"NO ONE READS THIS RAG"

punk rock and the zine-scene dynamic

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— A TALE OF TWO PUNKS —

Picture it like a neo-noir movie: New York City, October 1975. John Holmstrom and Eddie "Legs" McNeil, two kids transplanted from Connecticut, rented a run-down office on tenth avenue. Cramped and poorly insulated, it was just a few blocks down from the Anvil, "the most notorious S&M club in New York."[1] But it was already furnished to serve as an office, and the rent was cheap — good enough. With their names on the lease, the two began working on a project that would totally change and consume their lives. According to Holmstrom, they were "students of the media...ambitious little bastids [sic]."[2] Holmstrom was a cartoonist, a student of Harvey Kurtzman and Wil Eisner's at the New York School of Visual Arts. McNeil was kicked out of high school, and he'd been making short films with a "hippie" media commune called Total Impact. The two were brash, obnoxious, and confrontational, and they shared a love of old school rock 'n' roll. Between them, they had five thousand dollars, a gift from their friend and collaborator, Ged Dunn, Jr. Their new office, the "Punk Dump," was to form the base of a new media empire. This was to become *Punk* magazine.

By many standards, Holmstrom, McNeil, and Dunn succeeded. Some have praised their publication as the spark that ignited an international punk "movement."[3] Arguably, they found a popular audience for punk rock in the United States, and helped secure its eventual place in the

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[1] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 7.
[2] Ibid., 2.
[3] Peter Bebergal, "Punk: The Best of Punk Magazine," *BoingBoing*. October 21, 2014. Accessed November 16, 2015. http://boingboing.net/2014/10/21/punk-the-best-of-punk-magazin.html. Bebergal's article reverently reviews Holmstrom's autobiographical zine anthology, and refers to *Punk* as "the canonical text...its impact is undeniable, not only helping to coalesce an entire underground movement...but putting bands and musicians like Blondie, Iggy Pop, and Patti Smith on the map, and jump starting the career of The Ramones." Bebergal also praises the magazine's amateurish character: "Because *Punk* evolved out of underground comix [sic], it used the grammar of comics as its primary mover...the take-none-of-it-seriously philosophy was hardcore and something that later punk offshoots could have benefited from." Given the intensely principled nature of hardcore punk, which developed in the early 1980s, it is possible he meant to write, "something that hardcore and later punk offshoots could have benefited from." But this, of course, is mere speculation.

mainstream. As evidence, Holmstrom asserts, we need only note the scores of stylistically similar punk "zines" that succeeded their publication.[4] These amateur independent periodicals, which sociologist Stephen Duncombe described as "scruffy, homemade little pamphlets. Little publications filled with rantings of high weirdness and exploding with chaotic design," were produced unabashedly by fans rather than professional rock journalists, and were designed in part to break down the barriers between rock producers and consumers. Fan-produced zines, also abbreviated as fanzines, have reflected the underlying belief that unpretentious rock 'n' roll can be both socially subversive and artistically superior.[5] In short, punk identity is made manifest in these fan-made publications, just as it appears in the content of punk lyrics.[6]

As Holmstrom points out in his autobiographical history of the magazine, he and McNeil were not universally praised for their efforts. Some accused them of selling out, of turning the punk ethos that mattered to so many people into marketable schlock.[7] But the fact remains that their publication shaped the global punk scene irrevocably, just as the New York scene shaped them. This process of interaction between publication and place, this zine-scene dynamic, places *Punk* magazine within a long tradition of American countercultural publishing. Throughout history, participants in this tradition self-consciously rejected popular cultural standards and public policies. They used the precise cultural idioms and technologies of their eras to express

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[4] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 219.
[5] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 5-9.
[6] James McDonald, "Suicidal rage: An Analysis of Hardcore Punk Lyrics" in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 11 Issue 3 (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1987). McDonald argued that scholars analyzing the first ten years of the punk movement had devoted excessive attention to punk aesthetics, while simultaneously providing insufficient analysis of punk rock songs' lyrical content. His analysis focused primarily on hardcore punk, which differs from the movement's first "wave" in a number of ways, but his belief in the historical value of song lyrics as primary sources easily could be applied to any manifestation of punk. Ultimately, publications provide as much fodder for analysis as socialized punk "style," if not more so.
[7] Ibid., 340.

and advocate principled self-removal from the mainstream. A sense of history is inherent to this tradition; punk, like other countercultures, evaluated previous manifestations of rebellion.[8] In the late twentieth century, aging countercultures carved out space for younger ones by establishing ideological standards, to be either inherited, rejected, or absorbed into the mainstream. Punk, while dubiously a movement at all, was no exception.[9] As they propagated their grassroots, do-it-yourself (DIY) counterculture worldwide, the creators of *Punk* magazine demonstrated the critical role that publications play in the construction of countercultures and individual identities.

In the punk movement, zines and other publications served as critical lines of communication between the music's producers and consumers, significantly blurring that distinction. But the nature of punk publishing changed with punk's evolution as a genre and a movement, and its subsequent splintering.[10] Certain groups within the movement, such as feminists and homosexuals, developed their own distinct punk identities and communities based on shared characteristics and experiences, and a shared sense of isolation from punk's existing standards.[11] In this sense, movements like riot grrrl (at the intersection of punk and third-wave

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[8] Ibid., 4. Holmstrom, for example, "got disgusted with the hippie counterculture and moved on." See also Ken Goffman and Dan Joy, *Counterculture Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House* (New York: Villard, 2004), xvii.

[9] Megan Bartelt, "No Future: The Conception and Evolution of Punk Music and Culture in the United States and Great Britain from 1965 to the Present," *Marquette University History Department*, accessed 2/8/16, http://academic.mu.edu/meissnerd/punk.html. Bartelt argues the importance of the "No Future" concept in punk ideology, which contextualizes the movement's troubled relationship with academia. She cites Triscia Henry, who described "the lack of interest within punk culture of documenting the history of the movement" in her book *Break all Rules!: Punk Rock and the Making of a Style* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 7. Later, Bartelt adds that "classifying punk purely as art, however, can be dangerous, as any positive claim for an artist is read by the (in the case of punk, often hostile) public as a claim of intellectual complexity and therefore subjects the musician to the minute examination of every detail of his or her work except for its emotional impact, an essential aspect of punk music."

[10] See also Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 137. MacLeod argues that this process was also in part a result of "the mass media dispersion of punk," which "did not simply water down or destroy punk," but popularized it.

[11] Maria Raha, *Cinderella's Big Score: Women of the Punk and Indie Underground* (New York: Seal, 2004), 14.

feminism) and queercore (at the intersection of punk and LGBT identity) represented instances of rebellion against rebellion: countercultures whose members on principle removed themselves not only from the mainstream, but also the dominant counterculture of the era. This practice of rejecting previous movements' standards while still building on them makes punk unique within the American countercultural tradition. It demonstrates one of the ways in which punk was a truly postmodern counterculture. Because of the movement's unique character, members of splinter groups could reject some of the movement's trends while still retaining their fundamental identity as punks.[12] Their zines reveal resilient themes of exclusion, identity crisis, and community construction that both continued the punk publishing tradition and simultaneously reappropriated it. Punk therefore represents more than another postwar American counterculture; it is a point of dramatic departure with countercultural traditions, and a catalyst for further countercultural differentiation. Punk publications changed the way that countercultural ideas are generated and dispersed, with consequences visible to this day. By considering the publishing dynamics from a variety of punk scenes, one can form a better understanding of the current countercultural publishing climate, and perhaps draw conclusions about how (or if) countercultures operate in the United States today. In a digital landscape where everyone is able to easily self-publish online, scholars of culture and media must consider the factors and social situations that brought about the present dynamic. Punk played a vital role in shaping the new millennium's underground publishing culture, and the zine-scene dynamic demonstrates that clearly.

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[12] Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The true Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 62.

— PRIMARY SOURCES & METHODOLOGY —

In this project, I necessarily accept several assertions about the nature of counterculture: That a movement's publications reflect its standards and principles, that those standards and principles arise from interactions between the movement's participants; and that publications function as primary sources because they often foster such interactions. These interactions are visible in each manifestation of counterculture that this paper describes: The transcendentalists had *The Dial*, and the Beats had *The Journal for the Protection of All Beings*. The hippies had many underground publications: *The Berkeley Barb*, *The East Village Other*, *The San Francisco Oracle*, and more. Punk, as a counterculture, carried on this tradition with its own publications—from rock albums to concert fliers and periodicals.

A discussion of punk publications would be disastrously incomplete without a focus on zines. Zine culture is just one manifestation of punk's broader emphasis on DIY, the principle of creating content for oneself rather than merely consuming it. In this way, punk publishers idealized amateurism as artistic integrity—in other words, they equated the absence of professional journalistic standards with unpretentious legitimacy. In this respect, their zines reflected attempts to remove the barriers that traditionally separated different kinds of countercultural actors: those who produce and those who consume content, in this case the members of punk bands and their fans.[13] In the process, zine producers came to function as scene intermediaries, whose influence over the process of countercultural interaction enabled them to shape the movement.

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[13] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from the Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 124-125.

There are tens of thousands of punk zines in existence, housed in libraries across the globe. In at least one respect, this is fortunate; because many of these publications are only a few decades old, they are in near-perfect condition. There is no shortage of data to explore, nor a lack of accessibility. However, given the sheer volume of zines available for study, conducting a truly comprehensive survey of punk publishing would be far too monumental a project for one inexperienced undergraduate (with a limited travel budget and limited time) to undertake. For another perspective, one might consult sociologist Stephen Duncombe's *Notes from Underground:* Instead, for the purposes of this project, it made sense to choose zines that had the most obvious effects on the course of punk as a movement: those that inspired bands to form, that catapulted others to mainstream success, and that most visibly shaped punk ideology.

For my purposes, that means beginning with *Punk* magazine, whose run lasted four years, and which Duncombe appropriately calls "the first punk fanzine."[14] While Holmstrom might have contested this label for its connotations of amateurism, *Punk* remains significant to our study for its influence on both the NYC scene and the fanzine "genre."[15] When this paper cites *Punk*, it draws from the reprints of back issues found in John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd's collection *The Best of* Punk *Magazine*, which also includes commentary by Holmstrom. Still, limiting a study of the punk zine-scene dynamic to one influential publication would be absurdly insufficient, given just how many exist. San Francisco's *Search & Destroy* magazine offers an important cross-coast perspective on the state of American punk in the late seventies, and is additionally significant for its cultural connections to the beat generation. Similarly, this paper

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[14] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 124-125.

[15] Michelle Comstock, "Grrrl Zine Networks: Re-Composing Spaces of Authority, Gender, and Culture" in *JAC*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring 2001), 383-409. Significant for its consideration of zines as a genuine literary form.

draws from digitally accessed back issues of Los Angeles' *Slash* magazine, and *Maximum Rocknroll*, a publication that dealt explicitly with the subgenre of punk known as hardcore. The Queercore publication *Homocore* was helpful, as were digitally accessed pages from riot grrrl zines like *Jigsaw* and *Bikini Kill*. In particular, zines from the hardcore, queercore, and riot grrrl movements demonstrate the continuing relevance of punk's principled rebellion against rebellion, including the idea that punks can rebel against previous manifestations of punk and still retain their identity within it. Such publications, like those before them (*Punk* or *Search & Destroy* or *Slash*), explicitly criticized aging countercultures. The only difference lay in the specific movement or standards they criticized. Hardcore, riot grrrl, and queercore zines reflect the process by which punk fundamentally changed counterculture, allowing it to splinter (in theory) infinitely. This, in turn, is visible in the continuing relevance of zines to punk communities in the new millennium.

I analyzed zines in several ways: First, by observing the nature of their content and statements of principles in early issues, then considering how those early standards changed over time. Next, in an attempt to find relatable characters whose experiences could shape the zine-scene narrative, I looked into some of the punks who contributed to these publications, whether they continued to do so as the publications changed, and what particular ideas or attitudes they contributed. Letters to the editors were especially helpful when illustrating interactions between content producers and consumers. Furthermore, changes in graphic style and contributors offers an interesting point of observation for the publications' broader stylistic shifts. It is equally important to analyze similarities and differences between publications from different regional scenes; this reveals the underlying characteristics that more or less have

constituted punk's practical definition. In sum, zines contributed to the same process of identity and community construction that did punk songs and concert fliers. Their analysis offers insight into more than punk style alone—the course of punk as a movement is embedded within their pages.

— HISTORIOGRAPHY —

To help locate punk publishing within a countercultural tradition, this paper draws from several histories of sixties "underground" journalism — Primarily, Robert Glessing's book, *The Underground Press in America,*[16] and John McMillian's *Smoking Typewriters* (Oxford University press, 2011).[17] Glessing published in 1970, far closer chronologically to the hippies' sixties "revolution."[18] His book attempts to predict the future of the underground press. But McMillian provides an additional, important discussion of the counterculture's connection to the punk zine movement, which he extended into the 1990s and beyond. Each book presents a slightly different perspective on a tradition of countercultural publishing, either pre- or post-punk, which together help decode what exactly punk changed.This allows for a greater understanding of punk's legacy within the countercultural tradition.

