ROMANTIC, DO-IT-YOURSELF, AND SEXUALLY SUBVERSIVE:
AN ANALYSIS OF RESISTANCE IN A HAWAI‘I LOCAL PUNK ROCK
SCENE

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By
Fumiko Takasugi

Dissertation Committee:

Patricia Steinhoff, Chairperson
Meda Chesney-Lind
Katherine Irwin
David Swift
Christine Yano
Dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Mineki Asaga, from whom I inherited a sense of service in education and a knack for teaching, as well as other traits that we share.
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This study is about resistance. More specifically, it is about resistance using music to empower. This ethnography looks at the processes of resistance in a local punk scene in Hawai‘i between 1995 and 2003. The diverse socioeconomic environment of Hawai‘i affected the processes of a local punk scene and its scene participants, creating three sub-scenes within the local scene: metal/hardcore, ska/punk, and indie. Scene members’ uses of music and the meanings attached to the musics and styles were highly creative in developing different kinds of resistance to mainstream society. The different types of resistance could be categorized as: romantic (metal/hardcore), DIY (ska/punk), and sexually subversive (indie).

Resistances in the local scene involved distinction. This distinction, while integral to resistance by separating one’s scene or sub-scene from others, also contributed to processes of intersecting oppressions. This double-edged sword of distinction was useful in understanding the dynamic of the local scene. In addition to distinction as being value-based (i.e., not neutral), hierarchies within sub-scenes emerged, creating conditions where various gender, class, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation were “rad” (i.e., hip and radical, respected) in some sub-scenes while de-valued (i.e., uncool, weird, and second class) in others. Core participants were considered “rad” and were involved in the creative process of the scene, usually as band musicians.

Over a span of eight years, the Hawai‘i local scene changed drastically with regards to how women participated in the scene. In 1995, there was no indie sub-scene.
However, younger scene members’ exposure to the music, style, and especially the punk- and feminist-ideas of the Riot Grrrl and indie movements on the mainland led to sexual resistance that led to more core participation of women in the Hawai‘i local scene via the indie sub-scene. Women’s sexual resistance was an especially significant development in this local scene, in which core scene participation was achieved through being in bands.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Forms and processes of resistance in action are the focus of this study. I examine a youth subculture in its resistance to a number of aspects of dominant mainstream society. Similar to Lawrence Grossberg’s (1984) treatment of rock and roll and practices of strategic empowerment, I see the Hawai‘i local punk scene as a localized context in which punk music empowered the youths who used it in their resistance to the rest of society. Through examining the processes of a local punk rock scene, I analyze how resistance is shaped, defined, and accomplished by scene participants; and consequently, how the processes behind these resistances also simultaneously constitute intersecting oppressions (Collins 194790890; Crenshaw 1991).

Local scene participants’ practices of resistance to a number of unjust social practices and oppressive power structures emerge as the foundation of the music, style, and attitude of the local scene. Additionally, analyzing resistance in the scene leads to better understanding the changing dynamic of the scene in terms of intersecting class, race, gender, and sexual orientation. This changing dynamic, however, also brings into focus another dynamic: that of oppression. The same individuals practice both resistance and oppression.

Some Core Concepts

By resistance, I refer to the term in the sense of its usage by the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University (Birmingham School). In this tradition, work by Stuart Hall (1975) and others continues to be insightful in its juxtaposition of marginalized youths to their working-class backgrounds and the dominant mass culture. These “double articulations” of youth subcultures speak to the
dynamic relationship between the influence of increased affluence in youths’ lives and the continued categorization of youths’ class locations. Youth subcultures resolve the crisis of displacement in working class communities by creating a new subcultural community for themselves as a resistance to the effects of advanced capitalism. However, they also end up evoking the working class through their music and style. Thus, they are able to issue challenges to authority but are not able to fix the problem that their class position presents.

Phil Cohen (1999) explains the emergence of youth subcultures as working class youths’ responses to the dramatic changes in job and living situations of the working class in the postwar economy of the 1950s. Given the school as a primary location for socialization of children into adults who can survive in mainstream society, Paul Willis (1981) examines the attitudes, behaviors, and life trajectories of boys who refused to play by the rules. Dick Hebdige (1979) analyzes the meanings given to style by various countercultural and spectacular youth subcultures of the time.

Resistance is seen as a creative kind of agency—by merging style, music, and values subversively—achieved by a dominated group. The use of symbols is significant because if a more direct language were used, the group towards which the resistance was being directed could easily detect the resistance. As Clarke, et al (1975) lay out for us, this resistance is accomplished by taking objects out of their context and using them in ways not originally intended. This displacement causes disruption in how to interpret the object as well as how to make sense of the individuals who achieved this disruption. Teddy boys, mods, punk rockers, and bikers are just some of the youth groups studied by
Birmingham School semioticians (with the exceptions of Willis who used ethnography). Understanding such bricolage and the homology (or symbolic fit between style, music, values, etc.) of different youth subcultures is essential to resistance in the Birmingham School tradition.

However, I also add to this understanding some criticisms and elaborations of the Birmingham School's use of the concept. Caution directed at the tradition's celebratory view of youth resistance are largely three: 1) a one-dimensional view of resistance, 2) the over-privileging of the spectacular, and 3) the semiotic and textual analysis of resistance rather than an analysis based on grounded ethnographic methods.

Critiques of the Birmingham School perspective of resistance came from both within and outside of the Marxist tradition of the. In their criticisms of the privileging of the extraordinary and the stylistic, Stanley Cohen (1972) and Gary Clarke (1990) emphasize the ordinariness of subcultural life, cautioning that only paying attention to the shock effect of subcultures misses the more diverse nature of what comprises resistance. According to this view, resistance is often achieved in the mundane daily course of life without necessarily consciously confronting broader structures of class and capitalism. Cohen (1972) and Clarke (1990) also caution that subcultural style can, in fact, become a uniform rather than an innovation.

Other theorists found the relationship between subcultures and commerce to be less unidirectional than the picture that was previously set forth by the Birmingham School. In the work of Angela McRobbie (1989), a focus on female participation in subcultures brought the significance of the processes of consumption by subcultural
participants to the fore. Similarly, Gary Clarke (1990) states that it is pointless to look only at innovators and condemn those who appropriate styles as they become marketed products. Looking only at the former takes spectacular subcultures out of context and removes the possibility of better understanding the tension between subcultures and commerce.

Jon Stratton (1985) and Simon Frith (1981) also warn us of the complex relationship that youths have with commerce. Stratton (1985) examines how some subcultures transfer better across different societies than others because of the similar understandings of commodities across cultures (e.g., heavy metal, biker, and surfer as opposed to teddy boy because of the latter's relation to the specific history of aristocracy in Great Britain). And as detailed by Frith (1981), the nature of different youth musics can be quite different depending on the particular music's relationship to the youths' vision as opposed to commercialism, echoing Adorno's (1973) music analyses.

In attempting to better understand the complex relationship between youth subcultures in their resistance to commercialism, later scholars have brought elements of earlier Chicago School emphases on rigorous sociological and anthropological research back into the realm of subcultural studies. We also see a more liberal, pluralist stance towards subcultures, also characteristic of the Chicago School. A merging of Cultural Studies and Sociological/Anthropological perspectives seems to be a logical direction in recent subcultural studies, given the diverse forms that youth subcultures have taken in the last few decades. Incorporating broader societal structures that include women, racial/ethnic minorities, various social classes, and different sexual orientations of youths
in subcultures also involves a fresh look at these subcultures both through
semiotic/textual and ethnographic methods.

While the critiques and expansions to the Birmingham School tradition are
significant and necessary, the core ideas developed in its Marxist tradition remain central
to the study of resistance half a century after these concepts were developed. Punk rock
bands still shock and rappers and metalheads still scare most adults and youths.
According to Gramsci (1971) and Hall (1975), this resistance by youth subcultures is a
sign of a healthy society. And on a less positive note, the relationship of youths to the
larger structures of class and capitalism continue to echo the Birmingham School
narrative that subcultural empowerment is empowerment without a future.

Having examined the Birmingham School tradition and recent trends in the work
on resistance, however, we need to scrutinize another concept: that of “subculture.” The
term was first used by the Chicago School theorists in the 1940s. The definition of
“subculture” has shifted considerably since then. Subcultures were initially seen as
deviant groups that brought disorder to the neighborhood. From there was born the
connotations of a street rather than domestic phenomenon. This gave “subculture” the
images of a young, male, shadowy, unofficial, and actively creative entity. The work of
criminologists and deviance theorists like Albert Cohen (1955), Robert Merton (1957),
William Foote Whyte (1993), and Howard Becker (1963) are noteworthy here.

The Birmingham School adopted some of these understandings of subcultures,
denoting a social group that is more tangible and identifiable than “society;” that is a part
of the larger mass or dominant culture but also opposed to it. Stuart Hall’s (1975)
placement of youth subcultures as being between a youth's parent culture (working class culture) and the dominant culture of society is again recalled here. Similar to the Chicago School, the Birmingham School's definition of subculture was significantly narrowed by age (youth), social class (working class), and gender (male). However, the tradition also expanded the field of subcultural study to include expressive and artistic subcultures.

While Becker (1963) had conducted his seminal study on jazz musicians ("hip" as opposed to the ignorant audience "squares"), the Birmingham School brought the study of artistic youth subcultures to the forefront of subcultural study.

The increased influence of continental European poststructuralist theorists like Foucault, Lacan, Bourdieu, and Walter Benjamin injected new ways of looking at subcultures into the work that had come before it. While an academic alignment with theoretical paradigms that privileged the avant-garde (i.e., shock effect for the purpose of formally disrupting normative understandings of things) continued the tradition of studying the spectacular, a concern with too much of an emphasis on disruption also emerged. The concern was that of identification. Were we not emphasizing stylistic effects at the expense of how subcultural participants in fact identify with the subculture?

Representative of this concern of subcultural identification is the later work by Hebdige (1983), which is more cautious of the ambiguity of style or pose. The micro-relations of domination and resistance are always in flux and style can be either resistance or conformity. For example, Dave Laing (1985) gives a sensitive reading of the sensibility of punk rockers. The punk rocker's pleasure is dependent on the awareness that non-punk listeners will be discomforted by punk music and style. Sarah Thornton
(1996), reminiscent of Bourdieu’s (1984) cultural capital, utilizes the concept of “subcultural capital” to explain the hierarchies based on distinction within club cultures. We are reminded of Herbert Gans’ (1974) categories of total versus partial culture participants and Kathryn Fox’s (1987) work on the stratification within a punk scene.

Another significant innovation in the study of subcultures came out of the attempt to understand issues of core and periphery in subcultural identity. Resistance involves struggles for power, and the recognition that power is always taking place forces us to rethink the context in which we are examining power relations. Power works in particular ways in particular locales at particular times, and is not coordinated by some pre-existing center. Subcultural relations to style, place, and time provided forms through which subcultural identity could be evoked. Paul Gilroy (1987) shows us how a diasporic privileging of otherwise marginally influential places—the Caribbean and the African continent—emerged from the club scene in “black Britain.” While these places became subcultural resources for a short time (i.e., the 80s two-tone music), post-punk white reggae musicians eventually detached reggae from the Caribbean, Africa, and black-Britain.

George Lipsitz (1990) also examines subcultural relations to style, place, and time by demonstrating how Chicano rock and roll artists create a fusion (or syncretic) music by straddling two cultures. Subcultural identities are based on similarities of emotion and experience, and these can connect seemingly disparate social groups through nostalgic attachment and romantic identification. For example, white America’s obsessions with black music and musicians are analyzed extensively in Lipsitz’s (1990) work on rock and
roll and identification. Similarly, the ambiguous cultural identity of rock musicians in Russia is studied by Thomas Cushman (1995) who examined how musicians positioned themselves in relation to the West while living in a society going through turbulent change from socialism to capitalism.

Other North American popular culture scholars and ethnomusicologists have developed schemes for studying subcultural identification through structures of feeling. Lawrence Grossberg (1984) utilizes the concept of “affective alliances” to connect social reality and the emotional power of rock music. Musical activities like subcultures are attentive to change occurring elsewhere. The issues of core and periphery also include temporal as well as spatial distances. Ryan Moore (1998) ties the sense of apathy and lack of feeling often associated with young people at the turn of the century to the reality of these youths’ downward mobility juxtaposed against the continued pressure to achieve the “American Dream.” Moore (1998) sees nostalgia for 70s and 80s style and music in today’s youth subculture as a way of imagining oneself in a time when the American Dream was something that was still realistically attainable.

The concepts of structures of feeling and subcultural identification also allow us to envision subcultures as entities that do not need physically delineated spaces. When we see mediated communication as being integral to the definition and operation of subcultures, we find that: 1) bodily presence is unnecessary for the constitution of a subculture and 2) processes of intertextual networks of pop culture media influence individuals to choose some musics/styles over others. As shown by Donna Gaines (1995) and Chelsea Starr (1999), fanzines are examples of mediated communication that are
integral in maintaining and developing particular subcultural movements. More recently, Internet accessibility has led to more online fanzines and has spawned countless varieties of online subcultural communities.

The transformation of “subculture” is significant as the concept continues to be used to explain the activity of diverse social groups in a variety of societies. I wish to adopt the definition of “subculture” set forth in Hebdige’s (1983) later work:

Subculture is, then, neither simply an affirmation or a refusal, neither simply resistance against symbolic order nor straightforward conformity with the parent culture. It is both a declaration of independence, of Otherness, of alien intent, a refusal of anonymity, of subordinate status. It is an insubordination. And at the same time, it is also a confirmation of the fact of powerlessness, a celebration of impotence. Subcultures are both a play for attention and a refusal, once attention has been granted, to be read according to the Book (1983:87).

An examination of resistance in a youth subculture using an ethnographic approach requires knowledge of the subculture on both a micro and macro level. Punk is a subculture that developed around venues where shows (band performances) could be held. Thus, the punk subculture tended to be more localized than some subcultures. Various localized manifestations of punk subculture are referred to as punk “scenes”; for example, the New York punk scene of the mid 70s, the 80s LA punk scene, the London punk scene, the Pacific Northwest punk scenes, etc. John Irwin (1973) explains that while in its major folk usage, “scene” referred to the ongoing activity of a collectivity in a particular place and time, the term has since lost its temporal and spatial dimensions and refers more to the patterns of activity. However, the example of the “punk scene” is one in which particular locales and times are again evoked due to the centrality of localized live music to the subculture.
Furthermore, as Straw (1991) elucidates, local scenes are closely tied to international subcultures. He states:

The manner in which musical practices within a scene tie themselves to processes of historical change occurring within a larger international musical culture will also be a significant basis of the way in which such forms are positioned within that scene at the local level (1991:373).

Irwin (1973) explains that there are scenes and then there is The Scene; the non-capitalized version being minor scenes and the capitalized version being the most popular scene at any one time. Irwin further notes that participants of scenes explicitly recognize this scene as a lifestyle and that they are a part of it. This aspect of “scene” also sets it apart from “subculture,” which is more of a sociological term.

The study of resistance in subculture can also benefit from the study of multiple oppressions. The prominence of women and racial/ethnic minorities in academia led to work in the humanities and social sciences that deconstructed the traditionally white-, male-, and middle-class-centered views of society and social groups. Combined with European poststructuralist theoretical trends, new paradigms that focused on the interlocking systems of multiple oppressions and resistances emerged. One of the significant outcomes of these new directions in academia was Black feminist studies. Black feminist thought is useful in studying resistance because it reminds us that how class, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc., affect an individual is crucial in fully understanding the forms or processes of resistance. Black feminist thought also provides us with the concept of privilege versus oppression and how not questioning privilege adds to the normalization of structures of oppression.

Black feminist thought shifted the “center” (white, male, heterosexual, and middle
class) to demonstrate how those who didn’t fit this category on several counts encountered oppression on several different fronts on a daily basis. The Combahee River Collective’s “A Black Feminist Statement” (1982) is a political statement that expounded on the difficulty of organizing a Black feminist movement due to the need to address a whole range of oppressions together. In the legal sphere, Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) analyzes how feminist and antiracist discourses have yet to come together to address the issues that many real women of color face in their daily lives, such as domestic violence and rape. Crenshaw states, “Because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both” (1991:1244).

Not only are oppressions intersecting, they are also structural, institutionalized, and often unquestioned because they seem harmless enough. Patricia Hill Collins (1990, 2000) effectively demonstrates how controlling images of Black women like the mammy, matriarch, welfare mother, and jezebel work to keep Black women oppressed. By continuing to uphold these prevailing images of Black womanhood, elite white men dictate Black women’s sexuality and fertility through intersecting oppressions of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. Peggy McIntosh’s (1988) work challenges us to think of the oppression of others in terms of the privileges they may give us. Many of us are taught to recognize racism or sexism in mean-spirited acts by individuals but not through the advantages that skin color or gender confers on some and not others through an invisible system that privileges those advantages. Thus, whether or not a man agrees with the conferring of dominance on his group (i.e., men) because of his gender is
In subculture research, intersecting oppressions have generally been studied in intersections of class and gender or race and gender. Lauraine Leblanc (1999) refers to the gender resistance of punk girls as “trebled reflexivity” because the girls challenge capitalism by being punk, they resist the proper femininity discourses of the mainstream, and they “subvert the punk subversion” by challenging the masculinist nature of the subculture. Tricia Rose’s (1994) work on rap and hip hop demonstrates how Black women in this subculture both support the efforts by Black men to create a unified racial front of Black political/cultural expression, but simultaneously challenge sexism toward Black women by finding ways to take control of their own sexuality in music, dance, and style. Sunaina Maira (2002) elucidates how for girls, gender and sexuality add to the tension of identity that second generation Indian American youths living in New York City experience as they participate in the “desi” subculture of remix dance music that incorporates Indian music, hip hop, and other club music.

Studying resistance in a subculture or scene entails a thorough understanding of how members participate in subcultural activity. “Making the scene” or being fully involved in subcultural activity is an integral part of resistance. In a diverse scene population, differential access of members to participation or activities needs to be scrutinized because such differences have implications for resistance in that scene. For example, the case of women and queer scene participants begs further study because so many mixed-gender youth subcultures continue to be masculinist and are predicated on a system of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987). What occurs in such scenes, then, are
efforts by women and queer youths to be taken seriously as scene participants on par with male scene members. To accomplish equal footing, disadvantaged scene members must learn to navigate a difficult and sometimes dangerous gendered and sexual terrain.

This navigation of the gendered and sexual terrain is similar to the experiences of girls in gangs, another subculture. Within the realm of subculture studies, gang studies is an area in which differences in activity by gender has been investigated fairly extensively because of the increasing interest in women’s criminality. Thus, one of the significant products to come out of recent studies of girls in gangs is the issue of within-group differences between girls; especially in their use of aggression, as documented by Jody Miller (2001). More recently, however, a different question has arisen. Does focusing on gender differences gloss over perhaps an equally important issue of whether or not different populations of girls in gangs participate in different levels of aggression and violence for different reasons?

There may be little difference in activity for gang girls from similar social class backgrounds as found by Hagedorn and Macon (1998). However, there are clearly differences in activity between girls who become part of male-centered gangs and women who create their own “girl gangs.” Much of this difference can be explained by social class or racial/ethnic differences of gang girls’ backgrounds, which translate into different reasons for the kinds of activity engaged in (Campbell 1991, Moore 1991, Miller 2001). Girls have different reasons for joining gangs. For some, it is protection against victimization; for others, it is for status and prestige. As stated by Miller:

In certain contexts, norms favorable to women’s use of violence exist, and these norms are not simply the consequence of avoiding victimization, but also results in status, recognition, and support for expressions of
presumably "masculine" forms of violence (2001:10).

These reasons are often dictated by the choices the girls have in their lives.

In music scenes and subcultures also, most of the literature on the participation of women is in relation to or compared with that of men. As illustrated by Mavis Bayton (1990, 1997), Sheila Whiteley (2000), and Angela McRobbie (1990, 2000), representations of women in music subcultures have generally been static and essentialized. Subcultures are defined by the music, style, and ideas of male participants. Studies of music subcultures in which within-group differences of women have been explored are still few. McRobbie's (1989) work on the role of female subcultural participants involved in acquiring and selling second-hand clothing is perhaps the only study that treats this question of within-group differences of female subcultural participants until recently. However, with the rise of indie and Riot Grrrl movements, we are now seeing work on bands and scenes consisting mainly of women who do not fit the usual static roles.

One of the ways in which to further explore the question of women's participation in music subcultures is to examine women's sexual resistance to predominantly male and masculinist subcultures. Rock and roll music is highly sexual as seen in its sometimes suggestive and sometimes blatant sexualized lyrics (Frith 1990[1978]) and as it is heard, seen, and felt in its sound, rhythm, and dance (Grossberg 1984). As Grossberg states, rock is "a music of bodily desire" (1984:238). While one avenue for women to achieve participation is to become "one of the boys" by involving themselves in the mosh pit and becoming knowledgeable about the music, another is to refuse the way the subculture
operates and create situations or whole scenes that run on rules established by women. Sexual resistance has been used for the purpose of disrupting sexist practices and heteronormative understandings of what should constitute the scene as seen in the work of Tricia Rose's (1994) rap and hip hop subculture and Mimi Schippers's (1999) alternative rock scene.

Sexual resistance has been studied in many different contexts. The literature shows that many practices have been called sexual resistance. Female bodybuilders (Guthrie and Castelnuovo 1992), women studying self-defense (McCaughey 1998), exotic dancers (Chapkis 1997; Pasko 2002), survivors of domestic violence (Wesely, Allison, and Schneider 2000), and even how young girls conduct themselves in their relationships with older men (McCarthy 1998) are examples of resistance to dominant sexuality.

The modernist perspective of sexual resistance focuses on the distinction between public and private spheres of life. Hence, in this view, bringing the private sphere into the public accomplishes resistance. The legalization of same-sex marriages (Goldberg-Hiller 2002) and prostitution (Jenness 1993; Zatz 1997); and legal action on behalf of battered women (Gagne 1998) and victims of sexual harassment in the workplace (MacKinnon 1979) are examples of struggles to achieve sexual resistance by dissolving the wall between the private and public sphere. The modernist version of action presented by Erving Goffman (1959) divides the self into front and backstage spheres. Goffman's dramaturgical view echoes the assumptions of modernist gender theorists who assert that resistance is achieved when the public/private split is penetrated, the private
sphere is brought into the public, and the division ceases to exist. Hence, "the personal is political" (Smith 1987) and examination of how backstage politics are brought to the fore and observed in face-to-face interaction is most important.

Poststructuralists, in contrast, do not focus on public/private bifurcations, but see power as embodied and in constant flux. Sexuality is performed and talked about; thus, sexual resistance in this view is achieved by using the body to perform and discuss sexual alternatives. Dressing in drag (Butler 1999), queering sexuality in face-to-face interaction and conversation (Schippers 2000, 2002), using a personal diary to create a personal lesbian identity (Clark 2002), and going to les-bi-gay youth cyberzines to find one's voice (Addison and Comstock 1998) are examples of how sexual resistance is accomplished by performing and discussing alternatives to dominant sexuality.

Poststructuralists envision frontstage and backstage dichotomies as false notions. Rather, power relations are constantly fluctuating and resistance is achieved through discourse and performance. The presentations of sexual identity through performance of the body (Butler 1999; Schippers 2000, 2002) and through disembodied discourse (Foucault 1997; Clark 2002) become the mechanisms through which sexual resistance occurs. Furthermore, as Schippers (2000, 2002) observes, performed sexuality and discussed sexuality are inseparable, always occurring together, in presentation of sexual identity.

**Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Research**

As Sharon Hays (1994) and Eliasoph and Lichterman (1999) elucidate, culture and social structure are interpenetrating. I see this project as one that examines the
interpenetrating nature of the cultural and structural aspects of society. Grossberg’s (1984) use of “affective alliances” is especially useful in examining the connections between culture and social structure. States Grossberg:

I am concerned with the ways in which rock and roll provides strategies of survival and pleasure for its fans, with the ways in which rock and roll is empowered by and empowers particular audiences in particular contexts. Rock and roll becomes visible only when it is placed within the context of the production of a network of empowerment. Such a network may be described as an ‘affective alliance’: an organisation of concrete material practices and events, cultural forms and social experience which both opens up and structures the space of our affective investments in the world. (1984:227).

This study is about a group of youths who distinguished themselves as “rad,” engaging in radical resistance to capitalism and class oppression, downward mobility, hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987), and heteronormativity. This ethnography studies a local punk rock scene in Honolulu from 1995 to 2003. John Irwin (1977) explains that scene participants do not just hang out and enjoy the scene, but are all involved in creating the scene. He states:

What they are after is not just the enjoyment of the activities, but to become involved in collective expression or “action.” To find action, they move on to the public stage, enter the drama, or “make the scene” (1977:27).

The Hawai‘i local punk scene was a band scene in which scene members started their own bands and played original music at band performances (also referred to as shows). Becoming a band musician was a social process that was accomplished most significantly through the interaction between musicians and musicians; and between musicians and the audience that came to shows and listened to bands’ recorded music. Becoming a band musician involved the changing quality and quantity of ties between
band musicians, followers, musicians of other local scenes, commercially successful musicians, the music business, and other individuals in band members' lives.

Gary Alan Fine's (1987) work on peer culture also informs this interactively creative process known as a scene. Scene participants (or members of a peer culture) converge because they have something basic in common: “[T]hey share experiences, and these experiences can be referred to with the expectation they will be understood by other members, thus being used to construct a social reality for the participants” (1987:125). Experiences as well as objects, styles, and sounds are; therefore, given meaning through repeated interactions of scene participants. Similarly, as Hall and Jefferson (1975) state:

The symbolic aspects cannot, then, be separated from the structure, experiences, activities and outlook of the groups as social formations. Sub-cultural style is based on the infra-structure of group relations, activities and context (1975:56).

In a local punk scene in Hawai‘i, the concept of resistance helps to explain the formation of several *sub-scenes* within the Hawai‘i punk scene. Donna Gaines (1991) uses the term “subcults” to refer to entities similar to the sub-scenes that I found. She discusses subcults as follows:

[S]ubcults are far more specified and differentiated than subcultures. They are essentially cliques *within* subcultures—subcategories within the “outcast” population. Subcults are tied to highly exclusive scenes, organized into shared systems of music, language, style, and ideology... Most high school students can decipher these sign systems; they can read peer subcult affiliation on the spot. Most adults can’t. (1991:94-95)

Sub-scenes were identified by the differential nature of resistance articulated not just through their parent culture, but also through other aspects of individual scene member’s identities such as gender, sexual orientation, and race in addition to social
class. Material and symbolic aspects of sub-scenes such as music, language, style, and ideology contained meanings of resistance and new scene members learned these symbolic aspects in the process of becoming socialized as participants of the sub-scene, as well as of the larger local punk scene.

But there is also a need for a critical analysis of resistance. As rightly pointed out by Thornton (1996) in her study of club cultures (i.e., another form of youth subcultures characterized by dancing to house, techno, and drum and bass mixes by DJs at clubs), the pressure to accomplish distinction and the separatism and elitism achieved as a result, should caution one to question the ideologies held up by youths in the name of resistance.

As Thornton argues:

References to the mainstream are often a way of deflecting issues related to the definition and representation of empirical social groups. Sometimes, it signals an unquestioning acceptance of youth’s point of view or rather the universalization of the embodied social structure of a particular group...these clubber and raver ideologies offer ‘alternatives’ in the strict sense of the word, namely other social and cultural hierarchies to put in their stead (1996:114-115).

Ethnographic study of a local punk scene allowed a contextualized inquiry into the tension between resistance and oppression as linked to distinction. As stated by Thornton (1996:10): “Distinctions are never just assertions of equal difference; they usually entail some claim to authority and presume the inferiority of others.” In other words, distinguishing oneself from one group (even if this group is the dominant society) is always a part of allying oneself with yet another group; thereby holding oneself in higher regard against the former group.

In a similar vein, one’s privilege often distracts one from seeing the oppression
experienced by others. As Patricia Hill Collins (2000) explains:

Although most individuals have little difficulty identifying their own victimization within some major system of oppression—whether it be by race, social class, religion, physical ability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age or gender—they typically fail to see how their thoughts and actions uphold someone else’s subordination (2000:287).

Moreover, the matrix of domination (Collins 2000)—the intersecting map of power relations in a society—has distinct consequences in a society such as Hawai‘i and this, in turn, affects the nature of a local punk scene within it.

In sum, three major themes run through this study. The first theme addresses the diverse forms of resistance that were achieved by punk scene participants who came from very different race, class, gender, and sexual orientation backgrounds. The second theme pertains to the emphasis on how “rad” meanings attributed to certain resistances were developed and strengthened through the interaction between core scene participants to empower them in their daily lives. The third theme takes a critical view of the tension between resistance and oppression for scene members and points to the reproduction of intersecting oppressions within a scene touting itself as alternative and progressive.

Chapter Outline

Following the Introduction, Chapter two provides a discussion of the setting and methods of the study. This is an ethnographic study spanning seven years and based on the data triangulation of observation, qualitative interviews, and textual analysis. As a setting, Hawai‘i is geographically isolated and is very different from the rest of the US demographically and culturally as well as climatically. These aspects of the setting affect the nature of the Hawai‘i local punk scene. In this chapter, I discuss the setting of Hawai‘i and the local punk scene in the late 1990s to early 2000s, entry into the field,
data collection, and methodology.

The body of this study is divided into two parts. Part I examines resistance and oppression in the three sub-scenes within the Hawai‘i local scene. Part II examines “rad” resistance in practice, focusing on the changes in band musicians, bands, and the scene itself.

Chapter three describes the different sub-scenes and their scene members in the Hawai‘i local punk scene. Three different sub-scenes (metal/hardcore, ska/punk, and indie rock) within the larger local punk scene engaged in different kinds of resistance, which also distinguished each sub-scene from the others. The metal/hardcore sub-scene represented romantic resistance; the ska/punk scene, DIY (do-it-yourself) resistance; and the indie rock sub-scene, sexually subversive resistance. The distinction of sub-scenes showcased the diversity of the youths in the local scene.

Chapter four examines in detail the romantic resistance that represented the metal/hardcore sub-scene. Romantic resistance was based on scene participants who preferred metal and hardcore music and sought refuge as a place where high school outcasts could go and pursue a daily existence that revolved around work, practice, and shows. Scene members became core scene members in this sub-scene by seeking musical virtuosity through striving to achieve universal high standards. Virtuosity, in turn, became a source of positive identity for these scene participants.

Chapter five examines in detail the DIY (do-it-yourself) resistance that represented the ska/punk sub-scene. DIY resistance was achieved by putting the local scene first and by protesting oppression. DIY ethos redefined “success” in the local
scene as making the local scene better. By making a difference, a scene participant became a role model for younger scene participants. Oppression, especially of capitalist exploitation, was protested through the appropriation of dominant culture and by making protest a way of life.

Chapter six examines in detail the sexually subversive resistance that represented the indie sub-scene. Sexually subversive resistance was accomplished by scene participants undoing gender norms through developing alternative practices and through the existence and support of "indie boys." Sexually subversive resistance was not only about giving women scene members a voice but also about challenging the heteronormative nature of the traditional scene. Heteronormativity was challenged through modeling other local scenes that had come before the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene and through the support of the queer community in Honolulu.

Chapter seven is an analysis of the positive functions of the overlap between sub-scenes and a critical view of the problems with looking at "rad" resistance as just celebratory. Gender, race, class, and sexual orientation intersected in ways that developed the "rad" sub-scenes and the overlap between the sub-scenes was testament to the cohesion of the scene. This chapter also looks at the problems that stem from distinction and "radness;" namely, the oppressive aspects of an alternative scene.

Chapter eight follows the development of band musicians, the most visible core scene participants of the scene. The analysis in this section is based on metal/hardcore and ska/punk bands that were almost exclusively male and illuminates how becoming a band musician is not only about individual identity formation, but also follows social
processes in a local music scene. Focused on metal/hardcore and ska/punk bands, the chapter also provides examination into the processes of romantic and DIY resistance. This chapter also describes the earlier scene in the mid-to-late 1990s and serves as a backdrop to the processes of sexual resistance illustrated in the following chapter.

Chapter nine analyzes how women and queer scene members in the indie rock sub-scene and scene members in the ska/punk sub-scene accomplished sexually subversive resistance to gender roles and sexual stereotyping in everyday interaction. This chapter first examines the a-sexual nature of presentation at shows and the sexual nature of self-writing by core scene participants in their online journals. It then looks at how overtly sexual presentation at shows was later attempted and the significance this had on distinction and oppression in the sub-scene in conjunction with the rest of the local scene.

Chapter ten is the concluding chapter of this dissertation. Given the findings of this study, the conclusion reexamines the significance of resistance in the local punk scene while pitting this concept of celebratory resistance against the need for distinction among scene members. Not only do we, as adults, need to pay attention to the accomplishments of marginalized youths congregating in the local punk scene because it gives them an alternative community. These same accomplishments—in the form of romantic, DIY, or sexually subversive resistance—are reflective of what could happen in the larger society. Some youths are in touch with the problems of oppression and domination that others don’t notice.
CHAPTER TWO: SETTING AND METHODS

I collected data for this paper during a seven-year ethnographic study of what scene members referred to as a “Hawai‘i punk scene.” The scene was centered in Honolulu where most of the band performances were held, but extended to the whole island of Oahu and to the outer islands of Hawai‘i as well. My decision to study the scene came naturally as an extension of my personal interest in hard rock music and band subcultures and empathy for marginalized youths. Therefore, my introduction to the research field fell within the opportunistic research tradition, especially in terms of “taking advantage of familiar situations” (Riemer 1977).

Setting

The Hawai‘i punk scene was a mix of things local and punk imported from the mainland. The genres of music that are considered popular or underground in Hawai‘i do not necessarily correspond to the genres that carry such connotations in places on the mainland US. This is partly a result of the widespread popularity of Hawaiian music, which, appeals to all generations, unlike punk or heavy metal, which appeals primarily to young people. Contemporary Hawaiian music is an arena of great musical creativity, with many original bands, and of potential for commercial success due to the opportunities for musicians in conjunction with the tourist industry. Also popularized on the mainland, the music is characterized by the use of steel guitar, slack key guitar, ukulele, and falsetto singing. Songs commonly contain themes particular to Hawai‘i such as Hawaiian sovereignty and native Hawaiian or local values.

The popularity of Hawaiian music is significant as one quickly notices that the local “Hawai‘i music” section in a music store like Tower Records or Borders Books
and Music will be stocked with traditional and contemporary Hawaiian music. Only in the past few years have I begun to notice a small section within the rock music section in the stores designated for local rock band music. During an interview with Mark, a singer and guitar player in a punk band, he claimed, “If you look in the ‘local music’ section at Sam Goody’s, you find only Hawaiian music.” Mark felt that the reason his band wasn’t doing well was because they were in Hawai’i where only a small population was interested in punk music.

The local punk scene in Hawai’i was small and isolated for several reasons. Even aside from the strong support for Hawaiian music, due to its history, geographical location, and size, Hawai’i is unlike the rest of the mainland in many ways. Promotion of popular acts from the mainland in Hawai’i is difficult because of the state’s geographical isolation and distance from the mainland and the small size of the population interested in the music. Given these realities, coming to Hawai’i to play is not worth the expense and trouble for commercially successful bands. Hawai’i is not a place where these bands can make a profit. For bands from other local scenes, fronting the money for airfare and shipping equipment were issues that kept them from crossing the ocean.

Hawai’i, the 50th state, carries a legacy of colonization and a history of a plantation economy. While the pineapple and sugar cane plantations have passed, the state, now heavily dependent on its tourist industry, still functions on a split labor market (Bonacich 1972) in which more recent racial/ethnic groups such as Filipinos and Samoans, together with Native Hawaiians, continues to occupy “low-skill,” low-paying jobs. These realities have resulted in a political and economic structure of Hawai’i’s
different racial and ethnic groups, which looks quite different from the demography and culture of places on the mainland.

In Hawaiʻi, the island of Oahu (resident population 876,156 out of 1,211,537 for the entire state)\(^4\), also known as the City and County of Honolulu, has urban, suburban, and rural settings combined. It contains Waikiki, the tourism hub, Pearl Harbor and many military bases, ranches and farms, and a downtown business district. There are suburban residential areas marked by various sized shops, from mom and pop stores to large mainland chains (i.e., Walmart, Sam’s Club, K-mart, Costco, etc.), and up-scale shopping malls, telling of the wide span of social classes residing in close vicinity of each other. Driving around the island, one notices what used to be pineapple or sugar cane fields, factories, and canneries. There are Hawaiian homestead lands as well as celebrity homes. The local scene drew youths from all of these places and therefore, was a more mixed bag compared to other local scenes.

The Hawaiʻi scene was unusual for a punk scene as it was not predominantly white or middle-class; and instead, reflected the multiply Asian and Pacific Islander character of the islands’ population (Okamura 1994) and the mixture of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes of Oahu.\(^5\) Scene members were local Japanese, haole (Caucasian), Chinese, Okinawan, Hawaiian, Portugese, Filipino, Samoan, popolo (Black), Mexican, Puerto Rican, etc. All of these factors positioned punk rock music differently in the lives of local youths in Hawaiʻi compared to youths on the mainland. The typical age of a scene member at a show ranged from about 16 through late 20s. Scene participants were slightly more likely to be male.
This said, however, the local Hawai‘i punk scene also resembled other local punk scenes in many ways. The size of shows was similar to what I had seen or heard about other local scenes. On average, shows drew a crowd of between 40 to 100 people except for shows in which local bands opened for the commercially successful bands that occasionally came through Hawai‘i on tour. These bigger shows were also held at larger venues than the coffee shop, bar, or parking lot, where the smaller local band-centered shows were held.

