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Rasquache or Die!: Chican@/Latin@ Punks Presente!

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ABSTRACT

RASQUACHE OR DIE: CHICAN@/LATIN@ PUNKS PRESENTE!

By

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Master of Arts in Chicana and Chicano Studies

Chican@s/ Latin@s have a tradition in subcultural spaces whether dancing in their neatly pressed zoot suits, riding their lowriders, or jumping in the mosh pit. This tradition has continued for Chican@s/ Latin@s in punk who continue to live Mi (Our) Vida Loca defying society, broadening what it means to be Chican@/ Latin@, and asserting their identities, though their detachment and sense of cool have taken a different direction. This project explores what it means to be a punk for a Chican@/ Latin@ who is already at the margin. By exploring these complex identities I unearthed stories of misogyny and homophobia as patriarchy has seeped through what is suppose to be an anti-status quo scene. I also found stories of community and hope as Chican@/Latin@ punks have continued to build a network of friends and family locally and transnationally. By looking at the punk scene through the perspective of punks who have been active since the 90's and those who have become active in the new millennium, we can see how the scene has changed and remained the same, we can see the development of consciousness yet the ways people have been unable to let go of systems of oppression and reproduced them in the scene.

Chapter One: Introduction

I remember I was about twelve years old when I first started listening to punk rock, *Dead Kennedys*' "Police Truck" blaring through my fourteen-year-old brother's boom box, when he left the house I would listen to his CDs secretly. After discovering my secret, I was able to convince him to take me to my first show at a closed down pizza place in Huntington Park. The following Monday at school I had arrived with a new identity and found a place in a group of outcasts. For some reason the street I lived in became the place to hang out, there was never a solid number of us; on any given night when a show got raided there would be up to twenty of us hanging out in front of my family's small apartment. We were all between the ages of twelve to sixteen with not so functional families, looking for something to do, or at the very least somewhere to go. There were always more guys and three or four girls who hung out. People came and went; eventually, I left too.

More than ten years after my first punk show I find myself there again, except this time we didn't walk or catch the bus, someone drove. It's kind of cold out and my hands feel even colder because of the beer in my hand. We're in a backyard in South Central LA, and the bands are actually on time. The majority of people are drinking and smoking, it's hard to tell how old people are; there are definitely people younger than 18, but also others who are past their mid-twenties. We arrive rather late so *Destruye Y Huye*'s set is almost over, but we catch enough to see Angee screaming and bouncing around in the

garage, dimly lit by a string of Christmas lights, behind her the other womyn¹ playing the instruments that provide the rhythm to her dance. This is one of the few times I've seen a lot of womyn up front, the mosh pit is still dominated by the guys. But by the time their set is over I catch something I had never seen before, two guys kissing. I think to myself, maybe things have finally changed.

Going to shows was the weekend routine since I was thirteen years old so I can't recall every single band, but then there were those bands that really sparked something within, that got you dancing or thinking. This sentiment is evoked in Marin's testament,

...[S]tanding in the middle of the pit, the drummer was doing a crazy drum intro, playing all the toms and snares, truck truck ta, it was just, the beat he had with the guitars. It wasn't the first time I pitted but it was the first time I lost my shit in the pit

(Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014)

Although a lot of us were not the popular ones in high school we managed to form our own connections amongst each other. I grew up with one blood brother, but after so many years in the punk scene my family grew, we were not any type of afterschool special, there was in fighting and people stopped speaking to each other. Nevertheless, we were an angry bunch of weird kids that hung out and found comfort in one another. M. Boogie captures this frustration,

[W]hen I found punk it was like people are angry and that's what I first noticed, and at least they're yelling and letting it out. So I was like I'm gonna rock my head to this and it stuck with me cus I knew my family was different, my sister was different, I was different but it was ok, I took pride in that

(M. Boogie, interview by author, Nov. 19, 2013)

Most of the time the show would get raided, cops would come and shut down the bands forcing everyone to leave, then we were back to where we started; where do we go when

¹ I am using an alternative spelling of womyn that draws distinction and challenges the grammatical spelling of the word by affirming that womyn are not defined by men.

we hate being home and just want to have fun. A lot of times we would go back to my parents small one bedroom apartment and hang out in the street where we played music and were obnoxiously loud until my mom told us to keep it down or one of the neighbors called the cops. I was lucky enough to have a supportive mom who at times even helped dye my hair, for many others that was not the case. As Xelowks explains:

I came across a lot of people, I got kicked out of my house at a young age, so I met a lot of people at the margins, you know, just trying to survive, and that's what we were, fucking punks

(Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014)

In punk there was always a need to be an individual, but in my LA, we were all so similar, Chican@/Latin@² working class kids who were fed up. I never played in any band or wrote in a “zine” though I did help organize and promote shows. Back when I first got into punk we thought we were different, but most of us did not know that even though we never heard about it on television or even in punk documentaries, there was a long history of people like us in music scenes. These revelations came after digging for others like us in earlier punk bands, and were summed up after learning about *Más Álla de los Gritos*.

Beyond the Screams/ Más Álla de los Gritos: A U.S. Latino/Chicano Hardcore Punk Documentary (1998), produced by Martin Sorrondeguy- singer of *Los Crudos* (an all Latin@ punk band) and *Limp Wrist* (a queer hardcore band)- attempts to document the vivid Chican@/Latin@ hardcore scene during the early 1990's. Sorrendeguy's documentary addresses the creation of a subculture within a subculture as

² I will use the “@” sign throughout in order to attempt and create a more inclusive term that includes multiple gender identities. The symbol encompasses and “a” and an “o” but visually creates space between these two letters allowing the symbol to encompass gender identities that cannot be expressed with either letter.

Chican@s/Latin@s in the punk scene forged their own networks and maintained do-it-yourself ethics. Despite the enormous contribution of this documentary to the Chican@/Latin@ punk narrative, one of its shortcomings is the lack of discussion regarding issues of gender and sexuality (Zavella, 2011).

My research intends to expand upon Sorrendeguy's project by participating in the Los Angeles punk scene, as well as documenting the experiences of Chican@s/Latin@s who were and are active in the punk scene. My thesis seeks to contextualize the current Los Angeles punk scene while documenting the experiences of Chican@/ Latin@ punks, and the development of political consciousness this space facilitates. Thus, also looking at how punks perceive and address issues of patriarchy, immigration status, and race within and outside of the punk scene. Ultimately, my project seeks to disrupt the dominant discourse of punk as a "white boy" space and complicate the "us vs. them" binary. My goal is to take a snapshot of the current punk scene in Los Angeles as a social phenomenon full of potential for change, thus creating a space for Chican@/ Latin@ punks to share their story in an effort to make sure that our contributions are not forgotten.

Questions

Chican@s/ Latin@s have a legacy in subcultural spaces, whether dancing in their neatly pressed zoot suits, riding their lowriders, or jumping in the mosh pit. This legacy has continued for Chican@s/ Latin@s in punk who continue to live *Mi (Our) Vida Loca*, defying society, broadening what it means to be Chican@/ Latin@, and asserting their identities, though their detachment and sense of cool have taken a different direction. Through my research I hope to explore what it means to be a punk for a Chican@/

Latin@ who is already at the margin. By exploring these complex identities I hope to unearth not only the stories of Chican@s/Latin@s in punk, but also the possibilities and limitations found in the punk culture of Los Angeles. By looking at the punk scene through the perspective of punks who have been active since the 90's and those who have become active in the new millennium, we will be able to see the ways in which newer generations and older generations interact and maintain the punk scene in Los Angeles. Therefore, creating an understanding of how punk culture works, but also how it is produced and shared with younger generations.

I would like to further explore how Chican@/Latin@ punks perceive themselves and their experiences in the punk scene. My overall objective will be to uncover the following: What are the experiences of Chican@/ Latin@ punks in Los Angeles?

- 1) How has patriarchy, misogyny, and violence been reproduced in the Los Angeles punk scene and how has it been challenged?
- 2) How does punk facilitate the development of political consciousness for Chican@/ Latin@ punks?

And finally considering Hebdige's own assertion that Blacks "never lose what is, in our society, the disability of blackness," (1979) it is important to consider the experiences of Chican@s/Latin@s who also do not lose the disability of their race/ethnicity. Thus, we can infer that issues of scene preservation and cooptation arise differently. In order to understand this I pose the question

- 3) What strategies do Chican@/ Latin@ punks utilize to maintain and preserve the Los Angeles punk scene?

Theoretical Framework

Interrogating the Chican@/Latin@ punk scene requires much more than simply engaging with the music or lyrics. Given the complexity of the scene it is crucial that we examine it in terms of gender, sexuality, generations, and place. One of the essential academic works on punk is Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979). Through this work Hebdige traces the genealogy of punk, but also writes of the inevitable failure of punk as a subcultural space due to incorporation. He argues that there are two forms of incorporation, the commodity form and the ideological form. The commodity form then deals with the mass production of subculture, "publicity and packaging which must inevitably lead to the diffusion of the subculture's subversive power." Though Hebdige is correct in asserting that when things become mass-produced they begin to lose their subversive power, he seems to ignore the potential in alternate economies. The ideological form of incorporation is possible after two steps have been accomplished, when "subcultural signs" (dress, music, style) become mass-produced and when there is "re-definition of deviant behavior by dominant groups—the police, the media..." Hebdige exemplifies the latter through national magazines that carried spreads of punks and their mothers.

This argument when applied to punks of color, especially Chican@/Latin@ punks does not hold true; on the contrary Lipsitz (1994) argues that Chican@/Latin@ punks use the music to express their complex identities not distance themselves. This in turn, he argues, speaks to their audience and serves as inspiration. Furthermore, as Johnson (2001) posits for queer people of color disassociating from the family is not an option "because sometimes that family is the only form of survival... [and] it also forecloses any

possibilities of change within our communities”. Furthermore, as people of color our relationship to dominant groups like the police and media has never been a positive one (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Solorzano, 1995; Saenz, 2009; Cacho, 2007), rather than moving towards becoming a “model minority” being punk further moves us away from becoming such and has the potential to both marginalize us from the parent culture as well as bring us closer to it.

The works of Black and Queer Chicana feminists can facilitate the process of understanding punk as a space that has been ignored but sustains the potential for change. The work of Patricia Hill Collins is instrumental in challenging the essentializing of people of color. She writes of the ability of black womyn to develop a standpoint knowledge based on shared experiences. However she argues,

Being Black and female may expose African-American women to certain common experiences, which in turn may predispose us to a distinctive group consciousness, but it in no way guarantees that such a consciousness will develop among all women...

(1990)

When looking at development of consciousness among Chican@/Latin@ punks it is important to consider their own standpoint knowledge as being active participants of a cultural space, as well as society as a whole. Chicanas have incorporated and expressed their own standpoint knowledge creating all womyn bands, like *Las Tres*, their explosive performances; such as Alice Bag’s (Habell- Pallan, 2004), or perhaps most controversially when affirming that they are not a *Riot Grrrl*; typically associated with white feminists, on stage (Cruz Gonzales, 2013). Though my research will not focus solely on womyn, it is still important to consider experiences, ideas, and values of people who live at the margin. As Collins has posited, despite certain experiences a person may

not develop consciousness around certain issues, and therefore will never seek to contest or challenge such experiences. As such, Collins also writes about the “matrix of domination” in which she discusses the interlocking forms of oppression reminding us that we are all “*both* a member of multiple dominant groups *and* a member of multiple subordinate groups.” This is important in understanding the positionality of Chican@/Latin@ punks, especially those who reproduce the status quo, and also to challenging binaries in order to build coalitions. Furthermore, Collins (1990) notes that empowerment is possible when we reject “the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural, or institutional, that perpetuate objectification and dehumanization.” Nevertheless, given the exclusion of womyn and queer people of color in music history it is important that we pay special attention to the ways that they are talked about and represented. As Deborah Vargas (2012) argues it is not enough to merely write in more womyn into the scene because this “does little to address gender as a system of social structural power.” Thus, it is not enough to compose a list of womyn or queer punk artists if it does not look at the power dynamics that play out in the Chican@/Latin@ punk scene. Vargas (2012) notes that, “the power of music is not so much in its function as a mode of cultural resistance as in a mode of submission to inappropriate desires and sexual acts.” Thus, for womyn of color and queer people of color there resides a potential for resistance and submission through their music as they challenge notions of acceptability while also giving in to their sexual desire. As Jose Esteban Muñoz (1999, 2009a, 2013) has argued, the punk scene can serve as a stage in which queer identity can be imagined and created; ultimately, navigating and altering different identities and communities: punk, queer, and Chican@/Latin@.

Thus, subcultural spaces can be a place of cultural production, developing an identity, and solidarity. Macias (2008) deals with these music venues as spaces of contestation that led to police persecution, and eventually closure. Furthermore he argues, Chican@s/ Latin@s in youth spaces “utilize strategies of appropriation, reversal, and inversion' feigning complicity with dominant discourses while skillfully decentering and transforming them." Chican@/ Latin@ punks continue to face these dilemmas and have continued to create alternatives and solutions. He also writes of Mexican American oral culture “ [it] tells stories to the next generations, a folk healing that utilizes an ancient knowledge... a ritualistic music and dance that raises the spirit of both performer and audience.” This tradition of oral culture is present in the Chican@/ Latin@ punk scene through the self-preservation of our stories through zine production and collection. Thus, engaging in what Velez-Ibanez has called “networks of marginality” that respond to social conflict but also create networks of community interdependence (qtd. in Loza, 1993). Typically seen as a “youth culture” punk defies this as older generations continue to share their knowledge and make it accessible to younger punks. Ultimately, Chican@/ Latin@ punks have been able to dodge cooptation but also fought their erasure through self-definition, *consientizacion*, and preservation. Before moving forward with an analysis on the Chican@/Latin@ punk scene it is vital to address the tradition of Chican@/Latin@ cultural and musical production in Los Angeles.

Patches: Stitching Los Angeles, Punk, and Chican@s/Latin@s Together

“We didn’t cross the border:” Chican@/Latin@ Musical Legacy in Los Angeles

The story of Mexican@s and California are inevitably tied, from the broken promises of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, to the Chican@ movement of the late

1960's, to the musical landscape that exists today. George Lipsitz (1986-7) writes of the *Mexicanidad* in Los Angeles as invisible, one which remains floating and attributes this to the continued musical production of Chican@s/Latin@s but still remaining outside of the mainstream, leaving them in limbo between cultural appropriation and never being fully incorporated. Nevertheless, throughout their musical and cultural production Chican@s have sought self-presentation that demonstrates their unique and distinct traditions, fusing the folk with the *barrio*, and challenging master narratives (Lipsitz, 1986-7). It is then important to consider Dick Hebdige's (1979) loose definition of subculture as the expressive forms and rituals of subordinated groups who are often rejected by society and made out to be a public threat. Mexican@s in California used *corridos*, songs that have been used historically to relay the events of the time. Notably during the 1930's various *corridos* were written about Juan Reyna, a Mexican man who killed a white police officer at a time of heightened racial tensions (Loza, 1993). Given the early racial tension that existed among Mexican@s/ Latin@s in U.S history, this definition of subculture lends itself so that any cultural production becomes a subculture within the United States. However, the cultural production by Chican@s/Latin@s has continually fluctuated between the marginal and mainstream.

World War II undoubtedly brought changes to the landscape of Los Angeles. During the war many young Chicanos would go on to serve in the US military. After serving the country Chican@s began to have a greater understanding of themselves, but also felt they deserved more rights as they had fought for the country, and this would be reflected in the music scene (Loza, 1993). During the swing era Chican@s/Latin@s created a musical and cultural landscape that disrupted the black and white binary by

fusing sounds, creating their own, and ultimately altering the music of their parents (Macias, 2008; Paz, 1961). This would become a part of Chicano/Latino musical tradition, as artists as early as Chico Sesma³ were mixing traditional Mexican sounds with jazz. Sesma would then go on to inspire another southern California legend the *Rhythm Rockers*⁴. The epitome of Mexican and U.S musical synthesis was possible through the music of Lalo Guerrero⁵, who would blend sounds and infused the music with *caló*, *pachuc@* slang that mixed Spanish, and English to create a language of their own (Macias, 1998, Loza, 1993, Waldman & Reyes, 1998). Through style politics *Pachuc@s* (zoot suiters) were able to claim space, challenge gender norms, and assert their identity. Though usually given a negative connotation, the *Pachuc@* would come to serve as a symbol of cultural pride and respect for future generations of Chicano/s/Latino/s (Lipsitz, 1986-7; Mazón, 1984). As Chicano/Latino artists began to emerge and gain popularity it became common for them to Anglicize their names or to completely take on new ones to attempt to pass and avoid stereotypes about the type of music they were, or should be, playing. As Waldman and Reyes (1998) write of Bobby Rey⁶, who had to change his name from Reyes because that “did not connote a person who played R&B, so he dropped the last two letters... everyone knew people of Mexican

³ An East LA native, Sesma played in the high school orchestra and would go on to play big band music. He became a disc jockey and organized concerts where he promoted Latino artists.

⁴ Started by Barry and Rick Rillera in Orange County, they would become known as the O.C.’s first Rock’n’Roll band.

⁵ Lalo Guerrero’s musical legacy is monumental, from composing traditional Mexican songs that would become part of the Mexican repertoire, to his satirical genius that reflected the Chicano experience. Guerrero is key in the musical legacy of Chicano/s with multiple classics like “Marijuana Boogie,” and “Chuco Suave”

⁶ Reyes was part of the *Masked Phantoms*, a known band in East LA for their regular performances El Monte Legion Stadium. Reyes would also reach notoriety for his song “Corrido de Auld Lang Syne.”

descent did not play Rock'n'Roll or rhythm and blues.” Other artists had to change their names as well, such as Andres Rebago Perez, who became Andy Russell⁷, or Florencia Bisenta de Casillas Martinez Cardona, who became Vicky Carr⁸. These are only a few of the artists who proved that changing their name made them marketable to the American mainstream public and brought promises of success (Avant- Mier, 2008). Further demonstrating the racism that has plagued the music industry since it's early days, how music has been racialized for profit, and how people of color have been confined to particular genres to fit these corporate visions.

During the 1950's Ritchie Valens, born Richard Valenzuela, would gain national attention for his Rock'n'Roll interpretation of *La Bamba*, a traditional *Son Jarocho* song. Despite the Spanish lyrics, Valens was not restricted to this style and had a large repertoire; sadly his untimely passing would rob fans of his music, but undoubtedly create a Chicano music superstar. During the 1960's and 1970's bands such as *Tierra*, *El Chicano*, *Thee Midniters*, *Cannibal and the Headhunters*, among others created the Eastside sound. Although bands like *Tierra* would eventually gain national exposure, as late as 1982 Rudy Salas of *Tierra* talked about having to organize their own shows in order to get exposure (Lipsitz, 1986-7). Simultaneously, several social movements like the free speech movement in Berkeley, the anti-war movement, and the Black Power movement began to ignite, inspiring Chican@s to take on their political voice. The Chican@ movement had its own aesthetics taking from various elements like the Black Panthers and the *Pachuc@s*, and thus had their own sound. Many of the bands of the

⁷ A vocalist who sold millions of records in the 1940's and 1950's with songs like “*Besame mucho*”

⁸ Born in El Paso, Tx. Carr would perform across several genres and won 3 Grammy awards,

1960's continued making music and showing their support for the Chicano Movement by participating in political actions (Waldman & Reyes, 1998). During the 1970's the mainstream would embrace disco and funk. Chicano/Latino groups emerged and infected the music with their own flair, but as the time passed disco would die down, Blacks would evolve funk into rap, and whites turned to speed metal and punk (Waldman & Reyes, 1998). Chicano/Latino would have their own notoriety in both of these genres. Alvarado (2012) writes of the emergence of punk in Chicano/ Latino communities, mainly East Los Angeles, as being similar to that of New York and the UK, youth who were drawn to punk were artists or were listening to glitter rock artists like David Bowie and the next logical step was punk. Though at this point it is nearly impossible to recount every band; this is the incomplete list I have managed to compile. From the late 1970's to early 1980's; *The Brat, The Bags, Los Illegals, The Plugz, The Stains, The Undertakers*. From the 1980's to 1990's; *Circle One, Suicidal Tendencies, A.D Do, Anti-Social, Armistice, Black Jax, Bloodcum, Conscientious Objector (C.O), Chainsaw Blues/the Fingers, Crankshaft, Dog's Breakfast, FCDN Tormentor, Fish Head, Fuckin' Assholes, Hawaii's Hardcore, HCOT/Copulation LA, Human Retch/Six Gun Justice, Insurrected State/No Church on Sunday, Loli & the Chones, The Looters, Moral Decay, Our Band Sucks*. From the 1990's - early 2000's; *Subsistencia, Kontrataque, Aztlan Underground, Union 13, Social Conflict, Teenage Rage* (Alvarado, 2012; Waldman & Reyes 1998; Habel-Pallan, 2004)⁹. Thus, the presence of Chicano/Latino punks is undeniable, across the *barrios* there are youth who feel odd and out of place

⁹ I would like to reiterate that this is an incomplete list as it would be nearly impossible to keep a track of every Chicano/Latino punk band in southern California for almost 40 years.

with the mainstream. Growing up in the midst of the Chicana@ Movement, complicated the overall experience of how Chicana@/Latina@ punks formed their identities. While Chicana punk pioneer Alice Bag writes about not fitting in at the Chicana@ organizations on her school campus, she also writes of the importance of witnessing the Chicano Moratorium, which made her “acutely aware” of her position as an “other” who was “undesirable and had powerful and dangerous enemies”(2012).