Understanding that tradition involves the study of multiple other countercultures and their historical legacies. Because the punk movement took place in an extended post-WWII period of American history, characterized by cultural conflict and broader cultural trends, it makes sense to connect them to both the beat generation, who operated primarily in the 1950s, and the hippie movement of the 1960s. Simon Warner's *Text and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll* draws comparisons

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[16] Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press In America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970).
[17] John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (Oxford: University press, 2011).
[18] Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 39.

between the beats and punks using the lens of music fandom.[19] Warner was not the first to do so; as will be demonstrated in this paper, punks themselves made the connection many times in their publications. In particular, William Burroughs' stylistic influence on punk tastemakers like Patti Smith, the so-called "punk poetess,"[20] and V. Vale, founder of San Francisco's *Search & Destroy* magazine, should not be underestimated.[21]

Punk history is contested and complex, spanning multiple decades and continents. Dick Hebdige provided one of the earliest, most important perspectives on the United Kingdom's punk culture and its symbols in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.[22] Additionally, localized oral histories prove particularly useful, as they offer insight into the specific interpersonal dynamics at work in any given scene. These are comprised of carefully ordered transcriptions, directly quoted snippets from lengthy interviews that the authors conducted, rather than a straight recitation of facts, dates, and faces. In *Please Kill Me*, Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain trace the history of the original New York City scene.[23] Jack Boulware and Silke Tudor provide a San

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[19] Simon Warner, *Text and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll: The Beats and Rock Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).
[20] Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove, 1996), 206. Smith's legacy continues to this day. See also Laura Barton, "Patti Smith: Punk's Poet Laureate Heads Back on the Road for Her Sins" *The Guardian*. Last modified April 17, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/apr/17/patti-smiths-horses-the-making-of-the-worlds-punk-poet-laureate.
[21] Burroughs' influence is present in a wide range of punk publications, which did everything from discussing his writing to actually using his image. The first issue of San Francisco's *Homocore* magazine, a queercore publication from 1988, used a photo of Burroughs for its cover. This demonstrates the degree to which the punk movement had already considered its stylistic inheritance from the beat generation. San Francisco punk publications in particular, perhaps given their proximity to beat generation landmarks like City Lights bookstore, often played on perceived similarities between the two postwar movements. Arguably, the punks saw their connections to the beat generation as legitimating. In their *Graphic History* of the beat generation, Paul Buhle, Harvey Pekar, and Ed Piskor mention Patti Smith in particular, and refer to Burroughs as "the godfather of punk."
[22] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979).
[23] Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove, 1996).

Francisco Bay Area perspective in *Gimme Something Better*[24] while Marc Spitz and Brendan Mullen cover the Los Angeles scene in *We Got the Neutron Bomb*.[25]

As the group most central to punk publications, musicians' perspectives on scenes and zines alike carry historical weight. For this purpose, the memoirs of scenemakers like Patti Smith and Richard Hell are helpful. The former published *Just Kids* as an exploration of her long, complex relationship with the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe.[26] In 2013, Hell published *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp*, which roots his path toward punk in a sense of youthful nihilism and an inquiring (if not jaded) mind.[27] These books explain their authors' motivations for moving to New York City, along with the events that lead them to become punk rockers. Their books also describe the New York scene, thereby contextualizing the developing community into which *Punk* magazine entered.

Because countercultural publishing is by definition an "alternative" medium, alternative perspectives are important to its study. Fringe, minority, and otherwise circumscribed groups likewise found agency and self-actualization in their own attempts to self-publish. The histories of homosexuals, women, and minority groups within punk and other movements present alternatives to the white male narratives sometimes overemphasized in countercultural studies. Some accuse the beat generation and punk movements of a fundamental sexism.[28] Still, underrepresented groups did publish countercultural works, and in doing so, many came to view

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[24] Jack Boulware and Silke Tudor, *Gimme Something Better: The Profound Progressive, and Occasionally Pointless History of Bay Area Punk From Dead Kennedys to Green Day* (New York: Penguin 2009).
[25] Mark Spitz and Brendan Mullen, *We Got the Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of L.A. Punk* (New York: Three Rivers, 2001).
[26] Patti Smith, *Just Kids* (New York: Ecco, 2010).
[27] Richard Hell, *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp* (New York: Ecco, 2013).
[28] Anne Waldman, "Foreword" in *Women of the Beat Generation: The Writers, Artists and Muses at the Heart of a Revolution.* (Berkeley: Conari Press, 1996), xi.

themselves as the creators of their own distinct countercultures. To explore this tendency among the feminist punk riot grrrl movement, I relied on Sara Marcus' book *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution.*[29] Editors Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay attempt to address the difficult issue of punk racial dynamics in *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race.*[30] Additionally, articles on the queercore publishing movement by D. Robert DeChaine and Mark Fenster prove its relevance as a distinct subculture unto itself.[31]

This project necessarily traces the genesis of punk publishing, along with the changes that took place within it from 1975 to the present. It was helpful to have access to graphic collections of posters and pages from zines, such as *Punk Press: Rebel Rock in the Underground Press, 1968-1980,*[32] assembled by Vincent Bernière and Mariel Primois. Johan Kugelberg and Jon Savage's *Punk: An Aesthetic* contains wide-ranging visual examples of punk fashion, publishing, graffiti, and marketing.[33]

[29] Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The true Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010).
[30] Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay, *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* (New York: Verso, 2011). Interestingly enough, some punks of color have criticized Duncombe and Tremblay's collection as incomplete. A relevant review and critique, which calls the book "Another Failure," was published in the *Maximum Rocknroll* zine on January 17, 2012. This review provides merely one example from a larger trend of punks rejecting academic historical approaches to their counterculture. It can be found on the magazine's website: http://maximumrocknroll.com/white-riot-another-failure/
[31] D. Robert DeChaine, "Mapping subversion: Queercore music's playful discourse of resistance," *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 21 No. 4 (1997), 7-37, DOI: 10.1080/03007769708591686. See also Mark Fenster, "Queer Punk Fanzines: Identity, Community, and the Articulation of Homosexuality and Hardcore," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (Winter 1993), 73-94. Ironically, Fenster's article actually contests the notion that the queercore publishing movement represented an attempt to actually carve out a distinct counterculture separate from hardcore punk. Rather, he asserts that it was intended merely to seek acceptance within hardcore's existing frameworks. However, certain letters to the editor of *Homocore* would suggest otherwise. More on that later.
[32] Vincent Bernière and Mariel Primois, *Punk Press: Rebel Rock in the Underground Press, 1968-1980* (New York: Abrams, 2013).
[33] *Punk: An Aesthetic*, ed. Jon Savage, (New York: Rizzoli, 2012).

Counterculture, rather than the absence of culture, is a manifestation of the active decision to adopt a lifestyle that defies norms.[34] This definition allows us to study the historical interactions between culture, counterculture, and those who experience both. It is not a matter of distinguishing between "high" and "low" culture and associating the latter with counterculture. Studying punk publications, charting their growth over time and analyzing their content, is a means of understanding the people who created, composed, and consumed them. It also reveals the changes that punk brought to the traditional zine-scene dynamic. But to engage in such a study requires an understanding of punk's historical context.

The hippies, representatives of what is commonly called "the" counterculture (as though only one exists), were distinct from the 1960s mainstream in a great number of ways: they stood against the corporatization and militarization of American culture, espoused ideals of free love, rejected Christian morality, and expressed themselves through rock 'n' roll.[35] Like punk, the sixties counterculture was characterized largely by a trend of what Glessing called "youthful unrest": isolation from older generations' experiences due to changes in the cultural environment, such as available technology. Glessing emphasizes the role that television in particular played in shaping hippies' worldviews.[36] Glessing's book mainly deals with the rise of underground journalism that corresponded to the arc of the hippie movement: publications like New York's *Rat* and the *East Village Other*, or California's *Berkeley Barb* and the *San Francisco Oracle*. But the sixties counterculture did not represent a dramatic new social

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[34] Ken Goffman and Dan Joy, *Counterculture Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House* (New York: Villard, 2004), 24.

[35] Christopher Gair, *The American Counterculture* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2007), 171. It is worth noting that Gair's book labels only the sixties movement as "the counterculture," although the author does acknowledge the influence of transcendentalism and the beats on that movement. On page 177, he hints that the punk movement was a rejection of the counterculture as he narrowly defines it.

[36] Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 55.

phenomenon; it was far from the first movement in American history to take issue with the prevailing trends and perceived machinations of mainstream culture, nor was it the first to express its ideals through independently published periodicals. Take, for a chronologically proximous example, the beat generation: artists, poets, and novelists fed up with "button-down" American culture, striving for individualized actualization against the prevailing atmosphere of WWII-era collectivism.[37] It is not audacious to suggest that the hippies inherited many of their traditions, including their aggressively informal publishing style, from the published works of beat generation authors like Kerouac, Ginsberg, Snyder, and Ferlinghetti. Beat generation sacraments included travel, drug use, sexual experimentation, and protest — all equally associated with the sixties. Like the hippies who came after them, the beats used print as a means of expressing their ideas and forming communities. The beats even self-published through independent printers like City Lights Bookstore, which Ferlinghetti owned and operated. In this way, they were able to create proto-zines like their *Journal for the Protection of All Beings*, which included interviews of beats conducted by other beats, a clear example of community construction and reflection. In terms of these publications' influence on the hippies, the beats' use of vernacular is particularly visible in the underground papers that popped up in leftist, radical, and university communities during the sixties. But arguably, even the beats were not the first to harbor such an ideology. Nineteenth century transcendentalism, for example, placed a similar emphasis on an exit from society into vaguely-defined "nature," where man supposedly existed best and most unburdened. Furthermore, the transcendentalist publishing tradition was

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[37] Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "Introduction" to AUTHOR *The Beat Generation in San Francisco: A Literary Tour* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2003), xiii.

characterized by a marked willingness to criticize mainstream values and institutions, such as slavery and capitalism.[38]

Along with a tradition of defiant publishing, a clear set of shared antiestablishmentarian values connected the transcendentalists to the beat generation and hippie movement. Together, they made up part of the countercultural tradition that punk revolutionized. Their collective influence on punk is not to be underestimated; the beat and hippie countercultures were especially fundamental to punk identity construction, because all three arose out of the same extended postwar period in American history. They were fundamentally similar because they rebelled against similar manifestations of the mainstream: Cold War paranoia, rampant militarization and red scare witch-hunting, a national prioritization of conservatively defined "family values," the subjugation of individualism, and persecution of various social groups.[39] In *Counterculture Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House*, Ken Goffman and Dan Joy propose "three distinct strands of connection" that "weave the motley array of countercultures into a continuous tradition: direct contact, indirect contact, and resonance."[40] Through the first two strands, countercultural participants interact either in person, through correspondence, or by reading each other's work. This concept of interaction explains the inheritance of ideas, traditions, and artistic styles among the countercultures of the extended postwar period: beat generation literature inspired hippies to leave home and embrace dropout ideology; the hippie publishing style had an influence on punk zine aesthetics and attitudes. The legacies of older

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[38] Barbara L. Packer, *The Transcendentalists* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 65-167.
[39] Lorraine Fox Harding, "Family Values and Conservative Government Policy: 1979-97" in *Changing Family Values: Difference, Diversity, and the Decline of Male Order*, ed. Gill Jagger and Caroline Wright (London: Routledge, 2003), 119. See also Judith Stacey's *In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age* (Boston: Beacon, 1996), 86.
[40] Ken Goffman and Dan Joy, *Counterculture Through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House* (New York: Villard, 2004), xvii.

countercultures are visibly embedded in punk publishing, which both rejected and embraced them.

But simultaneously, punk represented a unique chapter in the countercultural tradition. It not only inherited traditions from previous countercultures; it rejected other traditions from those same movements. And significantly, it actually also embraced certain elements of mainstream culture that it deemed unpretentious and sincere.[41] Like the hippies, punks were born into the American postwar period, and set out to rebel against a culture that was inescapable to them. Like the hippies, they were raised with television and big consumer culture. They knew fast food, rock 'n' roll, and the suburbs. But unlike the hippies, punks came of age in a world where *Rolling Stone* was already an institution. What used to be countercultural music's voice in publishing had become the entrenched standard for no-longer-new-school rock journalism.[42] Rather than attempt to utterly shed these associations with the mainstream, as the hippies had done, the punks embraced their identity as members of a consumer society, albeit perhaps failing to see the irony of doing so. There was a running gag in the first few issues of *Punk* magazine that involved asking musicians what they like to order at McDonald's.[43]

The zine-scene dynamic: that self-sustaining, reflexively creative relationship between publications and the communities they reflect, contextualizes and explains the process by which punk ideology unmade and remade the American counterculture. The zine-scene dynamic has the potential to account for stylistic changes in both publications and movements. Therefore, it has real relevance for any academic study of the American counterculture. It offers a lens

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[41] Jude Davies, "The Future of 'No Future': Punk Rock and Postmodern Theory," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 29, no. 4 (2004), 4.
[42] Robert Draper, *Rolling Stone Magazine: the Uncensored History* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 25.
[43] Lou Reed, Patti Smith, and Richard Hell, *Punk* #1-3, January-March 1976, in John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 13-64.

through which to view countercultural beginnings, development, and disintegration, and it provides insight into the ways ideas are propagated on a large scale. With this in mind, it is also relevant to an understanding of the current era, in which the tools of independent, electronic self-publication are so readily available to the masses.[44] There is real power in the ability to spread ideas; there is additional power in understanding how ideas spread. For their part, countercultural publications shaped their scenes and movements in several ways: They promoted the exchange of anti-mainstream rhetoric; they united culturally isolated people around unique leaders, symbols, and principles; and they provided an avenue for identifying, criticizing, and satirizing a movement's cultural enemies. Punk zines did all of the above, in the process crafting a shared countercultural understanding of what was and was not genuinely of their movement.