Styles and attitudes were also quite similar to other local scenes, testament to the globalization of youth subcultures. Except for the racial makeup of scene participants, occasional local references in song lyrics or band names, and subtle differences in style (like the wearing of rubber beach flip flops among the metal crowd), the local Hawai‘i scene was indistinguishable from other local scenes. As in many scenes, people reminisced about the “old scene” which was somehow always better than the present scene. Some even said that the scene was now “dead.”

A vibrant underground scene was already in place in the mid-1980s. Several scene institutions included the University of Hawai‘i; KTUH (the university radio station on the air since 1969); a few Waikiki clubs; and some spaces around the university like a church and a YMCA. Golden Voice, a rock music promoter based in Los Angeles that brought popular bands out to Southern California, Nevada, Hawai‘i, and Alaska was already in place. Radio Free Hawaii, an “alternative” and “revolutionary” radio station was voted one of the country’s best five radio stations for 1993, 1994, and 1996 in the reader’s polls of Rolling Stone magazine, a feat accomplished by only one other station.
The vibrancy of the local scene in the 1980s is apparent from the description by former scene members. A former general manager from KTUH who was also a former scene member said the following about the scene of the mid-1980s:

I think when you’re young, you really think the music you play can change the world. And it was the era of the Clash and REM and U2, when they were still considered unique underground alternative bands. And we [at KTUH] had a feeling we were doing something special and very unique... But, I don’t know, how much of that was youth, and how much of that was the times?

As evidenced in the above, the local punk scene was greatly affected by the trends and activities occurring in other local punk scenes outside of Hawai‘i. The quote from Straw (1991) below, in which he mentions “affective alliances” coined by Grossberg (1984), helps illustrate such affective alliances between Hawai‘i scene participants and local punk scene participants on the mainland in the musical activity of punk:

...[T]he cosmopolitan character of certain kinds of musical activity—their attentiveness to change occurring elsewhere—may endow them with a unity of purpose and sense of participating in ‘affective alliances’ (Straw 1991:374).

Moving closer to the new millennium, other changes occurred around the scene. For example, more local female DJs became known by name in the club and hip hop scene in town. This, combined with the influence of the Riot Grrrl movement on the mainland, the popularity of television shows like “Sex in the City” that focused on young women’s romantic and sexual relationships, and girl power emphasis in entertainment and media became a perfect backdrop for women to get more involved in the punk scene as well. Similarly, the influence of the hip and queer-friendly indies scenes from the
mainland, the popularity of TV shows like "Will & Grace" and "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," movies like "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," and the popularity of prominent gay hangouts in town⁸, suggested new possibilities for queer-identifying scene participants in the punk scene.

**Entry into the Field**

With a population that was impossible to quantify and also difficult to find, I had many of the same problems of acquiring informants as did researchers of other marginalized and hidden populations. My sampling procedure was relegated to snowball sampling. After finding out where Hawai‘i local scene participants held shows (band performances) and regularly hung out, I started showing up at these locations, eventually looking for possible informants. (For more on my introduction to the subject matter, see Appendix).

My first show in Hawai‘i was a “zinefest,” an annual event where zine writers could have large numbers of scene members peruse their work and take or buy a copy of their zine. Bands also played at these events. A fellow graduate student studying alternative media at the time saw an ad for the zinefest in her newspaper of study and suggested I check out the event, as she knew that I had an interest in rock band scenes. I began talking to members of a band that day after battling my shyness.

Making contact with someone in the scene was extremely intimidating for me. Although I had met and gotten an autograph from Billy Squier—hard rock guitarist and singer—while in high school in Tokyo and had hung out with Eddie Ojeda—lead guitarist of Twisted Sister, the notorious *hair metal* band, because my roommate in NYC
was taking guitar lessons from him—I had never had a rock band musician or core scene participant as a friend. Once I convinced myself that I could not leave the scene venue until I had talked to someone, I circled the room several times before finally going up to someone that looked like they might be nice enough to talk to me. I learned to get phone numbers rather than give mine out, as I never got called back the latter way. I learned to talk fast so the other person couldn’t get a word in to reject me.

I felt ill at ease a lot, especially in the beginning of my first study, due to not knowing a single person at shows and feeling that no one would want to talk to me. Most of the scene members I had seen at shows had that cool posturing of punkers. They looked angry at the world—a world that included me—or more introverted than outwardly friendly, not looking for someone to talk to. I felt like I stood out like a sore thumb, because I wasn’t talking to or hanging out with anybody, as everyone else seemed to be. I have plenty of journal entries about feeling awkward and wanting to throw in the towel. The following is an example:

The [show] atmosphere is such that one starts to feel weird if she doesn’t know anyone because everybody else seems to. You’re supposed to be with someone or hanging out with someone. At the show today, I felt a wave of relief come over me when I saw Jay [an early informant] and he waved to me. I had been feeling so isolated in the crowd and Jay helped even though he only waved from a distance and I had only hung out with him once before that.

McRobbie (2000) describes a similar awkwardness as she tells of the beginnings of her study of working-class girls’ perceptions of their worlds and futures in Birmingham, England:

... I remember the research as a period of long intervals where nothing very much happened and not very many people were interested in talking to me. For every animated and lively interaction between myself and the
various groups of teenage girls there were much longer stretches of time when I thought I’d prefer to be doing almost anything other than hanging about, feeling awkward, and coming across as too eager. (2000:4)

The process of gaining the trust of informants is unpredictable. This humbling process does not move forward according to the researcher’s timetable. By necessity, one learns to be patient. I was constantly reminded that these scene participants had no reason to help me. Pressuring or being aggressive was not going to get the job done. I did gradually make more acquaintances over time, and people actually started to come up to me at shows to say hi, rather than the other way around. I eventually started to feel less alone even when I went to shows solo, as I began to notice that there were indeed other people that came to shows by themselves. By this time, I had also made enough friends in the scene that I no longer had to go to shows by myself.

My time in the field consisted of mainly two parts: the first period from May 1995 to December 1997 and the second period from August 1999 to May 2003. During the time between these two periods, I did not attend many shows as I was busy with comprehensive exams and teaching. When I came back to the scene to be a regular show-goer again, it was almost as if the scene had gone through a complete overhaul of scene members and their bands. As in my initial contact with scene participants in 1995, I had to approach someone to start a new networking process.

This time, however, I was better equipped to deal with the intimidation I knew I would soon experience again. I knew that show-goers tended to congregate outside the band performance venue in small groups, just hanging out and talking to each other. I brought copies of double-sided one-sheet questionnaires that asked about scene members’
tastes in music and thoughts on the media's depiction of rock music as connected to youth violence, since this show was put on not long after the Columbine tragedy. I brought a bunch of pens, pencils, and pieces of cardboard saved from the yellow pads I had used up since coming back to graduate school, so people would have something to write on. I knew that there would be bored people sitting around talking and that this would at least give them something to do. I ended up collecting 33 questionnaires.

The answers to the questionnaire were not important, since I did not yet have a theoretical framework that the data could feed into. But the possibilities for contacting some of these scene members for interviews later (for those that agreed to be interviewed) were important. In the end, I did not pick up any key informants from this exercise, although I got five interviews out of it. These interviews, however, led to introductions to a few scene members who later became my key informants.

**Data Collection and Methods**

Although not involved in most of the creative process of the show (bands, show promotion, and zines), I was a peripheral member in the field, not playing a major role in the activity of the scene, but still participating in it (Adler and Adler 1987), most regularly as *show-goer* (i.e., audience). I was a researcher first; scene participant second (i.e., a “researcher participant”) (Gans 1982). I tried not to miss key informants’ band performances, occurring between once a week and once a month. I also took pictures of performing bands for them and carried equipment, especially early on in the research. I eventually became friends with some informants and frequently had coffee or lunch with them. I saw, spoke, or emailed informants at least once a week outside of shows, and
these interactions kept me up-to-date on the scene.

My main locations for observation were shows where bands were playing. My usual show outfit consisted of a T-shirt, longish shorts or jeans, and sneakers, like many of the other scene participants I encountered at the show. The set for a band at a show was, on average, 30 minutes. The combined set-up and break down (of equipment) after the show took about 20-30 minutes (i.e., 10-15 minutes for each). On a few occasions, I only saw my main band of interest and left, but usually stayed longer and saw at least two or three more bands. This was because other people I knew were playing, because the $5 fee to get in was not particularly cheap for a graduate student and I wanted to get my money’s worth, and I also wanted to support the bands playing, especially when the crowd consisted of 25 people.

Shows happened at night. I went to shows, usually stayed between two and four hours, and headed home to write out my notes as much as I could before falling asleep in the act. I attempted to finish my transcribing of my memory the next morning, but confess that the task took me several days longer on occasion. Sometimes I taped my own voice on a tape recorder within an hour or two of the show. For example, this was done while driving home from a show held on the other side of the island. I recorded as much as possible, afraid that I would forget details and impressions as I drove the one hour it took me to get home from the North Shore. I lived not too far from the South Short, between Waikiki and the university. I took copious notes on bands, music, dress, behavior, conversations, atmosphere of the show venue, and other relevant matters. I collected 45 sets of fieldnotes although I continued to go to band performances after I
stopped taking lengthy notes.

I also conducted 26 un-taped in-depth interviews. Interviews were not tape recorded because I learned early on that the presence of a tape recorder hindered the rapport I had with the interviewees. During the early stages of data collection, I found that a tape recorder changed the comfort level that scene participants had with me. The tape recorder transformed the interview into a formal event and intimidated scene members (Whyte 1982). So instead, I appeared with one or two sheets of guiding questions and a full pad of paper. In each interview, similar to fieldnotes, I took lengthy, detailed notes during the interview and organized the notes soon after the interview ended.

Short follow-up interviews were also done when these were necessary. Most of these interviews were with core scene participants involved in bands and organizing shows. Two of these later interviews were tape recorded, but the rest were not, because I often found myself with interview opportunities on short notice (e.g., at a show) when I didn’t have a tape recorder with me. Eight of the 26 interviews were with men. I used interviews to gather information on individuals’ life histories and involvement in bands. Questions also spanned interviewees’ thoughts on punk rock and social issues such as activism, marginalization and deviance, gender and sexual orientation, social class, and race/ethnicity.

Scene participants’ zines and music produced by bands were also studied. Zines, originally known as fanzines, were handwritten or typed, with drawings and other artwork; then, usually xeroxed cheaply. Gaines (1995) and Starr (1999) have also
included zines in their studies of youth subcultures. Some scene members who had learned how to screen print in art classes liked to screen print their zine covers, but most commonly, the zines were black and white xeroxed sheets. Local zines were, on average, approximately 24-32 pages long. Usually stapled, the zines were often the size of 8 ½ x 11 sheets folded in half, but there were some as small as 2 ½ x 3 inches.

Figure 1 shows some of the covers and contents of zines by zine writers in the local scene.
RECEIVED AS FOLLOWS
Figure 1  Zines by some local zine writers in the punk scene
Each zine writer had his own style. Many consisted of poems, essays, reports on band performances or protest activities, interviews, and other kinds of written material. The zines of two cartoon artists in the scene consisted entirely of cartoons. Zines were produced cheaply and in small quantities, and generally given away to those who were interested, traded with someone else’s zines, or sold for about $1. I went to zinefests (annual punk shows that also doubled as zine exhibition/distribution fairs) when I could and picked up as many zines as I could, but also asked for a copy when I heard that someone was finishing one up. Some scene members distributed their zines at regular shows and I picked some up this way as well. During data collection, I obtained 62 zines by 44 scene members. 9

As the scene that was based on music, I realized early on that I could not ignore the music itself. Rock music, with its bass guitar and drums, guitars, vocals, and sometimes keyboards, is heavily amplified music. Rhythm and melody, notwithstanding, the body starts to respond when music is loud enough. On a very basic level, the body hears and feels the music, and much of this has nothing to do with the lyrics. As Frith (1981) and others recognize:

> The fans know, in Greil Marcus’s words, that “words are sounds we can feel before they are statements to understand.” Most rock records make their impact musically rather than lyrically. The words, if they are noticed at all, are absorbed after the music has made its mark. The crucial variables are sound and rhythm (1981:14).

Tia DeNora (2000), in her study, *Music in Everyday Life*, stresses the significance of music in human agency and specifically, the importance of theoretically grounded ethnographic work that analyzes the process of people using music in action. It had
always been clear to me, even if on an abstract level, that the spontaneous development
of large mosh pits at band performances and the fact that youths who were branded
“losers” in all other aspects of their lives, could gain positive identities by being in a
respected band were testament to the power of music. Even on a more personal level,
physically felt music can change people’s emotions. It can energize and make people
think. As my sister said to me at a show, “I love coming to see bands and hear live
amplified music because I feel it booming through my body—the floor vibrates—and it
gives me energy.”

The roots of rock and roll music can be found in music from the African
continent. Taking from the traditions of rhythm and blues, gospel, country, and jazz,
rock is an eclectic music. Traces from the African continent that later became central to
R&B, gospel, and so on, can be found in call and response, participatory dancing,
kineticism, emotion, storytelling, etc. As explained by Lipsitz (1990):

Historically, Afro-Americans have treasured African retentions in speech,
music, and art both as means of preserving collective memory about a
continent where they were free and as a way of shielding themselves
against the hegemony of white racism... But music with retentions of
African culture have long held enormous appeal for American whites as
well... Residual elements of opposition to industrial values had to be
purged from most Euro-American workers, but Afro-Americans
maintained a closer connection to the pre-industrial world. Thus working-
class whites could find a consistent and eloquent critique of individualism
and competition in Afro-American culture which also displayed a humane
and human alternative to industrial values in its music (1990:111).

In “classic” rock and roll music can be found the “collective memory” of oppression and
the will to be free of that oppression (Lipsitz 1990).

Moreover, the use of music in resistance is especially vital to understanding a
local punk rock scene. As Mark Anderson, one of the authors of *Dance of Days: Two Decades of Punk in the Nation's Capital* (2001) confesses:

> My alienation was alarming, inexplicable extremes. As strange as it may sound, sometimes I could hear the rage roaring in my head—a dark, screaming noise. At times, it blocked out everything else. More than once, I feared for my sanity. Rock music was one of those things that gave me hope (2001:x).

And as Gaines (1991, 2003) finds in her personal life as well as in the youths she studies, metal and punk music literally saves lives.

I tried to collect as much recorded music by bands as possible, but this was not always easy. Bands did not record very often, and when they did, they did not produce many copies. Some of the older CDs that I have in my possession can no longer be bought. They have all been sold, so you’re lucky if you can find a used copy in a local music store. I made copies of these bands’ music for younger scene participants who only knew of these bands as legends of the older scene. Song lyrics were not easy to come by either, and I had to get band members to transcribe lyrics for me in some cases. In all, I collected 72 songs and lyrics.

Online journals were my last source of data to be discovered. Unlike diary-interviews (Zimmerman and Wieder 1977) in which researchers asked subjects to keep chronological records of their activities, I unexpectedly discovered existing scene members’ journals through an informant. Therefore, my use of journal entries as data was unobtrusive. I learned of online journals (*diaryland, live journal, blogger*, and other journals in cyberspace) initially from Nani (one of my later informants), who invited me to visit her journal by giving me her journal website address.
I had discussed studying the gender dynamic of the scene with Nani and she suggested that I take a look at a related online scene. Once Nani and her female friends popularized online journaling in the local scene, some male journalers became interested and also started their own journals. My use of online journals as data for this study was not unlike Addison and Comstock’s (1998) study of les-bi-gay youths’ cyberzines in that these were spaces where scene members participating in cyberspace activities could safely articulate their identities and politics.

Online journals were websites that were updated regularly and frequently. They were similar to traditional hard copy journals, but had the added features of access to others and comments posted by those who visited the journal site. Online journals also shortened the distance between journal writer and readers: especially significant for journalers in an isolated place like Hawai‘i. Visitors could read the entries by the journal writer and other commenters, and then enter comments of their own. Journal sites were often masked so that virtual addresses did not reflect real identities. Among Hawai‘i scene members, Nani’s was one of the first of such journals and appeared around the end of 1999.

Nani introduced me to other online scene participants’ journals, both inside and outside of Hawai‘i, but I also found these sites via Nani’s journal because online scene members’ journals are linked to each other in virtual space. Because use of the Internet shortened the distance between writers, the online journal scene connected Hawai‘i scene participants with scene participants from other places as remote as Boston, Philadelphia, and Manila in the Philippines as well as online scene members not associated with the
punk scene but living in Hawai‘i. Nani explained the role of online journals as follows:

In a way, online journals are a scene in and of themselves. A lot of online journal kids know each other from the zinesters list, visit the same message boards, communicate with each other, and have this kind of virtual relationship.¹⁰

Based on a circle of friends whose journals were linked directly or indirectly with Nani’s, I chose eight other journals and monitored and printed these out several times a month from 1999 to 2002. I visited online journals on average of two or three times a week. Because most of these journals were created during 1999-2002, data collection resulted in unequal amounts of journal entries for the nine scene members. Furthermore, journal writers differed in their frequency of writing entries. For example, while Nani sometimes entered twice a day, another local journal writer sometimes abandoned her journal for months at a time, writing on average, less than once a month, or when she was moved to. At the time of data collection, there were more women than men (2 men and 9 women) in the group of online scene participants I studied. Altogether, the printouts of online journal entries totaled approximately 450 pages.

As I often felt that displacement was a constant in my life, I felt that I shared a certain worldview with key informants and other scene members with whom I had contact throughout and since data collection. As a student of culture and social stratification, I started this study with certain theoretical inclinations; namely, symbolic interaction and cultural studies of the Birmingham School tradition. As a result of the patterns found in the data and because of my own personal and academic background, the theoretical approach of this study inevitably combines aspects of interpretive and critical social science approaches.
While going to shows, doing interviews, and reading online journals, I also had countless numbers of casual conversations and email correspondences with scene members. Going to the data and making sense of what I had seen, heard, and read was possible only with the insights gained from these more spontaneous interactions. In going back and forth between data, theory, casual interactions, and data analysis, I found myself stumbling upon patterns that eventually led to a combined theoretical framework that helped to explain what I was finding. This method of moving between data collection and analysis for the purpose of arriving at a theoretical framework that explained the data resembled the constant comparative and theoretical sampling procedures in the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967).
PART I
RESISTANCE AND OPPRESSION IN SUB-SCENES

Part One of this study is a survey of the different kinds of "rad" resistances that were an integral part of the three sub-scenes that were found in the local Hawai‘i punk scene: metal/hardcore, ska/punk, and indie. Examination of the sub-scenes also involves understanding how the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation affected the nature of resistance of the three sub-scenes. Part One closes with an analysis of the dangers of looking at only the celebratory aspects of "rad" resistance involving distinction.
CHAPTER THREE: SUB-SCENES: “RAD” RESISTANCE BASED ON DIFFERENCE

One of the most unique aspects of the local Hawai‘i scene was its diversity, unlike most local punk scenes on the mainland, which are white and middle class. The unique racial/ethnic mix combined with a plantation-turned-tourism-driven economy created a population to which a generalized discussion of youth subcultures on the mainland US did not completely apply. Perhaps Hawai‘i’s scene was too small for sub-scenes to create individual scenes around themselves. Therefore, scene members referred to their scene as the “Hawai‘i local punk scene,” regardless of what sub-scene they belonged to.

Punk rock music (or punk music), since its birth, has always represented youthful resistance. Legs McNeil, scene member of the 1970s New York punk scene, explains that he coined the label “punk” as the name of a new literary magazine started by New York scene members. He states:

...I thought the magazine should be for other fuck-ups like us. Kids who grew up believing only in the Three Stooges...So I said, “Why don’t we call it Punk?” The word “punk” seemed to sum up the thread that connected everything we like—drunk, obnoxious, smart but not pretentious, absurd, funny, ironic, and things that appealed to the darker side” (McNeil and McCain 1996:204).

Since the inception of the term punk, different punk scenes, punk bands, and punk rockers have been embracing the larger meaning behind punk—youthful resistance to all sorts of oppression. However, different individual punk scene members also adopted varying meanings and symbols that embraced resistance, which, to outsiders, did not always look or sound like they were all punk. Sub-scenes in the local Hawai‘i punk scene were examples of these different groups who adopted different meanings and symbols,
while still existing under the umbrella of a local punk scene.

The Sub-scenes

One’s taste is closely related to one’s position in the social structure (Bourdieu 1984). Similar to Sarah Thornton’s (1996) club cultures, the local punk scene and its sub-scenes were also “taste cultures.” Sub-scene participants, like Thornton’s club crowds, “… generally congregate on the basis of their shared taste in music, their consumption of common media and, most importantly, their preference for people with similar tastes to themselves” (1996:3). Local punk scene participants were drawn to sub-scenes of their choice as a matter of taste and preference.

The development of sub-scenes in the local Hawai‘i punk scene also followed Grossberg’s (1984) logic of the “inscription of difference”: how “affective alliances” of rock and roll bands and their fans are situated in a matrix of the diverse interpretations and uses of rock and roll for empowerment in daily life. As Grossberg states:

Fans of different musics (e.g. punk and heavy metal) often place a great weight on what appear as minute musical differences to outsiders. The ways in which one listens to music, as well as the music one listens to, is a product of already differing and often antagonistic affective alliances (1984:243).

Music, style, and attitude differed between the three sub-scenes, and groups of bands formed around the genres. The three genres can be briefly described as the following:

- Metal/Hardcore: A combination of heavy metal and hardcore (an aggressive and masculine form of punk). Sonically, this combination of amplified bass, heavy bass drum, and the extremely fast and loud guitar-playing deriving from hardcore punk as well as metal has also been called speed or thrash metal. Therefore, metal/hardcore had the trained and polished sound of metal and the aggression of hardcore. Ideology-wise, the genre
was thought to be more progressive than metal due to the aggressive hardcore punk influence. I use the label of metal/hardcore because so many of the scene members I spoke to described their music as being “both metal and hardcore.”

- Ska/Punk: Based on the do-it-yourself (DIY) philosophy of rock music that predicates that anybody can get together with some friends, pick up a guitar, bass, and some drums, and start a band, without musical training. As a result, the sound tends to be simple, raw, and unpolished. Although there are many sub-genres of punk (hardcore, ska, straight-edge, etc.), the defining characteristic of the genre was the proactive stance behind DIY ideology and the political message behind the music. While all three sub-scenes (metal/hardcore, ska/punk, and indie) had roots in punk rock, the ska/punk sub-scene derived the most from reggae music. The music of this sub-scene tended to sound more upbeat, catchy, and happier than metal/hardcore.

- Indie rock (Indies or Indie): Indie is short for independent record labels that give artists more freedom of expression than big commercial labels. The music is seen as having grown out of scenes associated with emo and Riot Grrrl. Emo, short for emotional, is seen as a sensitive form of 90s boy rock formed out of discordant hardcore punk. Riot Grrrl developed as a movement to give women more prominence in rock music. Indie music spanned a broad spectrum of punk sound, from hardcore and discordant to pop-py, melodic, catchy punk. The label of indie rock also represented acoustic guitar acts, keyboards, rap, and other non-punk genres that have progressive philosophies behind the music.

All three sub-scenes had elements of punk, while the ska/punk sub-scene retained the most style, music, and ideology of older punk music as represented by bands like the Clash or the Ramones. Some bands played music that straddled two genres and scene members went to see bands of other genres play. Overlap also existed in style of dress, behavior, and ideology.

It is important to note, however, that sub-scenes as well as the local punk scene as a whole were based more on the music than anything else. While it is difficult to separate
the sound from the ideologies, politics, and style (including dress, performance style, as well as lifestyle) of different musical genres, the kind of music one liked was perhaps the most significant indicator of which sub-scene a scene participant was most involved with. To go a step further, the music one liked was integral to one’s identity. Furthermore, individual scene members could then use such preferred music to perform the self as well as to become involved in creating and navigating the scene. As De Nora (2000) explains:

Music is a material that actors use to elaborate, to fill out and fill in, to themselves and to others, modes of aesthetic agency and, with it, subjective stances and identities. This, then, is what should be meant when we speak of the ‘cultural construction of subjectivity’—and this is much more than an idea that culture underwrites generic structures of feeling or aesthetic agency as is implied in so many post-structuralist writings and by musicologists trained in semiotic analysis of texts. Such structuralist perspectives remain distanced from the heart of the matter, from how individuals not only experience culture, but also how they mobilize culture for being, doing and feeling (2000:74).

The local scene was clearly a community with scene members converging at shows: the most public manifestation of the scene. Unlike the fight for space between metal and hardcore scenes on the mainland (See Grossberg 1984, Gaines 1991 and Weinstein 2000), in Hawai‘i, bands playing music of these genres were usually on the bill together at shows. As evidence of the inclusiveness of the scene, very few confrontations or conflicts occurred between different sub-scenes or genres of music. As Joe, the guitar player of a local Christian metal band, told me in 1995:

On the mainland, there’s different types: grunge, metal, hardcore, heavy metal, Christian metal [that draw boundaries between each other]. Here, at the same gig, we can all play together... and it’s cool... Only in Hawai‘i.

Kanoa, a bass player who played in several different genres of music told me similarly in
If you go to the mainland if there’s a show it’s all hardcore bands or all metal bands all night. I’d get bored, man. They don’t mix, you know? Here, you have all kind of bands playing the same show. I find it so much more fun this way.

Further accentuating the inclusive nature of the scene in Hawai‘i was what a student who was fairly new to Hawai‘i at the time (1998) told me. Jack said that he was a “floater” who went to several different shows and events (some outside the punk scene, like the Goth scene) in a night. He said,

I dress just regular [T-shirt, shorts, and sneakers or what he would wear to school] but they’re okay with me wherever I go. People are a lot more open and accepting of who you are here. I couldn’t do this [hang out with people in different scenes and sub-scenes] back home.

While the Hawai‘i local punk scene was inclusive of different genres, different sub-scenes were not equally inviting to everyone. Furthermore, not all scene members were equal participants in the scene. Scene participants varied in their degrees of involvement in the scene and, because of this, some participants had less input in the process of creating meaning in the scene compared to others (Gans 1974, Fox 1987). The degree of prominence and contribution of individuals differed although the creation of meaning was always a collaborative and social process achieved through interaction with other participants in the scene. Audiences at shows were also participants in this process.

Prominence of scene members could also be measured in terms of how much of their identity was vested in the scene as opposed to how much they identified with the rest of society. As Herbert Gans (1974:95) explains, although youth culture is often described as a single culture, especially by the media, these cultures exist on at least two
levels: total cultures and partial cultures. Gans states that total cultures “...seek to exist apart from mainstream or straight society and in fact to change or overthrow it” and partial cultures “…are practiced by people who still ‘belong’ to mainstream society.” For example, Eduardo, who used to be a user but not a creator of punk music, saw himself as a punk music fan and donned his Doc Martens boots wherever he wasn’t. He wasn’t a scene participant, but punk had been a part of his identity. He said, “No, I didn’t go to shows and stuff, but I was still really into the music.”

Although the number of participants in the total cultures is small, their activities are highly visible to participants in the associated partial cultures. While total cultures are creator-orientated, partial cultures are user-oriented. Participants in partial cultures maintain their social status in mainstream society and usually participate in these partial cultures as a hobby on weekends and at night. In contrast, total culture participants view themselves as creators. As Gans states, “…the fulltime participants in the total cultures are creator-oriented, viewing themselves as artists whose art is concerned with creating an entirely new American culture (1974:96).” I define less prominent although always significant individuals in the scene as scene participants (members) and more significant individuals as core scene participants (members). My key informants were all core scene participants according to this definition.

Since the late 1990s in the Hawai‘i local scene, more so-called musical genres were created. According to some, because the scene had grown, there was now also less mixing among scene members in different scenes. Oren, a long time core scene member, noted such historical changes in the context of an evolving scene. He was quoted in an
alternative weekly local paper in 1999 as follows:

In the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, the death rockers would go to punk-rock shows and the punks would go to death-rock shows. Now the death rockers—well, now they’re Goths—don’t mix with the punks; the surfers don’t go to the reggae shows. There’s a lot of things going on; there are a lot more people promoting punk shows now. But it’s also less family-oriented than it used to be—I used to know everyone at every show. I miss that family, but that’s the sacrifice for growth.

Kanoa explained the same branching out of genres but explained the reason for the changes as the following:

It used to be just punk, ska, emo, and a few others. Now it’s like emo-core, different types of Jawaian, and so on. They’re all more broken down. I think it’s because no band wants an old label and they want to distinguish themselves by giving themselves a new genre name.

This explanation for how names of new genres were born was a rather familiar one. Quoted in Andersen and Jenkins (2001), Ian MacKaye, who went on to become a hardcore/emo icon of the Washington, DC punk scene said:

When we first got into the punk scene, we were just stupid kids from the viewpoint of the 19-to-25-year-old punk... They started calling us all this shit and I said, “Man, you think you’re punk—well, we’re hardcore punk!” That’s when the whole hardcore thing started. Before long, we started getting our own identity and were separating ourselves from the older bands. Our whole thing was to bust out in our own way (2001:76).

Genre fusion or genre crossover, as evidenced with the sub-scene names of hardcore/metal and ska/punk and in how the indie sub-scene embraced all kinds of band forms—from vocals, guitar(s), bass, and drums to keyboard and vocals—was also politically significant. Andrew Ross (1994) explains that genre fusion or crossover works as a resistance to the marketing strategies that the music industry tries to push in creating recognizable genres for consumers. Hybrid and syncretic forms of music
created through genre fusion and genre crossover break up these marketing strategies and complicate profit-making. Ross states:

...the music industry’s primary form of regulation is cultural, and is evident in the strict management of taste cultures that still correspond to racial and class divisions in society. This is why attempts at genre fusion and genre crossover are politically significant, in music coalitions like punk/reggae (and two-tone ska), hardcore/metal, acid house/jazz, rave/indie rock, rap/metal, metal/classic..., dub/disco, and even the mix of R & B and country that engendered rock ‘n’ roll. Difficult to market for an apartheid-based industry, and difficult to police as a social phenomenon, such fusions are not institutionally encouraged anymore... (1994:11).

While the music marketing industry may not seem as relevant an entity to the local scene, it is a determinant in how scene members define their music, style, ethos, and therefore, identity. This is another example of the tension between resistance and commerce.

The way in which scene members dealt with outsiders was also telling of how much of a community the scene actually was. Because the scene was diverse, race, gender, sexual orientation, and social class were never reasons to consciously exclude someone, although they did become factors that could determine what sub-scene an individual would be drawn to and the status attainable for that individual within that sub-scene. Age could become grounds for an individual to excuse himself from the scene, although more important was how “rad” the individual was. Core scene members who could arguably be in their early 40s were “rad” because knowing about the old scene made one respectable in the eyes of younger scene members. Ironically, in the eyes of local people who were not affiliated with the scene, scene participants were sometimes seen as acting “unlocal” because punk is seen as a white subculture. Nani told me the following after we had both participated in an ADB protest
march in May 2001. This knowledge among scene members could possibly have played a part in the cohesive community of the scene. The local scene had its contingent in the march and Nani walked as part of that group:

The other day at the protest, you know how loud it was and how hard it was to know what was going on in the front. I was drumming during the march and this Native Hawaiian activist woman came up to me and kind of started yelling about how I was disrespectful and that they were trying to do a chant and I was ruining it. I apologized to her, trying to explain that I didn’t mean to and that I wasn’t aware of what was going on at the front of the march. I felt sooo bad for almost the rest of the day. I wanted to tell her that, “Hey, I support you! I’m Hawaiian too y’know,” but I just felt completely worthless. I am always immediately assumed to not have similar views with Hawaiian groups because of the way I dress or because everyone I hang around with is white.

The most significant factor for suspicion by scene members was an individual’s affiliation with the military. Scene participants were wary of *jarheads* because they (military personnel) were expected to not know the rules of the scene or of local ways. So although they often showed up at a show as skinheads dressed in hardcore garb, they stood out. Such *visitors* were not familiar to scene participants individually and this also fed into their conspicuousness. Unfortunately, they often arrived inebriated and obnoxious; thus adding to the stereotypical image that scene members had of them. Every physical confrontation I witnessed at shows involved drunk militarymen. Fights did not happen often. However, Kanoa told me of an instance when his friend, a girl who was “into metal and heavy music,” got caught in the middle of a fight involving military guys and became so fed up with the hostility that she stopped going to shows.

Evan, a scene member with his own political zine, also noted how trouble at shows in the Hawai‘i scene was automatically associated with military personnel. In the
following from an interview with a hardcore band from the mainland in his zine, he
mentions this problem in the Hawai‘i scene:

Evan: How often do you guys have to deal with... people giving you shit?
Interviewee: Not very often, cuz we’re a pretty big band, so our shows are
usually pretty big. I think those people feel outnumbered. When
we were a smaller band, we had to deal with that a lot. There’d
only be like 100 kids at the show, and you’d get a couple of
meatheads in there, and they would think they had a chance to fuck
things up. Now we just toss those guys out...
Evan: That’s a problem we have here in Hawaii, with the military.

Processes of “Rad” Resistance

Socialization in the symbolic interactionist perspective is “an ongoing interactive
process through which individuals develop identities and learn the ways of thinking,
feeling, and acting that characterize their society” (Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine
2003:65). The local scene and its sub-scenes are akin to “peer cultures.” As researched
extensively by Fine (1987) and Adler and Adler (1998) and cited in Sandstrom, Martin,
and Fine (2003), pre-adolescent children:

... participate in the construction of peer culture—a culture that both
reflects and resists the values and practices of mainstream adult culture.
Within this culture, children fill the gaps of the gender socialization they
receive from adults... they create a shared culture that allows them to
question adult authority, challenge adult expectations, and influence adult
social worlds. (Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine 2003:89).

As examples of socialization into sub-scenes, pre-adolescent Little Leaguers in
baseball in Fine’s (1987) and co-ed elementary school children in Adler and Adler’s
(1998) studies could easily be substituted with scene participants in the local Hawai‘i
scene. As explained in Hall and Jefferson’s (1975) analysis of youth “sub-cultures” in
Great Britain, youths in sub-cultures (or subcultures or scenes) engaged collectively and
interactively in the creation of peer cultures, similar to the peer cultures they created as young children. Sub-cultures and scenes reflected the values of the parent culture—the social class background of the youths—and resisted the dominant, hegemonic culture of the larger society.

During the socialization process, scene participants interactively created what constituted “rad” or what was cool and radical. “Rad” had to be learned to be a scene participant, but “rad” was also always changing. “Rad” was similar to Thornton’s (1996) “hipness,” but Hawai’i local scene members referred to this subcultural capital as “rad” rather than “hip.” Obscure knowledge only known to those who are serious about the music was one form of subcultural capital. Others included their dress, their lingo, the type of equipment they owned, people they knew, bands they had seen, etc. As both Bourdieu (1984) and Thornton (1996) note, subcultural capital can be objectified as well as embodied.

The production of affective alliances (Grossberg 1984) by and for scene participants of a scene defined the characteristics of the kinds of resistance that scene members engaged in. This process also helped define “rad.” A core scene member should know “rad” if he saw it. Such recognition included assumptions (e.g., that musicians are heterosexual, men, white, and middle class, etc.). Barry Shank (1994), in his study of alternative identity formation of scene participants in an Austin, TX music scene explains how the “cowboy” ideal was core to Austin’s scene participants because of the tradition of cowboy folklore locally. The cowboy ideal included important understandings of affective alliance that had to do with race and masculinity. Says
Shank:

These may have been rough, raw, wild individuals but, according to the academic rules of song collecting, the blood in their veins and the spirit in their songs indicated southern descendants from the purest Anglo-Saxon patricians. Despite the obvious influence of the Mexican vaquero tradition from which the cowboy’s work (and the guitar) derived, and Lomax’s own acknowledgment that “it was not unusual to find a Negro” on the trail, his song collection was valued to the extent that it demonstrated the continuing dominance of an Anglo-Saxon cultural tradition (1994:23).

A conversation I had with Nellie, Don’s (the guitarist from POW, a metal/hardcore band) girlfriend revealed the knowledge-based aspect of subcultural capital. She described this “rad-ness” as the “I liked them first thing” in the following:

There’s this pride in the “I liked them first thing.” Even with Don. He’ll be so proud that he has this special edition album or that he “got them on vinyl” or whatever. It’s like unless you listened to them back then, you’re a wannabe. And they always talk about the “good old days.” “The Backdoor [a venue where shows were held but no longer exists] used to be so packed back then,” and so on.

“Rad” had much to do with resistance, the main ingredient of punk and other youth subculture ideologies. The different sub-scenes in the Hawai’i local punk scene had different ideas of what constituted resistance and what was to be resisted. The more resistance the scene member engaged in, the more rad he was and the more subcultural capital he commanded. The characteristic elements of “rad” and resistance that became inseparable from each sub-scene were born and transformed in the interaction of scene members.
CHAPTER FOUR: ROMANTIC RESISTANCE: THE METAL/HARDCORE SUB-SCENE

The romantic nature of the resistance of the metal/hardcore sub-scene in the Hawai’i local punk scene derived more from metal than from hardcore. Gaines describes the music of choice of the metalhead kids she studied as “romantic” (1991:202-204).