Punk

Punk is an aggressive musical style characterized by three- chord songs (Kuhn, 2009), though not limited to these norms. Furthermore, scholars have described punk rock culture as an opposition to mainstream rock (Moore, 2007), the rejection of normal behavior (Ramirez-Sanchez, 2008), and an overall in-your-face attitude driven by anti-establishment, and anti-authoritarian ideologies (Arevalo Mateus, 2004). How and where punk emerged is still something contested today. There are three stories that have been commonly accepted. Perhaps the most dominant narrative situates punk as being born out of working class youth in Britain in the late 1970’s, who had lost all sense of hope. The other story is that punk was born out of a lingerie shop called “Sex,” in Britain, and the art students who hung out there. Hebdige (1979) argues that the rebellion embedded in British punk relied on the political prowess found in reggae that threatened to bring down the system that the punks hated. On the other hand, it has been argued that punk was born in New York with the *Ramones*. However, such narratives have been contested and some have argued that punk was actually born in Detroit, with *Death* (Rubin, 2009), or in Peru, with *Los Siccos* (Noisey, 2013), or in Michigan with ? and the *Mysterians* (Guerrero, 2011), all bands consisted of people of color. What is important to note of punk history is

that it broke away from the glamorization of mainstream rock because it created spaces devoid of rules in which anyone could participate.

Before there was a punk scene in Los Angeles there was *Slash*, a small independently published magazine called a “zine” in which creator Claude Bessy declared war on mainstream music and so began bringing punks together. In April 1977, *The Damned* from Britain played a show with bands like *The Germs*, *The Weirdos*, and *The Zeros*. *The Germs* would become infamous for their performance, which did not involve much music but instead many antics like covering themselves in peanut butter. The scene in Los Angeles would be known in its early stages as “art-damaged,” more focused on performativity than music (MacLeod, 2010). The sound, however, would be captured in *The Germs*’ first single, “Forming” which was “raunchy,” and very much DIY (do it yourself). In Hollywood *The Masque* opened providing a space for bands to play and the Hollywood scene would become the epicenter of LA punk as everyone who was part of the “in crowd” moved into the Canterbury apartments located near the club.

By the 1980’s “new wave” had emerged, and in southern California specifically this meant a “watered down” version of punk that was marketable. The opening up of the scene allowed for people from the suburbs to come in and get involved, eventually leading to the creation of “hardcore” a faster more aggressive and musically complex sound, with subtle aesthetics (MacLeod, 2010; Kuhn, 2009). Though many have argued that punk has undergone several deaths as a genre, in reality it has just changed. As Kevin Dunn (2012) notes, “Just as DIY punk went underground post- 1978, DIY punk in the United States has continued to thrive under the radar.” For better or for worse punk has acquired new shapes and forms. This continuous navigation between underground and

mainstream has allowed punk to develop into different forms and to be picked up in different places.

Alan O’Conner (2002) explains that a punk scene is “the active creation of infrastructure to support punk bands and other forms of creative activity. This means finding places to play, building a supportive audience, developing strategies for living cheaply, shared punk houses, and such like.” Furthermore, he argues each city has different resources and punks must struggle to make their scene with said resources; thus creating a scene that is local but translocal at once for the various punk scenes that exist and their relation to one another. This is particularly important to observe as the Los Angeles scene is one that is comprised of many hubs that are separate but interconnected, while being in contact with other scenes nationwide and internationally.

Since the early days of punk, Chican@s/Latin@s have been a dominant force as they formed some of the earliest bands and contributed to the overall aesthetic (Waldman & Reyes, 1998). Furthermore, Waldman and Reyes (1998) note that punk followed in a tradition already established amongst Chican@/ Latin@ rockers, who since the days of Ritchie Valens were humble, but at times also ostracized by the Chican@/ Latin@ community. The story of why the East L.A punk scene emerged has been debated as some claimed that when entering the Hollywood scene there was a sense of exclusion and racism (Habell- Pallan, 2004; Alvarado, 2012). Nevertheless, on the east side bands were forming and playing shows mainly in backyards until *The Vex* was opened on the second floor of *Self- Help Graphics* in 1980. Though *The Vex* struggled to find a permanent

home¹⁰, its shows were pivotal for many punk bands that were then invited to play Hollywood, and it was also home to touring bands. Moreover, *The Vex* created a bridge between the Hollywood scene and the East L.A. scene, hosting East LA bands like *Los Illegals*, *Thee Undertakers*, *The Brat*, and *The Stains* to name a few (Alvarado, 2012).

Chican@/ Latin@ punks continued to create music throughout the years despite the lack of scholarship and documentation of it (Alvarado, 2012). The remembering of the punk scene becomes problematic when we realize how little attention is given to Chican@s/Latin@s in punk, both in punk history and in Chican@/Latin@ history, with only a few notable mentions in the works of Chican@/ Latin@ scholars (Waldman & Reyes, 1998; Habell-Pallan, 2004; Alvarado, 2012). Though the work of these scholars is vital to ensure that Chican@/ Latin@ punks are not forgotten, we must continue to document and preserve the scene through any possible medium. Furthermore, we must look at punk as part of the musical legacy of Chican@s/Latin@s.

Paper, Scissors, and Glue: Methods

I still can't help but have this nervous excitement when I'm at show. The band starts to play and I try to look for a place where I can feel the motions of the pit and still maintain a visual of what's going on. Most of the time I don't go in, but I like to stand around and sway with it, shove into people, make sure that those that are trying to get out of the pit have a way out. When I can't help it I close my eyes and begin to rock my head to the beat, dancing on my tippy toes but with my arms ready for anyone that might come

¹⁰ *The Vex* was moved out of *Self Help Graphics* after a riot ensued during a *Black Flag* show in October 1980. Though punk historians have claimed that *Black Flag*'s performance incited the riot Alvarado (2014) recalls that it was in fact a long lag time between bands that led to people being bored and trashing the venue. This led for the venue to continue changing locations throughout the 80's and being shut down for years, until 2013 when the venue was reopened in El Sereno.

directly at me. I'm as much an outsider looking in as an insider looking out. Manalansan IV (2000) states that ethnographers "have acquired a new role in viewing and representing communities and peoples;" their role has become more complicated because sometimes they are the "'natives' or members of the community in which they are conducting research." As a Chicana punk engaging in scholarship about Chican@s/Latin@s in the punk scene, I too defy what has been previously known as objective research. My positionality as an "insider" is not a complete one as I have been in and out of the scene for the past four years. The binary of outsider/insider and observer/observed can be very limiting and should instead be based on "reflexive, interpretivist practices... [and the] consideration of the social and political contexts in which the research is situated" (Trinh Vo, 2000). Thus, the core of my project will be critical ethnography, where as a member of the punk community, I will not speak for any of the participants. Rather, my role will be to weave together the various narratives of Chican@/Latin@ punks and share in the struggles and joy of being part of the Los Angeles punk scene.

For this project, the methodology includes a review of scholarly journals, books, zines, and documentaries to examine the experiences of Chican@s/Latin@s within punk. Considering Fiske's (2005) contract—that argues that cultural production comes from the interaction between audience, producer, and text—I will deal with all three components, the text, the performance, and the audience's reaction to the performance. I will utilize the lyrics and musical compositions of three L.A. punk bands in order to make more connections between the music itself, and the experiences of punks. It is essential for us to pay attention to music composition because as Phillipov posits, "Too often music is treated as subsidiary... simply a vehicle for the expression politics rather than something

which is embedded in a variety of meanings and affects in its own right and interplays with politics in complex ways” (2006). Furthermore, Collins (1990) writes of the importance of discovering, reinterpreting, and analyzing work of black womyn especially those who are not seen as intellectuals; artists, poets, musicians, writers, etc. By the same token it is important to look at work of Chican@/Latin@ punks in order to learn about, and from, their experiences.

Procedure

As part of my ethnographic work I attended and participated in punk spaces such as live musical performances, or “shows,” throughout Los Angeles. I conducted ten to twenty hours of participant observation at said spaces, mostly in South Central and South East Los Angeles. Field notes were taken from memory with the exception of jotting names of bands, songs, or things said during conversation. As a member of this community I have acquired easy access to information about shows and gatherings not accessible to most, as the punk scene in Los Angeles has remained mostly underground. Currently, most flyers advertising shows will not include an address but rather state “ask a punk.” Therefore in order to attend shows and other activities one must be in contact with “punks.”

The bulk of my project comes from one on one interviews with Chican@/Latin@ punks who were or are members of the Los Angeles punk scene. Each interview took from an hour and a half to two hours and was audio recorded. In addition to the interview, participants were asked to fill out a demographics sheet with general questions like race, age, social economic status, etc. Most questions were open-ended, allowing the participants to touch upon any issues they deemed important or to give them space to tell

their own stories. After transcribing the interview I gave the interviewees a copy of the interview to correct any misquotations or for them to expand or omit any information. The data was then coded and sorted into themes, coding enabled me to create more detailed information as well as cross reference the data (Emerson, 1995). After this I contacted participants for another shorter interview where we addressed themes that might have not surfaced in their interview or for a more in depth conversation about certain topics. Interviewees were asked to provide any feedback in terms of the questions or points of interest they felt should be considered. All data was coded and sorted into themes that have shaped my thesis. Upon completing my thesis I will share the final project with participants and any others that may be interested.

Participants

I conducted face to face, semi-structured interviews with ten punks ages 18 to 35 whom were/are active participants in the Los Angeles punk scene. I first contacted personal friends to inform them about my project and invite them to participate. If they declined, I asked if they could refer me to anyone they believed would be interested. Interviews were planned around the participants schedule and took place wherever the participant felt most comfortable, ranging from their homes throughout Los Angeles to punk spaces in which they are active. Participants range in age, gender, and sexuality, as well as their involvement in the punk scene. Some participants were/are observers, performers, organizers, or zinesters, allowing a more complex tale of what punk provides for people. Before each interview I gave them a brief overview of my project and explained the procedures in said communication, emphasizing the participant's right to

withdraw from the research at any point. Furthermore, I have undergone the human subject's approval process.

Outline of Chapters

The following chapter will review existing literature that examines the ways punk has been linked to political consciousness, gender and sexuality, patriarchy, and begin to explore how Chican@ punks have created a Chican@/Latin@ punk scene. I will first engage with literature that addresses race and punk; looking at how race has been dealt with in the punk scene historically, what punks of color have previously written about their experiences, and how punks of color have forged their own spaces within their respective scenes. Then, I will focus on literature that looks at the involvement of womyn and queer people in the punk scene, complicating the narrative as punks of color must navigate several identities and face different experiences as womyn and queer people of color. Furthermore, looking at the ways patriarchy, misogyny, and violence are found in punk. Finally, I will look at literature that looks at punk as a space for potential change, through its music, aesthetic, and modes of cultural production.

Chapter three will discuss my findings by looking at the stories and thoughts shared by the punks I interviewed. Using womyn of color, and queer people of color lenses I will analyze the stories and thoughts shared by the people I interviewed to understand their experiences in the punk scene, especially when dealing with race, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, I will be able to make note of how they have formed and maintained the punk scene in Los Angeles. My field notes and personal anecdotes will be utilized to navigate the stories and thoughts shared by the individuals who were interviewed. Furthermore, lyrics and musical composition will be used as supplemental

text to further explore themes and issues raised by the participants. Ultimately, creating connections between the words of the people I interviewed, the music, and the experiences I had while participating in the L.A punk scene.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the findings made through my research. It will pay special attention to different issues that surfaced in the interview process that still need to be further investigated. These questions can be utilized by people in academia to further explore the LA punk scene. Most importantly, these questions can be used by punks to look critically at the scene and move forward in creating the changes they want to see in the scene. Ultimately, this chapter will function as a way to take a look at the greater picture of how the LA punk scene functions and how it has connected people locally, nationally, and transnationally.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I can't recall the first zine-- independently produced and distributed magazine- I ever read, I do clearly remember that I started accumulating many rapidly, so quickly that I could not read all of them. Unfortunately, the zines were lost in several moves when I went to college. Though the importance of zines for punk cannot be stressed enough, sadly they are not warranted academic. Nevertheless, punks of color--in particular-- have worked to maintain an archive of zines created by other punks of color, an entire dissertation could be devoted to the creation of zines alone. However, it is my intention to challenge the realm of academia for its lack of attention to punks of color, especially Chican@s/Latin@s.

The literature reviewed critically examines the role that race has played in the creation of the punk scene and its politics from its inception. To further complicate the narrative, I will consider the treatment and function of womyn and queer people in the scene. Though the punk scene has been plagued with pseudo radical rhetoric, in many instances it proves to reproduce the white patriarchal structure of mainstream society it claims to abhor. Lastly, the literature will deal with the facilitation of political consciousness by examining the DIY ethic, but most importantly how various subcultures are formed within punk due to the intersection of various identities and ideologies.

It Happens All the Fucking Time!: Race, Racism, and White Privilege

When looking at punk it is important to remember that it does not form out of a void but rather within a particular context and setting. Despite its alleged anti-racist politics, the punk scene initially stems from opposition to the corporatization of rock music, and not from a politic of racial consciousness. Moreover, as the origin story of

punk has maintained white males at its core, there have been few attempts to complicate punk in terms of race in any major publications. Therefore, it has become our responsibility as punks of color to push forward our stories in the punk scene. By doing so we complicate the white male history typically attributed to punk, but also complicate what it means to be Chican@/Latin@. Ultimately, forming our own stories and traditions in the LA punk scene.

The intersection of being a person of color and being a punk becomes extremely complicated, since from the start issues of race were not heavily dealt with. Though there were specific organizations and individuals working to end racism, authors Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay warn of punks trying to adopt a “radical whiteness” positing, “punk rejection can inadvertently lead to further marginalization of racial minorities... [As] the experiences and concerns of white punks dominate the political agenda of rebellion" (2011). Paul Gilroy (2011) critiques the ways in which race was dealt with in the early days of punk, mainly because while claiming anti-racism they managed to diminish Black Nationalism and liberation. He concludes “the exclusive identification of racism with Nazis was to create problems for anti-racism later.” In Haenfler’s (2004) work on the straight edge¹¹ scene the author argues that rejecting drugs, sex, and alcohol was symbolic to resisting sexism, homophobia, and racism but never elaborates on how the symbolism applies.

¹¹ Straight Edge was a concept initiated in the 1980’s by band members of *Minor Threat* who rejected the consumption alcohol, drugs, and engaging in casual sex. The term would be adopted by other youth who also refrained from such activities and it would eventually become it’s own subgenre with bands that played heavier music, and sometimes wore an “X” on each hand to show their straight edge lifestyle and ideology.

Another case is the erasure of Chican@s/Latin@s contributions to the punk scene in Spitz's and Mullen's seminal work on Los Angeles punk, *We've Got the Neutron Bomb* (2001), where the authors only gloss over the East Los Angeles punk scene. By taking excerpts from interviews with Willie Herrón and Joe Vex, Spitz and Mullen breeze through the East LA scene focusing most of the text on *The Vex*, and only halt to take notes of how punks behaved themselves in the neighborhood because they feared the gang members in the area. Furthermore, Gilroy's point on anti-racism work is most apparent when looking at racially charged lyrics like those of "Guilty of Being White"¹² by D.C band *Minor Threat*. In the transcripts of a roundtable discussion about the lyrics, lead singer Ian Mackye takes a color blind approach arguing that he rather treat people on an individual basis and at times flirts with the idea of reverse racism. Though others try to counter his arguments, Mackye does not listen and the issue remains unresolved (2011). Ryan Moore (2004) speaks of the hardcore scene in the 80's and 90's as predominantly white and the ways people were excluded:

Hardcore punk was nothing if not pure white noise...purged of nearly all its debts to rhythm and blues or any other "outside" influence. In Southern California, one major consequence was the marginalization and eventual erasure of a budding Chicano punk scene, whose performers had attempted to incorporate various traditions of Latin music¹³

¹² "I'm sorry/for something I didn't do/lynched somebody/But I don't know who/You blame me for slavery/A hundred years before I was born/ Guilty of being white/I'm a convict/ (Guilty) Of a racist crime/ (Guilty) I've only served/ (guilty) 19 years of my time/ Guilty of being white

¹³ Though Moore does not write of any specific Chican@/ Latin@ artist, or Latin musical influence when setting this statement in its historical context one can infer that he is referring to bands like *Los Illegals* who at this time were singing in Spanish and used a keyboard allowing them to give the music a different feeling. Though *Los Lobos* (a Mexican-American band which fused various sounds) were well received by the punk community, it is difficult to say what was actually happening. Brendan Mullen, founder of *The Masque*, died before him and Willie Herrón, member of *Los Illegals*, could settle their argument about why *Los Illegals* were not invited to play at *The Masque*. Herrón

Moore's account is important in recognizing how racism or trying to adhere to a particular sound diverted some Chicana@s/ Latina@s from contributing to the growth of punk musically and culturally. Ultimately, the boundaries set up to maintain a punk sound mimics the constraints placed by major music labels on music genres upholding the racialization of music, particularly the myth of rock music as "white."

The concerns about race do not prove to be fruitless, as punks of color have spoken up to retaliate against the racism they have encountered in the punk scene, even from those who claim "radical whiteness." Taina Del Valle talks of her experiences of alienation in punk as a Puerto Rican womyn, explaining that every time her performance does not meet punk "norm" she feels alienated. She concludes, "It happens when I am called racist for dedicating a song to Latinos... It happens all the fucking time" (2011). Similarly, Madhu Krishnan (2011) writes of feeling acceptance in punk but simultaneously being considered the "honorary white kid," and having her culture ignored by her peers. Nevertheless, she too refuses to let her race and ethnicity become secondary. In an interview with Skeeter Thompson from DC band *Scream* he speaks of questioning the genuineness of punks' claims of "anti-racism." He adds that this was one of the few deep interviews he had ever had because he is never asked about race (2011). In 1990 there was also a series of letters written to *Maximum Rock 'n' Roll*, an international punk zine based in San Francisco, in response to a young Black man that wrote expressing his frustration with the racism he encountered in the punk scene and encouraging other punks of color to leave the scene. Writers shared their experiences of

argued it was because of racism, Mullen argued that the band was just not that good (Gurza, 2008).

racism within the scene, the hardships they faced within their families for being punk, but also expressed working to make the punk scene a place that celebrates the fusion of different sounds.

Mimi Thi Nguyen (2011) boldly calls out the white straight male attributes of punk and talks about how "rugged individualism" serves to reproduce hegemonic structures. She goes on to argue that by advocating the idea that punk is a space where people can transcend their respective identities, punks are actually dodging the power dynamics of such identities and dodging accountability. Though this may seem ideal in order to bring people together, ultimately it erases the experiences of people of color while maintaining the status quo. Nevertheless, punks of color have remained in the scene throughout its development. The issues of race and racism are important to recognize in trying to understand the experience of people of color in this subcultural space. Although there is no universal experience of the punk scene for people of color, these experiences of alienation in a space that claims to be inclusive gives us insight to the ways people of color have enacted resistance and countered white hegemony.

Aquí Estamos Y No Nos Vamos: Forming a Subculture within a Subculture

People of color have remained in the punk scene, and have taken charge of the different elements of their scenes, giving them their own particular flavor. As posited through *Más Allá de Los Gritos* (1998) by the early 1990's a combination of continued racist practices in the scene, as well as political turmoil helped facilitate a network of punks of color working together. Such subcultural formations, however; predate the film as early as the 1980's people of color began to assert their existence within the scene. Such is the case with Pakistanian band, *Alien Kulture*, who despite the "Paki bashing"

occurring in England formed their band and strived to be recognized (*Alien Kulture*, 2011). An even greater offset of this band has been the development of Taqwacore scene in the U.S with bands of Pakistanian and Indian origins. Members of this scene have spoken of punk as the perfect avenue for them to look at their complex identities, and to adjust their faith. Though Taqwacore has a specific community there can be parallels drawn to other minority communities, in their migrant experiences, and the prejudice they encounter in the U.S (Siddhartha, 2011).

One important element that punks of color have taken control over is documenting their respective scenes. For instance in discussing the documentary *Afro-Punk*, director James Spooner (2011) observes the need he felt for a Black punk community when he was younger. Spooner achieves this through his documentary by bringing attention to the experiences of Black punks throughout the U.S and ultimately helping the creation of a Black punk community nationally. The film captures the complex experiences of Black punks who feel alienated by the punk scene, but also face questioning and hostility in the Black community. Nevertheless, documentary interviewees like Tamar Kali Brown and Cypher embrace their Blackness, Tamar Kali Brown expressed feeling more connected to her Indigenous and African roots by being able to fuse elements of garb with punk aesthetics, which for her represent more than a trend. Much attention has been given to the all-Black band *Bad Brains* from Washington, DC. David Ensminger's (2010a) interrogation of the role of Black people in punk reveals that members of the band blame white supremacy for the lack of information on punk/hardcore in Black communities and ultimately less Black people being involved in the punk/hardcore scene.

Bad Brains maintained their wild and enthusiastic style, however upon discovering Rastafarianism their style began to evolve as well as their music, adopting traditional garb, dreadlocks, and incorporating reggae into their repertoire (Tate, 2011). Ensminger (2010a) argues that *Bad Brains*' use of the trope of suffering can be connected to sorrow songs, and to themes of exile. Darryl Jenifer (2011), from *Bad Brains* tells up and coming Black rockers that they do not need to prescribe to any particular aesthetic to rock hard, they just have to do it from the heart. Ultimately, Ramirez-Sanchez (2008) argues that it is those Black punks who know their history that can better assert their belonging in both communities. Mahon posits that "postliberated" Black aesthetic melts the frozen dialectic between "Black music" (read Hip Hop) and "white music" (read rock); allowing for Black people to gain inspiration from broader sources (qtd. in Nyong'o, 2006). This same principle can be applied to Chican@/Latin@ punks who have historicized their scene but also looked for other sources of inspiration out of the punk realm.