From outside the movement, the term "punk" is difficult to define accurately. Holmstrom wrote in *Punk* Magazine's issue three editorial, "Any idiot knows that words (like magazine, rock albums, and people) tend to assume several identities. your own definition is valid but reveals more about yourself than 'punk.'"[45] The reality of punk identity, as it turns out, may be that it is entirely too subjective and individualized to have originated purely from a single place, or with only a single band. Ian MacKaye, a member of several influential hardcore punk bands from the eighties and nineties, expressed such a sentiment in his interview with Gabriel Kuhn for Kuhn's book *Sober Living for the Revolution: Hardcore Punk, Straight Edge, and Radical Politics*. "Punk," said MacKaye, "or underground music, or hardcore, or whatever you want to call it, is not singular...it is essentially a projection of every person."[46]

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[44] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 210.
[45] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 49.
[46] Interview with Ian Mackaye in Gabriel Kuhn, *Sober Living for the Revolution: Hardcore Punk, Straight Edge, and Radical Politics* (Oakland: PM Press, 2010), 22-26.

Mackaye also noted his disinclination to read "a lot of punk histories, because having been there, [he] started to understand how people who write histories — or about histories — ultimately tend to shape them into manageable narratives."[47] His implication was that academic over-analysis tends to dilute the connoted meaning of punk, particularly in terms of its emotional significance for so many kids of what Richard Hell called the "blank generation."[48] Hebdige expressed this idea in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*:

> After all, we, the sociologists and interested straights, threaten to kill with kindness the forms which we seek to elucidate...our 'sympathetic' readings of subordinate culture are regarded by the members of a subculture with just as much indifference and contempt as the hostile labels imposed by the courts and the press. In this respect to get the point is, in a way, to miss the point.[49]

The academic pursuit of objectivity and teachable explanations is by some standards fundamentally opposed to the punk movement's central tenets: the supremacy of individualism and subjective opinion, the importance of personal passion, and the rejection of traditional wisdom. It is much more difficult to determine a universal, academically applicable definition of punk when the movement's surviving members, its primary sources, are disinclined to cooperate with academics who they perceive as agents of the mainstream. The definition is further complicated when each primary source differs so starkly in how he or she considers the key term in question.

For simplicity's sake, here I begin with a dictionary definition — because "punk" as a genre identifier was hardly the word's first or intended use. The word has long been a piece of slang, in use since the sixteenth century as a reference to a passive homosexual plaything, either a young male prostitute or a coerced sex partner of some other variety. By the mid-twentieth

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[47] Ibid., 22.
[48] Richard Hell and the Voidoids, "Blank Generation," in *Blank Generation* (Sire, 1979).
[49] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 139.

century, it had mainly evolved into a piece of prison slang describing much the same role, but with a greater emphasis on the lack of consent. It was only in the early 1970s that music journalists began to use "punk" to describe the urgent, aggressive, stripped-down version of rock 'n' roll that was gaining an audience in New York City. This application of the word grew out of an alternate definition, though — one that describes a punk as "a person of no account; a despicable or contemptible person...a petty criminal; a hoodlum, a thug."[50] With its late-nineteenth century origins, this definition must have seemed a perfect fit for the ardently amateur, dropout, burnout, rebel character of the New York scene.

Over time, "punk" came to refer to the genre's musicians and fans in addition to mere juvenile delinquents. this is evinced by the stark increase in published appearances of the word, and the phrase "punk rock" in publishing, on the rise since 1975 or so.[51] But like most artistic mediums and musical forms, punk rock's origins predate its classification as an international movement. In fact, it arguably began even before someone bothered to name it in print. Music journalism labeled early New York scenesters as "punk" bands before they themselves adopted the label — and when they did so, it was often reluctantly. In their own minds, bands like the Patti Smith Group, Television, and the Ramones played a kind of rock 'n' roll that was more classic than revolutionary. Their style was intended as a return to the "three-minute song" popularized by artists like Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley, and the early Beatles records. By extension, it was a rejection of bloated, complex prog rock and psychedelia. In short, they were simply fans of rock 'n' roll, fed up with the process by which "the cool Yardbirds turned into

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[50] *Oxford English Dictionary*

[51] This isn't difficult to determine; run a quick n-grams analysis of the Google Books database to see for yourself.

Led Zeppelin, and suddenly there was Journey."[52] Still, in spite of its retrophilia, the music that would come to be known as punk rock had a countercultural streak from the beginning; paradoxically, it used an inherited rebellious ideology to reject both the corporate rock around it, and the very countercultural hippie tradition from which it inherited that spirit of rebellion.

Punk as a countercultural movement originated from the rock 'n' roll of the same name. In the United States at least, punk rock itself began years before its popularization, when Andy Warhol promoted the Velvet Underground in New York City during the mid- to late-sixties. This is especially true if we accept the narrative that Gillian McCain and Legs McNeil himself present in *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*. Obvious bias aside, McNeil is a journalist, and through his interviews with members of the band and their management, he illustrates the Velvets' style: A deliberately simple garage aesthetic, amateur musicianship, and provocative song themes.[53] All of these would become standards of the genre in time.

Eventually, in the wake of the Velvet Underground's dissolution, a new class of their disciples emerged. Commonly referred to as America's "proto-punk" bands, they ranged in character and aesthetic from the vigorously political, revolutionary MC5, to the off-putting and chaotic Stooges, to the glittery, glamorous New York Dolls and the literary Patti Smith. Admittedly, "proto-punk" is something of an unhelpful label; it loosely describes those groups and artists whose work influenced the first punk bands. The Ramones, for example, commonly acknowledged as the first "true" American punk rockers, bonded as NYC teens over a shared love of the Stooges. However, within one page of *Subculture*, Hebdige refers to them both as a

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[52] Jack Boulware and Silke Tudor, *Gimme Something Better: The Profound Progressive, and Occasionally Pointless History of Bay Area Punk From Dead Kennedys to Green Day* (New York: Penguin 2009), xv.
[53] Rosebud, qtd. In Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove, 1996), 6. "Image was all, and the Velvet Underground certainly had it. I could not believe all these tourists...listening to the Velvets going on about heroin and S&M."

proto-punk band and "American punk...minimalist."[54] There exists no true, single starting point for something as chaotic and grassroots as the punk rock scene. The Velvets were merely a catalyst, proto-punk nearly too broad a term to really serve as a helpful identifier. Punk rock itself was barely a genre, let alone a movement or a counterculture, when it first began. But it had certain characteristics that contributed to its popularization: Its emphasis, insistence on amateurism and simplicity, made it accessible. Punk, after all, had a pop sensibility that dated back to the fifties. Furthermore, punk rock's hedonistic themes made it an ideal channel for what Glessing called "youth unrest," long demonstrated to be one of the catalyzing building blocks of countercultural movements.[55] In this respect, punks were again similar to the hippies of the sixties "revolution." By 1975, a punk scene loosely existed around the venue CBGB's in New York City, albeit without a name. Television, Patti Smith, and many other artists were already performing at CBGB in the Bowery, forced by the venue's cramped conditions to challenge the division between performer and audience. Richard Hell had long since adopted the deconstructed, nihilistic aesthetic that would eventually inspire Malcolm McLaren's to decorate the Sex Pistols in London. But New York City's punk rockers had no publication of their own, and therefore no voice or public image — not yet, at least.

— *PUNK* MAGAZINE —

The *Punk* Magazine story began with failure: Legs McNeil, "resident punk," and editor John Holmstrom's migration to New York City in the mid-1970s, along with their inability to break into the film and comic book industries. Eventually, inspired by a shared love of the

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[54] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 25.
[55] Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press In America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 39-49.

Dictators, cheap fast food, fast cars and fast girls, and with significant financial support from Dunn, they settled into a dingy office to start work on *Punk*. McNeil chose the name, a reference to the lesser antagonists in contemporary cop shows, with whom the kids identified.[56] From the beginning, Holmstrom and McNeil had very different intentions for *Punk*'s purpose and direction. Holmstrom wrote that they set out to do mainly two things, each corresponding to a different founder's vision: Holmstrom fully intended to establish a new force of nature in American publishing — *Rolling Stone* meets *MAD* Magazine; McNeil, by contrast, was in it for the possibility of a movement — a chance to spread the unpretentious gospel of punk rock and the punk lifestyle as he defined it. This disagreement over the magazine's purpose would ultimately drive a rift between them. McNeil came to view the business and growth-oriented Holmstrom as a sellout, and Holmstrom began to see McNeil as obnoxious, recalcitrant, and self-righteous. Still, if there was one thing they agreed on, it was the content of the magazine: Crass, unpretentious, even downright deliberately wrong — but all with the sneer of isolated artistic integrity. The magazine's first few issues presented a colorful menagerie of pulpy content: Comic strips about picking up chicks, joke poems and pinups, tee shirt contests, even several attempts at fumetti, the practice of creating cartoon "films" with staged photos and speech balloons edited in. It all came together in a grab bag of attitude and good humor.[57]

In many ways, *Punk*'s aesthetic and colloquial character were inherited — gifts from what Glessing described as the publishing "revolution" of the sixties.[58] Glessing's work characterized a distinct countercultural aesthetic tradition: in the 1960s, it combined socially

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[56] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 49.
[57] *Punk* Magazine, January 1976, in John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 1-23.
[58] Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970),

provocative content with a new "Graphic Revolution."[59] The latter arose out of economic necessity and idealism. Lacking textual content, underground publications often prioritized the use of psychedelic art, sexually explicit imagery, cartoons, caricatures, and comic strips. Among other traits, these represented divergences from traditional publishing norms, reflecting creators' attempts to treat the newspaper as an artistic medium. They presented deconstructed page layouts, wildly brief editorials, unjustified text wrapped around intense artistic images, and dark, heavy inking.[60] These latter qualities proved particularly influential on punk publications, whose cynicism and disillusionment with traditional journalism was reflected in their rebellion against it. 1960s publications possessed an unpretentious quality which granted them anti-establishment legitimacy; punk publications would adopt this quality as well. In many cases, such commercially rebellious attitudes were reflected in their utter lack of advertising (save the occasional page of classified ads, most from people seeking sexual partners). In the 1960s, many underground publishers regarded advertising as exploitative. To them, "indifference to economics" was a principle. In fact, "much of the innovative graphic art in underground papers [stemmed] from their general lack of funds...there [was] an unspoken principle that a paper cannot be politically effective and fiscally secure at the same time."[61] Their insistence on unconventional layouts and visual content partly stemmed from what Glessing calls their "Youthful Unrest." This, in turn, was born of their upbringing in a media-saturated national culture, and the cultural awareness that resulted from that.[62] In a sense, their broad, postwar American scene created them. According to Glessing, "such flexibility and versatility [was]

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[59] Ibid., 39-49.
[60] Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 39-49.
[61] Ibid., 45.
[62] Ibid., 51-57.

characteristic of underground staffers who [wanted], more than anything, to be free generally from the strictures of the American social system and free specifically from the economic and artistic restrictions of old fashioned newspaper graphics."[63]

The founders of *Punk* had nowhere near the same agenda to push — no "peace and love," no "fight the power." To the jaded kids of the seventies, the lost-soul suburbanites who Richard Hell famously called "the blank generation," the old revolution had failed miserably, and worse yet, it had become the new establishment.[64] The hippies, after all, failed to stop the war. The hippies got lost in their psychedelics, grew up and got jobs, tuning out more than they ever turned on. For Holmstrom, McNeil, and the legions of dissident kids who became punks, the newest way to rebel was to reject the culture that the baby boomers' "revolution" had won for them. Like Richard Hell, these punks fled suburbia for the cities, took speed and started amateur rock bands.[65] In doing so, they followed in the romantic tradition of the beat generation, which Dead Kennedys singer Jello Biafra called "the early hippies."[66] This identification locates punks neatly within the American countercultural tradition. *Punk* Magazine legitimated punk rock as a social movement of consequence—one with its own distinctly countercultural ethos and voice.

Holmstrom makes a point of differentiating between *Punk* and the infinity-plus-one "fanzines" it arguably directly inspired. Whether his distinction is entirely accurate is debatable.

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[63] Ibid., 47.

[64] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 4. Holmstrom writes, "When I wasn't drawing or studying, I was going to see live music as often as my paltry income allowed...Before [the New York Dolls], the only rock shows I'd seen were at huge concert halls like Madison Square Garden or outdoors. I had seen a lot of hippie-era bands, like Jimi Hendrix, Cream, and the Who. I missed Woodstock, but went to many of the later rock festivals, which were among the worst experiences of my life, full of drunk and stoned hippies wallowing around in the mud demanding 'free music for the people.' I got disgusted with the hippie counterculture and moved on.

