NOT QUITE 'NO FUTURE':
THE PERSISTENCE OF PUNK

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the lives of nine women who were part of the creation of the punk scene in Vancouver, BC and have continued to identify as punks as they get older. By conducting in-depth interviews that cover specific aspects of their life histories, I gather information on how these women's participation in punk influenced their choices and goals and how they, in turn, influenced the punk scene. Using theoretical concepts from the works of bell hooks and Pierre Bourdieu, I argue that the women were able to exercise a great deal of creative agency despite the many restrictions to which they were subject because of their gender, class, style and life circumstances. They were able to turn limitations into opportunities that enriched their own lives and the community around them in a way that shows how a marginal cultural movement may contribute to greater social change.

Keywords: Punk; gender; age; social change, marginality, intersectionality, habitus.

For Kelly, who didn't make it this far.

Acknowledgements

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1: A (very) brief history of punk and thoughts on punk

I trace the origins of this research to a cool, damp day in Vancouver. On Saturday, September 8, 1979, four local punk bands and one local reggae band played a gig (concert) at Vanier park. The bands were DOA, the K-Tels, the Subhumans, the Pointed Sticks, and Reconstruction. It was a free, all-ages, outdoor performance that was co-ordinated by local anti-nuclear activists. I was too young to get into bars and had only been to two rock concerts (both at a sports stadium) before that day. This was an entirely different experience. The people who were up on stage were young men who lived in the area in and around the city. Those who organized the show were men and women who likewise were 'local'. There were no massive trailers full of gear nor teams of roadies. There were no security guards and no laminated passes. There were no cordoned off areas that signified an exclusive 'backstage' area. People jumped off the stage and into the audience and back again. The line between audience and performers was oftentimes indistinguishable. Everyone seemed friendly and eccentric. There were very few of the colourful, big Mohawk hair-dos and expensive leather jackets that were even then already used to symbolize 'punk' in the mainstream media. People were dressed in jeans, chequered shirts and sneakers. A few people had the traditional 'rocker' jean jacket with the band patch sewn on the back. More striking to me were those people who had rejected the readily available commercial band logos and instead drew all over their clothes with large felt markers or spray paint. It was a chaotic mix of 'do it yourself' (DIY) rock and roll that was cheap, accessible and apparently open to anyone.

It was also overtly political. People circulated through the park handing out

pamphlets and selling newspapers. There were many types of communists (Marxists, Marxist-Leninists and Trotskyites), union organizers, anarchists, and other political activists. They were using this gathering to look for new allies and adherents. There was a notable absence of politicians who were connected to any of the mainstream political parties. This was a space for marginalized political groups. In my everyday life, I felt I did not fit well into the upper-middle class high school that I attended on the prosperous West side of Vancouver. I hid the fact that I was one of the only people whose family was on welfare, whose father had been in jail and whose mother had been subject to prejudice and harassment for publically coming out as a lesbian. The world appeared as a hostile place for both me and my family. The kinship between me and these other angry, critical, politically-minded folks who were circulating around this musical event seemed obvious and was a relief. I didn't have to pretend to be interested in cars or sports teams or the next family vacation to some foreign country. I had found a community where I fit.

That was a long time ago now. I spent years after that going to punk gigs, living in punk houses and suffering and enjoying the lows and highs of life in a community that centred on punk music. I returned to university with the intent of continuing an education that had been derailed by poverty, drug and alcohol use and the cultural dissonance of moving between the materially comfortable and privileged world of the university and the chaos and marginality of the punk scene. My return to SFU happened to coincide with an attempt to hold a conference about punk at the university.[1] I had heard about this conference from both new friends within the academic community and old friends within

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[1] Further information on this conference is available through the web page announcing the postponement of the event. It has not been rescheduled as of 2011. http://www.sfu.ca/punkconference/

the punk community. The conference did not happen and I heard a considerable amount of hostility from some people in the punk scene who considered the whole project to be an attempt on the part of university professors to take ownership of some of the traditions and ideas of the punk scene. I was intrigued by this defence of what I soon came to call 'cultural capital'. I also quickly noticed that there was a sharp gender divide. The organizers of the conference were men. The bands and punk 'personalities' who were invited were men. The people whom I heard the most complaints from were women. There was a story here that involved much more than a style of music but the music is what most people first identify as punk and a brief history of the music is a necessary starting place.

There is a rapidly growing historical literature around punk. Some of it grew out of the punk scene itself. Alongside the bands was a legion of people who organized concerts, put up posters, published fanzines, opened shops and otherwise contributed to a community that was focused around the punk style and attitude. Punk quickly established its own history and this history is recorded in a myriad of ways. One of the earliest books, perhaps ironically, is subtitled "the obituary of rock and roll" (Burchill & Parsons, 1978). They argue that punk was the latest and greatest expression of rock and roll style and attitude but that it is also the last desperate gasp of that style of music. Rock and roll, like history itself, has a curious ability to survive its own death, however, and there are numerous books that describe a further historical narrative of punk.

Punk history is an interesting amalgam of small, apparently disconnected, regional music scenes that exploded onto the mainstream media stage in the middle of the 1970s. Long, detailed historical works trace the origins of these music scenes back to a few

influential bands from an underground music scene centred in New York (Burchill & Parsons, 1978; Heylin, 1993; McNeil & McCain, 1996; Reynolds, 2005). It is also clear that many of the attitudes that flourished in the punk scene could easily be traced to much earlier musical movements. (Robb, 2006) The history of punk is idiosyncratic and open to various interpretations, in part because it involves a very small number of people. One writer has attempted to record the names of every punk band in Britain (Glasper, 2004) and it is plausible that he could accomplish this even if he limits his research to the early punk scene in England, which contained over 40 million people at that time. Punk music is usually released on small local record labels, receives very little commercial radio play and tours are organized by individuals and small groups with little financial backing from larger organizations. One of the strongest illustrations of the antipathy that punk music faces was the way in which the Sex Pistols single, *God Save the Queen*, was banned from the charts although the quantity of records sold should have put it at number one or two. I recall that a photo at the time showed a blank space at the number two position on a record chart in England. Despite this suppression, punk has successfully spread outside the London/New York axis of its origin. Research shows that there are punk scenes in numerous other countries that share some of the aesthetics and attitudes of the English and American punks but develop quite independently and with very little help from the more commercialized mechanisms of globalized culture (O'Connor, 2001 & 2004). Punk has managed to spread around the world with little support (and even despite opposition) from the large structures of cultural dissemination.

One of the places where punk successfully took root was on the West coast of Canada in Vancouver, BC. Joe Keithley describes the origins of the Vancouver punk

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scene in his autobiography, *I, Shithead* (2003). He was already in a band that was trying

to successfully break into the small-town rock and roll circuit in western Canada. His

band was not appreciated by the locals and their first paying gig was summarily ended by

the bar manager before they finished their set. On the way back to the city, they decided

to become a punk rock band. All they knew about punk was from listening to the first

album by the Ramones (1976) and seeing a few clips on the news of performances by

punk bands in the UK. This was enough for Keithley to adopt punk wholeheartedly and

he quickly found others who were similarly inspired (Armstrong, 2001). The first punk

concert in Vancouver took place in July of 1977 and featured a punk band from

Vancouver, The Furies, and their peers from the nearby city of Victoria, Dee Dee and the

Dishrags. The Dishrags are women who went to high school together and played

frequently in Vancouver. They are the original punk band from the West Coast of Canada

but they are also still just a 'girl-band' (Beadle & Wiseman, 2011). Punk rock did not

escape from the greater dynamics of gender oppression and part of the purpose of this

thesis is to fill in some of those apparently blank spaces in the research on punk that are

full of women's stories.

Much of the more analytical scholarship around punk coalesces around work that

comes from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) located at the

University of Birmingham (Haenfler, 2010, p. 7). One of the most prominent theories is

that punk is a subculture that is focused around style. As a subculture, punks as a group

are subordinated to and in conflict with dominant groups in society. Style becomes the

means by which they can express resistance and revolt. Hebdige describes "the idea of

style as a form of Refusal [*sic*]" (Hebdige, 1978, p. 2). His book puts punk within the

context of many other groups that defined themselves by style and argues that all of these are youthful expressions of rebellion based in part on class divisions within British society. His work is both a textual and semiotic analysis of punk words, music and fashion. While Hebdige was well aware that there were limitations to this analysis (1978, pp. 138-139), his book clearly makes the point that punk was important in the lives of many people and that part of that importance is due to the ideas that were embedded in its style.

Numerous other writers take up the challenge of linking punk style and working class resistance as described by Hebdige. Some of them focus on the apparent failure of punk to initiate any 'real' change either in the dominant music industry or in the world at large (Dancis, 1978; Grossberg, 1986; Simonelli, 2002). They extrapolate from this lack of influence that style could not affect any real change in the social and economic structures of society. This dovetails with the work of others who do not try to fit punk into a narrative of social change. Many researchers point to punk as a form of performativity that does not have roots in working class values but is rather a continuation of an art project that has its roots in Dada and was continued by the Situationists of the 1960s (Marcus, 1989; Nehring, 2006). These previous movements had not led to structural changes in class positions so it seems reasonable to expect that punk would prove equally as ineffective. It is also pointed out that some of the assumptions of the working-class origins of punk are incorrect. Punk is not necessarily a working-class movement (Dancis, 1978; Simonelli, 2002). Even within the UK, a society where class is well recognized, the argument that punk was an expression of working class rebellion was tenuous. When it is translated into other places, that discussion becomes even less

applicable. In the Vancouver area, for instance, punk bands were generally spearheaded by people who lived within a different class structure than Hebdige describes. They are better described as middle-class as the are the ones who had the resources to avoid work but still had the financial resources to afford guitars and beer.

All of these arguments continue to inform the discussion around punk and social change (Miura, 2010) but have also led to a broader discussion about where punk is situated in social terms and how it operates in social relationships. This research is often challenging to pursue. Punk was initially a style that was very much focused amongst young people and very contemptuous of much of the 'mainstream' world. This can make sociological research rather one-sided. Hebdige notes this bias in his own work when he comments that "we are in society but not inside it" (1979, p. 139). Those who do manage to spend time inside the punk scene often have a great deal of difficulty in doing analytic work. Julie Burchill who was 'inside' at one time describes the writing she did as "shockingly bad" because it was "written entirely on speed" (1987, p. viii). Several researchers have been able to straddle this divide and conduct sociological analysis as both insider and outsider.

Much of what Haenfler (2010) describes as "post-subcultural" and "clubculture" theories come from writers who have spoken with people who were in the punk scene, or who themselves have spent time in that scene (Bennett, 2006; Leblanc, 1999; Lydon, 1995; Thornton, 1996). Many of these people have continued to identify as punk as they get older. David Hesmondhalgh specifically warns against "the privileging of youth" (2005, p. 21) in research. He argues that this over-emphasis on youth comes from very specific historical circumstances and effectively restricts our understanding of punk. The

punk scene is not static either. It is expanding and morphing into other 'sub-scenes' or 'movement'. Straight Edge punks are those who eschew all drugs and alcohol but are still actively involved in creating punk music and participating in punk gigs. This specific type of punk attracts a considerable amount of attention from academics perhaps because they are more approachable than other punks (Atkinson, 2006; Haenfler, 2004 & 2006; Mullaney, 2007; Wilson & Atkinson, 2005). Punk also engenders other scenes such as Emo, Grunge, Goth and, quite recently, Steampunk[2]. Writing that constructs punk as purely a youth culture has become a smaller part of the mix as these latter analyses and these other 'scenes' considerably extend the field of punk culture.

A few researchers are taking advantage of punk's longevity to look closely at how punk functions constructively in the lives of its older fans. Albiez (2003) does this by looking specifically at one man (John Lydon, aka: Johnny Rotten) and the relationship between his life and punk culture. Bennett (2006) writes about older men who continue to contribute to the recreation of punk culture in their community. He does not, however, include any women in his research. His rationale for not interviewing older female punks is that "none of the older punks in [his] interview sample were married to or lived with older female punks" (2006, p. 224). This presupposes firstly, that there are (the normative) "older punks" and (the exceptional) "older female punks" and, secondly, that older female punks must somehow be attached to or affiliated with older male punks. The

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[2] Haenfler (2010) discusses many of these scenes in his work on youth subcultures. Greenwald (2003) goes into considerably more depth about Emo and connects it to Punk and Grunge. Information on Steampunk is readily available on web sites such as www.steampunkcanada.ca. Very little academic research has been done on Steampunk as of yet although the article by Guizzo (2008) provides a colourful introduction to the aesthetics of Steampunk. Miller and Riper (2011) provide an approach to Steampunk based more in Anthropology and Cultural Studies.

few women with whom he talked declined to participate in his research.

Some researchers have an easier time finding women in punk and there are interesting differences from the experiences of men. Caroline O'Meara (2003) and Helen Reddington (2004) specifically focus on punk musicians from the 1970s in the UK. They write largely about the constraints that women face when they enter the masculine and male-dominated world of rock music in general and punk in particular. Mavis Bayton (2006) articulates the material constraints that impede women's ability to participate in making music in the 'popular' arena. Money, equipment, transport, space and social constraints that are specific to them as women all play important roles in limiting their ability to publically participate in the creation of many forms of pop music including punk. A consequence of these restrictions is that there are far fewer women than men who are musicians and women are much more likely to be involved in other aspects of the punk scene. Lauraine Leblanc (1999) writes about a variety of punk women from across North America. These women participate in punk scenes in a multitude of ways and very few of them were musicians.

Leblanc's book, *Pretty in Punk* (1999), also grapples with the problem of applying subculture and feminist theories to women's participation in the punk scene. She concludes that subculture theories themselves "carry an explicit tag of masculinity, and even though they purport to apply broadly, they have sought to explain a limited number of cases, within a limited framework of research on males" (p. 225). She also expresses disappointment with how feminist researchers have dealt with punk women (p. 228). This critique of feminist researchers arises in part from their focus on punk as a youth subculture. She is offended by the way younger women and girls are treated within

academic settings and this extends to women in punk. My research is similar in focus to Leblanc's but covers a slightly different time period and is focused in Vancouver, a city with its own unique punk scene. I take into account both her dissatisfaction with the limitations of subculture theory and her critique of the approach taken by some feminist researchers but otherwise build on her sociological approach to punk culture.

As noted above, overemphasis on style is one of the shortcomings of some analyses of punk that has motivated researchers to look for a variety of other approaches. In order to explain how punk works constructively for some people, several scholars have turned to Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *cultural capital*, *habitus* and (to a lesser extent) *field* to explain punks' relationship to music and the use they make of it in their own lives (O'Connor, 2004; Albiez, 2003; Doane, 2006). Bourdieu's writings explore ways of connecting class and status with taste and culture (1990). Writers using his concepts generally point out that punk music and style are a means to create a cultural space that is separate and distinct from the work or class status of punks. Punks are able to deploy different types of 'capital' and use a variety of strategies to achieve goals or access resources. These strategies arise from their participation in the punk scene and are different from the strategies of those outside of that scene. Albiez for instance, describes John Lydon's creation of a "new perfomative and challenging sonic space" as directly antagonistic towards mainstream musical practices. Other artists utilized some similar strategies, but, Albiez argues, the combination that Lydon put together is a unique product of his punk background (2003, p. 372).

In addition to analytic tools of Bourdieu's theory, bell hooks provides some useful concepts and theoretical understanding of women who are marginalized and of how

culture works in people's lives.[3] Her work is commonly categorized as 'cultural studies'

or 'woman's studies' and the concepts that she uses are useful in describing and critically

analyzing the experiences of women in the punk scene. Her style of writing is also

accessible, deeply inspirational and helps bridge the gap between academic writing and

the life experiences of the women that participate in this project. Several of the women

that participated had read some of her work. Her books are not written with the specialist

jargon that often colours academic work and her work is familiar to many people outside

of academe including many of participants in this project. Most of them recognize her

name and some of them are very familiar with her work. Referencing her writing helps

connect this research to their own theoretical understanding of their lives.

Hooks is very conscious of how writing filters people's experiences through the

choices of the author. How she writes is an important part of what she is writing. She has

a political purpose to her writing and her theorizing. She makes this clear throughout her

work. She asserts that the reasons why we write are important (1990, p. 129), for whom

we are writing is important, (1990, p. 128) and that we must assume a radical standpoint

in our writing (1990, p. 132). This stance is largely a result of personal experiences both

as an individual and a member of a community, but it is also a result of being grounded in

feminist thought and writing. It is this grounding in experience and activism that makes

her writing useful in this project and reminds me that my role of researcher, writer and

academic puts me in a peculiar position in the punk community straddling the line

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[3]Hooks has not written specifically about punk but she has written about rap with which there was
some crossover with punk (The Beastie Boys, for instance). She notes that she was repeatedly asked to
trash rap music from a feminist perspective but when she chose instead to critique the white supremacist
capitalist patriarchy, many people lost interest (1994, p. 115).

between outsider and insider status. It is a means of overcoming the rift that Leblanc

(1999) saw between punk women and academics and bringing their different experiences

and understandings together.

2: Theory and method: Habitus on the margins

It is a useful and exciting project to bring punk and academic work together precisely because of the presence of both differences and commonalities in understanding and experiences. The women who participated in this project expressed an interest in participating in this sort of academic work. I am both an insider within the Vancouver punk scene, and an outsider with a specific agenda that structured primarily by my participation in university. I chose to use Bourdieu and hooks prior to starting the research because I felt that they would best help me understand some of the questions that I had formulated as an academic. Using their work in my research also helps situate it within the specific field of Sociology. My analysis of punk requires some explanation of both Bourdieu and hooks and of how their work helped form the research questions that shaped this project and the methods that I used.

Bourdieu's work can be used to analyze punk as a youth subculture but it can also extend beyond the limitations of subcultural theory. Bourdieu points out that what may at first appear to be a generational conflict (the basis of youth subculture theory) is something different. It is "not age-classes separated by natural properties, but *habitus* which have been produced by different *modes of generation,* [that] cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous" (Bourdieu, 1977, p.78). The division of culture based on age is not a useful tool especially as members of a subculture get older. The concept of habitus, and the related concepts of field help explain how these cultural affiliations and social structures persist and are reproduced within the diverse practices that individuals

act out in their lives.

Bourdieu describes habitus as "systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*" (1977, p. 72). By dispositions, he means firstly "the result of an organizing action" and secondly a way of being or a tendency towards a specific practice or way of doing things (1977, p. 214). Habitus is not the product of an individual and their actions but is a social structure that influences and is influenced by social relationships. It operates within a *field*: an arena of social relations that is defined by the social positions and their relationships that make up that field (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 226; Lane, 2000, pp. 176-177). These social positions and the agents that fill them are each associated with a certain habitus and have access to specific types and amounts of capital. I will not be discussing the details of the greater field in which punk operates in this thesis but it is important to remember that the habitus and the associated strategies that I am discussing take place within a certain environment that also shapes and limits the actions of everyone in that field. Individuals, as Bourdieu explains it, exist as "agents" who possess a point of view or a 'position' combined with the ability to "produce effects" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 107). Certain types of capital are available within that field. 'Cultural capital' is a specific type of symbolic capital that individuals can use or deploy to empower themselves and to gain access to resources that they need or want. Bourdieu clarifies the relationships of these concepts by creating the formula:
"[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice" (1984, p. 101).

Bourdieu's formulation of habitus can be misunderstood as a very static picture of how people's lives are structured. The actions of an individual are not determined by the above formula. Every person has the ability to engage in a range of practices that are

influenced by their habitus, their access to capital and the field in which they are located. Certain practices are very unlikely but someone may nonetheless choose to engage in them for a variety of reasons. The making of these choices is the practice of agency by an individual. Bourdieu is very careful to allow space for agency even within a structure that seems largely deterministic. "Even when they appear as the realization of the explicit, and explicitly stated, purposes of a project or plan, the practices produced by the habitus, [...] are only apparently determined by the future. [...] The fact is that, always tending to reproduce the objective structures of which they are the product, they are determined by the past conditions which have produced the principles of their production." (1977, p. 72) It is important to note the word 'tending' in these sentences. He goes on to explain that "it is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions and entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established assemblies." (1977, p. 73) There is no simple model that says a certain type of habitus forces people to behave in specific ways. There is what could be called a 'central tendency'[4] but there are also many variations that are possible if not probable.

It would also be a mistake to understand the concept of habitus as a real structure that is independent of the field in which it operates. Some aspects of habitus are fairly concrete and can be empirically measured and others are vague and open to understanding (or misunderstanding). It is also part of a loop of influences and practices that feed back on themselves. "The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which

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[4] 'Central tendency' is a term used in statistical analysis to indicate a value that best represents the bulk of the results such as mean or median. This is significant given Bourdieu's use of statistical data to talk about social structures.

organizes practices but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes" (1984, p. 170). Habitus is a theoretical construct that describes aims and practices but does not precisely illustrate or predict them.

