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Being in the Know: Punk, Confrontation, and the Process of Validating Truth Claims

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BEING IN THE KNOW:
PUNK, CONFRONTATION, AND THE PROCESS OF VALIDATING TRUTH
CLAIMS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

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For my wife, Amy and my Mom
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Punk rock saved my life.
Frank Turner

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ABSTRACT

Since the birth of punk, it has been a harbinger of trends within both youth culture and what cultural theorist Theodor Adorno calls the “culture industry”¹ (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1947; Adorno, 1971). However, punk has never been fully embraced by the culture industry, largely, by design. Punk arose as a response, borne out of the frustration of a stagnant world that values profit over people (Sabin, 1999, p. 3). Present within opposition is confrontation—which is the very nature of punk. This thesis seeks to exemplify how punk uses confrontation as the instrument through which punk comes to know truths. The matrix by which punk substantiates truth statements is through the collective acceptance through the scene: bands and show-goers—via shows, fanzines and socio-political groups, which build upon other radical epistemologies (e.g. hip-hop & Black Feminism).

¹ Culture industry refers to a culture that produces “products which are tailored for the consumption of the masses, and which, to a great extent, determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to a plan” (Adorno, 1971 p. 12-13). This term is explicitly used rather than “mass culture” because Adorno and Horkheimer acknowledged the possibility that art and culture could spontaneously be created by the masses, which certainly occurred in the American punk scene circa 1991, with the explosion of the “Grunge” scene in Seattle, Washington.

CHAPTER ONE

THE VALIDATION OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL CLAIMS

Someone told me being in the know is the main thing.¹
— Ian Curtis, “Novelty”

Epistemology is the study of knowledge: how knowledge is conceived, perceived and acquired. Throughout the 20th and into the 21st centuries, scholars have debated the varying constructs of knowledge and how knowledge is known, accepted and transmitted from generation to generation (Hall, 1990). Central to any epistemological debate is how knowledge is known to be true and the methodology needed to validate that truth.

The post-modern era has ushered in hyper-specialized areas of knowledge. In doing so, a hallmark of post-modernity has emerged: the presumption that knowledge has an intrinsic power that separates the educated and uneducated. Those whose knowledge has been denied or deemed worthless suffer economic, social and cultural oppression (Apple, 1979/2004, p. 61-62). Those oppressed groups—cultural (e.g. hip-hop), social (e.g. Black Feminism), and subcultural (e.g. punk)—therefore, often create alternative truth statements. These alternative assertions of truth oppose the dominant culture’s epistemological claims. Where hip-hop opposes the political injustices facing the inner city Black community, and Black Feminism challenges the personal inequalities, the

¹ This line from Joy Division’s track *Novelty* is deeply symbolic to the band and both the English and American punk scene. To “be in the know” suggests that a special privileged knowledge that sets one a part from the dominant culture. This is particularly significant for punks who purposefully create an alternative community that stands in confrontation to the dominant culture.

Washington, DC punk scene merges both, the political and personal, to offer an authentic confrontational voice that presents an alternative to the dominant culture.

Recent scholarship has begun to examine and elevate these marginalized knowledges. Critical pedagogy proponents have looked at the “local knowledge”² of groups that have stood at the margins of society. On an epistemological level, hip-hop, Black Feminism, and punk share related roots, which draw from the traditions of progressive³, critical⁴ and transgressive⁵ theories. These marginalized groups have unique matrixes by which truth claims are validated. While the epistemological claims of hip-hop, Black Feminism, and punk are different from each other, the methodological process of validating those claims is similar. Each proposes an alternative knowledge to the dominant culture, while methodologically, authenticating these truths through a collective

² Critical theorists point to the often forgotten or downplayed knowledge of local communities because they do not fit to state or national standards of education. However, researchers particularly those exploring issues of multicultural education and “funds of knowledge” research are attempting to elevate the local knowledge by incorporating it into the classroom (Gonzalez, 2005; Moll et al, 2005; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004; & Gay, 2000).

³ Central to a punk epistemology is a democratization of the “scene.” Therefore, John Dewey’s views on democracy within education are an important theoretical foundation for punk. Dewey believed that key to the educative process was the collaborative sharing of values that a group or community opts into, thus ensuring autonomy of the group (Dewey, 1904).

⁴ Within this paper, “critical theory” is being defined as theories that suggest the problematizing of knowledge, discourse, and pedagogy. Building from the work of the Frankfurt School, Fanon, Foucault, Giroux, McLaren, and many others who challenge the “structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10).

⁵ Transgressive theory becomes situated between critical and post-theories. Hip-hop scholars like Pennycook, Alim and Ibrahim propose that transgressive theory that pushes the boundaries of social and cultural configurations beyond the “ontologies on which definitions of sex, gender, and sexuality rests” (Pennycook 2007, p. 36; Butler 2004). This relationship between knowledge and power, is “fluid,” but grounded in “*a posteriori*...change, movement, rupture or continuity” in the “relations between forces, and...relations between forms” (Baker, 2001, p. 291-292; Kendall & Wickman, 1999, p. 51). Thus, since knowledge is dependent on language and other social discourses, statements of “truth” are “constituted narrative discourse[s]” (Munslow, 1997, p. 12 & 32-35).

process. Thus, a discussion of both hip-hop and Black Feminism is worthwhile, to highlight the similarities between these cultural, social and subcultural groups.

Establishing a Black Epistemology

W.E.B Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folks*, analyzes how Negro spirituals and the Negro experience in post-Reconstruction America altered the “soul” of emancipated Black America, and in doing so presented a foundation for Black epistemologies (Du Bois, 1904/1994, Monteiro, 2000). Du Bois begins the book by presenting the question for the post-Reconstruction African-American: “How does it feel to be a problem?” (Du Bois, 1904/1994 p. 1). According to Du Bois there are two equally problematic realities for Blacks. First, White citizens’ problem with emancipated Blacks, and secondly, Blacks’ own ontological problem understanding themselves as emancipated peoples (p. 2-7). The struggle between the relationship between the two realities of the emancipated Black soul—“an American, [and] a Negro” is central for Du Bois (p. 3). The conflict between being an American, on the one hand, yet being treated as a marginalized citizen (at best) and, on the other hand, a degraded subhuman (at worst), created both an ontological and epistemological rift within the Black soul. This problem, as Du Bois believed, could not be reconciled through legislation or development of governmental programs (the Freedman Bureau), nor could it be achieved through remedial industrial training and capitulation to the socio-political realities of the post-Reconstruction South, represented by Booker T. Washington (p.14-22, 30-35). In *The Souls of Black Folks*, as well as his previous work, Du Bois reveals an “African centered epistemology” which presents a challenge to the philosophical and anthropological work of the time by

developing an ethnographic Afrocentrism, and suggests a potential way forward for Blacks (Monteiro, 2000).

Embedded within the Du Boisian Afrocentrism is an epistemology that reconstitutes the myopic lens of “being a problem,” by reclaiming “problemness” as a key to socio-political progress for Blacks. The socio-political resistance originates in the Negro spirituals known as “sorrow songs.” The “sorrow songs” serve as a metaphor for the Black past, the present and the future. On one level the songs are a reminder of resistance to the savage injustice perpetrated against the community (the past), and the other level as a “method” for moving forward, where there is a “blending” of past histories with contemporary realities (the present), resulting in a “distinctively Negro” epistemology (Du Bois, 1904/1994, p. 159). This vision of a unique and distinguishing Black experience is a foundation for other variants of Black epistemologies: namely hip-hop and Black Feminist epistemologies (Monteiro, 2000, p. 232; Alim, 2006; Brown, 2006; Gordon 1993; hooks, 1984).

The seemingly representative experience for Blacks is rooted in being a “problem” e.g. being viewed as inferior by the dominant culture. Langston Hughes’ 1967 “children’s” book *Black Misery* is a more modern example of the Black “problemness.” Hughes, in *Black Misery* chronicles the constant degradation suffered by black children and how the relentless refrain of humiliation shapes the reality of the child. In the Afterword, Robert G. O’Meally, describes Hughes’ poetry as “[evoking] the sound of blues music” (O’Meally 1994, p. 55). The roots of blues music can be traced back to the same “sorrow songs” that Du Bois references in *The Souls of Black Folks*. This reaffirms

the belief that music has the ability to express raw emotions in a constructive manner. The reoccurring exhortation of: “Misery is when...” churns throughout *Black Misery*, developing a “Negro pathology” of misery due to the belief of inferiority and self-loathing (p. 54),⁶ which is similar to the consistent chorus traditional in blues music.

Hughes died before completing *Black Misery*, and O’Meally suggests that the absent panels would have illuminated Hughes’ hint of humor—a humor that is not laughing at the misery, but mocking the portrayers of the desolation.⁷ Embedded within a Black epistemology is a sense of reclaiming reality that cannot be defined by the dominant culture but rather is reclaimed *from* the dominant culture and *defined* by a Black counter-reality (Kennedy 2002). Today, hip-hop is arguably the most influential manifestation of Black epistemology and counter-narratives.

Towards an Epistemology of Hip-Hop

Hip-Hop evolved from 1970’s Bronx block parties into a worldwide unique cultural art form (Higgins, 2009, p. 8). Hip-Hop culture is commonly seen as having five distinctive elements: rapping (musical and lyrical expression of hip-hop culture), breakdancing, graffiti (the visual artistic expression of hip-hop culture), b-boy/girl style (fashion), and the “capha”⁸ (the ever evolving linguistic expression of hip hop). But, the

⁶ Hughes intended to write 45 scenes of the misery endured by Black Children. For example “Misery is when you start to play a game and someone begins to count ‘Eenie, meenie, minie, mo...’” This line from the children’s rhyme historically ended by saying “catch a nigger by its toe.” This type of scene was known all too well to young African-American children (Hughes, 1967).

⁷ The use of humor can be traced back to the “lampooning of slavery,” where slaves used humor stories to endure the humiliation of slavery (Kennedy, 2002 p. 34 & Levine 1977, p. 341 & 344).