[65] Richard Hell, *I Dreamed I Was a Very Clean Tramp* (New York: Ecco, 2013).

[66] Jello Biafra, Interview with V. Vale, *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), v.

If it comes down to the quality of the printing, Holmstrom may have a point. *Punk* was, from an assembly and distribution standpoint, something more of a "real" publication; it was printed independently, but professionally, on real printer's equipment at a shop in New York City, and it could be purchased on newsstands throughout the city:

> The first issue of *Punk* Magazine was printed by Perez Printing on Greene Street, just below Houston Street in the West Village, just a few blocks away from CBGB. [Holmstrom] knew Freddie, the owner...to Freddie, who often worked with New York artists, this was like a fine art project, not a commercial job. (For some reason, *Punk* was often treated that way. He set aside several individual press sheets, insisting that I treat them as first-edition prints. He also fooled around with the press while the cover was being printed, changing the colors a bit—which resulted in every copy of *Punk* #1 looking slightly different from the rest.[67]

Granted, Holmstrom's accounts of the actual production process suggest a very real quality of publishing amateurism: Short staffing, tight budgets, the occasional problematic void where content ought to have appeared, editorials written in minutes and conflict over creative control. All of these factors considered, *Punk* had one foot on either side of the dividing line between "professional" and "amateur" publications. But to make Holmstrom's judgment — to suggest that *Punk* was "high" content — devalues the historical consequence of fanzines as primary sources. In the end, it was precisely this hybridization of real, hard-hitting rock journalism and the "low" entertainment value associated with comic books that set *Punk* apart from the other "serious," or mainstream publications with which it shared shelf space. When I say "amateurism," it isn't to suggest that Holmstrom, McNeil and company were somehow bad at producing what content they did. Rather, it's a stylistic identification, and a point of reference for analyzing the fanzines that were to come.

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[67] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 25.

In particular, the contributors' interviews with punk luminaries reflect a genuinely unpretentious approach to scene coverage. They focused less on judging groups based on allegedly objective standards for whether their music was good or bad, and instead simply let their personal tastes dictate content. This is especially apparent in the magazine's earliest issues. Take their interview with Lou Reed, for example — a primary source epitomizing *Punk*'s bizarro brand of amateur, irreverent, absurdist, postmodern rock 'n' roll journalism, in which the journalists were as bad and mythical as the subjects themselves. It all came together in Holmstrom's "Lou Reed: Rock 'n' Roll Vegetable," the 1976 cover story from the first ever issue of *Punk*. Because Holmstrom was educated as a cartoonist, he crafted a hand-lettered, narrative-driven interview that reads like a comic strip — because, in reality, it is a comic strip. In it, Reed, the former Velvet Underground warlord, is both glorified and yanked back down to Earth. The interview is all at once confrontational, unprofessional, and strikingly honest. It premieres one of punk rock's fundamental identity crises: Its combination of genuine music fandom with a simultaneous, contradictory disdain for bloated rock star idolatry. Holmstrom, as the interviewer, is frank in his appreciation of Reed's work. However, there is also a visible desire to bring Reed, a rock star in the classic sense, into the realm of reality. To make him relatable to his fans. To "regular" people. And somehow, the product as a whole comes across as unique. It is an important piece of American countercultural publishing, because to a lot of people, it represented something remarkable: something eager, original, entertaining and real.

The piece's visual component is critical; it helps to establish both Holmstrom and McNeil as characters in the interview's unfolding narrative. Holmstrom conducted the interview, wrote and drew the strip, which owes a hefty stylistic debt to his biggest influences: *Rolling Stone* and

MAD. Holmstrom makes no attempt to obscure the unprofessional character of his unorthodox rock journalism. In the strip, a lanky Holmstrom caricature earnestly approaches Reed, utterly unintroduced, at a CBGB concert one night. Holmstrom immediately declares, "We'll put you onna [sic] cover!" And Reed, ever the cynic, responds, "Your circulation must be **fabulous.**"[68] In consideration of *Punk*'s eventual success, many who have read the piece now allege that Reed was needlessly rude to the young punks. This is perhaps defensible; in order to take his picture, the group places dozens of candles on the table surrounding Reed, much to his discomfort. But with that first brief exchange, a critical dynamic is introduced. In it, *Punk* achieves artistic integrity through its honesty and emphatic (even obnoxious) unpretentiousness. "No one reads your rag," Reed later proclaims with disdain, in response to a series of loathsome questions about comic books, bands he likes, and cheeseburgers. Reed, herein called "the original street punk," establishes a standard for punk rock's grassroots, egalitarian ideology, asking the kids why anyone ought to care what he thinks about Bruce Springsteen, Patti Smith, or the Ramones. He may be a rock star, but in contrast to many of his own fans, he comes across as unconvinced of his own opinion's weight. But he gives punk rock his blessing in a sense when he says he loves the Ramones.

Reed's disdain for popular music comes through again when he and Holmstrom discuss a Bob Dylan concert that Holmstrom attended — a ticket for which the young punk payed $8.50. "Don't you feel **embarrassed** when you tell anybody that?" Reed asks. And Holmstrom, again demonstrating a countercultural attitude that would become iconic, responds, "No, I don't get

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[68] Lou Reed, "Lou Reed: Rock 'n' Roll Vegetable," *Punk* #1 (January 1976), John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 17.

embarrassed by anything. I don't have that much pride."[69] And far from embarrassed, *Punk* adopts reed's burn as a sort of anthemic proclamation, and restates it throughout the pages of its first issue: "No one reads this rag, anyway." The magazine's self-effacing style would become legendary, and would continue to reflect Holmstrom's obsession with the constantly shifting nature of popular culture and music. What they were saying and covering was not necessarily intended to be profound, but rather entertaining and unpretentious. On at least some level, entertainment was *Punk*'s ultimate goal, and it was visible in its zany combination of cartoons and off-the-wall interview questions, the latter of which caught Reed completely off-guard.[70]

Punk's discussion with Lou Reed took place across two disparate settings: CBGB and a local diner, in which the group discussed Reed's experimental album *Metal Machine Music* at length. There is an adolescent, fanboyish quality to the interview — like something out of a high school newspaper — and even as Reed bluntly voices his distaste for interviews in general, Holmstrom and McNeil are relentless in their quest to understand Reed's creative process. Reed's revelation that the music he makes is for his own enjoyment, not his fans', leaves Holmstrom and McNeil surprised and slightly put-off. They lampoon the musician's arrogance, and the Holmstrom caricature is shown thinking to himself, "Wotta [sic] **ham**! He probably thinks that the Ramones are talkin' about **him**!"[71]

The art style is exaggerated. Characters' facial expressions are wildly animated, their mouths opening wide and their gangly limbs going spastic attached to enormous hands.

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[69] Lou Reed and John Holmstrom, "Lou Reed: Rock 'n' Roll Vegetable," *Punk* #1 (January 1976), John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 18.
[70] Lou Reed, "Lou Reed: Rock 'n' Roll Vegetable," *Punk* #1 (January 1976), John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 18.
[71] John Holmstrom, "Lou Reed: Rock 'n' Roll Vegetable," *Punk* #1 (January 1976), John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 18.

Holmstrom even draws Reed as characters from the various comics Lou claims to like, from *Archie* to *E.C.* There are plenty of bizarre moments, minute details that contribute to the scenery and the narrative as a whole: Holmstrom, picking a sleeping McNeil up from the CBGB bar by his hair; "Hey Joe" playing in the diner; Reed offering to trade an autographed record for Holmstrom's tape recorder; the Ramones' lyrics, incorrectly cited. It all contributes to the zany, adolescent fun—just as Holmstrom and McNeil intended.

Beyond Lou Reed, only one other artist prominently featured in *Punk*'s first issue: the Ramones. Holmstrom describes them as "our band" in *The Best of* Punk *Magazine*, asserting that the Ramones largely owed their mainstream attention to profiles of the band from *Punk* issues one and three. Roberta Bayley, a *Punk* contributor, took the photo that appeared on the cover of the Ramones' first album; it was part of their photoshoot for the magazine.[72] *Punk* helped publicize the band Blondie, too; in issue four, they featured photos of singer Debbie "Blondie" Harry as a sort of punk rock centerfold model: posing in various photos in a torn t-shirt, and naked, grasping a guitar.[73] In each case, the publication's ability to indirectly create stardom profoundly reflected the existence of a zine-scene dynamic. According to Holmstrom, such an ability was not without its consequences, though: "If *Punk* magazine had never happened, I'm sure that some things would have played out differently. Some of the bands we didn't write about as much, like the heartbreakers, might have had a better shot at success.[74]

At this point it should be apparent that punk rock is a countercultural movement that a publication propagated, both by providing a critical megaphone for the original scene and tying it

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[72] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 42.
[73] *Punk* Issue 4, John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 83-87.
[74] John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 340.

to a particular attitude, voice, and set of principles. To begin with, rock critics responded to the gradual emergence of a musical subgenre that felt simultaneously fresh and familiar. Next, *Punk* magazine In turn, the scene flourished; bands poured into New York City from up and down the East coast, hoping to either make it big or make a mess. The fans came, too — countless restless kids, dropouts and burnouts, outsiders embracing the sloppy DIY gospel of punk individualism. As a result, punk was hardly a movement by design, until *Punk* Magazine's printed manifesto appeared, and gave those kids an identity to wield like a cultural weapon of mass destruction. In response to accusations that *Punk* had stolen the name of its movement from a piece of slang used mainly by the gay community, Holmstrom ran an editorial in issue three that spelled out exactly what they were about:

> "The key word — to me, anyway — in the punk definition was 'a beginner; an inexperienced hand.' Punk rock — Any kid can pick up a guitar and become a rock'n'roll star, despite or because of his lack of ability, talent, intelligence, limitations and/or potential, and usually does so out of frustration, hostility, a lot of nerve and a need for ego fulfilment. Rock'n'roll is a very primitive form of expression — like cave paintings or jungle sculpture. It takes a lot of sophistication — or better, none at all — to appreciate punk rock at its best — or worst (not much difference)."[75]

Embedded in this short sample, we again see the entire identity of the punk rock movement as it existed early on, when the publication originally gave it a voice. We see that Holmstrom defines punk rock, the medium of the movement, relatively narrowly. Furthermore, he reaffirms the punk ideal of the attitude problem, punk's fundamentally amateur character, and its association with a very specific type of music that (importantly) was native to New York City. Some, including Hebdige, have asserted that punk rock truly began in the U.K. scene that the New Yorkers inspired. Under this theory, the Ramones and others were merely further manifestations

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[75] Ibid., 50. It is worth noting that Stephen Duncombe cites this same quote in *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 124-125. His discussion of *Punk* magazine is limited though, and does not include a discussion of its impact on the early NYC scene.

of that broadly defined proto-punk—catalysts for the genre rather than its first manifestations. This arguably makes sense from a British perspective, due largely to marked stylistic differences between, say, the Ramones and the Sex Pistols—the latter of whom were far more confrontational, political, downright angry and short-lived. And just as the Ramones proved the inspiration for punk bands across the United States, the Pistols inspired countless bands from across the United Kingdom. The true point of genesis for punk rock, both as a subgenre and a movement, is a debate settled neither easily nor satisfactorily in existing literature. In this paper, which focuses on American punk scenes, I place the movement's genesis in New York City, 1975-1976. But this is not to say that contradictory arguments are entirely invalid. What matters is that the New York City scene had an impact far beyond its own geographical borders. Whether in London, San Francisco, or Los Angeles, restless youth identified with the sounds of rock's "Blank Generation," adapting the sounds and principles of the New York scene as they saw fit. The regional variation in punk counterculture is important; it demonstrates the zine-scene dynamic's continuing impact over time and space. For example, San Francisco Bay area publications like *Search & Destroy*, *Maximum Rocknroll*, and *Homocore* al provided differing perspectives on a developing movement. They show punk to be remarkably flexible as a categorization, with a tendency to shape the principles and identities even of those who rebel against it.

— SAN FRANCISCO: *SEARCH & DESTROY* —

V. Vale., the founder of RE/Search publications, has an academic, journalistic interest in rebellion. He was a founding member of the band Blue Cheer, and witnessed sixties San

Francisco Bay area counterculture firsthand. In a 2012 interview at the Los Angeles Zine Fest, conducted by Black Flag vocalist Henry Rollins, Vale stated that "the true summer of love was not in '67, but in 1966, before anyone knew it was happening, when it was really an underground."[76] Around that time, Vale graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in "totally worthless English literature" and moved to the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, "because [he] knew there was something happening, and [he] wanted to get in on it." Vale had a sense of history; he believed that "every ten years or so, there'd be a social revolution." He saw the hippie movement come and go, and was at one point an avid reader of *The Berkeley Barb*, from whose editor he inherited a certain DIY sensibility. When punk rock began to take shape in San Francisco, largely following the Ramones' first appearance at the Savoy Tivoli in August 1976, Vale decided to create a "primary source" for the punk movement. "I had some anthropology influence," he told Rollins. To Vale, such a project seemed like "preventative medicine": an attempt to keep the movement's message from being hopelessly distorted by the mainstream media, much in the same way that the hippies' message had been. His mission was simple enough: "Interview as many of the smartest people [he] could find in punk, the most visionary, the most forward-thinking, the most futuristic...marry it with artistic photos and adventurous artwork, and take chances that way." Still, with limited resources, Vale faced the problem of how he could make such a content-heavy publication happen at all.