As previously mentioned, *Más Allá de los Gritos* has also proven pivotal in historicizing the Chican@/Latin@ punk scene. In the film, Sorrendeguy explains feeling more connected to Latin American punks because of their lived experience, finding their anger genuine as opposed to that of white punks in the U.S. In the documentary Michelle Gonzales, drummer of bands *Spitboy* and *Instant Girl*, describes the attitudes held by white punks about punks of color; there are two kinds: the desirables, and the undesirables; those who are "too brown, too down". Gonzales' statement indicates that punks of color who are critical of white punks are looked down upon. Ultimately, this demonstrates that the perceived acceptance of punks of color is dependent on their ability

to downplay racial/ethnic power dynamics. Thus, racism in the punk scene takes on much more subtle forms, being able to pass as “anti-racist” while maintaining the status quo. Hence, there is a division created between punks according to what levels of racism they are willing to be subjected to. Furthermore, Sorrendeguy states that many Latin@/Chican@ punk bands make a conscious decision to write lyrics in Spanish to demonstrate that theirs is a different experience, further demonstrating that Latin@s/ Chican@s in the punk scene created a subculture within a subculture. However, this comes as no surprise as one of the earliest Chican@ punk bands, *Los Illegals*, speak of the importance of being bilingual. Willie Herrón notes "had we not had a second language to deal with, or at least a larger influence in our lives, we'd probably be playing pop songs... with nothing but the content to sing about" (qtd. in Loza, 1993).

Performances of Chican@/Latin@ punk bands also prove to be crucial as many times they led to discussions amongst the bands and audience, creating a space for dialogue that was not available before. Zavella (2011) critically looks at *Más Allá de los Gritos* and argues that being a part of these scenes creates a "cultural citizenship" where people can take control and make themselves; creating space to critique politics from outside and within Latin@ communities. This is reflected in interviews with Chican@/Latin@ punk bands. On one occasion Sorrendeguy relates how they started hosting punk shows at community spaces allowing for a variety of people who may not identify as punk to participate, and even forging relationships with the *cholos* in the area. Other members speak of their own personal growth in being part of *Los Crudos*, as they have had to face their own internalized hate (Guskin & Esneider, 2011). Furthermore, Esneider (2011)-- from the band *Huasipungo*-- speaks of his experiences as an

undocumented punk and the support his band members provided while they were on tour to avoid any encounter with immigration services. These narratives demonstrate feelings of alienation within the punk scene for punks of color, but also reflects how Chican@/Latin@ punks have created a community amongst themselves and others in their community (Sorrendeguy, 1999; Guskin & Esnider, 2011; Esneider, 2011; Alvarado 2001).

Although punks of color's experiences have not been entirely positive, it is important to recognize the potential of punk spaces for people of color, as a place to stage and rehearse our future identities. Although in the past white punks attempted to limit the fusion of punk with other sounds, Chican@/Latin@ punks have continued to incorporate musical elements from different genres, especially those that relate to the music of their parents. Author Deborah Vargas writes about the "afterlife" of punk found in *cantinas* as bands like *Piñata Protest*, who incorporate the accordion into their pop punk sound, and *Girl in a Comma*-- an all-womyn band--that play punk in a *cantina*, a place usually relegated to men. *Ricanstruction*, a band of Nuyoricans who fuse punk sounds with Hip-Hop and other genres, are the embodiment of the changes happening in the punk scene. Though their sound may not be considered "punk" by purists, their ideals are because they embrace their marginalization, and value remaining underground allowing their music to thrive (Arevalo Mateus, 2004). Furthermore, authors Carmelo Esterrich and Javier H. Murillo (2000) acknowledge the aggressive sound of punk, but they also write about the ways it transforms traditional music forms. By looking at bands like *Café Tacvba*, the authors note how the music is adapted and fused, but also critically parodied through hyperbolic lyrics inspired by classic tunes. Thus, there is interplay between punk

and traditional music, challenging the status quo but also pushing the unspoken confines found in punk. Chican@/Latin@ punks seem to detach themselves from the nihilistic offset of punk and ideas of “no future” and instead promise a future, especially as they continue to change the scene through Spanish lyrics, fusing various sounds, and refusing to be drowned out in white punk history.

It is important to continue documenting the contributions of Chican@/ Latin@ punks as they continue to (re)create the punk scene as a subculture within a subculture. Artists who have identified as Chican@/Latin@ punk in the past may have changed their musical styling but have maintained the sense of humor and the do it yourself ethics of punk (Habell- Pallan, 2010; Alvarado, 2001). Nyong’o (2006) posits, “because black rock is perceived as part of the rock scene, rather than the black music scene, its impact has been minimized.” Thus, it is important to emphasize that Chican@/ Latin@ punks are not just a branch of the subculture, but a subculture within a subculture. Although alliances have been built amongst punks of color, such alliances do not go unproblematized as even within these networks issues of patriarchy continue to surface.

Oh Bondage Up Yours: Dismantling Punk Rock Patriarchy

The experience of Chican@s/Latin@s in the punk scene are not homogenous as issues of gender and sexuality are also important in complicating and exploring how the punk scene functions, like any other subculture issues of patriarchy surface in different forms. Men participating in the early days of punk were said to be “interrogating masculinity” as they wore make up and “cross dressed” such as Jack Grisham who wore heavy make up. Dave Dictor lead singer of MDC goes as far as saying that punk allowed him to experiment with his sexuality (Ensminger, 2010). However, the reasons why they

engaged in such behaviors becomes complicated when considering individuals motives, but most importantly race. Katherine E. Wadkins (2012) looks at the construction of punk rock masculinity and determines that proto-punk artists like the *MC5*, Iggy Pop, and others were merely appropriating Black stereotypes and making them counter-cultural. The *MC5* took the look of the Black Panthers donning Afro's and initiated a White Panther Party, with politics that called for unrestrained sexuality.

Two important points arise from these particular performances of masculinity, first that these actions were not political, nor did they question norms of masculinity. Second, that Black men in particular were still perceived as primitive, though this was something that white males problematically sought, and thus Black men were left with little to no space to reinvent themselves. Waldkins (2012) notes of *Death*, an all Black band— as being uninterested in the aesthetic element of punk, but nevertheless, “gender was preformed literally, during the bands appearances, and implicitly in their personhood.” Therefore it is difficult to gage how engrained patriarchy was in men's mind. Masculinity has played itself out in different forms from sexual encounters (Woolston, 2012) to violence at shows (Ensminger, 2011a), showing signs that perhaps the men had not completely done away with patriarchal ideas. If we are to address patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity within the scene, it is important to incorporate a holistic understanding of violence. As defined by the Violence Prevention Alliance, violence is

the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation

(2015)

Moreover, it is essential that we consider the effect that state sponsored violence—prison industrial complex, military, etc—has on personal violence (Smith qtd. in Sussman, 2007). Therefore, it is important to consider how violence is perpetuated in subtle ways amongst members of the L.A punk scene, as a symptom of patriarchy and many other problems, like poverty, that are encountered in our community. While violence is perpetuated against womyn and queer people, it is also present amongst hetero males. For instance, Ensminger (2011a) looks at the development of gangs/ crews in the punk scene, and how these led to violence amongst punks. The crowds were rowdy spitting on bands, throwing objects (Blush, 2010a), fights would break out, and occasionally erupted into riots. Nevertheless, Ensminger concludes that most of the violence that is written about in the mainstream media is merely a sensationalist strategy to sell, and most importantly a way to delegitimize punk rage.

According to the accounts given in *American Hardcore*, the LAPD was notorious for harassing punks and breaking up shows by showing up in riot gear, inciting the riots themselves as they battered punks (Blush, 2010b). Naturally, punks response was to write songs against the cops, and depict them as what they were, enemies. From its early stages LA punks would become entangled with state violence as they were at times provoked and then trapped in the system. While mainstream society depicted punks as violent, it was in fact society that inflicted violence on punks. Womyn in particular faced much harsher reactions from society for their punk identity, specifically their unconventional appearances. One noteworthy case was when Ari, lead singer of *The Slits*, was stabbed for her appearance. However, that was not an isolated incident as Viv Albertine, another member of *The Slits*, recalls having skinheads and motorcycle gang Hell's Angels, show

up to their performances just to harass them (O'Brien, 1999). Unfortunately, these violent reactions from society at large are unsurprising. However, this begs the question if the treatment of womyn within the punk scene was much better than by the outside. In order to really uncover the role of womyn in the scene, it is important to remain critical and investigate the power dynamics between punk men and womyn.

Though many would agree that punk created a space for womyn to participate in by being part of bands, there were still many incidents of sexism within the scene, from sexist lyrics to devaluing contributions of female members in bands (O'Brien, 1999; Habell-Pallan, 2004; Palacios & Estrada, 2004; Griffin, 2012; Ensminger, 2011; Woolston, 2012); this becomes most apparent with the development of hardcore (Macleod, 2010). Nevertheless, from the inception of punk there were instances of sexism difficult to ignore. As Joanna Gottlieb and Gayle Wald (1994) argue, in the initial stages of punk the reason men were able to play with their own masculinity and performance was because womyn's identities were so fixed. On one hand, there is considerable attention given to the voice of womyn punk vocalists, many of whom have been criticized for their loud screaming rather than singing. Such is the case of British band, *The Raincoats* that stood out for their inability to play well and their peculiar sound. Their singing had shrill notes, yet they pushed their voices in order to challenge what was considered acceptable for womyn's signing, in turn a form of liberation for them and other womyn vocalists (O'Meara, 2003). Moreover, the issue of style becomes more complicated for womyn as it becomes a symbol of their social economic status, but also of their sexuality. Those with more feminine appearance were said to be middle class, and a more masculine look was attributed to those who were working class (Fox,

1987). William Force (2009) writes about womyn's punk style as being more mainstream with a punk twist and extra fitted, calling into question their authenticity as punks. It is interesting to note that hairstyles for womyn were given names such as "just been fucked," and womyn were called "scene sluts", neither of these terms were applied to men. Thus, there is an obvious double standard for what is deemed appropriate for men and womyn in the punk scene. Ultimately, these labels demonstrate the sexism and misogyny reproduced in punk culture.

Moreover, Ensminger (2011) looks at the ways womyn are depicted in punk show flyers and finds that most images objectified or vilified women. The negative depiction of womyn does not end with show flyers. Woolston (2012) looks at the ways that the media has depicted Nancy Spungen, girlfriend of punk star Sid Vicious, in a negative light and by extension have continued this negative portrayal through Courtney Love. Both of these womyn have been denigrated because of their past history in stripping, but the greatest accusation has been that they were the downfall of their boyfriend musicians. Both Nancy Spungen's and Courtney Love's image have remained tied to their sexual past; however, for the men in the punk scene this has not been the case. One notable case that has remained largely swept under the rug has been Malcolm McLaren's (who helped launch *The Sex Pistols* among other bands) pedophilia. Not only did he manipulate Anabella Lwin (lead singer of *Bow Wow Wow*) into sexually provocative situations at the age of thirteen, he also launched a kiddie porn magazine, and publicly stated, "I like to see children in sexual situations" (qtd. in Brown, 2011). This demonstrates how McLaren's male privilege allowed him to dispose of his history of pedophilia and still be successful in the music industry. These are obvious cases of double standard where the

men are allowed to unapologetically strut their sexuality, but womyn must uphold a restrained sexuality. Those womyn who are open about their sexuality are cast apart by men, who ridicule them or believe they can engage in sexual acts with them. As Ana Castillo (1994) shares in her own experience of attempting to speak about sexuality “[it] was not a personal ‘invitation’ from me to come—to me—but a tragically overdue invitation to discuss within our various communities our spiritual, political, and erotic needs as a people.” The negative representations of womyn and McLaren’s actions are representative of the different forms of violence that womyn are subjected to in the scene. While the images may not physically harm, they do cause psychological harm for womyns’ sense of worth, but also the worth that males give to them. By portraying womyn in a negative light it enables men to treat womyn as inferior. Furthermore, McLaren’s actions are sexually abusive and manipulative, once again perpetuating violence, but also making sexual conquest and misogyny permissible. Overall, these examples further reveal the sexism and misogyny found in punk. As a result of these continued issues of patriarchy, the *Riot Grrrl* Movement was born.

The inception of *Riot Grrrl* occurred when members of *Bikini Kill*, Kathleen Hannah and Tobi Veil, and members of *Bratmobile*, Allison Wolfe and Molly Neuman, came together in Washington D.C and called out for a “Revolution Grrrl Style Now!” *Riot Grrrl* sought to challenge the patriarchy embedded within the scene and demanded more representation, called out sexism, promoted a personal revolution, and promoted anti-capitalist ideas (Duncombe, 2004). The name was adopted to celebrate youth but also to emphasize the growl in the word girl that is usually perceived as passive (Rosenburg & Garofalo, 1998). *Riot Grrrl* chapters flourished throughout the U.S with

different discussion groups, zines, and bands forming to address patriarchy. The performance of *Riot Grrrl* bands is also important as they adopted the idea of “girls to the front” and made the men stand in the back, a space that had previously been relegated to womyn, creating a safe space for the womyn performing and the womyn in the audience. Thus, *Riot Grrrl*, and events like *Ladyfest*, allowed womyn to come together, become cultural producers, resist mainstream femininity (Zobl, 2004), express pleasure, and assert sexual autonomy (Moore, 2007). This is further demonstrated in the interviews conducted by Rosenberg and Garofalo (1998), where young womyn express feeling connected to the ideals of equality and of starting a revolution from within. Along the same lines *xsisterhoodx*, an online community for straight edge womyn, was created since straight edge hardcore seemed particularly male dominated, espousing ideals of community through brotherhood (Haenfler, 2004). It is important to note that Leonard, director of the site, speaks of the way that the straight edge scene scrutinizes womyn for their sexuality, recreating the virgin/whore dichotomy (Kuhn, 2009). Although womyn were given more space to perform, many punks maintained conservative ideas about womyn’s sexuality, and thus, womyn’s role in the scene.

However, Nguyen (2012) challenges the perception of *Riot Grrrl* as a solution to the problems of patriarchy in the punk scene and instead pinpoints how they reproduced racial hegemony, and pushed for white womyn’s liberation. While she acknowledges the importance of this movement, she also talks about the racism womyn of color had to encounter in these spaces. Furthermore, she critiques the ways white female punks dealt with being called out as racist, and deems the historicizing of these incidents as problematic as it is often depicted as a blotch on their perfect record. Digging through

zine publications and blogs one can find numerous accounts where womyn of color disidentify with the *Riot Grrrl* Movement for various reasons, particularly issues of race (Nguyen, 2012; Dawes, 2013; Cruz Gonzales, 2013). While *Riot Grrrl* strived to create a safe space for womyn it did so without a critical analysis of their class and racial privilege (Stinson, 2012). The narrative of *Riot Grrrl* becomes further complicated as Jacques (2001) notes the image of angry white womyn comes to light simultaneously as that of angry black men in Hip Hop, creating an interesting juxtaposition in mainstream media.

Although white womyn have remained the focus of most media and scholarship on womyn in punk, womyn of color have contributed to the punk scene in multiple ways. Poly Styrene lead singer of *X-ray Spex* was mixed race, and was viewed as overall weird as she even scared Johnny Rotten, lead singer of *The Sex Pistols* (Ensminger, 2010a). Her voice has been deemed unattractive by some, but it has also served as a tool against male dominated punk. Though she was never hypersexualized, she was never desexualized and exuded her own sexuality. Styrene's performances as well as the performance of other womyn of color, like Tamar Kali's¹⁴ and Janelle Monae's¹⁵, represent a shift from white womyn punk, allowing for a distinct performance, sexuality, and black feminism that remain invisible in punk (Stinson, 2012a). Osa Atoe, a Black womyn who created the popular zine *Shotgun Seamstress*, talks more in depth about writing zines and sharing her

¹⁴ Black female punk performer based out of New York and featured in *Afropunk* who's performance plays with the genre of punk and other musical stylings (Stinson, 2012a).

¹⁵ Black female punk performer who has become commercially successful in the music industry, and a spokesperson for cosmetics line Covergirl. Monae has received much attention about her identity, as she has called herself an android. Using this term allows Monae to play with images, sounds, and her sexuality; maintaining things ambiguous and escaping strict definitions of who she is (Stinson, 2012a).

vision of feminism for younger generations to resist traditional gender roles and “subvert the mainstream paradigm” She shares about her experience with writing the zine “[m]y own identity was strengthened through the process of providing six issues worth of examples of other black queers, feminists, punks, artists, and musicians...I found comfort, empowerment, and pride through interviewing folks...” (Stintson, 2012). Thus, womyn of color creating allows them to pay homage to others like themselves. Experiences like those of Atoe, are reflected in the performances of Chicana punks.

The contributions of Chicana punks were also pivotal as they helped define the East L.A punk scene and influenced the 1980’s hardcore sound, with Alice Bag (Alicia Armendariz) as the lead for *The Bags*, and Teresa Convarrubias fronting *The Brat* (Habell-Pallan, 2004). The lyrics of these Chicanas expressed the rage they felt at the violence they had experienced on their own bodies and that of their mothers. Similarly, Sandra Hahn of *Los Illegals* talks about the patriarchy embedded in her family structure where marriage was the only accepted outcome for her life (Loza, 1993). At the time of her interview Sandra’s parents were not aware that she was performing in a band. Habell-Pallan (2004) writes of Bag’s performance paying particular attention to Bag’s feminine presentation and her ability to fight off males, deemed masculine by society, while she performed on stage. Bag gives insight to her performances,

All the violence that I’d stuffed down inside of me for years came screaming out... all the anger I felt towards the people who had treated me like an idiot as a young girl because I was the daughter of Mexican parents and spoke broken English, all the times I’d been picked on by peers because I was overweight and wore glasses, all the impotent rage that I had towards my father for beating my mother just exploded.

(2005)

Bag's performance is an outlet for years of frustration against structures of racism and patriarchy that consumed her life at a young age. Performing, for these womyn becomes more than defying the status quo, but also a way to heal from the violence they experienced.

Issues of race and gender become further complicated when we consider individuals' sexuality. Though central in the formation of punk, queer people have also faced stigma of being identified as such, but it is the embrace of this antagonism, Nyong'o (2008) posits, that allows for "queer world formation". As a response to the macho energy of hardcore, and the Reagan era in the 1980's the subgenre of queercore/homocore emerged creating their own zines, producing their own music, and culture. Queercore engages in disidentification, which allows people to create their own identity by confusing and compounding other identities (Muñoz, 2009); in this case disidentifying from dominant gay/lesbian culture, but also from punk (Taylor, 2009; duPlessis, 1997; Fenster 1993). As Fenster (1993) argues defining oneself as a "homopunk" does not define an individual's position in the scene but rather attempts to define the scene, and build a community. Thus, challenging the patriarchy and homophobia that some punks may not acknowledge, while also creating a safe space for punks who are queer.

Through a collection of interviews and other writings David Ensminger (2010) creates a historical account of queercore and demonstrates how punk is latently queer, though some punks remain(ed) in the closet. From the early days of punk there are multiple people who were openly gay, particularly in the Austin, Texas scene. The lead singer of *The Dicks*, Gary Floyd, was a 300-pound man who often performed in drag and

taunted those who questioned him for his politics and sexuality, demonstrating a sense of confidence and fearlessness. When speaking of bands such as *Limp Wrist* and *Youth of Today* (a play on words from the straight edge band *Youth of Today*), Ensminger observes that while being humorous these bands created a subgenre that could challenge the homophobic ideas still found in the punk and hardcore scenes. Bands like *Tribe 8*, utilize their lyrics to challenge the inherent homophobia of straight womyn, which have the choice of befriending queer womyn or maintaining a closed mind to that community (Fatal, 2012). Another example of the rhetoric of queercore is found in the performance of *Anal Traffic*, who remain playful and vulgar in their performances, dancing around the stage making sexual suggestions with their instruments, and thus subverting hetero rock performances (Taylor, 2009). On the other end of the spectrum, there is the performance of Brian Grillo from *Extra Fancy*, who performs aggressively with his oil drum. Kevin Schwandt (2009) argues that while his leather gear may replicate the mainstream gay image it also incorporates a working class aesthetic. The different performance of queer punks is testament to the complex and diverse identities found within punk and its subgenres, though these do not gain much recognition in academia. Nevertheless, through their performance queercore artists prove that they are more than just queer people performing punk as they infuse their performances with their own rhetoric and politics (DeChaine, 1997). The cooptation of queercore has also been a point of discussion especially as bands like *Extra Fancy* (Schwandt, 2009) and *Pansy Division* (DeChaine, 1997) have gotten mainstream attention. While DeChaine argues that such media attention is important, Halberstam (2003) argues that such subcultures cannot be coopted or incorporated because “they were never offered membership in the dominant groups in

the first place.” As identities become more complex the issue of cooptation appears to diminish, as queer people of color experience marginalization within the queer punk community.

When looking at queercore band *Tribe 8*, Shoemaker (2010) highlights that lead guitarist Leslie Mah is a biracial queer punk who has had a unique experience within the scene. In interviews Mah expresses that being a queer womyn of color in punk is difficult because both the punk and queer community remain predominantly white. Furthermore, Mah expresses that she cannot engage in the same type of performance as her other white band members, who often take off their shirts, because she could be hyper sexualized. This is in stark comparison to the account given by Fusch (2005), who focuses on the performance of the bands lead singer, Lynn Breedlove, who is white and also more butch. She writes,

[When] Breedlove takes off her T-shirt: viewers typically respond in ways that suggest that they identify her as same and other... girls us (sic) front, near the stage, also take off their shirts – and often their bras, if they’re wearing them – performing their solidarity with the dykes on stage.