Habitus is an aspect of people's lives that is not isolated from other influences. It operates within a field that constrains both the habitus and the individuals within that field. It cannot be easily categorized by a simple typology. It cannot produce a linear understanding of cause and behaviour. The strengths of this concept are numerous however. Logical arguments in the social sciences are inevitably complex and the pretence of objectivity is not possible. Unlike simplistic binary formulae of class, gender, age or race, habitus cannot be used to securely define the place of an individual within the greater social order. Nor does it reify any of these theoretical social structures so that they can be simply counted and summed up. They are always positioned in relation to other structures in a person's life and in the field as a whole.

Nonetheless, habitus is not truly amorphous in that it does have some structure, some shape and a considerable amount of substance and meaning. Structures do exist and they play a role in determining the limits of people's choices and in how they interact with one another. These structures themselves are also subject to change from the action of individuals. Habitus is reflexively constructed from certain structures that people are born into and by their own practices that generally re-enforce but can also be used to alter these structures. These alterations are not done easily however. Altering one's class position involves far more than getting a better job or higher income but, as Bourdieu

shows in *Distinction* (1984), it also involves changing many of the cultural markers that are a part of one's class.

A simplistic understanding of a person's class position tells us little of the resources to which they have access. The various types of capital that are also a component of Bourdieu's construction of habitus allows for a nuanced understanding of how people can modify their social position despite their class origins. Can education be used to alter their class? Can they use it to garner more resources? Bourdieu developed his theories in response to these questions by theorizing other forms of capital such as social capital or symbolic capital. I will not be trying to ascertain the specific forms of capital that these women had access to but I do want to understand the constraints upon their lives that directly shaped their understanding of the world around them. Their class, their education, their cultural taste, their family and their gender are all aspects of, though not precisely defined by, their habitus. Habitus describes central characteristics of a group but only describes the *tendencies* of any individual in that group. Many people choose to behave outside of the normative practices of the social groups of which they are a part. In doing this, they may create new normative practices. Punk women are one particularly identifiable group who have experimented with behaviours that are outside the norms they grew up with.

Bourdieu is very good at explaining how social relationships are re-created, and why certain practices exhibit such durability even as material and social circumstances around them change. Punk has shown some of this durability. The women in this project continue to identify as punks in their own lives and they also pass on that identity and the associated practices to new generations. When they were growing up, however, punk did

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not exist. They were involved in its creation and are now involved in its perpetuation and re-creation.

This creativity is far more than the formation of a few bands or the publishing of a few fanzines. These women, like many others, have limited resources at their disposal. They are subject to oppression based on their class status, their education and their gender. They make creative choices in their lives in order to deal with this intersection of oppressions. The many influences in their lives do not work independently of one another. They also work differently within different contexts. As the world around them changes, women's strategies and practices also have to change. The resources that they have available and their understanding of how to use those resources are transformed by events that are specific to their lives or events that are more generally present in the social world (the field) in which they live. The concepts of intersectionality and marginality as articulated by bell hooks (1984, 1989, 1990) become useful tools for explaining and understanding the complexity of influences and the myriad of practices that arise from these mixtures.

Intersectionality is a term that describes the ways in which multiple social relationships can work in the life of an individual or a specific group of people. It is prominent in black feminist thought because writers in that tradition need to articulate that, in their experience, they are not subject primarily to oppression based on their gender, nor oppression based primarily on their race, nor any other specific characteristic of their lives. They are subject to a constellation of oppressions that is unique to their situation and therefore requires unique strategies of resistance. These experiences are recognized in historical writing that looks at the ways in which black women were

excluded from both women's liberation struggles and from black liberation struggles (Giddings, 1985). It is further articulated in the work of Patricia Hill Collins, who notes that "individual biographies are situated within all domains of power and reflect their interconnections and contradictions" (2000, p. 287). Without this awareness of intersectionality, many of the subtleties of individual lives are lost. Bell hooks reminds her readers constantly of some of the factors that she feels are most important in the intersection of oppressions that permeates much of our society by repeatedly using the phrase "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (1994, p. 5) as a description of mainstream social structures rather than singling out a single aspect of the dominant power relations.

Hooks also frequently uses the terms *margin* and *centre* to describe the structure of society. "To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body" (1984, p. ix). The margin, as hooks defines it, is a place that is connected to the centre but people who live on the margins are restricted in their participation in the centre. The perspective from the margin can give any individual access to knowledge that she would not have if she lived in the center, however. Those who live on the margin have the advantage of understanding both the center and the margin whereas people who live in the center tend to ignore the margins (1984, p. ix). This additional awareness can be a source of pain, however. Hooks talks about "intense personal emotional upheaval" associated with talking about living on the margins. Her response is to theorize ways in which the margin can be chosen as a place for "radical openness." It is "a site of radical possibility [and] a space of resistance" (1990, p. 149). Marginality can be forced on an individual but she

may also choose to go to the margins[5] in order to pursue strategies of resistance to oppression that may not be possible in the center.

Hooks spends a great deal of time writing and talking about the effects of marginality. She writes to translate knowledge that exists in the margins into the centre. Concepts such as 'homeplace' that I use in my chapter on punk housing arise from her writings about living on the margins. While the communities of which they are a part may be marginalized, these women do not live their lives as marginal people. They are a significant part of their community and this community allows them a great deal of space to live their lives and put into practice their ideas of home, work, relationships and gender. These women talk about the differences that separate them from the 'straight' world around them and they frequently reference being belittled because of their participation in punk. However, they have a high degree of freedom to act in their lives and feel empowered in their chosen communities. Marginality in this sense is a measure of distance from many of the conventional markers of success in the social environment in which they grew up. They do not own houses or nice cars. They do not publish books or articles. They do not have high incomes or jobs with a great deal of status attached. Marginality here has specific characteristics that are partially constructed by their own experience but still has some similar characteristics to the marginality that hooks constructs.

Additionally, I appreciate the compassion and humanity that hooks' work conveys. Her writing varies from descriptions of intimate autobiographical details of her

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[5] "Self-marginalization" is explored by Reiichi Miura within the specific context of punk and politics (2010, p. 71),

life to thoughtful conversations between herself and others on contentious political and social issues. She is both explicit and reflexive about how concern for other people works in her writing. She talks of the need for historical knowledge (1990, p. 209) and safe spaces (1990, p. 149) in communities. This is not a retreat into an escapist communality that pervaded some of the alternative ways of living that I experienced when I was young. For me, punk was a reaction that refused to back down from confrontation against powerful structures and a way of participating in a critical community. Punk attitudes towards political participation as explored in Chapter 6 give some examples of this activism. hooks recognizes that there are a variety of ways of creating critical communities.

Finally, hooks insists this sort of research and work is inherently political. She makes reference to Bourdieu, in fact, when she discusses the danger of reinscribing colonizing and oppressive structures through the process of doing research. (1990, p. 127) She describes being oppressed as meaning "the absence of choices." (2000, p. 5). The constraints of this project require that I make choices that limit the narratives of the women who participated in this project. Yet, "a distinction must be made between our freedom to think and write in multiple ways and the choice to write in accepted ways because we want particular rewards." (1990, p. 129)

I have dealt with this dilemma by being as forthright and honest as I can about the constraints that I am working under, the rewards that I am striving for and the possible limits of my abilities. I am a student in a university who is using this topic and the stories that these women have given me to get funding, and to establish my academic credibility in order to pursue further studies. I am relatively new to this sort of writing and I have

never tried a project of this size before. I am also a white man who has access to many of the advantages that come from living in a racist and sexist society. Nonetheless, this study is also an opportunity for the participants to exercise more choices about how their lives are interpreted and perceived. This opportunity for them comes in part from my own political choices. I choose this topic because I believe that the stories of women in the punk scene are seldom heard and always undervalued. This work is grounded in their experiences and I use as many of their words as I can. The theoretical connections that I believe are necessary to the greater sociological project in the academy are not meant to stifle or constrain their experiences but to explain and expand on the lessons that they learn from surviving the punk scene in Vancouver.

For the women involved in the scene, punk offers the milieu in which they could work with a multitude of problems. I am generally pursuing what C. Wright Mills referred to as "the political task of the social scientist - [...] to translate personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals." (1959, p. 187) Mills notes that "to understand the changes of many personal milieux we are required to look beyond them" and the means for connecting personal problems of individuals with public issues was the use of the 'sociological imagination.' (1959, p. 10) I look at the theoretical work I am referencing as a specific form of imagination. By using these concepts together, I am able to place the often idiosyncratic, peculiar, emotional and individual experiences of these women within a structure of understanding that will hopefully make them more comprehensible to people who have never encountered the punk scene except in sensationalist stories in the media. I am also able to connect their lives more directly to the surrounding social structures

from which they themselves may feel excluded, and to make sense out of their beliefs and practices outside the context of punk.

Hooks' analysis of how choices are limited by the intersection of a variety of oppressions within the lives of individuals, and of how moving to the margins might alter the choices available to them gives me the language and the theory to understand some of the constraints in the lives of punk women and the reasons for some of the choices that took them to the margins rather than the center. I look for areas in their lives where they made these sorts of choices. I then use the resultant categories to help build my definition and knowledge of their habitus. The theory of habitus is a general theory that tries to objectively describe the way in which any person's life is structured. The theoretical conjectures of bell hooks rise from specific ways in which this structure imposes itself on people's lives or how they can practice agency that both changes their lives and perhaps changes their habitus. By looking for both their inherited dispositions and the ways in which they have made choices and changes in their lives, I am learning about how these women have been affected by their association with a specific habitus and how they have also helped shape that habitus.

Investigating their lives involves first looking at where these women came from, secondly looking at their experiences and strategies within the punk scene and thirdly, looking at their current circumstances and practices. The dispositions that these women inherit shape their understanding of the world around them and guide their practices when they are young and, to a considerable extent, throughout their lives. These dispositions are durable and difficult to change but they are not determinist. They allow for the development of new strategies and practices. These women develop new strategies

and engage in different practices as they get older. This is in part because the world around them changes. The field in which they are located shifts and the habitus that helps constrain their practices responds both to these shifts and to the decisions and practices of people who share that habitus. New technologies of production and social organization have a profound effect on many people over the span of their lives. New practices and strategies also have a profound effect and it is those practices that are labelled 'punk' which I am looking at in this work.

Other changes may seem so common to me and the other participants in this research that they are not commented on. My own position in this process limits my understanding and research. The existence of these limitations is one of the more complex aspects of Bourdieu's theories of habitus. He strives to overcome the dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity in his work. This epistemological stance sets definite limits on what we can perceive and know but these limits vary between individuals and between groups. Despite the inability to objectively define many aspects of our lives or the environment in which we live this does not mean that all the details of our lives are subjective or in some way illusory. What may appear as an objective 'fact' to one person could be perceived by another as a subjective interpretation of different facts. Habitus plays a role in how we perceive objectivity and subjectivity. It may limit our ability to conceive of change either because some changes seem out of reach or because they flatly contradict what we know to be real. Nonetheless, I believe that change does happen and it is mediated by these understandings.

My use of theory is not designed to fit the thoughts and practices of punk women into a predetermined structure. My understanding of habitus, intersectionality and

marginality in fact specifically excludes this type of 'theory-driven' analysis. I believe that this understanding could be an imposition of academic understanding into the lived experiences of these women. I am, however, often translating their experiences and their knowledge into a different language. They live their knowledge in a way that does not necessarily translate well into the written word but that translation is a significant part of my work here. Bourdieu states that "[non-academics] know a lot: more than any intellectual, more than any sociologist. But in a sense they don't know it, they lack the instrument to grasp it, to speak about it." (1991, p. 118) I disagree with the idea that knowledge is lost simply because it is unspoken but I do see value in translating knowledge from one form to another. My intent is to translate these women's ideas into a form where they can fit into sociological work specifically. Unfortunately, the scope of this project does not allow for their full participation in the analysis and expression of their own thoughts. I have tried to include some of this within the actual interview process but that is not a substitute for the process of going over and editing and re-interpreting in collaboration with all the participants.

There are clear differences between academe and punk in terms of access to resources and to symbolic capital. The academy is a world of privilege where it is possible to attain a great deal of status if not necessarily a preponderance of wealth. Bourdieu also makes the point that intellectuals don't pay attention to the real experience of other groups because their interests lie elsewhere in the pursuit of cultural capital. Punk rock does not produce the magnitude of wealth and status that could be achieved through more conventional careers in rock and roll or other forms of popular music. Infamy does not readily translate to status. The punk rock scene is appropriately

described as 'marginal'. This idea of marginality should not be mistaken for the concept of 'deviant,' however. Deviance can imply a degree of 'broken-ness' that is not applicable to the way that I am using marginality here. The margins as hooks describes them are places that are the product of an exclusionary social system. These can be people who are as whole and healthy as anyone who lives in the centre.

With the background literature that I have outlined above and the conceptual structure provided by the works of Bourdieu and hooks, I formulated three questions designed to help me investigate the role that punk plays in the lives of nine women who were involved in the punk scene in Vancouver in the late 1970s and early 1980s. First, how does involvement with punk culture influence personal and social transformations over the life course? Second, how do gender, age and punk intersect to create, influence or transform punk culture? Third, how do gender, age and punk intersect to influence or transform the mainstream world? These questions are explored through chapters that are each focused around a central theme. Each of these themes is a significant component of how these women have lived their lives. Exploring these components one at a time helps to pinpoint specific practices and strategies that were influenced by their participation in punk.

These nine women all became involved in the punk scene in Vancouver between 1978 and 1983. Only three of them still live in the city and four of them reside in suburbs close to Vancouver or in the nearby city of Victoria. One of them recently moved to another province and another is in Europe. None of them are musicians although they have been involved in different aspects of cultural production as writers, managers, organizers and supporters of the various kinds of artistic expression. Two of them

currently run their own businesses and one of them is financially supported by her husband. Five of them have some post-secondary education and two of them never completed high school.

Four of the nine women have children and some of these children define themselves as punks and some of them emphatically reject many aspects of punk style. One of the participants is currently in a relationship with another woman, two of them are married to men and three of them talked about being in other committed relationships with men. Three of them talked about being in both lesbian and hetero relationships and none of them exclusively identified as gay. All of them currently identified punk as being a significant component of their lives and all of them continued to be connected within the punk scene on facebook, through email and phone calls and through travel and personal visits.

The women whom I interviewed are part of a community that is mobile, mistrustful and often holds itself apart from many mainstream institutions. My initial contact for this project is a woman whom I have known since 1986. I conducted nine lengthy, semi-structured interviews in places that the women chose as appropriate for their own comfort and feelings of safety. I started each interview with a brief overview of my own goals in doing this research. I ended each interview by inviting critical reflection on the interview process and I specifically asked if each participant had any suggestions or thought I had neglected to ask about something. We began with the common goal of talking about their participation in the Vancouver punk scene and how it affected their lives. I had a description of the research (with a consent form attached) and a list of questions (through which some of the women chose to read). I generally began by asking them to tell me

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where they came from (their family history), how they got involved in the punk scene, and where they are now. The interviews lasted anywhere from one and a half hours to an entire day. I transcribed all the interviews except one in which the recording was too noisy to do a complete transcription. I then analyzed the transcriptions for themes and selected stories and quotes that provided both good illustrations of these themes and also provide the reader with a sense of these women's lives and characters. My analysis was based both on the reading that I had done outside of the interviews and on the content of the interviews.

As I mentioned above, reflexivity was very important to me from the beginning of this research. The theoretical work that I use includes the significant epistemological caveat that my own knowledge and biases limit my understanding of my research. I was also concerned with maintaining a method that would best reflect women's experiences. It has frequently been noted that reflexivity is especially important in feminist research and qualitative inquiry (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Taylor, 1998). Taylor identifies the semi-structured interview as a good way to allow women to "describe their experiences in their own terms," and as a means of encouraging interview participants to introduce new questions into the research that are based on their own lived experiences (p. 366). Mauthner and Doucet pay particular attention to using reflexivity in the analysis and writing stages of research. One of the techniques they advocate is regular meetings with a research group to remain reflexive while in the middle of the research progress. My own process included meeting with a small number of other students who were also working on sociological or anthropological research projects, and reviewing my own work in a space where we could all talk about our processes, our thoughts and our feelings. At

times, this research (and the subsequent writing) was quite an emotional process because it was intertwined with my own history.

During the interviews I was guided by a discussion of strategies that can be used for analyzing research that takes place where there is an intersection of oppressions (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). This process also required thinking critically of my own position as a researcher. This also meant communicating my awareness of this privilege to the women who participated in the research. This gave them the space to be critical of me or the process when they wanted (and they sometimes were). It was also important to clearly indicate the primary importance of the participants in the research process. Some of the women were initially hesitant to participate in the research because they felt that their stories weren't 'important enough'. I worked hard to assure them that their lives were important. The importance of the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals is an important component of my understanding of sociological research and this understanding was also a part of the methodological milieu in which I chose to situate my work. Without that context and discussions with the participants, many of these interviews would not have happened.

Snowball sampling was appropriate for this research since the existence of social connections between participants is one of the defining qualities of this group of people. This population can be difficult to locate as they do not necessarily gather together in specific places or around single activities as they did when they were younger. There was therefore no physical space that could be used for posting notices. Fortunately, many of these women have had sustained social connections since they were young and I was able to gain the support of several women who had also helped organize a reunion of old

punks. Snowball sampling both includes and excludes certain people from the potential sample but the benefits of gaining access to people who are otherwise difficult to find (Browne, 2005) outweigh the possible exclusion of people who were not included within that specific social network. I also tried to ensure that there was some expansion of the initial social network by using the chain referral technique (Penrod, et al., 2003) that built on my initial snowball sample. The resulting interviews were with some women whom I knew very well and some whom I had never talked with before although we had heard of each other through our respective social networks.

This combination of snowball sampling and chain referral presented certain challenges and limitations to the research. The interviews were done within a small community and it is therefore possible that people within the 'scene' can identify some of the participants simply through the narration of unique stories or events. I strove to maintain their anonymity by carefully editing details out of their stories. Relationships between these women have not always been positive. The timing of this project was opportune, however. Many of the old conflicts and disagreements that would have impeded the chain of referral had faded over time. However this process of getting older also made memories fade. Some of these women had great difficulty in remembering events from twenty or thirty years previously. Fortunately, they often had photos and we all had access to such public memory projects as the Punk Rock Canada website[6] which

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[6] Primary access to this website is through www.punkhistorycanada.ca. The photo gallery was down at the time of this writing but other photo galleries were available through semi-public social networks such as facebook. These include events pages and the personal photo galleries of individuals from the punk scene. These are too varied and ephemeral to list here but doing a facebook search for "Vancouver punk rock" reveals a number of different sites with photos and writings associated with the early punk days in Vancouver.

helped recover some old memories. Access to these sorts of memory tools was an important component of some of the interviews. It is also important to note that these women are often remembering events and perceptions that took place decades before the interview. These memories are coloured by the intervening years and by their current situations.

In order to protect these women from any negative consequences that might come from unearthing old conflicts or activities, I have maintained the anonymity of these women throughout the research process. The punk community did have a high incidence of certain types of criminal activity such as drug use and welfare fraud. While these incidents may have happened many decades ago, specific stories could still have social consequences for certain individuals both inside and outside the group that I am working with. Names, places and incidental details are changed in order to preserve the confidentiality of the participants. As an homage to one of the most popular pop culture icons of our shared childhood and youth, all the women who participated have been given names from the Peanuts comic strip.

There is an important absence to note in this research. I was unable to arrange interviews with some women who are currently experiencing many problems in their lives. These are women who may have a distinctly different view of how positive or helpful participation in the punk scene had been in their lives. For ethical reasons I did not push them to participate if they expressed any discomfort with the process. Part of the purpose in this research was to empower women to share their story and not to extract information from them without regard to their wellbeing. The women who did participate were generally feeling good about their lives at the time of the interviews and were often

feeling hopeful about the future. These positive feelings may have coloured their recollection of the past in a way that might be different from the memories of women who do not feel that their past experiences are leading to a better future.

The following chapters are arranged according to the importance that the participants in this research gave to each of the themes that I identified. Class is a broad category that is tied to powerful and long-lasting structural components of society. These women are generally born into a specific class and do not seem very concerned with changing their class status. Class is here defined as a combination of education and work status (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Erickson, 1996). Many of their relationships are also established at an early age and very few of them abandon their relationships with their families of origin. Rather they add on to these relationships both within and without the punk scene. Most of these women talk a great deal about their homes and the ways in which they constructed their homes changed over time. Within the greater community in the lower mainland, most people are expected to move 'away from home' as they mature. This is one area where I expected to find changes that occur as a conventional part of their life course. However, it also becomes clear that these women are making specific choices that are associated with their participation in punk. Politics are similarly an area where there is a great deal of variety and into which many of them put a great deal of thought and energy that is, in part, derived from their activities in the punk scene. Gender is placed last because it is a central focus of this specific and is a crucial arena of activity in the stories of all of these women.