⁸ Alim defines the “capher” as “an organic, highly charged fluid circular arrangement of rhymer wherein participants exchange verses” (Alim, 2009a, p. vii).

rap pioneer African Bambaataa and many other hip-hop scholars suggest a sixth element—“knowledge” (Higgins, 2009, p. 17-45 & Pennycook, 2007 p. 86). Knowledge, or “the funky-ass ways that philosophy is carried out in everyday life” (Darby & Shelby as cited in Pennycook, 2007 p. 89), is central to hip-hop because rap serves as a form of counter-narrative⁹ storytelling that, at its best, gives voice to often silenced or forgotten inner-city communities (Akom, 2009, Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 475-476, 481-482). Thus, hip-hop has developed into a critical and authentic voice for inner city and urban communities worldwide (Higgins, 2009). Recently, hip-hop commentators have lamented the loss of authenticity in hip-hop as it has become increasingly accepted into commercial American culture. However, as hip-hop has been absorbed into the culture industry,¹⁰ many within the Black community have not reaped the economic and social benefits, and in many cases, the inner city and urban communities have further devolved (Evelyn, 2000).

⁹ Counter-narratives elevate of previously excluded voices from the construction of the knowledge and stories from the margins of society, including students, in hopes of addressing how “much of ‘reality’ is socially constructed; stories provide members of out-groups a vehicle for psychic self-perseveration & the exchange of stories from teller to listener can help overcome ethnocentrism” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 15).

¹⁰ There is a growing dialogue over the cooperation and cooption of hip-hop with the mainstream music industry. This struggle is personified in Nas’ defiant classic “Hip Hop is Dead”:

Everybody sound the same, commercialize the game
 Reminisce when it wasn't all business
 If it got where it started
 So we all gather here for the dearly departed
 Hip hopper since a toddler
 One homeboy became a man then a mobster
 If the guys let me get my last swig of Vodka
 R.I.P., we'll donate your lungs to a rasta
 Went from turntables to mp3s
 From "Beat Street" to commercials on Mickey D's
 From gold cables to Jacobs/ From plain facials to Botox and face lifts
 I'm lookin' over my shoulder
 (Nas, *Hip-Hop is Dead*, 2006)

The urban inner city was and is the womb of hip-hop. The raucous and gritty environment is often cited as an inspiration for many hip-hop artists. It is the “streets” that educate, authenticate and validate an artists “cred”¹¹ (Higgins, 2009 p. 98-108 & Alim 2006, p. 124-125). A rapper is seen as authentic when they have come from and then represent the streets in their lyrics and lifestyle. The braggadocios self-promotion, misogynistic and celebration of violence and drugs has become a stamp of authenticity in hip-hop because it *supposedly* reflects the experience within the urban inner city.¹²

Traditionally educational venues have been sites of normalization and assimilation to dominant culture. The American public education during the “hip-hop years” has been viewed as an “American apartheid” (Massey and Denton 1993, as cited in Alim 2006, p. 56) because of the assimilating nature of schools, and overwhelming presence of white administrators and teachers. As a result of the increased white-practices, “whiting” of schools is not only present within the curriculum, but the hidden curriculum too. Since American education is so fiercely concerned with standardization the uniqueness of Black knowledge is co-opted, coerced or forgotten (Akom, 2009, p. 508-510). Hip-Hop presents an alternative theoretical space to the traditional spaces of education. Within the community, language and ultimately “voice” serves as the essential

¹¹ A rapper’s “street-cred” is sacrosanct. The experience growing up in the “ghetto” is often seen an essential for being an authentic voice in hip-hop. As race once was the essential stamp of validation of authenticity, the emergence of Latino and white rappers, namely Big Punisher and Eminem have been trailblazers for their races in hip-hop. While race is still a factor in what is considered to be authentic hip-hop, class-origin is much more essential due to the work of non-Black pioneers.

¹² Two of the most influential hip-hop arts currently both came from middle-class educated families yet, claim to represent “the streets”. Both Kanye West and Rick Ross are critically acclaimed artists that both had a middle-class childhood. Furthermore, Rick Ross was a corrections officer before he started his rap career, taking his stage-name from a notorious Miami drug dealer “Freeway” Rick Ross, presenting a sizable challenge to his creditability as an “authentic voice” in hip-hop.

transmitter of knowledge. In KRS-1's influential rap "You Must Learn" an authentic hip-hop voice is exemplified as it promotes a localized language and knowledge:

Just like I told you, you must learn...
 In fact you'll start to illuminate
 Knowledge to others in a song
 Let me demonstrate the force of knowledge
 Knowledge reigned supreme/The ignorant is ripped to smithereens
 What do you mean when you say I'm rebellious
 'Cause I don't accept everything that you're telling us
 What are you selling us, the creator dwellin' us
 I sat in your unknown class while you're failin' us
 I failed your class 'cause I ain't worth your reasoning...
 It seems to me that in a school that's ebony
 African history should be pumped up steadily...
 Insulting to a black mentality, a black way of life
 Or a jet-black family, so I conclude with one concern
 That you must learn
 (Boogie Down Productions, *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop*, 1989)

In the present No Child Left Behind climate, this song, while two decades old, is just as poignant today as it was when it was first released. The reality of an ever-increasing homogenization of curricula, coupled with increasing cuts in educational and local resources have kept urban schools demoralized. As a result, educational theorists began to develop hip-hop pedagogies to address the educational concerns of the forgotten youth. Hip-Hop pedagogy (HHP) is one of the many forms of critical pedagogy (CRP) and critical race theory (CRT) being researched today (Hill, 2009; Fisher, 2007; Brown, 2006; Gordon, 1993).

Much of the current research into hip-hop is centered on the primacy of language (Alim 2009; Ibrhamim 2009; Pennycook 2007; Higgins 2009; Akom 2009, & Ladson-Billings 1995 & 1999). Language becomes the nexus for pedagogy and epistemology.

Yet, as Pennycook (2007) suggests, hip-hop culture is not a monolithic entity. Because of hip hop's continual evolution there is no hip-hop paradigm. Thus, he purposes that "rap and hip-hop may be viewed as quintessential arts of postmodern times" (p. 11), meaning that "traditional" views of hip-hop must continually be critiqued. Additionally, hip-hop scholar Awad Ibrahim points to his fellow hip-hop scholar James Spady's (1993) definition of "hiphopness" as a meaningful way to describe the intentions of HHP:

Hiphopness—the dynamic and constant sense of being alive in a hip hop rap conscious, reality based world—is actually where many young...people are today. As we enter [the 21st century], it becomes even more important to realize that significant changes are taking place in the rapidly growing hip-hop world. (Spady, 1993, p. 96 as cited in Ibrahim 2009, p. 241).

Emerging in the field of HHP is the aim to disturb the "dichotomy between Self/Others, Urban/Suburban, Third World/First World and Local/Global" (Ibrahim, 2009, p. 239) by positing the individual's voice and experience, popular cultural texts, and cultivation of localized language in front of traditional forms of curricular instruction, not vice versa. By doing so, a hip-hop epistemology develops.

Much of Hip-Hop Based Education (HHBE) focus is on the developing a mastery of language, whether that language is "standard English," a localized form of "Hip-Hop Linguistics (HHLx)" (Alim, 2006, p. 10), or some blend of the two. HHLx is an outgrowth of the work of James G. Spady and other cultural theorists. It is a "paradigm that integrates the varied approaches of ethnography, biography, and social, cultural and oral histories to arrive at an emic view of hip-hop culture...that is, a nonhierarchical, anticolonial approach that humanizes its subject" (p. 11-12). HHLx provides an analysis of the theoretical linguistic interpretation and the reality on the streets. Alim writes

“since language ain’t neva neutral, HHLx interrogates the development of unequal power relations between and within groups in an effort to make a contribution to our understanding of the world around us” (p. 8). Much of the resistance to policing language is a result of language defining the human experience (Nesbit, 2000, p. 97). HHLx scholars¹³ question censorship or the outright exclusions of the language of a substantial segment of the population. At HHLx’s theoretical foundation is the belief that:

Language is power, that is, the view that language is the revolution, a powerful discourse in and of itself. We know that the most powerful people in society tend to control speech and its circulation through mass media...they are weapons of mass culture to be deployed in the cultural combat that we, invariably, as humans, find ourselves in. Unfortunately, with teachers of young Hip Hop Heads still sayin that language of their students is the very thing that they ‘combat the most’. (Alim, 2006, p. 10)

While Alim’s statement may have merit within a traditional urban classroom, many hip-hop curricula actively embrace HHLx, as means of negotiation with “standard” English and the development of an authentic identity.

HHLx provides a mode of meaning making that authenticates the local voice (i.e. student, hip hop art, etc.). The process of authentication is “a constant hip-hop preoccupation” (Newman, 2009, p. 211) and as Michael Eric Dyson (2006) writes

Should the authenticity of a model of reality inform the art, or vice versa...Can it be suitably a source of moral and ethical energy that should be transmitted to others...I think that seeing things this way is part of the ingenuity of hip-hop. (Dyson as cited in Newman, 2009, p. 211).

Therefore, the language becomes a necessary tool in being able to define and describe. It also has significant implications on relationships of power; especially

¹³ The HHLx scholars being alluded to are Alim, Androustopoulos, Ibrahim, and Pennycook. Alim, Ibrahim and Pennycook’s edited collection *Global Linguistic Flows* (2009) provides a synthesis of scholarly work on global HHLx.

the Spencerian notion of what knowledge is most worth. As such, HHBE focuses significant energy on HHLx as means of re-scribing roles of power and as a means of authentication.

Budding from the recent scholarship on hip-hop pedagogy and epistemology has been the development of a new generation of multicultural voices, producing a new literacy, with the skill-set to organically redesign the methods, the texts, and the experiences of knowledge production. Truth claims developed through the use of the unique localized language to describe oppressive experiences that are validated through communities “feelin’ the flow” of an artists or voice (Hill 2009, p.32-39).

“Feelin’ one’s voice” has not only been a hallmark of the authentic Black expression from blues music to the present, but also of the Black experience. The authentic voice is the instrument of protest. From the “sorrow songs” through blues music, to hip-hop, the authentic voice speaks to genuine experiences of frustration, anger, joy and hope. However, it would seem as if only the lyrical voice could be considered authentic. However, in the racial and gender struggle, a new alternative voice emerges within Black Feminism, which produces another unique social epistemological validation method.