Although Fusch’s argument about solidarity between the audience and the performers is compelling, it lacks any consideration of race. Mah’s discomfort with going topless on stage is testament to what other womyn of color who are performers and/or in the audience may feel when faced with this situation, having to navigate and negotiate between their gender, sexuality, and race. Both Mah and Breedlove utilize their body as a site of resistance, rejecting gender norms through their bodies (Langman qtd. in Griffin, 2012), but in different manners. While Breedlove may use her privilege as a white womyn to go topless, Mah blends feminine and masculine gender norms. Thus, queer

people of color in punk find themselves having to navigate their identities and putting into practice various forms of resistance.

Kuhn interviews a queer straight edge vegan punk from Oakland who comments on the shortcomings of the straight edge scene in particular for queer people. The problem, he argues, is in what the straight edge hardcore scene does not do; it does not create space for queers, womyn, and people of color. Though people have left the scene due to the lack of these spaces, the punk scene is still important in the formation of individual's identities. This is exemplified through the experience of Vaginal Crème Davis, a queer Afro Chicana punk drag performer, who speaks of her own development going through different phases, like the "snow period" where she attempted to attain white privilege by association, and most importantly experiencing a "conscious shift" when she

started reading about Angela and the Panthers, that's when Vaginal emerged as a filtering of Angela through humor... We (Vaginal Davis and the Afro Sisters) did a show called "we're taking over" where we portrayed the Sexualese Liberation Front which decides to kidnap all the heads of white corporate America so we could put big black dildos up their lily white buttoles and hold them for ransom. It really freaked out a lot of the middle-class post-punk crowd—they didn't get the campy element of it but I didn't really care.

(Davis qtd. in Muñoz, 1999)

The experience of Davis proves to be different to that of white queers but also of other punks. Her performance is injected with politics not entirely understood by most of its audience. Nevertheless, as Muñoz posits Davis cannot fully access Black militancy and Panther rhetoric for its homophobia. Davis' performance and experience is important because it demonstrates the development of a queer person of color, but also challenges a white- hetero punk scene to acknowledge its presence. To some extent punk can provide a space to experiment with sexuality and to challenge heteronormative time.

Jodie Taylor's study on "middle aged" queer people in subcultural spaces finds that people do not view themselves as "middle age." Taylor posits that queer temporalities work differently than heteronormative temporalities, as they do not prescribe to normalized milestones as marriage and childrearing. This allows them a "prolonged youthfulness" that allows them to continue engaging in cultural production and innovation, as exemplified by Vaginal Davis performances.

The literature of gender and sexuality in the punk scene brings forward many compelling points. It is important to note the different ways that various identities interplay with each other, and how this reflects in the ways that punk has served as a space of transgression as well as a space that reproduces patriarchal structures. Given the literature there seems to be a clear divide in terms of what punk provides for people of different genders, races, and sexualities. What has proven liberatory for some has not been the same for others, as is the case for some womyn of color and *Riot Grrrl*. Furthermore, as inspirational as *Bad Brains* were for punks of color, specifically Black men, their spirituality led them to condemn queer sexualities, and gained them scorn from other bands (Ensminger, 2010a). The way the axes of domination work can be further investigated in punk spaces, especially in the current Los Angeles punk scene, which has continued to evolve throughout the years. It is important to explore how Chicanas and queer people have continued to navigate these spaces and if they have been able to address, challenge, or change any of the problems of the past.

Now Go Start a Band: Development of Political Consciousness and Cultural Production

Despite the different forms of oppression reproduced in the punk scene people of color, womyn, and queer people continue to participate in these spaces. While many have

said that the appeal stems from the anger embedded in punk, another significant factor is punk's Do It Yourself (DIY) spirit. The idea that anyone can and should start a band has drawn people into the scene. D.I.Y is not limited to just learning three chords and starting a band, but also expands to creating zines, producing music, booking shows, allowing people with different interests to engage in cultural production; ultimately creating a forum to express different identities, ideas, initiating dialogue, and creating an alternative to capitalistic cultural consumption.

D.I.Y is one of the central tenants of punk culture, it promotes that punks make or create their own things rather than consuming; from their clothing to music distribution. There is a significant amount of scholarly work that looks at the D.I.Y ethics embedded in punk, specifically looking at the production of zines (Moore, 2007; Moore, 2009; Mattson, 2001; James, 1989; Roberts & Moore, 2009; Mattson, 2001, Nomous, 2011). All authors have noted that producing these zines and records has allowed the punk community to create an alternate economy that subverts capitalist modes of consumption. Roberts and Moore (2009) specifically note how zines were essential to the formation of political resistance for punk by providing information regarding events and companies to boycott. Furthermore, zines gave bands exposure, allowed creative expression, and facilitated dialogue between punks throughout the country and the rest of the world. These forms of production gave more creative liberty to artists, created less of a financial burden, but most importantly fostered friendships and relationships that ultimately create a community of support for all participants, creating a larger community as zines, records, and other items are distributed transnationally (Moore, 2007). Zines have facilitated the process of building community for punks of color as well; archiving this

work has become the mission of various organizations. Though the importance of zines in punk is undeniable, punks have been able to resist the mainstream through other outlets.

Kevin Mattson's (2001) research, for instance, creates a detailed account on the various strategies of resistance created by punks in the 1980's. In his account Mattson not only discusses the production of music and fanzines, but also goes on to discuss how punks set up organizations that engaged with their communities in multiple ways from providing high school students with alternative political information to exploring alternative forms of protest. Though Mattson does not believe these programs brought about any tangible changes, he does emphasize how these methods allowed punks to resist cultural norms.

Similarly, Barret (2013) argues that punk is not simply a stepping-stone towards political action. He instead gives two detailed accounts on how punks have become political agents in keeping open two important spaces for punk shows; *924 Gilman* in Berkeley, and *ABC No Rio* in New York. Through their struggle to maintain these spaces open both collectives had to develop strategies to work horizontally internally, as well as with their local communities. Barret insists on the importance of the organizational structures utilized to maintain these spaces open, especially in a world where free trade has become the norm. Barret demonstrates the ways punks have been able to grow amongst themselves while effectively resisting the structural forces trying to shut them down. It is important to document how Chican@/Latin@ punks have employed similar methods to maintain punk spaces alive, moreover, how they have utilized their D.I.Y ethics in other organizations and spaces.

Andy Bennet takes a different approach when looking at punk and resistance; rather than focusing on youth involved in punk he examines an older generation of punks ages 35-53. Bennet counters the common notion that older people who still participate in punk are simply refusing to let go of their youth. Furthermore, he notes that aesthetically older punks have toned it down and maintain their punk identity more as an essence to their person and beliefs. Ultimately, older punks have embraced punk as a lifestyle and maintain a relationship with other older punks as well as younger punks, taking up the role of teachers and insiders for the younger generation.

The sharing of knowledge between punks at music performances is important in the development of political consciousness (Ardizzone, 2005), as shows became forums for ideas via the literature made accessible and the speeches given (Mattson, 2001; Nomous 20011). Similarly, in his “New Punk Manifesto” Joel Olson (2011) writes about the important political functions of punks like developing their punk communities through D.I.Y methods of zine making, record production and traveling, but also notes the importance of individuals changing ourselves. He notes lifestyle changes like becoming vegetarian or exploring issues of racism, sexism, homophobia in our community, and within us. Similarly, Chican@s/Latin@s in the punk scene have remained active members despite being past the age of “youth.” However, it is also necessary to interrogate why some have abandoned the punk scene and how being involved in such spaces impacts their lives today.

D.I.Y ethics have proven to be central to the development of punk scenes, but also to the development of political consciousness. By becoming producers of their own media, and recordings, punks are not only able to effectively challenge capitalism, but

also create a cultural landscape that allows for dialogue, and ultimately political consciousness. Though the literature on D.I.Y is extensive there is no consideration of race, which proves interesting considering the long relationship that Chican@s/ Latin@s have with being *rasquache*, or making ends meet (Habell-Pallan, 2004), due to the financial hardship that many immigrant communities have encountered and continue to face. Just like the aesthetics of punk, *rasquachismo* has manipulated materials and iconography to create a message. More specifically, in the 1960's Chican@s would employ *rasquachismo* as a framework to view and create art (Ybarra-Frausto, 1991). One such tactic was to display art in public, in order to reach their target audience, other Chican@s and immigrants (Ybarra- Frausto, 1990). Similarly, punk bands have performed in the middle of marches with no city permits, and their own power generators for their instruments. The resemblances between the *rasquache* tactics employed historically by Chican@ artists to those employed by Chican@/ Latin@ punks serve to reiterate the spirit of survival engrained in our communities. It would be interesting to see how Chican@/Latin@ punks have related to and participated in D.I.Y, and ultimately how these experiences have led to political consciousness, though it may not be articulated as such. It is vital that we look at political consciousness not solely on how Chican@s/Latin@s articulate their ideas, but rather how they engage in political dialogue through their actions. Furthermore, if the subculture within a subculture that emerged in the early 1990's exists today it is important to consider how DIY ethics, political consciousness, and older generations of punks have aided in preserving it.

The literature on punk is extensive, however; there is a limited amount of literature written about the participation of punks of color in punk. Most of the literature

that does speak about punks of color recognizes that there has been racism within the punk scene, even in spaces that were supposed to be more inclusive. Issues of race are not the only ones that exist within punk spaces, as sexism and homophobia have played an important role in the scene, causing some to stay in the scene and fight to make it right, and causing others to leave punk behind. It is important to remember that these identities cannot be seen as mutually exclusive, since many navigate punk spaces having multiple identities and experiences. Given the lack of literature on punk that deals with issues of identity outside of a white straight male perspective, it is important for me as a Chicana punk to write about the punk scene that is not so often historicized. It is important for me as a scholar to make sure that the contributions of punks of color, *mujeres punkeras* (punk womyn), queer punks, and all other punk whose identities are erased be highlighted and celebrated for their contributions to the punk scene. Recognizing the complexity of the LA punk scene in terms of different factors of identity and how they have interplayed to keep the punk scene growing, allows us to challenge a narrative that has kept us under a cover of punk as the most important identity. Furthermore, it is by challenging and unpacking these issues of identity that we can further reflect as punks of color on how to keep moving forward, developing our own political consciousness, and making the LA punk scene more than a pastime.

Chapter Three: This Is El Lay: *Loquera*, Consciousness, and Survival

After each show, I try to write down every single detail I can remember. From the dusty backyard floor on which the bands set up their equipment, to the frenzy of the male dominated mosh pit bodies slamming into one another, leaving empty 40oz bottles as their casualties. The amount of information to jot down is utterly overwhelming. There is the need to not only write about the bands, but who was there, the crowd's reaction to the bands, the people on side tables selling band merchandise, food, and beer; the details of the event of one night can go on and on. It was easy to lose myself in the drumbeats and fists going up in the air singing along with everyone else. Understanding the complexity of the LA punk scene requires more than listening to the music but also looking at how shows work spatially, and the way that different elements interact with one another.

Nevertheless, the notes that I managed to attain from attending shows worked hand in hand with the interviews and conversations conducted throughout this study. I had ten formal interviews with people who have been, or continue to be; involved in the punk scene throughout Los Angeles, as well as informal conversations with friends or anyone who was willing to share their thoughts and stories. Of the people formally interviewed, four identified themselves as womyn, four were males, and two participants identified as gender nonconforming¹⁶. Though the work and energy they have put into the punk scene will be reflected in their stories, I wanted to briefly highlight the work of each individual.

¹⁶ In order to respect these participants gender identity I will refrain from using gender pronouns and instead use "they."

Patty (25 years old) has been active in the punk scene since she was ten and till today takes photos at shows, Kevin (25) is a gender nonconforming straight edge individual who volunteers at *Bridgetown DIY*—a grassroots punk space, Rooster (22) is a queer male from East Los Angeles and singer for punk band *PTSD*, Angee (23) is from Huntington Park and sings for an all womyn punk band *Destruye y Huye*, Xelowks (30+) is an organizer, mother, and Hip Hop artist, Oscar (21) is originally from Huntington Park but now resides in San Francisco and is a writer for *Maximum Rock'n'Roll*, Malegria (24) is a queer gender nonconforming individual from the San Fernando Valley who has helped organize several shows, Marin (30) is a queer womyn who has drummed in several bands as well as organized many shows, Rudy Bleu (36) is the creator of *Scutter* zine, organized Scutterfest, and is currently part of the Maricon Collective, finally, Dingy (34) has been in several bands since 1996 and has also organized several shows. Through the interview process I was able to not only acquire data but also form stronger relationships as these individuals shared their stories and inspired me on multiple levels, from how they first came into the punk scene to the ways they've grown as people.

Forming: Getting into the Chican@/Latin@ punk scene

“... I was into it [punk] cus it was really weird and I was really weird at the time” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Despite the age differences among all the participants one of the underlying factors for their involvement in the punk scene was feeling “weird,” or like they did not fit into any social clique at school, or at times even within their own family. Nevertheless, many were brought into the punk scene by older people that were also part of subcultural spaces, though these older people did not always

identify as punk. Kevin talks about being exposed to punk as early as ten years old from a mentor at their afterschool program, “there were certain aspects in the way they dress, carry themselves... gritty raw people with spiked colored hair, some offensive shirt, something you don’t understand, it just drew me in so quickly” (Kevin, interview by author, July 1, 2014) Though for Kevin and others, the appeal was more aesthetic, the overall sentiment is one of not fitting in and trying to find a place of acceptance. Dinky talked about not fitting in with the mainstream crowds, but how he was still ostracized by other subcultural groups like the “metal heads¹⁷.” He recalls, “the punker kids were older, they accepted me with arms wide open, I thought... they’re older and they’re teaching me, they’re not calling me a poser” (Dinky, interview by author, Aug. 5 2014). Although an unspoken hierarchy remains within the punk scene, in general individuals find a sense of belonging with punks, and at times with people of other subcultural groups; mainly skaters, metal heads, etc.

Another important element why punk became appealing to many participants was the relation to feelings of anger. Malegria speaks of the anger they felt and how they felt this same anger in the music, “I was pissed off cus I wasn’t being heard, I was young, a lot of things were being done to me... [it] resonat[ed] with being angry” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). Though these feelings of anger may be dismissed as typical “teenage angst” there is much more to these feelings of marginalization and anger when considering the different circumstances these individuals were facing, from

¹⁷ Another subcultural group that listens to Metal. While punks and metal heads share similarities in their appearance and musical preferences, Metal tends to be more musically complex. This in turn, opposes the simplicity of punk.

acknowledging their queer identity, dealing with their immigration status, or dealing with sexual abuse within their families.

Although the reasons for individuals involvement are layered and complicated, everyone agreed that being a part of the punk scene was fun. Marin shared some of her experiences at her first punk show, “I went to a backyard show and I saw these bands and it was the idea of you can just walk in and make space for music, to socialize, to hang out-- after that I was just like ‘oh man I wanna do this for the rest of my life’ [laughter] literally” (Marin, interview by author, July, 11 2014). Individuals shared a range of stories from simply hanging out at a show, to going on tour, to hosting touring bands at their homes, all taking part in some sort of “*loquera*” from lying to their parents about their whereabouts to experimenting with drugs, alcohol, and sex. The term *loquera* surfaced in my conversation with Angee when she spoke about her experience as a young Chicana punk organizer, who engaged in critical work in the community during the day but the night before participated in her own *loquera*. The simple translation for *loquera* would be “craziness,” however, its connotation is one of unrestrained fun, and a loss of rules. Moreover, this *loquera* does not necessitate drugs, alcohol or sex as Dingy, Oscar, Patty, Kevin, and Malegria have had extended periods of sobriety, or identify/ have identified as straight edge. There is a wide variety of people involved in the punk scene, but there are several strands that seem to come together to form the LA punk scene: fun, marginalization, and being anti-status quo.

When asked to describe the people in the punk scene the responses ranged widely, some spoke of people coming from broken families, others spoke of the underlying issues in the punk scene like greed and homophobia, and others spoke about the ways that punk

is anti status quo. However, when speaking about the racial demographics everyone spoke of the “brownness” of the Los Angeles punk scene, with the exception of a few white punks found in Long Beach, or Hollywood. The overall sentiment was that the further west, or out of LA County you go the more white punks you will encounter. While many spoke of this fact in a celebratory fashion, it is important to consider what this implies in terms of understanding the power dynamics that exist among punks of different racial backgrounds. Most people interviewed spoke of experiencing racist actions or remarks once they left the comfort of the brown dominated L.A punk scene. Thus, this creates a niche in Los Angeles, where Chican@/Latin@ punks can feel at ease in terms of race. Most participants responded to the question of race in similar manners with responses like “I never really thought about it” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014) or “shit, sometimes you don’t even notice” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). This brings to the forefront several interesting factors such as the demographics of the city, intertwined with this are issues of social economic status, de facto segregation because of economic racism, and the overall inequity that exists in Los Angeles. Furthermore, this allows for the punk scene to become a sort of racial comfort zone where people do not have to acknowledge their own race unless they decide to travel outside of the confines of Los Angeles. Moving away from the comfort zone found in punk is important for several reasons as Oscar talks about discovering his place in society after moving away from a predominantly young Chican@/ Latin@ punk scene to an older, whiter punk scene in San Francisco. In a reflective tone Oscar explained, “I didn’t get into identity until I got to college, I really didn’t realize I was brown until I got to college” and then elaborated on this in terms of his involvement in the punk scene in

Los Angeles, “I never got to talk about it [race] in the punk scene, well everyone else looks like me I don’t see why I have to talk about it, now I feel like I have to talk about it because—cus I’ve experienced things” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014).

Marin shares how she came to understand the importance of the racial demographics of the LA punk scene when she travelled to Chicago for a Latino Punk Fest.

I remember when I first went to Latino Fest, I remember asking the guy I don’t understand why you need to have a festival we had this conversation...it’s a dude fest! What’s the point? And then he put it in perspective, its Chicago, it’s very segregated one side is very brown, the other side is very white and when I went there and saw it I realized it that’s why we have something, Latino Fest, one festival when it’s all brown people. In LA it’s such a brown scene and it’s so spread out that every weekend is Latino Fest, and you don’t realize how sacred that is cus no other city has that

(Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014)

To some extent this implies that the people involved in the LA punk scene may not recognize the importance of a mostly Chican@/Latin@ punk scene. Moreover, this creates a much more complicated understanding of racial disparities not only between Chican@s/Latin@s and whites but also among Chican@s/Latin@s and Black people. Although Los Angeles has become increasingly brown, the number of Black punks visible in the punk scene are small; an astonishing fact considering demographics still show a high percentage of Black residents, roughly 9% according to the 2013 census (census.gov). Oscar comments on this fact “[the LA scene] lacks a lot of blackness I don’t know if it’s an embedded anti-Blackness in our community” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Though it is hard to pin point why there is a lack of Black people in the punk scene it is important to acknowledge the racial tensions often found in our communities and how punk can be utilized as a way to ideally build solidarity.

Though some admitted that they preferred and mostly stayed in the Chican@/Latin@ concentrated areas of Los Angeles, the issue of race became more complicated for those who have ventured out. Most people talked about dealing with racism in the punk scene outside of Los Angeles. Angee spoke about being sexualized as a womyn of color by white punks who approached her speaking in Spanish, and Rudy talked about people who did not participate in certain events or shows because they were in East LA. However, Dingy who has traveled throughout the U.S and internationally with his bands stated that he had never experienced any sort of racism. In fact, he instead spoke about *Chuco's Justice Center*—a community center in South Central LA—that initially had a policy that to perform at the center at least one person in the band had to be a person of color, and how he disassociated from this. This is symptomatic of the color blind politics usually found in punk, which advocates for treating people as individuals rather than looking at their race. As Nguyen (1998) points out, punk focuses on the idea of “we’re just all human...we’re just all punk.” This call to colorblindness seems logical especially when there are established relationships among white people and people of color. A similar sentiment is expressed by Kevin when speaking about one of their closest friends, “I just see... my friend the guy who has anxiety issues, he’s like my brother, who he is from the inside...I want people not to see themselves not only as people of color” (Kevin, interview by author, July 1, 2014). Though Kevin has an understanding of the importance of people of color having spaces to perform or to celebrate their identity, such understanding becomes more complicated when dealing with his personal relationships to white people and their white privilege.

The intent of this project is not to create a racial divide, but it is of grave importance to understand how punk has helped formulate ideas of race and privilege. While punk certainly can be used as a space to challenge the “us vs. them” binary, and potentially to create a space of solidarity this becomes increasingly complicated when under a punk lens we must look at people as individuals. Thus, making it difficult to create dialogue that confronts white supremacy not as an attack on an individual or a specific band, but rather a system of oppression that white punks ultimately can benefit from. In a scene that is mostly Chican@/Latin@ race can seem to take a secondary or unimportant role, however “those roots are heavy handed, you’re not gonna get away from it easily” (Kevin, interview by author, July 1, 2014). These roots ultimately play a role in other aspects of peoples identities and how we interact with one another, especially those that may be different than us.

Chican@s/Latin@s tend to become involved in the punk scene because they feel marginalized from mainstream society. In punk they find a network of outcasts who share sentiments of frustration, anger, and who question the status quo. Nevertheless, people who are involved engage in *loquera* to different degrees, letting loose and engaging in their desires. Unlike other areas in the U.S, the Los Angeles punk scene is dominated by Chican@s/Latin@s. This is in part because of the complex history of migration into the city of undocumented people and white flight. While this concentration of Chican@s/Latin@s creates a level of comfort for some members, it also makes race a non-factor for many punks. Though some may never face racism or discrimination because of their race in the LA scene, it is important to consider the various identities

found in the punk scene and how other forms of oppression are replicated within the scene.