"Money determines everything in life, doesn't it? Almost," Vale told Rollins in 2012.[77] And in 1977, securing the funding necessary to produce a fanzine could prove tricky. Luckily for Vale, he was already brushing shoulders with luminaries of previous countercultures. As an

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[76] V. Vale, interview by Henry Rollins, Los Angeles Zine Fest, February 19, 2012
[77] V. Vale, interview by Henry Rollins, Los Angeles Zine Fest, February 19, 2012

employee of City Lights Bookstore, owned and operated by the beat Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Vale had begun to develop relationships both with Ferlinghetti and the beat poet Allen Ginsberg. When he proposed his idea for a punk publication to them, each gave him a signed check for 100 dollars; According to Vale, Ginsberg was already a fan of punk rock, and had been "going to CBGB's for years."[78]

Search & Destroy ran eleven issues between 1977 and 1979, publishing roughly once every two or three months.[79] Its first issue focused mainly on the bands that made up San Francisco punk's first wave: Crime, the Nuns, Deaf School, and Mary Monday & the Bitches—the last of these fronted by a former stripper with a dubious past. This issue featured photo collages of punk bands with the members identified, a "Basic Iggy Bio" of the Stooges frontman (after whose song the publication took its name), and commentary on the Mabuhay Gardens scene from Allen Ginsberg.[80] The last of these is especially noteworthy in that it distinguishes *Search & Destroy* as one of the first publications to draw comparisons between the beat generation and the punk movement, thereby locating punk within a countercultural tradition.

Visually, *Search & Destroy* was more explicitly a newsmagazine than *Punk* or its British imitator, *Sniffin' Glue*. It was printed large, on In the first issue of *Search & Destroy*, Vale's publication differentiated itself from *Punk* in a number of ways. For one, its interviews were more in keeping with existing publishing standards. Unlike *Punk*'s impromptu interview with Lou Reed, there is no sense while reading *Search & Destroy* that a joke is being played on the artist. Consequently, interviews with Jennifer Miro of the Nuns and the band Crime come across

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[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] *Search & Destroy* Issue 1 (San Francisco: City Lights, 1977) in *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), 1-17.

as more traditionally journalistic. *Search & Destroy* interviewers shared more stylistically with the writers of *Rolling Stone*, or tamer *Punk* contributors like Mary Harron, than with Holmstrom and McNeil. The San Francisco publication's contributors asked questions about bands' artistic influences, the state of the movement, and the relative importance of political consciousness to punk identity.

As Biafra said, the San Francisco scene was politically inclined from its start.[81] Plenty of Dead Kennedys songs reflect this: On the *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* album alone, the band rips through "Kill the Poor," "California Uber Alles," and "Holiday in Cambodia." Songs like the Avengers' "The American in Me" and the Nuns' "World War Three" wielded a similarly tongue-in cheek approach to the political. In a 1978 interview from issue six of *Search & Destroy*, Tony Kinman of the Dils expressed concern about the apolitical direction that a lot of American punk was taking:

> I don't think there's been enough NEGATIVE action in this country yet. You have to decide something's fucked before you wanna change it...And the United States is FUCKED here! It's as fucked a nation as there is...The thing that bothers me most about the whole American scene is that it has become trendy to HONESTLY NOT CARE. To say, 'who gives a fuck about the miners? I don't.' And that's really scary, because these are the people who are gonna get recording contracts, whose records are gonna sell.[82]

The Dils frequently participated in demonstrations for the labor movement; as one article in *Search & Destroy* issue ten states, "To their credit, Tony Kinman & the DILS participate."

Politics differentiated San Francisco from Los Angeles in particular, according to Biafra. "L.A. was 'trash for trash's sake,' and the lyrics reflected that," the Dead Kennedys frontman said.

"The Weirdos [Los Angeles] wanted to destroy all music, while Negative Trend [San Francisco]

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[81] Jello Biafra, Interview with V. Vale, *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), v.

[82] *Search & Destroy* Issue 6 (San Francisco: City Lights, 1978) in *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), 125.

wanted to destroy capitalism itself—that's the basic difference between L.A. and San Francisco!"[83] Vale helped propagate the scene's political focus. His questions from an issue six interview with Joe Strummer of the Clash focus heavily on the band's labeling as "too political" on the eve of their entering the studio to record the *London Calling* album. But Vale also makes sure to ask Strummer what books he's reading: Jack Kerouac, Dashiell Hammett, and Raymond Chandler."[84]

Certain aspects of *Search & Destroy*'s band profiles performed similar functions to Legs McNeil's crass interview style. By providing lists of band members' favorite albums, the publication humanized them as rock fans, thereby removing a traditional commercial barrier. Like *Punk*, *Search & Destroy* also played a role in growing its scene. Biafra expressed this in a 1996 interview with Vale:

> In San Francisco, very few people involved in the scene were natives; people who had been the weirdest person in their town all migrated to one place: San Francisco. I think it was partly *Search & Destroy* that encouraged people to come out and flaunt the strangest thing about themselves, just to build on. Unlike today's punk scene, the pressure was for everyone (especially bands) to be different—*not* the same. It became a *Walter Mitty* ambition for me: "Wow, wouldn't it be great to be interviewed some day in *Search & Destroy*?"[85]

Biafra's comments reflect a belief in the zine-scene dynamic. He places a great deal of importance on localized fan publications. Artists like Biafra understood the potential success that fanzine coverage could bring, and so, as Vale told Rollins, they did not tend to reject interview requests.[86] As a result, *Search & Destroy* was able to maintain a constant output of content.

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[83] Jello Biafra, Interview with V. Vale, *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), v.
[84] *Search & Destroy* Issue 6 (San Francisco: City Lights, 1978) in *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), 123.
[85] Ibid., v.
[86] V. Vale, interview by Henry Rollins, Los Angeles Zine Fest, February 19, 2012

According to Biafra, the magazine played an important role in a different kind of punk identity construction than that of *Punk* magazine: "I especially liked the way [Vale] bolted from the same old punk-world shop-talk after one or two questions and began probing the person's weirdest background stories, knowledge, or philosophies," he said. "You could open [*Search & Destroy*] up to any page and laugh and learn something."[87] In an interview with Alejandro from the Nuns, Vale makes an unconventional point of "[looking] at Alejandro's books before asking him any questions."[88] Burroughs appears in the collection, as does an Andy Warhol anthology, *A Clockwork Orange*, and "Assorted Rock, Film, Art & Fashion Magazines Including INTERVIEWs."[89] *Search & Destroy* performed a vital historical function by demonstrating that punks could be well-read. As a result of Vale's efforts, we are able to analyze more about punk than its image, even deconstructing its self-classification as an anti-movement. Evidently, its luminaries were students of American counterculture; they had a clear sense of their own legacy within that tradition. *Search & Destroy* self-consciously filled its role as a primary source for the San Francisco punk scene, because it showcased sides of the performers and scene beyond their projected nihilism. It suggests that punk is not antithetical to historical study, as some have suggested. Rather, the first wave of Bay Area punks knew fully well where their movement stood in history. Theirs was an attempt to take up the banner of old, failed countercultures, and propagate the new revolution through a new form of unpretentious rock. Unlike Holmstrom and McNeil, Vale & Co. placed the blame for the hippies' failure on mainstream media distortion of their message, and not on the hippies themselves. From Vale's perspective, the hippies could

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[87] Ibid., v.
[88] *Search & Destroy* Issue 1 (San Francisco: City Lights, 1977) in *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), 10.
[89] Ibid., 10.

offer a guidepost and a cautionary tale for subsequent movements, rather than something to spit on and disown completely.

Search & Destroy's tenth issue featured an interview with Bill Burroughs, the "godfather of punk" himself. By inviting Burroughs to comment on punk news like Sid Vicious' murder charge, interviewer Ray Rumor directly connected the punk movement to the beat generation. A discussion of space travel at the end of the interview importantly suggested that the concept of punk might someday constitute a revolution in more than music alone. "I think we should go all over," says Rumor. Burroughs responds, "Yeah, I do too."[90] As punk grew and changed in the early 1980s, that sentiment would prove hugely influential on the movement's next generation.

— HARDCORE PUNK: REBELLION AGAINST REBELLION —

Arguably, by February 1978, punk as a movement was already dead. The Sex Pistols, those inflammatory adolescent missionaries of the UK punk variation, broke up in January — just days after completing their first American tour.[91] This might have represented a legitimating moment for the first generation of American punk rock, which had managed to retain its own distinct style amidst the Pistols' explosion into the public eye.[92] But according to some New York and San Francisco scenesters, the damage was already done. By unapologetically cursing on live television, effectively adopting vulgarity and explicitly political irreverence as their identity, the Pistols made themselves into the poster boys of punk rock: America's newest moral

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[90] *Search & Destroy* Issue 10 (San Francisco: City Lights, 1978) in *Search & Destroy #7-11: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), 105.
[91] Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove, 1996), 332.
[92] Ibid., 258.

panic. As with the rock 'n' roll of the previous British Invasion, a group of young men from England appropriated a musical movement with its origins firmly in the United States, then reintroduced it to the youth of America to social uproar and enormous profit.[93] For many American punk artists and originalists, including Legs McNeil, the movement subsequently lost what made it special in the first place: its exclusivity, its urban character, its social isolation, and its absence from popular media. This new, popular punk movement would not be an unpretentious rejection of the cultural status quo as they had planned; it would be a trend in suburban teenage fashion.[94]

In spite of its increasingly commercial character, "poseur punk" retained the countercultural element of youth unrest.[95] Rampant new media attention, largely a result of the Pistols tour, inspired an onslaught of kids sporting DIY McLaren fashions, far removed from the traditions of the early American scenes, to self-identify as punks. But the fundamental dynamic had changed. Instead of following the *Punk* magazine path — reversing white flight, fleeing to the cities, taking hard drugs and starting bands — the next generation of punks would hear about the movement through secondary sources: the mainstream journalists who were so far removed from punk's earliest scenes, and who before the Pistols had neglected to cover punk as a movement.[96] In short, things were not going as the original "resident punk" had planned.

1978 and '79 saw two major trends in the development of American punk rock: the rise of a mainstream popular punk that included the commerciation and re-branding of the scene, and the development of an entirely distinct, reactionary punk splinter genre, a "mutant offspring"

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[93] Ibid., 328.
[94] Ibid., 334.
[95] Ibid., 328.
[96] Danny Fields, qtd. In Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* (New York: Grove, 1996), 330.

called hardcore.[97] The first of these trends was in large part shaped by record companies like Sire, where label executives launched top-down campaigns to rebrand commercially viable young artists. They called it "new wave" rather than punk, a term with connotations that they feared would negatively impact sales.[98] As a result, bands that had been foundational to the New York City scene, such as Blondie and the Talking Heads, were dissociated from their historical context and sold to the public unabashedly as pop. Some have defended the artists' agency in this narrative, while others have accused them of being sellouts. The concept of "selling out" is central to understanding the changes that occurred in the punk movement during the final years of the seventies. The original punk scenes prioritized and idealized artistic amateurism, just as they rejected the early seventies musical mainstream and its corporate culture. After the Sex Pistols proved that restless American adolescents could be sold on the sounds and images of a vaguely defined punk rock, more and more labels opened their doors to bands they previously wouldn't have touched. But there were broader ramifications to this process, including the alienation of many nostalgic punks. In particular, a certain class of younger punk fans in Los Angeles saw commercialization as a big problem. In their minds, punk was supposed to defy the mainstream, not become it. Instead of a social movement based in retro rock, they believed that punk had been perverted into a pop-culture trend of tryhard fashion and affected angst. Hollywood clubs now regularly hosted popular punk and new wave acts, charging so much for tickets that no average teen could hope to see a show.[99] Punk's amateur spirit, its removal of the

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[97] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 124.

[98] James R. McDonald, "Suicidal rage: An Analysis of Hardcore Punk Lyrics" in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 11 No. 3 (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1987), 92.

[99] Eugene, star of *The Decline of Western Civilization*, qtd. in Marc Spitz and Brendan Mullen, *We Got the Neutron Bomb: The Untold Story of L.A. Punk* (New York: Three Riers, 2001), 192.

barrier between performer and fan, seemed to have been sucked out of the former counterculture completely. It was around this time that the phrase "punk is dead" became a standardized idiom.