According to the Merriam and Webster’s dictionary, among the main definitions of “romantic” are: 1) having no basis in fact: imaginary; 2) impractical in conception or plan: visionary; and 3) marked by the imaginative or emotional appeal of what is heroic, adventurous, remote, mysterious, or idealized.  

Although loud, heavy metal music is melodic, and has roots in classical music and blues. Robert Walser (1993) explains the blues and classical music traditions in metal music as follows:

Heavy metal, like all forms of rock and soul, owes its biggest debt to African-American blues. The harmonic progressions, vocal lines, and guitar improvisations of metal all rely heavily on the pentatonic scales derived from blues music…But from the very beginning of heavy metal there has been another important influence: that assemblage of disparate musical styles known in the twentieth century as “classical music.” Throughout metal’s twenty-year history, its most influential musicians have been guitar players who have also studied classical music. Their appropriation and adaptation of classical models sparked the development of a new kind of guitar virtuosity, changes in the harmonic and melodic language of heavy metal, and new modes of musical pedagogy and analysis (1993:57-58).

Heavy metal sounds romantic (to those who like it) but is also romantic because of the ethos behind it. Heavy metal is imaginary, visionary, and idealized. The imagery of the music was often otherworldly, religious, abstract, and involved themes relating to chaos and power. According to Deena Weinstein’s (2000) thorough search of thousands
What heavy metal takes seriously is power. The sonic power of the music—its inherent meaning—contributes to every delineated meaning that appears in its lyrics. Any lyrical theme, even despair or suicide, is empowered by the heavy metal sound (2000:35).

Power as well as intricacy, are attributes of this music. A male student in a class in which I gave a talk on sub-scenes, described metal/hardcore as “motivating music.” He said that metal/hardcore was his favorite genre of music, compared to ska/punk and indie music, when I played a song from each (sub-scene) genre during the presentation. Another male student who liked metal/hardcore the best claimed, “I like the energy and you can feel his [the singer’s] anger.” Others who claimed they liked metal/hardcore out of the three sub-scene genres also described metal/hardcore music as: “the guitar work was pretty,” “I liked the [bass solo] intro,” “it rocked, very aggressive,” “hard, speedy, powerful,” and “sounds angry and pissed off.”

The alienation of Gaines’s (1991) youths, metalhead kids, had socioeconomic roots. Her study was based in Bergenfield, NJ, an “upper-poor,” post-industrial town built on industry but no longer possessing that industry in the late 1980s. Bergenfield was not unlike many other suburbs in the US. Her metalhead kids were alienated kids living in a place where there was little hope of escape and few means of survival other than minimum wage jobs, the military, or welfare. For them, heavy metal music was their means of romantic resistance. Gaines states:

Disaffected dirts and burnouts have problems with authority. They may look like rebels and be viewed as outcasts by adults. But as a rule, they don’t have a program, they won’t organize or even try to “fight the power.” Theirs is an individualistic, atomized form of “resistance” (1991:100).
The metal/hardcore sub-scene attracted youths mostly from lower middle-class, working-class, and working poor backgrounds. Youths from these social classes in the Hawai'i scene often liked both metal and hardcore music. Furthermore, in the late 1980s and 1990s, although different in their ethos, bands both in Hawai'i and on the mainland; both independent and commercial, were following a trend to fuse metal and hardcore sounds. Given these contexts, it was often difficult to say whether an individual scene participant was more metal or more hardcore in the Hawai'i local punk scene.

In the metal/hardcore sub-scene of the Hawai'i local punk scene, scene members dreamed that becoming a famous musician would solve all of one’s problems and even being a follower of a metal/hardcore band gave them the illusion that they too would have fewer troubles. These dreams were essentially very romantic notions. In the metal/hardcore sub-scene, romantic resistance was achieved by participating in the scene to escape the rest of society and by seeking virtuosity in the music and scene that they created.

**Representative Core Sub-scene Participants**

Stan was the first person I had a conversation with at my first show in the Hawai'i local punk scene and he eventually became one of my main informants. He was the bass player and youngest member of POW, a metal/hardcore band. POW was an older and respected band in the scene that had been around for almost ten years when I started going to shows. Befriending Stan led to four other contacts: Keoni (drummer) and Don (guitarist)—also from POW; Jay, the guitarist from Green M&Ms, a hardcore punk band; and Joe, the guitarist from Salvation, a Christian metal band. Although I had several key
informants, they and their group of friends in the scene constituted the core scene members that became my main group of focus.

Stan (Okinawan-Japanese) was 23 when I met him in 1995. He was about 5'8", of medium build, and had short-cropped curly hair. He usually wore loose-fitting khaki or greenish jeans with a loose-fitting big T-shirt with skater (i.e., the skateboarder culture) shoes like Vans or Converse sneakers. Stan wore his wallet on a large chain connected to his jeans. Stan listened to all genres of music. He especially liked metal and hardcore, but he also loved punk and ska, reggae, blues, hip hop, and emo. He was something of an aficionado of jazz. He always felt like the weakest musician in his band, but he was proud to be in arguably the best metal/hardcore band that Hawai‘i had seen up to then. One of his older brothers, a car mechanic, played guitar, and was Stan’s idol when he was growing up. Stan, who dropped out of high school, had since acquired a GED and lived with his parents, siblings, and their families in a three-generation household in a 3-bedroom house. He had worked in a painter’s union, as a sales clerk at Tower Records and an adult video store, and a vacuum cleaner salesperson. He later worked for a friend in retail while toying with the idea of studying to be a writer together with his girlfriend.

Keoni, 25 when I met him in 1995, was an amazing drummer. A local surf magazine described him as follows: “With double bass [drum] abilities like no one else, the guy is the textbook definition of heavy.” Keoni was Hawaiian-Chinese, of slim build and medium height. He and Don both had beautiful long brown hair that was the envy of many girls. Mellow (partly because he smoked pot so often) and kind, he became
another person when playing. He was the quintessential metalhead, gruff-looking, usually wearing an old loose-fitting T-shirt, dark-colored worn-out surfer shorts, and slippahs. He often looked unshaven. Keoni only took part-time jobs—as a delivery person for a florist and dry cleaner and as a busboy at a local restaurant—enough to have money for studio rent fees, gas, and weed. He lived with his mother in an area of town that was Hawaiian homestead land. In 1997, while on hiatus with POW, he toured around Europe with another local metal/hardcore band that asked him to be their drummer. When I last saw him in 2000 at the final POW show, he was washing dishes in a Japanese-style steak house in Waikiki.

Don, also 25 when I met him in 1995, was similarly hailed as one of the best guitar players in the scene. In the same surf magazine, Don and Ray (the other guitar player of the band) were described as follows: “[They] are a couple of sick guitarists who flex their skills whether it be blistering leads or slower, mellow stuff.” Don’s mother was Caucasian and his father, Filipino. Don was of medium height and muscular from regularly working out at the gym. He sometimes had a little bit of well-maintained facial hair. Don’s ensemble was always a large T-shirt, worn-out shorts, and either rubber slippahs or skater shoes. His long hair was usually tied back. Don helped his parents out by working part-time in addition to helping his father make beautiful Hawaiian jewelry in their home. When Don was not working or practicing, he was with his girlfriend. He usually brought Nellie to practice, because according to Nellie, “He doesn’t like driving to and from practice alone.” So Nellie was often my pal during POW practice and at shows. Don later started attending classes at a community college and
then at a local private university. He graduated with a degree in Nursing.

Jay, a guitar player for the band Green M&Ms, was younger than the metal/hardcore POW crew. Jay was Filipino and 21 when I first met him in 1995. Although good friends with POW members, Green M&Ms was a self-identified “pop-punk” band. Their sound was more hardcore punk than metal. Furthermore, compared to Chris—POW’s intimidating singer who mostly shouted and “roared” the lyrics—Richie (Jay’s cousin and the singer for Green M&Ms) was a melodic singer who used to sing a cappella. Jay told me that the content of their songs were “girlie love songs and stuff.” Jay had a way of looking slightly stooped over when he played guitar, usually looking down, with his hair falling over his eyes. Jay as well as the others in the band wore oversized non-descript T-shirts (or shirts with logos of other bands) and shorts or jeans with skater shoes. Jay, as well as the others with the exception of the long-haired drummer, had short hair that had a way of looking unkempt. Jay worked with the drummer, Eric, at a major automobile service station that had branches throughout the island.

Joe, about the same age as Don and Keoni, started one of the few Christian metal bands on the island and the only one that was well known in the scene in the mid 1990s. He was of Portugese descent and about Stan’s height with a medium build. He had long, voluminous brown hair (that was great for headbanging) and a mustache and goatie (small beard grown mostly on the chin area) when I met him. Stan told me that Joe had a shady past but found God and had been a devout Christian ever since. The band was composed of members of the same church. Joe told me he always liked listening to music, but once he got into making music himself, his musical preferences became
heavier and heavier and that his band’s sound was definitely metal. Although the singer shouted and roared the lyrics (as did Chris of POW) the lyrics read more like a church sermon. He was juggling three jobs when I met him while also studying to become a science teacher. He eventually did become a teacher but continued playing with his band.

**Seeking a Refuge**

While seeking virtuosity was more of a conscious, long-term goal, being in the scene as a refuge from the rest of society was how scene members lived from day to day. While romantic resistance was achieved as the result of complex processes, it was particularly noteworthy that metal/hardcore sub-scene members shared experiences rooted in social class starting in high school or junior high school. Feeling like outcasts and having similar attitudes towards work, practice, and shows was telling of why these scene participants would want to seek refuge from the rest of society in the scene.

**High School Outcasts**

Many of the core scene participants of the metal/hardcore sub-scene of the Hawai‘i local scene felt that they didn’t belong in regular society. Keoni and Don—the drummer and guitar player for POW—were friends since high school where they were always reminded of being “different.” This was around the time that they started their band. In their mid-20s, they still felt that they “didn’t belong.” When I asked Keoni and Don to explain “difference” and “not belonging”, they told me the following in an almost proud manner, that seemed telling of the alienation they must have felt for years:

Don: We don’t hang out where non-musicians hang out (don’t go to trendy restaurants and clubs, for example). The people there would feel uncomfortable if we did. We look different. Keoni and me were outcasts at school. We had long hair. Because people knew we were into heavy music, they expected certain things of
us. If there was a joint, it would be passed along to us before anyone else.

Keoni: We’re seen as being into drugs and all. We “don’t do the regular thing.” At large gatherings, we’re the targets when you hear, “Security, follow that man with the long hair!” (chuckles)

Weinstein (2000) describes metalheads as being the diametric opposite of fashionable. She says, “Heavy metal is not cool. It is not hip. As a social construction, the facial expression of the member of the metal subculture toward outsiders is a rejection of hipocracy” (2000:132). Gaines describes her metalhead kids similarly in the following:

To outsiders, they look tough, scruffy, poor, wild. Uninvolved in and unimpressed by convention, they create an alternative world, a retreat, a refuge. Some burnouts are proud: they “wave their freak flags high.” They call themselves burnouts to flaunt their break with the existing order, as a form of resistance, a statement of refusal (1991:9).

Metal/Hardcore scene members often gave up on the rest of a society that marginalized them, and felt they could care less what people thought of them in return. A song by Green M&Ms—a hardcore punk band—described their politics based on the way that they felt society saw and treated them. The following is a portion of the lyrics:

We don’t care about the world today/The world don’t care about us anyway/We don’t care for politics/Because you and I know it’s full of shit/… We don’t care about the way we dress/We look like a fuckin’ mess/

Female scene members of the metal/hardcore sub-scene shared male scene members’ feelings of alienation, although their situations had gender implications that differed from men’s. Similar to younger children’s peer groups (Adler and Adler 1998), local high school girls had their own popularity contests and stratification problems to deal with, separate from the boys. Girls like Nellie (a metal/hardcore fan and Don’s
girlfriend) who were fed up with school stratification systems and the mechanisms used
to sustain them, could remove themselves from the suffocating system by jumping into a
masculine subculture. Nellie explained how she and her three best female friends in
school (all of whom became metal/hardcore sub-scene members) got into the music and
the scene in the following:

Nellie: I hated the preppie school spirit thing with jocks and cheerleaders
as well as the local tita-tita thing.
Fumi: What do you mean by the tita-tita thing?
Nellie: Oh, girls creating hierarchies and secret clubs. They would get so
vain. And they did this "icing out" thing where a girl would be
singled out for isolation. It was so screwed up.
Fumi: So you felt like you didn’t fit in with all of this?
Nellie: Yeah, that was us. Especially after I myself got “iced out.” We
started hanging out and getting into heavy music and started going
to shows. People couldn’t understand how four girls could just go
into the pit and mosh. But we did.

As a manifestation of the intersecting religious symbolisms and experiences of
alienation, metal/hardcore sub-scene members, as in the metal subculture at large, were
drawn to Satan and devil imagery. Stan (the bass player of POW) explained to me on
several occasions why metalheads liked Satan, but summed it up as an affinity of scene
members with Satan, “the outcast.” He said:

Satan’s the quintessential outcast. And because a lot of metal ideology
and imagery comes from Christianity, it’s logical that we choose him as a
symbol. Because we consider ourselves as outcasts too, he’s held up as a
kind of hero.

As with other thrash or speed metal (both extremely fast metal) songs, local bands
of the metal/hardcore sub-scene created songs whose lyrics both alluded to religious or
poetic images as well as everyday problems that others could relate to. The lyrics either
symbolized or described the reality of scene members’ lives. For example, while singing:
“Compassion died a violent death,” “I heard the angels cry,” and wearing a “crown of thorns,” bands also sang “father showed no love,” “he’s my brother and I want him back [from drug dependency],” and “You said you loved me but it’s a lie now.” Many abstract images were metaphors for experiences and feelings that resonated with scene members’ everyday lives. For example, noteworthy in two songs in the same POW album were the numerous references of being “scarred for life” or “marked for life” as if scene participants’ outcast statuses were not going to go away.

In line with music that was both empowering as well as an escape for scene members, band practice and shows where bands played allowed core scene members like Keoni and Don an alternative space to a reality that was uninviting. Half jokingly, Keoni told me why he had been in a band for so long (7 years when I met him in 1995). He said, “I’m in the music because it gives me an excuse to be a freak.” Gaines also notes that her metalhead kids “self-mockingly call themselves burnouts” (1991:33). Similarly, for metal/hardcore sub-scene members in Hawai‘i, self-mockery was a coping mechanism and a resistance to being labeled by others. Self-mockery was important because it gave scene members the agency to talk about themselves mockingly instead of being referred to mockingly within the labeling from others in which they had no agency. Labeling by others hurt. Self-mockery empowered.

**Work, Practice, and Shows**

Of the three sub-scenes, the metal/hardcore sub-scene had the largest proportion of Hawaiian, Samoan, and Filipino scene participants—also the most economically marginalized populations in Hawai‘i. Racially, this sub-scene was the most inclusive of
minority youths. Metal/hardcore sub-scene members tended to come from working-class or lower middle-class backgrounds. In the Hawai‘i economy dependent on tourism, the available jobs consisted of low-level manual labor. Maids, janitors, dishwashers, and other maintenance workers or service sector workers like store clerks or fast-food employees were all low paying. Higher-paying jobs required higher credentials. The paucity of good jobs also meant high competition. While a strong private school system that feeds into mainland colleges exists in Hawai‘i, not all families can send their children to college, let alone, prestigious schools on the mainland that produce graduates who could win the competition for good jobs. Of the participants in this sub-scene that I spoke to, all had gone to local public schools.

Instead of seeking out jobs that paid more or considering certifications that might get them more stability, higher status, and better paying jobs, searching for a job meant looking for something accessible, easy, and flexible enough so the work could accommodate practice schedules and shows. Full-time jobs were unnecessary because scene participants lived at home (with parents). Moreover, parents often did not encourage their grown children to live outside of their home for two reasons: 1) the cost of housing and rent was extremely high in Honolulu and 2) living with and caring for extended family, an Asian and Pacific Islander tradition, was strong. For example, Stan was expected to baby sit for his nephew and nieces—all of whom lived in his parents’ home—and help with household chores, but was never encouraged to find a place of his own.

There were exceptions to this part-time worker lifestyle. Rent, utilities, and food
were usually not a major concern for core scene members, but this was not so in cases like Don's. Don lived with his parents and younger brother. Don worked two jobs to help his parents and add to the household income because his parents had gone into debt to purchase a house. In some cases, scene members had to dish out more money; for example, when buying new equipment, pressing CDs, or going on tour. Joe (guitar player for Salvation, a Christian metal band), a self-admitted equipment collector, told me that he worked several jobs at once to afford his collection.

Jobs for metal/hardcore sub-scene members were not meant to result in careers, but were a means to an end. The end was to have enough money for what was needed. In direct contradiction to this subsistence mentality, scene participants felt that if they could have their dream jobs, they would be working harder for more money. Core scene members dreamed of having the status of bands that filled arenas like their idols, Metallica, Black Sabbath, Motorhead, Slayer, Sepultura, etc.: all big-name metal/hardcore bands. Romantic resistance was, in part, a rejection of the real world in which core scene members lived, with time seemingly revolving around shows, practice, or time spent hanging out with other core scene members.

According to Stan, practicing was not work. He said, "[Band] Practice isn't work. I wish I could get paid for playing and didn't have to work." Work was the jobs that one needed to pay rent for the practice studio, pay off the car, or buy equipment. Stan dreamed of the day when he no longer had to "work," meaning when he could live off of what he earned as a musician. He said, "It would be so great. They'd give me instruments to endorse, and 'roadies' would handle my equipment, and take care of
setting up and cleaning up for me at shows.”

The types of jobs the musicians held were store clerks, car repair and gas station attendants, music store employees, construction workers, exterminators, jewelry artists, waiters, and so on. For most, these jobs were not considered possible career occupations. They were mainly forms of employment needed for subsistence. Sometimes musicians worked together at the same job site, but these seemed to be exceptional cases. For example, all five POW members were employed at various branches of Tower Records in Honolulu at one time or another. There was a scene connection among Tower Records employees and they often “hooked each other up” with CDs and videotapes when a non-employee core scene participant came into the store.

Especially for bands who had been playing for a long time, being in the studio or wherever else they could play gave them something that could get them through the difficulty of daily life. Nellie said that she hoped Don would continue to play guitar even if POW disbanded. She said:

I told him [Don] that I hope he never stops playing [guitar] because I know playing does something for him. He could be really stressed out from work or whatever, because he’s prone to stressing out, but one practice, and boom, he’s back in the swing of things.

POW was fortunate to have their own studio, rented by the month, where they could leave their equipment and lock up after each practice. The close quarters in which people lived in “town” (Honolulu) made it difficult for garage practices, like some scene participants living in more rural areas of the island could have. Practice studios were few (usually about two running at any one time in all of Honolulu) and therefore, difficult to book. In these studios, bands booked by the hour and had to move their equipment in and
out for the hours they used the space.

For POW and Eighty-eight (another metal/hardcore band that shared the same space when the studio raised the rent), the studio was a special space. Band members liked to spend time there even though the studio was small, dingy and uncomfortable. The studio had one ragged sofa, windows that got stuck when you tried to open them for air (and needed a stick to keep it open), and air conditioning that was usually broken. POW practice could begin at 4 and be finished by 6, but the band lingered on for a few more hours of jamming or hanging out and talking, sometimes with some beers. On occasion, I found band members in the studio, hours ahead of practice because they were “itching to play.” Given most scene members’ living situations, the studio was also the one place where band members could hook up to an amplifier and hear themselves play.

Perhaps most telling of the kind of refuge the studio was to band members was the story of “Pluto,” the rhythm guitar player for Eight-eight, who killed himself by shooting himself in the head in the practice space. As noted by Gaines (1991):

...when people talk about teenage suicide, the word “romance” is often invoked. Supposedly, suicide is not real to young people. They are anesthetized to life and desensitized to death...It is also believed that young people kill themselves to get attention or revenge. Suicide is now hip, dangerous, the final resistance to adult authority, a last stand against conformity. To some kids, suicide is death before dishonor, heroism over defeat (1991:248).

Although people gave different reasons for why Pluto put a gun to his own head while his band mates were next door in a different room, he must have felt safe in that space and that he could rest assured that his friends understood why he killed himself.

Both shows and practice sessions were a retreat from difficult and sometimes unbearable
lives. The scene held a special show in Pluto’s name—a fund-raiser for his family.

**Seeking Virtuosity**

Being good at what one did in a band was important in the metal/hardcore sub-scene. In many cases, who you were in the scene (e.g., the guitar player for POW) was your master status: the definitive statement of your identity. While band musicians usually had very little formal musical training, fellow musicians and music lovers knew when someone was a good guitar player, drummer, etc. Furthermore, one’s virtuoso skills or association to someone with those skills gave a scene member an alternative identity to *outcast* or *burnout*. Virtuosity usually referred to the guitar player’s technical abilities but could also define any of the other musicians’ exemplary talent and abilities.

**Universal (High) Standards**

Rock music is not seen as a form of music for which much formal musical training is required. Although sheet music for how to play standard hard rock songs was available in music stores for purchase, a good majority of musicians in the scene could not read sheet music. Learning how to play a particular piece—whether it be a Metallica or POW song—was contingent on the musician’s ability to pick up the part by ear.

Even with hard practice, becoming a good musician took a long time. Many of the bands in this sub-scene made elements of metal (or more specifically, heavy metal) an essential part of their music although they also identified as hardcore. This meant that extended guitar solos as well as complex drum and bass rhythms—metal staples—were characteristic of their songs and required extensive practice and training to perfect.

Singers also needed to be good and were also expected to have a charismatic presence;
something that usually took time to develop. Because of the need to master the complexity of the music, core scene participants in the metal/hardcore sub-scene tended to be older than scene members in the other sub-scenes. This difference in ages of scene members was especially stark when comparing metal/hardcore sub-scene and ska/punk sub-scene core participants.

For a newcomer to metal/hardcore music, everything just sounds really loud—nothing else is discernible. As a fellow graduate student once jokingly said to me when I played several tracks on a POW CD for her, “How come they keep playing the same song?” Also typical of the comments directed to a metal/hardcore song by students in the classes I gave talks in were statements like, “It’s just loud,” “chaotic, confusing, and fast,” “repetitive noise, violent,” and “loud, obnoxious, and wild.”

But for those scene members who were knowledgeable about the music, virtuoso skill was immediately evident. These were universal standards of metal and hardcore music that were upheld as a measure of excellence across space and time. Such skills could be spotted quickly by musicians or serious scene participants who were also trained in the same genres of music. For example, the following occurred at a show touted as a local “metal show” one night in 2001. My partner Roy’s brother, Brian, was in town and going to a show was something to do. Roy and Brian were both musicians from prominently known local punk scenes of Olympia and Seattle, Washington. The more recent Hawai‘i punk scene (1999 and later) was partly modeled after these scenes.

The “metal show” turned out to be a disappointment. So we ended up playing pool [the show venue was a bar in Waikiki] and doing a lot of talking outside of the venue rather than inside of it. But when Jamie (a former Green M&Ms guitar player in a newly formed band) started to play his guitar solo, both Roy and Brian immediately became fixated on
Jamie’s guitarwork. Brian said, “Not bad (a compliment coming from him).” Roy said, “Wow, he’s some kind of virtuoso, this guy.”

In all the disappointment of the show, the brothers had quickly picked out the obvious gem from the junk that evening.

Audience response also reflected how good a band was. Not only band members, but core scene participants in the audience also had high standards and expected quality from bands. The bands, in turn, understood these expectations of their audience. When these expectations combined with the close ties between performers and audience, the band became one with the audience. The highest praise for a punk band is to have the audience at a show singing and dancing (or moshing, in the case of the metal/hardcore scene). The worst audience response to a band is quiet and stillness. Therefore, bands work hard at performing their best and getting their fans excited. In the metal/hardcore sub-scene, several memorable shows stood out because of the high quality of performance and tight band-audience connection. The following describes a local show that attracted more than 1000 people in 1995:

During the POW set, a pit had already been forming, but it was when they played their song of lost love—a ballad that breaks into full-on metal/hardcore starting with Don’s guitar solo followed by Keoni’s drums—that the show erupted. POW is known for its stops and starts and as if everyone in the audience was awaiting the second that the ballad erupts into a wall of sound, the mosh pit spread into a large circle that consumed the whole room except for the four corners. I was in one corner and in a slightly elevated position to witness the quickly expanding sea of rapidly moving bodies that had until then only occupied the space immediately in front of the stage. As if on cue, the audience went into “mosh mode” together. It was one of the most amazing things I had ever seen and was in awe on one level while I also made sure I had my arms in front of me with palms outward so I could push someone back into the pit if they came flying at me.
Source of Positive Identity

Virtuosity was sought because virtuosity distinguished an individual in the scene. As a virtuoso, you were no longer just a decent guitar player in a band; you were arguably the best guitar player in the scene. This was something special that separated the gifted musicians from the “squares” (Becker 1963). Virtuosity also brought you closer to your idol, like Keoni to Neil Peart, the drummer in the metal band, Rush. The imaginary yet symbolic tie to a famous musician grew that much stronger with a reputation for virtuosity in the local scene. In this sub-scene, being a good musician instantly gave a scene member subcultural capital (Thornton 1996).

Band musicians referred to each other by what they did in their band. Regardless of what other attributes they possessed in their daily lives, who they were in the scene was how people referred to them. Don mentioned that Ray, the other guitar player in POW, was his inspiration to take up guitar, as quoted in a local fanzine interview: “I remember when I first saw Ray play back in ’85-’86ish. I was totally inspired by his guitar playing.” As another example, Taryn, a frequent metal/hardcore show-goer and friend to many core scene participants, ranked Brian, the singer in her boyfriend’s metal/hardcore band in the following: “Yeah, he’s probably the second best singer in the scene after Chris (POW’s singer).” Furthermore, Darien, the bass player for Green M&Ms, spoke of his “teacher,” Stan, who taught him how to play bass as “the bass god.”

Being seen as a virtuoso also carried the added stresses of having statuses to live up to and finances to keep up with. Musicians in the metal/hardcore sub-scene needed to keep some of these stresses to act as a creative tension to develop good music, but
without letting these impede practice or performance. As Weinstein (2000) notes, the problem is amplified by the fact that in the genre of metal music, virtuosity is expected of musicians. She states:

The difficulty of constituting a band as a cooperative social unit is shown by the vast array of tensions within groups. The rock community refers to these tensions as “ego problems” or “attitude.” For several reasons, heavy metal is probably more prone than other musical styles to personality clashes... the virtuosity required in heavy metal performances, especially from the frontman singer and the lead guitarist, encourages the musicians to behave as prima donnas (2000:72).

This attitude of virtuosity was, on occasion, manifested in local band members' rock star or diva-like behaviors. An example of this kind of behavior occurred when the well-known band, Marilyn Manson, was in Honolulu and POW was opening for them. Due to the show promoters being unfamiliar with members of the local band, Keoni encountered some difficulty in getting into the show venue to set up his equipment for their set. Once inside, he voiced his frustration: “They can go find themselves another drummer for POW if they won’t let me in!” Keoni knew well that he was not replaceable.

Although they knew they were good, musicians were expected to be humble, except on rare occasions when they felt they were being disrespected. As Stan explained, “Calling myself a musician is okay. ‘Rockstar’ is not. That’s taboo.” Humility had a lot to do with the amount of practice and talent that was expected of one who became a virtuoso. Younger musicians were also expected to show respect to older musicians, especially when established musicians helped them. As Jay told me, “Green M&Ms owes a lot to POW. About four years ago, they were doing really well and they let us
play with them. They’re kinda like heroes around here.” Clearly, good musicianhood gave a scene member subcultural capital. In this sub-scene, the subcultural capital was based mostly on rad technique; dress and style counted for much less.

Opportunities to open for big acts from the mainland allowed core scene participants to get a peek at stardom. Playing with these bigger bands gave local musicians a positive outlook on life because all of the bands that local scene participants admired and idolized started where they were—at the bottom. After POW finished their set opening for Ozzy Osbourne in the big arena in town, Keoni, Stan, and Sam, a follower of POW who acted as a roadie for POW for the Ozzy show, had the following conversation while we stood around after moving equipment outside:

Keoni: This is the epitome. Fumi, playing here is a dream come true. It’s what I’ve lived for all my life.
Stan: Hell yeah. This is the big time!
Sam: No, man. This is just the beginning. It’s just the springboard man.
Keoni: Hey you’re right man.

For metal/hardcore sub-scene members, participating in the scene to seek refuge from the rest of society and seeking virtuosity together constituted romantic resistance because given the choices, the future was not so bright and metal/hardcore sub-scene members needed alternative sources of hope and positive self-identity. Metal/hardcore sub-scene members did not leave Hawai‘i as readily as scene participants from other sub-scenes. The answer to the question asked of the “burnouts” of Gaines’s (1991) Bergenfield by adults and others applied here as well. If the situation was so bad, why didn’t they leave and go somewhere else where the situation was better, where there were more opportunities? The answer is that they couldn’t leave.
One needed a certain amount of capital, be it social, economic, or cultural, to go somewhere else and start from scratch. I asked Stan if he would be ready to leave Hawai‘i if POW became well known on the mainland. Would he think twice about going to the mainland? Stan answered:

I’d definitely go on tour but I don’t know if I’d want to live out there. I’m still paying off my car and Don works a number of jobs to help his parents out. They depend on him now so he can’t just take off. Besides, you don’t know what jobs will be available where you go.

In relocating to the mainland, metal/hardcore sub-scene members also worried about racism on the mainland because this sub-scene had many scene members of Asian and Pacific Islander ancestry who knew that the population on the mainland looked very different from that of Hawai‘i. Returning from playing a music festival in Portland, Stan claimed, “It’s so white over there. They actually thought we [POW] were a gang.” Portland locals seemed to have taken POW to be an ethnic gang.

Lipsitz (1990) explains that young working-class people all over the country became involved in creating rock and roll music because they were motivated to find something better—to “leave behind the alienations and indignities of work; a career in music could be the alternative to a career washing dishes (1990:118).” But as Gaines points out, it’s not that easy. She states:

But that has always been a class privilege. The townies are the poor kids, the wounded street warriors who stay behind. And besides, escape was easier for everyone twenty years ago. American society had safety nets then that don’t exist now (1991:252).

Romantic resistance offered an alternative system of hierarchy to dominant hegemonic structures in which good musicians of a marginal youth subculture could get
respect. If a musician was good, he went down in history with the best of them. The younger kids remembered him for what he stood for and what he accomplished, even if he got old. If he was good, he could be on the same stage as his idols, opening for their gigs. And just maybe, his band might make it big enough to join the ranks of his idols. In the meantime, he could work at a part-time job, enough to earn him money to pay for what was needed.

In this light, romantic resistance is, in some ways, reminiscent of Willis’ “lads” and Jay McLeod’s (1995) “Hallway Hangers” as well as of Gaines’ (1991) “metalheads.” The scene gave scene participants a positive self-identity by way of standards set by themselves: musical virtuosity and identity as a musician or supporter of respected musicians’ efforts. The price of being the stigmatized was always high. The kids who were labeled problems or weird actively sought out a scene that could mean the difference between life and death. But as long as metal/hardcore sub-scene members had their buddies, supportive family, and scene, they knew they could dream and have a place where they were welcome.
CHAPTER FIVE:  DO-IT-YOURSELF RESISTANCE: THE SKA/PUNK SUB-SCENE

Do-it-yourself (DIY) is based on the idea that if you want something to change, then you must stand up and take the initiative. Punk rock music is seen as young people's music. DIY reflects the frustration that youths felt about not being heard because they were punks. Even though they liked rock music and felt that it helped them get through difficult lives, these youths were barred from attending shows because they were underage. These youths’ plan of action, then, became starting their own bands and writing songs about what they believed in. If people weren’t going to let them into theirs, they might as well start their own scene. This was a direct resistance to adult society and conservative society that made them feel like there was no space for them by youths who were attracted to punk rock music.

Scene participants who were drawn to the ska/punk sub-scene understood the connection between authority and oppression. DIY philosophy urged youths to resist such authority and oppression through available means. The resistance of the ska/punk sub-scene was raw, loud, and grating, because the point was to get people’s attention, agitate, and make others see their oppression. It was the ska/punk sub-scene members who played simple, short, three-chord tunes and wore their hair in dyed spikes and mohawks. Their loud fashion and sound was part of their chosen identity.

Compared to metal/hardcore sound, although both were loud and often fast, much of punk music was upbeat and happy-sounding, played in major keys, as opposed to the sad and angry sounds of metal/hardcore music. In response to my talk on sub-scenes, a
student who chose ska/punk sub-scene music as her favorite said, “It sounds fun. It reminds me of when I play pool with my friends.” Another student said it was a “good song to hear before surfing.” Others who liked this genre the best stated, “Catchy,” “It’s got a good beat,” and “makes you want to get up and dance.”

Protest and rebellion were an attitude and way of life, unlike the more dreamy, romantic, and less political lifestyle of metal/hardcore sub-scene members. In the introduction to her book on gender resistance in punk, Leblanc (1999) describes her own rebellion in school where she was a straight-A student but marginalized because she was a punk scene member. By dressing in punk gear complete with shaved head and mohawk, she wore her politics on her body at a young age:

... I was not trying to anger people, but to scare them, to wake them up... becoming a punk was, for me, the ultimate in self-empowerment... I had moved from a position of victimization, as the smartest, dorkiest, most persecuted girl in school, to one of agency as a person in control of my self-presentation. I would have told you how I had gone from being a social outcast to being a core member of a marginal group... (1999:3-4).

Ska/Punk sub-scene members were political. They voiced their politics in their music, and wore their beliefs on their bodies. It should also be noted that although not as political, metal/hardcore sub-scene members also embraced DIY in the sense that made it their business to build themselves a refuge and maintain standards of excellence. In a similar vein, indie sub-scene members, while most concerned with gender and sexual resistance, also embraced DIY in the sense that were actively involved in making their gender and sexual politics heard.

In this sub-scene, scene members achieved DIY resistance by starting things on their own. They stressed the importance of their local scene community, overtly
expressed their distaste for capitalist enterprise, and made their rebellion a way of life.

**Representative Core Sub-scene Participants**

**Oren** was known throughout the scene as well as in other “rad” local circles as a perennial punk promoter and baker who owned his own business. He was an older haole scene member, but his age (as well as his real name) has always been a mystery to younger scene members. Oren was a long-time scene participant, but had not been in a band of his own until the late 1990s. He played bass in several different bands. In the meantime, he had established his own bakery business, worked for Golden Voice, and promoted punk shows on his own as well. While he was a punk rocker before he became a baker, his career as a baker also had a very DIY start. He had made some cheesecakes for some friends who then told other friends how good his cakes were, and soon, he was baking for people who placed orders with him. As his business grew, Oren’s baked goods could be found in most local coffee shops as well as at Golden Voice shows and art events. Oren was political, involved with Refuse and Resist, and could be seen at demonstrations and fundraisers of all kinds. He also routinely supported causes like gay rights and domestic abuse.

I met **Trent** during my interview with Oren. He and Oren had just started a new band, Blue Punx, which became one of the most popular bands in the local scene during the latter half of my data collection. Trent, a guitar player, was about 18 or 19 years old when I first met him in 1999. Oren had asked Trent to videotape the interview to possibly include in a Hawai‘i version of *The Decline of Western Civilization*, a documentary of the LA punk rock scene starting in 1979. I thought Trent was quite
fashionable, reminiscent of something out of the Dexy’s Midnight Runners video, “Come on Eileen.” He traveled often and was tuned into local punk scenes on the mainland as well as in Hawai‘i. Trent was also haole and was already working as a barista and coffee roaster at a popular coffee shop on the North Shore when I met him. He later became recruited to work at a coffee shop in town (Honolulu), where he worked on making the coffee shop a hangout for punk scene participants and a venue for punk shows. Over time, Trent became more serious about Blue Punx and touring became an important part of their band activity.

Kanoa, who I met towards the end of my data collection, was a bass player and a recent high school graduate in 2002. He referred to himself as “jus’ a local bruddah” and was a faithful supporter of his friends’ bands as well as his own. He was Hawaiian with Puerto Rican and Chinese ancestry as well, had a muscular build. Kanoa was a teacher of Polynesian martial arts. His teacher was his father, a martial arts master, who started teaching Kanoa at the age of 5. Kanoa had curly black hair that was sometimes hidden under a knitted beanie or baseball cap. His style of dress was usually composed of dark colors, with a T-shirt, long loose-fitting pants or slacks, and skater shoes, with a black leather silver-studded belt. He was a vegan and said that his leather belt was his only transgression from his otherwise straight edge lifestyle. He and his friend used to have a statewide award-winning reggae band in high school, and he played bass in his friend’s emo band in the scene. Kanoa listened to all kinds of music, but his political tendencies and love of reggae placed him in ska/punk. He also supported his friends in emo bands (one of which was Hero formed in 2003), but told me that he wasn’t a big emo fan.
himself. He liked to surf or skateboard after work at the coffee shop and at another local restaurant. Kanoa wanted to go back to school, have his own coffee shop in the future, and study to be an auto mechanic.