Para Las Chicas Rockeras: Mujeres (Re)Claiming Space in Punk

There were small groups of people hanging out outside when I first arrived to *Chuco's*. Upon entering I was greeted by familiar faces and a large banner that read *LadyFest LA*. Though I showed up alone I felt at ease because I knew several of the people who had organized the festival. Along the hallway walls hang posters with information about the number of youth that are in prison, as well as flyers with information about the space. *Chuco's Justice Center* is a space that devotes itself to ending the mass incarceration of youth of color, police brutality, and provides several resources for the community. Their spacious building reflects their spirit of solidarity and resistance through the cultural and youth led artwork that brings their walls to life with vivid colors and empowering images of people of color in the past and present. One of the shelves is filled with programs for *Ladyfest*, and interactive posters have been hung in the walls inviting attendees to engage by answering questions like “Why do I need feminism?” At the end of the hall there is a large room where a stage has been set up and several organizations, and local artists have set up tables with information and/or merchandise. The vast majority of people attending tonight appear to be womyn of color, with some males present in the audience as well. The bands performing are female fronted, and L.A locals, from diverse racial backgrounds, ages, and performance styles.

“*Ladyfest LA* challenges how our specific histories as womyn, trans folx, people of color, genderqueer, and queer have been muted, erased or silenced. Collectively, *Ladyfest LA* seeks to create a more inclusive safe environment through workshops,

performances, art, and critical dialogue by building upon and recognizing the knowledge and talents of LA artists and activists” (*Ladyfest LA*, 2013). Today, events like *Ladyfest LA*, *Clitfest LA* or compilations like *Mujeres de Punk* are not uncommon. However, this was not the case in the earlier days of LA punk, there were of course Chicanas/Latinas who participated but the number of womyn involved was not as high, and those who did participate have become an important part of the story of Chican@/Latin@ punk. Rudy, Marin, and Xelowks who have been part of the LA scene for a longer period of time, talk about the absence of womyn in the scene-- especially in roles of performers or organizers. Reflecting on what she would change of her experience in the scene in the late 1990’s/ early 2000’s Xelowks comments demonstrate this absence, “I would’ve liked to have brown, black womyn, to have created more bands where it wasn’t just all male, and not just the girlfriends, more like gender specific education of the process of it all, and what was happening, not just passive audience watching” (Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014). Rudy’s experience is also representative of this, “there were girls but they would stand on one side, there was the handful of girls in the pit, then there was the girls that wanted to be in the pit but stood on the side, I was with them [laughter]” (Rudy, interview by author, July 8, 2014). Though there was a presence of womyn in the LA scene, their participation remained focused on being spectators who at times were spatially marginalized by being relegated to the back. However, Rudy notes, “I was [involved] towards the tail end of *Riot Grrrl*, but there was all this feminist stuff happening in LA and I was inspired by them, when I started doing my zine and band there just seemed to be all these bands around me doing kinda the same things” (interview by author, July 8, 2014). Though there was a different punk community in LA,

they were not to be found among the people of color in Los Angeles. Rudy elaborates, “as time moved on it was the scene changed, or I changed, or the shows I started going to changed. I felt there was a big presence of queer people, womyn-- I wouldn’t see a lot of people of color unless I went to a certain show you know?” (Rudy, interview by author, July 8, 2014). Although it is important to consider that this is a specific moment in the LA punk scene, it is perhaps more important to see the transformation that occurred to the punk scene. From Rudy’s narrative we can gather that in order to find spaces that featured and celebrated womyn and queer artists one had to move away from a Chicana@/Latina@ scene toward a more white scene. This in turn allowed for the Chicana@/Latina@ scene to remain stagnant rather than striving to be more inclusive of womyn and queer people. Nevertheless, the lack of womyn in the Chicana@/Latina@ punk scene would not remain.

We had driven in my friends Volkswagen bus to the *Linden Haus* in Long Beach, where our friends from *Bruise Violet* would be playing. The band set up in the kitchen whose entrance was divided into two. The audience showed their appreciation by pushing and shoving along to the beats. By the third or fourth song, my friends and I brought out glow sticks, flung them in the air-- for everyone to catch-- and turned down the lights as the band played. Daisy’s vocals moved me as usual as I bounced off of other people’s sweaty bodies. The room went into frenzy. The glow sticks became the only light source as the mosh pit formed with the door divider as its core, people climbed the refrigerator and jumped into the crowd hoping to get caught by the others. In the darkness bright blues, greens, and pinks could be seen floating in the air, unleashing their fury but in a

spirit of fun. As the set concluded the lights went on and we all stepped outside to relief ourselves from the heat.

This was around 2007; I was learning more about womyn of color in punk and started to meet more womyn in the scene. Aside from *Bikini Kill*, *Bruise Violet* was the band that almost every person I interviewed mentioned when speaking about womyn in punk who inspired them. “It was at the *Allen Theatre*, that’s where I first saw *Bruise Violet*, and it blew my mind! Cus they were like brown, female-bodied individuals... [it] was really inspirational...I’ve always wanted to make music, whenever I think of making music and what I would want to sound like, I’m like yeah *Bruise Violet!*” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). Marin was the drummer for *Bruise Violet* and shared more about the band, their songs, and where most of them came from.

We wrote songs about the shit we were dealing with, songs about what was real in our lives, not like we purposely wrote ten songs about feminism, ten songs about rape; these are things we deal with on the daily... Our agenda was to have fun and enjoy what we’re writing about, usually wrote about reoccurring things in our lives like feminism, sexism...wanting to change our community, our political struggles. We all did community work, volunteered in different places, all visited families in different places; so its what we talked about, what we sang about
(Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014).

Thus, the music created by *Bruise Violet* is a manifestation of situated knowledge, where four womyn of color came together to express themselves about issues they shared.

Marin’s words shed light on the band’s desire to have fun but still interrogate the sexism they experience in their daily lives. By specifically writing songs about feminism *Bruise Violet* makes feminist ideology more tangible for punks whose only understanding of feminism may come from mainstream depictions. As womyn they were able to share frustrations, but they were also aware of the impact they could make, and this is most notable by the individuals involvement in different social justice issues. Furthermore,

recognizing sexism as an issue and engaging in activism to bring about change. As a band their commitment to bringing about change is apparent in their performances, especially those they did for benefit shows, or womyn/queer centered events. These sentiments are further explored in their song, "Man's World." The intro starts off with a bass line and the guitar playing a single note until the power chord comes in and changes the feel of the song to a more powerful and fast paced sound. Daisy's voice roars the lyrics:

Is this a life worth living
When will inferiority come straight to a stop
To reach true equality?

Even from before birth
With color coded genders
we are all divided
How many times haven't we heard
That it's a male dominated world?

We aren't meant for cooking or housekeeping

Rosie wouldn't stand for shit,
60 years and were still in debt
and fighting for our equal rights, so why do we fall down?
into these corporate lies that
make-up our eyes to keep us blind
fighting for equal rights
so why do we fall down?

In a man's world women are
Subordinate so break the chains
It's not his fuckin choice

In a man's world women are
Subordinate so break the chains
It's not his fuckin choice

Rosie wouldn't stand for shit,
60 years and were still in debt
and fighting for our equal rights, so why do we fall down?

In a man's world women are
Subordinate so break the chains

It's not his fuckin choice (2x)

Is this a life worth living?
When will inferiority come straight to a stop
To reach true equality?

Even from before birth
With color coded genders
we are all divided

Don't you know a change is needed now!?

The guitar carries the melody in the song, while the voice is only melodic when the back up vocals sing, "we aren't meant for cooking or housekeeping." Daisy's vocals follow the tradition of women of color in punk being unpleasant, at times even incoherent.

Furthermore it is the conjunction of Daisy's words and her delivery that challenge prescribed gender roles that have been given to us before birth. From having to wear a certain color according to your sex to using products to achieve standards of beauty, that create profit for corporations. Moreover, the lyrics use historical references to demonstrate that the fight towards equality has been a long one, yet we continue to face the same issues. *Bruise Violet's* lyrics give agency to womyn as they assert that it is not "his" choice. Thus, they challenge patriarchy by asserting it is not a man who will dictate a womyn's life. The song challenges womyn to break away from societal norms and live according to their own standards rather than those imposed on us. Towards the end of the song we hear a chorus and the music stops. The audience assumes the song is over, but this is merely a break. The guitar creates a bridge with the same riff that was used in the introduction and then another verse is thrown at the audience before the song actually finishes. Ultimately, this creates an emphasis on the message of the song that calls the audience to challenge sexism and patriarchy. Through a musical interlude and then

closing with this line, there is a sense of urgency for people to action and change the subordination of womyn.

It is interesting to consider what Patricia Hill Collins has stated about the work of Black feminists and how this applies to the music created by womyn of color, like *Bruise Violet*, “[r]ather than raising consciousness black feminist thought affirms and rearticulates a consciousness that already exists” (1990). Though Marin and the other band members may not have intended to form a feminist band or a political band, their music and performance was very much political on multiple levels from taking up public space that has historically not been intended for them, to forming networks of womyn of color in punk. Although for them writing these lyrics was simply sharing their experience, for their audience the music has greater significance as they identify with the things they say. Sadly, *Bruise Violet* has broken up, but the womyn have done other great things by performing with other groups or through their involvement in community organizing. Angee also mentioned *Bruise Violet* as one of her favorite bands, which is important considering that she is now part of an all womyn band herself. Her comments demonstrate the importance of seeing other womyn involved in the scene, “...finding that there was girls of color in bands was just something so moving to me. It made me feel like wanting to be in a band wasn’t too weird” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014). Angee’s comments hint at there being some hesitation about her desire to be in a band, but also how seeing other womyn of color involved made her feel more safe and willing to give in to her desire to be a performer. Angee is only one in the current force of womyn active in the Los Angeles punk scene, with bands like *Grima*, *Apostasis*, *Ugly Heads*, *Ausencia*, and many others. Unlike Rudy’s testimony, where he had to go outside

of the *barrio* to find spaces that were more inclusive of womyn, most of these bands have been able to gain support within the Chicana@/Latin@ punk community.

The presence of womyn is definitely felt at shows especially when they take the stage. The mosh pit may remain male dominated, but the front is usually crowded with other womyn ready to dance and sing along. As a vocalist Angee expresses that it is important for her to be on ground level with everyone else, “that’s why I like to bring energy, I want people to be ok... I’m a girl, pit! Move! It’s fine, I’ll be ok, don’t worry if I fall, I will get back up!” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014). In this sense Angee is able to establish her agency as a performer who does not need to be protected but still demands respect. Despite the growing number of womyn taking the stage, Deborah Vargas urges us to remember writing womyn into music history is not just about visibility but also about understanding the dynamics that occur and the struggles they continue to face as womyn artists and musicians in spaces that historically have been male dominated.

Although Marin and Angee participated in their respective bands at different times, they both have encountered very similar issues as musicians. Both speak about being objectified on stage to different degrees. Marin shares, “we couldn’t tell who actually liked us for our music, and who was trying to hook up with one of our members, cus anyone who asked for our number for a gig ended up trying to get at one of us, honest to god!” (Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014). Demonstrating not only how they are objectified, but also how their work as musicians is diminished rather than appreciated. It is frustrating to realize that people continue to make the same remarks about womyn in bands, Angee shared that as a band *Destruye y Huye* has also heard comments like

“You’re good for a girl.” In this respect, although womyn are more visible on stage, there continues to be misogyny embedded in the scene that does not allow people to value the music. Although the thought of “you’re good for a girl” may not be verbally expressed to every single all womyn band, the sentiment is felt in the lack of support that these bands encounter.

When I interviewed Oscar he was in LA for *Beserktown Fest*, which brought together generations of punk bands from different areas in the world. He made note of what he felt was a key absence, “*Apostasis*, I can’t even begin, they scare the shit out of me! I can tell you this, they don’t get enough attention... if shit were right they would be playing this festival this weekend I don’t know what’s happening” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Although how organizers of this festival went about selecting the bands is unknown to me, the bands that seem to garner more support are those of males. Malegria elaborates, “the bands that bring out a lot of people to shows it’s mostly cis gendered males that get all the support and love, and if you see the band that has like female bodies people...its just never fully as supported” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). When I attended *Ladyfest LA* the number of males in attendance reflected the lack of support from the males. In a male dominated scene, the amount of men in attendance was depressing. Marin, Angee, Oscar, and Malegria have all helped organized *Ladyfest LA* in different occasions, when I asked them about the low turnout of men they had similar reactions and attributed the absence of males to the underlying *machismo* still found in our communities. Dingy briefly touched on this matter when we spoke about the different reactions the audience will have when dealing with womyn on stage,

“sometimes they [males] just stand and listen... I’ve heard them say dumb shit like ‘they’re gonna bust some feminist shit’” (Dingy, interview by author, Aug. 5 2014).

This brings several interesting points to the forefront. For one, it appears as though womyn are holding their ground enough for men to know that if the womyn feel disrespected they will get called out. However, it is unfortunate and equally problematic that males avoid moshing not because they understand or care about respecting womyn’s space but because they do not want to hear womyns criticisms. It is important to consider the significance of the mosh pit. As the mosh pit has been historically a space for men, they feel that the presence of womyn places constraints on how aggressive they can be. For men of color in particular, the mosh pit is important because it provides a space where they can be aggressive but not be criminalized. bell hooks writes about the emergence of Hip Hop culture where,

[y]oung black and brown males could break dance and rap in cramped living spaces, symbolic frontiers where the body could do its thing, expand, grow and move, surrounded by a watching crowd. Domestic space equated with representation and containment, as well as with the ‘feminine’ was resisted and rejected so that an assertive patriarchal paradigm of competitive masculinity and concomitant emphasis on physical prowess could emerge. As a result, much rap music is riddled with sexism and misogyny.

(1993)

Though speaking about a different subculture hooks’ commentary is vital because it sheds light on the importance that these spaces hold for men of color. Much like breakdancing the mosh pit also requires and allows the body to take up space in ways that are not accepted elsewhere. Hence, it makes sense when males are defensive about how much space they can take up while at shows, particularly the mosh pit. While this does not justify the exclusion of or violence against womyn, this analysis does bring us closer to understanding one another. Furthermore, it serves as a reiteration of the interlocking

forms of oppression that we face as a community. Unfortunately, these are not the gravest issues that womyn face in the LA punk scene.

Angee shares that the issues she deals with as a womyn of color in punk and society as a whole are reflected in her lyrics, “[w]hen I write for *Destruye y Huye* I want the songs to have meanings and themes about certain issues... “Fuck Ted Bundy” I wrote the song about being in the position of feeling like I’m gonna get raped or killed or harassed and how do I get out of it this time?” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014).

Unfortunately, issues of sexual assault have been present in the punk scene; the most recent incident that drew a lot of attention was when Jorge, lead singer of *The Casualties*¹⁸, was accused of sexual assault. Though people on the Internet were furious and went as far to demand a boycott of *The Casualties*, the same anger or indignation does not seem to take place at a more local level. Marin did not seek to defend any particular band, what she did mention was how only certain people get held accountable and concluded, “here’s a list of bands that have sexually assaulted people at our backyard shows you wanna talk to them? No? Then you’re on the same boat as them” (Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014).

Similarly, Malegria expresses their frustration with the misogyny they experienced in the scene, “they’re all douche bags... just being groped by them at shows, whether it be someone grabbing my ass, that’s disrespect... them being cool with that amongst their friends” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). Malegria’s statement reinforces the idea of all people being held accountable, but also the culpability that people who let these things pass by share with them. Creating this accountability becomes difficult when

¹⁸ *The Casualties* are a better known street punk that originated in New York in 1990. They have played throughout the U.S and internationally.

considering that violence always seems to play a role in attempting to restore justice. For one, in the past when womyn have asked male friends for support after being sexually harassed this has resulted in physical altercations that have caused the show to be stopped. Angee has been active in initiating dialogue among the womyn in the punk scene to address this, and the steps to take when someone is attacked.

I don't want to push anyone out of the scene it's not about that... We don't want to involve the police. If someone is harassed I want that person to feel supported, that they will be backed up without it turning into a big ole violent brawl. It's about protecting the things we have to throw shows. But yes, if that person is fucked up [the harasser/threat to the space] are we going to kick them out to be drunk somewhere else? What do we do? Create a little drunk tank? A little time out? [laughter]... What do we do? But it's a conversation that definitely needs to happen, and even if it doesn't, I feel there's more of us now a bit more certain of how to move forward, at least in an immediate situation like kicking someone out
(Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014)

Although Angee, and others admit that their first instinct is to resort to violence when dealing with these types of situations, they remember that the main concern should be making sure that the person who experienced the harassment feels safe. There are multiple layers to be addressed here because not only do we as a community want to feel safe but also want to hold others accountable in a way that will potentially change the aggressors mind and not involve the police. Angee's attitudes about these circumstances reflect a nuanced understanding of multiple systems of oppression. While an aggressor may inflict violence on someone else, it is also unproductive to call the police who will only inflict violence on the aggressor rather than attempting to rehabilitate them, and truly address their behavior, or who may further victimize the person who was assaulted. Furthermore, Angee demonstrates the importance of taking action as a community although things become complicated when intoxication becomes a factor.

Unfortunately, womyn not only have to deal with the potential threat of sexual assault, but when they assert their sexuality most womyn face slut shaming. Angee expresses being particularly bothered by this form of oppression that is present in the punk scene and ponders, “its surprising punk can embrace [sexuality], you have artists like Wendy Williams, Souxsie. I always think, can someone do that now and not be called a slut?” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014). Here Angee invokes the image of two influential womyn in the early days of punk who presented themselves in very powerful and sexual manners, wearing bondage clothes, and sheer materials unapologetically. This demonstrates a shift in what was acceptable within the punk community back then and what is deemed acceptable in punk today. Though there are womyn who continue to counter notions of acceptability they are often faced with the scrutiny of men and womyn in the scene. Nevertheless, Angee concludes that seeing womyn perform naked or in underwear is empowering, irrespective of the criticisms. On the other hand, there are womyn who choose to present themselves in less feminine ways. When describing her personal style Xelowks states, “I’m more comfortable in combat boots than I am in heels, but if I have heels I prefer them with pyramid studs... I don’t know [I] redefine beauty” (Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014). Thus, it is not an issue of defending a particular aesthetic, but rather creating a space where womyn can present themselves in different fashions and not be scrutinized. Audre Lorde’s words are critical to examine at this juncture, “If black men continue to define ‘femininity’ instead of their own desires and do it in archaic european terms, they restrict our access to each other’s energies” (2009). Thus, men of color must focus not on policing the bodies of womyn of color, but rather in understanding their own desires and decolonizing. This is

also applicable to Chicano/Latino men in the punk scene who should strive to work alongside womyn to build the scene in opposition to the mainstream, not reproducing it. Furthermore, as Ana Castillo (1994) posits, women's sexuality has been so repressed that at times it is difficult for womyn to express our desires. Nevertheless, there are organizations tied to the LA punk scene that are working to change people's perceptions of sex, toward sex positivity, and safer sex, one of the most influential being *Cucci LA*. As an organization *Cucci LA* has provided free workshops at events like *Ladyfest LA* creating a space where participants could talk openly about sexuality but also learn from one another and trained sex educators. By providing said services *Cucci LA* is working to demystify sexuality and promote healthy sex.

Though womyn have gained a stronger presence in the LA punk scene there are still issues to address. Womyn have worked to create spaces where they can perform and collaborate, but still face misogyny at different levels. While trying to confront issues of sexual assault and sexual violence, these also tend to be compounded with addressing violence in general. There are different opinions as to how these issues must be addressed, but overall for the womyn still involved there is an urgency to create change. The patriarchy embedded in the L.A. punk scene is reflected in the lack of representation, the lack of support, and the sexual scrutiny faced by womyn participating in the scene. There has been some progress in terms of the number of womyn active and represented within the punk scene. Though it is difficult to assess what exactly triggered this change in the Chican@/ Latin@ dominated L.A. punk scene, it is important to recognize the steps that are being taken forward. However, the effects of patriarchy within the punk scene are not only felt by womyn. This is where the matrix of domination becomes critical, because

womyn may also identify as queer and queer males also face oppression. Nevertheless, the queer Chican@/Latin@ punk community is also striving to create change and bring about equity in the scene, and society as a whole.

Out of the closet and into the pit

The bus ride to *Chuco's* from Boyle Heights was over an hour long, luckily Rooster was with me making the ride much more bearable; we talked about different things like politics, our families, how different South Central and Boyle Heights look at night, among other things. As I had expected many of the faces that I had seen at *Ladyfest* were also present at the *Queer Punk Fest*. The crowd in attendance was racially diverse, although most of them appeared to be Chican@/Latin@. We had missed the workshops that happened throughout the day but were able to catch the performances of the last four bands/artists. Some bands got people to start a small mosh pit; although it was not very rough, people seemed to enjoy themselves. The night concluded with Reyna the Ripper a performer who rips the audience with their voice and, in this particular performance, tore apart a Bible slowly at first ripping page-by-page and finished destroying it by smashing it on the floor.

Rudy's narrative is once again instrumental in understanding how the LA punk scene has developed in terms of a Chican@/Latin@ queer community. While he did move away from a punk scene that was predominantly Chican@/Latin@ into one that included more womyn and queer people, this led him to have a different experience than those that stick around. He was propelled not only to write *Scutter*, but eventually organize a queer punk festival called *Scutterfest*, and to start the band *Three Dollar Puta*;

it was like a two piece queer Mexicano band...it was just me and my friend Raquel, and we were like fuck it. We just kinda used a drum machine, guitar, keyboards. We

were just angry kids we wanted to talk about being queer, and also being Mexicanos, [it was a] weird celebration of those things, also anger towards the queer community about certain things, anger at the punk community cus of the fact that we were brown kids and queer

(Rudy, interview by author, July 8, 2014)

Though Rudy admits that his journey as a queer man of color has not been easy, he views the hardships he endured as opportunities to grow. He also speaks about his performances where his lack of clothing made white men, in particular, uncomfortable and how he reacted in a confrontational manner calling out the people who made comments.