For some, hardcore punk was the answer to commercialization. In 1978, a Los Angeles band called the Middle Class put out a short record called "Out of Vogue." The record clocked in at five minutes and thirty seconds, and it contained four songs: "Out of Vogue," "You Belong," "Situations," and "Insurgence." That same year, Black Flag released "Nervous Breakdown," their first single. The music on both records was "faster and louder than even punk itself."[100] Many consider these the first hardcore records, the first installments in a militant tradition that would redefine punk for the next generation of American rebel rockers. In a 1987 analysis of hardcore lyrics, James McDonald described what had by then become the dominant musical standard of underground punk:

> The basic concept is that anyone can play, the tempo is always very fast, approaching a hectic, monotonous pounding with little variation, and most importantly, the lyrics are not sung, but normally shouted, groaned, or spoken — often by the audience in a concert setting as much as by the singer of a group.[101]

All of these stylistic factors had the effect of further blurring the division between performer and consumer. Hardcore bands were comprised of hardcore kids, not affected pseudo-celebrity rock "stars." Stylistically then, hardcore punks embraced an even more aggressive, even more stripped-down version of first generation punk rock. This served as a means of legitimating hardcore while still asserting its distinction from the original scenes — those whose bands had "sold out." But in a world rapidly embracing mainstream new wave, hardcore kids had to assert

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[100] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 124.

[101] James McDonald, "Suicidal rage: An Analysis of Hardcore Punk Lyrics" in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 11 Issue 3 (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1987), 96.

their legitimacy as countercultural punks. Otherwise, they were no different from the poseurs. Therefore, along with their new musical style came an increased emphasis on traditional punk nihilism and disillusionment. Addressing hardcore musical themes of domestic abuse, child pornography, suicide, patricide, political fatalism and nuclear paranoia, McDonald concluded that "the world...has no meaning to them [the hardcore punks] whatsoever."[102] Whether true or not, such was their intended message. In the pre-existing punk tradition, hardcore kids adopted a principled stance against anything directly or even loosely associated with hippies. The hatred of mainstream seventies culture proved equally resilient, and converged with an increased sense of frustration with history itself. Aversion to consumerism was embedded in that frustration, too. Take, for example, the track "Lick My Shiney Boots," by a band called the F.U.'s, which McDonald analyzed in his article: "Sixties set us all free/Now what do you think about that?/Yeah, everybody's happy/and we're all soft and fat/Here comes the eighties/Brand new age/Holy cow! Wowee!/Freedom sure is boring/Looks like the seventies to me."[103]

Whereas the first punks had fled their suburban origins for the anonymity and adventurous lure of the inner cities, hardcore punks created scenes where they were already: in "the housing tracts of Orange County."[104] Hardcore was a homegrown movement, and necessarily so; ideologically, it rejected every manifestation of grandiosity in the commercial music industry, from major labels to major venues.[105] Instead of the rock clubs downtown, which

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[102] Ibid., 98.

[103] The F.U.'s, "Lick My Shiney Boots," in *Do We Really Want to Hurt You?* (Gasatanka Records, 1984), reprinted in Ibid., 100.

[104] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 124.

[105] James McDonald, "Suicidal rage: An Analysis of Hardcore Punk Lyrics" in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 11 Issue 3 (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1987), 96. McDonald writes, that hardcore "[did] not vary from the core of rock — that is, hardcore disavows commercialism...the recording industry itself, and anything similar to the

were crowded with imitative trendsters and the elitists of the urban arts scene, hardcore shows took place in garages, basements, and warehouses of southern California suburbs. In a sense, middle America proved the perfect incubator for the new school of punk rock; "Hardcore punks opposed fundamentally that mass culture which they sat at the center of in suburbia."[106] Perhaps partly as a result of its self-awareness, Los Angeles hardcore adopted the heightened sense of sociopolitical consciousness that had originated more in British punk than New York City. Importantly, it also did so in a uniquely American suburban context. But it took the attitude to an even more radical degree of provocative parody, and as McDonald described it, "rage...at the system, a total inability to change it, and no desire to participate in it or any of its conventions."[107] Largely, this manifested as a recurring theme of suicide within a range of hardcore punk songs. "The entire concept of...the [first Suicidal Tendencies] album," wrote McDonald, "is that youth of today do not have any control over their own individuality."[108] Like the Sex Pistols and countless manifestations of popular counterculture before them, hardcore bands made certain authority figures the target of their countercultural assault. By contrast though, and demonstrating most clearly their attempts at complete cultural isolation, hardcore punks' rage was directed as much at traditional American family dynamics as it was at the president. On the track "Parents" from their 1982 release *Milo Goes to College*, Descendents vocalist Milo Aukerman screamed, "Parents/Why won't they shut up?/Parents/They're so fucked up."[109] In

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characteristics of mainstream rock. Albums are released in small numbers and are produced by very low-budget record companies."

[106] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 129.

[107] James McDonald, "Suicidal rage: An Analysis of Hardcore Punk Lyrics" in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 11 Issue 3 (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1987), 97.

[108] Ibid., 96.

[109] Descendents, "Parents," in *Milo Goes to College* (New Alliance Records, 1982).

particular, that track reveals the grassroots nature of hardcore punks' rebellion, which was as much against their specific, suburban corner of society as it was against mass culture itself. "Parents" also expressed the hardcore tendency toward violence, and by extension the supposed threat to the suburban social order that captivated and panicked so many: "They treat me like a tool/They take me for a fool...But little do they know/that one day I'll explode."[110]

Given its utter rejection of commercial success, it is almost ironic that hardcore so thoroughly captured the nation's imagination through the channels of mainstream media. As MacLeod noted, "hardcore punk made ideal fodder for newsmagazines, audience participation talk shows, and cop shows...each devoted an episode to the hardcore scene which, they alleged, corrupted youth, destroyed families, and caused violence throughout middle america."[111] As one might expect, constant negative portrayals in popular media did not make hardcore scene construction an easy process. It was also not entirely baseless:

> True hardcore punks were, thus, united by their universal disavowal of the punk stereotype perpetrated by the dominant media. They were not new wave trendies, they were not violent suicidal muscleheads, they were not morons. But the real problem was that some of them were: Some people hanging out in the punk scene were new wave trendies, some were violent muscleheads, some were morons. Many "real" hardcore punks blamed the media for bringing in the un-true punks.[112]

Here, MacLeod's arguments about hardcore become problematic. Only a needlessly romantic, revisionist historical perspective would attempt to differentiate between "true" and "un-true" members of the hardcore scene. To do so is to suggest that one's countercultural identity is based on whether or not one meets certain externally identified social criteria, rather

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 129.
[112] Ibid., 135.

than one's self-identification and interaction with a countercultural movement. This is not to devalue hardcore punk as a counterculture, nor to reductively assert that the movement was sexist or homophobic or racist in its entirety. Not remotely. But negative mainstream media portrayals of hardcore punk, while probably exaggerated, were based in real aspects of the heterogenous Los Angeles hardcore community. Through its interactions with corporate media, hardcore punk demonstrated the importance of the zine-scene dynamic to countercultural identity construction. In terms of characterizing hardcore as a true counterculture, it also revealed that punk was not immune to the American mainstream tradition of reactionary scrutiny. Importantly, MacLeod described punk publishing as a reaction against the mainstream media, arguing that the creation of zines by punks and for punks was a fundamentally countercultural response. "Zines," he wrote, "were a form of participation in punk subculture, not simply chronicles or fan documents."[113]

Among hardcore publications, the concept of the participatory zine is no more clearly visible than in the story of *Maximum Rocknroll*, sometimes stylized as *Maximumrocknroll* or *MRR*. Founded in 1982, Tim Yohannan's San Francisco Bay Area-based publication began as a punk radio show on Berkeley's KPFA. It was one of the first to treat hardcore as the fully realized second coming of underground punk. Until his death in 1998, Yohannan consistently characterized hardcore as a sort of last hope for the movement, more a well-intentioned underdog faction of the "real," countercultural punk than a distinct counterculture unto itself. Along with this perspective came an early insistence on punk politics, often with explicit references to "the

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[113] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 124.

revolution."[114] The first *MRR* editorial was significant for its lamentations at the state of punk in 1982, which Yohannan expressed in a riddle sure to scare the pants off of anyone who revered the original scene:

> What has two legs, hangs out on street corners, panhandles, sells dope, says "That's cool, man,' is apolitical, anti-historical, anti-intellectual, and just wants to get fucked-up and have a good time? A hippie? Nope, a punk! Outside of the differences in appearance...the only way you can tell the difference is that most hippies passively embrace certain values, and most punks are vehement about them. This, of course, is a gross generalization, but it does seem that the values of both countercultures have more in common now than not.[115]

In some ways, Yohannan was basing his comparison on a misinterpretation of sixties counterculture. That movement, like hardcore punk, was heterogenous; many hippies did not "just [want] to get fucked-up and have a good time," nor did many of them embrace countercultural standards "passively." Plenty of hippies saw themselves as agents of an actual social revolution, albeit one that disregarded the efficacy of traditional political action.

Regardless, Yohannan's editorial established *MRR*'s character; it functioned as a sort of foundational text for hardcore as its own movement. There is an underlying sense, reading *MRR*, that Yohannan wanted to help punk "come of age" as a movement. He saw the sixties, and adopted a punk identity out of disillusionment with the hippies who sold out. He did not want this process of mainstream appropriation to happen to punk, but argued that it had already begun. Importantly, Yohannan also took a stand against the conservative hypermasculinity that had permeated the hardcore community:

> If punk is to be a threat, different from society, then any so-called punk who flirts with racism and sexism, proudly displays ignorance, resorts to physical violence and is afraid of knowledge or political action, is not a threat at all, but has gone over to the enemy...[punk] threatens to become more and more a re-enactment of those same

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[114] Tim Yohannan, untitled editorial, *Maximum Rocknroll*, July/August 1982, 3.
[115] Ibid., 3.

> [mainstream] values and thereby cross over the line from rejection to concealed acceptance.[116]

Whether he was effective in actually subduing trends of violence, sexism, and homophobia in hardcore is debatable. It is ironic that a movement like hardcore, which placed itself in such violent opposition to the mainstream, would have to itself become exclusionary in order to prune itself of problematic membership. There is a sense in which the "real" hardcore punks took a larger step outside the mainstream than even they intended, thereby inviting into their movement a population of punks to whom they could not relate, and who problematically challenged the movement's self-identification as a counterculture. Along with this problem came a pervasive culture of conflict, defined by accusations of who was and was not a "true" punk.[117] "I came from punk rock," said Rollins, "and while it was predictably violent, and thrilling in its own way, it was incredibly restrictive. If your hair was too long, someone would go like, 'What's up with that? Are you a hippie now?'...you feel that you're gonna be disappeared for having too much of a thought."[118]

In the ten years that followed, *MRR* became far more significant to the propagation of American punk ideology than most fanzines; it played the very important role of spreading the hardcore form across the country, and eventually the globe.[119] *MRR* covered scenes from Washington D.C. to Argentina in an attempt to bring about a sort of international punk awakening, effectively becoming "the de facto 'Bible of Punk Rock.'"[120] *MRR* and the hardcore

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[116] Tim Yohannan, untitled editorial, *Maximum Rocknroll*, July/August 1982, 3.
[117] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 135.
[118] Henry Rollins, Interview with V. Vale, Los Angeles Zine Fest, February 19, 2012
[119] Ada Freelunsch, "Ground Zero: Germany," *Maximum Rocknroll*, May 1984, 58.
[120] Seth Hindin, "Punk Publisher Tim Yohannan Dead at 52," *Rolling Stone*, April 07, 1998.

genre exemplified the beginning of a new trend in punk: that of rebellion against punk itself. Hardcore punks set themselves up as distinct from mainstream punk, both as successors to the tenets of the first generation and rebels against the popular turn it had taken. In short, this is to say that *MRR* helped the hardcore scene to develop its own prevailing trends and traditions, and to become in practice a counterculture unique unto itself, distinct from punk. But hardcore did not speak for everyone in the punk underground; women, homosexuals, and racial minority groups felt excluded from their scenes, which more directly suited the needs of a violent, straight, white, and male fanbase, whose identity largely was reflected in the bands they loved. According to MacLeod:

> the mass media dispersion of punk did not simply water down or destroy punk, it brought punk rock to the attention of many more people, and it facilitated the transformation of punk, for better or worse. As a result of the discourse, punk changed, in many ways. Punks created increasingly varied hybrids and subsets of punk, boht as a musical form and a social movement.[121]

The "increasingly varied hybrids and subsets" described were, for lack of a better phrase, rebellions against a rebellion against rebellion.They internalized hardcore punk's DIY standards, but rejected some aspects of the counterculture that devalued their identities and experiences. In this way, newer movements like queercore and riot grrrl were every bit as punk as hardcore or the first wave, but with a renewed emphasis on self-advocacy, and Yohannan's broader definition of who "the enemy" was.

— QUEERCORE: RECLAIMING PUNK IDENTITY —

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[121] Dewar MacLeod, "Social Distortion: The Rise of Suburban Punk Rock in Los Angeles" in *America Under Construction: Boundaries and Identities in Popular Culture*, ed. Kristi S. Long and Matthew Nadelhaft (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1997), 137.

Queercore, at the intersection of the punk ethos and LGBT identity, lacks a clear historical moment of genesis. In this respect, it is like a lot of other deviations from the contemporary punk standard: hardcore and feminist riot grrrl included. But perhaps due to this similarity, queercore has not received the academic attention it deserves. Unfairly, it has been lumped in with the broader LGBT movement or considered as merely another punk subgenre, rather than a significant counter-subculture entirely unto itself. It offers a profound example of the zine-scene dynamic.