3: Class: "Turning Rebellion into Money"[7]

"I got into the punk rock scene in 1983, 82 or 83; I probably didn't work again at a real job until the mid-nineties." (Peggy)

Class is an important component of a person's habitus. It defines an individual's access to a wide variety of resources and also limits their activities to a great degree. We live in a world where many things are possible and technologies of production and consumption develop at an incredible pace. This system also features an accelerating amount of inequality. Whether one is able to live well and enjoy the productive capabilities of the modern world is dependent on one's class position. And class is far from dead. Terry Eagleton makes an excellent argument for the continued importance of class in *Why Marx Was Right* (2011, pp. 160-178). The place of economic capital cannot be taken over by culture, ethnicity, sexuality or other components of a person's identity. However, the relationship between punk and class is far from simple. A number of writers tried to argue that punk was a working class form of music that presaged a revolutionary awareness that could be described as a form of class consciousness (Dancis, 1978; Simonelli, 2002). The experiences of the women who participate in my research do not fit with that understanding of punk. They came from working-class or middle-class backgrounds but were living within a rich and affluent society. They had access to work and they also had access to a social welfare system that could keep them housed, fed and

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[7] This is an excerpt from the song, *White Man in Hammersmith Palais*, from the first album by The Clash. It was a derisive commentary on the lack of political consciousness that they saw even amongst apparently rebellious youth in the UK.

allowed them to spend time in nightclubs and bars. Some of these women suffered deprivations, however, and their inherited class position and certain aspects of the punk scene had a very definite effect on this aspect of their lives.

Gainful employment and the punk rock scene were often difficult to combine. The women whom I interviewed had a variety of different ways to earn or otherwise acquire enough money to support themselves. Their ability to earn money was constrained in part by their family background and often even further by their participation in the punk scene. Generally, two of the most important markers of the ability to earn money are class background and education (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Erickson, 1996). While the families of some of these women may have owned a bit of property or a small business, the participants in my project were seldom supported by their families of origin past their teenage years. Some of them were not even supported in their teenage years. The family backgrounds of these women affected the work that they did when they were young, and their engagement with the education system that has become increasingly important over their lifetime in determining their job options. Their background encouraged certain expectations and discouraged others. It did this by passing on class-based understandings of work and money. These understandings are a significant component of the structuring aspect of their habitus that limited or shaped the possibilities that they could see especially when they were younger.

The nine women I interviewed have a wide variety of backgrounds as far as work and employment were concerned. Several of them were from relatively poor, working-class families. Several are from families that owned a business or that would now be described as entrepreneurial, one woman came from a family of academics and one was

from a military family. The educational status and careers of their families of origin varied considerably. The parents of many of these women did not finish high school. In a few cases, they did not even complete grade school. The reasons for this varied. Some of their parents came from countries that were at war during their childhood. Some of them are from areas within Canada where education was not that important in terms of gaining access to work when they were younger. Farming on the prairies, for instance, did not require higher levels of education in the 1970s. For a few, family problems were so pervasive and extensive that it interfered with the ability of the children to stay in school. Most of these women now have more education than their parents ever achieved but the lack of education in their family of origin continues to resonate as an aspect of their class background that shaped much of their lives.

There were many stories of good times and bad times when I spoke with them about their family histories. Patty, who was raised in a military family, pointed out that one branch of her family came from an "extremely large, well-known family" in a province on the Eastern coast. They were a family that owned land, farmed and also were involved in automotive mechanics and a great deal of volunteer work. They also had recreational property and had the resources to create idyllic spaces for the many children and grandchildren. "They owned property so spending time with them throughout my life was always such a blessing. They owned a beautiful home on two and a half acres. They loved to garden. They had a camp that I believe was completed the year I was born. So I spent many summers growing up there on a lake. My grandmother just stayed at home but also belonged to an organization named Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire

(IODE)."[8] Patty spoke of this membership as a significant marker of the high social standing of her family in the area.

Patty's father's parents had more modest beginnings. Her grandfather worked in logging camps in BC and helped build the railway as well. Her grandmother lived in Vancouver and ran a small cafe although she also spent time in the camps. Her father was born in Vancouver and attended high school but dropped out to pursue a boxing career. Unfortunately, he had just won the Canadian Golden Gloves championship when doctors discovered that he had a dead kidney that had begun to rupture. He was also diagnosed with diabetes. This brought his boxing career to an abrupt end. "It ended his life, emotionally, psychologically; for him, it was over." He turned to the military as an easy route to finish his education and get some work and spent the rest of his life there. According to Patty, he was never really happy in the military but it was a job and it did provide him with the ability to support his children to some degree.

It was also where he met Patty's mother. Patty was unclear about how they met but commented that it was not a "wonderful love story." Nor does she know why her mother entered the military. She describes conversations with and about her mother as "like walking on eggshells" and often incomplete and fragmentary. What she does know is that her mother was "not well her whole life." It seems that the military was the one place where her mother could get the support and the discipline that she needed to survive. Maintaining her emotional stability and containing her behavioural problems

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[8] The IODE was an organization that was founded in New Brunswick with the intention of promoting "patriotism, loyalty and service." Further details are available on the organizations website: http://www.iode.ca/OUR-HISTORY.aspx

were even a challenge for the military. She describes how her family was forced to leave a very nice posting in the United States:

> We didn't have to live on a base. We lived in this civilian area. We lived in West Virginia. My dad worked in Washington. It's not that far and he could drive. He got a car. We never had a car before. He got to drive. There were all these big changes. We had been there maybe eleven months and my mother phoned my father one day at work and said you better come home, or if you don't come home or by the time you come home or something, I'm going to be dead. So I guess he came home and she was ironing. Perfectly fine. Just more of her chaos to deal with so he went out to get gas because it was one of those days that you could buy gas. When he came home; I don't have details on a whole lot other than 911 had to be called and they took my mother away. And we weren't allowed in the house that night because they had to clean up some stuff. [...] She attempted suicide and tore a dog apart with her hands. She murdered our dog...

For Patty, this episode is the exemplar of what her family offered: insanity, violence and disappointment. "That's where my life begins to miss large periods of time. Because I just didn't listen to anything, I did whatever I wanted. That's when school started to fall apart for me. My family life started to fall apart. My parents get divorced after that. I just don't recall school life! I have very minimal memories of that period of time."

Charlotte's family of origin offered little more hope than did Patty's family.

Charlotte's father was, in her words, "not a good guy" and his family background is entirely missing from her story. She made several efforts to get to know him and spend time with him but the results were always traumatic. She describes her father's career in this way:

> My father in his later years was an artist and made his living selling paintings. But in his years when I was little and my mom was around he did all sorts of things. Including, he was an escort for awhile. My mom has this newspaper article that she cut out of the Brighton Post that is a photograph of him with some young lady. Saying he was single, 35: total lies. He did that. He did gold leafing in the church. He did a bunch of stuff but mostly he robbed people and robbed stuff and was involved in dodgy dealings and buying and selling stolen goods. That was his primary occupation.

Her mother's family tried to elevate themselves from their working class background but were largely unsuccessful. They did manage to immigrate to Canada. Their standard of living was much improved after this move and her mother was able to work as a dancer and start her own moderately successful business. She eventually married a man in BC who owned a house and had a much more reputable career than her first husband. Her mother also tried to give Charlotte further educational advantages by enrolling her in a private school. The end result of this, however, was that economic differences became even more obvious and the social consequences were profound for Charlotte. "Grade eight, I loved it and did really, really well. But the problem is that all these other kids were rich and we were very poor. So I was very much taken with [the

advantages and benefits of wealth.] Wow! - There were all these kids who had their own cars and their parents were super rich and didn't care where they were or what they were doing. So I got introduced to hard drugs and I got introduced to even heavier drinking and I got introduced to wild parties where no parents would turn up for days."

In Molly's family, employment was a bit of a scam. "[My dad] emigrated from Scotland - if he had gone to Northwest Territories he would have sold ice cubes to Eskimos - safe to say. Instead he ended up in Newfoundland selling electric appliances out of the back of a truck to Newfoundlanders who didn't have electricity..." Unfortunately, while her dad may have appeared to be a good salesman, he was not very good at supporting his family. At one point, when she was underage and her parents were embroiled in a messy divorce, Molly lied in court about her age and her work status in order to help her father avoid paying child support. She was fourteen at the time and was required by the court to give her mother $20 per week to cover her upkeep. She does not remember being too bothered by this payment schedule, however, as she notes that "by that time [she had] already been selling marijuana and stolen goods for years." She was successful in this type of work because of the help of her brother and the apparent wilful ignorance of her parents.

Not all these women came from the sort of low income, low education backgrounds that are illustrated by Patty, Charlotte and Molly. Lucy describes a fairly well-off background. Her family's history was grounded in poor farming communities in the Canadian prairies but they offered a far happier narrative of success built on hard work and education. She recalls the origins of her family:

They came across the prairies in covered wagons. My dad was born

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in a sod house. I'm one of the last vestiges of people that come from that

really earthy prairie background. I don't know many people in my

generation who grew up like that. My grandparents lived in a little house

with pump water and kerosene lamps. My earliest childhood memories

were [that] it could have been the eighteen hundreds. There was no

running water, no electricity. It could have been any time in history and

[we were] isolated out on the prairies and [those were] my happiest

moments of my life. I think as one result of that was the heavy imprinting

on my life as a small child that sense of community and that sense of

"come on in, the door's open!" There is always an extra cup of coffee.

There is always an extra plate at the table because that is how you had to

live out there. That just is how people lived out in Saskatchewan and they

still do. I think that really coloured my world view and I used to love after

dinner laying on the floor playing or being under the kitchen table while

my dad and all my uncles argued politics because it was the NDP right?

Saskatchewan!

The status of Lucy's family shifted when her parents successfully transitioned to

city living. She does not recall the specifics of what her parents were doing at the time

but she does enthusiastically remember what it was like to move to the big city as a small

child:

We lived out on the farm till I was about five or six and then we

moved to Calgary. One of my earliest memories of Calgary was moving

into a house that didn't have plywood floors and being completely blown

away. I thought we lived in a castle. Because there was a cheap chandelier at the front door and we turned on the light and I was like, I couldn't believe it, it was like being a princess! For some reason, the mind holds funny memories and that was one of my first memories of being in the city was that this house had this chandelier. It was probably just an apartment or a townhouse or something but... And it had a balcony! Wow, right. When you're a kid off the farm, stuff like that is really intriguing.

It is not clear from Lucy's recollections how much wealth her parents actually had but she moved in social circles that included some of the wealthiest families in a city that was full of burgeoning oil wealth. Her parents did not have much education but the expectation was that she would go to university and become a doctor. She did very well at the private schools in which she was enrolled. She felt as though her life was secure and safe and full of opportunity. These perceptions are in sharp contrast to the perceptions of those women who had grown up with extreme poverty, deprivation and abuse.

The primary effect of these differences in family backgrounds was in the amount of support that these women felt they could get from their family. Most of them had the ability to get some financial support from parents or other relatives when they were in the punk scene but several had no support at all and were left to fend for themselves at a very early age. Charlotte describes leaving home after quitting school at the age of fourteen. "So that was that. We had a big garage sale. Sold all my stuff. My furniture. [My mom] gave me a couch and a couple of things and I... That's when I moved to Vancouver for the first time. [...] I had no money, I had no family, I had nothing." Molly was not kicked out of her house but she did start shoplifting and selling pot around the age of ten. When she

did finally get a 'legal' job she was stealing from them as well, "at least a couple of hundred bucks per week from them in goods and cash." Patty describes all sorts of chaos that lasted for years: trying to work while living with her mother; living with other relatives; running away to different cities. Finally, she remembers that "I made my way back to Montreal. And then that's when I kind of just left my family. And I didn't interact with them on a regular basis from that period on until ten or fifteen or twenty years ago."

The punk scene was perceived by all of these women as a place where these sharp differences in families of origin were tremendously reduced in significance. Clara, with her academic background and her experiences living in both Europe and North America, commented on how she perceived class differences within the punk scene in Vancouver.

What I also found strong here in North America is that you had in the punk rock movement here in Vancouver for my age group a huge class mix. I never would have met that class mix had I stayed in [Europe]. I would have met students from higher educational institutions like high schools that permit you to go to university, lycée-type schools. We would have mingled and I wouldn't have met runaway kids who were working as prostitutes on the streets. I wouldn't have met drug-abusing teenagers. Here, everyone was in these houses together and these runaway girls who were working the streets and, my god, I never seen anything like that before and they were so young and they were somebody's girlfriend and I was like woah, woah, woah, woah. [...]

So in a way, the punk rock crowd was very democratic. I think the kids who come from a bourgeois background had better chances. Still

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some of them got really messed up on drugs. But often their families were able to bail them out. I found the kids with the bourgeois background were more cruel. [...] Their parents would have bailed them out for anything. Like dad the big contractor or something. And they were also doing crime together with kids who were from lower class families. They were breaking into machines, stealing from vending machines. For the kids who came from the richer families this was not a big deal when they got caught but for the other kids it was a big deal.

Clara's class background was exceptional amongst these nine women as both her parents were academics. This fact helps explain her use of labels such as bourgeois that were not generally used by other participants. This language combined with her experience living in a place with more rigorous class divisions than found in Vancouver make her observations of class differences within the punk scene particularly sharp.

Violet talks about a different way of mixing up classes that was enabled, in part, by her participation in the punk scene in Vancouver. She talked about her family background as being largely middle class with some working class values but she found that in her own life, she could easily move socially from one class to another. "Mobility. I can pass. In particular is the ability that I can pass. It means that I can also get by all over the place. I had days where, one day in particular where I literally had lunch at a restaurant in San Francisco with the guy that I was dating who is the heir to an American fortune, got on a plane, went to Vancouver and had a beer at the Ivanhoe. And was sort of an impostor in both of those places." As a result she feels that her class identity to this day is not fixed.

She has some post-secondary education and currently works at a job that requires a great deal of intellectual skill and knowledge yet she is uncomfortable with the idea of going back to school to complete a degree. She attributes this aversion to her "ongoing feeling of being an outsider".

This outsider feeling can be seen as a more unconscious awareness of class differences that are, on the surface, denied. Her emotional reaction to this part of our discussion was quite strong especially when she was discussing the possibility of going back to school. She saw education as an essential avenue to meeting some of her longer-term goals and as a way out of her insecure and low-paying job. It would also allow her skills and intelligence to be recognized as a 'natural' part of her life rather than as the exceptional component of a life lived on the margins. Although she clearly had some desire to 'fit in', she is also proud that she stands somewhat outside of the traditions of her family. She points out that her parents also had a rebellious streak and they expressed the "explicit intention of raising their own children differently." She describes the results of their efforts as successful despite the fact that it left her feeling like an outsider.

All of these women followed career and education paths that were varied. Their educational experience was often fragmentary as they had to drop out of schools or classes in order to deal with some other challenges. Many of them left school at some point and then returned much later. Six of them have some post-secondary schooling. At least two of them went on to post-secondary education having never completed high school. One woman is currently doing research at a university and has worked as an editor without ever having completed high school or any post-secondary schooling. Their path through the education system was never smooth. Those who successfully finished

some school then found their career paths impeded or altered by this fragmented nature of their education or by other factors.

Clara, whose parents were both academics, was enrolled in a film program but did not do the necessary course work to get a degree. She completed her film work in two years and is now producing her own films. By coincidence, Violet also enrolled in the same film program the year after but dropped out soon after. She is now working as an advocate for people with housing problems and working towards getting a law degree. Clara was the youngest person ever to enrol in the program until Violet, who was a year younger. Clara has had to deal with a series of "psychotic nervous breakdowns with the diagnosis of psychosis" that began to have a profound impact in her life starting in the 1990s. This eventually became the focus of a feature film that she produced and is currently taking on tour. She remarked that it is very unusual with the illness that she has to be able to complete such a project. Violet finds that she is particularly effective in her current work because of her experiences in the punk scene. She has lived with unstable housing, poverty, drug use and many people who have been diagnosed with 'mental health' issues. This gives her a style of communicating with people that is rare in the field in which she works. Her relationships and experiences in the punk scene serve as a source of social capital that she can utilize in her current work.

Lucy, Patty, Charlotte and Peggy have all worked in some sort of social service capacity since their days in the punk scene. Patty, who came from a military family, worked for several years for an organization that was devoted to helping military families deal with the stresses of the military lifestyle. Peggy worked as a foster mother for a number of years. Both Patty and Peggy have since gone on to do other types of work.

Charlotte and Lucy both still work for social service agencies although Lucy is currently applying for other work. She has been going to school for a number of years now as she plans for another career change.

Frequent job or career changes seem to be the norm amongst these women. Some of them, Lila, Clara and Charlotte for instance, who have stayed within one field for a significant portion of their lives have also taken long periods of time off work to deal with issues unrelated to their work. Regardless of the type of work that they do, all of the activities of these women are marked with a great deal of variety and instability. None of them have followed a consistent or straightforward career path. The closest that anyone has come to doing so is Clara. In a part of the interview that took place after I turned off the recorder, she pointed out that while we had just spent a lot of time talking about the various twists and turns that her life had taken in the last thirty years, she was in the process of achieving what she had set out to do: to make movies. During the interview, she attributes this ability to persevere in her chosen vocation to her involvement in the punk scene.

Being a punk rocker to me doesn't mean being snotty or being rude or spitting on the street or anything like that. It has more to do with not joining the rat race. Not selling out. Sticking to your topics. Staying true to your topics. That kind of thing. Of course there is change in our lives so we do strive for other jobs or we do other things so this question of the sell-out is always... At the moment, I am self-employed on welfare. So I've ploughed right ahead. And get subsidized by the state for having my own film production house. [....] I've always worked. I worked for a producer

for ten years so I have worked my way up in my profession to be a

producer. I've always worked ever since I quit going to university. I

worked for TV. I worked for producers. I've made a little bit of money off

my films. It's working better now. It is moving along now.

K: And through your psychotic episodes?

I was able to work the whole time. I only had sick times of maybe

four or five months and then I was employed for the whole time.

At the time of the interview, Clara was touring with a film that she had made that

chronicled her struggles with the psychosis and with the consequent treatment. She

seemed to have only recently come to realize that when she does not focus on the

diagnosis that pathologized her behaviours, she has been very successful at

accomplishing the career goals that she had when she was much younger.

Sally, on the other hand, has never really focused on a specific career in her past

and has carried that quality through to the present. When I asked her what sort of jobs she

had in the past she replied, "Well, that's a good question. [...] I don't think that for me it

was a big issue." Her current work is composed of several jobs: "I manage this building

here. I work at the chiropractors. I work at the Depot and I chauffeur, I drive a senior

around." She feels as though she has missed some opportunities over the course of her

life. She expressed regret that she had not been able to get more education than she had

and she was working through a creative block of her own at the time of the interview but

she did not attach much personal value to the specific work in which she is engaged. "I'm

young yet and in a few more weeks, I've got a birthday coming up. I will be 47. So I look

at oh, what have I accomplished? But what is life about? Accomplishing what? I get that

idea in my head that I have to be something but that is fucking ego. I just have to be the person that I want to be. I have no regrets." She clearly feels some pressure, though, to be more successful in work as her reference to 'missed opportunities' indicates.

Whatever means they used to earn their keep or whatever level of education they reached, all of these women shared some common essential attitudes towards work and money. It never defined their value or the value of their achievements. Many of them had lost jobs or been fired from jobs for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it was just because of how they looked. Other times it was the result of a bad attitude or health problems. Their response was not to buckle down and accept the judgement of employers. Rather they found work that could fit their lifestyle and personality. In many cases this required a high degree of self-motivation and a sort of 'radical' entrepreneurship. Peggy prides herself on her ability to run her own businesses and maintain her financial independence. She had her own company while she was involved in the punk scene and is currently self-employed in another business venture that has no relation to her past work (although it does follow from some of her personal interests). In between times, she has occasionally worked for other people but has otherwise preferred running her own businesses. Clara, as noted above, has her own film production company. Patty, although regularly employed in an office near her home, is also consistently engaged in home-based sales schemes that bring in some extra income and keep her busy and involved in her community. Molly is currently involved in various forms of contract work that use the managerial and research skills that she has learned from running her own businesses in the past.

Over the course of their lives there has been a general shift in the labour market

away from permanent full-time work. It is a truism to claim that the age of lifelong careers that paid well and offered job security is now over. Authors who have written about punk rock have pointed to the advent of 'enterprise culture' in the UK and the neo-liberal revolution in North America as a causative factor in the development of punk culture (Nehring, 2007; O'Connor, 2004). Nehring, in particular, writes about the apparent triumph of Thatcherism in the UK that marked the 'death of punk.' He goes on to argue that punk music and the oppositional punk attitude did not, in fact, cease to exist but incorporated values, attitudes and strategies that were also used by the apparent 'enemies' of punk. Punk music could not change the field in which it was located but it could help people adjust their strategies. The life stories of these women do not reflect a sharp division between the liberal era and the neo-liberal era. They often came from families that had few privileges regardless of who was in government. Often times, both parents had to work and many of them started their own businesses or were otherwise self-employed. They often encouraged their children to get more education in the belief that educational achievement would allow them to get better jobs. Educational expectations have risen alongside generally increasing educational achievements over their lifetimes, however. Many of these women have more education than their parents but that has not given them much advantage in the job market.

These women have adapted to lack of educational advantage by cobbling together a variety of jobs. Alternately, they turn to self-employment as a way of using their independence and 'do it yourself' attitude to their personal advantage. These are qualities that may be an impediment to working within a larger organization but are an advantage in self-directed employment. They have also refused to make their educational or work

status a measure of their value within a social context. They have found that within the punk scene, the pressure to succeed in this way is either much reduced or altogether absent. Clara is specifically talking about "punk rock boys" when she points out that career achievement is not necessary within the punk social scene. It seems that her points could equally apply to women in the scene.