**Putting the Local Scene First**

Ska/punk sub-scene images were a far cry from virtuoso guitar players playing extended solos on a big stage. DIY meant finding cheap instruments, learning three chords, figuring out how to make noise on the different pieces of a drum kit, singing and yelling loud, and feeling okay with performing the results in front of people on makeshift stages. The whole point of DIY punk ideology was that anybody could be in a band and make music with some friends. This also meant that bettering the local scene and showing others that interesting things could be done in Hawai‘i were important responsibilities of scene participants.

**“Success” Redefined**

Being on a stage with similarly inexperienced kids (or adults, for that matter) to perform in front of people is an incredibly daunting experience in the beginning. Mark was a haole (Caucasian) singer and guitar player in a “hard ska punk” band and a student who had just started at a local community college in 1999. He told me that anyone who even attempted to perform in front of people should be commended: “I really respect all the bands. You really need balls to get up on stage like that. So even if they suck, I wouldn’t tell that to their face, because I respect them for doing it.”

The image and aura of celebrity in the US is mind-boggling. The media makes the famous actor, model, athlete, and musician out to be a god-like creature that is almost
impossible to emulate. DIY ideology tries to deconstruct this myth of stardom and make
*
* taking the stage something that is accessible to everyone. Better yet, the stage should be
destroyed. Thus, at punk shows, there was often no stage that was marked off by clear
boundaries such as a raised surface or a wall dividing the performers from the audience.
Instead, there would be a corner or space at the end of the club that became a makeshift
stage. Furthermore, because fans usually knew the lyrics to bands’ songs and sometimes
could even play the songs, they were often given the mic and were up on the makeshift
stage with the band.

Success was redefined in the ska/punk sub-scene. Characteristic of the ideology
of this sub-scene was Oren’s definition of “success.” Oren was a long-time scene
member, but had not been in a band of his own until the late 1990s. Oren told me the
following regarding his feelings about success:

I don’t believe that leaving Hawai‘i is success. Success, to me, doesn’t
involve the mainland. I think I’m successful because I’m now doing
everything I’ve ever wanted to do. I’m in a band—two, in fact—and I can
put on shows either through Golden Voice or on my own. And I have my
own business. What more can I ask for?

Compared to scene participants in Tucson moving to Orange County, Honolulu
was much farther away (in that one couldn’t move around on land) from any other city
where bands could play a punk show in the US. Some ska/punk scene members did talk
about going to the mainland to *make it big*. These were usually younger scene
participants who were just starting their own bands. For example, Mark felt that there
was talent in Hawai‘i waiting to be discovered. He said, “There are some pretty solid
bands. There is more talent now.” To scene members like Mark, putting Hawai‘i on the
map of local scenes was important. At the same time, however, many scene participants
did not want to leave home and not very many bands did make it across the Pacific Ocean
for reasons other than metal/hardcore sub-scene participants' financial ones.

The ones that did go often found that relocation was not worth it and came home.
If they had dreams of making it like Mark, they often became disillusioned, especially
with the racism they experienced on the mainland. For example, the female drummer for
Julie's Rooftop, Jen, returned to Honolulu after a year from Portland where she was a
student and active scene member. Jen became so angry about the treatment she received
even in a "progressive" scene in Portland that she "dropped out of punk." She decided
that because punk was a white subculture that developed on the mainland, she would
have nothing to do with it anymore. After she came back to Hawai'i she told me the
following:

I’m local Japanese and although I knew that Japanese-Americans were
minorities on the mainland, I never experienced discrimination until this
past year living there. It just really woke me up and started me thinking
about lots of things. It felt especially weird to be experiencing racism in a
punk scene. Yeah, I even got it in a scene that I thought wouldn’t be so
ignorant.

Hawai'i local scene participants also discovered that all of the cool DIY stuff
could be learned at home in Hawai'i. This was possible because older scene participants
had already paved the way. Returning scene members also learned to appreciate things
about Hawai'i that they had taken for granted and to understand how attached they were
to the local scene. A Hawai'i expatriate whose band had been successful on the mainland
was quoted saying the following in a local newspaper interview:

Growing up in Hawaii, I learned all about independent film, hip-hop, indie
rock and Detroit techno; I didn’t need to go elsewhere… Thank God for
Jelly’s [local used book and music store], Hungry Ear Records [local record store], Academy of the Arts Theater, KTUH and Radio Free.  

On the mainland, Hawai‘i scene members often found that other local scenes were just as small as Hawai‘i’s. Scene members on the mainland had the same problems of finding space for themselves as scene participants in Hawai‘i. Those who returned realized that although there were hip scenes elsewhere, that the Hawai‘i scene was no less “happening” of a scene. The same interviewed expatriate stated that one did not have to leave Hawai‘i to find a good, vibrant scene. He said:

I think back to the early ‘90s, when it seemed like everyone was trying to do something. People were tuning in to Radio Free Hawaii and underground clubs were everywhere. It really didn’t take much—just an empty warehouse, a few good ideas and the kids came out.

As Oren put it, “There’s no place for these kids to go. So we have to continue to do it [i.e., to have shows] for them. ‘Cos kids are cool.” The ska/punk sub-scene also had the youngest scene participants of all three sub-scenes. Kanoa told me that ska/punk sub-scene members who attended shows were mostly between the ages of 13 and 17. This was quite a different demographic category from the other sub-scenes whose scene members were more typically in their early-to-mid-20s.

Having shows in parking lots, high school cafeterias, community centers, churches, and fortunately, more recently, coffee shops, also served the purpose of providing show venues that were accessible to all ages. This was important because the venues in Waikiki, downtown, and other club and bar districts where alcoholic drinks were sold did not allow underage scene participants inside. All ages shows were a punk tradition, so while often not being welcomed to play in established clubs and bars, bands
of the sub-scene sought out other kinds of venues of their own instead. For example, Romy (ska/punk later turned indie sub-scene member) and her sister, Pua, sometimes had shows in their garage/yard because they lived out in the country on the North Shore side. Pua said, “There were also times when we brought generators outside to have shows on the beach.” To core scene participants like Oren, Romy, and Pua, having shows regardless of scale and venue, was “success” itself.

**Role Models**

The simplicity of the basic three-chord punk format and the positive, fun sound also made starting a band much less daunting in the ska/punk sub-scene. For example, Oren explained why he chose punk as the music he wanted to play as follows: “I always wanted to be in a band, but I felt that I could make music that sounded like stuff I heard on records if I chose punk.” Trent also promoted Blue Punx by playing shows and putting out CDs. Similar to Oren, Trent was also a punk show promoter. He showed by example how easy it could be to start a successful band.

DIY stood for taking action, but core scene participants also realized that helping others to DIY was also an important part of being in the ska/punk sub-scene. Because older scene members knew how it felt to not fit in with high school status codes, they felt responsible for nurturing the local scene and instilling that sense of DIY in newer scene members. Sometimes this meant more established bands taking newer bands under their wing. Older bands sometimes took a newer band with them when they agreed to play a show. This was one way that younger bands got exposure.

Other core scene participants made themselves accessible to newer scene
participants. Kanoa explained how Trent helped younger kids who had started bands and needed to start playing shows but didn’t know where to start. He told me how Trent made himself accessible to younger kids. He said:

> It’s intimidating for kids just starting a band to ask for a chance to play. But Trent makes it real easy for them. He’s always asking people to spread the word that if anybody wants to play, to just talk to him. He’ll then put your band on the bill for an upcoming show that he’s organizing.

A weekly local paper also mentioned this accessibility of Trent in a special on the local music scene in early 2003. Their write-up included excerpts from an interview with Trent:

> Managing the scheduling of [the coffee shop’s] live acts while pulling shifts behind the counter, the 20-year-old [Trent] said he keeps the process for hiring bands intimidation-free. “We tell every kid that comes down here who’s in a band to just call us up or come talk to me after the show and we’ll put you on something,” [Trent] said.

Trent also approached the owner of the coffee shop where he worked as a coffee roaster/barista with the idea of having bands play in the shop a few nights a month. The owner, Harold, agreed to the idea if the shop could get a cut of the door (cover charge) and the kids cleaned up after themselves. Trent figured that bands would have a new regular venue (something that is extremely difficult to come by) and Harold’s local business would have a little more money coming in. Trent later switched this show venue to a different coffee shop when he discovered that Harold’s only interest in the shop was maximization of profit. Trent realized that Harold was exploiting roasters and baristas like Kanoa and himself, and the sub-scene moved their labor and business elsewhere.

Role models had their own models. Trent quickly became a role model for other
scene members at a young age, but he also found a model in his friend, Oren, with whom he also later started a band. Oren had already been doing this kind of DIY promotion by having shows in his bakery parking lot in the warehouse district and had learned how to put on punk shows through working part time for Golden Voice for years. During an interview, when I told him that I thought having punk shows at coffee shops were a great idea, he gave Trent the credit saying: “Oh, that’s Trent’s baby. He’s the one organizing all the coffee shop shows.” In turn, Oren also told me that Chris, the singer for POW, was his role model.

It was also clear to the observer that the new, younger additions to the scene (the 13-17-year-olds that Kanoa talked about) respected the more established older core scene participants. They reciprocated by showing the appreciation at shows. The following describes a show in 2003 at which such reciprocation was observed:

The show was outdoors in the large parking lot of Oren’s bakery in a warehouse district. When the band started playing, the show-goers converged in front of the band and the 40 or 50 people closest to the band all started singing along with Trent. A small mosh pit of about 15 people formed, but more significantly, the audience spread out like an open fan directly in front of the pit and sang the lyrics they knew by heart. The kids in the audience even moved like the singer, leaning slightly forward and all raising their fists simultaneously for the chorus part of the lyrics. Pua, who stood next to me during the set, was equally impressed. She said, “Wow, they have such great fans! They know all of their songs.

Scene members like Oren and Trent had a certain charisma about them that attracted younger kids to them. Younger kids wanted to be like them. These younger scene participants, in turn, learned from following the lead of older scene participants. I observed an example of this learning process in action at a Foo Fighters\(^\text{23}\) show in Honolulu in the summer of 2000:
While waiting outside in line to get in, I saw Oren running around making sure everything was running smoothly the way he usually does. He had Romy and another girl taking the tickets at the front door. He placed another boy strategically to the side of the entrance at the makeshift “will call” desk. He also had a troop of seven or eight kids (some maybe high school freshman age or even younger) walking around with him. Sometimes Oren would turn around and say something to them and one or two would run off to take care of something.

This system of reproducing core scene members and carrying on the DIY and Hawai‘i first traditions created something of a hierarchy of scene members that had to do with core scene participants’ subcultural capital. This capital consisted of a different kind of “rad” than that in the metal/hardcore sub-scene. “Rad” wasn’t so much about musical technical skill, but more about a local scene that needed to be proactively protected and passed down. So old was “rad” (e.g., the old scene, knowledge about old bands, etc.) and older scene members were “rad” because they knew how to do “rad” stuff.

**Protesting Oppression**

DIY is a proactive stance, and if someone knows he is oppressed, the idea is for him to protest the oppression. DIY in the ska/punk sub-scene encouraged open support for progressive causes and discouraged blindly following systems that one doesn’t believe in. The proactive nature of DIY resistance and the political nature of opposition made the ska/punk sub-scene a more visible entity in the community as well as at band performances compared to the metal/hardcore sub-scene. To maximize these effects, the ska/punk sub-scene members made sure they were seen and heard. They also took pride in their progressive lifestyles.

**Appropriation**

Some academics have celebrated the strategies of resistance of youth subcultures.
These strategies by youths involved the appropriation of mainstream styles by adopting those styles and giving them new meanings of their own (Hall and Jefferson 1975; Hebdige 1979). Others have lamented that the cycle of appropriation and reappropriation between youths and markets reflects the power that the market has over youths—that youths have lost track of where they are in the cycle and have no affinity with any particular style (Moore 1998). Some even go further to say that mainstream and subculture are really the same thing in a postmodern analysis of style and sound (Grossberg 1987). Still others critique the constructed binary of mainstream and subculture as the only division that makes sense to young people (Thornton 1996).

In the Hawai‘i ska/punk sub-scene, appropriation and resignification of styles as forms of resistance varied according to how involved the individual was as a scene member in the ska/punk sub-scene. Although there was no shortage of dyed mohawks, spikes, chains, plaid pants, and Doc Martens, I also heard from some scene members and former scene members that the scene was just a big fashion show. Linda, who used to be a scene participant, stopped going to shows. She said:

It’s all about the fashion now and because bands seem to spend more time dressing than making new songs, it’s like I just go to see people show off their clothes and accessorizing. And I don’t feel that the dress really represents anything either.

Kanoa spoke similarly of the fashion show aspect of the scene. He said, “The scene today is so much about fashion. It’s almost like it’s about who can dress ‘the most punk.’” However, when I commented that: “every time I see Trent, he has differently colored and styled hair—Oren too, for that matter,” Kanoa gave me a different explanation. He said, “Well, those two are in the most popular [punk] band on the island
right now. They have an image they have to maintain.”

This seemingly contradictory explanation came from how much status one had within the sub-scene. Core scene participants knew how to organize pieces of fashion and re-signify what meanings they would now carry. As Hall and Jefferson (1975) explain:

[D]espite their visibility, things simply appropriated and worn (or listened to) do not make a style. What makes a style is the activity of stylisation—the active organisation of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organised group-identity in the form and shape of a coherent and distinctive way of ‘being-in-the-world’ (1975:54).

What was important was that others understood that Trent knew what he was doing, and that the meanings he gave his style matched his philosophy and the ethos of the ska/punk sub-scene. Meanwhile, a less known scene member could have a similar ensemble as Trent, but could be considered as trying too hard or a poseur or wannabe, much like Thornton’s (1996) “Sharon and Tracy dancing around their handbags.”

Behind Kanoa’s explanation was the idea that the style was rad if you had a command of the style and your punk attitude and politics were apparent in your actions. Especially for younger scene participants, it took time for these pieces to come together. Style was only rad if there was a progressive ideology underneath the outfit.

“Scamming” was another strategy for resisting capitalistic power that several scene members—usually female—told me about. Scamming meant acquiring the goods without paying exorbitant prices for them. These scene members were tempted by cool-looking designer dress and accessory items, but felt guilty because they knew they were being seduced by the marketing of large multinational companies. Wanting to resist such
capitalistic enterprising, it bothered them that they were so tempted. So, instead of paying the expensive prices to buy the clothes, they shoplifted them instead. The following conversation occurred between Nani and Boom during a discussion of style in the scene. The two were bandmates in several indies sub-scene bands.

Nani: I hate that I want a Prada bag.
Boom: You do? I don't.
Nani: I hope my sister buys me one.
Boom: Yeah, like I want Diesel [an expensive brand of trendy, casual clothing] stuff. But we rip it off anyway, so it's okay.

A separate conversation with Nani during a band performance also revealed many more incidents of scamming by another core scene member: Pua. The following describes how I tried to pay for a couple of T-shirts screen printed by hand with a band’s logo and accidentally fell upon the very cheap way of procuring the basic materials:

Fumi: [To Nani who was handing me two shirts: one for me and one for Roy] I’ll take these two. How much is that?
Nani: Oh, don’t worry about that.
Fumi: But I want to support you guys’ band. I want to help out.
Nani: But it doesn’t cost anything to make them. Pua steals the shirts and it doesn’t cost much for the printing. So don’t worry about it.

Refusing to buy style pieces by stealing them instead was a twisted resistance to capitalist consumerism by scene participants; not to mention, a dangerous one. But whether or not they were resisting buying into the consumerism was highly questionable. Nani, Boom, and Pua’s styles were a more indies style than a 70s punk style of dress, but the concepts of appropriation, reappropriation, and consumerism straddled indie rock and ska/punk sub-scenes; in fact, this dilemma was central to punk subculture. Other youth subcultures such as hip hop (Rose 1994) and club cultures (Thornton 1996) faced this same issue, of subcultures existing in advanced capitalist economies.
Protest as Lifestyle

Scene participants in the ska/punk sub-scene prided themselves on being political and actively involved in radical movements and demonstrations. As an example of how Trent disseminated DIY ideology, he sung the following lyrics to a Blue Punx (Trent’s band with Oren) song:

Thought police in your schools. Sheep made to obey. Obey the rules.
Look at the great education you’ve got. Now you’re ready to be a robot…
Look at the future and all that you can be. You gotta set your own mind free. Look at YOUR future and what you’re GONNA do. You’ve gotta set yourself free for me and you.

Core scene members were socially responsible. They lived politically and socially conscious lifestyles; thus, while band activity was important to them, their daily lives also involved jobs that led to careers and volunteer activities for causes they believed in. Many like Kanoa and Trent were also strict vegans and made their stances on causes like animal rights known through their lifestyle choices.

Contrasted with scene participants in the metal/hardcore sub-scene, scene participants in the ska/punk sub-scene filled their schedules with activities such as participating in protest demonstrations (e.g., for the ADB meetings, war in Iraq, etc.), feeding the homeless (Food Not Bombs²⁴), and organizing fund-raisers for local causes such as Hawaiian immersion schools. The difference in scene members’ organization of time was an indicator of how much they were involved in activities other than band practice, shows, and jobs. Clear differences in time management patterns emerged between metal/hardcore sub-scene and ska/punk sub-scene members. For example, while I had much difficulty in scheduling interviews with metal/hardcore sub-scene
participants, especially because many of them did not wear watches to keep time, when I asked for interviews with ska/punk sub-scene members, they made it clear that they were busy and wanted to make sure that both they and I maximized the use of our time in the interview.

Cases in point were the experiences I had with Romy and Oren in scheduling interviews with them. Romy gave me her cell phone number telling me to call her in case something came up for me that day "because I'm really busy." Romy headed Food Not Bombs in Hawai'i and was involved in many other volunteer activities as well. Oren went through his day's schedule with me on the phone while thinking out loud what would work best for him (because I told him I could be flexible). The agenda involved the regular baking and delivering, working at the Art Academy, a piano lesson, band practice, and work at Golden Voice.

While many scene members' middle class backgrounds afforded them the time and resources to be active in volunteering and protesting, they also lived in empathy to the plight of those who did not have those luxuries. As Lipsitz (1990) explains:

The working class in the U.S. exists as an empirical fact in the lives of those trading their labor power for wages, but it also lives in the collective historical memory of the middle classes... As a class, American workers are... nurtured and sustained by a dialogue within popular music that enables them to remember the past and to imagine the future (1990:132).

A few ska/punk sub-scene members were also involved with Refuse and Resist, the national organization that headed protest demonstrations, petitions, and other actions against various causes such as "Free Mumia," police brutality, the war on Iraq, targeting of immigrants in Homeland Security, etc. One of these scene members, Evan, a core
scene member in the ska/punk sub-scene, also had his own political zine in which he discussed how the ska/punk sub-scene had become more involved in protests and demonstrations. He stated:

[T]here's been a lot more demonstrations here in Hawaii lately. A lot more bands are starting to take a more political tone to 'em... It's so militarized here, so I think some people are a little more aware about some of those [George Bush's policies and the war in Iraq] issues. I also think that events like this show [headlining a big mainland hardcore punk band in Honolulu] are gonna start to really pull people into more consciousness.

The ska/punk sub-scene and radical protest had an interesting synergy in progressive causes. Blue Punx as well as other punk bands played shows that involved Refuse and Resist protests and demonstrations such as the Martin Luther King Day parade in which Blue Punx played on a moving platform. As Evan described, the ska-punk sub-scene and Refuse and Resist had grown closer in recent years (1999 and later). As explained by Lipsitz (1990), rock and roll music, from which punk rock music was later born, has roots in working class culture and embodies in its sound, a protest to human oppression. He states:

The collective memory of the audience located these sounds in a context of powerful social associations with rebellion, emotion, and sensuality... For artists and audiences alike, the starting point of self-identity came from identification with the working-class cultures that created rock and roll (1990:127).

Of the three sub-scenes, the activities of the punk/ska sub-scene were the most visible to the general public. This sub-scene was also the sub-scene in which most new and young scene members first became familiar with the local punk scene because there were more young scene members like themselves in this sub-scene and because core scene members like Trent and Oren were more accessible than core scene members in
other sub-scenes. Those who stayed in the ska/punk sub-scene and became core scenestes were political; and tended to prefer music that was catchy, upbeat, and had a message.

Scene participants of this sub-scene often did not fit in with their school crowd, similar to scene participants of other sub-scenes in the local Hawai‘i punk scene. They became involved with the scene during those school years and realized that they had to take action to try and change the way society existed. They understood the connection between the injustices in larger society and their discontent with school stratification systems. These felt injustices were eventually understood as being rooted in the hegemonic power structure associated with the political economy of advanced capitalism.

Becoming actively involved in change gave ska/punk sub-scene members an alternative and positive identity to what they were used to in school. It also gave them "rad" subcultural capital in a sub-scene that could be characterized by DIY resistance. And because of their socially responsible attitude, they also felt a responsibility to the local community that housed their local scene as well as to the other scene members in the scene.

The ska/punk sub-scene continues to be a vibrant and vocal community within the Hawai‘i local punk scene. In addition to giving themselves a positive identity and also adding to their sense of accomplishment, the ska/punk sub-scene assured the rest of society that there were youths who were intelligent enough to look beyond the shallow stratification and value systems that were integral to their socialization in school. For those adults who took the time to understand the loud, aggressive style and sound of
ska/punk, these youths seemed to symbolize a promising future.
CHAPTER SIX: SEXUALLY SUBVERSIVE RESISTANCE: THE INDIE SUB-SCENE

The origins of sexually subversive resistance in the indie rock sub-scene can be found in DIY punk ideology, feminist movements, and gay rights movements. The name of the “indie rock” sub-scene comes from “independent” record labels, radio stations, and other institutions that are artist- and activist-owned and run. Although scene participants from the indie rock sub-scene also participated in demonstrations with the ska/punk sub-scene, this sub-scene placed stopping gender oppression and heteronormativity at the top of their list of causes.

Still a relatively new development in the local scene, the indie rock sub-scene resulted in two major changes in the scene: 1) an increase in women and queer scene participants and 2) softer, folkier, acoustic, as well as techno and rap sounds in the music in addition to the bands that played loud, raw, and/or discordant sounds of punk. When I played a techno-rap number from this sub-scene during the talk I gave in three classes, a student who preferred this music to the other two sub-scene genres said, “I like this one the best because I like the beats. It sounds like jungle beats. I like to go to raves and listen to trance and techno.” Others who liked this music said: “more Euro poppy and funny,” “most entertaining [of the three],” “spunky and hip,” and “novel.”

Changes in types of scene members and music were related in that both engendered subversion. Subversion involves overturning or at least substantially weakening an established system of norms. Punk is subversive in its opposition to capitalist enterprise and this was also where the idea of independent labels was born. The
indie sub-scene in the local Hawai‘i scene added a gendered and sexually subversive element to this opposition to established systems: in this case, resistance to male-dominated heteronormativity. This resistance was accomplished by the increased involvement of women and queer scene members and by the introduction of new sounds into the music of the sub-scene.

As described by Leblanc (1999), the punk subculture, while raising the banner to oppose all forms of discrimination, has failed to develop into a subculture where women could perform and otherwise be as artistically creative as men. In her study of punk girls, she discusses how the girls had to negotiate their gendered positions in the punk subculture because of the masculinist norms of the subculture. She says:

In “doing gender” in such a way that challenges the dominant cultural scripts of femininity, they create a position of what I call “trebled reflexivity”: they challenge the norms of the dominant culture, as well as the feminine norms of both culture and subculture (1999:160).

Even more to the point was the situation of non-straight scene participants in punk scenes. Queer or otherwise LGBT-identifying scene members did not have a voice in the creative process of the scene. The indie sub-scene in Hawai‘i changed this and provided a place for queer and LGBT-identifying scene members to “demand a hearing,” as Pua (a singer in several indie sub-scene bands) put it. The sub-scene subverted hitherto common sense understandings of masculinities and femininities in such a way that queer identity became a form of subcultural capital in the sub-scene; thus, being queer made one “rad” in the indie sub-scene.

In addition to protecting themselves from the potential for control of the creative process by outsiders (i.e., non-scene participants), the indie sub-scene also challenged the
masculinist and heteronormative local scene, developing, instead, a sub-scene that both looked and sounded new. In the indie rock sub-scene, sexually subversive resistance was achieved by deconstructing gender norms and also by challenging the heteronormativity in the sexual orientation of Hawai‘i scene participants.

**Representative Core Sub-scene Members**

The scene looked different when I came back to going to see band performances in August 1999. Stan and the other guitar player, Ray, left POW and the members of POW as well as Green M&Ms and Salvation got full-time jobs and/or started families and did not have as much time to be in bands. Some of them left Oahu. Going to shows again, I felt as if I stuck out like a sore thumb, just like I did when I first started going to shows back in 1999. I met Romy, my first new contact, at a show on the University of Hawai‘i Manoa campus. A few days later, Romy and her younger sister and fellow scene member, Pua, met me for an interview at the Burger King near the university.

At a later show, Pua introduced me to Nani, who, along with “Boom,” became my new key informants. Romy, Pua, Nani, and Boom were band mates in two all-women punk bands, which I will call Sistahs with Scars (“Sistahs” for short) and Julie’s Rooftop (“Julie’s” for short). Sistahs and Julie’s were both Riot Grrrl-indies style punk bands. Sistahs had a “pop” sound and Julie’s was reminiscent of the Olympia-Portland female indies band, Sleater-Kinney.

**Romy** was visibly different from any of the women at shows that I had met in the scene up until that time. She wore cat’s eye glasses and a style of dress that I could perhaps call *retro tomboy*. When I met her at the end of summer 1999, she was finishing
up classes at UH and excited about her new band (Sistahs with Scars) and her zine.

Romy had interned at Radio Free Hawaii before it was shut down, and learned a lot about DIY from Oren and others through the local scene. She was a drummer, and had been in a band with Oren before she became more interested in all-girl bands and activities.

Romy and her scene member sister Pua were haole and from the North Shore. They were knowledgeable about many prominent mainland indie scenes; especially, those that involved Riot Grrrl activities. Influenced by other indie scenes, Romy and Pua’s lives were very activist-oriented. During the time I was in the field, Romy was in three different bands: Sistah’s, Airhead, and Postmortem. In the last stages of my data collection, Romy became a Special Education teacher, while she continued to be active in the scene.

Nani, a petite 19-year-old in 2000 with medium-length black hair that she wore in a bob, described herself as “queerish Hawaiian-Chinese.” Nani was the singer for Sistahs and played guitar in Julies’s. She later went on to be in three more bands (Airhead, Gravyboat, and Postmortem)—all with Boom—after Sistahs and Julie’s broke up. She first started going to shows and became interested in bands in her early teens. The Bikini Kill (well-known Riot Grrrl band of the early 90s) show in Hawai‘i in 1994 was the real beginning for Nani: she bought her first guitar the next day. Like Romy, Nani was very stylish. T-shirts worn with skirts and jeans and retro-brand sneakers (e.g., Converse and Puma,) large-framed sunglasses, and brand-name bags were commonly part of her ensemble. Nani’s hair was often jet-black and sometimes highlighted, and always carefully styled even when she claimed to be “going for the unkempt look.” Nani
became a Sociology, Women’s Studies, and American Studies student and later started graduate school. In the scene, she was an *out* lesbian. She was an active online journal scene member as well as a zine writer. Nani continued to have a strong interest in the study of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

**Boom**, a singer and bass and keyboard player, identified as “middle-class Japanese American.” Boom was also a classically trained pianist and went to what some called the “punk high school.” The private high school gained the label in some circles, because so many of Boom’s cohort of scene participants had gone to this school. Romy and Pua were also graduates of this school. Boom was slightly shorter than medium height. She was 20 when I met her in 2000. Whereas Nani was more the outspoken front woman on stage, Boom was quieter and looked more serious when playing. The exception to this was Boom and Nani’s overtly sexual rap group act (Gravyboat) in which scene participants saw a different side of Boom. Boom was comparable to Nani in degree of stylishness. Her ensembles were so complete that they could be given names; for example, *school girl, glamour gore,* or *Sanrio cute.* Her hair was curly, short, and also jet black but not dyed. While taking art courses on the side, she also finished a BA in Zoology, and was hoping to get a job on Coconut Island, a natural laboratory for Marine Biology.

The last key informant I met in the indie sub-scene was **Kats**, a drummer from Okinawa, who was studying to get his BA in History. He had been in a band in Okinawa and had also been in a reggae band in Hawai‘i before participating in the local punk scene. Through hanging out with different musician crowds in Honolulu, Kats eventually
became involved in an emo band in the indie sub-scene. The band, headed by Keith, guitar players Mark and Nate, and bass player Wes, became “one of the best bands to come out of the Hawai‘i scene” (in Nani’s words) yet. Fans sometimes compared their sound to Fugazi, a pioneer in the genre of emo. Kats was also intensely fashion-conscious and had several flamboyant outfits that he sometimes wore for shows. Kats left Honolulu to return to Okinawa after graduation, and once again became active in a local scene back home.

**Undoing Gender Norms**

According to social constructivists, because gender is performed and always changing, alternative practices of gender can shift the dynamics of gender in a given social situation. As Schippers (2000) explains, gender and sexuality are analytically distinct but they influence each other as evidenced by how “queering sexuality” led to the subversion of hegemonic gender relations in her study. In the local Hawai‘i scene, the subversion of hegemonic gender relations consisted of alternative practices of gender and new masculinities as manifested in “indie boys.” The result of these processes was the development of the indie sub-scene in the Hawai‘i punk scene.

**Alternative Practices**

Different women in the scene viewed their marginality in the scene in different ways. Women’s perspectives on mosh pits were informative in this respect. While female scene members like Nellie and Taryn (both of the metal/hardcore sub-scene) jumped into the mosh pit and enjoyed the experience, others like Romy and her friends (of the indie rock sub-scene) felt that there was something fundamentally “not right”
about the whole phenomenon. To Nellie, having been a *mosher* was a badge of honor, and being active in the pit was a kind of rite of passage. To Romy, the mosh pit was just “disgusting male hormones” in which she refused to partake.

Alyssa, a ska/punk sub-scene participant who dabbled in the scene for a while because she was dating one of the “big fish” (i.e., Alyssa’s description of her boyfriend) in the scene, enjoyed moshing because it was “something to do for fun.” During an interview, she told me that her boyfriend did not like her going into the pit because he worried about her safety. However, this did not stop her. She said, “I felt that it was my prerogative and I didn’t want to miss out.” She showed up to our interview at a coffee shop wearing dark blue corduroy jeans that had been sewn up with white thread in various places by hand. When I asked her about the stitching on her pants, she described her experience in the mosh pit at a Rage Against the Machine show in 1999 as follows:

It was pretty psycho. If you’re a girl you know there’s gonna be a certain amount of groping and stuff. Yeah, these pants were torn during the show and I sewed up the tears. But you really get into the moshing and aren’t really thinking and suddenly it was like, “Woops, there goes my shirt, woops, there goes my bra.”

Nellie and Romy would have reacted differently although they would both have been angry about the incident. As a big show showcasing a major band, there were many moshers that were not part of the local punk scene and who, therefore, did not abide by the rules that local scene members maintained. In Nellie’s experience, if someone were hurt, others around him/her in the pit would come over to help. If a male mosh inadverently got tangled in a part of a female mosh’s outfit, he would apologize and make sure that she was okay. As Nellie would say, “They’re always looking out for you.
Someone will always pick you up if you fall.” Alyssa’s experience would have been unacceptable to Nellie because what happened to her was against the rules of the pit; not to mention, possibly criminal. The aggressors were “assholes” who did not belong in the pit. But Nellie would have spouted out a string of swear words and obscenities at the aggressor and perhaps thrown a punch or two in his direction, and that would have been the extent of her response.

On the contrary, Romy was against the whole concept of mosh pits because in her opinion, the pit symbolized hegemonic masculinity: a showplace for macho male tendencies. To her, joining the mosh pit would mean complicity in support of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987). Instead, Romy would have headed the creation of an alternative forum for dancing. And this she proceeded to do because she loved to dance but did not want to mosh. She wanted to dance the way she wanted to, without having to fear for her and her friends’ physical well being or be “grossed out” by what she or her friends had to experience.

Actions like starting an alternative forum for dancing meant thinking outside of the box. While both Nellie and Romy were feminists, they were different kinds of feminists. Starr (1999) describes the brand of feminism ascribed to by Romy as radical rather than liberal. She states, “...speaking about ‘transforming the whole structure’...is articulating a radical feminist ideology, rather than a liberal feminist ideology. Changing the system rather than living within it is a radical feminist concern (1999:184)”

The result of Romy’s kind of thinking was the birth of new norms guiding dancing and how an individual should conduct himself or herself at band performances in
general. Romy, Nani, Boom, Pua, and their friends started all-woman bands, put out their own zines, and put on their own shows. Alternative performances of gender resulted in re-written scripts of gender performance and what was acceptable behavior of men towards women, etc. Therefore, not only women but men in the indie sub-scene also actively involved themselves in establishing alternative practices as the new norms.

By normalizing practices that were uncommon to the ska/punk or metal/hardcore sub-scene, alternative practices became the newly established norms of the indie sub-scene. For example, Oren (a ska/punk sub-scene member but a supporter of all 3 sub-scenes) told me that he tried to support all-women bands just as he supported all-men bands. He also had rules for all-men bands so women would not be intimidated. He said:

I've been trying to push the girl bands and support them. And I won't put bands on the bill at my shows if they say or do rude things to women. Like [a hardcore band in the scene]—I don’t let them play at my shows because they say degrading things about women in their songs.

Public recognition of support for alternative practices also helped to legitimize them. Bands like Sistahs often acknowledged Oren’s and others’ support publicly at shows by thanking him before playing a song in his honor during their set (for example, “This one is for Oren. Oren, we love you!”). Such acknowledgement of core scene members’ support gave the alternative practices legitimacy, because core scene members like Oren were highly respected in the local scene.

Thus, marginality as a part of being a woman in the scene was dealt with in different ways. Being a dabbler was one way—one’s identity did not depend on one’s status in the scene as just an “on-and-off” scene participant (or partial culture participant—Gans 1974). Alyssa was involved in competitive horseback riding and was
on her way to a top-notch university on the mainland, where she would study to become a veterinarian. It did not matter to her that she was marginal to the scene. Another way of dealing with marginality was to become one of the boys as in the case of Nellie. Nellie represented the tough metal chick and considered herself as an equal to male scene participants. A third option involved creating a new sub-scene, which meant developing new practices within the scene that gave scene participants an alternative system in which to partake. This was the arena of Romy and her friends.

The development of the indie rock movement on the mainland provided music and other art forms, styles, and ideology that gave marginalized scene members a starting point for scene-building. As explained by Starr (1999):

In the early 1990s, punk girls who had a feminist consciousness, either as a result of being exposed to feminism in popular media, in women’s studies classes, or through local feminist groups, created what has been labeled the Riot Grrrl movement. The Riot Grrrl music genre is clearly political, emphasizing boundary-crossing between performer and audience, grassroots feminist activism, and social change. In contrast to largely masculinist and homophobic hardcore-era punk culture, Riot Grrrl joined the boys’ Homocore (later “Queercore”) as a self-proclaimed “queer positive” genre within punk rock (1999:99).

Through modeling (i.e., building on and learning from other earlier scenes) indie scenes where women had become an integral part of the creative process, marginalized scene members learned how to negotiate spaces and norms to secure a sub-scene of their own.

**Indie Boys**

Emo, short for emotional or *emocore* music, originally drew from the discordant and new sounds of Washington, DC and Olympia/Seattle alternative and indie scenes that fostered DIY and Riot Grrrl. Bands that are considered representative of this genre of
punk are Fugazi, Rites of Spring, and At the Drive Inn. Sometimes, Weezer is included. While the sound was often hardcore, because the genre gave all-men bands license to show their emotional side (often in a self-consuming manner), the visual performance of the music and the style of vocals differed from the dominant masculinity demonstrated by earlier hardcore bands. The style of dance changed from moshing to less confrontational, individualized styles. Many emo bands also included female band members like the Pixies, who are also representative of this genre. Because of the content of the lyrics and style of the vocals, Kanoa called emo “whiny music.”

Emo in the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene was as much about style as it was about the music. This was the sub-scene where geeky retro fashion of the 1950s and 60s was rad. While it is important to know that emo style did not start out this way on the mainland, it became a standard look in the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene, as in some other indie scenes. As Kanoa explained, “It’s so about the fashion with the messed up hair and the dressing up.” Turtlenecks, collared shirts, sweaters, corduroy pants, retro Converse and Puma sneakers, nice leather shoes, ties, black-rimmed Buddy Holly glasses, messenger bags (shoulder bags) worn diagonally across the chest, and the mussed-up-looking shaggy hair cuts (reminiscent of the Osmonds or the Monkees), were all parts of emo fashion. Emo boys in the indie sub-scene did not look like bad boys like their ska/punk and metal/hardcore sub-scene counterparts. “Cute” was a compliment and not a masculinist put-down.