The Unique Knowing of the Black Feminism

In *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks builds upon the Du Boisian Black epistemology by focusing explicitly on the unique knowledge that is understood through the experience of the oppressed, as a result of their race or gender. She builds upon the work of Fanon and Foucault’s whose concern with oppressed

populations is central to hooks' validation of truth claims. hooks argues that Black Feminism elevates "consciousness and action" in order to challenge "oppressive hierarchies" and to be an "example of liberation struggles led by oppressed peoples" (hooks, 1984, p. 164 & 166). hooks acknowledges that there is "no monolithic experiences" of Blackness and "we are not all oppressed nor equally oppressed" (hooks, 1984 p. 59). Therefore, hooks identifies socioeconomic class as the third determining factor of a Black Feminist epistemology. This is an important recognition.

The interplay between race, gender and class in the liberation of the oppressed is critical to understanding the experiences of black women. Racial, gender, and class oppression is the vehicle through which truth is understood, because it is not only how a black woman encounters oppression but how she moves towards liberation that validates her truth and her identity.

The relational interplay between variants of oppression is highlighted by Toni Cade's (2000) assertion that:

Our [Black Feminist] art, protest, dialogue no longer spring from the impulse to entertain, or to indulge or enlighten the conscience of the enemy; white people, whiteness, or racism; men, maleness, or chauvinism: America or imperialism...depending on your viewpoint. What typifies the current spirit is an embrace, an embrace of the [black women] (p. 423).

This belief is echoed throughout the Black Feminists community. Truth statements are understood through the experience of relationships between being a black woman and the dominant culture. Therefore, intra-personal, inter-personal, and social relationships are vital for understanding the larger socio-political and economic orientations between black

women and the dominant culture. Therefore, a relational-paradigm¹⁴ of Black Feminism is distinct from other strands of Feminism in that it is explicitly social and racial.

Black Feminist luminaries like Toni Morrison and Nikki Giovanni delineate the difference between Black Feminist understanding and White Feminism. The “Women’s Liberation Movement” is often seen as a “family struggle between white women and white men” while many Black Feminist view their role in liberation struggles in a more complete definition of liberation—“the role of black women is to continue the struggle in concert with black men for liberation and self-determination of blacks” (Ida Lewis as quoted by Morrison, 2000, p. 453). The Black Feminist movement is a dual struggle of recognition and validation. Black women jointly are negotiating their identities as women and as people of color simultaneously as the dominant culture assigns *their* identity and *their* worth.

This relational-paradigm is exemplified in the example of Signithia Fordham’s (1993) use of Patricia Williams; an African-American Harvard Law graduate, who speaks of her mother’s “contradictory strategies,” which “were intended to negate her identification with her mother” (p. 3). Williams recalls:

My mother was constantly asking me not to look to her as a role model. She was devaluing that part of herself that was not Harvard and refocusing my vision to that part of herself that was hard-edged, proficient, and Western. She hid the lonely, black, defiled-female part of herself and pushed forward as the projection of a competent self, a cool rather than despairing self (p. 3-4).

¹⁴ I am using the term “relational-paradigm” to explain and describe the systems of relationship. Relationships are critical to Black Feminist epistemologies, thus the systematic configuration of those associations are essential to map out and understand the layered process of validating a truth.

William's mother embodies much of the complex negotiation of truth and identity, as previously mentioned. Additionally, Williams' story is not unique as Fordham points out. Fordham suggests that present in Williams' story is a generational divide between the Civil Rights era Black Feminist and a modern movement of Feminism, which Fordham refers to as "those loud girls" (p. 8). Fordham believes that the "loudness" is a "metaphor" for African-American women resistance to centuries of silence. While Fordham applauds the development of a Black Feminist voice, she also warns of what she calls the "double-refracted Otherness" of Black Feminism, which separates not only Black Feminist from other forms of gender liberation movements, but could potentially endanger the unity of Black women, as the socio-economic success proceeds generation to generation—all which reiterates the matrix of validating Black Feminist truth claims (p. 24).

From Cultural and Social Expressions of Validating Truth Claims to the Subculture of Punk

The epistemological foundation of hip-hop and Black Feminism stems from the concurrence of an authentic voice emerging from the struggle between a marginalized race and opposing the dominant culture. The epistemological opposition that is shared between these cultural and social groups is shared with subcultural groups as well, e.g. punk. Subcultures are evolving statements of rejection, opposing the traditional structures' (family, school, culture industry) implicit ideological statements of normativity. Dick Hebdige describes subcultures as "noise (oppose to sound)" disrupting through "symbolic challenges to symbolic order" (1977, p. 90 & 92). Additionally, he

presents subcultures as being thoroughly in opposition to the dominant culture, questioning its values, its standards, and ways of being (Ibid). Therefore, subcultures, particularly youth subcultures like punk, are nonphysical communities challenging the ideological norms transmitted in physical communities. But, unlike hip-hop and Black Feminism, which represent a cultural or social community, the punk community is a musical subculture that draws from multiple cultural *and* social groups.

Central to the thesis of both Hebdige's seminal work *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (1977) and the edited collection of essays *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (1975) by Stuart Hall & Tony Jefferson, is the development of a solid foundation for the sociology of subcultures, which establishes a confrontational relationship with the parent culture. Punk's authenticity is not linked to a particular race or gender (though a major critique of punk has been that it is a white-male, middle-class expression of frustration; however, there are plenty of examples to the contrary, which will be explored later in the paper) but rather to its confrontational nature (Hall, 1975). Like hip-hop that is "anti-classical, a *UN*-friendly music with a dozens upon dozens of subgenres to accommodate and account for the full range of experiences that make up the human condition—irrespective of one's race, gender, age or geography," punk too, has many subgenres that all share a confrontational voice (emphasis by the author, Higgins, 2009, p. 10).

Hip-Hop and punk are not that dissimilar in that they both develop as musical expression of resistance to the dominant culture. Yet, in the recent decade the divide between the two genres has materialized. Hip-Hop's "Platinum Present" (1994-today) has

seen the cooption of hip-hop into the mainstream of American culture (Irby, 2006, p. 13). Higgins' lament that hip-hop, the once proud "form of social protest in the United States...appears to be anything but that now" could be heard among punk commentators too (p. 14). Elements of punk have been co-opted into the mainstream—fashion and particular bands per se, but the majority, or more "authentic" punk continues to be a voice of confrontation rather than cooperation, which is more difficult to say about hip-hop.¹⁵

Artistic subcultures have often been a vehicle of, or have initiated, epistemological debates. From utilization of radical techniques to the degree of precision desired in work, art has been at the forefront of the avant-garde. The avant-garde stands at the fringes of art, challenging norms and forcefully instigating debates (Nesbit, 2000). Punk was (and some still claims is) the musical avant-garde. Greil Marcus (1989) suggests "punk was...a new version of the old Frankfurt School critique of mass culture" (p. 67). Punk's holistic challenge to the dominant culture makes it a viable community to study. Establishing punk as an avant-garde subculture is a critical component to both the identification of how truth claims are made within punk, and to how a method of validating those claims are made.

Punk as the Musical Avant-Garde

Rising from the political, economic and musical stagnation of the mid-1970s, a new voice from the margins exclaimed: "I am the Anti-Christ/I am an Anarchist" and that

¹⁵ Rappers like Jay-Z, 50 Cent, and Lil Wayne all are multi-millionaire moguls that pimp products from energy drinks to clothing. As clownish as John Lydon of the Sex Pistols or Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedy's have become they have not stooped to be shills of multi-national corporations.

there was and is “no future” (Sex Pistols, *Anarchy in the U.K.*, 1976). It is commonly accepted that with Johnny “Rotten” Lydon’s declaration was a “breach in the pop milieu” that ushered in a new musical and cultural force: punk (Marcus, 1989, p. 3). From that point forward, punk has attempted to be a consistent challenge to social and musical norms through the persistent evolution of the auditory and performative artistic expression. Art-historian Molly Nesbit suggests that this is precisely the role of the avant-garde: to be consistently and constantly pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable and in doing so challenging traditional views of “knowledge” (Nesbit, 2000). This unrelenting push of norms by the avant-garde ultimately alters and reshapes knowledge, and therefore language, too.

For punk, as in hip-hop, language is important. Nesbit suggests that the power of the avant-garde is in its ability to play upon language and its many forms. For example, the tongue and cheek play upon words of “no future” from the Sex Pistol’s seminal song “God Save the Queen” was not merely the miscreant cry of nihilism, but a confrontational statement of “negation” and “refusal” of the myth of meritocracy perpetuated by the schools of the dominant/“parent” culture (Marcus, 1989, p. 8; Hebdige, 1979, p. 3 & 10; Clark, et al, 1975, p. 13; Sex Pistols, *God Save the Queen*, 1977). It is this rejection of the dominant culture that is at the heart of punk.

Punk, as stated above, is about confronting hegemonic forces in society, such as the capitalistic-hetro-patriarchal policies of government, schools and other sites of normalizing behaviors. This is a commonality between punk, hip-hop and Black Feminism. Punk distinguishes itself from these other groups in that confrontation is the

measure of authenticity rather than the authenticity “street cred,” or arrangement of social relationships. Confrontation becomes the method of authenticating epistemological claims that punk makes.

CHAPTER TWO

“THIS IS MY CRTIQUE! THIS IS MY SUBVERSION!” :¹

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF PUNK

Our band could be your life
Real names'd be proof.
Me and Mike Watt played for years.
Punk rock changed our lives.²

—D. Boon, “History Lesson Pt. II”

Music has been vehicle of social critique dating to ancient Greece. Plato in Book IV of *The Republic* describes musicians as being the conscience of the Republic (ed. Bloom, 1991). In the contemporary era, the Highlander Folk School founded by Myles Horton combined ideas of progressive schooling, social justice, and the folk music together to create a breeding ground of politically and socially-conscience music (Evans, 2007; Malott & Peña, 2003, p. 43; Glen, 1996; Hughes, 1985; Adams & Horton, 1975). The center “functioned as a training ground, retreat, and political workshop for the labor

¹ This is the chorus from “I Am Nietzsche” from *Dance Today! Revolution Tomorrow!* by the anrcho-punk band Orchid (1997-2002). The Orchid stood out from other anchro-punk and screamemo bands of the time for not only being political but being firmly rooted post-modern philosophy, often citing thinkers such as the lyrics from *Tiger* (2002):

I kiss the girls that speak Marcuse
I kiss the boys that speak Foucault
I love the kids that know Adorno
And snub their noses at kids who don't
I make love in theory and touch myself in practice (Orchid, *Gatefold*, 2002)

² Punk started as friends playing and writing songs that meant something to them, and The Minutemen’s “History Lesson Pt. II”, served as reminder to the American hardcore scene that punk is about pushing boundaries rather than being a confining entity as the American hardcore scene was becoming when the song was written in 1984.

and civil rights movements” (Marqusee, 2003, 44). Powerful songs like “I’ll Overcome,” “Keep Your Hand on the Plow, Hold On,” and “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize” coupled with a literacy program; community organizing and voter rights training sparked the Civil Rights Movement. The Highlander Folk School cemented the relationship between music and social action (Glen, 1996 & Adams & Horton, 1975).