It's not highly regarded in our society if somebody has no ambition or seemingly no ambition. Because it is always about striving and getting a bigger loan for your house and a bigger loan for your car and more achievement and more achievement and more achievement. Or even in your field, to publish to be to do. It is all about achievement. In my field too. Making a film, make another film. They are in their mid-forties and they haven't planted a tree. They don't have a boy. They don't have a house. They don't have a car even or just barely a car or barely a house. What does it mean in our society and there punk rock comes in again for them. Punk rock saves them. It's the underlying ideology for them not to be achievers. That's where it suits them. And somebody else would say that he didn't make it or what a loser he's still in the same position that he was in ten years ago. Why is he not moving? In a way, punk rock is the saving element because punk rock does not require for you to achieve, achieve, achieve.

Of course, this acceptance of this lack of achievement is in direct contradiction to Clara's own efforts to "achieve, achieve, achieve" despite substantial barriers to getting her work done.

All of the women in my research seemed to see themselves as relatively successful at the time I spoke to them. And in my view, as an outside observer, their self perception does match up pretty well with the actual circumstances in which they live. They are generally healthy, busy and feeling appreciated and loved by a tight knit community of friends and family. It is important to note that these are women who volunteered for this project and it is quite possible that they wanted to participate in part because they are relatively secure and happy in their current situation. There were a couple of women who indicated some interest in being interviewed who may have reflected quite a different reality. Unfortunately they were difficult to schedule due to unstable housing, drug and/or alcohol use and medical and mental health issues that took priority over participating in my research. I was able to get information about their class backgrounds, however, and they are not substantially different from the backgrounds of the women who participated fully in this research. Nor are any of these backgrounds substantially different from many other people who did not participate in the punk scene.

All of these women have to deal with many personal challenges as they work to support themselves and their chosen families but there is no direct correlation between class and punk. They were subject to many other intersecting influences as well. For instance, as women they shared a statistical disadvantage in earning power that has lasted throughout their working lives (Drolet, 2010). Participation in the punk scene sometimes made it more difficult to get and hold employment and sometimes made it more difficult to stay in school. At the same time it appears to give them access to other adaptive strategies that were useful within the context of self-employment or other types of work that required a high degree of independence and self-motivation. Access to these other

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means of earning money rewards them for behaviours that, in other arenas, cost them status, respect and the power to utilize different forms of capital. It means that their marginalized position did not necessarily stop them from achieving their economic goals. It also allows them the ability to develop other aspects of their lives. The ability to access money (and thereby material resources such as food and housing) is greatly dependent on class position within a capitalist society. This chapter shows how the women I interviewed adapted their participation in the work world to minimize conflict with their punk ideals. Economic relationships are only the first part of the greater picture of how they live their lives.

4: Relationships: Fuck everything, I love you...

"I think of us like a family because we did, we all grew up together. Some of us didn't come from great places. Someone said something on facebook a while ago and they were putting somebody down for something. That used to happen. Yeah, a person may have come from the ritzy part of town but nobody knew what the hell was happening to her until later on when it came out. There were a lot of kids like that. I always thought that I was so abused and then I met people that were really abused." (Lila)

And you're somebody's mom,

Even if you're just a lazy useless bum,

And you married somebody's dad,

If I had been your children I sure would have been mad

- "Somebody's Mom" by The Pointed Sticks (1978)

Relationships between people are an essential part of how habitus works. Relationships are built by people's "practices and representations" (1977, p. 72). This is why habitus is an important part of what Bourdieu calls a theory of practice. As discussed in Chapter 2, habitus does not provide for a mechanical interpretation of how people behave or act. Bourdieu explicitly warns against this sort of reading of his theoretical work. Instead, he explains that habitus offers strategies and principles that individuals can use in their everyday relationships with other individuals. This lack of a direct mechanical relationship is not to say that people possess "the free and wilful power

to constitute, on the instant, the meaning of the situation by projecting the ends aiming at its transformation" (1977, p. 73). Bourdieu emphasises the ways in which relationships can be expressed by the exchange of goods or of other types of 'capital'. These exchanges are a social activity and help shape an individual's practices and strategies. These practices and strategies may not appear logical to an outsider but they are often the result of a 'sens pratique' (a feel for the game). Individuals are constrained in their practices by their habitus and their habitus is expressed in the practices of themselves and the people around them, and in their interactions and relationships. Habitus is relational and it is important to look at how people behave in their primary relationships in order to understand their habitus.

Experiences of family, sex and relationships vary widely amongst the women I interviewed. Some of their parents had stable, happy marriages that lasted for decades. Some of these women had childhoods that were filled with violence and anger. Sometimes it was difficult to differentiate the two. Some of these women maintained contact with their families but others have been out of touch for long periods of time. Some of these women had children and were happy with that. Some of them talked about having had a desire to have children and many actually did have children. Others never wanted children and were quite happy that their lives had not included that experience. Some are single, two are married and living with their husbands, and the rest have a variety of relationships that included different forms of marriage at various times in their lives as well as other ways of constructing family. Their experiences of sex and sexuality also cover a wide gamut although all but one of the women I interviewed primarily identify now as heterosexual. Perhaps the only thing that is consistent amongst all these

women was a high degree of importance given to friendships and an openness to a variety of different ways of conducting their intimate relationships and constructing their families. While there are some clear influences from their families of origin, these women often indicate that they have rejected much of the normative pressure that they felt when they were younger and follow new strategies for satisfying their needs for intimacy, friendship and support both with and without children.

Work and education are the more quantitative aspects of habitus. They are often 'measured' by asking people about their possessions, whether they rent or own property, their income, job type and educational achievement. These more material aspects of a person's life are intermingled with human relationships. It is easy to see how one's job affects the people one socializes with, but it is less obvious how the people one socializes with affect job opportunities. It is these sorts of relationships that Bourdieu was looking at in *Distinction* (1984). He uses statistical measures there to illustrate a relationship between taste and material circumstances or class status and then argues, convincingly in my mind, that the relationship goes both ways. The one often influences the other. One of the central assumptions behind this research is that these women's involvement in the punk scene had an effect on the material conditions of their lives. In Chapter 3, I explored the most direct measure of material conditions: education and work. This chapter looks at some of the very important aspects of their lives that are far more difficult to measure: the way in which they construct their intimate relationships, their families, their friendships and direct community that forms around these relationships.

Lila presents some of the most traditional forms of family and relationships in her life. Her dad was an immigrant from Italy and her mom came from a large family in

Nova Scotia. Her dad's family suffered during the Second World War in Italy and her grandmother died at a very young age and left six children to be raised by their aunt. Her mom's family had nine children and their father was a ship's captain who spent large amounts of time at sea. Her dad lost touch with much of his family after he moved to Canada although one other sister moved nearby. Her father became estranged from his sister because of the abusive relationship that she was in. "There was a lot of abuse. She stayed with her husband for forty years and he was totally abusive and alcoholic. I mean he was a good man and a hard worker. He was nice to other people but he was really abusive to her and it kind of messed up her head. And when all that was going down, my dad detached himself from them." Lila describes her dad as being unlike most Italian men in that he could not tolerate that sort of abuse and was "very open-minded." Even though she described herself as being raised in a "strict Italian Catholic family" she was able to argue with him about religion and drug use and other controversial topics and feel heard.

Like all of the women whom I interviewed, Lila recalls a significantly traumatic event that happened when she was a child. For her, this event occurred within her direct family. She was only seven when her dad was diagnosed with cancer of the throat and larynx. His larynx was removed and he also suffered a sharp loss of mobility as a result of the operation and treatment that, at the time, was far more invasive than it would be currently. As a result he also suffered a stroke and spent the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

It really traumatized me. I remember when my dad left, he had nice dark hair and he used to carry me around on his shoulders and stuff. He

was really strong. He left and he was gone for so long, three months or something. And then when he did come home, I felt so bad because I remember being at the door and seeing him come out of the car and I was traumatized. I just looked at him and thought that's not my dad. I was convinced that they had taken my dad and given us another person that looked like my dad but wasn't him.

Before that too, when we went to the hospital before he had his operation. My dad wasn't a crier, he was always really strong. And he cried that night. I was thinking they're just taking out his tonsils, you'll get ice cream and popsicles but I just didn't get the gist of it all. We didn't even know what cancer was. People were trying to explain it but we didn't get it.

The impacts of these events were devastating for many members of her family. Lila's older sister was already very nervous and anxious and these qualities were made worse by their father's illness. Her mother was exhausted and dispirited. "She used to be happy and laughing and, she wasn't hard, but the joy was gone." Lila describes her own behaviour at the time as "just cuckoo."

I lived in a bubble. I really had blinders on. I didn't care what people said to me. It didn't sink in. Unless it really affected me, I could care less. I did what I wanted. I didn't care about the consequences. Oh, if you climbed that tree and it was a hundred feet tall and they dared me, I'd do it. And fall out and hit every limb on the way down. I've broken both my legs, my arms. I was crazy.

Perhaps for this reason, the birth of Lila's first son was particularly important as it catapulted her into the role of responsible parent. It also brought her face to face with the effects on other people of her own behaviour as a child and young adult. "When I had him it was like ok, I got payback. I remember when they put him in my arms and I hadn't seen my mom yet. She was there when I was giving birth but I had gone to sleep and looking at him I suddenly had this picture of him saying all the really mean things that I said to my mom and, I'm not kidding, the minute that she walked in the door I started bawling. I'm so sorry for all the things that I said to you and all the things that I did." His birth did not just alter her relationship with her mother however but also changed the way that lived in the punk scene.

This pregnancy came as a surprise to Lila for a number of reasons. Firstly, she had been told that she couldn't have kids and her boyfriend of the time had been told the same thing. Secondly, their relationship was not very sexual. "I think we had sex twice" she commented. When she thought she was pregnant, the results came back negative several times and some health professionals thought that she was faking pregnancy because of other incidents in her life that had led to a diagnosis of post traumatic stress disorder and anxiety disorder. This pregnancy was not delusional, however, and she ended up living in the punk scene as a single mother with an infant child with no support from the father or his family. "I was still in the punk scene but not so much. I still went to gigs when I could afford them but diapers and stuff came first. It kind of all trickles away. It's hard to be all single and partying and hanging out with Mama Goose who has to be up at nine in the morning. And waking up hungover to a shitty diaper. I learned that really quick too!"

The birth of Lila's first child was not the only event that contributed to her

movement away from parts of the punk scene. She describes a relationship with a boyfriend who was very involved in political activism in Vancouver as also being a significant part of what helped her to "smarten up". He was also a university student and encouraged her to sit in on some of his classes. She combined the ideas that she encountered in these arenas with her own experience of growing up in her community in East Vancouver.

> We always had Chinese and Korean neighbours. I was Italian and they were Chinese and they loved my food and I loved their food. And I hated Italian and they hated Chinese so we would be like let's switch and we would. And we had a Ukrainian family across the street and she loved my mom's spaghetti and stuff so we would always switch. But there wasn't a lot of Vietnamese and the ones that did move to our neighbourhood were very quiet and very withdrawn from people. I understood it later, I understand the mistrust. I'd be terrified too. Their parents probably witnessed horrific things. [My boyfriend and I] went to see *The Killing Fields*[9] and I went into the bathroom and there were some women in there and I guess they had lived through it and I just looked at them and started crying. I was bawling my eyes out all of a sudden. I felt so bad for being white. That people would treat them that way. It really affected me. It really bothered me.

She combined the information and attitudes that she heard from activist groups

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[9] *The Killing Fields* was a movie about the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia that was released in 1984. Vancouver was home to many refugees from Cambodia and other nearby countries.

and university classes with her experiences with oppressions she encountered in her everyday life with friends and neighbours. How this influenced her politics will be dealt with more specifically in Chapter 6 but it is important to note here that her politics are built on a unique combination of relationships including those that originated in the punk scene.

Lila's current relationship situation appears to be a transitional phase. She is feeling somewhat disconnected from the community in which she lives and also disconnected from the communities in which she grew up. "God, now I'm confused," she replied when I asked her to describe where she is at in her life now. She is married to a man whom she met through friends in the punk scene when her first son was quite young. Her husband has a good job that enables her to stay at home. In the past, this arrangement allowed her to be heavily involved in raising her children but one of them has now left home and the other is old enough to do so if he wishes. They now live about an hour's drive outside of the city close to where her husband works. She has done odd jobs and volunteer work but feels that her true community is still back in East Vancouver. She does not drive. She suffers from some agoraphobia and has had to deal with both her parents dying.

Despite these impediments to travel, however, she is re-establishing relationships that were begun in her days in the punk scene. She is finding that her old connections to the punk scene in Vancouver are providing her with both a sense of community and an extended family. "I can never turn my back on any of those people that I met through the years. I think of us like a family because we did, we all grew up together." Living at such a distance has certain costs such as an increase in her level of anxiety. "When I was

around all those people too, it's so weird all of the phobias went away. Now that I'm so isolated my phobias are getting up there again. It's where I am right?" She is currently trying to find new ways to reconnect to her family and community while accepting where she is now.

Lucy's narrative of family, sex and relationships is an interesting contrast. She grew up on the prairies. Her mother was an immigrant from the UK. Her direct family was composed of herself, her two parents and one older sister and a younger sister. Lucy, like Lila, talks of her family as one of the most important parts of her life. "The story of my family is about a family that loves family. That's my story. My story is all about family. And we're all very strong and very connected. I have 36 cousins and we're all close." She describes her childhood as "idyllic". Her parents were "nice people". Her housing was stable. Her needs were provided for. Nobody abused or molested her. When she thinks of her childhood she thinks of "sunny days and open spaces and having fun."

Her parents presented Lucy with a model of two very strong, successful people who provided many things for their children. She describes having been surprised when she found out that it was possible to wear second hand clothing or drop out of school. She had planned to go to a prestigious university in Canada and become a doctor. She did well in school and was also very physically active. She describes her relationship with her dad as being exceptionally close. She was big and strong and physically capable and often worked closely with him on projects that her sisters considered too 'masculine' for their tastes. She sees her confidence in her relationships with men as stemming from the good relationship that she had with her father.

I've always been very respected by men and I've always felt very

respected by men and my relationship with men has always been foremost

more than my relationship with women because my relationship with my

father is so strong despite his drinking. [...] I was immersed in this culture

of men and it felt so right.

Her engagement and identification with masculinity did not alter the heteronormative

narrative of her intimate relationships. She states that her "story sexually is very nice.

Nobody ever raped me or forced me. [...] The bottom line is that I was six foot tall and I

had legs up to here and big blond hair. I didn't see it at the time but I was a real fucking

bombshell. I thought I was one of the guys when they were hanging out with me but they

all wanted to sleep with me and I didn't realize that and I didn't sleep with any of them

but that is probably why they kept me around 'cause they kept trying."

Lucy's idyllic family life was disrupted by what she describes as her "constant

companion": death. She starts describing her experiences with death by talking about

how her dog died when she was about twelve. She admits that it does not sound very

traumatic but it was followed, in the order that she told them to me, by the deaths of her

best friend, her Grandma and her favourite grandfather. The first of these events to take

place was the death of her Grandma. This was particularly traumatic because of the way

in which she found out:

[Grandma] was at our house and I let her have my room and I slept

with my sister. That night she was acting very odd and trying to give me

her wedding ring. And I was like no Grandma, have a good night. At about

two o'clock in the morning I woke up and something wasn't sitting right

with me and I went across the hall into my room and it was very apparent

to me that my grandma had passed away in my bed. Rather than waking

anyone up I just felt that I needed to respect that and went back to bed. In

the morning I got my sister ready for school and my mom was like, get

your grandma up and I was like I'm just getting ready for school. And then

I hear my mom go down the hall so I just got P____ out of there and took

her to school and then midway through the morning they're like Lucy

come to the office. My dad is there with my two sisters and I'm like, yeah,

I forgot to tell you that grandma is dead.

Shortly after this event, both her grandfathers died, her dog died and then her best friend

died of an asthma attack on a school bus. She describes the lessons that she learned from

these experiences: "it's so not worth it getting close to people. [...] Five or six deaths and

I'm fifteen. I've been to a lot of funerals at this point. So then I shut down. That's when

the wheels fell off." At that point, she went to her first punk rock gig and found there the

"perfect receptacle for this key of my anger and my frustration and my revulsion to the

straight world. And you live a good life and be a good person and where does it get ya!

Everyone dies anyways!"

What followed in Lucy's life was a complete shift into the punk scene. She moved

into a punk house that was at the centre of the scene. She dated some men in the scene

and created relationships with many people that have often lasted throughout her life. She

moved between cities, travelled with bands and occasionally relied on her parents who

sent her money to help her out wherever she ended up. Her description of life at that time

is chaotic and full of names of people and places and a few very important friendships

that have lasted to the present.

Lucy, like Lila above, describes the birth of her first child as a major touchstone in her life. "I loved it. I knew what to do. Having kids, I was made for that. Suddenly my life had total meaning. And everything changed when I had that kid. It was such an experience." She was 22 years old at the time. She lived for a while with the father of that child but then split up and lived briefly with Lila who had just given birth to her first child. They rented a house and a couple of men in the punk scene lived in the basement and also helped with childcare and, in fact, covered most of the rent. She then started dating another guy in the scene and shortly afterwards was pregnant with her second child. More moving around, living in the woods, back to the city, and splitting up with the father of her second child. She was convinced by a friend to move into more stable housing in the co-op where she currently lives and there got together with another man and gave birth to her third child. She has five children with five different fathers. She does recognize that this may seem odd to some people but does not remember questioning the way in which her family was expanding when she was in the midst of it. "So there I am, I have three kids with three men and that didn't seem odd to me until recently. I thought that is my life. That is what the universe gave me."

She also got married although she does not connect her marriage with having children. She married another man she met through the music scene and was surprised when he asked her to marry him. "So we got married and I finally married someone. That was something that I didn't think I would do and we are still married to this day." I asked her what she thought of marriage and she replied, "I didn't see any use for it. As a kid I always saw myself as a mother. I never saw myself as a wife. And the only reason I did get married was because it was something that I hadn't done before. It wasn't because... I

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didn't have any concept of spending the rest of my life with anyone or anything. I thought I did but even when I got married it was like I wonder how long this will last. I was not like this is forever." Lucy still clearly values the roles of mother and father and marriage but also does not engage with them in a normative fashion.

Lucy has developed a construction of her family that contains elements of her prairie upbringing but has been transplanted and adapted to life in a city. Her views on marriage and childbirth seem especially radical to the present day and certainly do not seem to match the ways in which Lila, for instance, constructed her family life. Despite the fact that they lived together, spent time in the same scene and continue to be connected by bonds of friendship and community, they have made very different choices as they have grown older. Lila has tended to isolate herself and stay within her house and focus on her relationship with her husband and children. She did not maintain any relationship with the father of her first child. Lucy spends time with all the fathers of her children. She shares childcare duties with their families as well. "I have seven step-kids and we're a tribe and I'm the matriarch and it goes very well," she says. What is common for both of these women is the way in which their family relationships and community relationships intermingle. Co-parenting of children does not require marriage. Family does not require blood-ties. Children are important for their own contributions to family and community and not as markers of a family lineage. They both expressed that the birth of their first child was a life-changing experience for them because it forced them to rework their strategies for engaging with their community and their intimate partners.

The other women I interviewed who had given birth to children did not describe the sort of transformation that Lila and Lucy talked about. Patty has two children and

Charlotte has one. They both recount many changes that flowed from having children but these changes came after their children were born and took longer to unfold. Patty commented that she "thought it might affect a change in my life but..." She had a particularly difficult time with the father of her first child both during her pregnancy and afterwards. Drug use, interfering or unsupportive grandparents and the stresses of poverty all combined to make that time of her life very difficult. Charlotte faced similarly challenging circumstances. She had to flee the father of her child and abandon everything she owned and the community in which she had settled. "So I took my dog and a bag of clothes and basically left my trailer, left my truck, left all my stuff, my friends and my community and ended up [a] single mom, hiding from this crazy guy. The difference between Charlotte and Patty and Lila and Lucy is that the latter pair had some community support in the punk scene in which they were immersed at the time they became pregnant. Charlotte and Patty did not find that they had this support. An abusive environment is not conducive to positive personal transformation and both of these women became pregnant under very trying circumstances.

Difficult beginnings do not necessarily lead to bad endings, however. At the time I interviewed Patty, she was having many problems with her second son but was otherwise in a generally good space as far as her family and relationships were concerned. She is in a relationship with a partner who is considerably younger but has participated a great deal in the raising of her children for a number of years. She lives in a co-op that provides her with stable housing and helped her care for her father in the last few years of his life. She has been in touch with various other members of her direct family and has healed some, but not all, of the rifts that had developed over the years.

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Change, I've changed things.

K: You've successfully raised two boys. Things are changing but it's getting there.

I think I didn't have an opportunity to find out who I personally am because of being under the influence of drugs and alcohol throughout the first thirty years of my life ninety percent of the time. All of a sudden taking all that away, that influence. And then who I became was a parent. That was the primary focus. Now comes the interesting part.