In fact, because the look was so different from the scene participants of the ska/punk or metal/hardcore sub-scenes, it stood out to the extent that a local mainstream newspaper raved about it in their “Living Section.” According to the article entitled
“Geek chic,” this was a clean-cut look: “Emo is a look a mother could love. Wholesome, clean-cut and, well, almost nerdy. These folks shop at The Gap, Diesel and second-hand or thrift shops.” It goes without saying that the indie sub-scene members were not happy that a mainstream newspaper took the better part of a page with this article complete with a male model who, according to the paper, was supposed to represent their scene and style.

As for dancing styles, there was no mosh pit that formed for emo bands in the scene, although this did not keep the audience from going up front to support their friends. What this meant was that women were in front of the band dancing together with men. Dancing was more individualized and fairly stationary, in swaying, bouncing or twisting motions. I have sometimes seen scene members fall to the floor in a writhing motion, continuing to dance as if having a seizure to the beat of the music. It was rare to see scene participants running into one another or being confrontational.

Through their music and style, emo challenged hegemonic masculinity. As explained by Connell:

Hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to women and to subordinated masculinities. These other masculinities need not be as clearly defined—indeed, achieving hegemony may consist precisely in preventing alternatives gaining cultural definition and recognition as alternatives, confining them to ghettos, to privacy, to unconsciousness (1987:186).

Music of the indie sub-scene sometimes did not sound like it was part of a punk scene. One “band” consisted of a singer and her keyboard. Another band consisted of one male vocalist and his acoustic guitar. The set-up of these bands was modeled after similar acts in the Olympia, WA scene and other well-known indie music scenes. As
described in a local zine, the singer/guitar player with the acoustic guitar (Mark, also a
guitar player for Kats and Keith’s emo band) sang about lots of things but found it more
challenging to play alone than in his multi-member bands:

Song subjects have included friends, yearning, crushes, missing, wanting,
regret, lust, substances, fear of being an “adult,” wanting what you can’t
have. I guess they’re your basic rock n roll subjects... I’ve been playing
drums in a rock band with my friends for years. It’s easier to hide behind
a drum set. But, yeah, playing by myself is nerve-racking sometimes. It’s
a thrill even if there are only three people paying attention, which is
usually the case.

Challenges to hegemonic masculinity were considered rad in this sub-scene. In
line with this idea, male scene participants in this sub-scene often voiced their support for
women and gay scene participants openly. For example, Kats regularly expressed his
respect and adoration of the radness of all-women bands. On one occasion, he could
hardly contain his excitement as he told me that Bunny (the Sistahs guitar player) had
mentioned having him fill in for Romy who had broken her arm in a bicycle accident. He
told me the following:

Romy’s arm is in a sling and Bunny just said to me that maybe they could
have me fill in on drums. I’m so excited! Playing with Sistahs is like a
dream for me because I think they’re so rad. In fact, I’ve already played
to their songs [i.e., practicing to the Sistahs song recordings] so I can jump
in at anytime. I hope they really ask me. Now I’m wondering whether
they were messing with me. I hope not ‘cos I’m ready to go.

Some male Hawai‘i indie sub-scene members were also vocal about their love of
mainland all-women bands. One such scene member who often made me espresso drinks
at a coffee shop I frequented occasionally talked with me about the talent of all-women
bands at the coffee counter. Once, when I wore a Bratmobile (early all-women Riot Grrrl
band that also played a show in Honolulu) T-shirt to the shop, he said, “Oh, did you go to
that show? They are so rad. I love them.” On another occasion, when I wore a Sleater-Kinney (all-women indie band from the Pacific Northwest) T-shirt to the shop, he said, “I have the other shirt, not the one with the cat [mine had a cat on it]. Aren’t they great? I wish they would come here to play. I would die if they came here!”

Challenging gender norms was not achieved solely by feminist-minded women in the scene, but also by men who embodied, displayed, and verbalized alternatives to hegemonic masculinity. Resistance in the indie sub-scene was at least partly attributable to the involvement of men who questioned dominant forms of masculinity along with the second-class status of women on all levels. Emo boys and other indie boys challenged the legitimacy of hegemony in the scene by articulating their alternative form of masculinity through music and style.

**Challenging Heteronormativity**

Even in a local scene that prided itself on being radical and progressive, compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity were not completely discouraged through informal social control. Therefore, the indie sub-scene carried the burden of reinscribing both the hegemonic order of sexualities as well as gender in their segment of the scene if they wanted change. It was still difficult to carve out a sub-scene in which being queer or being gay was “rad.” In Schippers’ (2000, 2002) alternative hard rock scene, compulsory heterosexuality was controlled socially. Schippers gives several examples of such informal social control in face-to-face interaction in which men who acted like they were “checking out” or “picking up” women were ridiculed. In contrast, sexualized discourse and gesturing between women were seen as “cool.”
As a result, while Schippers (2000, 2002) notes that most of the scene members identified as heterosexual, the scene atmosphere maintained a counter-hegemonic air of gender through “queering sexuality.” I found that Hawai‘i local scene participants modeled other local indie scenes and networked with the supportive local community outside of the local punk scene to create a women and gay-friendly indie rock sub-scene.

**Modeling**

The undoing of gender norms challenged the normativity of gender as the scene had known it until then. Yet, there was still a whole category of scene participants who felt that they had no voice. Non-straight scene members, similar to female scene members of just a few years earlier, felt that it was time that they were noticed along with heterosexual women, who had now found their voice for their creative contributions to the scene in the indie sub-scene.

In the Hawai‘i scene, female band members were especially instrumental in challenging the heteronormativity of the scene. Once Sistahs with Scars and Julie’s Rooftop became staples of the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene, band members gained enough subcultural capital to experiment with other projects. They earned the respect and they now had a kind of carte blanche to experiment without being ridiculed or harassed. Whatever they did was “rad,” in the eyes of some younger scene participants. This development was significant because many women in Sistahs and Julie’s and their core supporters were queer as well as female. Thus, core scene members as well as newer scene members, took an especially keen interest in creating queer-friendly spaces in the scene.
These same women musicians were also the most networked with mainland scenes and scene members. Similar to how the Riot Grrrl movement expanded through the medium of zines and Internet chat communities (Starr 1999), the queer movement within punk also expanded through similar mediums. Core scene participants in the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene hooked into the mainland queercore community in this way. By the time that scene participants of the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene became involved with the queercore movement, zines had gone online and were much easier to access than the original hardcopy zines. Hawai‘i scene members learned about queercore through queercore zines like “Chainsaw.”

Again adopting from other local indie scenes, the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene started to incorporate alternative forms of expression into performances at shows. Such acts included: spoken word; multi-media performances like rapping to a drum machine while a monitor played a video and dancers replaced back vocalists (Airhead); and a queer rap group singing and dancing “in-your-face” sexual songs (Gravyboat). Like the bands consisting of a singer and her keyboard or an acoustic guitar/singer, these alternative forms of expression broke both punk performance stereotypes and gendered and sexual expectations that were a part of these stereotypes.

Similar to the incorporation of style pieces used in earlier punk scenes by the ska/punk sub-scene, the indie sub-scene also engaged in their share of adopting indie rock symbolisms. Emo style, described earlier, is one example of such an ensemble. Another case in point was when I saw gender bending combined with queering sexuality. At a show, Pua was wearing pants and a shirt with a tape-on mustache and “Do it with girls”
in large writing on one arm in black marker. This image was interesting in the context of the indie sub-scene in its early developmental stages, as such gender-bending images were still rare. When I asked her about the writing, Pua said she saw Tracy and the Plastics—a one-woman-multi-media musical performance from another local scene—have it written on her arm and wrote it on herself because it "seemed fun."

Cross-dressing was another parallel I found between the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene and other local indie scenes. While in Olympia, WA one summer for the indie rock festival, Yoyo-a-gogo, I noticed several scene members dressed in androgynous styles, but one tall man with a shadow of facial hair and with a fairly large build stood out because he wore his hair in pig tails and wore a knee-length skirt. He also had his own color-printed cartoon zine. Although I found this individual’s existence to be unique at the time, back in Hawai‘i, I realized that the Hawai‘i indie sub-scene also had just such an individual. His name was Paul although he also went by “Priscilla” (both pseudonyms). Nani affectionately called him “the scene fag.”

When Priscilla was Paul, one couldn’t tell that he often dressed in drag at night. He wore baggy jeans, a T-shirt, and a baseball cap with sneakers and a backpack, like other indie and skater kids. I was used to Paul’s look during the day, so when one night at a band performance, Priscilla showed up, I thought she looked extremely familiar but couldn’t place the face until the end of the show. The following describes Priscilla that night:

Priscilla had on a nice, collared, pale green, long-sleeved shirt with a dark-colored conservative-looking skirt that went below the knees. She had put something in her shirt because she appeared to have big boobs. Her dark brown shoulder-length hair with bangs (a wig) was tied in two pigtails. Her lips were accentuated with bright red lipstick and she wore eye...
makeup.

Modeling also occurred locally, as younger scene participants picked up sounds, styles, and ideologies from older scene participants. Older bands were tickled when they realized that younger scene participants looked up to them and respected them for standing up and doing something about the marginalization they experienced in their own scene. Nani spoke to me excitedly about a new band that she was telling everyone about:

They’re sooo hot, its insane! They’re all like 16, I’m sure. They're so cute, they tell us we’re their heroes! One time I was talking to them and they were inquiring about what music I like and whatever, and the lead singer started taking notes. It was incredibly cute.

Community Support

Compared to most scene members of the other sub-scenes, the indie sub-scene members networked more readily and easily with people in the community outside of the local scene. As a result, the indie sub-scene received more support from the community than the other sub-scenes. Indie sub-scene members were, on average, about five to ten years older than other scene members and looked “safer” dressing in indie styles (e.g., emo boys) that looked less threatening to adults. They also had more spending power, tending to be from more middle-class families. Therefore, the adult community probably viewed them as less likely to throw chairs across the room, expose their private parts, or strew Mexican food across the floor as part of a punk act (all incidents I have seen at least once at punk shows over the years). The indie sub-scene also tended to play less loud and confrontational music. In fact, indie sub-scene participants were not known for their destructive behavior and bands were usually welcomed back to venues where they had played before.
Oren’s standing as a responsible adult helped the indie sub-scene gain entrée into adult-owned spaces. The local community respected him because he was a responsible member of the business community. Oren’s baked goods earned him a write-up, complete with a full-page photograph of him in a premier upscale magazine of the Honolulu business and social community. He also had a reputation for being polite and nice. When I once asked him how he managed to secure venues for shows when so many club owners, etc. disliked punks, he said, “Well, I don’t see it as being that hard. I just try to be nice and people reciprocate when you’re polite to them.”

Oren had never made it publicly clear that he was sympathetic to the queer cause. So a watershed event occurred when Oren took it upon himself to play “Hedwig” in the local presentation of the movie/musical, “Hedwig and the Angry Inch,” the story of Hedwig, a male-to-female transsexual singer. The local punk scene-based production was performed for a night in arguably the most popular gay hangout in Waikiki as well as in other local hangouts. Around the time that Oren was performing Hedwig with other scene members who had acting and stage skills, indie sub-scene networks with the local gay community became more visible.

Sometimes support occurred by coincidence, as in the availability of a bar as a show venue because the bar belonged to the mother of a scene member. One popular bar downtown near Chinatown (“Club Alakea”) was run by Elisa’s (a guitar player in a band) mother. At this venue, a set-up in which indie bands played a show once a month was established to showcase what was new in the indie sub-scene. Over time, the bar increased the number of indie sub-scene nights a month. Club Alakea was already a
hangout for some in the queer community, and had some LGBT regulars, as well as wait staff, so this was a space that was already queer-friendly. I have also heard it referred to as a “transvestite bar.”

The sub-scene expanded both demographically and spatially as members of the local queer community embraced indie sub-scene participants. Scene members established their own “night” at another popular gay bar (“Synchrony”) in Waikiki. The indie sub-scene received support in many different forms on a more personal level. Nani described the response of one of Synchrony’s club’s patrons to her queer, two-woman (Nani and Boom), one-man (Zeke) rap group (Gravyboat) performance in her online journal:

Last night Gravyboat brought the muthafuckin house down. I was slipped a wallet-sized picture of peaches just before we went on, and I think it had much to do with my hotttness [sic]. The kids loved it. I even got my ass slapped, which I interpreted as a good thing. I’m so ready to go continental and we’re so taking over this town.

Furthermore, poetry readings where Priscilla gave performances once a month at a coffee shop also became popular joint indie sub-scene/queer community events. In these ways, the indie sub-scene increased their fan base to include some members of the local queer community.

Also noteworthy was the racial breakdown of the indie sub-scene population. Perhaps because of the rapping and DJ acts that became a part of the indie sub-scene performance styles, there were now usually a few Black scene participants mixed in with the predominantly Japanese-haole demographics of this sub-scene. The DJs were not really a part of the local punk scene, but as the indie sub-scene incorporated techno and
rap into their musical genres, DJs from the local hip hop scene and sometimes a scene participant like Romy stepped in to spin some records while bands were setting equipment up for their sets.

Indie, by definition, is a DIY ideology. However, in the indie sub-scene of the Hawai‘i local punk scene, the DIY ethos took on resistance that was atypical of the rest of the punk scene. The goal of indie resistance was to bring power and voice to women and gay scene participants. This end product was not an easy goal to obtain, due to decades-long traditions of masculinist punk scenes. Thus, core scene members embraced a sexually subversive attitude, creating a sub-scene where being masculinist and buying into hegemonic masculinity was “uncool.” The more sexually subversive, the more rad.

Refusing to work inside the box was not an easy endeavor, however. While “girl only spaces” (Kearney 1998) were one way by which mainland Riot Grrrl movements functioned, the indie sub-scene in the Hawai‘i local punk scene managed to call on sympathetic boys in the scene (who were also well-informed of Riot Grrrl and indie) for assistance. Some may also argue that the Hawai‘i scene indie sub-scene was much too small to keep the boys out. Thus, the indie sub-scene became a girl-driven but also boy-supported sub-scene.

Modeling successful scenes and bands and networking with the queer and LGBT community were a significant part of the processes for developing an indie sub-scene where scene members could collectively resist heteronormativity. Incorporating the DIY ethos into creative activities such as music and zines, the indie sub-scene experimented with and embraced alternative expressions and practices as part of the creative process.
In so doing, they also endeared themselves to the larger adult and queer communities in Hawai‘i. By modeling and networking outside of the local scene, indie sub-scene members legitimized their presentation of deconstructed gender and sexual orientation within the scene. These were the strategies through which sexually subversive resistance was achieved in the indie sub-scene.
CHAPTER SEVEN: POSITIVE OVERLAP AND INTERSECTING OPPRESSIONS

The diversity of Hawai‘i as a location for the scene resulted in multiple resistances according to how race, class, gender, and sexual orientation intersected for the individual scene member. Becoming and being a scene member in a sub-scene was a socialization process in which scene participants became more or less prominent and productive members of the local scene. Similar to Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of *habitus*, one’s social location shaped not only which cultural objects were chosen, but also the processes by which one came to value them. Scene participants in the different sub-scenes also got along well in the Hawai‘i scene, and overlap between sub-scenes emerged as a positive force in maintaining a unique local punk scene in Hawai‘i. This was a significant aspect of the Hawai‘i scene because the scene was small, and could fall apart if sub-scenes could not work together.

Celebration of the multiple resistances of the Hawai‘i local punk scene, however, tended to gloss over the more troubling aspects of what intersections between the sub-scenes presented. Because each individual scene participant was complex, coming from her unique social location, the progressive possibilities for resistance in the scene could overlook the oppressions that accompanied distinction. Therefore, we also see a phenomenon in which a scene member participates in a sub-scene because of her social location and experiences, but realizes that she can’t be a first class sub-scene member specifically because of the characteristics that make her unique (i.e., female, gay, Hawaiian, working class, etc.). This chapter examines this tension between intersections
and distinctions in more depth.

**Positive Overlap**

Scene members were conscious of sub-scenes and the overlapping nature of sub-scenes. Ryan, a drummer and scene member of the ska/punk sub-scene described this relationship of sub-scenes and the local scene at a show one night when he was struck by the diversifying scene. Ryan showed up at an indie show because his ride home (the lead guitar player of his ska/punk band) was bringing an amplifier to lend one of the bands playing in the indie show that night. He said, "Emo is becoming popular in this scene now. We're all a part of the punk scene, but there's definitely an indie scene within it."

There was clearly overlap between the three sub-scenes—a kind of blending of sub-scenes on the fringes of each. For example, because the indie sub-scene was the sub-scene that was most welcoming to women, bands like Sistahs and Julie's were part of the indie sub-scene, but band members were friends with ska/punk sub-scene members and the bands often played shows that were organized by the ska/punk sub-scene. In fact, because core scene participants like Romy gravitated from the ska/punk to the indie sub-scene, the indie sub-scene can even be seen as a branching out from the ska/punk sub-scene as a later development. Thus, sub-scenes must also be seen as processes working in the context of Hawai'i and the local scene.

Prominent core scene participants who seemingly straddled different sub-scenes also kept the sub-scenes in good relations with each other. For example, while Jay's band and style placed him in metal/hardcore, many of his close friends were in the ska/punk sub-scene. The two sub-scene bands regularly played the same shows, but
musicians of the different sub-scenes also hung out together. This is rather inconceivable in some other scenes on the mainland. Gaines (1991) explains that in local scenes, the politics between metalheads and punks ("hardcore kids" according to Gaines but ska/punk sub-scene members here) were usually very different and because of this, the two groups often did not get along with each other. She notes:

The classical heavy-metal legacy of spandex and dick-oriented lyrics remained associated with corporate rock in sexist, capitalist America. Left-leaning hardcore kids hate metalheads for their bad politics... Beyond contempt for some of the values the metal kids’ scene was founded upon, the hardcore kids had another reason for resenting them: the marketplace compliance of suburban metalheads pissed them off (1991:201).

We can see Romy and Jay as core scene participants who created something of a buffer zone between sub-scenes. Oren’s participation in the indie sub-scene also helped to create overlap in the ska/punk and indie sub-scenes. Even though the two sub-scenes did not see eye to eye on issues of sexual orientation and politics, conflicts between the two groups did not end up in flare-ups in the Hawai‘i scene due to the ambiguous space of sub-scene overlap created by such core scene participants. Venues like Club Alakea and many other venues before and after it were also physical buffer zones where different sub-scene bands played and helped each other set up and break down their equipment together. Fans and supporters also inter-mingled at these sites.

Another way in which sub-scenes kept good relations with each other was through their mutual respect. For example, core scene members of the different sub-scenes were respectful of each other’s work even though their music might not particularly be their cup of tea. For example, while Stan didn’t really care for their musical style, he nonetheless praised Green M&Ms because they were good. He was especially taken by
Richie’s singing. He said, “Man, he’s got such a voice, you know. That guy can sing anything.” Chris of POW also spoke similarly highly of another ska/punk band. At a show he said to me, “Fumi, have you heard these guys before? They sound so ‘different.’ If you watch them, you can see that they’re doing really interesting things with their sound... so experimental.” Noteworthy also is that both Stan and Chris spoke of these musicians’ virtuosity, in typical, metal/hardcore fashion, even though they were referring to punk/ska bands.

An interesting result of the tolerance of the two sub-scenes for each other was that some contingents of the metal/hardcore sub-scene became more socially conscious, decided to go back to school, or got training for careers that would make them more upwardly mobile, as many ska/punk sub-scene members did. While there were individual differences in motivation and family support, etc., scene members like Don and Ray of POW, Darien of Green M&Ms, and Joe of Salvation went back to school. Don eventually became a nurse and Darien and Ray went on to get Bachelors degrees. Joe became a schoolteacher. This trend could be seen as a result of sub-scenes influencing each other.

The hardcore element of the metal/hardcore sub-scene also had a few relatively politically radical scene members who hung out with the ska/punk sub-scene crowd, so there were exceptions to how inactive the metal/hardcore sub-scene was concerning social issues. In fact, I was surprised to find that there had been a number of metal shows held to raise money for Prevent Child Abuse Hawaii, even though these shows were only held once a year. Smaller, isolated efforts by metal/hardcore sub-scene members to raise
funds for local causes did occur. One show promoter (Nalu)—a former punk scene member of the Olympia, WA indie-punk scene—organized shows at one particular club in Waikiki to raise money to buy school supplies for a Hawaiian immersion school. Nalu had many metal/hardcore bands on his bills, partly because he liked metal and hardcore himself and played in his own metal/hardcore band, but also because the club was not all ages and one had to be 21 or older to get in. Metal bands tended to be older in age, and could play in 21-and-over clubs while punk/ska bands often couldn’t.

Reflecting back on the earlier mention of “sub-cults” by Gaines (1991), especially in the Hawai‘i local punk scene, because inter-sub-scene relations were good, to outsiders or newcomers, sub-scenes didn’t seem to exist. Differences were not clear, unless one knew what kinds of distinguishing characteristics to look for. But once individual scene members started to talk about their likes and dislikes in music, style, and politics, the presence of sub-scenes became very clear. Also noteworthy is that unlike ska/punk and metal/hardcore or ska/punk and indie sub-scenes, metal/hardcore and indie sub-scenes had much less in common with each other. Music, style, and politics were all quite different in these two sub-scenes.

The amount of overlap between different sub-scenes can be seen in the following Figure 2. Following Figure 2, a sociogram in Figure 3 also illustrates the core scene participants mentioned in this study and the bands that they were associated with.
1 > 3 and 2 > 3

where

1 = overlap between metal/hardcore and ska/punk
2 = overlap between ska/punk and indie
3 = overlap between indie and metal/hardcore

Figure 2 Overlap of music, styles, and number of scenesters in the three sub-scenes
Later band activity involving Zeke and some members of Sistahs with Scars and Julie's Rooftop can be found in Figure 4.

- Small circles, triangles and squares designate individual scenesters:
  - •  
  - ○ = Key informants
  - △ = interviewed, observed, and/or read (in the case of journal writers) core scenesters
  - □ = Other band members

- Solid lines designate bands. Musicians frequently started new bands with other scene members during or after their original bands were active. I have illustrated the bands that were active during the time I was in the scene.

- Time periods are divided in this way because of the 1995-1997 and 1999-2003 periods when I was an active show goer and because there is continuity between the periods.

- All of the individuals in the sociogram knew each other at least in the two time periods studied. Due to the fact that all were acquainted with each other, I have consciously left out lines connecting core scenesters to each other to reduce the congestion in the diagram.
Intersecting Oppressions

Oppressions in the Hawai‘i local scene emerged when the distinctions that were an integral part of rad resistance of sub-scenes became obstacles to some scene participants. These obstacles kept some scene participants from becoming fully respected core scene members in their sub-scenes or made them feel inadequate because of their unique backgrounds and experiences. Such oppressions—as the other side of the double-edged sword—appeared in all three sub-scenes, although in different forms. The following examines these oppressions in each sub-scene in detail.

The Gendered Nature of Virtuosity: Distinction in the Metal/Hardcore Sub-scene

Gender mattered in the metal/hardcore sub-scene. The virtuoso was a male figure. Being a woman systematically excluded one from being considered for virtuoso status. Not only were there very few women (I met one drummer, one guitar player, and saw two vocalists at shows) in bands, but only those who tended to have masculine attitudes and mannerisms were taken seriously as scene participants. As Stan and his friends often said, “Girls don’t have enough strength to play good metal.”

In contrast, a social constructionist explanation would start from the assumption that there are no physical or biological reasons why women should not be virtuosos. As Mavis Bayton (1997) writes:

I start from the supposition that there are no physical reasons for the lack of female guitarists. Women are just as musical as men, and at any age they can acquire the strength and skills required to play any instrument in any style of popular music. Women are just as capable of becoming rock musicians as men are. Lead guitarists are made, not born. The reasons for women’s absence are entirely social (1997:39).

Male musicians did agree, however, that women could be one of the guys. Those
who demonstrated musical skills as well as knowledge of music and musicians were
“cool.” Nellie explained the respect that Sara—a drummer in a metal/hardcore band—
got from musicians in the following:

Don thinks that she’s good. People think that because she’s a girl and
because she’s so skinny, that she can’t handle drums. But then, she blows
them away. And it’s cool because she’s not treated like a girl but like one
of the guys. And she knows how to hang with the musician guys too.

Praising them for their masculinity was one thing, but whether or not established
all-men bands would consider adding girls as members of their own bands was a different
matter altogether. Carly, also considered a very good guitar player, was well respected
by male musicians in the scene. Male musicians’ comments about her were indicative of
the masculine character of the scene. As Stan put it, “She’s good. She plays [guitar] like
a guy and acts like one. She even farts like one!” But when Ray asked Stan if he would
consider Carly as his (Ray’s) replacement if he were to quit, Stan replied that she could
“come down and check it [POW] out” but that they could probably do just as well
without her. In fact, they didn’t recruit her when Ray actually did leave, even at the cost
of Stan and Don having to take on the parts that Ray had been playing.

Similarly, of the female scene participants that were metal and hardcore
enthusiasts, few of them tried to get involved with making and playing music themselves.
For example, Taryn, who was highly regarded by male as well as female scene
participants in the sub-scene as being knowledgeable about metal/hardcore music and a
supporter of the scene, told me that she once used to think about it, but never actually
tried being in a band. She did pretend, though. Taryn said:

In high school I felt like I wanted to be in a band myself and sometimes
we [she and her friend Nellie] told people we were. But we didn’t need to
be in a band. We fit in anyway. We just liked hanging out and knowing people.

The systematic exclusion that kept women out of bands and out of virtuoso status directly corresponded with the need for male musicians to enhance their masculinity through gaining virtuoso status in the sub-scene. As Bayton (1997) states:

To have, say, a girl on lead guitar would undermine rock’s latent function of conferring ‘masculine’ identity on its male participants. Its ‘masculinity’ is only preserved by the exclusion of girls. I think that if it were traditional for girls to play electric guitar, then boys would avoid it just as much as they currently avoid embroidery. Girls fulfil the role of ‘outsiders’/‘negative reference group’/‘the Other’. So, from the boys’ point of view, girls must be kept out of rock bands just as they are kept out of cricket and football (1997:41).

As a consequence of such masculinist concerns, in the metal/hardcore sub-scene, the competition and discipline for virtuosity played out on male-dominated terrain. This was similar to the tendencies of the metal and hardcore genres at large in which there were good female musicians, but they were known less for their riffs and more for their presentation that involved their attractiveness to men. As Gaines (1991) and Weinstein (2000) state, heavy metal is not known for its feminists. Hardcore is also similar in its stance of upholding gender and sexual inequality.

These anti-feminist tendencies are similar to Thornton’s (1996) club cultures, in which femme was considered inferior to more masculine styles and music. In addition to other apolitical and apathetic tendencies, equality of genders and sexes are not high on metal scene members’ ideological agendas. Commonalities also exist with Tricia Rose’s (1994) hip hop culture, in which race is of foremost concern to those involved while gender and sex take a backseat. Collins (2000) also explains that the outright
misogynistic behaviors and attitudes of some rappers create extremely difficult and
dangerous situations for Black women to maneuver.

Some women, just like some men, gravitated to the metal/hardcore sub-scene
because they liked the music, felt that they fit in, and felt safe there. However, their sex
restricted their entry into being considered as core scene members on equal par with their
male sub-scene colleagues. And most problematically, the metal/hardcore sub-scene also
denied talented women the possibility of developing positive identities for themselves by
becoming virtuoso musicians in the sub-scene.

**The Subtleties(?) of Racism: Distinction in the Ska/Punk Sub-scene**

As with the nature of society in Hawai'i generally, there was much less overt
racism in the local scene than in local scenes in other locations. The metal/hardcore sub-
scene that was so welcoming to minority youths who happened to like metal and hardcore
music seemed especially promising. Especially encouraging was the fact that many of
these minority youths also became band members and core scene members whose
presence and creativity defined the sub-scene.

Over time in the field, especially in studying the ska/punk and indie sub-scenes in
addition to the metal/hardcore sub-scene, I started noticing that the different sub-scenes
looked different racially. Around the same time, I also began to gain more trust from my
key informants in the ska/punk and indie sub-scenes, and heard from more than a couple
of them what sounded like racial oppression; namely, in the ska/punk sub-scene. Nani,
who often gave me her observations of the ska/punk sub-scene told me straight out:
“There’s definitely racism in the scene [referring namely to the ska/punk sub-scene]. But
it’s mostly so subtle that people don’t notice it. It’s hard to point out an instance of racism.”

Whether or not the racism was subtle or not was questionable, however. Most obvious and troublesome was what Kanoa told me. Because his closest friends who introduced him to the scene were all in the ska/punk sub-scene and he later started bands with some of those friends, I considered Kanoa a solid core scene participant in the ska/punk sub-scene. He was one of the very few Hawaiians in this sub-scene, and his close friends (Trent, Nate, and Joe) were all haole. Kanoa told me of things his friends sometimes said about him, with reference to Kanoa’s racial/ethnic background. He said, “I’m not happy about it, but that’s just the way they are.” The following is what Kanoa told me during an interview:

Kanoa: Like we’ll often be in a car and I’d be sitting in the back [partly because Kanoa’s car was “broken” and he didn’t have the funds to fix it]. And Trent and Nate and them, they’d be like, “Kanoa sits in the back ‘cos he’s dark,” and stuff like that.

Fumi: Geez, that’s horrible! What do you do when they say that to you?
Kanoa: Well, nothing really—they’re my friends. What can I do?
Fumi: Even if they’re just joking, they should take your feelings into consideration. Do they apologize?
Kanoa: No.
Fumi: That’s just racist.
Kanoa: Yeah, I know that they’re full on into the white supremacy thing.

Especially troublesome was how white scene participants felt that they were somehow closer to the real thing (i.e., the punk ethos) because the punk subculture in the West was started by white youths. In reality, the music of the subculture was rooted in the cultures of African and Caribbean continents, Black America, and other non-white and non-Western sounds and traditions. Punk was derived from these traditions, while
also rooted in the working-class realities of American life.

Nani also told me how she did not appreciate when haole scene members played on the subcultural capital of being white (again, embracing the mistaken understanding of the roots of punk), while also assuming they understood the oppression of people of color. She said, “You know, like when Trent acts like he’s ‘down’ with Filipinos ‘cos his girlfriend is Filipina or Keith’s attitude ‘cos his girlfriend was Black.” This also harks back to the reasoning of Jen, the drummer from Julie’s who, even upon coming back to Hawai’i from Portland, realized that although it was much less overt, there was clearly racism in the Hawai’i scene, and she no longer wanted any part of such a scene.

In the last months of my time in the field, I began to notice that scene members of color strategized to offset racism in the scene. Scene participants like Kanoa and Nani re-owned the terms that others used to set people of color apart (e.g., “brown people”). Scene participants of color used these terms playfully while mocking the ignorance of haole scene participants or what they stood for. For example, a few months after Kanoa told me about the comments in the car, the following incident occurred at a show:

I walked in the door of the coffee shop/show venue, paid my $5 to get in to the haole guy sitting inside the door and got my hand stamped (to show you had paid) by the haole girl sitting next to him. The guy asked me whose band I was there to see and I said it was Kanoa’s. He smiled and said, “Fine choice.” Then, he said something to Kanoa, who was right behind me. They were obviously acquaintances (or friends) but Kanoa jokingly went into a martial arts stance with legs spread, one in front of the other with weight mostly on the back leg and arms up in front of him like he was ready to fight the haole guy. Kanoa then said, “Hey, haole boy, you scared of brown people or what, eh?” The haole guy looked stunned for a split second but then he smiled and the two playfully sparred with each other.

Ironically, these strategies to resist racism started to look a lot like how punk
scene participants had to struggle to find positive reinforcement in a community that was alternative to school and other environments, where they felt unwelcome. The irony was that within the local punk scene also, scene members had to use strategies to re-own what others used against them to oppress them. It was problematic for a progressive ska/punk sub-scene if being white gave a scene member subcultural capital, but that seems to be exactly what was occurring.

The Difference Money Makes: Distinction in the Indie Sub-scene

One of my first impressions of an indie show could be described as “glamorous.” The glamorous ensembles of drag queens, complete with hair, makeup, and perfume, was representative of the sub-scene; but another image was the ensemble of Diesel and other expensive brand name clothing and accessories donned by indie sub-scene youths. While these images clearly aligned women and queer scene members with the larger queer community outside of the scene, they also made me wonder whether some potential scene participants were systematically excluded from the sub-scene because of their financial means—after all, people did have to look “good” to go to shows, especially an indie show. In other words, were only queer and women scene participants with money (to buy clothes fitting for a “rad” scene member) welcomed?

Core scene members in the indie sub-scene were very stylish in that they not only knew how to put different style pieces together, but were also able to acquire brand name pieces to complete their ensembles. I never saw a core scene participant wear the same outfit out to a show twice, except for one particular scene participant whose brown suede jacket was his signature fashion piece. “Radness” was often discussed in terms of
appearance in this sub-scene. An example of this was Boom’s description of Mariah, a
core scene member of the indie sub-scene. Mariah had her own folky pop band and even
organized indie shows, but much of Boom’s description of Mariah had to do with her
appearance:

Everybody loves her. She is sweet and all but I wonder sometimes how
much of why people like her is because of the fact that she can afford
things. She can buy expensive clothes and always looks good because of
that. And of course, she’s beautiful. She even has a beautiful voice.

The issue of social class, which created distinctions within the indie sub-scene,
was reminiscent of the criticisms of the Riot Grrrl movement by Third Wave feminists
that the movement helped only some women (i.e., white and middle class). While
discussing sub-scenes in 2003, Nani told me that she felt there was a sizeable portion of
the scene for whom money was an important part of their status. In describing these
scenes, she said, “There’s a group of over 21, close to, say, 25-year-olds. The trendy
haole and Japanese scene members that are at, like, Club Alakea. And I mean, the stylish

At the time of this writing, the local Japanese population in Honolulu was at least
four generations old and was represented in a large span of occupations and social class
backgrounds (working class, middle class, upper middle class) (Okamura 1994).
Reflecting this reality, there were many local Japanese scene members in both the
metal/hardcore and indie sub-scenes. Thus, the distinction made by Nani here was clear.
She was referring to the indie sub-scene members, distinguishable from the
metal/hardcore sub-scene ones.

Some core scene members felt that they shouldn’t don too much indie fashion,
because beyond its sexually subversive character, indie style also signified financial wealth. Nani mentioned in her online journal, for example, that she didn’t want to be showcasing indie fashion too much, wearing accessories associated with punk so as not to look too indie. This thinking was somewhat similar to how some indie sub-scene members reconciled the personal conflict that they experienced in wanting designer clothes by stealing them. In either case, the scene participants wouldn’t have to shoulder the guilt of adding to the coffers of the fashion industry.

While I never once heard of any grievances concerning marginalization voiced by financially less stable scene participants in the indie sub-scene, core indie sub-scene members clearly came from higher social class backgrounds than scene members of the other sub-scenes. For example, a majority of the scene members I met in the indie sub-scene went to private high schools that are much more expensive than public schools in Hawai‘i. Many either lived alone or with their parents in areas considered nice, upper middle class neighborhoods like Hawaii Kai.

The difference that money made for the indie sub-scene was perhaps more hidden than the oppressions in the other sub-scenes because less financially able scene participants probably did not even consider being a part of the sub-scene. Hence, their conflict was less visible than some of the other conflicts involving gender or race. The situation appears similar to what Addison and Comstock (1998) describe in their les-bi-gay youth cyberculture study. They explain:

None of the sites, however, seems willing to address the race and class inequities inherent in both the cyberculture and in the culture at large—exclusionary forces that determine not only who participates or who is represented in the cyberculture, but also who gets access to the technology and information necessary for participation (1998:376).
Unfortunately, social class background made a difference in the “radness” of a core scene participant in the indie sub-scene; thus, many were systematically excluded from gaining status in the sub-scene. And while some established core scene participants in the sub-scene were conscious of the problem, no one had a good solution for it. To others who were oblivious to the problem, the possibility that many potential scene members were too intimidated to come near the sub-scene was of little importance to them.

The Double-Edged Sword

As demonstrated in the first part of this study, individual scene members had different reasons why they were attracted to this youth subculture. Punk scenes are a global phenomenon and the Hawai‘i scene was just one of many local scenes all over the world. But as with any other local scene, each sub-scene and each scene participant had their own story to tell. While punk is fundamentally a youth phenomenon, all youths do not experience a unilateral passage into adulthood—not even the youths that converge on a punk scene. While Cohen (1999) claims that the youth question became lost in the popularity of post-structuralist understandings of identity that tended towards feminist and Black cultural studies, neither social class, gender, nor racial resistance constitutes the unequivocal reality of all youths. For example, some youths identify more with older individuals of the same race, gender, or class, than with other youths of the same age but who are of a different race, gender, or class.

Resistance was a part of distinction and distinction, a part of resistance. By definition, punk scenes were manifestations of youth subcultures that resisted dominant
structures in society. Distinguishing themselves from the rest of society was a part of what punks did to define their resistance. In a scene that was wary of outsiders for good reasons, it took a while for a newcomer to be accepted by scene participants. Because punk, like other youth subcultures are in constant danger of being appropriated by mainstream society, core scene members are in no hurry to explain symbols and meanings associated with the scene to outsiders.