The broader punk movement had LGBT members from the early New York City days. In the early- to mid-seventies, the rise of glam rock correlated with a loosening of the way some people perceived gender and sexuality in the United States. Early punks like Iggy Pop, of the Stooges and other acts, and Pete Shelley of the Buzzcocks, were relatively known to be bisexual, whereas punks in more hardcore scenes tended to stay more closeted — take, for example, Darby Crash of Los Angeles' Germs.[122] But The relationship between punk as a movement and the gay community was plagued by conflict since the early days of *Punk* magazine. Sometime between the production of issues two and three, the staff received a letter from Peter Crowley, the music director at Max's Kansas City, where a lot of crossover tended to exist between the city's punk and gay scenes. "Dear Assholes," the letter began, before attacking *Punk*'s knowledge of history:

> It's about the word 'punk' — even college boys like yourselves should know the lames who write dictionary definitions of street words are bound to fuck up the meanings. 'Punk' is a prison word meaning the boys who give up their ass to the 'wolves' (macho homosexuals or horny straights). More experienced hoods then use(d) the word 'punk' as an insult to young would be hoods. The kind of wimps who write dictionaries (and publish magazines) overheard these kids being called 'punk' and assumed that 'punk'

[122] Ashton Holmes, *What We Do Is Secret*, DVD, directed by Rodger Grossman (2007; Los Angeles: Rhino/Peace Arch, 2007.), film.

> was a word meaning 'a young ruffian.' Lesson #2: it might help if you got your prejudices strait [sic]...fuck all goody goody out of time straights.[123]

Crowley's venomous criticism struck at the core of a developing conflict between young, straight punks and older gay scenesters over ownership of the term. Introducing the letter, to which his editorial for that issue responded, Holmstrom wrote, "It was a lot easier for us when nobody read this rag." But Holmstrom also took a stand against Crowley, inserting his own definition of "punk" as it applied to the scene their publication reflected. Importantly, the young editor also denied Crowley's accusation that he and McNeil were "college boys." He wrote, "Legs was thrown out of high school. I dropped out of art school. Now put me down because I know how to read. Go ahead."[124] There, again, was an example of punks rejecting academia with artistic legitimacy in mind. Arguably, Holmstrom's assertive response to Crowley played a big part in dissociating the term "punk" from its homosexual context, thereby invalidating the experiences of punk rockers who happened to be homosexual. The response was a significant moment of departure that shaped what would constitute punk culture for the next decade.

At a certain point in the 1980s, hardcore punk counterculture began to cross over with the skate and surf communities, bringing what Jello Biafra called a "jock" attitude into a lot of newly formed and maturing scenes. According to Biafra, this played an important role in the development of homophobic tendencies among a wave of younger, second generation punks.[125] While interviewing V. Vale at the LA zine festival in 2012, former Black Flag vocalist Henry Rollins agreed that a certain amount of what Biafra called "punk fundamentalism" drove him

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[123] Peter Crowley, qtd. In *Punk* #3, March 1976, John Holmstrom and Bridget Hurd, *The Best of PUNK Magazine* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 50.
[124] Ibid., 50.
[125] Jello Biafra, Interview with V. Vale, *Search & Destroy #1-6: The Complete Reprint* (San Francisco: V/Search, 1996), vi.

away from the punk scene for a time.[126] Hardocre punks were expected to exude pugnacious masculinity, maintain a certain appearance, and prove their status within the scene in the pit. In its own way, it was an exclusive scene, and hyper-masculine groupthink bred homophobia in hardcore.[127] These fundamentalist, homophobic attitudes were not limited to first-wave hardcore bands; they were also characteristic of early pop punk bands like the Descendents. Hailing from Hermosa Beach, the Descendents enormously influenced California's developing melodic punk scene. One might say they were punk classicists — they raged ardently against their feelings of social isolation, refused to adopt the established punk aesthetic, and still maintained a genuine pop sensibility. In many ways, their music represented a return to punk's original formula, but with a hardcore edge. Members of diverse bands from NoFX to the Foo Fighters have attested to the Descendents' importance as a group that removed pretentiousness from punk.[128] With that said, the members of the Descendents came up in the earliest hardcore scenes, and for all their punk nostalgia still played songs with lyrics like "your pants are too tight / you fucking homos," and "mister buttfuck / you don't belong here / no way / you're fucking gay."[129] Debate exists among Descendents fans and scholars as to whether or not such lyrics were meant to be satirical, intended as parodies of hardcore's "jock" mentality. It would be needlessly reductive to accuse the Descendents or all hardcore punk bands of being homophobic. But certain gay punks might have been uncomfortable hearing their lyrics at intimate shows.[130]

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[126] Henry Rollins, Interview with V. Vale, Los Angeles Zine Fest, February 19, 2012

[127] D. Robert DeChaine, "Mapping subversion: Queercore music's playful discourse of resistance," *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 21 No. 4 (1997), 8-9, DOI: 10.1080/03007769708591686. "

[128] Among other musicians, Fat Mike of NoFX, Brett Gurewitz of Bad Religion, Mike Watt of the Minutemen, Mark Hoppus of Blink-182 and Dave Grohl of Foo Fighters express this sentiment in *Filmage: The Story of Descendents/ALL*, DVD, directed and produced by Deedle Lacour, Matt Riggle, edited and produced by Justin Wilson and James Rayburn (2013, Rogue Elephant), film.

[129] Descendents, "I'm Not a Loser," in *Milo Goes to College* (New Alliance Records, 1982).

[130] Tom jennings, "What the Fuck is *Homocore*?" *Homocore* #1, September 1988, 2.

Queercore, also called homocore, developed in rebellious response to the more problematic, reactionary standards of hetero hardcore punk. Musically, it did not differ dramatically from existing hardcore and first-wave punk sounds. Queercore as a movement mainly dealt with the construction of practical communities and support networks for LGBT punks. Queercore began primarily as a movement in publishing, with a variety of zines that appeared in the late 1980s that emphasized previously unexplored aspects of existing punk scenes. Of these publications, San Francisco's *Homocore* magazine provides of the most important examples of queer identity construction within an existing punk community dynamic. It published quarterly between 1988 and 1991, and shared a lot stylistically with *Maximum Rocknroll*: a high-contrast, black-and-white aesthetic, editor Tom Jennings' insistence on political consciousness, and a desire to excise a lot of the problematic hyper-masculine tendencies from the existing punk scene. But unlike *MRR*, which addressed punk as a whole, *Homocore* was directed at an audience caught between two specific conflicting identities. One reader's letter, printed in *Homocore* issue three, read:

> I've been in the punk "scene" for about 6 years and came out as a lesbian 3 years ago but over here in England the two are totally separate scenes. I know of no punks who are either lesbian or gay, all literature, zines is either punk OR gay the two never coincide [sic]. Even a lot of the so-called sussed punks here are homophobic—me, my girlfriend and some friends got beaten up in London by anarchists wearing animal rights T-shirts cos we were kissing at a bus stop. I feel like I'm involved in two different cultures but don't fully fit into either and I've been thinking of putting together a newsheet [sic] to distribute amongst the punks to bring out some of the other gays and lesbians—there must be some!![131]

There are multiple significant aspects of this passage: For one, it demonstrates the increasingly international scope of the zine-scene dynamic in the late-20th century. For a San Francisco

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[131] Sue Le Ray, letter in *Homocore* #3, February 1989, 3.

fanzine to have a reach as wide as London is in a sense remarkable. This letter also demonstrates the creative drive that a queercore zine like *Homocore* could instill in its readers. They advocated more than a simple rebellious ideology: the classic punk desire to DIY a personal publication. There is also an indication of genuine interaction between *Homocore* and the reader: In response to Sue Le Ray's request for a copy of the zine, Jennings wrote, "I hope you got 'em by now…"[132] In this and other ways, the editor asserted *Homocore*'s dedication to the traditional, unpretentious punk value of producer accessibility. On top of that, Jennings regularly included a list of "Zines You Should Get," reviewing and publicizing other zines whose intended audiences crossed over with *Homocore*'s. By placing *Homocore* in the context of a much broader LGBT punk community than its readership alone, Jennings demonstrated a commitment to DIY punk principles on top of his commitment to the cause of LGBT equality. In this way, he remained countercultural.

Arguably, a lot of this analysis supports the belief that queercore was inherently self-limiting—that it was designed to remain a sub-movement within punk, not distinct from the parent ideology in any way. Such a suggestion is not without merit; it explains *Homocore*'s projected reverence for *MRR* and DIY principles in general. In his 1993 analysis of the *Homocore* reader letters section, Fenster argued that the publication's "mission" was, broadly,

> ...to construct a space for the problematizing of sexuality *within* the hardcore scene rather than to create a new and radically different 'scene'—as [Jennings, *Homocore* editor] clearly states, this is not intended to be simply a 'gay' magazine but a homo *punk* fanzine. A direct attempt to articulate homosexuality to hardcore without completely dis-articulating other sexulaities, *Homocore* confronts the hardcore scene on the latter's own terms—keep the scene, keep the fanzine and its look and format, keep your own sexuality, just let gays and lesbians be 'open and honest' and allow them to 'behave' as they want."[133]

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[132] Tom Jennings, response to a letter in *Homocore* #3, February 1989, 3.
[133] Mark Fenster, "Queer Punk Fanzines: Identity, Community, and the Articulation of Homosexuality and Hardcore," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (Winter 1993), 79.

But such an analysis is, in at least some sense, reductive. It diminishes the historical value of queercore punk as a rejection of hardcore standards, and it does not explain queercore zine editorials that advocated queer punk community creation outside existing scenes. One such column, "Why Punks, Hippies, and Queers Should All Go Fuck Themselves" was the first *Homocore* editorial written by Lookout Records founder Larry Livermore. In a four-page piece, he frankly discussed the homophobia he had experienced in the San Francisco Bay are punk scene upon first coming out:

> People I'd known for years stopped talking to me. Even the ones who would still talk didn't like to do it in public places. Nobody would tell me what it was I'd done, well no one until finally this one guy who'd never liked me too much anyway blurted out, "So, we here you're gay now."...Yeah, people are always going to get uptight. Even the supposedly enlightened. Especially the supposedly enlightened ones,"[134]

These statements line up with the "punk fundamentalism" that Jello Biafra and Henry Rollins described. But doubtless, the idea that a punk might be judged and ostracized for his sexuality did not encourage queer punks to express themselves with pride. "It's usually just too scary to be open and honest [about one's sexuality]," wrote Jennings in the first *Homocore* editorial, "when you hear supposedly cool and politically aware people and bands say or do sexist or homophobic shit." To Livermore though, a more public acknowledgment of their queer sexuality was the exact move many of the queercore punks needed to take. His column went on to advocate for the ardent assertion of gay punk identity, separately from the existing scene if necessary:

> A lot of times it seems easier to hold yourself back and not make a scene, not risk making yourself or others uncomfortable. But you kill yourself a little at a time that way...Every so often we've got to break out all over again. Every so often we've got to learn all over again what it is to run wild and free.[135]

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[134] Lawrence Livermore, "Why Punks, Hippies, and Queers Should All Go Fuck Themselves," *Homocore* #1, Sept. 1988, 12.
[135] Ibid., 13.

There is a revolutionary sentiment embedded in Livermore's editorial. To a degree, it asserts that queer punk identity does constitute something distinct from both queer identity and punk identity. Therefore, it might necessitate a movement of its own. Livermore was not alone in suggesting this, either. Other pieces, such as queer punks G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce's "Don't Be Gay, Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Fuck Punk up the Ass," went a philosophical step further; their column asked the difficult question, "Has Punk Failed?" After a discussion of the word punk's origins in gay-bashing, the writers attempt to reframe derogatory labels for gays and lesbians as counterculturally empowering:

> The phenomenon of a highly visible and disruptive subculture looking sexually deviant and seeming to behave that way has proven an effective weapon against institutions that attempt to control and contain personal identity and sexual freedom. So what does it mean when someone calls you a fag or a dyke? Society considers you as outside of its restraints and controls, and that your protest must extend to sexual behavior as well. The next time someone calls you queer, consider the implications. Maybe you've got them right where you want them.[136]

If we accept that publications create movements, it becomes much easier to argue that queercore represented something unique and separate from the dominant form of hardcore punk. But it was far from the only movement that rebelled against hardcore.

— RIOT GRRRL: THE WOMEN FINALLY STEP FORWARD —

Kathleen Hanna was late to the punk movement. She was born in 1968, a full year after the first Velvet Underground & Nico album came out. By the time she turned ten, some would say that American punk had come and gone. In time, Hanna would help contest that assertion. As a student at the Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, Hanna did not study gender or

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[136] G.B. Jones and Bruce LaBruce, "Don't Be Gay, or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Fuck Punk Up The Ass," *Homocore* #7, February 1991, 27.

sex politics; She was a photographer for the school's paper.[137] She eventually became a concert organizer for the local Olympia alternative rock scene, which was in some ways already rebelling against the fundamentalist hyper-masculine tendencies inherent to hardcore punk.[138] Eventually, Hanna began creating and reading zines. After she came across Tobi Vail's publication *Jigsaw*, in which Vail expressed frustration with punk counterculture and a desire to make music with other women, the two began corresponding regularly, and started working on music together. In this way, they founded the band Bikini Kill, and helped kickstart the riot grrrl movement.