Patty has incorporated some of the healing and growing that she was unable to experience when she was young into her parenting. She also took care of her father as his health deteriorated and eventually brought him to live with her and be a part of her direct family before he died. Although she has some doubts about choices that she has made along the way, it is clear that she has accomplished a great deal of change already and is looking forward to further growth.

Charlotte is also feeling far better about her own family and her own ability to be in a relationship. She describes many years in the past of abusive relationships that often involved 'survival sex'. She often felt as though she was cornered by her life circumstances and was in relationships only because she could see no other means of getting food and housing. Her story frequently reflects a lifetime of living in fear and panic that did not end when she became a mother. She is now feeling, however, that she is learning to trust herself and the world around her. Doing the interview for this project is one example of how she practices this newfound trust and feelings of safety. She elegantly narrates how her inability to even conceive of a trusting relationship limited her

choices over the course of her life.

Honestly, three years is the longest I've ever been with anybody and I was married along the way and none of those relationships were ever more than a few months. So this is my first real experience of that kind of really going into depth with somebody and actually starting to trust. It's really scary. But it's also really nice.

K: Had you ever even conceived of that sort of relationship?

No, no. Part of it is that I still experience this but I'm able to articulate it more at this time but I was a child. I was driven by a child's needs. Because I'd been neglected, because I'd moved around so much because I had been exposed to violence and trauma. I hadn't attached! I had no trust, no bonding, no touch. When I look at what relationships that I did have, it was very childish. I really did want to be taken care of and rescued and very often I was acting out the pattern that I had seen... Many of my relationships were violent. Many of them, I would play the submissive role even though I knew it wasn't me. It felt like a game but I felt compelled to play. It would be like ok, I'll do that and then he'll do that and I'll do this and then he'll hit me and it was a game.

Charlotte struggled for years to understand this game, to raise a child and deal with her own struggles in her family of origin and her relationships. Having a child presented both impediments and opportunities for this personal growth.

Women without children also struggle with families and relationships, of course. Their experiences are similarly varied from their childhood to their present lives. Peggy is

currently married to a man whom she met while she was managing a tour and he was drumming for a punk rock band in Europe. Violet has a boyfriend and lives next door to another friend who provides her with a great deal of day-to-day emotional support and the presence of a trusted partner. Sally has thought about being in a relationship but still feels that it could cause more problems than it is worth. "I got really weak in relationships. And I think probably always and that is why I tend to stay single. It weakens me. That would be different today because I know and I can recognize that but it was always like that though. It was probably nice for them but not so good for me. Things would be different today. But I'm telling you, I'm certainly happy where I'm sitting today." Clara expressed continued frustration with the men in her life but also recognized that her problems in relationships were connected to her own choices. She lives with one ex-boyfriend and maintains some strong emotional attachments to others but she does not see much space for growth or change in these relationships. "I think that's the boys that I pick. And when I look at them now, when I see them again, they haven't changed very much. Usually most people who know them would say that they are jerks. They don't treat women very well and are not very respectful. They act like jerks a lot of the time." These women exhibit a range of strategies in how they get their needs met and also different degrees of success.

Molly also talked about the need for relationships to be able to adapt to change. She found that some relationships could adapt to the changes that she experienced and others fell by the wayside. "I tried displaying my changing mind set to my larger circle of friends and acquaintances and it wasn't so accepted. People lost on one track, on their own track, don't want to see you evolve. It is a confrontation with their own stagnation.

My really good friends have, of course, never gone away. They worked through all my evolutions but those are few." She is currently living in her birthplace in a relationship with a man whom she knew as a teenager. She describes her earlier relationships as being almost purely based on self-centered and momentary impulses. "Oh, relationships, that's the thing about being punk. You do what you want when you want. I can't tell you the number of relationships that I was in where I would just conveniently forget that I was with someone and would fuck someone else. And it all comes back to the same thing. It doesn't matter. We're not going to be here. It is all coming to a halt so do whatever you want." This expression of nihilism is not always reflected in her choices at the time, however, and since then she has clearly learned to engage in her relationships in a much different way.

Molly had been married previously and had at one point wanted to have children but now recalls that she did not necessarily want to experience childbirth or having children but wanted to be able to share the experiences of many of her friends who had children. She left her first husband after giving herself an herbal abortion to end a pregnancy that could have been carried to term. She currently has a broad range of people in her life including some contact with her birth family. She feels that her experience in the punk rock scene has enabled her to tolerate or even enjoy these relationships. "Having gone through it all, it's the punk patience so I can deal with my insane mother now so I have some sense of family. Molly's relationships with her birth family are tenuous but more substantive than they have been for many years and her relationship with her partner seems to be secure and emotionally close although she still often feigns ignorance when I ask her to talk about her relationship. This veneer of hardcore cynicism that Molly

currently displays is nothing compared to the ferocious rage that terrified many of the people around her when she was younger.

Participation in the punk scene often seemed designed to express anger and cynicism exclusively. "The rest of pop culture is about love songs and this is not," remarked Clara when she was talking about her relationships within the punk scene. I can recall meeting some of these women at the time and they could certainly be intimidating when they chose to be. It was not uncommon for punk gigs to have an aura of barely suppressed violence. This was not just limited to the macho hardcore scene. There seemed to be very few 'norms' within the scene around how to do relationships. The idea of normative behaviours still coloured some people's understanding of how to behave, though. Lucy rhetorically asked me "when did you ever go to a show where there wasn't some massive fight between some woman and her boyfriend? That's borderline behaviour. That's not what normal people do." Lucy is here expressing the idea that relationships that existed in the punk scene were generally 'dysfunctional.' She tended to use this sort of language more than the other women who expressed concerns about specific shortcomings in their relationships in their youth.

Peggy commented on a marked inability in her early years to express many emotions and on the limited nature of her relationships at that time. She sees her subsequent participation in the punk scene as being a key that allowed her to open up her emotional world and fully explore a variety of relationships with partners, friends, family and community. She used to get into vicious fights with her friends but she still has those friends. And some of those friends have kids who are old enough to have more kids! This is a very significant fact for a group of people who generally thought that they would not

live past the age of thirty. She describes her current view on the punk scene:

What I see is a community that found itself again. It's older. It's wiser. It's gentler. But it is still the same community. And I think that community has a new generation. That generation is the age that we were all hanging out. That's what blows my mind. All the kids now are in their twenties which is how old we were. I just really like to see the people for who they really are today. And I'm glad that they still value their relationships that we had back then because as toxic as the relationships might have been, as muddled as they might have been through lack of mainstream values, if we had them we tried to block them. I know I did. As we get older and we change our values or reinvent them or regain them, the same people still have a connection with each other. To me that really means community and that really means that we had something then and we still have it now. And that makes me damn proud. And that's all I wanted to say. I'm just so happy that everyone can say I love you now instead of fuck the world. But I think we had to say fuck the world before we could say I love you. [...] We could still say both… hahahah. Fuck the world, I love you! Haha Fuck everything, I just love you, that's all…

Peggy is partly describing growth that takes part as a regular part of a person's life-course. She is also describing a specific way that people within the punk scene could develop long lasting relationships that could include marriage and children.

Growing older, of course, is a regular component of an individual's life course. Growing older within a punk community, however, offered considerable latitude for

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creating a variety of different types of relationships. Being involved with punk culture not only gave them access to these alternatives but also provided them with a community where they could feel valued and supported for constructing their families differently. For all these women, participation in the punk scene gave them the opportunity to pursue some strategies that differed from those that they had grown up with. There were many other examples of groups that pursued alternative strategies and the punk scene was one way in which they could both construct their relationships differently from the norms that they had grown up with and still maintain a community. Their participation in the punk scene is an outward and visible sign of active agency and knowledge of the field in which they live. The presence of this agency is not unique to these women. Every individual exists as an agent by Bourdieu's definition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 107). The form that their participation took was both different and cohesive enough to be labelled as a separate 'subculture' or 'lifestyle' however and this is why punk exists as a separate category of culture or style. The lives of these women were not so different that they do not share many goals that are almost universal within the field in which they live. One of the most important goals that they had in common was finding places to live and making homes for themselves, their families and their community.

5: Housing: Punk homeplace

Fuck, you lived in houses that you gave names too! Your home had its own identity. This is Bitch City. There's the Plaza. This is Stalag. I mean how fucking cool is that! It's not just a number, it had its own identity... (Sally)

Habitus is composed of both inner, more subjective aspects of a person's life and outer influences that are often perceived as objective constraints or limits on an individual. Part of the outer subjectivity is the immediate environment in which people lived. The habitus that these women were born into helped define a practice of housing that was based on private ownership of property and fencing off of one family from another. Most of these women were raised in houses in Vancouver or nearby cities. Their parents worked hard to provide them a nice space that met most of the normative middle-class standards of the day. As they moved out of their parents' homes and into the punk scene, their ways of living were transformed. They still put great value in their homes but they constructed them in a way that was often incomprehensible to their parents and frequently the cause of much concern. Their time spent living in punk houses often only lasted a few years but appears to have had an effect on their current choices in where and how they live. The influence of their habitus in their early years was supplanted in some ways by the influences of the punk culture that they were also helping to create. Their marginalized status also contributed to their housing choices. All of these possibilities are

constrained by the field in which they are operating also.[10] As they have grown older they have combined these factors in different ways to make their current choices in homeplace.

For women in the Vancouver punk scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s, this immediate environment was the city of Vancouver, certain bars and halls where punk gigs were staged and, of primary importance, the houses in which they lived. These punk houses were not just places that people rented so they could have a place to keep their stuff and sleep and cook. They were communal places and centres for the creation of music and art, the discussion of politics and aesthetics and the negotiation of relationships and family ties that were created within the punk community. These family ties were not only the assumed bonds of genetic lineage although these were sometimes included. Sometimes siblings, sometimes parents and children were in the scene together. Rather, these family ties were new creations that were sometimes cemented by sex or marriage or other more innovative means of creating family. They were a place for creating a community or communities that were unconventional or even oppositional within the greater social arena of Canadian or North American society. They were not sites of refuge or withdrawal into a private family life but were sites of possible resistance. They were in many ways the equivalent of what bell hooks describes as "homeplace" (1990, p. 41).

hooks writes about "places where all that truly mattered in life took place – the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls. There we learned dignity, integrity of being; there we learned to have faith" (1990, pp.

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[10] The field here is composed of such factors as property laws, historical and political factors and the consequent structures of access to land and housing that are specific to this city and the surrounding area.

41-42). hooks does not dwell on a physical description of what that place looks like. She describes feelings of safety and understanding and inspiration that are found in homeplace. These feelings are located not just in the physical space but also in the social space. This social space is composed of people, especially but not exclusively women, who normally inhabit that place and create space for resistance against the various forms of oppression to which they are subject. Homeplace is a space that is a reflection and a response to the intersection of various influences and oppressions that manifested in people's lives. It is not just an abstract space. Homeplace is a physical space that is a haven from oppression and also a centre of resistance (1990, p. 42).The physical space itself is an important component of how these spaces work. Material conditions matter in people's lives and the material conditions of the places where punk women lived had some unique characteristics which both shaped and were shaped by their beliefs and aspirations. It is important to have an appreciation of these physical spaces in order to better understand what these women lived with on a daily basis and the context in which their stories are set.

For many people, it would be hard to imagine that the houses these women lived in could serve as places of safety, of community and of family: places to call home. I lived within the same community as these women and my own experiences are useful in understanding their stories. They did not generally take much time during the interview to explain some of the background that was common for both of us but rather pointed out aberrations from our common history where they felt it was important. It is important to describe some of this common history for those who are looking in from the outside. I lived for three years in a large house that was located on a main thoroughfare in East

Vancouver. The rent was cheap and the landlord almost never came by and apparently had little interest so long as the rent cheques did not bounce. There were six bedrooms, two on each floor as well as a living room, a small dining room, a kitchen and two bathrooms. There was an open space in the basement as well and we built in a darkroom in the area that used to have laundry facilities. The house was functional but not pretty. We had makeshift curtains, softwood floors that became pebbled by the constant pounding of high heels and hard boots and a fireplace that occasionally had a bottle thrown into it. Rent worked out to only a few hundred dollars each and we had one phone that was shared by everyone.

I lived with over thirty-six different people in three years and this did not include visitors and friends who sometimes stayed for extended periods of time. One former roommate describes herself as being the only person who had to get up in the morning to go to work and only knowing the identity of the people that she was stepping over as she left because she had checked the concert listings for the night before. Food was often cooked and eaten communally although most people had very erratic schedules. Dishes were an adventure as few people liked doing them so a few of us turned it into a competition to see who could pile them highest without breaking anything in order to add enough drama to dishwashing to attract some participants. Everything tended to be negotiated 'on the fly' as stuff happened and people moved in and out or stayed for a few days and left. This did not always work out in the way that everyone liked and hence the high turnover of people moving in and out. Relationships of various sorts began and often ended quickly and sometimes violently. The police were seldom called which is a bit surprising given some of the activities there. There were always other shared houses to

move into as well and it often seemed as if people were shuffling back and forth until they found the right combination of people who shared similar standards of cleanliness or rule enforcement. The house that I lived in was one of the quieter houses that actually allowed some of us to work regular daytime jobs and myself to go to university full time.

Other houses were far more chaotic and noisy and had more frequent late night parties and massive amounts of drug use that made contact with the 'straight' world much less frequent or desirable. The decorative norms of the time were posters from local gigs or sometimes from larger tours or band releases. I can distinctly remember that the Dead Kennedys and Crass both released posters that were popular. Stolen street signs, found 'art' and, in one case, the front signage from an old trolley bus with all the route names on a roll of canvas material were also used to decorate. It was common to have a band room for practice and where gear would be stored. The biggest security concerns in these houses tended to focus around protecting the sound equipment and the drugs and alcohol that generally fuelled the chaos. So many people were in and out of these houses that the reality was they operated on some sort of 'honour' system whereby the vast majority of people in the scene would respect the property of others. I had only one item stolen in all those years and I got that back within a few hours with the help of a few phone calls and a few friends. The offending thief spent a few days in detox[11] and expressed appropriate remorse for his transgression. The real risk he ran was that he would be outcast or ostracized from the punk scene. This could be catastrophic as there was little space in any other social group in the city for people with his combination of physical and mental

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[11] A detoxification centre is a first stop for drug and alcohol withdrawal that was often also used as a place of refuge by some who could get some free food and a roof over their head when their addictive behavior caused too many problems.

health issues and lack of social skills.

The best known of these houses was undoubtedly the Plaza. This was a large, older house on Vancouver's East Side that stood only feet away from the main North-South truck route through the city. Lucy based some of her status within the punk scene on having lived at the Plaza and there is now a facebook group that is solely for people who lived there at some point. Pictures of the time show a fairly bare house with the interior walls covered in graffiti. There were many other houses, however. For many women, it was not unusual to move regularly between houses. Lila describes living in Hell House, The Snake Pit and House of Commons. Lucy recalls moving from a warehouse squat to the Plaza to another row of houses in East Vancouver before finally settling in a co-op in Kitsilano on the more prosperous west side of Vancouver. Violet refers to time spent hanging out at the Plaza and the Body Bag house though she ended up at another house called 'Ground Zero'. Molly moved from a welfare hotel to Cityspace, a large warehouse ostensibly rented out to a series of small businesses. "We shared washroom facilities and a hot plate and it didn't matter. There were four floors and at one point I counted thirty-three people living on four floors." Charlotte remembers moving out of home with a nice sectional couch that eventually became a piece of communal punk property that lasted for many years in different places whether she lived there or not. Sally moved so often that she commented, "I can't remember where I truly was. If I was even paying rent anywhere." Rent payment and housing did not always directly correspond with each other as both women and men spent time 'on the road', got in and out of various relationships or simply spent their money elsewhere if nobody demanded that they pay rent.

This lifestyle did not make punks particularly reliable tenants. Consequently, these houses were chosen mostly for their price and for the willingness of their landlords to rent to punks. Lila spend some time talking about the Hell House in detail. By car, it is only a short distance from Vancouver along an East-West thoroughfare but this house was not easily reached by transit and was therefore described as being "way the fuck out there in Burnaby on Canada Way" An excerpt of Lila's description gives a sense of how this house was organized:

> I'd come home and we'd had those ivies that grew on the outside and it would be all over my wall. It literally grew inside my room. I was right beside P____'s room and we had this big like a rumpus room at the top right beside my room. But it was really scary. The whole house was really freaky. The guy who built it was one of those demo guys that goes into old houses and takes things so the whole house was built from pieces of old houses and churches and stuff. When you came into the living room it had one of those round doors covered in leather and stuff. When you came into the house, on the right was the band room and then there was [a bedroom] and a bathroom. And there was the sunken in living room with fireplace. To the left of the fireplace there was a little closet door but when you opened that door it opened to a huge hallway and a set of steps and a landing and a bathroom and another set of steps and then a huge hallway with three bedrooms and that rumpus room in the back. It had cupboards and dumb-waiters and stuff like that. You'd open the doors and it would be bricks or you'd open the door and it would go way in the wall somewhere

that you couldn't see.

These houses were not just physically strange either. They came with stories of spirits and community that helped define their character. They provided the physical anchors to which many of the women to whom I spoke could connect their memories of events and people. Many of the women sorted out their memories of their time in the punk scene by listing the various places where they lived. This was certainly far more important than the music that they listened to or the concerts they attended. There is certainly an aspect of this importance of home that would seem to follow from the traditional role of women that they had learned in their early years. The habitus into which they were born is composed of durable dispositions that structure their choices and their strategies even in the context of the punk rock scene. Women's responsibility for the home is strongly engrained in this habitus. It correlates to women's experience as described by bell hooks. She formulates the idea of 'homeplace' based on black women's experience and describes it as places that "belonged to women, were their special domain" (1990, p. 41). In fact, I often had to specifically ask about bands and musicians they listened to but the stories of the places where they lived were an integral part of their description of what it meant to be in the punk scene. For these women, punk music was only a small aspect of punk culture, their punk identity and their narratives of punk life.

Sally describes her introduction to punk by talking about listening to a tape that a friend had brought to a party. Her entrance into the punk scene, though, was clearly about entering a punk house (or, in this case, apartment building) and moving her homeplace into the punk scene. She did not change her persona or style or musical taste but simply packed up all her possessions into the trunk of her car and "drove into the scene."

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That's when I would have just somehow got a hold of L____,

something happened, we went down, I had a car at the time. I went back

out with L____ she must have taken me out. We went to see bands and

met all these people. I remember one of the first times I was hanging out

with them and next I was just packing up all my shit, from my sister's

place or whatever. The trunk of my car was full of all my clothes and I just

drove to 1226 cause that was where the party was. Someone said 'Ah, I

remember that you drove to 1226, you came for a party and never left.'

And that's pretty much what happened. I drove into, I parked in the back

and my car got towed too.

What Sally describes is more than just a symbolic journey. Everything she owned was

packed in her car and then whatever she had not unpacked and moved into the

apartment building was gone with her car.

Regardless of the trials and difficulties of living in these sorts of communal houses,

all the women I interviewed agreed that there was a perception of safety and acceptance

within this community. Despite all the movement from one house to another and the

occasional stories of horrific violence and misadventure, there was almost always a sense

of coming home when they entered one of these punk houses. These houses were the true

physical space of the punk scene. They were also a space that was generally very

different from where these women grew up. One woman, Peggy, had actually owned an

apartment before she got into the punk scene and sold it ten months after she bought it.

Home ownership was very important within her family and an uncle had helped her buy

the apartment. She is one of only two of the nine women I interviewed who are currently

living in a house that they privately own. The difference that she sees between her own ownership of a house and the way that her family looked at home ownership is in how it symbolically operates within her social circle. For her parents, their house was a status symbol that required ever increasing expenditures that eventually helped bankrupt them.

For Peggy, her house clearly has value as a living space and also as a work space and community space. She runs her businesses out of her house and uses it for large parties that include live bands and over one hundred people in attendance. She is fiercely protective of her property and her right to own property and she feels that this puts her at odds with the attitudes of many others in the punk scene. She justifies her ownership in part by opening up that space to many visitors in the punk scene. Her yard was the site for a 'punk rock survivors reunion' that took place in 2009. People stayed overnight, bands played and food was shared amongst people who often had not seen each other for decades. Her strong desire to own her home echoes her parents emphatic desire to own both homes and businesses. This strategy for creating a home is a durable aspect of their shared habitus. Peggy's has modified her parents techniques, however, and found ways to reconcile her desire for private ownership with the more communal approach to private property that she recognizes as the punk ideal.

Most of the women I interviewed currently live in co-operative housing. Lucy, Charlotte, Violet, Patty and Clara all live in some sort of legally structured shared housing in four different cities currently. Some of them have children. Some of them do not. They have differing degrees of privacy within their spaces but all of them expressed a great deal of satisfaction with the spaces in which they live. For Lucy, her townhouse is generally kept unlocked. When I went there to conduct the interview she said she figured

that it was me at the door because I had not been there before so I didn't know that it was acceptable to just walk in and call her name. During the interview one of her children and a sister both walked in to say hi and see what she was up to. Charlotte did not quite have the same open door policy but she had a spare bed for people to stay overnight and a local pub within walking distance that served as a sort of second living room which is where we first met up. Violet has her own apartment but shares keys with a friend who lives next door. Patty would probably love to own her own home but very much enjoys living in the small community in which her co-op townhouse is located and has her kids and neighbours regularly dropping by and is actively involved in community projects and management.