Preferences for particular genres of music as well as similarities in the backgrounds of scene members in the various sub-scenes also suggests that "rad" resistance based on distinction can be seen as moral evaluations framed in terms of aesthetics. Accumulating subcultural capital based on "rad" resistance had a lot to do with being accepted and maintaining one's status in a sub-scene within the Hawai'i local punk scene. Subcultural capital gave a scene participant a positive identity for himself in the scene; something that was perhaps unattainable in society outside of the local scene.

Distinction only became a problem if the scene participant was a total culture participant (Gans 1974), or, in other words, if the scene consumed a large portion of the individual's life or identity. Nonetheless, the problem was real. Youths are often attracted to the scene because they feel they don't fit in elsewhere. They are eager to embrace the ideology and activity of the punk scene: to "make the scene" (Irwin 1977:27). Thus, if they are treated as second-class citizens in the scene, the implications for the potential core scene participant and the scene as a whole were serious. While the existing different sub-scenes within the local punk scene accommodated scene members with different ideas and backgrounds, a real problem emerged when a scene member was
made to feel second rate or somehow less authentic of a punk scene member because of her background or the way she looked.

While this survey of sub-scenes suggests a local punk scene whose sub-scene parts hang together, underlying conflicts did exist. The metal/hardcore sub-scene, while meeting the needs of scene participants marginalized from dominant society in terms of race and class, in turn, was threatening and exclusionary to women and queer scene participants. The ska/punk sub-scene, while providing for scene members who didn’t fit in at school or mainstream society due to their unorthodox ideas and lifestyle and outspoken nature “subtly” marginalized scene members of color. Finally, the indie sub-scene, which welcomed women and queer scene participants, had an unspoken requirement of social class built into its core scene membership. Perhaps participants of the scene have found ways to exist together amidst differences, but the findings also suggest that conflict is much more complex, subtle, or hidden.

What emerged in this study in the tension between resistance and distinction was how race, class, gender, and sexual orientation intersected in ways that not only became the basis of sub-scenes, but also inadvertently articulated who could and couldn’t be first-class core scene members within those sub-scenes. According to the findings, a poor woman (or gay man) who was of a minority race might not fare very well in the local Hawai‘i scene. This thought is deplorable, given that the significance of a local punk scene is that individuals who feel they don’t fit in with their fellow students at school or elsewhere have an alternative punk community where they can go. The existence of any kind of oppression in a community that claims to be alternative to mainstream society,
precisely because it is not as oppressive, is clearly problematic. Was this supposedly an alternative scene actually quite similar to what it was supposed to be alternative to?

Part Two of this study offers further analyses of the local Hawai‘i punk scene. The following chapters are about social processes in the scene; namely, closer examinations into the social nature of musicianship and core scene membership in the scene. The chapters examine resistance/oppression in action, especially in reference to becoming core scene members and also with regards to gender and sexual orientation. Core scene members in the metal/hardcore sub-scene worked hard to distinguish themselves as participants of romantic resistance. In turn, some of the women and queer scene participants in the punk scene, feeling marginalized, became involved in distinguishing themselves as a different sub-scene, achieving sexually subversive resistance as a result. Thus, the intersecting nature of resistances and oppressions in distinction came into play in these readings of change in the local Hawai‘i punk scene.
PART II

"RAD" RESISTANCE IN PRACTICE

Part Two of this study is an examination into the processes of how scene participants achieved "rad" resistance. First, in Chapter 8, I look at how becoming a "successful" local musician was accomplished through a process starting with developing a liking for hard rock music with an emphasis on metal/hardcore, ska/punk, or both. Then, the scene member became a band musician, learning to play an instrument and playing shows. Finally, the band recorded a CD. Then, in Chapter 9, I look at how women and queer scene members became core members of the band scene through performance of sexuality in action and discourse. Sexual resistance was necessary for these scene participants to become band musicians and core scene participants.
CHAPTER EIGHT: DEVELOPING CORE SCENE PARTICIPATION:

BECOMING A BAND MUSICIAN

For a scene member, to become a band musician meant he was also becoming a core scene member. This developmental process of musicianship or core scene participation was critical in understanding resistance in the Hawai‘i local punk scene. The metal/hardcore and ska/punk sub-scenes that are examined here can also be seen as the backdrop for the birth of the indie sub-scene within the Hawai‘i local scene. The emphasis of this chapter is on the connections that formed both among core scene members within the scene, and between these scene members and outsiders to the scene. The formation of and change in these connections illustrate a social process of core scene participation or band musicianship.

Connections and Stages

The process of core scene participant as band musician development is one of social as well as subcultural capital acquisition and accumulation; and thus, one of distinction (Bourdieu 1984; Thornton 1996). Over time, scene participants became connected with other prominent scene participants and even icons of their musical genre. Their bands gained followings and became well known in the local scene. Meanwhile, they also became better musicians, figuring out tricks and techniques of “the masters,” and gained even more knowledge about the music and the subcultures that centered on music.

Another way of looking at such connections is to view them as elements of an underground social movement; underground because these scene participants and their
bands were inaccessible to people who were not hooked into the scene. Joseph Gusfield (1994:64-66) argues that even though a movement may not necessarily be geared towards changing the institutionalized rules and procedures of an organization, social movement action can be going on at a more micro, less public level of everyday interaction. A movement can be oriented toward establishing alternative lifestyles or norms rather than engaging in direct conflict with established institutions. Gusfield notes that each member of such a movement feels that he is not an isolated individual, but that the ideas behind the movement are socially shared.

Besides interaction within the local scene, bands also had ties to bands on the mainland. CDs and tapes, radio, music magazines, fanzines, MTV, and the Internet were sources of information about what musicians in other local scenes were playing and listening to. Inexpensive recordings of bands' music circulated via grassroots means were another channel of communication and information. Whether or not bands knew each other, there was a sense among them that others similar to them were tuning into and being inspired by similar music. As stated by Gusfield (1994:69), "Even where no association exists, as in the 'hippie' movement, the recognition that a similarity of actions is occurring creates the movement." Furthermore, as stated by Alberto Melucci (1995) with regards to his concept of collective identity:

The notion of "movement" itself, which originally stood for an entity acting against the political and governmental system, is now inadequate to describe the reality of reticular and diffuse collective phenomena. Contemporary "movements" take the form of solidarity networks with potent cultural meanings, and it is precisely these that distinguish them so sharply from political actors and formal organizations (1995:52-53).

While the aspiring musician was a member of the local scene, he also aspired to
be a part of the larger scene of internationally successful popular musicians. In the metal/hardcore sub-scene, “success” meant something quite different from the definition given by Oren and others in the ska/punk sub-scene. In this chapter I analyze how social interaction within the local scene helped define the band musician’s identity. I also look at how the ties that band musicians cultivated and maintained with each other changed in quality and quantity over time. These two aspects together provide a picture of the process of band musicianship.

Many band members started playing in bands while they were still very young and in the process of becoming full-blown musicians. By identifying and tracking the connections of the members of bands in the local scene, I illustrate how the resulting networks served to sculpt and reinforce the identity of the band and band members within the scene. I also examine how less personal ties between band members and others became more personal and close through this process of band musicianship.

Although the focus of this chapter is on band musicians, both musicians and audience were integral parts of the local scene, and this study looks at both. Gans’ (1974) analysis of total and partial culture participants also sheds light on the musician and audience (or follower) distinction. A band member in the Hawai‘i local scene was more likely to be a total culture participant than a non-musician. Gans’ analysis is useful in understanding variation in the degree of involvement in the scene and thus, the degree to which the scene is a part of one’s own identity. Irwin (1977:54) also speaks of lifestyle scenes in which members can be “full-time participants”:

In many activity systems, which were first referred to as scenes—such as the “jazz scene” and the “drug scene”—more and more people who joined stayed on as full-time participants... The late 1950s saw more and more
people—disaffiliated from other social organizations, such as work and school, and from traditional institutions—beginning to group around the full-time scene performers. Eventually, the activity systems grew into full-time lifestyles for more people than just the scenes’ central characters.

In other words, such lifestyle scenes give a member the frame of a worldview, values, identity, and guidance.

In his study of male jazz musicians whom he refers to as “dance musicians” in Chicago in the 1940s, Howard Becker (1963) notes that there is always a tension between a musician and his audience. The musician wants the freedom to be creative and experimental, but he needs the audience so he can make a living from his work. As the ones paying for the music, the audience wants a certain thing while the musician wants freedom of creativity. Many times the two do not agree. In the local Hawai‘i scene, this tension was not a problem because musicians had a relationship with the audience that differed from that of Becker’s musicians and audience. The musicians in the Hawai‘i scene were not dependent on their audience to make a living.

Largely due to the virtuoso nature of metal musicians, one of the images of metal bands is that there is a large gap between the musicians and the audience. Will Straw (1990:102) describes the characteristics of metal culture in the following:

Heavy metal culture may be characterized in part by the absence of a strong middle stratum between the listener and the fully professional group. Only in rare cases in the early 1970s could there be found an echelon of local heavy metal bands performing their own material in local venues.

This gap was not seen in the local Hawai‘i scene. In fact, Hawai‘i local bands can be seen as the “strong middle stratum” that was missing in the heavy metal culture that Straw (1990) writes about.
Moreover, a ska/punk band like Blue Punx was even closer to the audience, as virtuosity was not as valued in the ska/punk sub-scene. It was not uncommon to see band members learning how to play chords while performing. This was similar to the now legendary Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols who, it is said, learned how to play bass at band performances. At one show, I saw Oren asking Trent where his fingers should go on the fret to get the right chord. I heard a scene member in the audience with me say, “Right on. That’s real punk for you.” More than virtuosity, the ska/punk sub-scene stressed the importance of getting the “anyone can do this” message across to the audience.

The close relationship between the musician and the audience occurred, in large part, because a good portion of the audience was also composed of musicians. To support the local scene, musicians went to each other’s performances and got actively involved in the performance of the music, including jumping on stage to sing or take over playing an instrument. And even if they weren’t musicians themselves, many audience members were friends of band members who frequented shows and considered the show a party. The show was a place to hang out with friends. As Richie of Green M&Ms said to me at a particularly “happening” show, “This is the coolest party of the year!”

A scene such as this local Hawai’i scene is articulated and defined through both the production and consumption of music, style, and ideology (DeNora 1995). Thus, in this sense, audience is also a creator of the music, style, ideology, and scene. DeNora states that in addition to textual analyses of music (i.e., relying on the musicologist’s interpretation of the music): “We need to focus as well on the practice of approaching music for social activity (consumption) and the practice of appropriating the non-musical

Furthermore, local band musicians had more control over the creative process than more “successful” musicians, because they were at an early stage in the process of becoming “real musicians.” They were still defining their music as well as their identities as musicians. They were also not making a living from playing their music, so they did not need to rely on the monetary contributions of an audience. In contrast, followers were often close friends of the band; thus, followers were more likely to be supportive of the band’s music regardless of how good or bad the band was at any given time. In turn, band musicians knew that their friends would be there to support them no matter what.

In sum, followers tended to support bands’ artistic processes rather than try to sway the creative process in their favor by pushing what they wanted to hear and see on the band. Perhaps most significantly, the musicians and followers were in the same sub-scene and thus, had similar tastes in music to begin with. They also together developed and shaped the sub-scene and its music. This most likely decreased the amount of potential conflict between musicians and followers regarding the music. Such tight relationships between band members and audience members was seen in all sub-scenes of the Hawai‘i local scene, and was central to the creation of community in the scene and at shows.

As stated earlier, women were underrepresented in the metal/hardcore sub-scene, with at least twice as many men as women. The gender composition of this sub-scene added credence to the analyses of Frith and McRobbie (1990[1978]), who found in their
research during the late 1970s that men made up the bulk of the audience at concerts, listened to the radio, read popular music magazines, and ultimately became musicians, technicians, and other music-related businesspeople. According to Frith and McRobbie (1990[1978]:376), “It is boys who experience rock as a collective culture, a shared male world of fellow fans and fellow musicians.” This was the case in the ska/punk sub-scene as well.

The pool of interested aspiring female musicians from which to create a band was small compared to the pool of aspiring male musicians. In her article published more than ten years after Frith and McRobbie’s (1990[1978]) research in the late 1970s, Mavis Bayton (1990) explained that since women are not as motivated to seek out rock musicians as role models, they are not as likely as men to see or dream of themselves as rock musicians someday. Similar to the manner in which boys are socialized to consider organized sports as an important part of their development from boys into men (Messner 1990), rock musicians were still a male image in the minds of most people. Girls who were interested in considering musicianship as an option for themselves were not a part of this culture that bought into an essentialist idea of male musicianship.

Moreover, the metal/hardcore sub-scene was characterized as notoriously macho. This gender dynamic of the metal/hardcore sub-scene also corresponded with Gaines’ (1991:118) study of metalheads in which male metalheads felt that the girls were “stupid about music.” While it tended to be more politically correct, the ska/punk sub-scene did not fare much better in terms of female representation among band musicians.

As in Gaines’ (1991) study of metalheads in Bergenfield, NJ, however, there were
a few female core scene members in the metal/hardcore scene who were well respected in this sub-scene like Carly, Nellie, Taryn, and Sara. Carly and Sara earned their respect because of their guitar and drum skills. Nellie and Taryn had subcultural capital: they knew the music and they were well connected in the sub-scene. They also dated guys in the bands. As Gaines (1991:118) states:

On the streets, there are some girls who are “macho.” In addition to having severe crushes and boyfriends they also hang out in the boys’ “sphere” of music, bands, and action... Such girls dream of being their rock heroes, not marrying them. They identify with the bands, and are encouraged by no-nonsense guitarists like Joan Jett, Lita Ford, and Chrissie Hynde.

When I asked Taryn (who told me that she did once want to be in her own band) if she had female musicians she admired, she named Lita Ford and Doro Pesch, both established lead guitarists in metal bands. When I asked Oren the same question, he said he respected Stevie Nicks, the singer of Fleetwood Mac. Oren said about Nicks, “I think she did a lot for women in music.” Oren was a feminist, but his choice of admirable women musicians was a singer, falling into one of the stereotypical roles of women in music: the attractive singer diva. In contrast, Taryn’s choice went against the grain, as she chose musicians who occupied the stereotypically masculinist position of lead guitarist.

The singing diva was not an atypical existence for women in the ska/punk sub-scene while women who played instruments were. Apart from girlfriend scene members like Alyssa, a few women scene members became band members in the ska/punk sub-scene. Jasmine was a singer in a ska/punk band. She was thin and attractive and wore tight-fitting clothes, makeup, and heels for band performances. She had a strong voice
but her presentation was also sexy and she played the diva. Jasmine was one of two
women in this band. Trish was the drummer in the band and had a very different
presence from Jasmine. Trish was mostly hidden behind the drum set, unlike Jasmine
who was at the forefront of the band performance. Trish was also heavier and less
conventionally attractive. Furthermore, she was an "out" bi-sexual. I have heard male
scene members in the ska/punk sub-scene talk about Trish as "the butch one," or that "her
arms are bigger than mine." While Jasmine was a typically attractive front woman, male
scene participants spoke of Trish as if she was outside of the realm of female band
musicians as she was less "attractive," gay, and a drummer.

H. Stith Bennett (1980) observes that being in a band is everything for the local
rock musician. States Bennett (1980:3), "...the career of becoming a rock musician is
simply being in a local rock group." Thus, the position of the local band musician in the
local scene or sub-scene is central. To understand the development of the career of a
band musician in a local band, a whole array of relationships with others both within and
outside of the local scene must be considered. Furthermore, the identity development of
the band musician can only be studied by tracing the different stages of the career. Here,
I will first examine the beginnings of the aspiring musician’s development, and will then
use a more formal scheme to show how connections both inside the local scene and
beyond it change as the musician’s career develops.

To examine these relationships systematically, I identify five types of connections
between musicians and others. These types were based on the developments of four main
bands in the metal/hardcore and ska/punk sub-scenes: POW, Green M&Ms, Salvation,
and Blue Punx. The five types are: 1) local musician and local musician; 2) local musician and follower, 3) local musician and music businessperson or local musician and community member; 4) local musician and musician in another scene; and 5) local musician and the "successful" musician.

For each type of connection, I classify the strength and nature of the relationship. These range from strong, personal ties such as those among the members of a well-functioning band to weak, indirect ties such as those that the aspiring local musician felt connected him to his idol when he copied the commercially successful musician's technique, sound, and style. My use of weak, indirect ties is unorthodox. It is unlike the use of the concept by Mark Granovetter (1973), who coined the term, "weak ties." Rather than discuss the strength of formal ties as opposed to ties based on close friendships, the use of weak ties (or connections) here refers to a felt tie between a budding musician and a commercially successful one. However, studying this kind of felt connection between the musician and commercially successful musician is useful here because by comparing this with other kinds of connections, the changes in the nature of connections and patterns of the aspiring musician's career development begins to emerge.

When the tie is weak and indirect, the relationship is not mutual. For example, the young local musician is virtually unknown to the commercially successful musician. Whether or not such a "connection" exists is based solely on the aspiring musician's subjective view. For the commercially successful musician, an aspiring musician is just one in a sea of consumers of his music. However, consumers of his music are important
collectively to his survival as a successful musician because he depends on them to listen to and buy his music.

If the local musician continues to develop his career and gradually does become commercially successful, he may become known to the other musician in a direct and more personal way; thus, changing the nature of the tie from a felt one to a real one. One may argue that “tie” or “connection” is an inaccurate way to describe these subjective perceptions of musicians. However, I use these concepts because they are useful in illustrating the social processes involved in band and musician development. Although it has a slightly different character from the other kinds of ties, this type of weak and indirect tie is essential to tracking the development of the aspiring musician. Changes in such ties are manifestations of the changing networks of one who is moving towards becoming a “successful,” full-fledged musician.

Three key stages of the local band musician’s development mark his progress toward success: 1) getting started as a musician; 2) playing as a musician in a local band; and 3) producing and promoting a CD or demo tape. The three stages are also based on the progress of four of my main bands of study, and from reading and hearing about and seeing the development of other local bands. There may be higher levels of “success” that the bands never achieve, but the three key stages represent stages that define a musician’s success in a band in the local scene and beyond.

Becoming a core scene participant in the Hawai‘i local scene or a sub-scene also meant distinguishing oneself from other scene members/show-goers. As demonstrated in Part I, distinction was achieved by the accumulation of subcultural capital; a process that
while resisting aspects of the dominant society, simultaneously resulted in the oppression of other scene members in their own local scene. In this chapter, I will also show how the process of musician development brought to light the contradictions between resistance and oppression through the interactive process of accomplishing and maintaining core scene participation as band musicians.

This schema of musician development represents the way the average band member’s connections develop over time. It may not apply to every individual band member in the scene, but it does reflect the general pattern of changes in networks and points of reference of band members as their careers progress and their identities change. In the following, I examine each stage of the process of band musician development in more detail: beginnings, band membership (pre-CD), and band membership during recording and promotion.

**Beginnings**

The beginnings of a band and band musician were not the same unidirectional process for all. There were, however, a number of commonalities for most; for example, some kind of musical influence and appreciation of metal/hardcore and/or ska/punk music, acquisition of and learning to play instruments, and connecting with others that were equally interested. Being in a band and consciously being a musician progressed at different speeds because learning to be “good” took time and standards were higher in metal/hardcore than in ska/punk. The following section discusses the “beginnings” of the development of the band musician process; namely, their influences and how band musicians got started insofar as acquiring basic necessities (i.e., instruments and how to use them).
In the beginning there were influences...

Pre-band membership was a time when musicians were either not yet conscious of a scene or were just show-goers and friends of musicians. Those who were not yet conscious of a scene tended to be young kids in junior high or high school. In the case of those who were already scene members, beginnings of band membership occurred when an opportunity to form a band with other scene members presented itself. For example, Oren went to shows for years before he joined the band. In another case, Kanoa was already a bass player for an award-winning reggae band in high school, but started going to shows when he befriended Nate in school. Kanoa later joined Nate’s band, Hero.

Kanoa told me the following regarding his beginnings in the scene:

Fumi: How did you become aware of the scene?
Kanoa: Well, you know Nate, right?
Fumi: The kinda fashionable skinny white dude, right?
Kanoa: Yup. Nate was this guy in high school that was considered weird. I mean, he had spiked and dyed hair and he painted his nails black, you know? So people just left him alone. But I thought he was okay, so I started talking to him and we became friends. And one day, he asked me if I wanted to go to a [punk] show with him. That was my first show.

For those who did not know about the scene yet, there was no distinction between musicians and followers. The guy behind the counter in Larry’s Music Store [a local music store where band musicians often went to buy guitar and bass strings as well as other equipment] was just that: a salesperson. All of these categories of people who were involved in music were seen as one big entity. The distinction made at this stage was between influences close by and idols (the commercially successful musicians). The individual did not yet see himself as a musician. As Jay of Green M&Ms said in the first
few months of my data collection: “I wouldn’t say we’re musicians. Green M&Ms is just some young kids still. We play like girlie love songs and stuff. Really!”

Interest in playing and creating music stemmed from a variety of influences. Early influences seemed to come from listening to music, watching MTV, checking out music on the Internet, and from watching older friends or family members who were knowledgeable about music. As Stan says: “In the beginning, I just played to impress my older brother who was, to me, a really good guitar player.” Later, individuals like Stan met people with similar interests at school, music lessons, and music stores. Stan met his friend Blaine at guitar lessons and once they were both able to play some chords, began practicing together.

Joe, the guitar player for Salvation, spoke to me about how he got interested in creating music. He spoke of influences both near and far:

As a kid, I always liked listening to music. My mother would always have music playing while she cleaned the house and stuff. But in the sixth grade, I listened to AC/DC for the first time and became taken by the music. Then I started listening to all the metal bands: Black Sabbath, Ozzy, etc., and went on into Slayer and Metallica. It got heavier and heavier. And I started to think, “I would just love to be in this myself.” So I worked and saved, worked and saved, and got myself a guitar, a pedal, and an amp, and took lessons for a month.

These types of felt connections (i.e., Ozzy, Slayer, and Metallica for Joe) were on the level of aspiration and idolizing. However, as Joe explained, even aspiring and idolizing was enough to get someone so interested in the music that he would want to be a part of creating it.

Band musicians started committing time and energy to learning how to play their instruments well from early on. Stan once said that he became disinterested in going to
school and began to feel that he did not need to. He felt that whether or not he went to school was not important because he was going to be a musician. He eventually stopped attending high school. He explained, “It’s [Music] the only thing I really have a passion for. If I quit, everything I’ve ever sacrificed would go to waste... Yeah, I did sacrifice a lot, especially early on.” Keoni, the drummer for POW, also said that the interest in music for many scene members started when very young. He remembered that most of the guys in bands were “... interested in the music when we were kids and just got into it a little too much.”

Bennett (1980:4) explains the beginnings as follows:

At first a pool of potential rock musicians is intermingled with a great many non-musicians...there are single musicians, musicians with non-musician friends, non-musician “managers” with and without musicians to manage, musicians in twos and threes, some the remnants of previously unsuccessful group formation attempts, most from the immediate region but also some who have moved from other parts of the country. The thread which holds together the interaction of this seemingly disintegrated, usually disenfranchised, and inexperienced pool of musicians is the exchange of ideas about listening to and playing music.

These musicians slowly got tied into the scene, as this was where band members ultimately found each other. Usually, a few aspiring band members decided to start a band and looked to the people they knew to find a drummer or singer to complete the group. These could be friends at school, cousins, or someone they met through taking guitar lessons. It seemed that this was how musicians first began to form their ideas of what the scene was, although perhaps not yet consciously. The people whom they found themselves associated with through the music they liked was, to them, a scene. Kanoa wasn’t a part of the punk scene until he was introduced. His experience in playing reggae
music helped when he met Trent, whom he also met early on when he started going to shows with Nate. Kanoa told me, “Trent and I really hit it off because we were both into reggae. He also taught me a lot about the scene as well as about making coffee.”

Finding out exactly how bands were started turned out to be quite a struggle when I asked about the origins of bands that had been around for longer than five years. By the time I met POW in 1995, band members were in their mid- to late-20s and the band was considered one of the “dinosaurs” of the scene. Stan told me that POW was formed in 1985. According to Jay: “The first members of POW were 14-year-olds. Their parents were picking them up and dropping them and their equipment off. Wild!” None of the members of POW could tell me clearly how the band got started, but all accounts told of a band that had been around for a long time and that had been through many member changes. Chris and Ray said they met in high school connections. Don and Keoni were also friends from high school.

Especially in the case of respected bands that had been around for a decade or more, tales of origins started to sound almost mythical. Other newer bands or band members were able to give more clarity to the historical details of band beginnings. Stan, the newest addition to the band, only joined in 1993 when POW’s previous (second) bass player left to go to the mainland. Stan was recruited while he was in another band. Stan and Don were already friends when Don asked him if would be interested in replacing the previous bass player.

Salvation was a church-based band. Joe says he hooked up with the drummer, who was a minister at their church, and the bass player, who was also a member of the
congregation. In the beginning, Joe used to sing, but one day at a show they got a follower to come up on stage to sing. He was a big fan and knew all their songs. Joe added, “And he had a great voice!” Salvation recruited Sean on the spot. Joe added that Sean’s father was also a minister at the same church and was someone he could always talk to. Joe said, “He was a really good friend of mine who helped me out a lot.”

Among my main bands, only Jay and Richie, the guitar player and vocalist of Green M&Ms, were related. They were cousins. Green M&Ms started out with Eric, the drummer and some other people. Jay and Eric went to school together and then later, Jay joined Eric at the automotive service station where he worked. At first, Jay hung out with Eric’s band and one day grabbed a guitar and started jamming with them. He joined the band thereafter.

Women tended to get involved with scenes not so much because they wanted to make the music themselves, but because they liked the music and wanted to be around it. Their afterschool hangouts were music stores like Tower, Hungry Ear, and Jelly’s. For example, when Sara worked at Hungry Ear, the girls, still in high school at the time, were in the store for a good portion of their time after school and on weekends. They also became friends with band musicians or other scene members by being at the store and talking about bands and music. They tried to go to shows too, but were too young to get in (metal/hardcore shows tended to be for the over 21 crowd). Added to the restrictions were the tendency for parents to be more protective of girls than boys. According to Taryn:

Taryn: We were in those stores (Tower, Hungry Ear, Jelly’s) all the time. That was soon after I became friends with Nellie ‘cos we both went to the same high school and were in the band (the school
band) together. Stan was already in a band by then too, and he was my next-door-neighbor so we talked about bands a lot.

Fumi: How about shows?
Taryn: We were too young to get in so we just started talking to the bouncers and hung out outside. The nice ones sometimes let us in.
Fumi: Were your parents okay with your going out to shows late at night?
Taryn: Mine weren’t too strict but Nellie wasn’t allowed to go out on school nights and neither of us could stay out too late.

That there were few female role models as stated by Bayton (1990) was, however, certainly a reason why there were fewer women in bands. However, the women core scene members I met or knew of did become models for younger women scene members.

As Taryn told me during an interview in 1998:

There’s this tiny girl who comes to Sara’s band’s shows sometimes. And she always has drumsticks. I’ve noticed her following Sara around sometimes and when Sara’s playing she’s drumming the beat on whatever she has close by: a book, a tin can, a railing, etc. It was pretty awesome.

**Acquiring the basics**

Unlike other more traditional forms of Western music, rock music does not have a tradition of institutionalized teaching or acquisition of skills through rigidly structured discipline (Bennett 1980; Frith 1981). The traditional notation system of five lines on a sheet of paper is not the main method of training. Bayton (1990) observes that many classically trained musicians who later turn to rock music end up throwing away all of their previous training to start all over again. Improvisation and playing very simple parts are some aspects of rock music that classically trained musicians must get used to in making the transition to rock. Those who have never had classical music training often cannot read music, but for the aspiring rock musician, the ability to read music on paper is unnecessary.
As a case in point, in 1999, I once learned to play the guitar chords to a song by Sistahs with Scars for fun. I had no guitar training although I had played piano and violin when I was younger. Of course, there was no sheet music to help me with the chords on guitar. All I had was the song I had heard many times and also replayed many more times in my head. Kats, the drummer in an emo band who already played guitar, showed me where my fingers needed to be to get the chords. When I got lost, I either asked somebody to show me where on which strings to press down on and/or listened to the Sistahs song again.

Learning to play one song on the guitar was a particularly significant experience for me in understanding the process of learning to play an instrument. During the process, I realized I was trying to play the guitar from the song playing in my head and the image of Boom or Bunny (the Sistahs guitar player) playing bass or guitar. As noted by Frith (1981), even those who listen to rock and roll music experience it in a different way compared to other genres of music. According to Frith (1981:15): “The response to the music is, to a large degree, physical. Interestingly, one of the effects of the music is the vicarious experience of producing it, as listeners mime the movements of the guitarist, the drummer, or the singer.”

My experience of learning to play a song on guitar was also significant for reasons concerning gender construction. Nobody had even suggested that I try to learn a few chords on guitar in the metal/hardcore scene. To metal/hardcore sub-scene members, I was just a woman and a researcher, and it wasn’t my business to learn how to play. They would let me in on “little known secrets of the trade” such as tuning the drum set
(Keoni) or focus my attention to certain characteristics of the music because they knew I was studying band musicians and their music (Stan), but teaching me how to play was altogether different. Ska/punk and indie sub-scene members were more encouraging, letting me touch their instruments for other reasons than to carry them to or from shows.

Bennett (1980:19) explains that the first step of a career in rock begins with obtaining an instrument:

Very early in his or her career an aspiring rock star is faced with the task of coming into possession of a rock instrument, and in the situation of being young and hence more or less disenfranchised, the alternatives are to “beg, borrow, or steal” for an instrument.

Kats, the Okinawan drummer of an emocore band that was active in the local Hawai‘i scene around 1999-2001, told me that when he was in high school in Okinawa, he begged his father for a drum set: He said to his father, “I promise I’ll study more and get better grades. But I need this—it’s really all I have a passion for,” echoing the reasoning for his indulgence in the music given by Stan.

Once they could afford to buy instruments and equipment or were given these as gifts, friends got together to experiment informally in garages. POW initially practiced in Don’s garage until the neighbors complained. In cases such as POW’s, when garages were no longer an option and members had some money, rental studios were used. Such studios generally rented out by the hour and usually had a drum set that could be used. Salvation was lucky. They were permitted to practice in the chapel when nothing was going on. Once when I sat in on Salvation practice, it was right after a bible study group and several people from the study group stayed to watch Salvation practice. The chapel that the band members went to was located at the far end of a large shopping center in a
former supermarket and was fairly secluded when the band practiced.

Much of learning to play an instrument or sing was accomplished by copying a more advanced musician, by listening or watching, or both. The rock musician picked up much of his technique from his rock idol. Bennett (1980:18-19) observes:

Rock music is exemplified by the processes of *self-recruitment* and *learning without pedagogy* which are not possibilities in other forms of music in America. What exists for a person who is trying to move out of the general population and into the population of rock musicians is an amorphous amalgam of knowledge about instruments and equipment, recordings of rock performances, experiences of live rock performances, and a group of like-minded contemporaries.

Obviously, the instruments used in a heavy metal band also differ from those of a string quartet or quintet. In contrast, Boom, a classically trained pianist, was able to show off her skills on keyboard sampling the works of classical music composers such as Beethoven and Tchaikovsky in her band, Postmortem because indie rock was more flexible in the use of different instruments.

Playing styles were also picked up. Cutting edge techniques on the electric guitar and use of various pedals were studied and sometimes copied. Bennett (1980) stresses that the method of learning and other characteristics inherent in rock music, such as playing styles, styles and brands of instruments, and the history of the genre, lead the local rock musician to feel a certain closeness to the successful musician. All rock band musicians started out by playing in people’s garages and copying their idols’ styles, unlike the piano or violin prodigies who are professionally groomed from ages as young as three. This process of acquiring skills as well as establishing styles had implications for various social relationships that the local band musician established and maintained.
with those around him.

In the beginning, however, some band musicians did take lessons. Stan and Joe both took guitar lessons for a few years until according to both: “The teacher could teach me nothing new.” Don was one of the few who took lessons for five or six years. In the following, Stan explains Don’s reasons for taking lessons for so long:

Fumi: How long did Don take lessons?
Stan: Five or six years. But he says he learned more after he stopped taking lessons. They teach you the theory and rules. Theory hinders the player because what they teach is chords and structures. The guy who doesn’t take any lessons is free to improvise.

Fumi: Then why did he take lessons for so long?
Stan: Because if he didn’t take anymore, he was afraid he would become stagnant—get stuck. If all he learned was Metallica, he would have been stuck there. He couldn’t grow. But then again, Michael Schenker [virtuoso guitarist of the Scorpions, UFO, and the Michael Schenker Group] laughs about people who take lessons. He learned by ear listening to blues records.

Thus, whether or not and for how long musicians took lessons differed for individuals. Much of how individual musicians felt about lessons seemed to come from their personal beliefs concerning the best way to remain creative while acquiring cutting-edge techniques.

The synergy between performance and practice also differed for classical and rock band musicians. As Bayton (1990) reports, some former classical musicians who later became rock musicians noted that whereas in classical performances the material was exactly the same as what the musician had practiced many times, in rock the performance was not like the practice. Much of this difference had to do with how the rock band musician and his audience played off of each other. The relationship changed
from one between the musician and written music to one between the musician and audience. Thus, I heard comments at shows like: “Wow, did you see the size of that pit!?” (Chris) or “The crowd was so dead today. I couldn’t get into it [playing].” (Stan).

Similarly, Jay once told me:

The thing with punk bands is their raw energy. It’s nice in places like the Afterdark [a venue for shows around 1995] too, but it’s the small clubs that you feel that raw energy. It’s like a 50/50 deal. The band supplies the raw energy and the audience gives half as well.

In examining the beginnings of band musicianship, women tended to be more interested in learning about bands and music than being in a band or making music in the metal/hardcore and ska/punk sub-scenes. They were also less likely to come in contact with female scene members who were serious about being in a band than men came in contact with male scene members serious about being in a band. Thus, in short, women could accumulate subcultural capital in the form of networks with already prominent core scene members, knowledge about the music, and in a few cases, how to play an instrument. It was difficult to seek out as their role models the few female core scene members that had established themselves. By 1999, the influence of indie subculture from the mainland affected many younger female scene participants, and the process for female core scene participation became less gendered.

Band Membership (Pre-CD)

Once the musician joined a band, new types of connections were formed. Now, the individual saw himself as a band member of a band in the scene. Furthermore, band members’ identities changed along with their social networks within and outside the scene. The more the band musician’s identity became established, the more he began to
see himself as a core scene participant in the scene and/or projecting onto famous musicians who made a living from their music. This section on pre-CD band membership focuses on the changing connections of musicians and others, both in terms of quantity and quality; and the contradictions that musician identity entailed for musicians.

**Changing connections: quantity and quality**

In this pre-CD stage, followers became a presence in band members’ lives. The relationship was similar to that between musician and musician for certain followers who were themselves musicians in their own bands. “Follower” or “following” implied a devoted and dedicated attachment to the band, and denoted an actively supportive relationship to the band and their music. Followers who were also band musicians went to each other’s shows, lent each other equipment, jammed, hung out, and worked together in the same music stores. Band musicians became conscious that there were people that came to shows to see their band, and that there were some that came every time they played.

At POW, Green M&Ms, Salvation, and Blue Punx performances, the area in front of the band was full of devoted followers. If they were not busy making a mosh pit, they had their fists in the air shouting or singing the words to the songs along with the band. For example, Chad was an ardent supporter whom I saw at almost every band performance I attended. The following is from my fieldnotes from a POW performance:

There must be close to 100 here today. I see Chad. He stands out because he’s tall and skinny but you can’t miss his blonde headbanging head. He must know all the lyrics to all the local bands’ songs too, because he is always singing. His fist goes up right on cue with all the other followers. It’s almost as if he’s in the band with the POW guys. Now Chris’ mic is
being sent over to Chad and he’s singing into it.

This kind of band-follower (or band-fan) interaction continued to be a common part of the show and scene dynamic. Such interaction was also seen across sub-scenes and across time.

Many bands had an “extra member” such as the “sixth POW.” These followers were usually close friends of one or more of the band members. Mike, POW’s extra member, went to all the POW shows and brought the refreshments. He was Mexican and even made tamales once (possibly the best tamales I have ever had) managing to bring them to the show venue for the band while they were still hot. He helped with carrying and setting up equipment and hung out with the band on a regular basis. I saw Mike almost as often as I saw some of the band members themselves.

Mike often acted as the band clown as well, and was adept at releasing some of the tension of gigs and band practice after someone had had a hard day at work. This was a significant role that Mike played, because bands often began to look like “dysfunctional families” (Stan’s words) when somebody brought their stresses and foul moods with them to the studio. When I first started hanging out at POW practice sessions, I felt like an intruder. There was tension in the room so thick that, at times, I thought I would have an asthma attack. When I talked to Stan about my concerns, he assured me that it was not my fault. He said, “We’ve always been like this. We’re perfectionists and want to play good, not messing up for everybody else, yeah? You [the individual band member] feel responsible for that and it causes stress.” I noticed, however, that unlike my presence, Mike’s presence took a load off of the band and created a less tension-filled environment.
Interestingly, Kats’ emo band, which did not have an extra band member, did not allow me to observe their practice sessions. As Kats explained, “Practice is serious business. We can’t have people sitting around and watching us because it’s distracting—not even friends.” So even though I sometimes drove Kats and his band members and their equipment to their practice studio, I wasn’t allowed to stay. Even POW had unspoken policies of who could sit in the studio while they practiced, though. I often sat with Nellie, Jay, Richie, or another friend of Keoni’s who sometimes came by. They were all close friends. When an acquaintance of Stan’s (Dave, a cousin of a childhood friend) came by one day with permission only from Stan, there was a clear tension in response to Dave’s presence.