As the folk movement faded to Rock n’ Roll there was an explosion in “Garage Rock” bands in the late 1950s early 1960s that were not overtly political, yet many of those bands aesthetically challenged the dominant culture (Marsh, 1993, p. 35-40). The “Garage” sound is noted for its simplistic 12-bar blues riff and sloppy style, played at college parties during the early 1960s. During the late 60s, influential political-rock bands like MC5s, the Velvet Underground and the Stooges took the “Garage” sound and added overtly political lyrics. This style became the template for punk.

Fanzine³ writers while covering these “Garage” bands, that major music magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *Creem* neglected, first coined the phrase “punk” to describe the “Garage” sound (Malott & Peña, 2003, p. 50). All of the ingredients for punk—the sound, the dissatisfaction with the status-quo, and the fashion—came together in tiny bars in London and New York City in the mid-1970s. 1977 is often seen as the “birth of Punk,” but it ought to be noted that both the Ramones and the Sex Pistols had formed by 1974 and 1975 respectively (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001, p. 4-11, 16; Azerrad,

³ Fanzines are “unofficial and unprofessional” (Vee & Stimson, 2010, p. x) homemade pamphlets or mini-magazines, typically Xeroxed that chronicled local and national punk rock scenes. Fanzines like *Touch and Go*, and *Maximum Rock n’ Roll* became the blueprint for future zines, that helped to develop the Riot Grrrl movement, which will be discussed further in the paper.

2001, p.7; Blush, 2001, p. 9-10; O'Hara, 1999, p. 26-31). However, 1977 is considered to be the turning point, where punk becomes a real threat to the status quo.

1977: The Beginning (and End) of Punk

In the midst of Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee, punk had captured the attention and imagination of England's working class youth. The mythologizing of the chaotic punk concerts drew disenfranchised youth together in a collective space of rebellion. While many of the lyrics of England's "first wave" punk bands tilted towards nihilism (e.g. the Pistol's chant of "No future") than direct politics, it can argued that the nihilism present within those lyrics from bands were political because they threatened the very core upon which society operates—social replication. The juxtaposition between the lavish Silver Jubilee festivities and the new austerity measures passed by Prime Minister James Callaghan's administration enraged the working-class in England. The Sex Pistols' nihilism ("No future for you/No future for me") flew in the face of "England's dream of its glorious past...the Sex Pistols denied it" (Marcus, 1989, p. 10). Here was a youth gathering under a new voice proclaiming that they would not assimilate to the seemingly predetermined fate of working in the factories or on the barges, like the fate of their fathers. It was midway through 1977 that the Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen" rose to Number 2 on English charts signaling that Britain was listening. The Sex Pistols played all over England spawning and inspiring many of punk bands that took their nihilism and directly politicized them—namely the Clash and Stiff Little Fingers.

In England, the punk scene was primarily white, working-class, and from the inner city, who were dissatisfied with their socio-economic and political future.

Meanwhile, in New York, the scene was also primarily white and middle-class, yet many punks were intellectuals that wanted to challenge the cultural norms in dominant culture (Malott & Peña, 2003, p. 17-25). Both forms of punk presented a fissure in the musical family tree. The rebellious '77 punks had a tenuous relationship with their older 60's Hippie siblings. Mark Perry,⁴ the influential founder of *Sniffin' Glue* fanzine, noted: “although [punk] was entirely connected to the hippy politics, it was entirely the natural progression of hippies' anti-establishmentism...there was a perfectly logical line from the San Francisco hippies to the London punks” (Perry, 2000, p. 122). But, punks were the antithesis of hippies. Much of punk's rebellion was a rejection of the self-absorption and the naïveté over-indulgence of the 60s youth movement. Rather than promoting “peace and love” punks' slogan was “kill yr idols.”

In 1977, “Rock had a generational crisis...” wrote *the Washington Post* columnist Larry Rohter. He pointed to the heroes and heroines of the 60s accumulating wealth and living decadent posh lifestyles (Rother, 1977). Punk was dirty and unsophisticated in its sound. It matched the bleakness and the fury that many British and Americans felt after the 1960's social movements sputtered and the deep resentment for government sunk into the consciences of both countries. On the heels of Watergate, and the folly of Vietnam War, punk challenged not only musical norms but social and political ones as well.

In his 1975 *Against Method*, philosopher Paul Feyerabend presents an observation that social and political progress is not necessarily rational or scientific. Feyerabend states that “one can show the following: given any rule, however ‘fundamental’ or

⁴ Mark Perry is considered to be one of the first punk fanzine writers. He started *Sniffin' Glue* in 1976, after seeing the Ramones for the first time in London.

‘rational,’ there are always circumstances when it is advisable not only to ignore the rule, but to adopt its opposite” (Feyerabend, as cited in Rombes, 2009, p. 6) Thus the “anarchist spirit that underlies our most cherished and significant developments” is same as the punk’s driving methodology in the late 1970s (Rombes, 2009, p. 6). But as quickly as punk rose to the forefront of the cultural consciousness, the furiousness of the “first wave” of punk eroded into clichés and disco beats⁵ and in the wake came an American correction to punk’s trajectory—hardcore.

Throughout 1977, punk became an outlet for rebellious and outcast youth so much that an October 1977 Associated Press article by James Simon ran in many small American market newspapers like the *Daily Journal* Fergus Falls, Minnesota, the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, Fayetteville, Arkansas and the *Idaho State Journal*, Pocatello, Idaho to just name a few (p. 117). Punk was seen a “virus” infecting the youth of America (p. 117). American punk embodied the viral mentality in the late 70s. More virulent bands and scenes popped up in all regions of America, particularly on the two American coasts. Los Angeles and Washington, DC became the hubs of American hardcore punk. This style rejected the ubiquitous Sex Pistol copycat bands that formed post-77 and the “New Wave” radio friendly music like the Ramones, Elvis Costello and

⁵ There is no greater example of the erosion of punk than the Sex Pistol’s *The Great Rock N’ Roll Swindle*, which was a tongue and cheek “fuck you” to everyone that left in their wake. While it be considered a “laugh” with covers of Frank Sinatra’s “My Way,” the Monkees “Steppin’ Stone,” and even symphonic interpretations of “E.M.I,” “God Save the Queen” and even the classic “Anarchy in the U.K.,” but must commentators, including myself believe it was the disco melody of “Anarchy of U.K.,” “God Save the Queen,” “Pretty Vacant,” and “No One is Innocent” known as “Black Arabs” that was the truth death-rattle of the “first-wave” of punk. Thankful, this track only appears on the out-of-print double LP known as version B of the album.

the Attractions, the Police, Talking Heads, Generation X and Joe Jackson (Azerrd, 2001, p. 6-11 & Blush, 2001, p. 12-13).

The Development of American Hardcore Punk

Stylistically, hardcore was punk played at breakneck speed. But the hallmark of the American Hardcore, particularly in the Washington, DC scene was the construction of a community of artists that wrote, recorded, produced, and distributed all their music independently. Hardcore punk developed, organized and sustained a resistance to the Regan-era politics through music, direct action and through the use of fanzines (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001; Azerrad, 2001, p. 139-147; Blush, 2001). While the majority of scholarship on punk has focused on the early 70's roots in New York and England, it is the DC punk scene that can be seen as the clearest implementation of punk's epistemological influence. A thorough exploration of local punk scenes, rather than individual bands, reveals the power of the punk ethos—an aesthetic that influences politics, technology, fashion, literature, economics and education.

Understanding the Dynamics Between the Individual and the Scene

For many, it is the veracity and danger of punk music that initially draws people into the scene (Duncan, 2007). Yet, it is the collectiveness, the shared beliefs and sense of community that impels many individuals to come back to attend more shows. Many who identify themselves as “punks,” can recall their first show, and not just who played, but also the emotions that went along with being among a community of likeminded individuals.

While individuality and self-expression is a badge of honor in punk, one of the ironies of punk is how individuality needs validation from the collective scene. The scene is a site of cultural hybridity (O'Connor, 2002). The scene is the space in which musical expression meets community politics and social norms, resulting in both an artistic and political diversity (O'Connor, 2002 & Straw, 1991, p. 372). Therefore, it is the local scene that generates authentic resistance and confrontation to the imperialism of popular music.⁶ Pop music can be seen as the Trojan horse for the culture industry. Pop music has been a vehicle for selling a product, or a lifestyle dating back to 1950s television jingles which featured prominent pop singers. Many punk theorist and commentators point to the local scene as the defense against this potential infiltration. Therefore, the scene is a “social, economic and political filter” (O'Connor, 2002, p. 226) that serves as a “cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexisting, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation and to a widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization” (Straw, 1991, p. 372). The scene is not merely an “infrastructure to support Punk bands” but the hub of dialogue (O'Connor, 2002 p. 226).

In the introduction to a edited collection of recollections of individuals' first punk show, Duncan (2007) states it is the:

Urgency and power that a group of humans with the same beliefs and ideas that can harness is intoxicating and infectious...That unified/unifying urgency is what makes people invest their lives and take ownership of a scene, sub-culture, or identity, even though eventually they may drift from the community they helped construct. (p. 1)

⁶ The music produced and distributed by corporations for consumption of the masses.

The communal construction and the autonomous direction of scenes are foundational to growth and perseverance of a scene. In many ways, merely finding a flyer for a punk show and then attending is an act of desire and seeking of an alternative existence and acceptance by the larger group, because it is proof of the individual being “*in the know*.” Duncan suggests: “It’s about being in a place so intimate that just showing up makes you an integral part of the whole. *Knowing* that without you, it couldn’t be the same. *Knowing* you are connected to a community” (my own emphasis, Duncan, 2007, p. 1). This “*knowing*,” as Duncan proposes, implies an interwoven relationship between the individual punk and the scene, where influence and validation flow back and forth between the individuals within the community. Thus, there is a dialectical process that takes place between, the individual and scene over the validation of truth claims.

