal process of constructing popular knowledge (Tucker, 2012). In turn, this analysis of *Falsetto* positions the piece as both a musical performance and an educational technology with both framings working towards the same end.

Shifting to the video featuring G.L.O.S.S., a different set of epistemological assumptions emerge since the performance aligns with Freire's (1970) conception of the banking model of education. Relying on a relatively traditional approach to political content within hardcore (see Blush, 2010), Switchblade very directly articulates the band's stance on issues related to trans identity within modern culture. The lyrics from 'Trans Day of Revenge' provide a clear example: "Remember those dead and gone, but don't let the media set us up for harm. HRC, selfish fucks.

Yuppie gays threw us under the bus" (G.L.O.S.S., 2016). Within these lyrics, the band takes a clear stance on how to feel about popular media, organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign, and upper-class gay culture. Furthermore, the band also makes claims as to how others should respond to those institutions. This differs from the codified approach of Hennies by shifting the locus of knowledge within the performance space. Rather than creating knowledge through a distributed, affective response to an original codification, G.L.O.S.S. assumes the role of arbiter. This formation sits at odds with the ground up approach to learning described by Niknafs & Przybylski (2017) in their exploration of education within political music contexts, instead positioning the band as a proxy for the teacher. In other words, the distribution of knowledge within this model reverts to a hierarchical set of relationships in which Switchblade professes a certain understanding of the world that audience members can passively listen to or (as many within the audience do) repeat those same words and ideas back to the performers. Other musicians or members of the audience can disagree (publicly if they happen to be on the same bill as G.L.O.S.S.), but they cannot do so in the moment of the performance. This leaves audiences with the choice to either passively agree with the band's opinion or quietly disagree without any means of dialogue.

While this may seem antithetical to punk's anti-authoritarian spirit, the assertion that punk pedagogies (here referring specifically to the pedagogies of punk music and not all DIY music) often enact an intrinsic challenge to education models rather than a rebellion or rupture (Schwartz, 2015) creates a means for the banking model to hold sway. And although Freire (1970) takes a clear stance against the banking model of education, utilizing this epistemological formation within certain artistic endeavors may hold value, as shown by Dines (2015) autoethnographic study of punk. Since the queer bodies at the center of G.L.O.S.S.'s thematics

exist outside of heteronormative understanding of gender, the band's message operates in such a way as to reclaim these abjected identities and knowledges while creating space for both to exist (see Cordova, 2016). While this may not address most issues inherent to the banking model of education, it engages the goals of punk pedagogies by shifting the institution through which this knowledge travels and placing the power of distribution into the hands of an oppressed community (see Kahn-Egan, 1998; Miner & Torrez, 2012). In the moment of performance, a marginalized group or individual suddenly gets to decide (or, at least, communicate) what constitutes truth and reassert a specific set of communal knowledges as valuable. By shifting the arbiter of knowledge away from larger capitalistic institutions to radical communities, G.L.O.S.S. utilizes relational aesthetics to momentarily places that power into the hands of the oppressed. In turn, the performance reinforces the speculative reality or subjunctive mood of DIY discussed in previous sections.

However, as Freire (1970) asserts, the goal of liberation cannot exist as the mere transfer of power from one group to another. Instead, liberation exists in the process of reinscribing a full humanity within all people regardless of their current position within society (since the oppressors rob themselves of their own humanity through oppression as well). This emancipation only occurs through the dissolution of the social structure that divides people into the oppressed and the oppressors. Individuals that hope to challenge the state or exist outside of its control need to instead build a sense of community without constructing a singular and universally held identity. By presenting an official knowledge or stance, G.L.O.S.S. do just that: proposing a singular ideology and set of responses with which others should identify. For Niknafs (2018), this enactment of a liberatory or utopian music pedagogy (Wright, 2019) exists within the machinations DIY scenes, but G.L.O.S.S.'s aesthetic pedagogies also seem to undermine these

anarchic aims. Moreover, the approach taken by G.L.O.S.S. also sits at odds with Cordova's (2016) framing of punk pedagogies as enactments of educative healing. This becomes clear when the author defines teaching via educative healing as a process of "consciously observing learners create their own educative desire paths, rather than forc[ing] them to walk on the miseducative pavement" (Cordova, 2016, p. 148). While this critique should not be read as a complete dismissal of the band's work (creating space for abjected knowledge and marginalized identities to exist holds its own intrinsic value), it does point towards questions about artistic gestures and pedagogical practices within DIY music that demand serious consideration.

Conclusion

In producing this (admittedly overtly binary) comparison between performances by G.L.O.S.S. and Sarah Hennies, I challenge scholars to further analyze the epistemological assumptions and aesthetic pedagogies within punk pedagogy. By unearthing the ways in which artists utilize performances to enact certain forms of knowledge construction and learning, education researchers can further understand what and how people learn not only through arts-based education practices but the aesthetic experience of witnessing a performance itself. Paired with theories of relational aesthetics, this analysis enables theories of teaching and learning, like those developed by Freire, to act as a theoretical frame for understanding artistic practices and the ways audiences interact with cultural artifacts. The reverse holds value as well: by placing artistic works in conversation with educational theory, scholars may provide insight into the nuances of sociocultural theories of learning, especially those situated within informal learning environments. Although the theoretical approach taken in this paper provides some insight into this new conceptual space, future research should engage these questions through empirical research as well. Additionally, branching out beyond DIY practices holds significant value.

While DIY music provides a unique space for this type of investigation, any space where the relationship between artist and audience emerges through an artistic interaction should provide a means towards understanding how aesthetic pedagogies emerge within the world.

Focusing on DIY music in particular, this analysis also challenges scholars studying punk pedagogy to consider how the myriad of artistic traditions within DIY culture enact a variety of specific pedagogies informed by (sometimes intrinsically conflicting) epistemologies. In doing so, I extend the challenge posed by Furness (2012) to meaningfully engage DIY culture as something other than a purely punk space. Since DIY scenes (and their associated channels of cultural production) have always intersected with multiple genres (Bailey, 2009) and have increasingly embraced other forms of musical expression (Makagon, 2015; Oakes, 2009), punk pedagogy should follow suit by exploring the pedagogies of DIY culture that extend beyond the subgenres of punk and their associated scenes. While Schwartz & Robertson (2018) take steps in this direction by drawing connections between punk and hip hop pedagogies, work that distinguishes between specific enactments of punk pedagogies also needs to occur. To use Furness' (2012) words

> when the complexities and nuances of punk music, aesthetics and identities are ignored in lieu of sweeping claims…, this has a significant bearing on the ways in which people conceptualize, interpret and draw conclusions about the "politics of punk," youth subcultures, and perhaps the social functions of art and music, as well. (p. 17)

The same can be said of punk pedagogies. If punk pedagogy scholarship draws universal claims about punk as an educational technology, it would inevitably undermine the rich complexities of DIY culture while simultaneously glossing over the problematics of these spaces and their associated artifacts. By foregrounding DIY culture within punk pedagogy, scholars can move

beyond this narrow (and often overly idealized) framing to consider the polysemic heart of punk culture.

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