However, the community of queer Chican@/Latin@ punks is becoming bigger and more present. Martin Sorrendeguy appears to have played an important role in this as many of the queer identified people that I interviewed, and even those who just consider themselves allies, found his story of coming out in the punk scene as a queer Latino inspiring. Malegria speaks of the importance that *Limp Wrist*-- Sorrendeguy's band—holds, “its finally saying something gay as fuck, and being aggressive about it, and Martin is a total cute fucking bear, and all these punk guy dudes are totally into it” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). *Limp Wrist* gives voice to the unapologetic queer person through powerful fast music and cultural references.

Simultaneously, Martin's continued involvement challenges the homophobia in the scene especially as he is highly respected for the work he has done throughout the years with his bands and community organizing. It is important to note that there are queer punk bands; in fact the queercore community has brought forward amazing bands that many queer punks of color have found inspiring and have helped validate their experiences. Nonetheless, the amount of bands that focus on queer issues, gain wide recognition, and include queer people of color is minor. Nevertheless it is a community that continues to

grow, despite the many levels of homophobia found in the LA punk scene that must still be confronted.

If the representation of womyn in LA can be considered minimal then the representation of queer people is dismal. Marin's own journey as queer punk womyn of color brings to light the complexity of dealing with all these identities at once.

I never felt like a lesbian. I never felt gay. I always felt queer. I always knew I was different, I didn't want to choose one or the other, that's what kept my foot in the punk community because I would hang out with the white gay community that wanted me to be a lesbian, or the brown punks that didn't understand what I was talking about, I'd rather do that than hangout with the gay community that wants me to identify as a lesbian, there's that, identity is weird, its complicated

(Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014)

Marin's experience demonstrates how people must negotiate and navigate in order to find a place where they feel safe and free to be who they want to be. Nevertheless, there is a lack of understanding from the punks of color who accept Marin, creating a sort of void in her experience. Marin's experience echoes Muñoz's where they both were able to utilize punk as a space to create their queer identity. Whether they are out or not, queer people can use their time in punk to explore their sexuality. For Marin, the situation was not ideal because she never felt fully understood in the punk scene, but by being a part of the scene she was able to make more conscious decisions of the way she identified and wanted to present herself. Although there is more visibility of queer punks of color, when asked about their community most people spoke about having a small community of about four to five people who they consistently hang out with. For Marin building this community of queer people of color meant distancing herself from the scene for a period of time because she couldn't find one in punk. Furthermore, Malegria and Oscar have both expressed that even though they are out, their sexuality is not something they can

speaking about openly. When asked about it Malegria responded, “No, even now I don’t...I think for me my queerness is only as visible as I want it to be, wherever I feel safe”

(Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). Malegria elaborates further on this point when I ask about how safe punk is for someone who identifies as trans,

it’s scary...if you’re gender fluid or if you’re trans, for you to be in a band and play at these spaces in LA-- the ones throwing shows-- you have to be really brave, it’s not a scene that’s gonna be easily like we accept all gender identities. I’m sure people don’t feel like they’re homophobic... but they really are when they don’t know how to respect or even like learn the language they might be using is oppressive, hurtful to people

(Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014)

Similarly, Oscar talks about his (in)ability to express his sexuality, “I’ve been more open and telling people I’m about that life...but when am I ever ‘what’s up I’m gay as fuck!’”

(Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Both Oscar and Malegria depict being hesitant to expressing something that they should receive no criticisms about. It is utterly absurd and disappointing that despite the alleged open mindedness in the punk scene people still do not feel free to express their sexuality or gender identity. Though the LA punk scene may attempt to be more inclusive there are remnants of patriarchy that are hard to ignore.

On the other hand, for Marin who has been out for a long period of time the homophobia she has experienced has come even from those she considered friends. “[B]eing a queer womyn, saying that out loud, came with a lot of ‘you wanna make out with my girlfriend?... I know this other lesbian you wanna hook up with her, maybe I can watch?’ It came with a lot of dude macho bullshit that was disgusting” (Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014). For Marin being an out womyn of color meant receiving unwarranted sexual advances, which reveals the ownership that men feel over a womyn’s

body and sexuality, as if Marin's queerness could be exploited for their own personal gain. Rudy also experienced harassment but in a different way, Rudy shared, "guys would push me purposely cus I was the gay guy and try to be really aggressive, and I was like 'fuck you don't mess with me! I'm not the one you wanna mess with' other times I was like 'fuck I'm gonna get my ass kicked' [laughter]" (Rudy, interview by author, July 8, 2014). Rather than being sexualized, it appears as though the men harassing Rudy were trying to make him prove his masculinity by challenging him physically. Rudy, however, gauges the situation and at times responds to such confrontations.

Similarly, Rooster does not back away from a potential fight. It is interesting to note that in our conversations Rooster says he has never experienced any sort of homophobia in the punk scene. When I ask him about engaging in public displays of affection and others reaction to seeing that Rooster aggressively responded, "Fuck yeah, anybody say anything come say it to me, smack you in the face!" (Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014). It is interesting that Rooster's response to a potential threat of violence is violence. This speaks about his struggle for survival amongst homophobic threats. From engaging in public displays of affection to people's reaction to his drag, Rooster's mindset is one that rejects any societal notion of queerness as something taboo or incorrect. While Rooster's fearlessness is inspiring, it is also important to consider that because he does not present himself in an effeminate or flamboyant manner, people have a different reaction to him. He speaks about his experiences as a queer man in the scene, "[t]he way I express myself I get the whole I don't look gay, I don't act gay, a lot of people have thought it's a front but it's not..." (Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014). Rooster's willingness to engage in physical confrontations as well the way he

carries himself allow him to assert his masculinity allowing him to pass as straight. Moreover, people's reactions to Rooster demonstrate the engrained preconceived notions of what male homosexuality is supposed to look like. Rooster's aggressiveness gives him protection, because as Cherrie Moraga (2004) posits it is the "'queens' and 'maricones'...[that] are deemed 'inferior' for not fulfilling the traditional role of men, they are more marginalized." In fact, Ocampo (2012) writes of masculinity as cultural capital for queer men of color. For Rooster this seems particularly true, as he must navigate his identity as a working class queer undocumented punk of color.

Nevertheless, Rooster's presentation is ultimately something positive as he also shares "a lot of people come up to me say they were homophobic...when they found out I was queer they said I changed their whole perspective on what being queer, or what being gay was, and it's really cool I didn't have to even try" (Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014). Rooster's presentation allows him to play with what has been stereotyped as a gay man and ultimately change people's perceptions of sexuality. His unapologetic attitude about his queerness, however; negates any possibility that he attempts to pass to feel safe. Furthermore, he complicates the masculine/ feminine binary through his performances. Though he is aggressive he also talks about being flamboyant during his performances, proudly wearing a mesh shirt that reads "*Mas Puto.*" The phrase is usually associated with emasculating men, and derogatorily calling them gay. By wearing this shirt Rooster reappropriates something negative and utilizes it to flaunt his sexuality. Rooster's presentation has allowed him to challenge homophobia in the scene, but also to become a mentor for younger generations of queer punks. He states that through his conversations with younger folks "I find a couple of folks who are queer,

who aren't really out; they've talked to me about if it's safe, or not; they want my advice on it" (Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014). Since Rooster is openly and unashamedly queer it seems as though other younger queer people feel comfortable sharing with him and seek his advice about being out. This is important because this allows for the creation of a greater community among queer people of color who perhaps need that support.

Nevertheless, the issues of patriarchy within the scene are not hopeless. There is obviously a growing presence of both womyn and queer people in the scene. By performing womyn and queer Chican@s/Latin@s are engaging in what Vargas has called a "sonic scene...a sight that sonically registers as exceeding the limits of normative class, race, and gender parameters of the acceptable, proper, and expected" (2012). In this sense by performing womyn and queer Chican@s/Latin@s are forcing others to take notice of their identities. However, a concern or challenge that most people who are still active in the scene presented was one of "cliques" or as Oscar accurately termed them "intentional spaces." That is, though there are more womyn and queer folk they usually are showcased when it is *Queer Punk Fest* or *Mujeres de Punk* night. This is not to say that such spaces are not necessary, but rather that they must not be the only time when womyn and queer folk are featured. Marin does a great job at explaining why this is problematic. "I can throw an all queer show, but when straight cis dudes show up they're not gonna feel like they can't come in, but when you throw your cis all male show I'm not gonna feel like I can come in. That can change if there wasn't a clique. If you see a clique that's shady, you're not gonna go into the show" (Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014). Due to their hetero male privilege males do not feel unwelcome in spaces that

are womyn or queer friendly, however; that sentiment is not reciprocated when the tables are turned.

Queer people may still feel unsure about attending punk shows especially when there are people present who use hurtful language or have a history of being violent.

Ultimately, this demonstrates the hierarchy that occurs in the scene, with straight cis males at the top, and a few notable queer people who do not face homophobia because of their status in said hierarchy. Oscar describes this as one of his frustrations with the queer punk community,

I see myself as angry...as aggressive as a person who – I don't see colors, never see rainbows. I love raw punk, to each their own, but I also think queers in punk we need to get into these spaces disturbing the peace of hetero white boy spaces, even hetero like cis male of color spaces. I think we need to disturb the peace a little more, hats off to the people doing the work, but to me it looks a lot of different...I want it to look more pist I ain't celebrating shit Emma!

(Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014)

Oscar is clearly disassociating from any sort of mainstream gay representation, and instead chooses to present himself as an angry queer man of color who is ready to push the boundaries of different communities and spaces. Pushing said boundaries then gives queer people more agency in the way they are represented and ultimately gives them the opportunity to disrupt mainstream notions of queerness, as well as claim space in the punk scene. Angee also comments about events such as *Ladyfest* and *Queer Punk Fest*, “it’s awesome that these things happen but I think folks that would get the most of it aren’t getting it. There needs to be something implemented into punk that would appeal, maybe have a workshop that same day a show happens, make it accessible. The people that are gonna dialogue about the things they already know it’s mostly the same people attending” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014).

The people attending these intentional spaces all form part of these communities and while it creates an opportunity to meet and build with other members of that community, if people who do not identify are not attending then it doesn't do much in terms of changing people's minds or creating a network of allies/accomplices. By creating this space within the punk scene that is not relegated to womyn/queer punk nights, they are forcing everyone else to deal with their internalized patriarchy. Thus, we can begin to change this by organizing shows that mix up members of these different cliques. In true punk spirit Marin talks about her new role in punk organizing shows, "I've thrown shows once a year in the past three years instead of all the time. I was trying to like think like what queer bands can I bring together to kinda bridge that gap" (Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014). Marin is one of the many people working on bridging the gaps that exist in the punk scene. Building these bridges is one of the most important steps in working towards a punk community that challenges patriarchy, but also actively works to hold people accountable.

The ways that patriarchy is reproduced in the LA punk scene are complex, expressing itself through misogyny, and homophobia. Violence is a recurring way in which these systems are reproduced though they take on different forms, from physical to mental. As we can see through the various narratives of participants people must negotiate what they want to express according to their particular context. It takes courage, but also having a certain status within the scene to be able to fully express oneself. We can see this in almost every narrative from Rudy being fearless on stage to knowing when he's gonna get the wrath of people's homophobia or Marin hanging out with the punks who didn't understand her queer identity and eventually having to leave the scene to find

a community who did. Nevertheless, there is work being done to increase representation, though there appears to be a movement towards something more. Accountability is seen as one of the ways to start creating such changes in the scene. But, if people are to be held accountable for the patriarchy engrained in them, then it is also our duty as womyn, queer, trans, gender non-conforming people, allies/accomplices to hold ourselves accountable to the change we want to create. Not only in terms of addressing our internalized patriarchy/sexism/homophobia, but also in ensuring that we do not become merely a subgenre but rather insert ourselves into the scene without our identities being compromised.

Rasquache or Die: Chican@/ Latin@ Punks Creating Consciousness and Alternatives

Inside the small garage *Ausencia* lets out their melodic French Oi punk sound to fill the small garage as people rock their head to the music and some begin to bounce around. Though Mark lives in Orange County and is busy completing his Ph.D., he has been very active in the punk scene in LA and the OC. Half way through *Ausencia*'s set Mark took the microphone to briefly talk about the organization that would receive the money raised that night, and their work to help immigrants that have been deported back to Baja California. It was June 2014, and the nation appeared to be in upheaval about the massive amount of unaccompanied minors coming across the border from Latin America. While the mainstream media focused on criminalizing these children, many others were appalled at the conditions that these children and youth were facing in the detention centers, and the xenophobic racists demanding that these children go home.

Greater societal issues are important as many punk bands address them in their music. Issues of immigration are particularly relevant for LA punks, as many of us come

from mixed immigration status families, or some are undocumented themselves; the threat of deportation looms over the heads of many. Thus, allowing people to be sympathetic to these causes, but also acutely aware of the reasons for migrating and the consequences of being caught. It was a worthy cause and one that people were able to connect to but also learn about more. In South Central LA on this particular summer night the punks were showing support and solidarity with a little bit of money, music, and dancing.

In *Más Álla de los Gritos* (1998) we see dialogue being initiated by band members with the audience about different issues, today that has become a rare sight in Los Angeles. However, just because there is no major group discussion this does not mean there is nothing happening. Marin describes it in the following manner,

even if we don't have discussion, if there's a benefit, if there's a handful of bands willing to play and folks with nothing better to do-- people don't have to come, but they do, so there's other ways we talk and address things without actually talking about them it's not ideal not all the time, but it happens

(Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014)

The people attending benefit shows are almost guaranteed to learn something about the cause that these benefit shows are trying to raise funds for. This creates a different type of conversation, whereas they may not be fully engaged with what is going on they are still being exposed to different issues. While dialogue may be perceived as being the best situation to create consciousness, it is not the only way. Irrespective of dialogue or not, punk bands and the scene as a whole continues to have an impact in the way people think about the world, and can ultimately be life changing. Every single person I have talked to has asked themselves “what would my life be like if I wasn't punk?” Xelowks shared

what could be considered the moment that truly changed her mindset and her life. She recalls that she was attending a show with her friends, they were all intoxicated and then,

Subsistencia came up, they didn't just start playing... they started to talk, they talked about real issues after they spoke they brought their indigenous instruments, they blew their *conchas*, rattled their *sonajas*... they were talking about some real shit even in the midst of me being under the influence it really spoke to me... it was a turning point as far as activism in LA, this anger-- rage is justified it has a purpose. What I was doing prior to that I was turning it inward, in a very self destructive way, that band helped me see there's another way...like fuck, live for something!

(Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014)

Xelowks was active in the LA punk scene at a very specific time, when the *Popular Resource Center* in Highland Park, also known as *Centro de Regeneración*,¹⁹ was thriving and doing work to build their community. Moreover, at this point there was also a movement in this particular place to discover, and embrace indigenous roots.

Nevertheless, Xelowks' story demonstrates a movement from being self destructive to attaining a higher understanding of the systems of oppression and trying to combat them. As a band *Subsistencia* served to spark Xelowks' interest and ultimately to get her more engaged in community organizing. It was after their performance that Xelowks became active in the *Popular Resource Center* and their food distribution program. Again, when most people start listening to punk there is a sense of *loquera*, a space where as youth—and older people-- we are able to do whatever we want, however; for a lot of us there is also a turning point where punk introduces us to questioning authority or in some cases

¹⁹ This community space was founded by Zach de la Rocha and Aida Salazar in the early 1990's, named after an anarchist journal created by the Magón brothers, who published radical thoughts during the Mexican revolution. The intention of the space was to provide information and resources for the community. During the Zapatista uprising in 1994 the space would generate revenues for those who took up arms. Moreover, as the political climate turned very anti-immigrant with propositions that could criminalize our community, the space served as a place to dialogue and organize around those issues (kcet.org, 2014).

reinforces thoughts that we believed were only our own. Such was the case for Rudy who shared, “growing up I always felt like there were these weird fucked up rules as to what womyn needed to do in the household... [listening to] *Bikini Kill* or *Bratmobile* that’s when I saw punk in a whole different way” (Rudy, interview by author, July 8, 2014). For Rudy hearing his personal thoughts reverberated in the lyrics of these bands gave him a sense of not being alone. Oscar links listening to punk directly to his own activism,

I was learning from it, it was just like politically charged music... it taught me about where my family is from, why we’re here now. I think it encouraged me into direct action, things like that specially cus I saw how fucked up the world was...any punk that you talk to has had some involvement in activism or something like that, it was a push

(Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014)

To different degrees Oscar’s statement proved to be true. Although not everyone who I spoke to was involved with a specific organization or cause, they had all engaged in some sort of lifestyle change they believed could create social change. Malegria shared, “I just kinda made some changes in the way I live my daily life, for environmental reasons rode my bike, changed my diet to eating less fucked up shit ... when I was younger 9/11 changed my life I decided to question everything, religion, this country, my parents” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). For Malegria there was a definite change in terms of questioning authority and ultimately in pushing themselves to live a life that they felt was more aligned to their beliefs. Malegria’s choices demonstrate a shift in consciousness but most importantly, a shift towards a lifestyle that prioritizes social justice.

The lyrics in many punk songs are vital in understanding the way punk helps facilitate political consciousness and in some cases activism. Rooster talks about the

development of political consciousness that occurs not only when singing along but in attending to shows,

If you sing lyrics to songs, which is a lot of songs, that deal with the issues then to a certain extent you do care. The thing about punk is I see a lot of people come in very ignorant including myself, not ignorant, really naïve. We're mad, we just don't know exactly why, or how to get out but we don't know how, so we get drunk or high. Some of us don't, some of us stay sober to figure things out. I think there's a right place and time to talk about it... I can start a conversation about history with one person and end up with a whole circle we learn a lot at shows we're able to share our knowledge

(Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014)

Rooster's story reveals two important ways in which knowledge is shared in the punk scene. For one there are band lyrics that carry a message, by singing along audience members demonstrate solidarity with the message of the song. Even in the case of those who sing along mindlessly there is hope that they will eventually pick up on the message of the song. Furthermore, punk shows create a space for dialogues amongst people where they can share knowledge but also challenge one another.

There is a plethora of punk songs that have an underlying political message. In *Generacion Suicida's* "Estoy Sangrando" the audience is greeted with pure punk as the song utilizes three chords making slight variations in chords through the verses. All the elements of the song are theoretically speaking simple and fall in line with the genre of music. What is important to emphasize is the way the song builds up for the melody to come in through the singer's voice. This creates an emphasis not only on the voice but, ultimately on what the singer has to say. By creating this emphasis the audience can better discern what the song is saying but also learn the lyrics. Ultimately, this allows for the message of the song to really be heard and for the listeners to make a connection to what the singer is saying.

“Estoy Sangrando”

*No dicen la verdad
No nos dejan escapar
Nos kieren destruir*

*Este no es tu hogar
No son parte de mi sociedad
Nos tratan de destruir*

Estoy Sangrando!

*Ya no puedo aguantar
Nos tendremos ke escapar
Y buscar otro lugar*

*Pero esto es mi hogar
No hay ningun otro lugar
Los Angeles sangro por ti*

“I’m Bleeding”

They don’t say the truth
They don’t let us escape
They want to destroy us

This is not your home
You’re not part of my society
They try to destroy us

I’m bleeding!

I can’t stand it any longer
We will have to escape
And look for another place

But this is my home
There is no other place
Los Angeles I’m bleeding for you

The song talks about feeling rejected and targeted by mainstream Anglo society. It is important to note the speaker’s use of first person that enables them to sing a song about themselves but rather about a “we.” In turn, this allows for the listener to identify, but also calls attention to the fact that the audience is a community rather than an individual. The lyrics to “*Estoy Sangrando*” are very particular to Los Angeles referencing the city directly and implying in its lyrics the large immigrant community found here. Though the song may not seem explicitly political as there is no blunt discussion of police, ICE, or any other sort of power structure, it is in its own way calling out these forces without having to spell out their name. Furthermore, lyrics like these prove to be filled with potential as an unknowing mind might question what the speaker is referring to and attempt to learn/understand what is going on in Los Angeles for the speaker to feel this way. On the other hand, for the Los Angeles community, especially other Chican@/Latin@ punks in Los Angeles, this song may resonate deeply with their

lived experiences. Not only must they face marginalization due to factors like their race, ethnicity, or legal status but at times also for looking punk. Nevertheless, the song can facilitate knowledge about immigrant communities in Los Angeles, or provide comfort for those who identify with the sentiment of the song. Ultimately, the song engages in cultural resistance as defined by Gomez-Quinones (1977) who argued it was “a synthesis of tradition and creation.” This song in particular demonstrates this in multiple levels as it takes part in writing lyrics in Spanish seen as the traditional language but utilizes a “non-traditional” music form. Moreover, the sound can be classified as one that pertains more to the old school LA punk but that creates a new vision through the tone in its lyrics. These lyrics reflect what Rooster talks about in the importance of singing along and can be used as a starting point for conversation at punk shows.

Along the same lines, David Ensminger (2013) writes about the potential found at punk shows, or gigs by arguing the following.

Gigs do not simply embody a music marketing means to an end—a convenient conduit for disempowered fans to passively view a musical commodity; instead, the gig spaces act like a blend of porous secular and spiritual territories and positions. The sites and practices therein help forge, navigate, maintain, and agitate identities and social structures all while providing epiphanies that seem to mimic religious rites

The punk scene then provides a space where transformation can occur, the audience receives information and is then able to solidify their alliance to certain ideologies or continue to alter them. Yet, maintaining the anger and frustration, but using it to propel people into taking action to create change in a positive way, whatever that action may be. Kevin described these changes quite accurately and succinctly, “punk is a gateway drug” (Kevin, interview by author, July 1, 2014). Whether it be changing ourselves or taking steps to change the world, punk will lead you to other things.