Clara is somewhat unique in that she has very consciously chosen to live within a shared space that was originally a squatted building. She is the only one to describe herself as having grown up with communal housing. "I've lived communally all my life. I lived at [the Terrible House] with the boys communally and then I had a house in Chinatown communally and then I had my place for the last twenty-five years communally." And she and the people around her continue to make this choice even though they are able to get their own places if they wished. "My roommate now could afford a place of his own for the money he is paying me to live at my house but he doesn't want to. He wants to live with a person and he wants to live in such a luxurious apartment that he gets through sharing this apartment. And this is our lifestyle. He is six years older than me so he is in his early fifties and it's his choice. He could afford a one bedroom or two bedroom place for the same money but he is not doing it. It's people like that whom I choose as the people that I want to live with." She attributes this preference to her

parents' political choices which she, in part, continued to emulate as she grew older.

For all the other women the environment in which they grew up was full of aspirations to home ownership and financial independence that they considered 'normal' within their self-defined class. Their parents worked to provide a 'good home' for their children and renting was seen as a temporary phase with home ownership being the end goal. Most of their parents achieved home ownership and passed on both the ability and the desire to own a home. Peggy was initially looking for an apartment to rent when her uncle and her parents convinced her to buy a place instead. She did not remain a homeowner for very long but later in her life returned to those values and bought her current house.

For Peggy as well as almost all of the other women, the style of living that existed within the punk scene was different from what they had grown up with. The punk scene had an overall structure of a community of shared housing that could accommodate a great deal of movement and keep costs to a minimum. It is possible to see some similarities with the situation that many young people face when they first move out of home and are in unstable shared housing while they are getting settled. It is very common for post-secondary students to share housing while they are in school. The normative goal tends to be private ownership of an apartment or a house. For these women when they were in the punk scene, however, the unstable shared housing had no real expiry date. It was not a stepping stone to home ownership. In fact, it did not even encourage the development of any of the abilities or habits that might be needed to pursue home ownership. For instance, no credit history could be built when rent and bills are paid in cash and using fake names. Several of them commented that they did not expect to live

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beyond the age of thirty so planning ahead seemed superfluous. Both the punk lifestyle and often their individual circumstances did not make survival easy. For others who had an easier path in life, various events that occurred specifically in their lives or shared within the punk community often conspired to leave them with little hope that planning for the future was worthwhile. This was part of the reason that the Sex Pistols mantra of 'No Future!' resonated with so many people in the punk scene.

What is clear from this research is that there is a real difference between how these women construct their home life presently, how they lived in the punk scene and the sort of home that they grew up in. It appears that their time in the punk scene and the type of 'homeplace' that they established there heavily influenced their current lifestyle. This appears to apply regardless of whether they have children or not. Both women who do privately own their homes happen to be married but their marriages occurred at very different stages in their lives and they came to home ownership through different routes and for different purposes. One of the women lives in a house in the suburbs that is spacious enough to raise her children and close by her husband's work place. She does find it kind of isolating as she herself does not drive and she does not enjoy the neighbourhood that much. The other woman is in the neighbourhood where she spent much of her time in the punk scene and clearly enjoys creating and working on her live/work[12] space and has married a man who appears to share the styles and values that her home exemplifies.

Of the two women who are renting apartments that are not in co-ops, one of them,

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[12] Live/work (or live-work) spaces are popular amongst artists who would otherwise have to pay rent for a studio as well as an apartment. No doubt, this is part of the reason that they are also popular amongst some punks.

Sally, is living in a small apartment building which she helps to manage. An old friend of hers who was a part of the punk scene lives in another apartment in that same building. As was the case when she was in the punk scene, Sally mixes her living space, her working space and her community space and seems pleased with the combination she has achieved. She has recently moved back to her original home town and has chosen to live in an apartment in a house that is fairly centrally located within that city and, when asked about her home, often replies with stories about her neighbours. All the other women in this study now live in co-operative housing, many of them for a decade or more.

A central question for my research is why the homes that these women now live in are so different from the ones that they grew up in. There have been some economic and social changes that make it difficult for the women whom I interviewed to live in the same style to which their parents aspired. Some of their parents experienced the loss of their family homes due to various recessions that have plagued the North American economy since the nineteen-seventies. Buying a home was not easy for their parents either. Many of these women had parents who were immigrants or come from very difficult backgrounds. Even Lucy, who describes her family as being financially successful and solidly middle-class, describes a family background of poor farmers who moved across provinces before eventually meeting with some success in the city.

Lila describes the difficulties that her father had as he tried to learn English and save money and start a family while his own family was largely back in Europe and dealing with the consequences of the Second World War. Buying homes was difficult for their parents' generation as well, yet all of their parents seemed to hang on to the idea of home ownership as one of the most significant and positive steps in their lives if they

were able to achieve it. That ideal seems to have been largely lost amongst these women. Part of this change is due to shifts in surrounding economic and social structures. The women themselves stated that they valued co-operative living because it gave them some security of home but their efforts and work could be directed to projects other than home ownership. It is less expensive and requires less effort to share the tasks associated with ownership.

It could also be argued that the reason why many of these women do not own their own houses is that they experienced an extended adolescence within the punk scene. During the years when many people are laying the foundations of career, family and home ownership, they were living in punk houses, going to gigs and consuming large quantities of drugs. There may well be some truth to this argument as a number of women expressed to me that as they approached the age of thirty they came to the realization that they had spent a large chunk of their lives living the rock'n'roll lifestyle while their peers went on to grow up and do different things. They sooner or later realized they were far outside of the normative lifestyle of many other women at their age. They also often realized that it would be difficult if not impossible to become 'normal' after years of living a marginal life. Sally somewhat poignantly reflects on her 29th birthday: "I was crying and it was such a terrible day. I thought live hard and die young and I didn't think that I'd see 30. All of a sudden 29 seemed old to me. It was like, oh my god, what have I accomplished?" Later on she also recalled the closing days of her favourite bar:

It was the last days and I went in there and looked around and things

had changed. What had changed was that I didn't know everybody. Who

are all these people? And someone walked up to me and I asked, hey, I'm

out where is everybody? And somebody walked up and said well, they've

kind of moved on with their lives and lots of them have had kids and stuff

and I remember that it really struck me. It kind of hurt my heart a little bit.

Like things are changing and also I'm thinking should I hurt his face? Is he

insulting me? Is that a direct insult? Like they are saying people have

moved on and are doing things and I'm still lagging about!

This was a moment where she felt particularly removed from both her family origins and

the punk community. Since that time, she has focused on rebuilding her connections to

the punk scene and building a homeplace that is influenced by her connections to punk

and is also in the same general area where she grew up.

The difference between these women's housing strategies and those of their

parents is no doubt due to a combination of factors. For most of these women, the desire

to own a house or other type of private dwelling was superseded by the desire to live

within a strongly interlocking and open community. These two aims, community and

private property, are increasingly at odds with one another in Vancouver where the cost of

home ownership is increasingly out of reach of most people. In order to sustain their

community, which is based in the city, these women have generally turned to other means

of acquiring housing. They all now have a high degree of stability in their living

situation and are able to invite both their birth families and their punk friends into their

living spaces. To get to their current situations, they have made a series of decisions and

have used a number of strategies that are based on their habitus and on their economically

marginalized position. The decisions that they have taken and the strategies that they

have used appear to be influenced by both the habitus that they were born into and their

experiences within the punk scene. For many of them, their houses are the bases for community, family, work and creativity. They share their spaces with others in a way that is reminiscent of their early days in the punk scene and look for the safety and security of a homeplace by keeping the right people around rather than securing their doors or their gates.

Their strategies and goals are not much different from those of their parents but they are also living within a different time and place. To put it in the language of Bourdieu, the field in which they are practicing has shifted. Even those who grew up in Vancouver have seen it almost double in size and become much more crowded. They have had to adapt in some ways to these new conditions like anyone else who lives within that field. They chose to exercise this creativity with the punk scene that they were helping to create. They now have a new form of homeplace that has built on and altered the homeplace of their youth and adapted to the stresses and strains of our modern society by introducing strategies that come from the marginalized experience of their own punk rock community and also with the knowledge of other individuals and communities within the broader community around them. The chaos and poor living conditions of their years in the punk scene have been ameliorated by experience and increased income but these homes continue to reflect the punk past of their inhabitants. They respond in many different ways to the changes around them and the pressures on their community. Getting their needs met through work, relationships and housing is an essential component of their response. They also push back against these pressures. This response helps define their politics.

6: Politics: Community of misfits

The drug-dealing musician hippie turned into someone who literally kicked me out of the house into a snowstorm saying I won't have an anarchist in my home. I didn't know the meaning of the word anarchist at that point. The only place I had to go - I had got a job at a book store down the street and I had a key and I let myself in. This was about 11 o'clock at night. Of course I didn't know the spelling but I had always been a reader so I knew it would be a 'ch'. I looked up the meaning of the term anarchist and didn't feel so alone anymore. (Molly)

These women lived within a specific space, had specific resources available to them and were surrounded by specific people and relationships. How they utilized these aspects of their lives was in part determined by their beliefs about what they could accomplish and how the world around them operates. These beliefs are political beliefs. hooks notes that any analysis is necessarily political when doing academic work. There is no reason to think that the analysis of those who are not trained as academics would be any less political. I asked these women about both their political beliefs and their political practices. Nobody claimed to be 'non-political.' Their responses reflected a broad understanding of their role in changing the world and a variety of ways in which they turned their agency outwards in order to influence the surrounding social environment.

The political backgrounds of their families were varied and very much influenced by the places and times from which they came. For many of these women, their parents were born either slightly before or during the Second World War. Even for those who

were born later, the war was a formative influence in their lives and was often the cause of family dislocation or separation through either emigration or death. Many countries experienced dramatic post-war depressions. While this may have been better than the destruction of active warfare, it created a new sense of hopelessness for those who had survived the war and found out that they might not be able to get through the peace. Both my grandfathers struggled to get work after the war. One of them worked for years in Africa before his wife moved the family to Canada and found him a job in British Columbia. My other grandfather moved the family to Prince Edward Island for a winter, back to the UK and then finally to Vancouver where he was able to find work that used the skills that he had learned during the war. The post war years were a time of massive economic shifts that required many people to move their homes and change their jobs (Harvey, 2010). Times were not easy for many people in the countries that apparently 'won' the war and they were often even worse in those countries that had 'lost'. Some of the women I interviewed had parents who were from Italy and Germany and the experiences of the devastation in those countries reverberated in their lives.

It is also important to note that these women were generally born too late to be included in the 'baby boom' generation. Most of them were born in the mid to late 1960s and entered the job market at the same time as the advent of neo-liberal policies and the ascendancy of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and other advocates of state-enforced 'free market' economic policies. British Columbia was an early testing ground for these sorts of policies with the election of a Social Credit government in 1975. This government passed a budget and a series of laws that eliminated 25% of the civil service, slashed social services, increased the costs of education and eliminated agencies that

helped people assert their political, economic and human rights. This same government spent billions of dollars on a variety of mega-projects. The results of these policies were huge protests, lawsuits and a general strike in 1983. Ultimately the unions backed down after a late night meeting between the premier of the province and the head of the one of the largest unions. This handshake deal was known as the Kelowna Accord and was considered a betrayal by many people who were involved in the strike (Magnusson et al, 1984; Palmer, 1987). The Social Credit party eventually died due to the corruption and incompetence of some of its members but similar policies have continued to be the basis of all other governments of the province. For this generation of women, the consequences of these policies were that education and training rapidly became very difficult to acquire without support from parents. For the women who participated in my research, this often meant that they were left to make do with whatever support they could get from friends.

Another significant component that was important to anyone who was involved in the politics of the early 1980s was the presence of politically motivated groups that used violent means to have a greater influence on the surrounding society. These often took the form of groups that were based within urban areas but organized themselves secretly in small groups (sometimes referred to as 'cells') that could operate autonomously from one another in order to avoid infiltration and arrest by the police. I know from my own experience doing political work at the time, they were inspired by the more militant aspects of groups like the Black Panthers in the US but also by other revolutionary groups that were operating within urbanized and industrialized countries such as South Africa and some European countries.

There were numerous examples coming out of the 1970s of these sorts of armed

insurrectionary groups that were successful in getting media attention even if they were not very successful in changing the political systems within which they were operating. They released communiqués and other writings that were reprinted and distributed from Vancouver in the form of a magazine or newspaper called *Resistance*. [13] There were also groups in Vancouver that advocated or practiced this type of political action. The group that received the most attention for this sort of activity was the group Direct Action. They were named the Squamish Five by the media because of the location of their arrest but they were based in Vancouver and several of them had met within the punk rock scene in that city (Hansen, 2001). Gerry Hannah was the bass player for one of the most popular and well-respected bands in Vancouver: The Subhumans. Popularity and respect did not equal leadership, however. The women I spoke with each had their own political journey to describe and exhibited a wide variety of opinions and spoke of a diversity of actions that they had taken and in which they are sometimes still involved.

It was not unusual for these women to build from their parents' political understanding of the world when they talked about their own politics. Clara and Peggy have widely divergent political views from each other but they do not differ very much from their parents. Clara specifically points out that she "decided relatively early on for the ideals of [her] mother" when it came to political beliefs. She states that she would not argue with her dad who was in favour of fairly organized communist political action. However she found his political views to be too limited and preferred the more open,

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[13] An anarchist newspaper, The Open Road was also published by a collective based in Vancouver and worked in cooperation with Resistance. The communiqués republished in Resistance and the writings and discussion in Open Road formed the basis of many political discussions within Vancouver. These notes are from my personal library although Simon Fraser University also has a limited collection on microfilm.

anarchist views of her mom. She also notes that her outlook was partly shaped by her experience of living in communal housing with her mom when she was young and by a concern around the possibility of a war that would be even more destructive than the Second World War. She does not want to talk a great deal about her own politics because she believes that they are better expressed by the way that she lives her life rather than by words. I challenged her a bit on this statement though and she started to talk more about her anarchist beliefs and how they developed. She is clear about some of the greater social pressures that shaped her political strategies.

> This was when it was about the Pershing missiles and the SS20
> missiles. All the cold war increase of armament in Europe where all these
> missiles were facing off exactly in Germany. I found the left wing parties
> so narrow minded. They were arguing against the Pershings but not
> against the Soviet missiles or whatever so I could not agree to enter these
> parties. I worked on the student paper instead and we did some political
> cartoons and wrote political articles but I never entered a party. I never
> thought it would be fitting.

Clara clearly felt that she fit into neither side of the left-right dichotomy that is still commonly used to categorize political positions.

Peggy similarly felt that her beliefs did not fit in well to this dichotomy. She thought her antipathy toward s unions might be unpopular amongst her punk rock peers. She was specifically emphatic about her dislike of big unions and this stemmed from her parents' experiences when they were running their own company. "I saw a lot of the stuff that went on and I would see the guys in the back fucking the dog doing nothing and if

something was said, they would go crying to their union leader and we always had the union guys coming over to the shop. It was always a battle so… I'm not a huge fan of unions to this day. I can see both sides. I can see how the poor joe who is working needs the union to protect but from what I've seen the unions have gone too far. Not all but from what I've witnessed, they go too far in protecting the worker and not enough to protect the employer." However when I asked her directly whether she thought that all punk rockers were pro-union she replied, "No." She understood that the 'leftist' political leaning that she perceived in the punk scene did not exclude critiques of conventional left allies.

Later on in the interview, Peggy more clearly explains her political values. They are centred on a very strong belief in self-sufficiency with a very limited role for the government, big unions or big business of any sort. She indicates that she is actually ashamed of her role in scamming the government for welfare when she could actually get by reasonably well with the profits that she made from her own business. She was certainly more ashamed of scamming welfare than of the other illegal activity that brought in an income for her.

I could have been self-sufficient and I could have been and here I am bitching about a government that I am taking a welfare cheque from. I wasn't self-sufficient as far as supporting myself. The tax payer was supporting me when I could have supported myself and I am not proud of that. I am not proud of it at all. It is probably one of my biggest regrets about being a punk rocker: is bleeding the system. If there is anything that I could look back and say "fuck, I wish I never did that" that would be it.

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Absolutely. All the other stuff I can deal with. That I have a real bad taste

in my stomach to this day about it – bad taste in my mouth I guess.

However, she also recognized that the system as a whole often put her at a

disadvantage. She was fired from several jobs because of her clothes or her haircut and

she felt that her work and her abilities should have been the deciding factor rather than

her appearance. "If I can't work here because of my hair then fuck you! I don't need to

work here. Maybe that is why I didn't feel too guilty taking advantage of the system

because the system didn't really let me work." Her views could be mistaken for a very

individualistic libertarian sort of politic except that she was always moderating them with

a concern for the welfare of the many people around her who did not have her abilities or

advantages.

Both Peggy and Clara talked both about how they lived their political beliefs and

about specific political actions that they had taken. Lila describes being involved in more

overt political actions. Her experiences are an example of how people got involved in

political actions that might be interpreted by some people as much more serious than

scamming welfare and selling drugs. Lila's parents were not particularly politically

involved according to her account. Her grandpa had been the head of a socialist party in

the area of Italy in which he lived but her father didn't talk much about his political

beliefs and did not appear to be involved in any particular political party or organizations.

Both parents were involved in the church and in other public service groups when they

were able to do that. After her father's treatment for cancer, however, they became more

dependent on the goodwill of such groups than involved in being of service. Lila reports

this change in roles as being particularly hard on her dad who was very proud of his

ability to work and to help other people.

She does note that her father did not like the police. She found this to be "really weird." She specifically attributes this dislike to the fact that he got busted for making 'grappa' (homemade Italian liquor). She later narrates some further stories about her father and his family that give more clues to his political outlook even though he reportedly "didn't talk too much" about such things. His brother was killed by two drunk American soldiers who were on leave and the government and courts refused to do anything about it. Her grandfather was "furious, he was just so furious, he hated the government after that." Her father seemed to take to heart the lesson that you could not depend on organizations or governments to help out. He took this idea of self-sufficiency to extremes.

> He drove home with [a railway spike in his foot] and told my mom to take it out. It's like you're crucified she said. I can see right through your foot. And he said take it out! She said that it horrified her to take this fucking nail out. He didn't go to the doctor or anything. He fixed it up himself and he literally had this hole in his foot and it just happened to miss any vital parts. He also cut himself once. He got into this glass making for a while where he'd take little glass beer bottles and cut the top off and put that on the bottom and the top part would be, he'd sand it all down around the rims and he'd make glasses out of beer bottles. He ended up cutting himself one day. He cut the main artery. Me and my sister were the only ones home and I go down there and he's got blood squirting halfway across the room. I'm like, what the hell. He starts laughing! He's

so crazy... Get a thread and needle, he says! I was like eleven. I go what?!
He goes go get the needle and thread! [...] I ended up finding my mom and
they rushed him to the hospital.

While Lila described her dad's actions as weird and crazy, she also recognized
that the two of them were "like two peas in a pod." She describes her own childhood as
being a series of reckless and careless adventures that ended up with many broken bones
and trips to the hospital. She was constantly in trouble in school and suffered abuse as a
result. Some of this was condoned by the school system at the time. Misbehaving kids
were hit with a strap. "In elementary school, I was that kid who was in the hallway
everyday; getting the strap everyday almost." Some of the abuse was above and beyond
the pedagogical rules of that time, however. "I struggled, my teacher abused me and
nothing was done in those days. The teacher picked me up out of my seat by the hair on
my head. She smacked my face. She terrified me. I couldn't learn after that." Her
response to this treatment was to be louder and more violent, and to justify this by
standing up for others who were intimidated. "Especially those kids that were easy to go
through the cracks. If you are quiet and shy and never say anything you are very easily
dismissed. Like invisible. You are very easily invisible and people don't even see you're
there. And there are kids that do that. They just do that. They shut down and close." Lila
did not stay quiescent, however, and was known amongst other punk women as
'hardcore'.

Lila's tendency to be fiercely independent, outspoken and to take direct action
against situations that bothered her was highly respected in the punk rock scene. Many
other women pointed to her as one of the inspirational women whom they encountered in

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that scene and an exemplar of a politically active, 'hardcore' punk rocker. Part of this reputation came from making the effort to attend almost every single punk gig for a period of several years. "I remember for a period of two years I didn't miss a gig. I'm not kidding. I remember when Fang played Vancouver for the first time and it was a really bad night. Really stormy, really bad time to have a gig. Me and my friend went there and we were the only people there. Alien Sex Fiend came from England and we were the only people there. There was like three of us there."