Riot grrrl (or riot grrl—the number of 'r's is inconsequential) exists at the ideological junction of third-wave feminism and punk rock: two very distinct movements, each connoting its own identity, but similar in that both oppose perceived mainstream and systemic standards. As has been demonstrated, the punk movement, like countercultures before it, places itself in direct opposition to corporate music consumption, contemporary fashion, and academic trends. Third-wave feminism rejects the standard of male hegemony that it perceives. It insists on gender equality, and rebels against certain second-wave tendencies and standards. "Second wave feminism helped bring about professional self-sufficiency for women," wrote Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake. "...but *postmodernism* and the new global economy have brought on concerns about the *homogeneity* of the so-called bourgeois white feminism of the second wave

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[137] Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 32.

[138] Ibid., 37. Marcus does her narrative a unique service by discussing Calvin Johnson of K Records and his band Beat Happening, whose brand of "love rock" was part of a far larger Olympia alternative scene. Marcus portrays an Olympia that fostered DIY culture, in part because it was a college town and in part because it was a state capital with space for shows. K Records, for example, hosted a variety of shows that prominently featured riot grrrl bands.

(emphasis added)."[139] Third-wave strives to be inclusive toward previously underrepresented women. Arguably, there was a common trait of rebellion against rebellion between punk and third-wave feminism, which allowed for their eventual crossover in the riot grrrl movement. But unlike early NYC punk rock, riot grrrl harbored a key political sensibility from the beginning. Duncombe wrote that "riot grrrl politics, like all zine politics, are based in the existential act of creative rebellion...but with so much emphasis on individual expression and creativity, zines are less a means to an end than the ends in themselves: the revolution itself. Propaganda of the deed."[140]

As Vail and Hanna's introduction shows, riot grrrl was a punk splinter movement rooted in publishing. Arguably, it began even before riot grrrl had publications of its own. In his book's discussion of riot grrrl, Duncombe cites a series of women's letters to *MRR* from 1983, each of which expressed frustration with the existing punk scene.[141] In terms of content and themes, riot grrrl publications deviated from the standards set by *MRR* and other hardcore zines. A publication titled *Boink!* from New York City released an entire issue dedicated to the question of "Boxers or Briefs?" with the explicitly stated goal of objectifying male punk musicians:

> Of course, it's not just grrls who like to ogle pictures of half-naked young studmuffins, and the way we look at it, if you want to go on stage in public and take your shirt off, then you're looking to be ogled anyway. So we don't really care if you're male or female or straight or gay or bi or whatever, if you like punk rock and like the pictures, and you've got an attitude problem...then we hope you like *Boink*.[142]

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[139] Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 27.
[140] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 76.
[141] Ibid., 72.
[142] The Flaming Editor, "Boink's Statement Of Principles," In *Boink!* No. 1 (Queercore and Riot Grrrl Zine Collection), 1. The GLBT History Museum Archives, San Francisco.

True to the punk fanzine form, riot grrrl publications were not above creating manifestos. For example, *Boink!* issued a "Statement of Principles" on the first page of their introductory issue, in which it expressed a lot of the characteristics that distinguished riot grrrl from hyper-masculine American hardcore.[143] Some of these related to riot grrrl as a movement: "Fanzines rule...Riot grrls need a sense of humor," and "If you want to be sassy, try being sexy." Others took issue with punk standards: "Slam dancing and stage diving, like skate boarding [sic], was meant for pre-pubescent teenage boys, not 25 year old frat jocks." One or two carried a classic punk sneer: "Disco still sucks," and "The Spin Doctors suck. totally." The tenth and final principle seems almost to advocate a DIY lifestyle: "Life is like a sewer: What you get out of it depends on what you put into it."[144]

Simultaneously though, riot grrrl arguably presents examples of the same, problematic self-contradiction and exclusivity that plagued other punk movements. Some were quick to dismiss riot grrrl as problematic in the same way other punk movements were: its leadership was distinctly racially homogenous, and its scenes were doubtless insular. Others asserted that riot grrrl's leadership was inherently misandrist.[145] Determining some of those criticisms' validity is tricky; it would be easy to characterize any given punk movement with broad adjectives like "racist" and "sexist," but to do so would be overly simplistic. Given its commitment to social revolution, it is particularly difficult to simply claim that no one in the punk movement "cared" about punks of color. But the relative whiteness of almost every punk scene, without exception, surely presents an important lens for further analysis of all punk splinter movements.

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[143] Ibid., 1.
[144] Ibid., 1.
[145] Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The true Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 312.

— PUNK LEGACY AND PARADOX —

In 1970, Glessing argued that "the underground press is a reaction to, not a cause of, conditions in society."[146] Punk history contests such a claim; A cascade of publications, including *Punk*, *Search & Destroy*, *Maximum Rocknroll*, *Jigsaw*, and *Homocore*, along with innumerable DIY albums by countless bands, all demonstrated the underground's capacity for continuous, genuine community construction on a large scale. Zines and music played an important part in punk scene development, helping to construct a distinct countercultural identity and propagate it on a large scale. They stated principles, issued what were practically manifestos, provided a public forum and served as entertainment. They even identified enemies of the movement. Perhaps most importantly, punk publications helped propagate the movement's fundamental mission; they broadly sought to break down the barriers between countercultural producers and consumers.

Glessing was wrong to suggest that the underground press can only reflect scenes, and by extension that it has no power to affect change on its own. Defending this claim, he pointed to various instances of public conflict over countercultural dissent, examples of protest and rioting, and argued that publications could not be held responsible for any crime or violence their readers might have committed.[147] Glessing published before punk disproved his claims, and in at least that respect he is blameless. But his argument was rooted in an excess of sympathy for the sixties underground. Publications cannot be held solely or directly responsible for their readers' actions,

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[146] Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 143.
[147] Ibid., 144.

but they do impact the ways that countercultural actors view themselves and their movements. This in turn can inspire action.

Punk magazine popularized its movement's appropriated name, and it kickstarted the Ramones' career. Without the Ramones, whose record label contract enabled them to tour, Vale might never have started *Search & Destroy*. Without that publication, Jello Biafra might never have joined the Dead Kennedys. Countless other punks might never have come to San Francisco at all. Bands like Black Flag might not have been able to tour successfully in the Bay Area, let alone develop devoted followings. Had Holmstrom and McNeil not prioritized colloquial amateurism in *Punk*, there would have been no ideological basis for rebellion against commercialized punk rock. Hardcore culture might never have developed in Los Angeles, meaning Tim Yohannan might have had no reason to publish *Maximum Rocknroll*, and never would have shaped the gospel of underground punk.

Some of this is speculation. But in each concretely recorded instance, a publication was able to affect change in the environment that created it, thereby shaping and legitimating its scene. And although this zine-scene dynamic is present in a lot of American countercultural history, the punk movement has proven uniquely postmodern in its deviations therefrom. As its publications demonstrate, punk both rejected and embraced certain aspects of the mainstream, even as it adapted the publishing style of the hippies it professed to hating. Punk rebelled against conformity and rebellion simultaneously, fundamentally shifting the countercultural publishing paradigm in the process. It resulted in a lot of splintering, but each splinter group still managed to retain its fundamental identity as "punk."

Punk's visible application of the zine-scene dynamic raises certain questions, though. For one, why did punk never evolve into the wholly subversive social movement that Legs McNeil or Tim Yohannan hoped it would become? Some would suggest that certain aspects of punk counterculture are antithetical to movement-building: its ambivalence toward history and legacy, its sense of adolescent urgency, its ardent individualism, and perhaps most importantly, its fundamental tendency to rebel against existing forms of rebellion, either to suit a group's needs more specifically, or even for the sake of rebellion itself. The last of these caused the burgeoning punk counterculture, the true underground, to splinter at several key moments: when the first generation of punk bands began to achieve commercial success, and later in response to arguably reactionary hardcore punk "fundamentalism." But there may have been other factors behind punk's ultimate failure to overthrow the mainstream. In 1970, Lincoln Bergman, editor of Berkeley's *Movement* newspaper and a programmer on the city's community radio station, KPFA, wrote that "the greatest danger to the underground is repression and the taking over of the form but not the substance of resistance by the overground."[148] Similarly, Hebdige argued that absorption into the mainstream is the eventual fate of all subcultures, punk included.[149] Relatedly, some considered the "real" punk movement dead as early as 1979, at least in part due to the Sex Pistols' efforts. MacLeod argued that the mainstream press played a major role in turning punk into pop, but also in the splintering that took place later. Others would say that the resurgence of mainstream commercial "poseur punk" in the early twenty-first century indicates the failure of punk as a movement.

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[148] Lincoln Bergman, "Last Word from Underground," in Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 164.
[149] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 130.

In 1970, Bergman proposed a means of preventing, or enduring, an attempted mainstream takeover: "the only chance for survival is expansion," he wrote. "The need to speak to more people's needs. The attempt to reach and learn from the people on the bottom."[150] In a sense, this is exactly the process that occurred in punk. In response to their belief that the movement did not adequately represent them, various groups within it united to form their own countercultures, both distinctly of and separate from punk. The fundamental principle of rebellion against rebellion fostered this. As a result, movements like riot grrrl and queercore were able to develop as genuine movements. And in the longer term, the punk underground has not disappeared. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, self-publishing and zine cultures thrived, both in the physical and digital realms.[151] The punk DIY ethos remains integral to countercultural and underground publishing to this day. One could argue that this is a DIY trend that transcends musical forms; it is no longer even strictly limited to punk.[152] But the degree to which it still reflects a counterculture is debatable.

It is easy to understand why MacKaye and other punks are skeptical of histories. As living primary sources of a counterculture based on individualism, they perhaps feel no imperative to share and define something that was designed to be exclusive — much in the same way McNeil accused the Sex Pistols of distorting punk's original message. Academic perspectives on punk fail utterly if they neglect to acknowledge this aspect of punk classification:

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[150] Lincoln Bergman, "Last Word from Underground," in Robert Glessing, *The Underground Press in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 164.

[151] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 209. This edition of Duncombe's text includes a short afterword titled "Do Zines Still Matter?" His answer, in short, is that they absolutely do. Although the Internet has fundamentally changed their delivery, it has not changed their purpose, message, or value in many cases.

[152] Damian Hess, *Nerdcore Rising*, DVD, directed by Negin Farsad and Kim Gatewood (2008; New York; Vaguely Qualified Productions, 2008.), Film. Hess, a self-proclaimed "nerdcore rapper" who goes by MC Frontalot, mentions that "the means of production have fallen into the hands of the proletariat."

it rejects all academic pretense in favor of emotional experience, the perception of being honest. Still, such academic histories remain important, because they call into question the present state of counterculture. If punk changed the way Americans rebel, making it both easier to do so and harder to do so authentically, then one must ask whether counterculture can exist in the 21st century as it always has. The academic finds it necessary to trace punk and other anti-movements' effects on new millennium counterculture, but must carefully navigate their inevitable absorption into the mainstream. As Duncombe wrote:

> The history of all rebellious cultural and political movements is the history of the unavoidable contradiction of staking out new ground within and through the landscape of the past. But today this laying of claims may be harder than ever. No longer is there a staid bourgeoisie to confront with avant-garde art or a square America to shock with countercultural values; instead there is a sophisticated marketing machine which gobbles up anything novel and recreates it as product for a niche market. When the *New York Times* gushes over zines, when punk feminist Riot Grrrls are profiled in *Newsweek*, when 'alternative' rock gets its own show on MTV, and when the so-called Generation X becomes an identifiable and lucrative market in the eyes of the editors of *Business Week* and *Advertising Age*, rebelling through culture becomes exceedingly problematic.[153]

In 2012, Rollins and Vale discussed the future of counterculture, and the necessity of what Rollins called physical "disruption" to a movement's success. Vale expressed some frustration with certain aspects of the Internet era: "No one wants to haul huge RE/search books around anymore. They want real small things that they can put in their shirt pocket."Commenting on the Occupy Wall Street movement, Vale said, "There's nothing like physicality to force social change…that's what spreads the virus more. As we all stay at home glued to our computers, I don't think anything's gonna happen."[154] In Duncombe's book, the sociologist expresses concerns similar to Vale's:

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[153] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 9-10.

[154] V. Vale, interview by Henry Rollins, Los Angeles Zine Fest, February 19, 2012

> "In this digital age, when anyone with a computer can publish whatever they want to an anonymous audience of millions, are analog zines obsolete? In part, the answer is an uncomfortable: yes. Zine producers have historically embraced new technology...why stop now and fetishize the materiality of paper? One could plausibly argue that blogs are just ephemeral per-zines, and fan sites on the web are nothing other than digitally displayed fanzines."[155]

Some form of zines will remain relevant. Their stylistic shifts, along with the technological development of the medium, will continue to reflect changes in the nature of American counterculture. The zine-scene dynamic will remain fundamental as a lens for analyzing alternative ideas among Americans who self-identify as the underground. Even as new technology renders old means of self-producing irrelevant, the punk principle of rebellion against rebellion will continue to shape countercultural dynamics, and the process by which Americans craft their own unique communities outside of the mainstream.

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[155] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Bloomington: Microcosm, 2008), 9-10.

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