The most enduring aspect of political consciousness that punk as a whole promotes is DIY. One of the things that DIY encourages is for people to do things irrespective of resources, it is a belief that anyone can do anything. Dingy speaks about his experience with learning to play the drums because he wanted to start a band, “I said I’m gonna play drums. I’ve been hitting my mom’s pots and pans long I think I can keep a beat...my friend Paul bought our old drummers drum set, I paid him working summers that’s how I learned just getting on them playing” (Dingy, interview by author, Aug. 5 2014). Dingy’s story is not uncommon but rather reflects the ethic on which punk was built on, one that emphasizes doing something without any formal training and believing you can do it. What I found compelling about his story, however; was the fact that the drum set was not something that was given to him, being a working class punk means putting more effort to attain the equipment a lot of other people get for free. Ultimately, this gives us insight about the different context in which DIY surfaces for working class people of color.

For people of color D.I.Y comes with a different history, rather than being an ideology that is brought forward by punk, it is something that reinforces things we had already been doing. In general people associated D.I.Y to having a limited amount of resources and coming from a lower social economic status. However, as proven through Angee’s comments, D.I.Y puts this lack of resources in a different light. She states, “things that are seen as ghetto are really innovative” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014). If we want to further simplify this it is just, “working with what you got” (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014) or as Oscar elaborated, “it’s been a response to being poor and building from the ground up... in LA being brown kids, we

don't have access to nice little spaces, nice equipment... DIY is basically the idea of *rasquachismo* and making shit out of nothing" (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). These narratives further validate Frausto's (1991) arguments about *rasquachismo*, where things that were once devalued are viewed in a new light, and given the appreciation and value they were once believed to lack. Furthermore, the way D.I.Y is acted out in punk spaces parallels to Lipsitz statements about Chican@ art as a whole, "[it] constitutes a process of art-based community-making, not just community-based art making" (qtd. in Barnet-Sanchez, 2005). By engaging in *rasquachismo*/ D.I.Y Chican@/ Latin@ punks are enabled to create community because they are working on artistic projects like music or zines. D.I.Y and *rasquachismo* represent an alternative to consumption, but also defy the idea that people of color are incapable of doing anything. They create platforms from which people can build on and create the things they believed were unavailable to them.

D.I.Y as a whole allows people to demonstrate their many abilities and talents, from organizing shows, making flyers, to playing music. Another sentiment that was expressed was D.I.Y being the ability to take control as Kevin put it; "it's taking upon yourself to create something because it doesn't exist, because you want that to be" (Kevin, interview by author, July 1, 2014). Marin elaborates, "I made it a point to throw my own shows and book the bands I wanted to see instead of waiting for it to happen, that's another thing I like about punk it gives you the power to do that" (Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014). Both Kevin's and Marin's statements demonstrate the agency that punk brings to people who are willing to take action and create the things they do not have. Furthermore, by creating things ourselves we are given the freedom to express the things we truly feel

without any censorship. When asked about the bands that most inspire her, Marin notes that it is those who are intentional with their imagery and lyrics whether it's fun or political. She urges fellow punks, "put a design in the background that means something, and don't put it in the back just because it's political. Put it there cus you have a personal connection to it, put it there cus you sing about it in your songs. Cus it directly affects you, your community" (Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014). Marin's comments are important not because she urges people to create something that is considered a political message, but because it encourages others to express themselves and their experiences, something people of color are rarely given the opportunity to do. This creates a ripple effect because it engages the people hearing these songs, or viewing these images to want to learn more or to understand why people are presenting these images. This creates an opportunity for them to learn something they had never been exposed to. This is a theme constantly repeated in the stories of those I interviewed, from wanting to learn about punk to learning about other genres of music not associated with punk. At its best, punk is an avenue to maintaining an open mind and learning about different viewpoints. Ultimately, those engaging in DIY practices are creating alternatives to what they have been given. Rooster speaks on this point,

[T]hese kids don't have somewhere to go... So they're creating a space they want to see, it's one that they need...It comes out of necessity, [We're] forced to go into an institution for eight hours and what do you wanna do the end of the week? Just like everyone else you wanna let loose. Kids here gotta create spaces. This isn't about a lack of malls, it's a lack of resource centers, and just being who they are without being marginalized and criticized. We try to create them here, there's *Corazon del Pueblo*, *Eastside Café*, but they still lack, we create them every Friday or Saturday night, hoping the cops don't show up but they always do. It's not gonna die down, its such a big entity like literally the owner telling us to get out, it reinforces the idea that they're needed, they're not giving us options we're gonna keep doing it; there's no solutions so we create them for us.

(Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014)

As Chican@s/Latin@s growing up in places of lower social economic status the resources available to youth are scarce. This brings forward Macias' arguments about Chican@s in subcultural spaces who understand that they are not desired outside of their *barrios* and thus create subcultural spaces that are as self sufficient as possible (2008). Moreover, as Rooster points out even in the few places where youth have the opportunity to hang out, there is a fear of criticism because most recreational activities are bound to school, which many punks feel is not a safe space. Though people are actively working to create spaces where youth can feel at ease, the real power lies in those spaces that are created by youth themselves and those spaces, like punk shows or fests, are usually targeted by police. Though the criminalization of youth of color is a fact despite what subcultural group they chose to partake, for many of the young men in our communities getting involved in punk has been the alternative to gangs. Oscar shares, "if it weren't for punk I might be dead! [laughter] It says a lot of my community. If it wasn't punk, it was F13, it was a gang" (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Although my intent is not to glorify the punk scene, because it also has its own issues of gangs and violence, for many young people it created a different path than what is expected, yet again indirectly creating solutions for ourselves. Thus, the power of DIY takes different shapes and forms, and has a greater impact in our lives than we may expect. Sitting outside of Xelowks' house in East L.A, her and her daughter work on their garden together. I ask Xelowks about her thoughts on D.I.Y culture to which she responded,

It's a little outdated, do it yourself. You don't just need yourself, it's fine it was a beautiful concept at the time, you don't need corporations backing your music, you don't need to sign a label, what you do need is community. Do it together! It's not yourself... do it with other people, it's unspoken, understood, with other people that were like, fuck DIT-- I like that!

(Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014)

Xelowks response points to something that doesn't seem to be articulated in much of punk scholarship. While throughout the history of punk there have been individuals who have taken it upon themselves to do things, they have always had the support of their community, regardless of how big or small that community may be. This goes back to Velez-Ibanez's idea of "networks of marginality" which are "social ties or networks [that] are often based on exchanges generated through reciprocal favors within kinship, friendship, fictive kinship, community interdependence, and ethnicity" (qtd. in Loza, 1993). Thus while people are engaging in "DIY" ethics what is actually happening is the creation of a greater community, locally and occasionally internationally. Dinky's experience going on tour with one of his bands demonstrates the aforementioned idea of doing it together. "[T]he first tour in 2002, 2003 I didn't know anybody up the west coast. One friend got me in contact with another friend it was a chain that expanded" (Dinky, interview by author, Aug. 5, 2014). Thus, Dinky is able to build up a tour because of others who are invested in the idea of doing things free from external forces like music companies or agents. These links created amongst punks are further expanded when looking at various components. For instance, Rooster is not only in a punk band, he has also been a part of different community spaces. Rooster's presence in these spaces creates a bridge for punks to come into the community center, but also for other activists to interact with punks.

Furthermore, Kevin Dunn (2012) writes in depth about D.I.Y punk record labels that have "another vital role: community building." This is further demonstrated by the lack of contracts between labels and bands. Ultimately, this demonstrates that the principles of

community and trust are so strong that there is no need for a legal bind. Furthermore, demonstrating that these relationships are interdependent and not as individualistic as posited by the idea of D.I.Y. Others expressed a similar stance that moved away from focusing on the individual to the community. Oscar talks about his work in academia and how identifying a punk has influenced his outlook, “you do shit...not for yourself, you do shit for the kids that you might not always like, but you care about and you know in your little heart that that kid was fucked, but he deserves my work. It switched the dialogue from I to us” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Oscar’s comments demonstrate his recognition of the importance of academic work to our communities, but also show his personal growth. Despite the differences he may have had with people for several reasons, there is an understanding that those issues are secondary to the greater structural issues that have to be addressed. Though ideas of community may not be verbally articulated among Chican@s/Latin@ punks, it is evident through their networks of marginality, which become a lifeline of the Los Angeles punk scene.

Unfortunately, not everyone takes the road of activism or maintains their punk ideals. When I asked Xelowks about her friends who had gone with her to the *Subsistencia* show she admits she doesn’t know what happened to them, except for one who she ran into years later and was living on the streets. Not everyone who doesn’t become politically conscious face the same fate, some simply drop out of the scene and live to talk about it as a “phase” in their life. Nevertheless, even if punk only creates a “phase” of consciousness it does serve to open people’s minds to different ideas. Punk transforms our mind from feelings of hopelessness to being confident and having agency. It does so by encouraging everyone to participate and to create, bands, songs, zines,

shirts, and just about anything. As Rudy so aptly described it, “it made me feel like my ideas and way of living was right and valuable. It made me feel important, like I could fuck shit up and change the world” (Rudy, interview by author, July 8, 2014).

By continuing to engage in practices of making ends meet Chican@/ Latin@ punks in Los Angeles have been able to maintain the punk scene alive. As bands write politically charged lyrics, others participate in dialogue, and others strive to create independent media, there is also the important emergence of consciousness and ultimately to action. Although some have decided to leave the punk scene behind, the influence of being a part of this scene transformed their lives and lead to lifestyles tied to issues of social justice and activism. D.I.Y, do it together, or *rasquachismo* prove especially important for punks of color because it legitimizes and celebrates what we have been doing as a community for years to survive. Furthermore, it is these ethos that help foster agency and courage in many people who felt there was no hope. Ultimately, it is the tools of *rasquachismo*/ DIY/DIT that allow us to keep the L.A punk scene alive and growing.

What Happens Next?: Community Building and Scene Preservation

The flyer read “New Blood Night” at East 7th and featured up and coming bands, most performing together for the first time. Unlike other flyers this one pressed its audience “Come Support the Scene.” That night there was a rather good turnout, there were a lot of the usual faces, but also a lot of people I had never seen before. The majority of us were people of color, and a lot of us from South East LA or South Central LA. There are a few white people sprinkled within the crowd, but don’t come near making up even half of the people in attendance.

It was a warm May night and inside East 7th the heat seemed to feel much worse, we stood in front of a large fan in the side room. The main room has a small stage and a decent size dance floor. Despite the heat people wore heavy leather jackets and formed a pit when the bands performed. After *La Equi*'s set the band members and their friends walked around the space handing out free tapes with their music. Given how crazy the pit got you would think these bands already had a strong following with the punks. Nevertheless, the bands had good energy, which explains why people were so willing to pit. The last band, *Fumigados*, included members of several other bands that have been performing for a longer time but caught my eye because out of all the bands playing they had the only womyn vocalist who performed in the middle of the crowd rather than on stage. People started a mosh pit but the singer held her ground through the entire set. After all the bands performed a DJ played music in the same room where a few people stayed to dance.

Almost every weekend for over a year punks in LA would come to East 7th, just a few blocks from the heart of gentrified Downtown Los Angeles, to one of the few streets that still has not been infected by the new urban elite. For a few dollars people of all ages would come listen to some bands and dance the night away. Unfortunately, after issues with the fire Marshalls about exceeding capacity East 7th was shut down as a show space in the early summer of 2014. Although this was a disappointment for a lot of punks, shows have continued to go on consistently. When I asked Oscar what was his favorite thing about the LA punk scene he responded, "people know how to do shit... people just know how to organize and they know how to get around things out here. It's like fuck it we'll do it in someone's back yard and it'll get raided throw the touring bands on first,

punks out here are just resourceful” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Oscar is referencing how often times when police do show up and raid the show, people are able to find a place to host the shows in a matter of hours or at times, minutes. And thus, while one of the most frequented punk venues has been shut down again, this does not entail the death of the LA punk scene.

How Los Angeles has maintained a punk scene that is mostly people of color is not very difficult to determine, Los Angeles has remained a city made and run by immigrants especially of Mexican, and Latin American descent. However, one of the important factors that arise out of these demographics is a comfort zone in having shared lived experiences because the overwhelming majority of us are Chican@s/Latin@s and most of us grew up in working class homes. Angee comments on being part of a scene that is mostly Chican@/Latin@, “it’s nice to be able to go to a show... talk about your food, your moms food...its talking about *cumbias* at the punk show and playing *cumbias* at the dance party. It also means we’re dealing with a lot of issues that our families brought from our cultures, issues from being colonized, like *machismo*” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014). Thus, being a part of Chican@/Latin@ punk scene allows for the sense of a tighter knit community where you can embrace, but also challenge the culture you come from. This in turns allows for a unique relationship to be built amongst the people involved in the scene, or a different connection that is built between an audience and a band. Different people spoke about the importance of having songs in Spanish. Lola, who was not part of the formal interview process, felt that it was important to be able to write songs in Spanish, so she began to listen to a lot of punk

bands in Spanish to recover the language that she had lost. MJ, another punk I spoke to, expressed the importance of singing in Spanish in this way,

you came here from Mexico, South America, the main language here is English you start losing your Spanish, people come to the U.S. its English! Fuck your past, whatever language you speak, you're an American goddamit!... I speak Spanish fairly well, it's not the best. I think it's important to keep my connection between my Mexican and American roots and I'm still proud of what my ancestors did and my parents did to get here

(MJ, interview by author, Dec. 6, 2013)

MJ's response stood out to me because beyond seeing language as a tie to cultural and historical context it also brings into question the issues that immigrant communities face, mainly xenophobia. Moreover, it demonstrates a rejection of forgetting his family history and the struggles they underwent to migrate to the US. Thus, language proves to be a link back to the family, and to a past that while complicated and at times hurtful, remains an important part of individuals experience. Angee related that she enjoys writing lyrics in Spanish, though she notes it is the colonizer's language, because she likes that her mom can understand what she is singing about. Language then becomes one way to maintain a link to our families or the communities we come from, but also to feel more connected among each other in the punk scene. Oscar elaborates on this point, "it's something we can call our own, some kid in the Midwest may be listening to *Los Crudos*, he may not know what he's listening to, he'll never have the connection that we do to it even if he took an AP Spanish class, it's just so connected, it's us"(Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Though to assert that every single Chican@/Latin@ punk in Los Angeles speaks or understands Spanish is problematic, for those of us who do Oscar's point is extremely relevant. The lyrics and meanings behind songs hold a deeper

significance for us because we feel like we have been there through so many of those issues, and many times together as punks.

On the other hand, Rooster speaks about writing songs in Spanish for a particular audience. “songs about *la migra* –songs about *la migra* you sing in Spanish! The other one “*Putá Religión*” most Catholics speak Spanish” (Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014). Rooster is targeting his songs to a particular group that is a migrant community when singing about *la migra*, writing of his own experiences. On the other hand, he writes for the same community that is religious and critiques these belief systems that can be oppressive. This is important for its potential to trigger people to feel connected or to question their own views. Demonstrating that using Spanish allows punks to connect amongst each other but also engage in dialogue and questioning of their parent culture. On another note, Marin touched upon the importance of language when we spoke about *Riot Grrrl*.

[T]he only thing that annoys me with *Riot Grrrl*... folks still use that language it hasn't changed... some folks are still using language from 20 years ago, it should keep evolving-- I don't think it's a bad thing, it's just not for me. I think *panochacore*, *brujacore*. Queercore, let's try different things it's gonna speak to a different volume of people. I think it's also that when I hear *Riot Grrrl* I automatically assume white feminist from Portland when there's a show promoted with *panochacore* it's something different! Just like the first time I read *brujacore*, my mind didn't automatically default to white womyn in Portland, it made me be like what's that and it's in Spanish!

(Marin, interview by author, July 11, 2014)

Marin's thoughts on this are important because they demonstrate the need for things in the punk scene to keep changing in order to keep people involved. Moreover, her comments demonstrate the power that language has to draw people in but also to make them feel disconnected. Overall, Marin's comments demonstrate that a level of familiarity with what is being said will call people's attention, but this familiarity should

also spark curiosity. On a similar note, Angee shares that *Destruye y Huye* is not a feminist band. “There was a time I called myself a feminist but now I feel more comfortable with *mujercista*... As a womyn of color straight outta HP (Huntington Park), la Pacific, I don’t know it’s more true to my identity” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014). Though Angee does not speak for the entire band one can infer that the other womyn do not identify as feminist either. What we see instead is an alignment with womyn of color.

Angee also proudly calls out her hometown Huntington Park or HP, as it is more commonly known by the locals, and la Pacific, the main street in Huntington Park where people can find *Quinceañera* dresses, Mexican food, and bars all within a mile. Angee’s sentiments are important in considering the continued disconnect from feminist politics, which tend to be connected to white womyn. This is particularly true for womyn in punk as *Riot Grrrl* identified themselves as feminist, but many times did not include womyn of color. Though the majority of the people I interviewed believe in the ideals of feminism they may not refer to themselves as such due to the complicated history the term has with womyn of color. Ultimately, Angee’s word choice reflects how her identity politics are built around her local context, putting into play her gender, sex, race, and socioeconomic status. Moreover, by using the term *mujerista* she feels she can better connect to other generations of womyn who may have never been exposed to feminism. Similarly, Tricia Rose (1994) writes about black womyn rappers who do not identify as feminists because, “[f]eminism signifies allegiance to historically specific movements whose histories have long been the source of frustration for women of color... Gender-based alliances across race, especially in a racist society, is a problematic move for black women.” Rose argues

that indeed these womyn are feminists but cannot fully identify, a truth applicable to the womyn I spoke to in the LA punk scene. Nonetheless, Angee's comments may represent a misunderstanding of feminism but they also demonstrate Angee's agency which is important because "[t]he very act of self-definition is a rejection of colonization" (Castillo, 1994). Furthermore, what this demonstrates is a growing understanding of intersectionality, both Marin's and Angee's narratives demonstrate a shift, rather than distancing themselves they have remained in the scene and strived to make the changes they want to see. Through these narratives we begin to see the unwillingness to compromise any of our identities in the punk scene, by writing zines, songs, and singing along in Spanish we are asserting our right to speak the language we learned at home. Further making our presence known, but also creating bonds amongst each other.

Maintaining the Chican@/Latin@ punk scene is not so easily explained and involves multiple facets from how younger people have become involved, to why older generations have gone or stayed. Out of the different people I spoke to Malegria is the only one who does not consider themselves punk anymore, though they do occasionally show support by attending their friends events. Malegria shares that punk was "a subculture that served a purpose at one point in my life, it doesn't really benefit me. I just feel like I've been there, done that...it hasn't changed in any kind of positive ways" (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). For Malegria punk seemed to serve as a space where they could express and develop their consciousness but that no longer provides the same space for growth. Nevertheless, all the other people I interviewed still identified as punk to some degree. Xelowks explains her position,

I consider myself a punk until I die. Cus I don't fit any norm, even in the mexica indigenous community I feel different, in the punk community I feel different for

other reasons. I feel different I think... I'll always be a punk though I'm not very active... I also feel like I'm responsible for the next generation, my daughter identifies as a punk

(Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014)

Xelowks' comments exemplify a life long commitment to punk, and her commitment is extended by her young daughter's own commitment to punk. When I asked about how punk applied to her parenting she stated, "I like that she wants to know more about the history of it ...it speaks to a rebellious sprit. I'm gonna foster that, support that, encourage that-- question me, question everything. Respectfully, but question me"

(Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014) Through our conversation it was apparent that Xelowks is not afraid to talk to her daughter about any issue or to be challenged by her daughter. Though Xelowks may not be active in terms of attending shows or keeping up with new artists, her choice to raise her daughter in what some would deem an unconventional way reflects her commitment to punk as an anti-status quo mindset.

These sentiments of continued rebellion are reflected in one of L.A.'s beloved bands, *Hit Me Back*. Known for their high energy shows and positive lyrics the song "Life" reflects elements of the *loquera* found in the punk scene, but most importantly the commitment to a different lifestyle. The song is brief, highly energetic, and the melody is carried by the guitar while the percussion is created with a drum set, tambourine, and clapping. The song's lyrics go in hand in hand with the musical frenzy,

Minutes turn to hours and hours turn to
Years, my life flashed before my eyes and i
Didn't even see it, so much that I did and so
Much that I said, so many good times that i
Will never forget... and the one thing that I
Learned in this life of mine is not to fear
Death... but someday ill look back and laugh,
But until then im going to grow old staying
Young because there is way too much that I

Want to do before I die...

The lyrics are contradictory as it both states that it will look back and laugh at their past, and simultaneously rejects the idea of growing up. The song reflects the contradictions faced by punks who inevitably grow old and face society's expectations of them as adults, but who strive to retain ideals of youth. Much like Xelows refusal to give up her punk identity, the song insists on the good memories being more than just another life stage, and striving to maintain them until the day they die. Though this song was written when most members were relatively young, now all members are past their mid-twenties and they all continue to be involved in the punk scene. Despite the fact that not all members of the band identify as queer, being in punk allows them to engage in a queer temporality that, "redefine[s] the binary of adolescence and adulthood" (Halberstam 2003). Through their high energy performances and youthful lyrics *Hit Me Back* destabilizes the idea of young and old. As their music is listened to by younger generations this further disrupts the age binary because the lyrics become applicable to the experiences of different age groups. Thus, the interaction between different generations of punks becomes critical in maintaining the L.A punk scene alive.