Her story is interwoven with episodes of violence that go beyond the interpersonal fights and arguments that are part of most of these women's stories. She generally regrets some of the physical violence that took place between her and her mother but she is not apologetic about other aspects of violence: especially the destruction of things that, to her, are far less important than people. She spoke about one guy who was overly concerned about his car at the expense of another person. "I kicked in his car. This guy had a car. Most of us had nothing but this guy had a sports car and he cared more about this car than anyone. He had this girlfriend before me and he hit her with his car and she literally goes flying. So he jumps out of his car and he checks his car. Not her! He checks the frickin car! Not his girlfriend who is over there up the road. So I got back one day and I trompled his car. It was dented everywhere. I got my first steel toed punk boots: Army boots. Let's check out steel toes, see if they work. Guess what? They did." In her own words, "that was the beginning" of her political activism. She describes this episode as being part of the "party stage" and after that, she got "really political and all this stuff happened that got kind of scary."

Lila's story is of particular importance because it represents a type of political

involvement that is otherwise difficult to record. She was reluctant to discuss details of the activities in which she was engaged but she was very descriptive about how she got involved and the difficulties and stresses that involvement caused in her life. She is also very happy to talk about her political beliefs and how they relate to tactics and practices that she employed. A large part of her political story is tied up with personal relationships that she entered into whilst in the punk scene. She specifically points to a relationship with a man who was in a punk band and also a university student.

> I mean I went to peace protests and stuff like that before I met up with K____ who was in [a well known punk band]. He was in a few different bands. He had the big spikes and stuff. He grew up with the kids who were in the Grapes of Wrath. They used to be in a punk band together. He was going to UBC at the time. He was a psychology student. So I used to go to school with him a lot. I used to go to classes with him. There was the peace protests and stuff like that. We always did that but you just go because everyone else is going and it's a good thing to fight for. It's peace right? We really truly thought at that time there was going to be a nuclear war. We really had that threat hanging over us. It still terrifies me to this day. If someone says nuclear bombs it still freaks me out. Remember when we did the shadows that we did on the anniversary [of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing]. Go and do all the shadows on the sidewalks with chalk. I did that.

Lila is referring here to a few different events that took place in Vancouver in the nineteen eighties. There were regular peace marches that involved tens of thousands of

people marching with banners and in costumes through the downtown core of the city. These were popular and relatively uncontroversial. They were sponsored by church groups, unions and community groups. The Shadows project that she is referring to was a more limited and more radical action in that it more pointedly focused on the horrific effects of the atomic bombs that were used. It had undertones of anti-imperialist and anti-American sentiment that were suppressed within the more popular peace marches that took place. Lila noted, however, that "what got [her] was the peace protest; every year for ten years." She also made use of information that was available through the university, government organizations such as the National Film Board and other organizations that coalesced around issues such as medical research using animals. As mentioned in Chapter 4 she remembers watching *The Killing Fields* in a theatre full of people from South-East Asia as a formative moment in her political development. Overall, she describes a process of becoming increasingly radicalized and of feeling increasingly distrustful of mainstream media.

While this process was not fully supported by her parents, there was certainly a precedent for it in her father's dislike of the police and distrust in the mainstream media and of government in general. "My dad, because he was a thinker, goes, hmm, 'cause he didn't even think that, you know the man on the moon, he thinks that was all fake. He said I don't trust our government. I don't know if I believe that. It could have been done in Hollywood for all I know." Lila's description of her own beliefs does not seem to differ too much from that of her father's although they did experience conflict around religious practices.

Well questioning authority was a big thing for me. I was like

everybody else in the seventies and stuff. I was like a little lamb. We were always taught to respect like teachers and police and our clergy at the time because most of us were growing up religious. First of all I questioned the bible. I said to my dad that yeah, there is a lot of things in there that just don't make sense. I liked going to church. I felt safe there. But at the same time, do I believe that there is a man with a beard up in the sky? I don't believe that. They say that god is supposed to love everybody and everything then why is he so evil? I mean, if you read the bible, he is not nice. He makes everybody kill everybody. Let's poke your eyes out. Kill your children. Have sex with your daughters. That doesn't make sense. I was fifteen or sixteen at the time. I remember sitting down one day it was like christmas time and everyone was going to church and I looked at my dad and said I'm not going. And he was like, "What!?" He might have been liberal but he had his convictions about certain things. And I said why are you getting mad? Aren't I allowed to choose? You're the one who tells me that I have a right to think for myself and I don't like that. I don't believe it.

Lila was both following her parents' lead and moving beyond what they considered acceptable boundaries of political beliefs. She was growing up in different circumstances and had access to different resources including a set of political ideas that she encountered through her relationships in the punk scene. This led to strategies for achieving her political goals that her parents found a little shocking. She gave some general descriptions of the sort of activities that she was involved in. "[It] was a big

company and they went in and just unplugged everybody's computers. People were at their office and all of a sudden all these people walk in. Like twenty people in one office. And they walk in and started unplugging everything. Phones, computers, whatever. Anything that would cost them money. Putting things up on the window that will be hard for them to take off. Plaster that all up everywhere and make sure that they read it. It worked and it was global. That's what really freaked people out and I think that it actually did make a difference." She refused to articulate any details of what she herself did except to say, "I was on the front page of the paper. Let's put it that way. In a ninja outfit" Otherwise, her response was, "I don't want to talk about it on tape but we got really bad. I mean we really got into it and it got so depressing." She indicates that the reason that it got depressing was because of the high degree of danger and stress involved in participating in these activities. She does not renounce these activities and still believes that they were effective in some ways but it seems that she quickly began to suffer from burn-out and this is part of the reason that she found the birth of her first child to be so positive.

Her strategies had to change again when she gave birth to her first child. The conditions of her life and her aims were both altered by becoming a parent and, consequently, her political practices were transformed. Her political beliefs were also modified but not necessarily changed to the same extent as her practices after he was born. She felt a new imperative to teach her children her own beliefs as the best means available to her to change the world in the future.

I had K____ and thought that the only way to make a difference in the world is to have kids. And I won't put religion on him. I looked at him

and was like, holy crap, you have your own little brain in there. You could

be the next guy that solves world peace. You could be a bum on the street

and you are in my hands right now. [...] I looked at K____ and was like

you are going to be your own person one day and I want you to respect

women and respect yourself and realize that the government is not always

going to be there to help you. There are certain things that you can rely on

and certain things that you can't.

She goes on to say that "the only way you can change society is to have kids and

teach them what is right and wrong." This clearly contradicts her earlier advocacy

of methods of direct action but also indicates a very comprehensive change in

strategies that is partly just a realistic assessment of what she felt was possible after

she had a child.

She currently feels that her son, who is in a punk band and lives in a punk house

in Vancouver, is her primary contribution to the punk scene. She admits to being

agoraphobic but is able to get out to some of his gigs and also attended several reunions

of 'punk rock survivors' that have taken place in the last several years. She is still

considered to be 'hardcore' by many of her old friends and she is passionate and vocal

about her political beliefs but her practice is very limited. She strives to give herself

credit for having lived through hard times, however, and having achieved small goals.

She recognizes that the burdens of childbirth and consequent childcare are impediments

to political action. She also appreciates that age has given her new perspectives on her

past actions. "Nowadays, do I live the anarchist lifestyle? Hell, no. Do I like cops? Hell,

no! Do I trust government? Fuck no! They are all liars but at the same time it is little

steps, little steps, little steps. I get a lot of stuff that older people told me back then."

Lila was not the only one to be actively involved in political movements that were only peripherally connected to the punk scene in Vancouver. Her story provided the best narrative to show how many of these women practiced their political beliefs. Punks participated in peace marches with a large 'Punks for Peace' banner. They dressed up at festivals, played music, made art, spray painted, yarn-bombed and participated in numerous other community-based actions. What is absent from all their stories is involvement in party politics and other large, expressly political organizations. Many of them consider their current work to be political in nature. Lucy works with addicts and others whose behaviour has been deemed an 'illness' and consequently 'medicalized' or 'psychiatrized' and wonders if the politics of punk has caused more problems than it solved in the long run. "Like everything is so political that I have a right to be an addict and I have a right to do B&E (break and enter) from you to get money for my habit." Violet, who is an advocate for low-income renters in the city, sees the political aspects of the punk scene as more positive and more central (although perhaps romanticized) as we look back on it. She still sees the scene as a necessary part of her life that enables her to balance her political analysis and the anger that results from seeing the painful lives of the people around her.

That sort of thing builds solidarity in a way that no other political
work I've done has been able to touch. Political actions build solidarity
because they all have their asses on the line together not because they sit
around getting the correct theory. Shows, street actions, I need those things
as part of my sense of community and part of my activism. I need to be

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righteously angry instead of being in my head all the time.

The details of these women's political beliefs sometimes differed sharply and there are still many disagreements between them. They all find some commonality in practice that stem from their mutual involvement in the punk scene, however. As they have grown older, even their musical tastes have tended to diverge. Their initial community was built around punk music but has become much less focused on specific cultural or stylistic presentations. As they look back on their lives, they make sense of their differences and disagreements by creating a political understanding of community that turns these potential conflicts into places of mutual bonding. Several of them (Lucy, Violet, Sally and Peggy) referred to the idea of an island or a community of 'misfit toys'. This is a reference to the hugely popular animated TV film of Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. The island of misfit toys was a place where broken or defective toys were put because they would not be wanted by anyone. These toys organized themselves into a community that was inclusive of all of them and gave them all roles to play. This is an analogy in many ways for the political practices of these women in the punk scene. For these women, it is an inspirational concept for a community of people with very different backgrounds. This reference, it should be noted, is from a source that is very much part of the mainstream culture. This does not mean however, that putting the ideals of the film into practice in the way that these women did, was not a creative and political exercise.

This ability to find common ground amongst people with different beliefs is an essential component of how the politics of the punk scene is practiced at any one time. It is also indicative of how changing practices are incorporated into their lives as they get older. Politics is necessarily practiced differently in the different life stages through which

these women have travelled. Tactics that they could use when they were younger become impractical or impossible as they get older. This is in keeping with the anarchist idea of 'diversity of tactics.' They retain the values that their political actions expressed when they were younger but they incorporate different strategies as they get older and as their circumstances change. The essential distrust of governments and other authority structures, and their attempts to build an inclusive society that has space for all the misfits (and even 'normal' people) give their politics an anarchist hue that is consistent throughout their adult lives. It is an anarchism that is built around community, not the individualistic libertarianism that is enthusiastically embraced by those who already have power and privilege and is often exemplified in neo-liberal politics. Anarchism is the political label that seems to best bridge the many differences in both the local Vancouver punk scene and many other punk scenes (O'Hara, 1999). Amongst the most important of these differences that I still need to talk about is gender.

7: Gender: Sexist as all fuck!

The stories of those women are really important because they never had the authority to get their stories told. If they drifted through and left, why! A lot of them went in and got spit out. If you talk to some of them there will be a lot less self-mythologizing. Women's stories matter. (Violet)

Questions about gender permeate all aspects of this research. This is in part because the question of gender was the launching point of this whole project. I read an article while I was doing some preliminary research for an undergrad course in methodology that was about older men and their relationship to punk (Bennett, 2006). It was primarily of interest to me because I could relate to the subject matter that was being written about. As a man in my forties who had been involved in the punk scene since I was a teenager in the late nineteen-seventies, I was intrigued to see my own experience reflected in a piece of academic writing. I was still in touch with many of my old friends from those days and had observed a resurgence of interest in punk music and the punk scene in Vancouver specifically. I was wary of romanticizing the 'good ol' days' of punk but I could see an example in this essay by Bennett of a way to talk about and investigate my own past without falling into the sort of obnoxious elevation of youthful rebellion into a social movement of great importance. At the same time, it was of great importance in my own life and the lives of a number of people around me. Amongst these people were many women whom I recalled formed the core of the punk scene in Vancouver. Women in punk were completely absent from Bennett's essay. As I did more reading, I

realized that they were generally absent from the literature as a whole. That struck me as inaccurate, offensive and, as Violet expressed it, "sexist as all fuck."

Bringing up the question of gender while interviewing these women revealed few commonalities. All the women recognized that they were treated differently from men. Many of them located this difference with reference to ideas of feminism or of the patriarchal basis of our shared society. Many of them also saw differences between the issues that they had to face as girls and women in the larger society and what they had to deal with within the punk scene. They tended to go back and forth in their narrative from talking about the punk scene as a place where women were empowered and respected to talking about the punk scene as a place where the patriarchal domination of men over women was played out in their personal relationships and within more public relationships and events. This is a difficult question to focus on because it is inclusive of so many other aspects of their lives. Many of the previous chapters include stories that are clearly specific to these women as women. What I focus on in this chapter is the behaviour that illustrates their definitions of and assumptions about women. The basis of these definitions is what they learned from their parents and their birth families. The punk scene presented some of the same definitions but also some new ones. The result, in their present lives, is a type of feminist consciousness that is an outgrowth of all these influences and of their own personal development.

The backgrounds of all these women were rooted in worlds where the existence and separation of two genders were both assumed and enforced. However, they grew up in a time when patriarchal notions of gender were increasingly under attack and women were participating in what later became known as 'second-wave feminism' (Valenti,

2007) and what bell hooks (1984, pp. 1-15) more critically refers to as bourgeois or liberal feminism. Some of their parents clearly took advantage of this greater freedom for some women to be involved in traditionally male enclaves.

Lucy describes her mother as very successful in business and as an example of a very strong, even domineering woman. "She is just an alpha. She is very overbearing. She is the boss. A very strong woman. Ten times stronger than I am and I'm very strong. She decided to sell real-estate and within a year she was the top realtor in Calgary and then she decided she was going to work for this oil company and within two years she was assistant to the vice-president. A real savvy woman. " Charlotte's mother was also successful in business but her achievements were constrained by relationships with men who were controlling and abusive. Peggy and Violet both had mothers who were successfully involved in family businesses but they spoke as if the businesses were primarily the creation and concern of their fathers. The rest of the women had mothers who focused on their time at home and fulfilled the conventional roles of mothers and homemakers that were generally normative at the time, although often there was not enough household income to maintain those roles. This meant that the mothers who appeared to fulfill the traditional roles had to raise the children, cook, shop and keep the house clean and also work at a variety of jobs to bring in additional income. Mothers who were regularly available to them as children but also worked were a common part of these women's narratives.

Only one of these women spoke about being introduced to feminist ideas by their parents but almost all of them now describe themselves as feminist. Those who don't like that label (the 'f-word') still advocate for rights and freedoms for women that are clearly

inspired by feminist ideas. Peggy for instance notes that "it is not that [she] is a women's libber or anything but [...] society's rules are what put women down – make them more insignificant than they really are." She considers herself to be relatively conservative within the punk scene but her actions and her thoughts are best described as feminist. She ran her own business that involved booking music shows and touring with bands and did this both across North America and sometimes in Europe. She describes the difficulties that she had because she was a woman. "Men were a different league than women, supposedly or that's society's perception anyway and what they went with. [...] Even when I was doing the music business, I was in a man's world. I was a punk woman in a man's world – a white, anglo-saxon, man's world. I had to go up against the men, not against them but just – especially booking tours and all that kind of stuff, I had to be more noticeable because I was a woman as far as that goes like when I was booking at clubs and all that kind of stuff. [...] Predominantly I was making the contracts with people who were all men. The people that I was making the bookings with were all men. The people that I was dealing with were all men. Very, very few women were doing what I did. [...] I guess I feel like they just didn't take me as seriously as they should until they got to know me. As our business relationship got better things improved, but initially, I was a woman, I was booking punk bands. I don't think I was taken very seriously at first." She did manage to succeed despite this and had a business that was successful for years.

The world of business and work is only a small portion of the overall structures of what bell hooks calls the 'white supremacist capitalist patriarchy' (hooks, 1994, p. 5). Some of the differences that helped reinforce patriarchal structures were quite weak

within the punk scene. Peggy noted that the income differentials between people were relatively small amongst punks. She describes both men and women as being "on a more equal level. There wasn't this paycheque involved. There wasn't that 'what are you contributing to the household?' There wasn't a bunch of married people with children." Equality of poverty did not make other aspects of relationships equal, however, and all of these women noted the persistence of discrimination against women in many different aspects of their lives. Many of them spoke about being raised with some consciousness of feminist ideas but they also encountered a different discourse of feminism and anarchism and other liberatory ideals when they were in the punk scene. Their experiences and practices within that scene were not straightforward. How they were treated and how they responded because of their gender point to an enduring legacy of sexism and patriarchal structures and attitudes that is part of their habitus. Resistance to these structures and attitudes did exist. It was embodied in many aspects of their lives in the punk scene and to the present day. The sheer variety of ways in which gender issues arose is indicative of how important and pervasive this aspect of their habitus is.

Clara is the one woman who had been introduced to feminist ideas at a very early age. "My politics were women's lib politics from what I'd been taught at home." The practices that she was exposed to, however, were not reflective of the feminist politics that her parents talked with her about. "The way that [my stepmom] talked to me about what a women does with her life; her life didn't look like that. She was married to my dad and she wasn't working, nor following her career, etc." Her mother never finished her own graduate degree but supported her father as he advanced his academic career. Her father was frequently absent from her daily life and, when he was present, played a

considerably reduced role in raising her. In addition, her father had the freedom to move from wife to wife. He was married four times in all. She has avoided repeating exactly the same pattern, having never married herself, but she does share the difficulty that her mom and step-mom had in living up to her political and feminist ideals. As she notes in Chapter 4, many of the men she chooses to be in a relationship with do not treat her well. "I've always had this kind of taste in men," she explains.

This was her choice, however. "I would pick my boyfriends," she notes. She also does not see that it has any connection to her involvement in the punk scene. She commented that the punk scene suited their existing dispositions did not necessarily shape their behaviour a great deal. It was where they seemed to fit for a number of reasons such as their political bent or their "inner emotional set-up." She herself did not adopt many of the outside characteristics of punk. She describes her appearance both then and now as a "kind of a very classic kind of look." "I was not so into the fashion of it all. I'm a punk rocker who never cut her hair so I always had long hair. I just wouldn't do it even when people said do you want to cut your hair I just wouldn't do it. I figured that's not the point that I have to be like everybody else and cut my hair off. So I kept my long hair." The style and look of punk was not important to her but she did find that the punk scene was a good place in which to advance her career.

Clara found that when she first went to film school, her affiliation with the punk scene was far more problematic than the fact that she was a young woman. She was, as noted in Chapter 3, the youngest person to register in the film program at SFU. "I started getting bad grades because they figured I was a punk rocker doing drugs and not doing my studies. While I was editing films at night and shooting films during the day, they

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didn't see what I was doing at night. So they didn't count that into the grades. And they had this prejudice about me being this drug-taking punk rocker. So then I went back and I argued and I said I did this, this and this and they said oh sorry, we didn't see and then I got a better grade. So there was quite a lot of prejudice actually." Her overall impression was that the prejudice against her because of her affiliation with punk rock had more effect and required more effort to overcome than any prejudice that may have come about because of her gender.

Prejudice based on gender did exist but many of the women I interviewed commented that the punk scene gave them tools and space to resist and even overcome some of that oppression. The normative constraints that commonly defined how 'real women' should move or talk or dress were considerably loosened within the punk scene. Clara commented on how her attitude that tended to lower her grades also gave her the strength to insist that she be allowed to smoke in class! Perhaps this was not the most useful aim to achieve but it was still a remarkable feat even in the early-eighties, long before smoking indoors was banned at universities. She was inspired by women around her in the punk scene who displayed different kinds of strength. Loud, physical, intense and political are some aspects of what constituted femininity in the punk scene.

For Clara, this prejudice, or, more specifically, the resistance that it inspired, led to an intense focus on making films that continues even through many bouts of medication and hospitalization resulting from her diagnosis of psychosis. Molly describes punk as giving women "something that the old-school feminist movement didn't: [A] sense of ownership of ourselves inside and out." She was particularly critical of the feminism that she grew up with and argued that the feminism of punk allowed women

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many more choices in their behaviours and appearances. "Women my age and most of the women that you are interviewing come out of the old burn your bra dress, like a shrub... Punk actually did give us the ability or the knowledge that you don't have to be ugly to be strong. Look at Blondie! She was an ultimate. You're allowed to be whatever the fuck you want in whatever format you want to present yourself and however many ways you want to change. It doesn't matter what you were, you're allowed to evolve. You are allowed to be smart, capable, attractive, interesting, hardcore, ridiculous, everything that there possibly is, is what you should be and embrace that." Molly remembers being inspired by a trip to the Laundromat with another woman in the punk scene: "C____ was the first one I noticed cause I was still a non-make-up wearing, never shaved my legs until my mid-thirties kind of thing and I remember her at the laundromat one day in full makeup and like, not overly done, but to me at that point it was like, who the fuck does that to go to the Laundromat!" Molly's critique of mainstream feminism may sound particularly harsh but hooks could be equally critical in her assessment (1984, p. 2).

Peggy found that "being a woman in the punk rock scene for me was much easier than being a woman in the mainstream world. I think that being a woman in the punk scene gave me more freedom to express myself that we had talked about earlier. And express myself without fear. Women in the punk rock scene were much stronger." Sally expressed similar sentiments: "being a women in that environment was really comforting for me because I came from a place that had some abuse. There was a different mentality of thinking there. Just thinking about that now, it was very important to me. It made me feel very much a part of, you know, without having to be or present myself in a certain way as a woman to fit in." Lucy echoed a similar sentiment when she described the punk

rock scene as an "even playing field.[14] [...] There was no classism. There was no racism. There was no sexism." This description sounds suspiciously utopian, however. Upon further reflection, all these women also described the existence of sexist behaviour that could be very harsh and destructive for some women.