It needs to be stated that there is no Meta-Punk scene. But by looking local scenes, principally, at the history of the Washington, DC punk scene it is clear that something unique was created (and recreated), constructed (and reconstructed), and discovered (and rediscovered), as individuals and as the collective. In the next section, I will argue that the DC Scene’s authenticity emerged from confrontational stances made by political collectives, bands, and zine writers.

The Role of Authenticity within Punk

The contemporary philosopher, Charles Taylor’s understanding of authenticity becomes very useful. Taylor presupposition that a societal shift has occurred in post-World War II Western societies, towards “instrumental reason” serves as the central challenge to authenticity (Taylor, 1991, p. 2-7). The sweeping mantra of efficiency and

cost-benefit logic has co-opted originality, imagination and discovery according to Taylor. Therefore, his thesis suggests that there is a deficiency in authenticity in modern culture, which has results in the “flatten[ing] and narrow[ing]” of modern existence (Ibid, p. 4). Much like Adorno’s warning about the culture industry, Taylor’s admonition of instrumental reason serves as a reminder for an alternative existence based on meaning rather than value—an authentic existence.

Authentic existence, according to Taylor, champions a life in tune with what one seeks. This suggests that one must root their identity in something rather than nothing (1991, p. 29). Authenticity is derived from the deep desire within the individual, to find and express a “self-determining freedom” that is our own unique way of being (p. 27). This is consistent throughout the history punk: “Being true to myself means being true to my own originality, and that is something only I can articulate and discover” (p. 29). Therefore, an authentic validation of truth claims involves the use of “artistic language,” a language communally expressed within the dialogue that “involves creation and construction as well as discovery...originality and frequently in opposition to the rules of society and what we recognize as morality (p. 61 & 66). Punk scenes provide the arena for this type of authentic dialogue.

The scene becomes a communal space focused on artistic performance and language where belief statements are sung and debated. It is the show where individuals collectively gather as a community to witness the artistic expression of ideas and emotion, and to be in dialogue with one another. This dialogue is extraordinarily important to authenticity of punk. Punk music is a musical expression of debate and

dialogue. Much of the lyrical content is political in nature and it shows it is common for the singers to “pass the mic” for group sing-a-longs.⁷ These moments of democratization too authenticate punk as a shared experience rather than an individualistic one.

Adorno suggests that an authentic artistic performance is one that is not just focused on the immediate experience, but rather it is a hermeneutical process between the artist, the art and the viewer (Adorno, 1973, i-xv). This is true for music as well, particularly with punk where the interactions between musician, show-goers and the art are intimately intertwined. The question remains: does Adorno suggest that only experiencing art in person provides the environment for authentic expression? Not necessarily.

Adorno’s work on music analysis suggests that a dialogue can exist between the artist and listener. Active listening is hermeneutical (Agawu, 2005, p. 51-54). Music theorist, Kofi Agawu writing about Adorno’s method of musical analysis writes: “listening becomes an unavoidable internal exercise” (p. 54). While internalization may occur the interaction with the art is only a one-way relationship. Adorno and Agawu neglect the inherent power dynamic in recorded music between the musician and listener. The music studio provides a sterile environment, which often robs the authenticity of music. This is especially true with punk.

The science of the recording process clashes with the artistic expression. The recording process, just like a photographer shooting a subject, attempts to record a “real”

⁷ Sing-a-longs is a common form of shared concert experience at punk shows. Often the lead-singer shares the microphone with show-goers who are up-close to the stage, on stage before their stage dive, or has crowd-surfed their way to the front. Sing-a-longs typically occur during choruses or used as moments of emphasis by the singer.

experience. The result still may be marvelous, but it is inherently rendered less than the actual experience as it happens. The “Punk claim [that it moves] too quickly to be truly captured by the slow apparatus of the camera” holds true for the recording studio as well (Pinkus, 1996, p. 183). The immediacy of punk is difficult to translate to the recorded sphere of vinyl, spool of tape, or digitized compact disc. Missing from the recording process is the shared experience that can only truly be encountered in a live setting. For the foundational DC punk, Ian MacKaye, the live show provides opportunity for the shared moment creation that can spawn action:

Those people are there *with* me. That way we can get into a [relationship] of respect for each other as human beings. Chances are we’ll be taking better care of each other, [and] then we can take it to the streets (emphasis added, MacKaye interviewed in *Instrument*, 2001).

MacKaye articulates the position that authentic live music is a shared experience between the performer and the show-goer, where the artistic expression is mutually created, interpreted and discovered.

This definition suggests a collectivity within the scene that at punk’s best is present. The democratization within punk is a definitive characteristic. Punks often laud the art form as being inviting. The reality that anyone that can play three chords and scream can take the stage and be listened to is profound. Anyone can have a microphone in their hand and their thoughts be voiced, discussed, and dialogued. Therefore, Punk’s authenticity is not a false pretense, but something that is at its best—genuine.

CHAPTER THREE

BEING IN THE KNOW: THE MAKING & VALDITING PUNK TRUTH CLAIMS

We're going underground!

— Paul Weller, “Going Underground”

A majority of scholarly educational research on punk has focused on the lyrical analysis as a measure of social protest (Malott & Peña, 2004; Mohan & Malone, 1994; McDonald, 1987; Bennett & Ferrell, 1987; Lanig, 1985). David Lanig’s (1985) and James McDonald’s (1987) work both explored the social commentary within the lyrical content of early punk bands—Lanig focusing on the “first wave” English bands, McDonald looked at the early 80’s American punk bands. Yet, a major intellectual turning point occurred with Bennett and Ferrell’s (1987) study of pop-culture and music videos. They used hermeneutics in their content analysis to identify the development of a “common knowledge” that derives from pop-culture. They suggest that pop-culture is a powerful and influential factor in an individual’s formulation of cultural knowledge. Bennett and Ferrell suggest that there is an “epistemic socialization,” an event that an individual experiences that shapes cultural perceptions and questions, and that “popular music recordings—audio or video—have a place in the common cognitive careers of their audience” (Bennett & Ferrell, 1987, p. 346). Mohan and Malone (1994) build upon the idea of epistemic socialization.

Looking at punk values, post-Nirvana, Mohan and Malone question where punk values had been co-opted by the culture industry. They found that punk still retained a high level of social critique within the lyrics, but the actions of individual bands and local scenes were put into question—a question that will be challenged by looking at the DC Punk scene whose bands and scene were an engine of the greater DC political resistance and protest. While these studies are primarily sociological in nature, they do begin to inform educational studies that begin in the 1990s. As educational theorists began to investigate the influence of non-traditional sites of education, it became apparent that critical pedagogy theory is linked with theories on authenticity. The next section will link the previous analysis of authenticity with the critical pedagogy, in order to highlight the foundation of making and validating truth claims.

Critical Pedagogy as a Foundation for a Punk Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy¹ builds on John Dewey's idea of Progressive schooling, Myles Horton's Highlander Folk School, the Open Schooling Movement, and Paulo Freire's Liberation Pedagogy. Writing in the 1980-90s during the height of the neoconservative attack on higher education, multiculturalism, and public schooling, Giroux believed that schools were the focal point of the debate of over the future of American democracy, therefore, schools must develop a "critical citizenry" (Giroux, 1988, p. 92-102; Giroux, 1991, p. 502-504,) Unique to Giroux's Critical Pedagogy is its philosophical core that

¹ The term "critical" is often problematic, especially in terms of educational theory. I am defining critical pedagogy generally as the diverse approaches in education that explicitly seeks to inform, empower, and advance marginalized and under-represented populations. It evolved "out of a yearning to give shape and coherence to the theoretical landscape of radical principles, beliefs and practices that contributed to an emancipator ideal of democratic schooling in the United States during the 20th century" (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 2) and to develop "a more egalitarian, democratic, and multicultural society and education" (Gutek, 2009, p. 403).

includes sociological theories from the Frankfurt School and Antonio Gramsci which critique mass-cultural domination and socio-politics. Therefore, the thrust of Critical Pedagogy is to challenge and critique the hegemonic forces within the classrooms, schools and communities, through praxis, dialogue, and persistent learning on the part of educators (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 10-16; Trifonas, 2000, p. xi-xiii, Giroux, 1988, p. 92-102). Consequently, teachers become catalysts for this change. Teachers have the ability to either expose their students to the edification of the status quo or of personal and collective empowerment.

Critical Pedagogy begins with premise that schools are simultaneously venues of normatively and transformation. As a result, schools become a primary battleground of cultural and political clashes; after all, schools are traditionally the setting of the acquisition of hegemonic consent by the state. Therefore, Antonio Gramsci believed “that schools in capitalist societies have the potential to be liberating institutions if the oppressed classes gain control of them” (Malott & Peña, 2004, p. 16). Gramsci stressed deconstruction of the traditional top-down model of education and advocated, “every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher” (Gramsci, cited in Giroux, 1988, p. 203). Dissolving the paradigm of power inherent in the teacher-student relationship is crucial for emancipatory schooling.

Giroux builds on the Gramscian belief in *organic intellectuals*, in his work *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning* (1988). Giroux believes that developing a teacher as an intellectual would result in a transformation in the individual teacher, schools, and ultimately the community. The process re-

conceptualizes the various epistemological, pedagogical, and ontological questions surrounding education, such as: “What knowledge?,” “Whose knowledge?,” “Why this particular knowledge?,” “Who is presenting this knowledge?,” “To whom is this knowledge being presented?,” “How is this knowledge being presented?,” and “To what purpose is this knowledge being presented?” (Giroux, 1988, p. 14). Inherent within those questions is the “recognition that power, knowledge, ideology, and schooling are linked” (p. 18). Giroux asserts that this confluence of dominance diminishes democratic values, while amplifying a market-based, top-down, schooling. Central to Giroux’s argument is the development of a language and curricula that resists domination.

Going Beyond the Hidden Curriculum: Developing an “Underground” Punk Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy Theory stresses the localized “hidden curriculum – the unstated norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning and in both the formal content of the social relations of school and classroom life” (Giroux and Penna, 1988, p. 23). Therefore, epistemologically, Critical Pedagogy Theory has some Deweyian influences that are not apparent in its philosophical roots. Dewey stresses that the “fixed and ready-made” (Dewey, 1902, p. 279) knowledge that traditionally is transmitted to students is not knowledge but mere consumption. While Dewey implicitly speaks to importance of localized knowledge, Freire explicitly articulates the importance of local knowledge (Freire, 1970; Freire, 1992). Furthermore, Freire stresses the dialectical approach between “primary culture and developed culture” (Freire, 1992, p. 72), which unites the epistemological and philosophical roots of

Liberation Theory and serves as the starting point for the pedagogical method of Critical Pedagogy Theory and the desired outcome of the empowerment of marginalized voices.