The following conversation with Mike at POW practice one day shed some light on his relationship with Keoni and how he was strictly a follower/supporter of the band.

Fumi: Why didn’t you ever join the band?
Mike: (after a bit of thinking) Because by not joining the band I could stay best friends with Keoni. Besides, if I wanted to hear live music, I could just come and listen to these guys [POW].
[A few minutes later...]
Mike: Actually, it’s because I was too busy being a pothead... because I was focused on something else, you know?
[Even later...]
Mike: Well, my mother, being Mexican and all, you know, would not have liked it if I were to do music other than flamenco or something, you know?
[And even later...]
Mike: Actually, it’s a combination of all three.

Another extra member of POW, Pluto (who committed suicide during my time in the field), was also the rhythm guitar player of Eighty-eight, another band in the scene. He often “played roadie” for POW, carrying heavy equipment for the band and helping them set up and break down for their set at a show.
In addition to breaking down equipment, extra members and followers often helped clean up after shows, especially when shows were held at someone’s workplace like Oren’s bakery parking lot or the coffee shop where Trent worked as a barista. When I first met Kanoa, he was not yet a core scene participant. He told me that people in the scene liked that he always stayed after a show to help clean the place up. He said:

Some of my friends say that Trent is using me. Some people tell me that Trent takes credit for the work even, so why should I put up with it? But I don’t mind. If I can help, I’ll help, you know? That’s what friends should do. You don’t expect things in return. That’s how I was taught.

Extra members of bands sometimes acted as public relations people. An example was Aron, Green M&Ms extra member and the drummer Eric’s best friend. Aron was at all of M&M’s shows and often appeared “stuck” to Eric. Where Eric was shy and soft-spoken, Aron was friendly and approachable. On the few occasions that I spoke to Eric, Aron usually spoke for him while Eric just smiled. I often thought that Aron would make a good manager for the group if Green M&Ms ever needed a manager. Aron could take care of all public relations. The same went for Mike and POW.

The kinds of relationships that musicians developed with others also changed along with the numbers of relationships. For example, some business-oriented relationships became more personalized because these employees were sometimes musicians and/or core scene participants themselves. People whom the musicians had previously dealt with on a professional business level at the music store to buy guitar strings or to ask for advice on an amplifier were now recognized as “the bass player in Band X” or “the former singer of Band W” or “Gary’s former guitar-playing competition.” Many of the employees at these stores were now referred to in ways that
tied them into the scene.

To local band musicians in Hawai‘i, the commercially successful bands were still somewhere on the level of distant, idolized role models. They were known through their CDs and through media exposure. Local bands opened for well-known bands when they came to Hawai‘i on tour. In fact, POW had quite an impressive list of well-known bands that they had opened for, including Slayer, Sepultura, Marilyn Manson, Ozzy Osbourne, and the Testament. POW almost opened for Korn (a highly anticipated show), but this show, to the dismay of fans, fell through. Although these well-known bands sometimes directly contacted local bands (e.g., Chris got a call from the now TV celebrity, Sharon Osbourne, Ozzy’s wife and manager), the bands usually did not seem to connect on a personal level with the more “accomplished” bands.

Some local bands, especially in the ska/punk sub-scene, did connect when bands came to play shows in Hawai‘i. This could be because band members of bands for which local ska/punk sub-scene bands opened tended to be younger. Younger band members were less likely to be in town with family and more willing to be shown around town with local band scene members. When the band Green Day came to Hawai‘i, band members played volleyball with local scene members and Oren baked a cheesecake for the singer of the band, Billy Joe Armstrong on his birthday.

Connections with musicians outside of Hawai‘i also increased with the development of the band. The connections also lasted. While exchanging of recorded music was one way, some local bands spent a few years playing on the mainland as well, and connected with other aspiring musicians there. POW was one such band that spent a
year in Oakland, CA. They became a part of the scene in the Bay Area, and tried to get signed to a record label. They had to return to Hawai‘i after a year, however, because they were burglarized in Oakland, and could not continue to finance their stay. But while in Oakland, POW made acquaintances with other bands in the area. Even though they had only been there for a year, POW realized that they were remembered in the Bay Area. One day at practice, Chris mentioned that an acquaintance of his who set up gigs in the San Francisco area had told him that bands still remembered POW on the mainland:

The people all remember you guys from when you were over there. [Chris had not gone with the band to Oakland, but rejoined when they returned to Honolulu.] You guys remember Powerhouse, a Latino heavy metal band? When I was talking about us, somebody’s like, “There is a band, POW here.” So I’m like, no way! But then he started mentioning our songs and I realized he was talking about us!

This example demonstrates how aspiring local musicians in Hawai‘i extended their networks to aspiring musicians in other scenes on the mainland. This insider knowledge of other bands active in different scenes expanded the local band’s extended network of personal ties.

Women core scene members’ connections did not change in the same way as men’s. For the most part, networking occurred through their boyfriends. For example, Alyssa, the girlfriend of a prominent ska/punk band member, Cedric, became friends with core scene participants and their girlfriends through Cedric, but stopped coming to shows when the two broke up. Kats told me that Ashley, the girlfriend of guitar player, Nate, in Kats’ emo band, came to shows that Nate and Kats’ band played, but otherwise had no connection to the scene. According to Kats, however, Ashley saw herself as having a
certain status in the scene as Nate’s girlfriend. According to Kats: “She has this attitude like ‘my boyfriend’s in a band, you know.’”

Women band members like Sara and Carly were the exception. Their networks expanded similarly to male band members. In many ways, Taryn and Nellie were also treated similarly by male musicians because, although they were not band members, they could talk about the music (i.e., critique performances of local bands as well as more commercially successful bands) with the guys and were not afraid to go into the mosh pit. But they were also girlfriends and their networks expanded in relation to their boyfriends, similar to Alyssa. Taryn and Nellie also didn’t drop out of the scene if their relationships with their boyfriends didn’t work out. As long as not being in a band was not an issue for them, they were satisfied because they were core scene participants and the scene was still a large part of their identity. As Nellie said in an interview in 1998, looking back on how involved she was in the scene—moshpits at shows, collecting metal music, hanging out at music stores where fellow scene members worked, etc.: “I was so into it [all that the scene had to offer her]—we [Nellie, Taryn, and Sara] were so into it!”

As more hardcore and punk bands from the mainland came to play in Hawai‘i in the second stage of my data collection in the field, there were signs that changes were occurring. While well-known arena rock metal bands could usually only be brought to Hawai‘i by companies like Goldenvoice, smaller, less-known bands from the mainland also came to Hawai‘i with the help of local bands as their contact people (as opposed to Goldenvoice, for example). Local bands connected with these mainland bands from mainland local scenes. Sometimes local bands held fund-raiser shows to bring such
bands from the mainland. Oren was often involved in these fund-raising shows, which he organized outside of his work with Goldenvoice. When such bands came to Hawai‘i, they often stayed at homes of Hawai‘i local scene members to save money. Instances of these connections between Hawai‘i and mainland local bands increased as ska/punk and indie bands became more popular and numerous in the local scene.

Contradictions(?) of musician identity

The band was a significant part of band members’ lives, but was far from being economically viable as a full-time activity and occupation. The bands I studied practiced at rented studios or chapels an average of twice a week. Stan said that he had something to look forward to on a day when there was practice. The rest of the week consisted of hours of boring work and idle time that was unrelated to band activity. Even thinking about work frustrated him. As a result, he went on TV-viewing sprees that lasted hours at a time: an avoidance activity that kept his mind off reality. I sometimes tried to join him in these sprees by watching several movies in a row on TV or video with him, but usually fell asleep by the middle of the second movie.

Practice was serious business. Band members had to be focused and concentrating. Musicians were professional, taking responsibility for their respective parts. They tried to play the best they could. The following describes an intense POW practice session. They are working on a new song and have tried starting again three times, but Chris keeps “messing up.” Keoni throws his drumsticks in frustration. Ray did not make it to this practice.

Chris: It’s so hard to sing to this. Partly because I don’t have the lyrics memorized yet, but this is hard to sing. I promise I’ll have it down though.
Keoni: [To Chris] Why don’t you come in after a rest? We’ll play a little before you come in.
Don: Stan, try lower the bass tone, don’t crank it up so much.

[They start to play a new song and stop.]

Chris: Stan, make the bass sound more high, more twangy. The reason I say this is because sometimes your sound gets drowned. People have to hear you.

[They play again. Stan seems bothered by the contradictory suggestions from Don and Chris.]

Chris: I don’t know what it is, but Stan’s still getting drowned.

[They play for a while, then Chris leaves the room and the other three play. Then Don and Stan experiment with something new.]

Don: Keoni, come in with the smashings after my lead.

The seriousness of practice was not usually matched by the success of the band in the metal/hardcore sub-scene sense. While they made no money from playing, they were paying studio fees, paying for equipment, and sacrificing time and energy that could be used to make money. It seemed to add to Stan’s frustrations when his band was not playing shows regularly. He often described how shows were an outlet for him: He said, “If we at least had a gig set up, I would have something to look forward to and be happy with even that… Maybe I’m somewhat of an exhibitionist who likes playing in front of people.” When there were no gigs to play for months at a time, Stan became frustrated and irritable.

The fact that band performance venues were short-lived was another problem. Joe became frustrated when a popular venue for shows downtown closed. While fellow bands like POW tried to bring Salvation with them on a bill to play a show, some venue owners resisted the religious messages of bands like Salvation. When one of
the venues where Salvation often played closed due to higher costs, Joe said, "I'm sick of just practicing all the time and not playing." On a different occasion, Stan also voiced concern about Salvation's predicament. He said, "Now that the Fast Lane's closed, we really gotta play with Salvation. They have nowhere to play now."

Some musicians were also students. They needed to balance the time they spent on their various responsibilities. For example, Joe was taking classes, working at a supermarket, editing tapes for music at his church, and working for Golden Voice, putting up fliers for shows and doing other odd jobs, but still managed to make band practice. Joe was serious about school because he also aspired to become a science teacher. However, this did not necessarily mean that he wanted to teach and be a musician on the side. Being a musician would also be a fulltime job.

In a different case, a guitar player in another metal/hardcore band was a teacher at a local high school, but quit his job and went to San Jose when his band chose to move and try their luck on the mainland. As Don also started going to school during the time I was in the field, enrollment in a community college forced him to balance his time between school, work as a jewelry artist, and the band. POW changed its practice dates to accommodate Don's classes. This was possible because the other band members sought out flexible jobs that allowed them to work around band activities. As Stan said, "I worked at Tower and Hungry Ear and they were all cool about my band schedule and all. They let me work around band practice and shows."

In contrast, for musicians in the ska/punk sub-scene, playing shows was success enough. Shows brought the local punk community together, many shows were linked to
activist causes, and created incentive for new bands to start up. And most importantly, especially all-ages shows offered a space for youths to hang out and to be with others who felt disenfranchised or outside of the mainstream.

In the local scene I studied, financial profit was never a big part of the operation of the scene. In fact, the absence of a profit-making motive was characteristic of this particular scene. When asked, “How much did you get paid for that show?” or “Do you ever see the money?” The answer most commonly given was “We don’t do it for the money anyway.” When asked what happened to the small amount of money that was collected at the door at a show, Stan as well as others answered, “It probably goes to the club.” Nobody seemed to really know, nor care very much. Mark, the singer and guitarist for a ska/punk band jokingly told me that, “We do it for love of the music.”

This contradiction between dreaming of making music for lots of money and the reality of playing shows but not doing it for the money was vital to understanding the conflicted position of some musicians at this stage of development. Many metal/hardcore musicians wanted to be like his idols for whom music-making and music-playing were their jobs. At the same time, considering where he was in his career development as a musician, he realized that he would not even get paid for playing a show that the audience had paid to attend. Money made went to paying for the venue. While this was frustrating given his aspirations, he also realized that given the size and composition of the local scene in this time and place, he couldn’t do it for the money. However, his aspirations to make it a career were still strong.

“We don’t do it for the money” was a justification of the situation he chose to be
in. He could actually get paid to play other people’s music by doing cover songs in cover bands that played in popular bars in town. But this would defeat the purpose of being an original band and an insult to his artistic integrity. Distinguishing themselves from cover bands was important to bands in the scene in asserting their own identities. The justification also extended to the relationship between musicians and their followers. As long as making money was not an issue, the relationship between musicians and followers was a comfortable one for the musicians. Unlike Becker’s (1963) jazz dance musicians, the tension of having to conform to the demands of the audience was practically nil.

In contrast, if success was not measured by commercial popularity or “making it” on the mainland, these issues were largely irrelevant to bands. Being considered a core scene participant and respected for their lifestyle and integrity was a sign of success for most ska/punk scene members. Thus, there was less interest in where band musicians were and wanted to be in their musician careers. For them, seeing their followership and fans increase, becoming more politically conscious, or starting their own bands gave core scene participants the most satisfaction.

Even without immediate economic motivations, musicians at this stage of their development spent a great deal of their spare time in music-related activities. In addition to the band’s practice sessions, individual musicians also practiced in private. They needed to learn their parts as well as come up with new riffs and lyrics for songs. They had an obligation to the rest of the band to play and know their parts well and to contribute to the creative process. Stan was often targeted at band practice, being told to
practice more on his own, and come up with new riffs to use in new songs. Chris said, “Yeah, he’s the youngest and newest, you know, so I know we give him a hard time sometimes. But he really should contribute more to the new songs.”

Although he felt pressured to practice more, Stan played mainly when the mood struck him or when he was somehow inspired to play. Infrequent band performances also added to Stan’s decreased motivation to practice. One afternoon in the studio while the five of them tried to put together a new song, the following conversation took place:

Don: Eh, Stan, play something.
Stan: I need inspiration.
Chris: Go run around the block naked man! That’ll give you inspiration
[All laugh].

In contrast, to an observer, when a musician couldn’t wait to play, he seemed very much like a heavy smoker “jonesing” for a cigarette when he hadn’t been smoking for a few days. One day when I was about half an hour early and thought I would be the first one at the studio for a practice session, Ray was already there and had been there for an hour. He said, “I had a dream about playing last night and then I was just itching to play so bad I just had to come here as soon as possible.”

Jamming was a method of cooling down after an intense practice session that was also a way of releasing frustration. Jamming with fellow musicians and friends was different from practicing. Jamming happened spontaneously. Musicians took up their or each other’s instruments and played songs by bands they liked or just started improvising. The others then followed the lead and played or sang something accordingly. Jamming occurred in most instances where musicians came together, often after practice, and there happened to be instruments to play. The following documents such an instance:
They play a song from their set. Suddenly, Ray is playing the song “Pretty Woman” on his guitar. Keoni says, “Eh, Roy Orbison!” Then Keoni takes Ray’s guitar, Don starts playing Keoni’s drums, Ray takes over bass, and Stan starts singing into the mic. They play Bob Marley and other reggae stuff. It sounded really good and they were really having fun with it.

The women core scene members that I came in contact with in the scene, on the whole, seemed to be more conscious of the possibility that being a core scene member would not, in and of itself, sustain either their identity or livelihood now or in the future. And because there was more recognition of a need to work and/or build a career on something other than the scene, they got busy studying for degrees or certifications that would lead to careers with which they could make a living. For example, Sara studied architecture and Nellie was already a hairstylist/beautician by the time I met her. Thus, the contradictions of musician identity experienced by male band musicians were not as severe for women musicians because there was less envisioning of themselves as becoming commercially successful. Although they might see their boyfriends succeed, they were perhaps more in touch with the reality of having to survive while still trying to “make it.” This also meant, however, that women were excluded from experiencing the full effect of passionately pursuing a dream career as a musician.

In sum, at this stage, band musicians were serious about their band and their musicianship. They were established in their own local scene as well as networking with others outside of the local scene. In the case of many metal/hardcore bands, the better the band got, however, the more the contradictions of expending so much time and energy became a source of frustration as they were not making money from playing. In the case of many ska/punk bands, being in a band in becoming a core scene participant was
fulfilling in itself; thus, contradiction was minimal. An analysis of the next stage in the development of band musicianhood illustrates how these networks and conflicts evolve even further.

**Band Membership During Recording and Promotion**

The continued process of networking can be examined by tracing what happens to a band and what its members actively do when they make and promote a CD. Making and promoting a CD helped to solidify the identity of the band and its musicians by increasing a followership that now consisted of far more than just friends and other local bands. Meanwhile, the earlier conflicts for metal/hardcore sub-scene musicians began to take on a slightly different character as band members had to start weighing possible success and the changes this could bring about for their lives and personal relationships. In contrast, ska/punk sub-scene musicians increased their ties with the local community and sometimes became more serious about their bands, even if this meant touring on the mainland more to become known outside of Hawai‘i. The following section looks at these developments in the final stage of band musician development.

**Solidifying band musician identity**

As a band continued to make, practice, and play new material and improve their skills, they also solidified their band and band musician identities. As previously demonstrated, the longer a band was active, the more it was respected, and the more their followership increased as well. Non-scene member populations heard about and saw these bands more due to media coverage. There were also more opportunities for these bands to open for touring bands from the mainland. These big production concerts drew crowds that were many times bigger than local punk shows; thus, the opening local
bands gained more exposure to populations that would otherwise not know of them.

POW was sometimes reminded of their growing fan/followership base, often among populations they would otherwise not have dreamed of attracting. As a case in point, Stan and Ray in a conversation with Dave, Stan’s non-scene member friend and housemate, found out that Dave’s younger sister, also a non-scene member, had seen and liked POW. The following was taken from my fieldnotes:

Dave came to the POW practice session and told Stan and Ray, “My sister wanted me to get her some acid. I told her I couldn’t get her any but there was a Volcom show on the 24th so she might get some there. I told her there was going to be a bunch of bands playing. I said the name of your band and she said, ‘Oh, I know that one. The one with the big bald singer, right? I like them!’ You have a fan!”

In the ska/punk sub-scene, ties with community and activist groups increased as bands became more prominent. Ties increased especially with activist groups and socially conscious organizations as members of political bands became more known to the local community and not just the local scene. The local scene component that participated in Martin Luther King Day activities, the anti-ADB demonstrations, anti-brutality causes, etc., were scene participants of the ska/punk sub-scene. Oren, and increasingly Trent also, became heavily involved in various social causes in this way.

Radio airplay and appearances, write-ups in newspapers and magazines, and sales of CDs and tapes also became more frequent at this stage. To succeed beyond what they had already accomplished, most important for the band was to get more exposure. This required traveling, sometimes even relocating, and producing their own CD. Because the decision to relocate to the mainland was a difficult one for local bands to make, producing and developing a CD was considered a big step in the right direction by bands
in the local scene.

Here I will discuss producing CDs because they are now seen as the professional form of recorded music as opposed to demo tapes on audio cassettes. It should also be mentioned here that especially in my second period of data collection (starting in 1999), making CDs became so much easier and common that especially on a small scale, recording and copying CDs became the norm. When POW was recording their first CD, however, cassettes were still the common demo tape format. Thus, recording a CD was seen as a major accomplishment.

As soon as a band had enough songs to fill a CD, they had the material necessary to record. Next, they needed to find a person who knew how to mix and work the recording equipment. The band also had to secure such equipment, a space in which to record, and most importantly, come up with the money necessary to see this endeavor through to the end. Without a sponsor to provide financial backing, the band members had to come up with at least several hundred dollar each to pay these expenses on their own. Once the recording was done, there were more matters to consider. Pressing (mass-producing) the CDs, doing the artwork, printing the artwork, and finally doing the packaging had yet to be taken care of.

The whole process took months. The recording itself took weeks, but studio space and time had to be paid for, so the band could not afford to take too long to complete the recording. Unfortunately for bands in Hawai‘i, there was a shortage of specialists in sound engineering, of recording equipment, and of studio space. This resulted in a limited pool from which bands could choose, so quality work was hard to
come by. In many cases, recording quality suffered. Salvation was one of the few bands that recorded their songs by themselves because Joe had managed to purchase recording equipment by working several jobs. He got permission to set up his equipment in the storage area in the back of their chapel and they recorded there.

Once a CD was made, the band had to promote it if promotion was important. This meant more time and money for a local band. The band looked for distributors to put the CDs in the major outlets, but sometimes band members went to the smaller local stores themselves to promote and sell the CDs. Contracting with distributors usually meant more money to be paid. Band members also directly contacted independent record labels, music magazines that reviewed CDs, and radio stations locally, on the mainland, and outside of the US. In short, the CD needed to be heard by the people that mattered. The CD was packaged together with a biographical sketch of the band, a photograph of the band together, and sometimes a letter or other band trinkets like dog tags with the band name engraved on them. In these ways, in addition to the local following, the CD was made available to national and international channels, all of which led to more attention, exposure, and hopefully, a good record label contract.

For ska/punk sub-scene bands, however, promotion was not a big concern or job that required long hours and large sums of money. In the case of Blue Punx, Trent sold CDs at the coffee shop where he and Kanoa worked. CDs were also sold at zinefests and given away to scene participants who got to a CD release party early. I have also seen cases in which bands announced during their set at a show that CDs and other items like T-shirts and buttons could be bought after the show. In the case of metal/hardcore bands,
giveaways of CDs were rare, except to close friends.

Furthermore, since 1999, music by local bands has become much more accessible. First, I have noticed that Mark’s earlier comment that local music is Hawaiian music no longer necessarily held true as large music stores began to build a local band section in addition to a Hawaiian music section. Secondly, a local scene site on the Internet, initially begun as a listserv, now had a section devoted to selling local bands’ CDs.

Representative of metal/hardcore sub-scene bands, Salvation was actively engaged in promoting its demo tapes. As Joe said to me, “People from the labels and radio stations listen to many demos every day.” Joe said he was told that because of this, you have to make yourself stand out against other bands:

You have to have something that distinguishes yourself. We put our demos in red cases both to be different and in association with the image of blood. As for radio stations, you are supposed to tell them which track to play. Then a few months later, you tell them to play another track, and then another. You have to be persistent and strong in presenting yourselves without overdoing it or putting other people down. These things instantly turn people off. But we learned about all of this only after hundreds of demos and dollars.

When POW put out its first CD, there was a rush of publicity. The members scrambled to get their CD as much exposure as possible. They took copies to radio stations and got a local distributor to have them displayed on the shelves in major record stores. The fact that an employee of the distributor was a good friend of Stan’s and also in a band himself gave Stan good connections. The band soon realized that their CD was selling better than they had expected, since it was originally only intended to be a fancier version of a demo tape and they only made 2500 copies.

At first, there was also radio exposure through songs going up in the local charts
as well as the band’s songs being played on the air, a fast pace of sales, and write-ups on
the CD in the local daily newspaper and in surfer magazines. The following was from
one such surfer magazine:

Finally a CD from one of Hawaii’s original, underground bands who have
been around in some shape or form, for a long time. [POW] performed
with everyone from Slayer to Sepultura, and many other heavy groups to
visit the islands. Their live shows are pretty intense, and this disc is a
pretty good representation of their sound... Kind of like Suicidal
Tendencies at times, and kind of technical at other times. Short and sweet
is how I’d describe this six-song offering... The sound quality on this is
okay as you can’t really expect perfect recordings from local underground
cats now can you?

Since 1999, making individual copies of CDs became easier. While bands’
amounts of produced CDs may have been small, scene participants often made copies for
themselves off a CD that a friend had bought. Thus, for the ska/punk sub-scene band’s
purposes for scene participants to become familiar with their music, new personal
computer technology was useful. If getting signed to a label was not a major priority,
ska/punk bands did well to increase their local fan base and spread political
consciousness.

In contrast, for metal/hardcore sub-scene bands, getting signed and doing
promotional activity were important. Results were even more important. Sometimes,
efforts were fruitful. For example, Salvation’s demo tape got out. They were even able
to sign a distribution contract. This meant that their tapes would be carried by chain
stores such as Wal-Mart and Kmart. Many months after POW started their promotion
process, there were signs that sending CDs and bios had begun to pay off. POW was
written up in a national metal music magazine. In the article was also mention that the

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band was remembered on the mainland:

Labeling themselves “aggressive music for aggressive people” Hawaii’s [POW] has been trying to solidify their band for quite some time. I remember seeing the band playing many shows in ‘89/’90 while we were all residing in the Bay Area before the outfit returned home. Thinking that the group had thrown in the towel years ago, I was obviously pleased to get this six-song CD.

As regular users of the Internet grew in numbers, it was also not unusual to find references to local bands on sites specializing in certain genres of music. For example, a ska band that was popular and considered a pioneer in fusing ska with Hawaiian sounds and Hawaiian themes was mentioned on a site titled “The Herenow of Ska: The Definitive Story of the 3rd Wave of Ska.” The reference referred to this local band as representative of a “West Coast ... hodge-podge definitive sound” because of its eclectic mixture of sounds.

Promotion activity sometimes resulted in new ties. For example, a POW CD reached a legendary great in the genre of heavy metal music: Ozzy Osbourne. Chris heard from Osbourne’s management (Sharon, Ozzy’s now-celebrity wife) that Ozzy would like to have POW open for his show at the Neal Blaisdell Center, an arena for professional performances that drew large audiences.

Once a band had a CD, there was an increase in direct personal contact with local distributors, radio stations, DJs, and young employees of record stores. Local fan bases grew. By this time, the band had also opened more for big acts who came to Honolulu on tour, and they may have made more connections with successful bands and music industry people compared to the days when they had no CD. The individual band member saw himself as a solid core scene participant in the scene, and now started to
envision getting signed, going on tour, or where to go next.

*The ironies of “success”*

The dilemma that the musician faced at this stage was that given the situation of Hawai‘i’s geographical isolation, the small size of the interested population, and the bad condition of the economy, in order to become commercially successful, the band needed to break out of the comfortable local scene. Some bands had no intention of leaving, but even bands that saw leaving as a step closer to success were often not ready to leave. Many band members were not willing to make the big leap for several reasons. Locally established band members were ambivalent about relocation mainly for financial reasons and sometimes for fear of racist attitudes in a new place on the mainland. Ironically, as a result of these concerns, metal/hardcore sub-scene band members began to redefine what “success” was and also began to set time limits for themselves to “succeed.”

Five years after the Bay Area experience, when I asked Chris if he would go now (as he stayed behind the first time) if POW decided to try the mainland again, he was still unsure:

> Sometimes I think about it really happening and it scares me, man. I’d have to leave my 20-hour-a-week job, I’d be poor, we’d be living out of a van, be freezing cold, have no girlfriend, and so on. It’s so hard to find a good steady job in Hawai‘i. Should I say to the guys, “You guys go on without me. I have a new girlfriend and I can’t leave my job?” Sometimes I think I might. Yeah, that would be a real weenie... If I could just pay for a house here, somewhere to come back to when we go on tour...

While talking to me about relocation, Chris had, in the end, switched the conversation to one about going on tour: something easier for him to handle.

Even touring placed a financial strain on band members. Before POW went to
play a show in Portland, Oregon in the fall of 1996, band members discussed how much money they would need to set aside for the week-long trip. At Mike’s birthday party at a fancy bar in Waikiki, Keoni advised Stan to save some money for the trip to Portland. He said, “You gotta save a paycheck before you go, uh? I probably gotta save two paychecks, man. Buy your ticket soon too. It’s not 200—something over 300 dollars. Gotta save man.” Ska/Punk sub-scene bands did not fare much better. When the owner of a coffee shop would not allow Trent to go on tour to the mainland for a few weeks, Trent was forced to quit and find work elsewhere when he returned.

Apprehension concerning finances was evident in both those who had previous experience of trying to “make it” on the mainland like POW and for those who had no such experience but had perhaps heard stories of the difficulties (e.g., Chris and Stan who did not experience the Bay Area). I had the following conversation with Keoni later at the same get-together:

Keoni: Gotta save a lotta money to tour.
Fumi: When you guys went to the mainland—to Oakland—you were all working, right?
Keoni: Yeah, all but Ray.
Fumi: And he was okay?
Keoni: Yeah, his folks were sending him money.
Fumi: Oh.
Keoni: Well, I admit my Mom, my parents helped me out too. But most of us still had to work. Because we were paying for two places: the studio and the place we lived. So it was hard.

Band members did have to work enough to pay for studio rent, but it was easier to get financial support and a roof over one’s head in Honolulu. Support systems consisting of family and friends offered financial and emotional support at home. While some band members’ parents helped by sending them money, things were much less stable and
reliable on the mainland. Some like Chris had stable jobs in Hawai‘i (construction in
Chris’s case). Thus, Chris’s worries about leaving his job were not exaggerated.

Local band musicians also worried about racism. Upon returning from the
Portland gig, Stan and others said that POW was mistaken for an ethnic gang. It is rather
odd to think that a Caucasian, Hawaiian, Filipino-Caucasian, and two Okinawan-
Japanese men would be seen as an “ethnic gang,” which usually consists of members of
the same racial group. Ray, Don, and Keoni could possibly pass as Latino (which was
what Stan was implying), but that still left one visibly white and one visibly Asian man.
While I did not have an opportunity to ask band members how they could have been
mistaken for an ethnic gang by Portland locals, several scene members including POW
told me that their first impression of Portland was “very white.”

Several years later, I again heard about a local Hawai‘i band member
experiencing racism on the mainland. When I interviewed Jen (the former drummer of
Julie’s Rooftop) in fall 2001, she was very critical and bitter about the racist attitudes she
encountered in Portland where she studied for a year. Jen, a Japanese-American, said:

I always kind of knew I was a minority but never was very conscious of it
here in Hawai‘i. So it was a rude awakening what I experienced on the
mainland. It’s very white in Portland but the worst was the discrimination
in the scene there. It’s like you’re second class if you’re a person of color.
It hurt the most in the scene because I expected it to be an escape from the
rest of the city.

While much of the fear or anger was probably rooted in incidents or impressions of the
mainland that band members heard secondhand from others, this fear was a factor in the
ambivalence of band members to make the decision to relocate.

Pressure to go to the next level increased when a band was established to the point
of making a CD of their song, had an increasing follower base, and its members identified as members of a good band. Signing with a major mainland record label and “succeeding” in a world bigger than Hawai‘i became obsessions to some bands. But because of the ambivalent feelings about leaving Hawai‘i, band members began to redefine what “success” was for the band. Relocation became less important as a prerequisite for “success.” This sentiment of not needing to leave Hawai‘i was similar to the redefinition of “success” by members of the later punk/ska sub-scene as well as of the comments of earlier local scene members in the 1980s. Why can’t you be in Hawai‘i and be a successful band? Why do you need to go elsewhere? Chris’s thoughts on this at the practice studio one day shed some light on these questions: “See, I don’t believe in the idea that you have to go to the mainland to succeed. I don’t see the need to relocate. Hawai‘i is my home. I want to try to be here and succeed.”

Conflicts of time as well as identity began to plague bands as members started thinking about alternative careers (alternative to playing music for a living) and lifestyles (settling down as opposed to living the single life). Bands had to work around school and work schedules that were a part of building a career as a teacher, nurse, police officer, etc., that were less flexible than the part-time jobs that musicians had taken on in the past to pay for band-related expenses. As described earlier, when Don started taking classes at a community college, the band had to re-schedule practice. Salvation almost fell apart when their bass player, who was already married, started training for the Honolulu Police Department and had a baby. Then, Ray left POW to finish college on the mainland.

Joe had to make the decision to cut his lush head full of long, wavy brown hair,
condusive to getting the full effect of headbanging. When he went to ask his girlfriend’s father if he could marry his daughter. He told me:

I would never cut my hair for anybody. But the dad is so judgmental that he doesn’t give people a chance. So I cut my hair and went over to their house and said, “I’m against the idea of having to alter my appearance to conform or please somebody else. But I want you to know that I did this because I love your daughter very much and if this was the only way you would agree to accept me, I was going to cut my long hair.

Around early-to-mid-1997 when many of these changes were starting to take place, band members also began to talk about how much time they would allow themselves to “succeed” before they called it quits. The excerpt from an interview with Chris below is an illustration of this:

Chris: I want that break soon before I’m too old to do what I’m doing.
Fumi: When’s too old, like 55?
Chris: Not even! Even at 45 I wouldn’t want to be doing this. It’s funny, but when I was 20 I didn’t want anything else but have a wife and kids. That was all I ever wanted then. But then I broke up with a certain girlfriend and that changed my entire way of thinking. Since then all I want to be is a rock star. And now I’m starting to get old... (Note: Chris was 30 at the time of this interview.)

Some like Don already predicted how their daily lives would change in just a few years. Don, who anticipated growing pressure from the other obligations of work, family, and marriage in his life, foresaw the difficulty of continuing to come to practice. He said, “For me, it would depend on the situation. I mean, if you’ve got three kids and bills to pay, you’d feel like a dick if you said, ‘Well, gotta go to practice’ and just ditch the family when they need you.”

Interestingly, some ska/punk sub-scene bands that gained a large local fan base and became good enough to be noticed by scenes and labels on the mainland began to
shift their strong focus on the local scene. Becoming better bands and making an impact on the mainland became new priorities for some. For example, Trent told Roy and I one day that he was becoming more serious about his music and band and wanted to tour on the mainland more. Familiar with Roy’s ties to scenes in the Pacific Northwest, Trent asked Roy if he would be interested in being their band’s manager. Such shifts in priorities and foci could be evidence of more overlap between sub-scenes. Some values of the metal/hardcore sub-scene could become adopted by the ska/punk sub-scene.

Through the cultivating of new ties and the strengthening of others to make them closer and more personal, the band and musician came closer to becoming participants in the total culture of musicians. Making and promoting a CD was one way that these ties were created and strengthened. The band and musician started at the beginning with few connections. They developed their identities as musicians by improving their music and cultivating connections with people.

None of the bands with women in the metal/hardcore sub-scene that I came into contact with or knew of during my fieldwork ever became as successful as bands consisting of all-male musicians with the exception of one ska band that went to the mainland. This band had a woman singer. Tracing the process of band musician development and thinking about how the process might be different for Sara or Carly made me wonder whether women musicians ever really had the option of envisioning themselves as successful musicians, given the lack of support and role models. Perhaps Taryn and Nellie might have considered starting their own band if there had been a more supportive environment.
CHAPTER NINE: A-SEXUAL ACTION/SEXUAL DISCOURSE:
GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND SEXUAL RESISTANCE

By 1999, the Hawai‘i local scene had changed. I found that not only were there more women who were active core scene participants in the local Hawai‘i scene, but their music, style, attitude, and presentation were all quite different from core scene participants—predominantly men (but also women)—in the earlier scene. The mere fact that more women were in attendance at shows was refreshing. Even more eye opening was the qualitative change in self-presentation. Women were creators of the music in the scene as well as of new styles and attitudes. They had started their own, all-women bands.

Changes in Women’s Scene Participation

These changes in the local Hawai‘i scene followed the trends of what had been happening with women and rock music on the mainland since the early 1990s. As Gottlieb and Wald (1994) state:

...we seem nonetheless to have arrived at a new moment in this history, in which a number of factors coalesce, including the sheer number of women bands, the introduction of self-conscious feminism into rock discourse and activity (both in the promotion of outspoken girl culture on the part of the riot grrrls, and the political organizing of Rock for Choice and the Bohemian Women’s Political Alliance), and the (in part media-driven) increased visibility of women rockers in defiant and often outrageous performance and musical styles, which both defy and recast conventionally “feminine” erotic performance (1994:256).

Strangely enough, as Gottlieb and Wald (1994) explain, while women had actually already been active in bands in punk for decades, (e.g., Patti Smith, Debbie Harry, Chrissie Hynde, and Poly Styrene, to name just a few), the in-roads they had made
seemed to have been cancelled out by several masculinist tendencies in rock, but most recently, the rise of hardcore in punk in the 80s. Hardcore—angry and political—resonated with the masculinist component of punk scenes and became an important development in the histories of punk rock. Unfortunately, parallel to the development of hardcore, misogyny, sexism, and hegemonic masculinity went relatively unquestioned. The Hawai‘i scene, similar to other local scenes, followed this trend. In such a climate, the participation of women in the scene was accomplished most easily by becoming “one of the boys.”

I was used to women scene members who were “one of the boys.” I identified more easily with scene members like Nellie, Taryn, and Sara because like them, I had consciously “tapped into my masculine side” in the past: talking, drinking, moshing like the guys; and knowing and liking the music like the guys. Taking on masculine attitudes and behaviors helped us (women) accomplish “guy” status. But what I was seeing at shows again in 1999 after my two-year absence from the scene confused me. Here were female scene participants who dressed cute and feminine; yet, were clearly respected as core scene participants in the scene. I wondered what had happened to the scene and thought, “What’s with these girls?” It took me a while to comprehend that this confusion I experienced was about the monolithic way that I had been viewing sexual resistance.