Lucy, who described the punk scene as being very egalitarian, recognized that her perspective was an expression of her own place within that scene. She describes a core group of punks who formed an elite within the punk scene. "There was a core group of men and a core group of women and they were equal. When there was work to be done at the Plaza, we'd all do it. We'd all be expected to help move gear just like any guy would and the guys were expected to cook and help out around the house so in that way it was very, very equal. In day-to-day living? Absolutely." However, she noted that there were many women and men who were on the outskirts and they were not necessarily treated well by those in the centre. "As far as community within our own scene of women, I did not find it very strong. [I had a few women that I was close to but] the rest of them I just thought were a bunch of stupid bitches. [...] I was at the top of the hierarchy so I don't really know what happened beneath or outside of us because I didn't really care." These are harsh words and the truth is that Lucy often expresses considerably more compassion for women (and men) who just got "chewed up" by the punk scene and by life in general. She laments that the women who suffered this fate "probably didn't even know that they had to be respected. [...] Most of them gave away their power or never even know that

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[14] Lucy is here talking about field in a way which comes more from the neo-liberal model of an economy without the 'distortions' of government interference than in the sense that Bourdieu uses as the arena in which habitus operates. Neo-liberal concepts are unfortunately far more pervasive than the ideas of Bordieu.

they had it."

Charlotte was one of those women who did not feel empowered in her days within the punk scene in Vancouver. She has only lately come to a place where she feels that she has the power to make choices for herself. She has repeatedly been in situations where she runs out of options. "I never, until this part of my life, looked at choices or felt that I had choices. I just bumped up against circumstances or these people doing other things and was ok, I'll do that. Just because I felt that I had a lack of choice and a lack of power." She describes the punk scene as being pro-feminist on the surface but very traditional at the level of people's intimate relationships. "Men had the power and it was about which boyfriend you had and who's sleeping with who and all that stuff." But the reality for her was that she "got beat up by punk rock boys as much as I got beat up by anybody else." Her experience overall is indicative of how some of the worst aspects of the patriarchal disempowerment of women can manifest:

> I still experience this but I'm able to articulate it more at this time but I was a child. I was driven by a child's needs. Because I'd been neglected, because I'd moved around so much because I had been exposed to violence and trauma. I hadn't attached! I had no trust, no bonding, no touch. When I look at what relationships that I did have, it was very childish. I really did want to be taken care of and rescued and very often I was acting out the pattern that I had seen... Many of my relationships were violent. Many of them, I would play the submissive role even though I knew it wasn't me. It felt like a game but I felt compelled to play. It would be like, ok, I'll do that and then he'll do that and I'll do this and then he'll

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hit me and it was a game. It's not true that you deserve it or you make it

happen but you do play a part. You really do. A lot of people don't want to

acknowledge that part.

She has returned to the city where she first encountered punk and is living with a

man who has been involved in the punk scene as long as she has. She describes a

whole new way of living her life that is a result of getting older while still

identifying as a punk.

Definitely this last two years has been a very new experience. The

fact that I've been in Victoria for so long. I lived in this place, the coop, for

so long. [I've had the same job for over a decade.] And I'm ageing. Not to

say that, I know people can do stupid crazy things at any point in their life

so I try not to be too complacent about it. The whole ageing thing has been

a new frontier. Who am I in the world? My commodity is not my body or

my looks whatever. Even though I didn't feel pretty and I didn't feel

attractive I did have power in my sexuality. Literally through sex work but

also in all those subtle ways where you go, where I was sort of, sex for

life. Give me a place to stay or food to eat or buy me beers or whatever,

buy me a pack of smokes. Survival sex.

She does not attribute these negative experiences to her participation in the punk scene.

She generally describes the scene as a place of refuge. A place where she could get help

that was not offered anywhere else.

She describes how her involvement in punk "changed things for [her]." She says

that she was inspired by both men and women who included her in conversations about

women's rights but also showed her different ways of being in relationships. She recalls being very impressed by one woman in the scene who "had a strong identity as a woman and as an independent woman and outside of the stereotyped kind of women. [...] She was having sex a lot with her boyfriend and she was being very noisy and I can remember being impressed with that. She's enjoying sex and she's not ashamed and she's being noisy. Like wow, just feeling that that was very powerful. That she had a role and she was being respected as a woman. Her boyfriend was very tender. It seemed equal to me. They were doing things for each other." For Charlotte, these examples were important but they were also undercut by her own deprivation.

She was in a scene where men and some women had many privileges and access to resources that were unavailable to her and others. This was a hidden undercurrent of discourse around gender. "Within the punk scene more than in any other music scene it was ok for women to be strong and powerful and mouthy and loud and physical and aggressive and those sorts of things. [...] On the surface, it looked that way" She notes that the differences in material circumstances made for a real difference in how this freedom was experienced. "For me, a lot of the discussion that went on and the sort of ruminating and theorizing was very academic and I always felt inferior. Oh, they're having these high and mighty conversations but where am I getting my dinner tomorrow? I'm not going to discuss my role when I don't know where I'm sleeping tonight and guys are trying to outdo each other by quoting Gertrude Stein or something." Books of theory do not make up for lack of food and housing.

Some of the freedom that existed around gender in the punk rock scene therefore was also dependent on a certain level of privilege and access to material comfort. Those

women who had access to these things also felt that they had the greatest amount of freedom as women and were reasonably well-respected within the punk scene. In some instances, this made them unaware of the difficulties and struggles that other women who were relatively disadvantaged had to deal with. The women who participated in this research are also the women who both survived their years in the punk scene and continued to identify with it. Women who did not survive don't get to talk about their experiences and there are many of those. Other women may have survived but are unwilling to continue to associate with the punk scene because their experiences were so negative. Even amongst those women who felt that there was a degree of gender parity and respect for them as women also recognized that patriarchal dispositions were strong and enduring. Being in the punk scene was better than the rest of the world around them but it was far from some of the anarchist and feminist ideals that floated through the discourse in and around punk.

Violet, as the quote at the beginning of the chapter indicates, was particularly conscious of how badly women could be treated and of how important gender was in the punk scene.

What was the significance of gender? Were women and men treated differently? Obviously, the experiences were different. In some senses the scene was not as split as the rest of the world and there were spaces that were not safe like the centre of the mosh pit[15]. But we did things that were really crucial to the scene. We'd rent houses. We fed people. We had

[15] The 'mosh pit' is usually located directly in front of the centre of stage and is an area that is understood by most members of a punk audience to be reserved for a particular hardcore style of dancing sometimes referred to as 'moshing' or 'slamming'.

money. We had jobs. In some ways the scene was deeply conservative where gender was concerned even though it had allegedly leftist progressive politics. Some of the ideas of femininity were taken apart and put together in different ways. You could dress in ways that were intended to subvert ideas of femininity and beauty or disregard them completely. Some of the things that were intended to be subversive were not actually subversive at all like all the black eyeliner. You could do things that the rest of the world thought was ugly, there was less emphasis on weight and nobody cared or not if you ate a big meal or if you swore or sat the right way or crossed your legs the right way. The mosh pit was way too guy centred but you could still go in and jump around. You could swear and open beer bottles with your teeth and that was fine and I liked that.

One of the important points that this quote illustrates is that the practices of gender were a critical part of the punk scene for these women. There was posturing and theorizing that went on in the punk scene about sexism and gender roles but the practices, according to the women that I interviewed, opened up new spaces for agency and empowerment. Normative standards still existed and someone like Debbie Harry ('Blondie') could exploit them well. But many other women found a welcoming place in the punk scene that valued them for their participation and their enthusiasm and their creativity. It was not the only place that they could have found to put their ideas of gender into practice but is was the place that they chose.

8: Punk: Still rockin' the margins

These are women who came from varied backgrounds. Some of them (Lucy, Lila, Violet and Clara) felt that their families provided a lot of support for them through their teenage years. Others found their families unwilling or unable to help them, sometimes from a very young age. All of them recall some traumatic incidents that were emotionally challenging and gave them extra burdens to deal with. When they became part of the punk rock scene, none of them had access to a great deal of wealth or status. Few of them had access to educational resources or good careers. In many ways, the punk scene had little to offer them. Housing was cheap but dirty, noisy, crowded and often very unsafe. Job opportunities were few and drug dealing and scamming welfare were the most lucrative and reliable forms of income. Relationships in the scene were complex, unstable and not recognized or denigrated outside of the punk scene. Political activism and discussion took on extreme forms that were also excluded from the mainstream political field. All these things were only accentuated by the music and the fashions that were not considered critical within the punk scene but were often the primary signifier of punk for those outside the scene. These factors contributed to defining punk as a marginalized scene. In addition, for punk women in particular, their gender created further barriers and challenges that flowed from the fundamentally patriarchal nature of the families, communities and societies in which they lived.

Despite these challenges, the participants in this research live their lives full of creative agency and practices that empower themselves and the people around them, and helped build a cultural movement that did not exist when they were young. This sort of

creativity is not a unique activity. Many other women lead creative lives and participate in alternative cultural movements and this often begins when they are young. Part of the reason that subcultures are often associated with youth is that there is a common tendency for young people to differentiate themselves from other generations or other members of the same generation using style. Punk was often portrayed as an especially negative and destructive style and part of the purpose of this work is to show how it plays a positive role in people's lives.

Much of the media interpretation of the punk scene was very focused on how shocking, rebellious and youthful it was. In the late seventies and early eighties, coloured hair, tattoos and piercings were things that were unacceptable within the mainstream social mores in and around Vancouver. A local paper describes "a generation of misfits – spiky-haired punks who live on welfare and believe in anarchy" (Rains, 1986). It goes on to describe aimless lives of violence and poverty that can only be ameliorated by the acquisition of a job and a nice haircut. Many of the women I spoke to had multiple stories of being singled out for negative attention because of their appearances. Even fairly subtle differences in clothing could be the cause of exclusion. "I can remember my first year going into secondary school. Everybody was wearing flares, big fucking flares and shit like that and I walked into school in a pair of pencil straight jeans and a heel and a big baggy shirt and everything and it was like whoa!"[16] Sometimes small differences can produce large reactions.

It was often girls and women in the scene who were the originators of the styles

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[16] Sally narrated that story to me and I remembered that boys could also suffer that sort of discrimination. I was threatened by other boys who objected to my 'Disco sucks' t-shirt.

and fashions that were so effective in shocking the public at large. Many men who dyed and crimped their hair into the spiky look that became emblematic of punk had to learn how to do so from women who had the skills to do that work. Sometimes it was just happenstance that was subsequently turned to the advantage of women trying to shock. Lila recalls the trauma that she put her parents through with her hardcore punk hairstyles:

> I remember I felt really bad because I came home and I had blue hair and my dad looked at me and said you can't come through the front door anymore! And my poor mom; at first it really hurt her feelings. And then she said to me whatever you do, just don't shave your head! Well that night, my hair caught on fire. I had a big do. I had too much hairspray and A____ was the one who came in and was whacking me on the head and he shoves my head in the sink and then I looked like a cancer patients so guess what? I had to shave my head.

This is an example of a creative, punk response to an unfortunate accident. Rather than put on a wig or wear a hat, she chose to shave her head. And part of the reason that she could make this choice was because she had already chosen a community who would value and respect this sort of style.

I argue that these women were able to engage in the level of creative agency that they did because of their involvement in the punk scene. This scene provided them with an arena in which they could try out new ways of doing things. These strategies are constrained by the larger habitus that they share with many other people and the field in which they are located, but they make specific choices that set them apart from the mainstream (the 'center') and make them identifiable as punks. Some of these choices

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have to do with style and the kind of music that they listened to but other choices helped define larger aspects of their lives such as their work, homes and relationships.

For all of these women, punk became a very important component of their lives. For some it was a license to act differently. For some it was an escape from abuse or from the mundane. Often it was only a brief contact with the idea of punk that catapulted them into a punk lifestyle. Punk is not just a form of music nor is it only a youth subculture. It is a combination of styles, beliefs and practices that offers a full sense of community with emotional and physical care for individual members. It is also, as Bennett (2007) pointed out in his research of older men in punk, a community that can span generations. Punk is a combination of many different things. It is not just a subculture that rose to temporary popularity amongst rebellious youth before being subsumed back into the mainstream culture. It has characteristics that appear to be durable and transposable. Time has shown that punk is persistent. It is not a fad that exists only in one place and time but can last over an individual's lifetime and, indeed, beyond.

This durability is a critical observation. What I have shown in this work is that the punk scene was about more than just style. It was a community that developed within a specific field amongst people who were both involuntarily pushed to the margins and some who moved to the margins by choice. There were many reasons for being marginalized. Abusive and neglectful parenting, emotional trauma, poverty and consequent 'psychiatrization' all played important roles. Lucy, who now works in the 'mental health' field, estimates that "at least half the scene had quite serious to very serious mental health issues. I think a lot of people who got into punk rock were people who had a predisposition to mental illness and that's why the drugs and the alcohol were

there because that is a classic self-medicating activity. And punk rock gave you that vehicle to act crazy. Except you and I were acting crazy and having fun but some of those people really were crazy. Like punk rock was their baseline." Given the circumstances of their lives, however, the pathologizing of their behaviour is not giving them credit for adapting to very challenging circumstances.

Not all these women accept this dichotomous model of 'mental health'. Clara, who has lived with a diagnosis of psychosis for over fifteen years now, offers a better explanation of why people would choose to live in the punk scene. "I think punk rock suits them. Like what I said before, punk rock suited some of us for our inner politics but it also suited some of us for our inner emotional set-up as well. I think like that. So [some] people they don't live as punk rockers anymore. [They don't look like punk rockers.] They are in their forties and they try and make their way but their attitude is very punk rock." Punk rock strategies and social relationships worked for some people.

For these women, punk rock made sense. It gave them access to a combination of ideas, aims and relationships that was effective within the field in which they operated. It allowed them to effectively utilize whatever forms of capital to which they had access. It provided them with a logic of practice that may not have seemed so logical within the mainstream but worked within their own social relationships. This logic further empowered their individual efforts. This is why the use of habitus to describe the punk scene is so productive. Habitus describes the overall understanding and world view from which punk women chose both their aims and their means for achieving those aims. It is

not just a musical style. It is not just a fashion statement.[17] It is not just a temporary stage

of unfocused youthful anger. It is a series of guidelines that are not written into rules. It is

a constellation of social relationships that provides guidance and context for their own

behaviours. It provides people with an understanding of how the world works that helps

them make choices about their own actions and how to evaluate the actions of others.

Clara is quite explicit about how she uses her understanding of punk to evaluate

people and how it still influences the choices she makes in her life and the people with

whom she spends time:

When I meet people from western countries who are my age and I

ask them what they did when they were fifteen or sixteen and they don't

say that they were a punk rocker, it's not that likely that I will be friends

with them... If they had the choice at the time, being in a western country,

they should have been a punk rocker. It sounds snobbish but I don't mean

it that way. It is the alternate youth movement from which you can depart

and lead your life in a free way because you have made some choices

about stepping out of conventional society. Some of those choices go in a

bad way in that people get hooked on drugs and go kaput on this and some

people actually die and other people have big problems for many years.

But there are other routes also to take from that. The way that you lead

your life.

It is understandable why punk was not very popular. This was not an easy

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[17] Fashion and appearance are important but I decided not to include an additional chapter because it seldom came up in these interviews and the analysis of punk as a style has been extensively covered elsewhere, especially by subcultural theorists such as Hebdige (1979).

community to live in. From the point of view of an outsider, it seemed to offer few advantages. Being a punk made it difficult to get or keep a job. Housing was noisy, often filthy and unstable. Drug and alcohol use were common and often excessive and this eventually led to the increased medicalization of many people as addicts. The moral panic that permeated the mainstream view of punk further isolated people in the scene.

Yet these were not women who were far removed from the mainstream. Many of them came from middle class families that could provide some financial support. All of the women whom I interviewed were of European heritage and none of them were subject to the racialization that takes place in a racist society. (This was the norm in the Vancouver scene which involved few racialized people despite their obvious presence in the city as a whole.) They had access to resources and they had the ability to make choices. They existed, as Bourdieu articulates, as agents and not subjects (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 107). Their actions may have been constrained by their habitus but they had choices to make.

Many of the stories in this work delineate how they made those choices under conditions that limited their options. Like any collection of life histories, they are full of variety and difference. There is a distinct commonality as well, however. These are all women who decided to engage with a great number (but not necessarily all) of a collection of strategies and styles that, together, are labelled 'punk'. It is important to note that the journey into punk often did not feel like a decision. Charlotte noted a number of times that she felt as though she kept hitting a point where she had no choices. And these points kept bringing her back to participation in the punk scene. This makes sense given the theoretical construction of habitus. Habitus is in part involuntary. It is in part

inherited. It is a structuring structure. But it is also subject to change. And while it constrains their practices and even their aims, it does not determine the actions of individuals.

These practices include emphasizing self-employment in their careers and avoiding work that required adherence to more common social norms of dress and appearance. In relationships, they worked to maintain many of the family relationships that they were born into but often expanded the definition of family as they grew older and had children. In some cases, this meant that the role of marriage was not central to their construction of family. Marriage could be an extension of a deep spiritual relationship, as Peggy talks about with her first marriage, or simply something that was done because the opportunity was there, as Lucy describes her own marriage. In housing, six of the nine women chose co-op housing as the best way to deal with low income and provide them with both security and a close community in which they could maintain their punk practices. Politically, they were generally active in a number of specific (and often community based) projects without joining political parties. They practice a sort of practical and patient anarchism that can express a very sharp critique of the system as a whole but remains grounded in the idea that changing people and their social relationships is a slow process. They express less of this patience in the area of gender. They advocate for ideas that they identify as feminist even if they want to avoid that label. They grew up in a patriarchal community and they have spent a great deal of time and effort in fighting for their own space and voice.

These strategies do not differ a great deal from the choices that many other women make within the larger community that they all share. The constraints of the

habitus and the field which is shared by the center and the margins are powerful. The differences are subtle but they are still differences. The moral panic that accompanied punk is evidence of how important small changes can be. The choices that these women make are a form of resistance to a unique intersection of oppressions and limitations that they experience and consequently have political dimensions. Their choices also help empower them both as individuals and as a community. The participants in this research still focused a great deal of energy on their homes but they did not emphasize home ownership or idealize the possession of private property as a dominant goal. They acquired enough money to live on but they did not value a consistent career and avoided the most financially rewarding work in favour of work that gave them a great deal of flexibility and individual freedom. They had children and sometimes got married but did not follow the usual forms of family and relationships. Their politics were based on their exclusion from the mainstream and their marginalized status. Living their lives on the margins meant that they had to be aware of both the margins and the center (hooks, 2000). This has given them all an awareness of their status as women in a patriarchal society that may not be available to those who inhabit the center and can afford to ignore the margins.

The ability to perceive social structures and practices from the point of view of an outsider[18] is profoundly important. It is what social scientists use all the time to obtain new perspectives and analyses of how societies function. Women in the punk scene, like many people who live on the margins, are forced to do this kind of analysis in order to

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[18] Patricia Hill Collins points out some of the benefits and risks of the "outsider-within" status that can confine people to the margins are allow them to participate in social change. (2000. P. 289)

survive (hooks, 1984). The presence of these people on the margins is also critical to the mainstream. Without fresh perspectives and new ideas, the center will not hold. There is a certain irony in the way that rebellion can ultimately reinforce the mainstream through this process. Social change is necessary to adapt to changing conditions. In Bourdieu's terms, the field can shift and the presence of habitus explains why this shift can be so difficult to deal with (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 130). Social change happens when new ideas become common sense. The value of using the idea of habitus is that it helps define where the mainstream comes from. The "sens pratique," the feel for the game, is a type of common sense that is often not perceived by those who inhabit the center but may becomes increasingly obvious as a specific social structure as one moves out to the margins. It may be explained by philosophies or ideologies but it is also a lived knowledge that is best known in practice. People in the margins can use this knowledge that comes from their perspective to change the practices that arise from their inherited habitus: to push for social change.

Whether they were involuntarily pushed to the margins or went there by choice, these women chose to use the agency that they had to help create a punk scene that combined style with practice. They are not the first people to look for alternatives and will hopefully not be the last. The punk scene has had an enduring impact both in the lives of these women and in the community around them. Punk styles and practices are available to others whether they define themselves as punks or not. There are punk scenes in many other places in the world now and the scene in Vancouver continues to endure, expand and explore and has been passed on to new generations.

These women are also the first generation to grow up in a punk scene. Their

experiences of punk continue to change as they get older. I joked with Charlotte about what old punks would wear to shuffle around in their retirement homes and she suggested "combat slippers?" Further research could also be done into the experiences of those women who did not successfully navigate the punk scene. Many suffered and many died. This is part of the cost of living a marginalized life subject to multiple oppressions that is not explored very much in this thesis. For the moment, I am choosing to focus on the positives. Punk gave these women empowerment, respect and courage to overcome a multiplicity of obstacles. I found that all my interviews ended on a positive note. We are looking forward to a future in punk that continues to support people on the margins.

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