This empowerment develops the student's "voice," the critical analysis of culture, power, and ideology (Sleeter & Bernal, 2003, p. 242). Again, Giroux ties together Dewey's belief that schooling is essential to citizen engagement and Freire's belief in the empowerment of the marginalized (Giroux, 1988, p. 86-92). In doing so, Giroux buttresses the movement from "official knowledge" to an "unofficial knowledge" as a legitimate pedagogical method. In addition to this pedagogical movement there is an epistemological one too, from a canonized curriculum to knowledge rooted in localized experience, and particularly the student's own narrative. The teacher is emancipated from the role of the banker to a cultivator of individual voices. Teachers become "transformative intellectuals" who are "[dedicated] to the values of the intellect and the enhancement of the critical powers of the young" (Scheffler, cited in Giroux, 1988, p. 125). The teacher's role in this model is thus to cultivate this narrative and serve as "go-betweens" as both teachers and students cross the "boundaries" of curriculum, methodology and ideology (121-128).

Giroux believed that through "border-crossing," a commitment to true discourse occurs on both a micro and macro level (Guttek, 2009, p. 404). Giroux writes that:

What is at stake is not the defense or repudiation of a common culture, but the creation of a democratic society in which differences are affirmed and interrogated rather than dismissed as essentialist or disruptive...of course the major crisis in education is not simply providing students with the opportunity to engage in a deeper understanding of the importance of democratic culture while developing classroom relationships that prioritize the importance of difference, equality, and social justice (Giroux, 1991, p. 508).

Border-crossing becomes the means of dialogue between the dynamic topology of culture, power and ideology. The classroom is no longer an autonomous unit divorced from the larger society, but a collective connected to the larger community (Giroux, 1991, p. 511-517; Giroux, 1994, p. 42-46; Richer, 1990, p. 93).

A significant shift in Giroux's writing occurs in the early 1990s as a result of his work on border-crossing theory. Giroux and other critical theorists, namely Peter McLaren and bell hooks, begin to stress the importance of cultural studies (Weaver & Daspit, 2000, p. xii-xv). Influenced by the Frankfurt School, Giroux and others began to stress that school is the hub of cultural interaction. Therefore, many saw the need to critically analyze the messages within pop culture and how those messages inform and influence learning. In the late 1990s Giroux began to build upon the theoretical landscape of cultural studies and education by stressing the need to develop literacy around cultural studies that would inform critical pedagogy. The goal for Giroux and other critical educators is the development of a directive knowledge, which "creates the foundation for social justice, equality, and empowerment" (McLaren, 2000, p. 73).

Some of the best research into punk pedagogy has been done by Malott and Peña in their 2004 book *Punk Rockers' Revolution: A Pedagogy of Race, Class and Gender*. They too situated punk pedagogy under the umbrella of Critical Pedagogy theory, because the emphasis on the humanization of curriculum.

An "Underground" Curriculum and the Transmission of Knowledge

Investigation of a "punk pedagogy" began to be developed throughout the 1990s as a part of critical pedagogy theory. Schwartz (1993), Egan-Khan (1998), and Malott

and Peña (2004) again use lyrics as the primary methodological tool in their pedagogy. Lyrics, all three argue, allow individuals to freely express themselves and helps to develop “organic intellectuals” (Malott & Peña, 2004, p. 39), an idea first developed by Gramsci (1971). While Malott and Peña, argue that punk may not be a cohesive social movement, those who identify themselves as “punks” are “part of a struggle for justice and humanization” (Malott & Peña, 2004, p. 96). Therefore, the pedagogy of punk can help inform and develop an epistemology of punk, and a process of validating and authenticating punk epistemological claims. The pedagogy of punk—through recorded and live music, dialogues at shows and conferences, and zines—assists in the development of critical thinking skills and more precisely confrontational thinking skills. Punk pedagogy focuses on dialoguing, critiquing, and cultural media and gender literacy skills. The goal is to develop organic intellectuals through direct politicization and intellectualization.

Counterstorytelling and Punk Pedagogy: Developing a Voice of Confrontation

Inherent in both critical pedagogy theory and the transmission of punk epistemological claims is the belief that language can either reify privilege and power or become the “terrain of contestation and struggle” (Giroux, 1992, p. 223). Language is the principal transmitter of knowledge and power, thus the focus on linguistics in radical epistemologies. A key component to this linguistically struggle is affirmation of the “counterstorytelling” (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004, p. 245). While counterstorytelling is a major component of Critical Race Theory, counterstorytelling also is a key element within punk. The importance of lyrics and zines as means of counterstorytelling is an

indispensable element of the authenticity of punk. Lyrics and zines are “sites of resistance” to dominant culture (Harris, 2003, p. 47).

Counterstorytelling is an important methodological tool that begins to shed light on the main blind spots of punk, like gender. As mentioned before, punk develops out of the white working and middle class. A major critique of punk is that it focused so much on class issues; it neglected gender within the dominant culture. The gender critique also suggests that punk is a mere “‘re-presentation’ of ‘others’” (Corrigan as cited in Malott & Peña, 2004, p. 35). This critique highlights three unintended consequences of punk which counterstorytelling could correct. First, is the development of privileged voices. The voice on stage or on paper is privileged and that voice has traditionally been male. Secondly, while scenes create space for subversion, they also create elitism and a false dichotomy between those who have knowledge—the punks “in-the-know” and those outside of the scene. Finally, punk re-produces the capitalist system that it often critiques, through fetishizing of record and memorable collecting. Therefore, punk is a contradictory site that can either re-affirm cultural norms in the dominant culture or transform them (Malott & Peña, 2004; Giroux & Simon, 1989).

Implications of a Punk Pedagogy on Schools and Traditional Sites of Education

Critical Pedagogy of theorists have become increasingly interested in non-traditional sites of education. The Internet, television and other medias have increasingly been investigated and explored in educational research.² This new interest attempts to address the epistemological questions as: “what counts as knowledge, what purpose is

² The work of Hill, Vasudevan, Dimitriadis, Giroux, McLaren, etc. most notably are on the forefront of investigating these new multimodalities and sites of education.

served in pursuing [such] knowledge, and who can produce knowledge” (Hyde, 2008, p. 49)? The new multimodalities offer suggests a shift in “cultural geographies” within youth culture (Vasudevan & Hill, 2008, p. 6). This shift suggests that the primary vehicle of education may no longer be traditional schools. Informal sites of education are replacing formal schools. The subsequent pages will explore how the Washington, DC punk scene in the 1980s and 1990s is an example of this shift. The primary pedagogical tool employed by the DC punk scene (unbeknown to them) was counterstorytelling.

The transformational truth claims made through counterstorytelling and validated through the response of the scene in the form of shows, zines and the direct action of socio-political groups that comprise the scene. In the 1980s, the staleness of conservative values provided a fertile environment for DC’s underground to radically challenge the misogyny and chauvinism of the Regan-Bush administration. Fueled by the socio-political collective known as Positive Force, and the “do-it-yourself” ethos of the seminal DC punk band Fugazi, the DC scene became a hub of radical intellectualism, and socialization, which helped to produce the micro-culture “Riot Grrrl” scene. The early 1990s as an outgrowth of a community of women who espoused a feminist ideology in punk zines and lyrics, the punk community and even previous waves of Feminism (Sinker, 2001, p. 48)—is the primary methodological tool to address these unintended consequences. Therefore, the DC punk scene is an intriguing test case for to see how a scene validates a confrontational and transformation epistemology, while avoiding the unintended consequences, mentioned previously.

CHAPTER FOUR

BANNED IN DC: EXAMPLES OF VALIDATING EPISTEMOLOGICAL CLAIMS

WITHIN THE DC PUNK SCENE

Words, Words and expressions
All these confessions
Of where we stand.
How I see you.
And you see me.

— Ian MacKaye, “Promises”

For twenty plus years (1980-early 2000s) the Washington, DC punk scene differentiated itself from many other punk scenes in the United States and England. DC was different than English punk (outgrowth of working class anger), New York punk (an extension of art avant-garde), and California hardcore (destructive and violent), because it centered itself confronting political and personal injustices (Rombes, 2009, p. 48). DC is a political town, and naturally the DC milieu shaped the DC scene. In this next section, three exemplars of the DC punk scene will be explored. Each presents a methodological process for authenticating a truth claim. What each hold in common is a direct confrontation with dominant political and social culture in Washington, DC.

Validation through Collective Conscience Development

While it was “Morning in America” in Regan’s DC, it was simultaneously “Revolution Summer” for DC Punks. “Revolution Summer” was not an idea that

originated within the “leadership”¹ of scene, but rather from members of the community that had increasingly become aware of injustices in DC and around the world. This group coalesced in the affinity group, known as Positive Force (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001, p 168-172).

Positive Force began in the mid-1980s as a group of punks from DC gathering together on a weekly basis to learn about social issues facing the DC community and brainstorm ways of confronting them. Positive Force would be instrumental in organizing protests, boycotts, benefit shows and in mentoring future generations of social activists. The group was the first place within the DC scene where women had a prominent voice and helped set the agenda of the group. In Positive Force, both men and women collaborated and co-labored to develop “Revolution Summer”—a summer devoted to social awareness, particularly centered on raising the public consciousness of the unjust South African Apartheid. However, Positive Force did not rely on tried and tired forms of 60s protests, rather, they developed strategies that were uniquely punk in their methods.

Amy Pickering² started flyer-ing DC with cryptic messages about upcoming “Revolution Summer” shows and protests. Meanwhile, Chris Bald³ and Jenny Toomey,⁴ organized daily demonstrations outside of the South Africa Embassy to call attention to

¹ The word “leadership” is a tricky word to use in Punk. There are definite leaders whose charisma; politics, etc. move the scene in one direction or another, yet few would claim the mantel of a “leader.”

² Pickering was a part of the original Georgetown Punk scene and was a member of the first all-girl band in DC called Fire Party.