The rotation of generational roles becomes an important cycle for the punk scene. Those who were once pulled into the punk scene by an older punk, are now pulling young ones into the scene. Rudy spoke about seeing his nieces and nephews become interested in punk and running into them at shows. What I found compelling about Rudy's testimony was his investment in the younger generations of punks, "if some younger kid comes up to me and wants me to see their band or someone my age I'll try my best to do it if someone wants me to read their zine, I will" (Rudy, interview by

author, July 8, 2014) Though Rudy is not going to shows constantly or producing punk focused zines, he is willing to provide support for the younger generations who may be seeking a mentor or just someone to share their work with. These relationships built amongst punks prove to be critical in the preservation of the punk scene as well. As many have noted the reason why they became interested in punk was because of an older person who was willing to share their knowledge.

As was earlier noted one of the reasons why people are able to engage in DIY ethics is because they have a network of friends who can support them in various ways, from helping them book shows, handing out tapes, or simply attending shows. Dingy shared the following about hosting bands on tour,

[O]ne time at the old house we had four touring bands stay at our house: one from Canada, one from San Francisco, two from Texas, plus friends and guests. We had a slumber party of over thirty people! The hallway was packed, some people slept in sleeping bags in the backyard. I woke up and there were bodies everywhere! I made *soyviche* for everyone. That was cool, just to see that, it was a big family getting together –an unknown family, getting together, hanging out the next day everyone was giving each other hugs and then they go away

(Dingy, interview by author, Aug. 5 2014)

This type of happening is quite typical; again what is important is the ability to form community almost instantly among each other because of the music. This network that is built with touring bands is reflective of Velez-Ibanez's concept of "ritual expressions of marginality" which are "fixed patterns of social relations based on scarcity and inequality between individuals groups and organizations" (qtd in Loza, 1993). The bands that are on tour do not have the financial resources to get a hotel, and instead rely on the hospitality of other members of the punk scene. Nevertheless, there is other multiple reasons why people may become connected at shows so instantaneously. As Rooster describes his first show and seeing a mosh pit for the first time,

I thought it was beautiful. When people got knocked down they weren't trampled to death, they were helped up back up, and they kept on going and kept on going. And it symbolized all the hardships we go through, when we get knocked down, you know our colleagues are not just gonna walk over you, they're gonna give you a helping hand, they're gonna pick us up, and it was embedded in the songs... street punk kinda shit

(Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014)

The mosh pit itself creates an interesting space where we can be in each others personal space, at times be extremely aggressive and violent, and most of the time it is acceptable, it is a sort of consensual violence. Although at times there is fights that arise from being violent in each others personal space, the idea behind it is to mutually engage and help each other up if we fall down. Malegria puts it much more succinctly, "it is a commitment when you get into punk, cus you're going to shows, different kind of shows, it's the people you hang out with, and others you don't know them, and you dance together, and you're rowdy together" (Malegria, interview by author, June 16, 2014). Malegria's comments reflect the responsibility that is assumed when in the mosh pit because regardless of knowing everyone there you're sharing that space and energy, there is the potential to harm someone but that is never the intent. Ultimately, people are able to build friendships that at times serves to maintain people in the scene. Patty comments about the role her friends play in her continued involvement,

people that have the same kind of ideas as you...you just get involved, I don't know everyone but those certain people that are super cool and you get along with its just kinda like it keeps going, even though some bands break up another one comes along and you keep going further. Basically those people that really really love going to shows and kinda having something to do after work when you're tired, there's that show where I'm gonna go crazy, let it all out, sign along its fun I know some people see it as so dangerous but we have each others back

(Patty, interview by author, June 10, 2014)

For Patty having this group of friends inspires her to continue to participate in shows and also allows her to feel safe despite the issues of violence that tend to occur at shows.

Moreover, though she just touches upon this, these groups of friends also continue to form bands and inspire each other to keep producing. Oscar touches upon the interconnectedness that the punk scene creates as we share band's music, read each other's zines, and create a pool of resources as a community. This is part of the punk tradition as Dingy recalls when he was first being introduced to punk his friend "would buy records and dub them onto tapes and he would loan me cassettes with a bunch of bands" (Dingy, interview by author, Aug. 5 2014). While these actions may be considered insignificant they play an important role in maintaining the scene alive as well as inspiring others to form their own bands.

It was a hot day out in Boyle Heights and we decided to check out *Sadicos'* matinee show. We walked through an alley and found the house. The backyard looked rather empty and the few people there were either in bands or friends of the guy who was hosting the show. It also became obvious that my friends and I were some of the older people in the crowd. *Sadicos* cancelled, but we decided to stay for the other bands. *Obama's Youth* is a four piece band with a womyn vocalist, they all appeared to be fairly young and none of them looked like they could be any older than twenty-one. The next band seemed really young as well and did not have all the equipment they needed. One of the drummers used his guitarist's amp as a seat, until someone handed him a chair. There was no pit and most people sat in what little shade was available, but everyone clapped and cheered each other on after every song.

Though some of these bands may break up, they represent the generation of younger punks who are partaking in a scene that changed my life and the life of many others. I can't help but question what is my role and that of others with this younger generation of

punks. Xelowks answers frankly, “I don’t know. I think there’s a gap we don’t know how to best approach the young, we do it other ways not through music, but through organizing, community, social action in different ways” (interview by author, July 31, 2014). Nevertheless, she expressed that if the older generation of punks have criticisms of the newer then it is their responsibility to take up issue with them. Rooster shares these feelings, and notes that the best way to bring about any change in the punk scene is through dialogue.

[C]ommunication! We have people that all they do is talk shit! ‘oh these younger kids’ You forget how you were when you were their age, you fool yourself to believe you weren’t like them. Talk to them! Not on Facebook, at the show they’re gonna remind you who you were when you started out

(Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014)

Thus, it proves critical to build these relationships with younger punks in order to understand what they are going through, because most of us have been in their shoes in some way or another. Moreover, people expressed that older punks should be there to provide a sense of guidance or support for younger punks. Kevin commented on why he agreed to be part of this project by stating, “it is very important, we need to be able to provide something for future generations as well as someone who comes from the Latino community, nobody should feel ashamed from where they come from” (Kevin, interview by author, July 1, 2014) Thus, Kevin’s comments reflect his belief in sharing information with younger generations of Chican@/Latin@ punks, as well as providing them with a sense of validation. Marin is currently part of a girl’s rock camp in Orange County and is starting one in South East LA called *Chicas Rockeras*, targeting young girls of working class backgrounds. Her work, she argues, would not be possible if she had not been involved in the punk scene. Her participation in this girl’s rock camp is important

because it demonstrates how critical it is for young people to have a space where they can express themselves and be encouraged by others who have similar experiences. Rooster reiterates the importance of dialogue among the younger and older punks. “[Younger punks’] energy is misguided. They could be aware but if there’s no one outreaching or in plain sight to do something about that, that information its just gonna get lost in them” (Rooster, interview by author, Sept. 5, 2014). Thus, while punk can be a space for people to acquire knowledge or become more socially conscious that overload of information can essentially be lost if there is nobody to ignite action. There seems to be a fire that occurs when people first get involved in punk, but another important question is what keeps people involved.

Most of the people I interviewed were in their mid-twenties, however considering that a lot of these people have been involved in punk before their teen years this connotes a deeper relationship than simply a “youth culture”. Multiple people spoke about punk as one of their outlets for their frustrations. Dingy shared, “I’m not good at talking or expressing myself. When I play I let loose, I close my eyes sometimes, I don’t know what I’m doing, I’m just moving... there’s still a lot of things to say that are on my mind that I can’t keep quiet about, music is my best outlet” (Dingy, interview by author, Aug. 5 2014). On the other hand, despite the issues that people have had within the scene most people responded that they could not leave the punk scene. Oscar states, “I can’t let go, it’s hard... I’ve said fuck this multiple times but I think I’m a person who likes to pick at things... it gave me too much for me to say fuck you to it” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). Though Oscar is only twenty-one he has proven that he is invested in the punk community through his continued support of bands and engagement in the scene.

The majority of people I interviewed had a genuine desire to keep the punk scene alive and recognized that a lot of the things they did were to inspire others; conveying messages of pride and unity. Xelowks reiterated, “this is not a phase, it’s a life legacy of fuck what you think I’m supposed to be” (Xelowks, interview by author, July 31, 2014). Oscar urged, “stop dropping out of punk, it’s not funny anymore” (Oscar, interview by author, Aug. 16, 2014). While Angee stated, “*Soy ponkera si*, and proud! But at the end of the day we all doing the same shit and we need to keep each other encouraged and keep this alive” (Angee, interview by author, June 25, 2014). There is an undeniable sense of urgency for people to remain in the punk scene, especially because many of those leaving are the ones who are most deeply affected by issues of patriarchy, and violence. In this case Angee asserts her identity as a *ponkera* but also recognizes that everyone needs to work together to keep the punk scene alive. Furthermore, there is the critical recognition that despite the differences and hierarchies found within the LA punk scene, we are not each other’s enemies; ultimately, creating sentiments of solidarity and hope.

In Los Angeles it comes as no surprise to have a punk scene that is made of Chican@/Latin@s as we constitute the majority of the population. However, as the narratives demonstrate our multiple and complex identities are not ones left aside upon entering the punk scene, as the prior informs our experience in the punk scene. Thus, we have infused punk with the language, the music, and the instinct of survival that has been taught to us at in our homes. Maintaining the punk scene requires that we keep an open mind and are willing to DIY, and do it together as well. Younger generations will continue to come as long as we keep producing music that inspires. However, the older

generations must remain in the scene to provide some guidance to younger people. The ways patriarchy, misogyny, homophobia, and violence are reproduced in the punk scene must not be ignored. As can be seen through the different narratives, there have been improvements in terms of the presence and involvement of womyn and queer identified people, but this is still only part of the process. In order to really create change in the scene issues of patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, and violence must be addressed and not looked at solely based on the number of people participating in the scene. Though punk does provide a space for consciousness to develop, there remains a sense of incompleteness if the scene cannot address patriarchy. We must continue to engage in critical dialogue even if that no longer looks like the dialogue of the past, we must evolve but keep our anti- status quo ideology.

Conclusion

Desde Afuera: Closing Thoughts and Reflections

“...it’s okay to be angry. Angry gets shit started”

(M. Boogie, interview by author, Nov. 19, 2013)

My friends and I walk out of the backyard and head toward the car. The South Central streets are surprisingly still and only lit by streetlights. As we walk in the middle of the empty street one of the guys starts to share that he is tired of this, that it is this constant fighting that makes him not want to be a part of this anymore. When I left in 2007 I moved away to college and used that as my excuse for not being around as often. I would show up to the intentional spaces, or wherever my older punk friends went. Coming back in was intimidating, and writing about the scene made me realize that there would be people who had criticisms. Getting back in the car with the disappointment visible on our faces, we continue to talk and share our frustrations. The issues that pushed me out are still present today. Sometimes it becomes difficult to remember why so many of us stay.

Unlike other punk scenes throughout the country, the LA punk scene is dominated by Chican@s/Latin@s. This is the case due to various factors including the city’s demographics, but most importantly how generationally there has been a continued influx of younger generations of Chican@s/Latin@s coming into the scene to keep it alive. The punk scene has continued to draw in people because it embraces the outcasts, it echoes the frustrations of the angry, challenges normalcy, and provides a family. Chican@/Latin@ punks encounter a place for their *loquera*, a space that is fun, exciting, and invites them to do as they please. While this can be liberatory for many, there are cases where this becomes self-destructive. Unfortunately, this freedom becomes easily

entrenched in practices that reproduce the oppressive structures that many of us thought we had escaped when we got into punk.

Issues of patriarchy, misogyny, homophobia, and violence can be seen through the LA punk scene at multiple levels. Though historically there has been an increase in the participation and acknowledgement of womyn and queer people in the scene, there are still many issues to be addressed. Womyn must still face unfair double standards; like having to prove themselves as musicians by male standards, being continuously sexualized, and facing sexual scrutiny. On the other hand, queer people are slowly starting to make themselves noticed in the scene. However, being out in the scene implies having a great deal of courage and queer people find themselves having to navigate and negotiate their different identities in order to find a space where they feel safe.

Nevertheless, the patriarchy engrained in the scene is being challenged by womyn, queer people, and allies. Womyn and queer people have continued to create music, art, zines, etc. enabling them to create space for themselves not available to them before.

Furthermore, utilizing these mediums to make demands, inspire, and empower others.

Though there are now safe spaces created for and by womyn and queer folk, there are those that are pushing to move beyond this. By organizing shows that are more mixed, punks have attempted to shake up heterosexual male spaces, and create a scene that is more inclusive not just in lyrics but in action. Problematic behavior has prompted womyn, queer people, and allies to become critically engaged in and out of the punk scene, by participating in organizing efforts that challenge patriarchy. Nevertheless, this is not the only way people become engaged in social justice in the punk scene.

Through different mediums like zines, music, and conversations; punks in LA are exposed to different issues and for the most part develop a critical consciousness. Though this consciousness may not be adopted into lifestyle changes or political organizing, there is at least the exposure to messages that are anti status quo or that encourage people to question authority. The older generation experienced a larger dialogue usually facilitated by the bands, while the millennial's appear to attain consciousness via lyrics or through smaller discussions among peers. The idea of do it yourself (DIY) provides an alternative to consumer capitalism, and teaches punks about working to create the things they want to see. For Chicana@s/Latina@s punks in Los Angeles this retains the culture that they grew up with at home, making something out of nothing, or being innovative with the little that is available. Thus, there lies great potential in the ability of Chicana@s/Latina@s punks creating for themselves, and ultimately finding solutions and creating alternatives for themselves as a community, rather than waiting for anyone else to do it. For Chicana@s/ Latina@s in the LA punk scene, being a part of this scene has been the catalyst for their action, taking the front lines in protest, organizing with community members on the street, and finding the power in us to create.

The development of community and network is essential in maintaining the Los Angeles punk scene alive. By connecting like-minded people, punks in LA are able to record music, play shows, distribute their zines, and at times to travel throughout the states and internationally. The DIY, or do it together, culture proves to be dependent on the work of multiple people who rather rely on one another; by working together the ties among punks grow stronger. This can be seen in almost every aspect of punk culture from zine production to putting shows together. This mind frame solidifies the L.A punk

scene, creating space for various projects to spring up, disassemble, and reinvent themselves; forming a chain of inspiration and creativity that has allowed for the LA punk scene to grow, develop, and take different directions. The bonding that occurs specifically in Los Angeles, however; is far deeper rooted than simply going to shows together or even creating music together. The vast majority of us have grown up in similar neighborhoods, with working class parents, speaking Spanish, knowing someone who doesn't have papers. We are bound by similar hopes and fears, fostering more than a music scene but a space of community and solidarity; creating, challenging, and growing.

Unfortunately, people have dropped out of the scene and while some “grow out of it,” others cannot remain in the scene because they feel marginalized in a scene that is supposed to be accepting. It is here where people who are truly committed to the scene must strive to make changes. The potential of punk to raise consciousness is hindered when it reproduces patriarchal ideas and oppresses others. While these issues are deeply rooted and cannot be wholly eradicated, when instances of sexual assault or homophobic attacks occur they must not be treated as insignificant. Looking at these incidents allows us to acknowledge other problems of hierarchy found in the punk scene, where certain people are protected and others are not. Nevertheless, there are steps that can be taken to address these issues by communicating, but also by holding people accountable regardless of whatever hierarchy they may hold in the scene.

The music and lyrics seem to work hand in hand to evoke feelings of passion, anger, joy, etc. Lyrics serve to bring the punk scene together, especially when they deal with issues that so many of us relate to. Furthermore, by writing lyrics in Spanish bands are able to spread their message to a wider audience of punks globally but most

importantly the Spanish speaking community in LA. By touching on issues like immigration and sexism, punk in LA works to facilitate consciousness by bringing to the forefront issues that may not be discussed or making the audience feel identified with the lyrics. Songs can also serve to inspire people to become active outside of the punk scene in community organizing or to make changes in their personal lives. On the other hand, they can also be light hearted and encourage the audience to enjoy life, have fun experiences, and make new friends. The lyrics and experiences of punks reflect one another, becoming personal soundtracks and part of people's memories. These are only a few of the topics that surfaced in my research, however; there is still more to learn about and from the LA, national, and global punk scene.

There is an obvious lack of literature regarding Chican@/Latin@ punk in LA, but nationally as well. Though there are many people who have begun to historicize and write about Chican@/Latin@ punk in academia there are still many points that remain to be further explored.

- I. Geography: One of the greatest ironies of Los Angeles is that we are both united and divided by freeways, creating different experiences depending on what side of the freeway you reside. Though the LA punk scene is home to brown punks, their experiences and taste are not all the same. Freeways have become borders within, las cicatrizes que separan a los have from the have nots. While, I spoke to people throughout different areas of Los Angeles, every scene takes distinct shapes and forms from the type of punk that is popular in the area to the aesthetics utilized. Understanding these differences can help us further grasp the

tensions that happen within Los Angeles. Furthermore, it is important to look at Chican@/Latin@ punks not only in Los Angeles but also throughout the country, and the world.

II. Gentrification: As Los Angeles changes with an increase in white young people, and the displacement of working class families of color, it will be interesting to see what changes occur within the punk scene. Will white punks dominate the scene or will the punk scene be fragmented by race? Only time can tell, we can begin to see some of the effects now as more white people attend punk shows in the heavily Chican@/Latin@ areas of LA.

III. Substance Abuse: One issue that came up consistently but remains to be further analyzed is that of substance abuse. From attending shows to people's interviews, excessive drinking came up constantly. Moreover, it was usually tied to issues of sexual assault and violence. Though a lot of people seem to have an understanding of how alcohol and other drugs have been utilized to oppress people in our community, they still engaged in consumption of these substances and some admitted having an addiction to them. Further exploring these issues has the potential to help rehabilitate but also prevent these issues from happening. Moreover, it would be interesting to interrogate the best way to address these issues in punk, since the scene has attempted to stay away from policing one another. Thus, further exploring the lines between policing and community accountability.

- IV. The Mosh Pit: While the mosh pit is supposed to be a space of consensual violence, this does not turn out to be the case most of the time as fights erupt from the aggression encountered in the mosh pit. The pit can itself be considered a research inquiry as it becomes further complicated when we take into account gender, sexuality, age, and ableism. Therefore, we can ask ourselves in what ways is the mosh pit a positive and negative space for punks? By providing an answer to this we can look at this practice more critically and decide whether it is something we want to continue engaging in as individuals.
- V. Musical Composition: Chican@/Latin@ punk has evolved the musical genre. The music being produced by bands is no longer confined to three chords, and is further complicated as bands have fused elements from other genres like Hip Hop, *Cumbia*, and other musical stylings. Exploring the changes in sound are important to further understand what it means to be a punk of color. Moreover, by analyzing the musical composition we are able to learn more about the context of the scene, and what is important to its participants.
- VI. Historicizing Chican@/Latin@ Punks: In terms of history there are still a lot of gaps that exist when dealing with Chican@/Latin@ punks, and punks of color as whole. Though we have strived to archive other people of color in the scene it becomes complicated because so many peoples identities were ignored. It is important for these scenes to be documented in order for us to challenge the erasure of people of color in

these spaces, and to demonstrate that we are essential in the creation and maintenance of these subcultural spaces. Chican@/Latin@ punks must be included in the legacy of Chican@/Latin@ musical and cultural production, as we have become part of the overall culture. Moreover, by looking critically the LA punk scene, as people who care about it continuing to grow, we can see the things that need to be worked on

There are questions and issues that overlap, as it is difficult to separate substance abuse from our social stratification. Thus, it is important to remember that there is much greater context to address.

There were also obvious limitations in this project. While I tried to speak to people throughout the Los Angeles area, the majority of people interviewed were from the East/ South East LA area. The majority of the people I interviewed were also mainly of lower social economic status. Thus, the narratives shared spoke to more particular experience in Los Angeles. Moreover, participants were over 18 years old and the perspective of younger high school aged youth would prove beneficial to understanding the importance of punk in young Chican@s/Latin@s lives. Furthermore, a more nuanced musical analysis can provide us more insight about the ways Chican@/Latin@ music has continued to evolve in Los Angeles.

Burnouts en Baja Vol.1 doesn't sound like a very radical concept for a punk fest. In reality, bands from LA played a two-day festival in Tijuana, Mexico along with bands across the west coast, from Canada to Mexico. This brought to light issues of immigration as bands from Mexico have been unable to play shows in LA because they lack the proper papers. Thus, challenging the state and taking it upon themselves to create

a space where they could all come together to share music. As I write this, *Ausencia* is playing the *Aztlán Tour* throughout Mexico. The flyer for the tour was created by a Mexican artist and depicts a death figure in *pachuco* garb ushering the ghost of a shot down *cholo* who has passed away. The images are indicative of the cultural exchange that has existed for many years and has continued through punk communities. In San Francisco, Oscar is helping organize Latin@ Punk Fest 2015, the first one to occur in the bay. Moreover, the people organizing the fest are changing up the set up as they are planning workshops, and getting to know more about the bands that want to perform. Hailing from Oxnard, *StayCool Fanzine*'s authors are keeping it critical writing about the forgotten histories of punk, analyzing how race plays out, and have been instrumental in the process of writing this thesis. We are all working locally but making connections nationally and transnationally.

Despite the physical distance we cannot be contained. There are too many factors that pull us outside of our comfort zone, because there is countless amount of work to be done and shared. We have managed to come closer, to build bridges out of music, zines, and tours. The scene is not perfect, it probably will never be. However, if we are angry about it we can change it, scream it out in our songs, write it out in our zines, organize in our scene. Irrespective of its faults and the challenges we must continue to face; it is there! Providing an escape, allowing people to create, helping people to cope. It has changed, but so have we. Still concerned with the world around us, still talking politics, still having fun, but more determined to fight for what we got.

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