³ Chris Bald too was a part of the original Georgetown Punk scene and was the guitarist for Embrace, and a few other DC Punk bands. It was during his internship at the *National Journal* where he first learned about the depth of injustice in South Africa.

⁴ Jenny Toomey was a key member of Positive Force in the early days. She would go on to start Simple Machines records and front the influential DC band Tsunami.

Apartheid. By the summer of 1985, the protest would grow to about 200 people outside the embassy, disrupting the daily business of the embassy by banging drums, trashcans, or whatever they could get their hands on (Connolly, 1999, p. 79-85 & Anderson & Jenkins, 2001, p. 1730175).

The move from personal politics of punk lyrics to public protest was a natural progression. Equally important to Positive Force was making the connection between global injustices and those present in DC, which is exemplified by a 1985 interview of Ian MacKaye for the *Washington Post*: “we live in a black town run by whites” (Anderson & Jenkins 2001, p 190).

“Revolution Summer” is an example of a method of validating a punk truth claim. A group organically developed, shared responsibilities and used their individual gifts and talents authentically to voice their opposition to a global issue, which had local ramifications as well. This methodology is neatly summarized by Guy Picciotto, founding member of the influential Rites of Spring and future member of Fugazi, at the kickoff show for Revolution Summer: “Punk is about building things, not destroying things” (Azzarrad, 2001, p. 381). Picciotto’s statement foreshadowed the building of a band that would become its own movement. From the ashes of the idealism of Revolution Summer rose Fugazi—the iconic band that came to symbolize Punk’s purist values. MacKaye, Picciotto, Brendan Canty and Joe Lally would blaze a righteous trail through not only the punk community but also the entire music industry, and they would stop to take notice.

Validation through Dialectical Relations: The Band, the Showgoer, and Truth Claims

Even before September 1987, Washington, DC's punk underground had a reputation of being one of the most influential, forward-thinking and political scenes in the world. Much of that reputation was shaped collectively by a group of bands on the DC punk rock label, Dischord Records. Dischord started in 1980, as a hardcore punk label by friends Ian MacKaye and Jeff Nelson. The two friends were not just co-owners of the label but also band mates in the seminal straight-edge hardcore⁵ band, Minor Threat. Minor Threat typified what would become the blueprint of aggressive hardcore punk music: short bursts of hyper-fast music coupled with shout lyrics of frustration and confrontation. While Minor Threat's run was short, their influence is still felt today and would haunt Ian MacKaye's later projects⁶ until his work in Fugazi.

Expectations for Fugazi were high. Fugazi was a Washington, DC punk super-group, comprised of members of two influential bands, Rites of Spring and Embrace.

⁵ Straight-Edge hardcore began in Washington, DC in 1980 as reaction to the narcissistic drug-fueled punk scene in American and London. For many of those who are straight edge, it is a means resistance to destructive elements within society (Haenfler, 2004, p. 787). Ian MacKaye is attributed with coining the phrase, and beginning the straight-edge movement with the Minor Threat song "Straight-Edge" and following up with "Out of Step (With the World)" which simplistically outlined the tenants of his belief in a clean-lifestyle:

(I) don't smoke!
 (I) don't drink!
 (I) don't fuck!
 At least I can fucking think.
 I can't keep up, I can't keep up, I can't keep up.
 I am out of step with the world! (Minor Threat, *Out of Step 12*", 1983)

This proud pronouncement of a clean-lifestyle spawned a whole movement within the hardcore-punk scene, which is still vibrant today, especially among younger hardcore kids (Kuhn, 2009; Wood, 2006, & Lahickey 1997).

⁶ Namely MacKaye's post-Minor Threat projects Egghunt, Skewbald, & Embrace, all which suffered under the weight of expectations for Minor Threat 2.0.

While the DC scene expected the sequel of those bands they were astonished (and some disappointed) by the punk, funk, reggae fusion that they heard. From Fugazi's music, to their stance on issues of Scene politics, to their outright rejection of the culture industry, Fugazi built an impeccable reputation that has garnered respect from likes of Michael Stipe,⁷ Bono,⁸ and Eddie Vedder.⁹ Dan Sinker, founder of the seminal fanzine *Punk Planet*, says of Fugazi that they “didn’t start any movement. Rather, the band became a movement unto itself” (2001, p. 15). He continues by describing Fugazi, as “the band [that] never comprised its egalitarian ideals; insisting on low door prices, independent venues (whenever possible), and low-priced, independently produced records, Fugazi has shown the world how to conduct business respectfully and honestly”(p. 15-16).

Fugazi's rejection of the culture industry is not its only legacy. Fugazi's fifteen year career had many highlights, too many to numerate in these pages. One moment at a show in DC in the waning days of 1988 typified the Fugazi show experience—part concert, part catharsis, part educational. An adlibbed moment that lasted all of the 90 seconds, symbolizes Fugazi's career and is a exemplary illustration of punk's truth making process.

Fugazi's first show was September 13, 1987, and by early 1988, Fugazi hit the road to tour parts of the Eastern United States, the West Coast, and finally a short stint in Europe. Before leaving, the band consciously developed a tour that was exclusively about

⁷ Lead singer of REM and longtime admirer of MacKaye dating back to MacKaye's first band the influential straight-edge hardcore band, Minor Threat.

⁸ Lead singer of U2 who found a political compatriot in MacKaye.

⁹ Lead singer of Pearl Jam, one of the influential Grunge bands from Seattle.

the music rather than the products of merchandise and memorabilia. The band declined show guarantees, in order to keep door prices down, and they did not sell t-shirts or other merchandise that could detract from the immediacy of the show experience, an ethic that would continue through the duration of Fugazi's career. During their West Coast swing, the band became fed up with the ritual violence of moshing at shows. Fugazi felt moshing created an environment of intimidation that spoiled the concert experience of the crowd and the band. The group's frustration with macho moshing developed into a "no moshing policy" that was as controversial as not selling any merchandise. It seemed so un-Punk on one level, and so un-American on the other (Anderson & Jenkins, 2001, p. 266).

Fugazi toured most of 1988, and during that time a sizable crew of Nazi skinheads led by, ironically enough, a black woman named "Lefty," started a wave of violent crime in the Washington, DC metro area. In late December 1988 the *Washington Post* ran an article on the rise of Nazi skinheads in the wake of a violent mugging of several gay men near the P Street Beach. A few days later Fugazi would make its return to DC playing a benefit show for Positive Force at an overly packed Wilson Center (p. 270-271).¹⁰

The show at the Wilson Center was the first time that a DC audience would encounter Fugazi's new "no moshing policy." MacKaye stood on stage seconds before the first song started and announced "Now at the risk of being a real asshole—and I don't care...I'm going to beg, cajole, plead with the people up front to be little more caring of each other...Let's make sure everyone can have a good time" (p. 270). With that Fugazi

¹⁰ The Wilson Center was a important DIY punk venue and cultural center located right off of 16th Street in the Mount Pleasant section of Washington, DC. The show space was in the basement of the cultural center. Ironically, the Wilson Center shut down and turned into a The Capital City Public Charter School.

launched into a new song called “Provisional” a song inspired by a visit to Dachau concentration camp in Germany, a not-so-subtle dig at the emerging skinhead crew in DC. Yet it would be a moment, midway through the set, during the song “Suggestion” that would be a defining collective experience of validating a knowledge claim (Fugazi, *13 Songs*, 1989).

Fugazi’s “Suggestion” was a part of its early crop of songs. The song deals with harassment and rape of women. However, on this night the song took on a much larger context. The skinhead counter-reaction to the cultural-pluralism found in Washington, DC was alarming, yet not surprising. “Violence, cruelty, and humiliation are common attributes of ethnic politics,” writes the political theorist Jacob Levy (2000, p 38). The skinheads employed each of the tactics that Levy mentioned to terrorize the “other.” MacKaye used “Suggestion” as an opportunity to address the skinhead issue. During an extended bridge in which only the drum and bass carried the song, MacKaye stepped up to the microphone:

You know I read in the paper the other day about some young men, some ‘*boys*’ who were beating up homosexual men in the park. You know I read in the paper the other day about some young men, some ‘*boys*’ who were beating up homosexual men in the park. Well, I don’t give a fuck what you are, you do not beat up people for being gay. [A rousing cheer erupted the crowd]. You do not beat up people for being black. [An even more ruckus cheer arose]. You do not beat up people for being women. [Even more cheers, and as if channeling a minster, MacKaye voice rose poignantly, cutting off each word sharply] “You...do...not...beat ...up...people...period (Emphasis MacKaye’s. Anderson & Jenkins, 2001, p. 271).

It was decisive moment for Fugazi, the DC scene, and for future punks who look to the past for guidance. Just before the band would bring song back, MacKaye stepped back up

to microphone, and gently said, “usually this is a song about rape but tonight it’s a song about...” (p. 271). Fugazi launched back into the final chorus while MacKaye improvised the lyrics¹¹ in a whisper:

He did nothing to deserve it
We sit back like they taught us
We keep quiet like they taught us...

Then MacKaye asked the crowd rhetorically: “how many people out there know someone who has beaten up a gay man, a black man, a black woman, a gay woman, a white woman? Everyone” (p. 272). The band stopped cold, MacKaye continued his plea:

They assign us roles of passivity, they assign us roles of fear, and they say ‘Don’t get involved.’ Well, that’s bullshit! Because someday you and you and you [pointing to members of the crowd and then to himself] and me will get beat up for some reason which is equally insane and equally idiotic. (p. 272)

The melody returned instantly after MacKaye’s final word. The band and the crowd were ascending to an emotional crescendo: “We blame him for being there/but...we...are...all”—the music dropped away, and the whole room shouted: “GUILTY” (Ibid).

¹¹ The final chorus to “Suggestion” is:
 She does nothing to deserve it
 He only wants to observe it
 We sit back like they taught us
 We keep quiet like they taught us
 He just wants to prove it
 She does nothing to remove it
 We don't want anyone to mind us
 So we play the roles that they assigned us
 She does nothing to conceal it
 He touches her 'cause he wants to feel it
 We blame her for being there
 But we are all guilty (Fugazi, *13 Songs*, 1989)

This experience exemplifies Punk's authenticity and method validating truth claims. In the moment, the division between band and crowd evaporated and a group of people were collectively mourning the pain of others. An identity was being shaped of what the group would be for and what it would stand opposed to. Fugazi recognized its power, acknowledged the privilege of having pulpit and spoke up against its own self-interest.

Validation through Word: The Riot Grrrl Zines— the Triumphs and Pitfalls of Truth Claims

The Riot Grrrl movement was a collective of bands, zine writers, and social activists that advocated a “youth movement, which combined feminist politics, punk, and style to resist the stale male-dominated punk underground culture” (Downes, 2007, p. 22). The collection of writers, bands, and individual women galvanized the oft forgotten or dismissed female voice in the punk scene. How the movement developed and what the movement voiced, is similar to the experience of Black Feminism. As mentioned, Black Feminism differentiated itself popular Feminist movements because of its unique focus of on the uplifting of marginalized racial and class voice, a similar delineation is made within the Riot Grrrl scene with the larger national and DC punk scene.

The movement originated in Olympia, WA and Washington, DC in the late 1980s. It was an open challenge to the bombardment of the anti-intellectual message to young girls by the media. A community of women within Olympia and DC began writing about the empowerment of young women and girls through zines and starting bands. Bands like Team Dresch, Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Huggy Bear, Heavens to Betsy and

Sleater-Kinney; and zines like *Jigsaw*, *Girl Germs*, *Riot Grrrl*, *Channel Seven*, and *Bitch*, were inspirations for other young women to pick up a pen or an instrument and speak. This form of counterstorytelling began to give voice to the women within the punk scene that had traditionally been marginalized. While zines were a part of punk, the Riot Grrrl movement elevated and claimed zines as their primary method of community and validating female punk experiences.

The expression “Revolution Girl Style Now!” was more than a slogan, but a call to voice: to voice frustration, to voice ideas, to voice dreams, and to voice emotions. These new voices were disseminated primarily through zines—the homemade and self-published writings that first chronicled the rise of punk now were being used to record the rise of women in the punk scene. Zines were expressions of ideas and talent to be shared and critiqued by all that may come into contact with the product (Todd & Watson, 2006; Duncombe, 2001).

A Brief History of Women in Rock Journalism and the Rise of Riot Grrrl Zines

Ellen Willis, rock critic for *The New Yorker* (1968-1975), inspired by the “Second Wave” of feminism, the “New Journalism,” and critical theory, began writing about how “musicians shape and reflect culture... Willis saw rock ‘n’ roll as a metaphor for world events, and criticism as a way of drawing out its poetic subtexts” (McDonnell, 1995, p. 8). Her criticism was openly shaped by her gender, and thus, saw rock as being a primarily cultural experience. Patti Smith, the seminal avant-garde musician and journalist, provided first-hand accounts of the burgeoning New York City punk scene in the 1970s. This accounting was an inspiration for many in the Riot Grrrl scene who were

both musicians and zine writers. A third pioneer, Lisa Robinson, wrote for *Creem* throughout the 1970s. Robinson and Smith's styles more directly influence the Riot Grrrl writers. Robinson too wrote first-hand accounts of the New York punk scene in the 1970s. But unlike Smith's almost mythological style, Robinson wrote "from a decidedly personal, emotional, biased, gossipy point of view" (McDonnell, 1995, p. 11). While these three women provided the historical foundation for the Riot Grrrl scene, Betty Friedan, Angela Davis, Maxine Greene, and bell hooks provide the philosophical scaffolding on which the scene was built.

Betty Friedan and Angela Davis both represent key voices from the "Second Wave" of feminism that called for women to reclaim their voice, their power, and through direct action if necessary. In the early 1980s, bell hooks' *Feminist Theory* (1984) outlined the beginning of a "Third Wave" of Feminism that serves as a correction to the Second Wave by addressing issues of race and class, within Feminism and the dominant culture. This new wave is an inspiration to many critical theorists and hooks was inspired by Greene, Noddings and Freire to dive into the critical theory of education. Her work in the 1990s¹² provided a blueprint for the broadcasting the Third Wave. Sharon Cheslow, Donna Dresch, Laura McDougell, Tobi Vail, Alison Wolfe, Kathleen Hanna, Kathy Wilcox, and Corrine Tucker, wrote, published and fought in spirit of New Journalism and the Third Wave of Feminism. These zine writers were influential voices in print, in music, and in the community.

¹² Most notably *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Culture* (1990) and *Teaching to Transgress* (1994).

The Use of Zines in Validating Truth Claims in the Riot Grrrl Scene

As stated above, the primary tool of the Riot Grrrl scene was not music but zines. Building on the historical, philosophical, and previous resistance movements like the 1960s avant-garde artist group the Situationist International, the community known as Riot Grrrl was decidedly a do-it-yourself- community (Marcus, 1989, p. 45-49). Like the Situationists, key to the Riot Grrrl movement was a belief that “a revolutionary organization must always remember that its objective is not getting people to listen to speeches by expert leaders, but getting them to speak for themselves” (Debord as cited in Downes, 2007, p. 13). This sentiment was modified in the zine, *Riot Grrrl #1* (1990), “You don’t need to be a punk. You don’t need our permission. There are no rules. No leader. Every girl is a Riot Grrrl.”

Self-published commentaries, like zines, have been important components to radical movements since the advent of the printing press. While Riot Grrrl zines may not have had the national or international impact as the *Federalist Papers*, they are vital statements of critique. Zines, unlike the mainstream press, are uncensored, personal, and amateur. It is important to note that the personal is political and that “amateur” can have a “pejorative cast in a society that honors professionalism...[yet] the roots of amateurism are far more noble: *amator*, Latin for *lover*” (Duncombe, 2001, p. 18). This distinction is critical in the context of the Riot Grrrl scene. Riot Grrrl was intensely political. Hanna wrote in 1991 “a belief in instant revolution is just what the powers that be want. That way we won’t realize that we are the revolution” (Sinker, 2001, p. 51). This sense of

politicization and personal reclamation was at the heart of Bikini Kill and the interconnected female fanzine community.

Methodologically, zines worked in two ways: first to provide ideas and secondly, to develop a community of like-minded individuals. As a relational-paradigm was important for Black Feminism, a similar system of relationships was critical for the Riot Grrrl movement and zines provided medium to enter into these essential relationships. Zines were passed along at shows and given away at punk-friendly independent record stores. These self-published periodicals crisscrossed through the realms of music, politics, cultural studies, gender studies and philosophy. This interdisciplinary approach emphasizes zines as points of border-crossing and as venues of intellectualism. The overt referencing of Critical Theorists like Freire, hooks and Greene in zines magnified the repression of women voices within theory, Punk and of the hegemonic culture. Zines coming out of the Riot Grrrl movement frequently read as manifestoes or mission statements that shape both a macro-vision of the movement while simultaneously developing micro-objectives (i.e. encouraging others to write zines, start bands, and/or start meetings among women to discuss issues and direct action activism) (Chidgey, 2001, p. 104-105, 134-139). Zines are particularly important to girls and young women because they “have the potential to empower an enormous number of young girls by giving them a public voice” that counters the myriad of culture industry magazines like *Seventeen*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, etc (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004, p. 411-412). Studies by both Harris (2003) and Guzzetti and Gamboa (2004), speak to the power of peers writing to fellow peers. Both studies look at zines as potential vehicles of empowerment

for teenage girls. Zines “actively manipulate the borders between public and private, inside and outside, to manage expression without exploitation, resistance without appropriation” (Harris, 2003, p. 47). The Riot Grrrl movement used zines as an uninterrupted space to confront mainstream media and machismo punk positions. Thus they provide a great example of punks articulating beliefs and having those beliefs be validated. In addition, to these studies, by looking at some of the influential Riot Grrrl zines like *Jigsaw*, *Bitch*, *Girl Germs*, *Riot Grrrl*, and *Channel Seven* to see how first-hand accounts in from different geographic locations shape cultural perceptions and the creation of skills and knowledge.

CHAPTER FIVE

END HITS: PUNK'S CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH

TO EPISTEMOLOGICAL CLAIMS

Punk was more about reclaiming American values than undermining them. Its self-reliant, anti-corporate individuals [who]...carved out territory through the trust [and] the spirit of the indie network.

—Steven Blush

At the heart of punk is a sense of confrontation—a challenge to the politics of society and the vision of the human person. Punk's rhizomatic musical roots parallel its theoretical roots. Developing from the Negro "sorrow songs," blues 12 bar riffs channeled the emancipated, yet segregated Black experience in America. That musical structure became the backbone of "garage rock" and then punk. All the while the authenticity of struggle and resistance present in the "sorrow songs" develops into direct confrontation between personal and social dynamics of society. It has been argued in this paper that punk is a subcultural force "which recognizes the often-crucial significance of a group difference in structuring our lives and aspirations, and the importance of achieving a system of representation that reflects more of that difference" (Phillips 2007, p. 168), also that the Washington, DC punk scene reflects this sentiment.

The Washington, DC punk scene exemplifies punk's confrontational values and is a primary example of the application of the matrix by which punk validates truth claims—confrontation. The unique political milieu of Washington, DC, provided a fertile

ground for an organic oppositional voice to emerge. The DC scene, made manifest the theoretical positions from other cultural (hip-hop) and social (Black feminism) by developing an confrontational voice based on the experience and the localized knowledge of a particular community, which is expressed both individually and collectively. Punk presents these confrontational truth claims through lyrics, dialogues at shows, written in zines, and through collective action. These truth claims are then collectively and individually validated a response that leads towards action. Through the use of collectives, bands, and individual pockets of friends, the DC scene provides a blueprint to other punk scenes on how to be an authentic challenge to the dominant culture.

However, a challenge still persists—can the DC scene be replicated in other communities? Is punk still a relevant and viable means of confrontation? While these questions remain to the larger community of punks, each individual who claims to be punk must as Dick Lucas, of the English band, the Subhumans, once said, “come to terms with the idea that I am a ‘part of society’” (O’Hara, 1999, p. 13). Therefore, punks ought to ask themselves: How will I, a punk, be a part of society? How can punk continue to provide an alternative to the mainstream culture industry? How will punk continue to develop a pedagogy of confrontation? These questions, ought to be asked because they are central to success of punk being a subcultural voice of authentic opposition to the dominant culture. As seen in these pages, it is my assertion that punk scenes over the years have, and continue to claim that punk is a protest, and that the scene has provided that needed community that validates the dissenters’ statements of truth. While, the music may change stylistically, the voice of punk is still a scream of confrontation.

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VITA

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