The discrepancy of the distribution of power within the local Hawai‘i punk scene became an issue when women and queer scene members were exposed to indie and Riot Grrrl ideas from the mainland. Indie and Riot Grrrl were based on DIY, the ultimate punk rock ethos. Until then, women who found the masculinist scene threatening,
despicable, or just plain uninteresting just stayed away. Others like Taryn and Nellie decided they were happy with not being in bands but to participate in the scene as supporters and consumers of the music and a place to hang out with friends. Riot Grrrl and indie rock gave some scene members new ways to interpret their positions and conditions in the scene. As Eliasoph and Lichterman remind us, “People can’t change anything until they consider it a problem” (1999:220-230). Until a group of scene participants considered the situation in the scene at the time as problematic, things were not about to change.

A new crop of young women and queer scene participants had begun to question the social structure of the local Hawai‘i scene. They had decided to make it their business to shake up the normalized way in which the scene had regarded women and queer scene participants as a lower class of scene participants. As Nani, Pua, and others said, they were tired of not having a voice and not being represented. To the band musicians and other core scene members of the earlier scene (before 1999), this sentiment had never become an issue. The rad resistances of the metal/hardcore and ska/punk sub-scenes didn’t address the domination that some male scene members enjoyed over others. While individual core scene members like Carly and Sara had experienced obstacles to achieving the same status as their male band musician counterparts, these kinds of experiences never burgeoned into the grievances of a community of women scene members. These younger scene participants were determined to bring sexual resistance into the scene.

Sexuality has always been seen as an important part of rock music. Frith (1981)
states that “...the issue is not the nature of sex but its representations, and they work not by describing feelings, but by constructing them” (1981:240) and that rock music aids in these acts. Gottlieb and Wald (1994) further question the radical possibilities of what happens when understandings and symbolisms of hegemonic masculinity in rock are appropriated by women:

To what extent is music that is loud, hard, and fast ultimately a masculine kind of expression? Conversely, what place do women have in this kind of expression, except as one of the boys? What is the value of this kind of expression for women?...If the symbolic meaning of the lead guitar, signifying male power and virtuosity, the legitimate expression of phallic sexuality, perversity (Jimi Hendrix) and violence (Pete Townshend), is tirelessly resurrected by generations of male rock performers, then something potentially radical happens when women appropriate this instrument, with all its ingrained connotations. What has changed to give women access to the pleasures of hard, fast, rock music? (1994:257-258)

In the Hawai‘i local scene, women’s increased participation in bands offered them possibilities for sexual resistance to a hitherto very masculinist band scene. New female core scene participants also pointedly did not look, act, or sound like other female scene members, especially not like those who came to shows in the earlier stage of my data collection and analysis. More importantly, they did not take on the attitude of becoming “one of the boys” in order to prove themselves as worthy of the respect that male core scene members received. Instead, they had created a new kind of sexuality for themselves that achieved sexual resistance.

The contrast between Nellie and Romy illustrated earlier demonstrates the changes that occurred among women scene members’ participation in the scene towards the end of the 1990s and into the new millennium. Romy’s crowd wanted to change the taken-for-granted understandings that band musicians were men and girls needed to be
ready for molestation if they dared to mosh. They wanted to confuse gender roles and
gendered expectations in the scene.

Change did not occur overnight and was not accomplished without pain. But
Hawai‘i scene members had other cutting-edge local scenes on the mainland on which to
model their own music, style, and ideology. Hawai‘i women and queer scene participants
who wanted no part in the masculinist and sexist punk scene, but who nonetheless wanted
a scene on their own terms, did not have to create such a scene from scratch. They did,
however, have to endure a scene that was initially unfriendly to women or men who did
not play by traditional rules attached to rigidly scripted gender roles. The burden of
changing the character of the scene with regards to women and queer scene members
rested on the shoulders of this new crop of core scene members.

While the accomplishment of giving women and queer scene participants a
presence and voice was attributable to the work of women like Nani, Pua, Boom, and
Romy via sexual resistance—in maneuvering and negotiation—the part played by
sympathetic men cannot be neglected. For example, the fact that Oren made it his
priority to put struggling all-women bands on the bill at his shows gave the bands a big
boost. These bands had nobody else to take them under their wing or show them the
ropes as POW had done for Green M&Ms. Bands had to play. Furthermore, Oren had
credibility in the scene and his backing carried some clout. Oren sent a message to the
scene when he let Sistahs and Julie’s play. At the same time, he did not allow bands that
delivered misogynistic messages or degraded women in their songs, performances, and
behavior to play at shows that he organized. Furthermore, some open-minded male scene
participants shared the understanding that change came about by disrupting the gendered codes that ruled the sexist nature of the scene; thus, joining the women in their “rad” style and attitude.

In the following, I first discuss the “a-sexual” nature of core scene participants’ face-to-face interactions at punk shows focusing on their dress and band-fan relations. Next, I examine core scene participants’ self-writing in their on-line journals. In particular, talking dirty, resisting sexism, and discussing sexual identity were emergent themes that I then analyzed as the more overt sexuality found in scene participants’ discourse among close friends. Finally, I discuss audience reception to a band that brought overt sexuality into the public space of the show. Audience reception to this band had implications for the display of a new liberating sexuality for women and queer core scene participants.

A series of important bands in the indie sub-scene were comprised of the same core band members in different combinations. Figure 4 below illustrates and then outlines the different combinations of indie bands of a group of band musicians including Nani, Boom, and Romy. The table of band members starts with Sistahs with Scars and lists band members up to Postmortem in the order in which the bands were active. Figure 5 is an illustration that indicates approximately how long the indie bands were active compared to the life spans of bands of the other sub-scenes.
Figure 4 Overlap of members in five major indie sub-scene bands: Sistahs with Scars, Julie's Rooftop, Airhead, Gravyboat and Postmortem
Figure 5  Relative lengths of band activity

1998

POW  Green M&Ms  Salvation

1995

1996

1997

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

Metal / Hardcore  Ska / Punk  Indie

Blue Punx  Sistahs with Scars  Julie's Rooftop  Airhead  Gravyboat  Postmortem

Hero
A-sexual Action

Women’s dress and behavioral codes in rock music scenes typically construct women in sexual terms (Bayton 1990; Frith and McRobbie 1990; Leblanc 1999; McRobbie 2000). Although these rock music scenes were rooted in alternative subcultures, prominent scene participants were usually men, except for the occasional popular groupie or singer as sex symbol, both static roles for women in rock music. Other female scene members were supportive girlfriends or doting female fans of male performers, always secondary in their status of involvement in the creative aspects of the subculture; and therefore, not to be taken seriously. A line from a song by the well-known Riot Grrrl band, Bikini Kill, exemplifies the difficulty of being taken seriously as female musicians: “I see a punk club, He sees a strip bar,” as if all women on stages are identical to exotic dancers serving the needs of men.27

However, gender roles can be confused so that hegemonic masculinity—where straight, dominant masculinity are the norm—is de-stabilized. “Asexual” has been used to describe the absence of erotic display or to describe innocence. As stated by Weeks (1986, 2002), there are societies that “…display so little interest in erotic activity that they have been labeled more or less “asexual” (Weeks 2002:32). Byers (1998:722), in describing the sexuality of the main female adolescent character of a popular TV program as the “innocent” one as opposed to her “promiscuous” or “conformist” female friends, states: “Angela’s character is so predicated on asexuality (or the nonsexuality of childhood) that choice does not really exist for her.”

Here, I use a-sexuality in action to denote not a complete lack of sexuality, but a
sexuality that is neutralized and confused. As a covert sexuality, “child-like” (neutralized) and “androgynous” (confused) presentation of sexuality in action disrupted gender. In this section, action is examined in the face-to-face interaction among core scene members at shows and in the dress of core scene members and in their band-fan relations.

**Dress**

Hawai’i core scene members embraced the innovative subversive meanings associated with Riot Grrrl, emo, and indie subcultural styles. Riot Grrrl researcher Mary Celeste Kearney (1998) explains the meaning behind Riot Grrrl style:

Creating their own anti-fashion style through an uncategorizable amalgam of couture faux pas – thrift store girls’ clothes, plastic barrettes, industrial boots, knee socks, lunch boxes, tattoos and body piercings, and unconventional haircuts and colors – riot grrrls appropriate the accoutrements of girlhood, femininity, and alternative youth culture for an ironic (dis)play and disruption of the signifying codes of gender and generation. (1998:158)

In line with Riot Grrrl, emo, and indie style, one of the most commonly heard compliments for the way core scene participants looked, regardless of gender, was “cute.” Cute described parts or an ensemble of dress as in “Cute shoes!” or “He’s cute,” but was also used to describe behavior and interactions such as “Their set (band performance) was so cute today” or to describe a couple, as in: “They’re so cute together!” Cute was a compliment because cute disrupted gender by neutralizing sexuality. Gender disruption was considered “rad” (i.e., radical and cool); thus, giving cute scene members subcultural capital (Thornton 1996).

A cute look constituted a-sexuality through neutralization by evoking images of childhood. As Michel Foucault (1990) explains, children are seen to be without
sexuality, and adults feel they need to protect children from the evils of sexuality.

Resignifying and owning “cute,” especially for female scene members, was a challenge and resistance to dominant representations of female sexuality. This strategy was adopted from Riot Grrrl as described by Gayle Wald (1998:594-595).

For the young, predominantly middle-class white women who have participated in Riot Grrrl subculture, reveling in “girliness” constitutes an aesthetic and political response to dominant representations of female sexuality produced by the corporate music industry as well as a strategy of realizing women’s agency as cultural producers within independent rock.

For example, the following describes a display of this resistance at a show one night:

Boom wore a short red-and-white checkered short raincoat with a small Snoopy illustration on the breast to a show. The jacket fit snugly, and Boom proudly wore the coat buttoned up. Her hair was in pigtails. Her look was synchronized with the philosophy of her style, which she explained to someone who commented on her “cuteness:” “I’m wearing it because I can and want to.”

Boom’s style achieved cuteness as well as radical feminism through her display of the conscious disruption of gender and of generation.

Another piece of “cute” fashion was the thrift store chic, described by Kearney (1998). Retro outfits and pieces of ensembles such as dresses, black-rimmed cat’s eye glasses, Pan Am shoulder bags, etc. were included in the indie scene member fashion, but in a way that blurred the meanings that the style pieces held in the 1950s or 60s. In other words, in the indie sub-scene, skirts would be worn with T-shirts and sneakers, minus the heels or nylon stockings that would have been a part of the ensemble several decades ago. Thus, the constricting nature of women’s clothes disappeared, creating more of a tomboy look but with recognizable retro chic parts. Again, the messages were those of the
liberation of women and celebration of youth. Bunny wore such an outfit at a show when Sistahs played one night:

Bunny, fashionable as always, is wearing a dark-colored, sleeveless one-piece dress with large light-colored polka dots tonight. She is also wearing sneakers and black-rimmed cat’s eye glasses. Her look is feminine and cute, but also cool as she slings her guitar over her shoulder. I’ve also seen Nani and Pua dress similarly but the way in which Bunny pulled off the polka dots was impressive.

Similar to Boom’s use of Snoopy, other Sanrio characters and character goods were used by scene members. In Hawai‘i, because of the close vicinity to Japan, Hello Kitty and other character goods were available to the scene members when they themselves were kids. So when Riot Grrrl use of these goods became known to Hawai‘i scene members, many of them re-embraced these symbols by re-owning the “cuteness” represented by them. Stated Nani:

Living in Hawai‘i I think it was different. I collected pretty pencils and erasers and stuff as a kid [similar to Japanese children in Japan] so it may be somewhat different for us [in Hawai‘i], already having been exposed to Hello Kitty and stuff. But I do think that the original Riot Grrrls liked cute things like Hello Kitty because it differentiated them from the older feminists who didn’t take the younger girls seriously.

Sanrio products originally created for children as the target consumers of the goods. However, marketing soon shifted to adult Japanese women who became the most avid consumers of Sanrio products. This trend caught on with women in other Asian countries, and a variety of products developed for consumption by adult women has grown (e.g., Hello Kitty scooters, car seat covers, kitchen appliances, and even vibrators) (Yano 2004). In contrast to these Asian women, Riot Grrrl used Hello Kitty and other characters for the purpose of generation (i.e., celebrating youth) as well as gender
disruption (while not necessarily sexually subversive uses). As seen in the lyrics card of a Fabulous Disaster (an all-women San Francisco punk band) CD and the cover art of a compilation CD of contemporary women punk bands, the use of cute characters by women in punk subculture is not unusual (Figure 6).
RECEIVED
AS
FOLLOWS
Figure 6  Use of cute characters on CD lyrics cards
Cute imagery also extended from clothing and body accessories to the adornment of equipment, instruments, and even websites. Cute imagery was often incorporated through the use of frilly lace and pastel colors. For example, a Sistahs with Scars website, which had a bubblegum pink background with the band members’ close-up photos placed inside of star-shaped windows. At shows, I saw pink guitar straps and pastel blue guitars. Furthermore, Traci, whose band originally consisted of two women and two keyboards (but later became just Traci and her one keyboard), decorated her keyboard by taping lace along the edges.

In addition to cuteness, there was also a strong androgynous look achieved by both male and female core scene participants in the Hawai‘i scene, modeled after punk, emo and indies subcultural styles. “Androgynous dressing reveals a lack of commitment to traditional gender ideology and, in a larger context, a noncommitment to a single look” (Kaiser 1998:460). The androgyny described here should be distinguished from the highly sexualized androgyny of the largely male gender and sexual experimentation of the 70s NYC scene symbolized by the Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol. In the context of the 2001 Hawai‘i scene, androgyny can be seen more as an achievement of a-sexuality.

Due to the popularity of the androgynous look displayed at shows, distinguishing men and women was sometimes difficult. As a case in point, I once saw a man and a woman that were dressed almost exactly the same at a show:

Romy and Jefferson were sitting together behind the table in front of the Campus Activities Hall, the show venue. Jefferson looked just like Romy except leaner and taller. They both had the same color and similar hairstyle (short and dyed jet black), wore the same cat’s eye glasses, both wore Converse sneakers with black jeans and T-shirts.
While the indie sub-scene had Priscilla/Paul, the “scene fag,” who dressed in drag, most cross-dressing consisted of women dressing in clothes that might confuse them with men. In this gender-bending dress, there were several standard parts. For example, jeans and pants with T-shirts and sneakers constituted a basic outfit. Both men and women wore Converse sneakers. Although scene participants sometimes wore some makeup with the more “cute” look (Priscilla also wore makeup), in the androgynous look, women wore little or no makeup. Elisa, with a look that was slightly reminiscent of Patti Smith of the early NYC punk scene, often sported this look of boyishness. The following describes her look one night at a show:

Elisa is tall and skinny, and in terms of body type, she could be mistaken for a boy. Her hair is also styled in a pageboy/moptop cut, worn by some indie boys. She enhances this androgynous look by wearing a plain white T-shirt with jeans. The only other accessories are her plain and squarish black-rimmed glasses and some non-descript sneakers. The way in which she plays guitar also looks masculine, played with a long strap so that it hangs low in front of her.

Men often had long, mussed-up hair, reminiscent of the Seattle grunge scene of the early 1990s in the Pacific Northwest, seen by aspiring hipsters as a major indie mecca. Some male core scene members dressed in emo style, wearing buttoned-up collared shirts, cardigans, sweat jackets, black-rimmed glasses, turtlenecks, and corduroy pants. Both male and female androgynous dressers incorporated punk accessories such as bullet and grommet (spikes, studs, or other small pieces of silver metal planted on black leather) belts and dog-collar bracelets, as well as rubber bracelets, giving indie ensembles their punk edge.

Band and Fan Relations
What appeared a-sexual was not just the dress of core scene members in Hawai‘i. The manner in which scene members interacted with each other in public was also a-sexual in character. A-sexuality in face-to-face interaction between scene members was accomplished by reversed gender roles in band-fan interactions, avoiding behaviors that could be read as sexist, and parodying commonly sexualized scenarios. Gender relations are significant in band-fan relations in most rock music scenes because bands are made up of all or mostly men; women are usually relegated to the audience. Therefore, the most visible difference that women can make in a band scene is to form their own bands, because all-women bands disrupt gendered band and fan relations.

As mentioned earlier, in all three sub-scenes, many fans were also band members in their own bands. All-women bands were no exception. However, gaining a loyal following was not accomplished overnight. In the early indie sub-scene (around early to mid 1999), this was especially problematic because early all-women bands like Sistahs and Julie’s had to play shows where the audience was predominantly men, many of whom were not too fond of the idea that women were taking over the stage. There was no indie sub-scene before indie bands became prominent. Thus, in the beginning, fan-band relations were difficult to navigate for these bands. Over time, however, being a musician in an indie band became “rad” and the growing audience became a devoted one.

In a scene where bands were almost exclusively men, starting the first all-women band was a struggle. When Sistahs and Julie’s first started playing shows, some male scene participants refused to take all-women bands seriously and tried to denigrate and discourage them. Men who tried to resist the concept of women in bands either tried to
sexualize female band members or place them outside of their parameters of possible sexual conquests by labeling them as lesbians. An early interview with Pua is telling of these strategies: "There's still a lot of name-calling from ignorant guys. We get called sluts and 'boobs all over the place.' Or else, we're all lesbians!" An excerpt from Nani's zine described another early show experience:

"Take it off," I heard as I hesitantly walked up to the microphone. This happens every fucking time! We roll our eyes, and try not to fuck up the songs we practiced over and over at practice this week... I heard it a second time. How can four idiots ruin my whole night? It's because of you that people get nervous on stage. You are the reason I try not to move so much because I know you're looking at my tits, I'm reluctant to dance. We look down at our instruments—ashamed and embarrassed—questioning our ability. This is not how it's supposed to be. My sex has very little to do with why I'm in a band, so then why is it the first thing mentioned?

The frequency of Sistahs and Julie's performances helped them to gradually ignore the sexist comments directed at them. As Pua told me, "...at first, especially because we were getting jeered at and yelled at, I was really nervous all the time. But [singing in front of an audience] got easier in time." Once they became more comfortable with performing, Sistahs and Julie's gained recognition locally as bands that had turned the gendered band-fan relationship on its head. A local journalist commented on this inverted gender relationship as follows: "During Sistah's sets, fans have been known to fling BVDs [men's underwear] onto the stage in savage fits of devotion."

Public displays of affection among individuals at shows were mild at best. Kissing was rare and I witnessed very few instances of touching between couples. I only witnessed five instances of handholding. The contrast of Sistahs and Julie's with mainstream band-fan relations was glaring. For example, in popular mainstream bars in

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Honolulu, I often observed female fans kissing male musicians in the band on-stage. Once, I saw a singer from a band head towards the ladies’ room with a woman under each arm. Before taking off for the restrooms, the singer had partially unzipped the front of one woman’s tight mini dress and pushed his face between her breasts. This kind of highly conspicuous, public display of the virile male rock star with willing women at his beck and call was typical behavior of male musicians and their female fans that I witnessed outside of the local punk scene.

Individuals at band performances in the indie and ska/punk sub-scenes did not engage in public display of sexuality, nor did they tolerate such behavior from others. Core scene participants even vocalized their disgust with displays of outright sexual behavior, especially when the behavior was beyond holding hands or a peck on the lips.

The following is Nani’s description of an experience she and her friends had one evening and Nani’s thoughts on the incident from her online journal:

... in the parking lot ... I saw two people fucking in the backseat of a [Volkswagen] Jetta. When we first drove up the couple was making out near their car, okay ewww. They then proceeded to get in their car and make-out. We went to eat, and when we returned, the guy was hanging out of the car and it was fucking rocking back and forth. It was fucking disgusting.

This attitude of scene participants contributed to an asexual environment with scant, overtly sexual behavior.

A-sexuality in the scene was also evidenced in the dancing styles of scene members. In the metal/hardcore sub-scene of the local Hawai‘i scene, dancing was masculine, aggressive, and confrontational. This style of dancing had been around for years, with some movements like jumping up and down as if on a pogo stick (said to have
been started by Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols in the 70s). Other traditional punk dance styles included strutting around, sometimes with arms flailing. A “mosh pit” or “moshing” started with a few men strutting in a large circle in front of the stage, or purposely running into each other. As described by Gottlieb and Wald (1994):

Cathartic exercises in semilegitimized violence or visceral abandon in collective movement, slamdancing and stage-diving clearly have different implications for boys and for girls. While they might willingly take part in a crowd of human projectiles, girls operate at a disadvantage because of their generally smaller size and weight, moreover, for girls, the violence in the pit can quickly shade into violation (1994:257).

Although in the late 90s, some metal/hardcore and ska/punk sub-scene bands had “women only” pits for a song in their set, the mosh pit was almost all male.

By contrast, since 1999, both male and female fans danced in forms other than moshing at indie sub-scene shows. Small mosh pits still developed at times when a ska/punk band played a set. Skanking, another mode of dance from ska and reggae was sometimes seen, especially at ska/punk sub-scene shows. Skanking was individualized for the most part, with running in place, cranking arms and legs, sometimes using kicking motions. Some skanking was close to slam dancing in mosh pits. But as Mark, the singer/guitar player for his ska/punk band told me, he liked to see girls skanking at shows. He said, “It’s so cool to see them having fun skanking to something you’re playing. Sometimes they close their eyes and look like they’re really feeling the music.”

As Romy told me in addition to her impressions of the mosh pit, she said, “I love dancing. It’s just that I don’t want to mosh just because I want to dance.”

Initially, both men and women in the indie sub-scene danced in place and moved to the beat in a bouncing or swaying motion. The singers of Sistahs and Julie’s, Nani and
Pua, moved very little, generally spreading their legs about shoulder distance apart and usually holding the microphone, clasping their hands behind their backs, or keeping their hands in fists at their sides. Other band members also moved very little with their eyes looking down or at their guitar, bass, or keyboard. The lack of movement in band members resulted from an initial fear of men fixating on their moving breasts. The resulting stationary playing also contrasted with the showy style of male musicians.

Dancing styles associated with emo music also became popular. This style was also individualized with little contact with others. The dancer writhed, squirmed, and jerked to the music, sometimes ending up falling to the floor. Keith and Mark of Kats’ band were known to end up on their backs at some point during a show. While the style seems to have originated with the male singers of emo bands, male audience members also quickly picked these up. Styles changed over time. Once Pua, Nani, and the other band members began to feel more comfortable with their performances and Sistahs and Julie’s became known as established bands in the scene, bands began using sexual parodies in their performances. Scene members knew the power of sex; thus, they over-exaggerated traditional sexual scenarios in a sort of parody.

Parodying, common in punk, accomplished the subversion of commonly understood meanings associated with situational scenarios. Punk theorists have often used the example of the swastika emblem—often worn as a style accessory by punks—to explain that displaying the swastika is an example of bricolage and parody. The symbol is stripped from its original context and meaning and exploited for shock and empty effect by display through distancing, irony, inversion, and parody. The observer is forced
to understand that after the initial shock effect, not only does the swastika no longer carry the meaning of fascism or Nazism, through its use by punks, it has been emptied of any kind of identifiable meaning whatsoever (Cohen 1972, Hebdige 1979).

In the field of gender and sexuality, as Butler (1999) explains, gender parody is funny and subversively powerful because the performance disrupts normalized gender, confusing common understandings of gender and gendered relations. She states:

> Although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization. As imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original, they imitate the myth of originality itself... The loss of the sense of “the normal,” however, can be its own occasion for laughter, especially when “the normal,” “the original” is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one can embody. (1999:176)

As an example of such parody, the following is the description of an occurrence at a show. A male friend of Sistahs performed a familiar scene on stage – that of the exotic dancer, but with gender roles reversed:

> In response to a fun, teasing comment by Pete, Bunny (the guitar player for Sistahs) said, “I don’t see you up here, Pete!” To this, he got up on stage and danced like an exotic dancer, gyrating while slowly turning. His dancing was so convincing that one of his male friends slid a bill into his jeans in the manner of how men usually slide bills into exotic dancers’ underwear.

As another example, the white nurse’s uniform, already familiar as “the pornographic naughty nurse costume,” was often used for parody in shows. The nurse costume in the show situation constituted parody by confusing the commonly understood image of the naughty nurse, and disrupting gender. For example, a visiting band, the Shags, featured a “naughty nurse”:

> The only woman in the band, a guitarist, was wearing a white nurse’s
uniform. Her look was out-of-place with the other 3 grungy-looking male band members. For example, the bass player looked and moved like Angus Young of AC/DC [guitarist of a popular 1980s metal band]. In contrast, the female guitarist’s look was poignantly subversive—looking the part of a nurse while thrashing away furiously on her guitar.

Indie sub-scene and some ska/punk sub-scene members were non-traditional and subversive in their band and fan relations. As women constituted whole bands and shared dancing space with men in the audience, gender was disrupted at band performances. Interaction between band members and fans defied the traditional norms of gendered and sexual band-fan behavior at shows. Moreover, sexual parodying of common sexual scenarios had a subversive effect. In combination with cute and androgynous sartorial and behavioral presentations, the new norms and expectations for action established at shows rendered stereotypical gendered categories de-stabilized.

**Sexual Writing**

While scene members compartmentalized their sexuality by accomplishing a-sexuality through their cute and androgynous dress and their non-traditional and gender-confused band-fan interactions at band performances; they discussed a more sexualized self-identity when in the company of close friends. A documented precedent for this kind of compartmentalization of sexuality of the self is found in the diary of a lesbian in 19th century aristocratic England. Clark writes (2002:256):

Anne developed her lesbian sense of self most explicitly in discussions with other women. Yet Anne had to convey her interactions, and her knowledge, in coded terms that enabled her to control interactions with potential friends and lovers. Concealment, of course, was necessary, to survive as a lesbian in a hostile world.

Similarly, participants in contemporary les-bi-gay youth cybercultures made distinctions between their on-line (where they were “out”) and off-line lives (where they were
“not out”). Explain Addison and Comstock: “For them, the consequences of being out on-line are not perceived to be as great as those of being out off-line” (1998:375).

For local scene members, and especially indie sub-scene members, one of the main mediums for communication was the online journal, a personal journal that was placed on the Internet and made accessible to others. The incongruity between the impressions of scene participants presented on websites and those seen at shows was clear. The child-like and androgynous a-sexuality of scene participants at shows disappeared in online journal writing and a more sexualized and complex version of the same individuals emerged. More specifically, scene members were freely sexual in their journal writing. The sexual nature of core scene members’ writing was found in talking dirty, resisting sexism, and discussing sexual identities.

**Talking Dirty**

Scene participants commonly talked dirty by discussing sexual desire, sexual acts, and sexualized bodies. Due to the number of women in proportion to men who participated in online journal writing and because of these scene participants’ sexuality, much of the celebrated sexuality and sexual desire expressed in women’s online journals was woman-centered and/or homosexual.

Entries about sexual attraction were common examples of sexual writing. The following passages from two scene members’ journals document such moments of attraction. Romy wrote: “… I couldn’t stop looking at her sports bra. I felt like a pervert, but I am going to buy a sports bra of my own tomorrow. I want my boobs to look like hers.” Trish illustrated a scene at a club: “…next thing you know, this weirdo
crazy bitch started dancing. She took off her jacket, and her breasts were exposed. We enjoyed the sight :D [Emoticon in original] I mean... at least I did. She had nice boobs.”

Similar to talking about sexual attraction, “dirty talk” was also found in online journals. Sexual references in dirty talk took several forms. Some entries were written in poetry or other creative writing forms. Trish often utilized sexual metaphor as in the following poem:

```
what happened to me, dear sandman? I closed my eyes... the next thing I remember is opening them again. I'm not saying that it felt like unfulfilling sleep... I just don't remember anything in between. Like a void of some sort... big and black, like your COCK!!! :x
the house is a mess. I want to clean, but the keyboard has me in handcuffs, with just enough slack to reach my hand over to the ashtray and partake in the inhalation of carcinogenic carbon dioxide [sic]. This monitor [sic], hypnotic, engulfs my sight... large and wide like my ASS!!! :B [Emoticons in original]
```

Nani mixed sexual attraction, humor, and identity politics in her journal. In the following, she admits her fascination with an actress in the popular HBO television show, “Sex and the City.” Nani understood that the show was not very “cool” because of its tendency to portray heterosexual relationships as “normal relationships” and because of the main characters being young, beautiful, thin, white, and stylish wealthy women, unlike most real women. In a confessional type of statement, she wrote:

```
I know how this show is not only nauseating because it perpetuates heteronormality, ... It also encourages gentrification, but kill me, I’ve got a thing for a woman [Kim Catrall] that drinks cosmopolitans and talks dirty... at least I’m honest. [Above brackets in the original.]
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Photos scanned into journals were also effective sexual communicators. Some photos were not pornographic, but became sexualized when captions were added. For example, Romy’s journal contained a large photo of Romy’s girlfriend holding a kitten.
The caption by Romy read: “Look at this sweet girl.” Nani commented in her response to this, “Both pussies are fine.” Another example of a photo sexualized by the added caption was a photograph of a “Hunx,” one of the band members of the band Gravytrain, a queercore band (a punk/rap band with queer lyrical content and performance style), which Zeke put in his journal. Zeke had answered an online questionnaire at quizilla.com and entered the results (the photo plus caption) on his journal. Quizilla.com was familiar to online scene members and is easily accessible on the Internet. Alongside the photo was the caption as shown in Figure 7.29
You are

HUNX ! ! ! !

You are easy to attract with honey. You have a small frame, but a strong position on rotten crotches. As your photos show, you usually like to have something in your mouth.

Which Gravy Train!!! Rap Bitch Are You?

brought to you by Quizilla

Figure 7 "Hunx" as featured in Quizilla.com.
Another common form of a dirty talk entry was the celebration of sexual empowerment. Although these scene participants interpreted displays of male sexual dominance as sexist and unacceptable, non-male-dominant sexuality was accepted and welcomed. Nani’s following entry highlighted the notion of sexual empowerment through the use of sex toys. She wrote:

the night was humorous, especially when the ladies got to talking about their “real power tools.” it’s so fun when girls talk about sex toys, it just makes me feel good knowing i am not the only one that is/used to be obsessed with getting off. i guess i’m kind of over the whole “i must orgasm!” thing, but it’s still amusing to share stories. if you need help, good vibes is where its [sic] at. [Underscore designates a virtual link.]

Nani and Romy celebrated woman-centered sexuality through denouncing the use of genital deodorants in the following online journal discussion. The genital deodorant contraption in question was designed to neutralize female genital odor. The two discussed:

Nani: When I go to town, I do. I don’t need something to curb the smell, half the fun is the smell and the consumption, the connection… tubes in the nose isn’t the hottest thing.
Romy: I think it’s offensive. The pussy snorkel, i mean… You know a fucking guy invented it. I don’t need someone to tell me about my body, when they know nothing about me. I like the way I smell.

These entries illustrate that while taking control of their sexual pleasure, scene participants were wary of being controlled sexually for the benefit of men. Subversive because of the liberal use of sexual references to non-straight and non-male-centered sexuality, online scene participants brought female and non-heterosexual sexuality, usually relegated to the margins, to the center.

Resisting Sexism

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Superiority of men and degradation of women—especially through objectification of the female body—constituted sexism. Another common online journal entry relating to sexuality was overt verbal resistance to such sexism. As explained by Markham (1998:224), some individuals go to cyberspace to “talk.” She says, “...some escape the scrutinizing, persistent gaze that follows them in bodied spaces.” While core scene members celebrated woman-centered and non-straight sexuality through talking dirty, they also discussed the problem of the prevalence of sexist thinking. As an example of the kind of sexism discussed, Boom told me about a conversation she had at work:

Okay, so I’m at work and this 19-year-old boy says that women are bad drivers. I said, “I’m a woman too.” “Well, YOU’RE not, but you know what I mean.” “No, I’m a woman too. You can’t go around talking like that.” He apologized but then he’s like, “Are you in a bad mood?” Like I said this because I was in a bad mood!

An entry on Tina’s journal also described a core scene member’s frustration with how ingrained sexist thinking is, even in those they care about and love. The following entry was a conversation between Tina and her boyfriend regarding a TV program, in which Tina confronted the faulty logic of her boyfriend’s statement:

We were watching a documentary on prostitution and he [boyfriend] said, “They [prostitutes] have sex with married men and ruin marriages,” and I said, “How do the prostitutes know that those guys are married? Anyway, they’re the ones that go to the prostitute.”

As in the above examples, scene participants often “called people on” comments that offended them. As Melissa Klein (1997) explains, confronting sexism is important because the act of confrontation draws attention to the problem. Furthermore, discussing sexism with others combats the social isolation of women. Klein used the example of the harassment of women by men on the street to illustrate these points:

...I understood the anger, because I felt it myself, particularly
around issues such as street harassment... We feel as if we are entering a war zone every time we walk down a crowded sidewalk wearing shorts... Street harassment is something all girls have in common, and the discovery and discussion of this served as a catalyst for widespread feminist activism. Talking about it together made us view our experiences not as degradation by men but as a source of communal action among women.... We found that sometimes if we stopped to engage one of them [harassers] and told him he was hurting us, he would feel ashamed and apologize profusely (1997:218).

The strategy of discussing offensive comments often resulted in a series of responsive entries on journals, but also took place on other Internet sites. The following were entries on a Hawai'i punk scene message board, an Internet site where scene participants posted and read messages. Sceneboard users posted anything from questions about upcoming shows to notices of guitars for sale. Occasionally, there were longer discussions consisting of several short “response postings” to an initial entry. In the following entry, the original poster of the message went by “Anonymous.” He was later found to be male. The message read:

A few words on Sistahs with Scars... some of them should play nude... I would dance if they were to play in the buff with little teddy bear necklaces and ribbons in their hair. I would like it... You would too.

The message offended many scene participants and triggered a long series of comments. Romy entered the following in her journal:

It [the message board posting] made me feel really really shitty. It made me feel like everything we’ve done is cancelled out by the fact that we have vaginas... I wish I hadn’t posted anything [a complaint on the message board], I feel like I gave in, sort of. The post is not mean, but it is invalidating.

In support of Romy and critical of the original writer (i.e., “Anonymous”), many commenters posted messages to the board or in Romy’s online journal. The following
message, posted to the sceneboard, reflected the general sentiment of the numerous
comments:

Persons with vaginas are still persons like anybody else and they exist for
their own reasons, not to dance around naked for you...Right on to Romy
and everybody else who responded to the above post. And to the men
who think anybody is making too big a deal out of sexism—you are part
of the problem.

By calling people on their comments and bringing the statements to the attention
of others, scene members were able to illustrate what constituted sexism. By disrupting
the communication of ideas for the purpose of calling attention to the problematic nature
of the statements, scene members sent powerful messages of what would not be tolerated
in their scene. As a result, bringing instances of sexist actions and comments to people’s
attention worked as a social control mechanism to police sexism.

**Discussing Sexual Identity**

As several online scene members identified as queer, core scene members often
discussed queer identity in their journals. The term “queers” generally refers to a diverse
group of people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT). Bell
and Valentine’s (1995) explanation of queer is informative here:

...perhaps the most significant, and for many the most seductive aspect of
the appearance of queer, was its much-flaunted inclusiveness: queer
embraced literally anyone who refused to play by the rules of
heteropatriarchy...Where the pre-queer world of lesbians and gay men
was (is) boundary-ridden, queer welcomed (virtually) everyone, or so it

Suzanna Danuta Walters (1996) states that “queer” is a more confrontational
signifier for homosexuals, gays, lesbians, bi-sexuals, transsexuals, and sympathizers of
their cause. She states:
... *queer* is used as a signifier of a new kind of “in your face” confrontational gay/lesbian politics (Queer Nation, etc.), particularly a politics around AIDS that brings together gay men and lesbians in a direct and powerful attempt to change policies. So *queer* in this usage would signify a politics and theory with a difference, typically a generational difference but also a (asserted) difference of style, of strategy, of tactics, of ideology (Walters 1996:833).

Similar to Addison and Comstock’s (1998:371) study of les-bi-gay youth cyber culture, online journals were utilized by queer scene members as “important sites for resistance, reproduction, and pleasure.” Of the online scene participants’ journals I regularly read, one of the men was gay and several of the women identified as lesbian, bi, or queer. Others just said they “liked both boys and girls.” Romy, who, during the period of my data collection began to date women as well as men, described how she enjoyed her newfound sexuality. She wrote in her journal:

> I like to hang out with/have crushes on rad people, gender matters not. It might be that I’m still pretty new at this, and that I’m very excited and liberated-feeling about it, but I think that most people would probably feel this way, if given the chance and the support to try it. I think that limiting yourself to one gender for friendship or other relationships is so silly.

Entries about individual sexual identity were self-reflexive. Similar to the self writing described by Foucault (1997:211), these entries of self-reflection on identity are written “... to capture the already-said, to collect what one has managed to hear or read, and for a purpose that is nothing less than the shaping of the self.” Not meant to be a mere narrative of the self, self writing, according to Foucault, makes experiences a part of the self and is proactive. In the case of online scene participants, online journals seemed to help hash out complex issues of identity through writing that helped make sense of readings and experiences. Self-writing both defined and developed the self.
In online journal writing, some scene participants demonstrated how unnecessary it was to have labels distinguishing sexual preferences. For example, Trish described in her journal how she no longer wanted to have sexual relations with a man with whom she had been intimate, and then tied these feelings to a redefinition of her own sexuality. She wrote:

...this is the same person I've been having "relations" with...so anyway, it seemed like he wanted to get his freak on...so he kept trying to you know...get me "hot" but it didn't work. I didn't want to kiss him. I didn't want sex. I told him straight "I'm sorry if I seem like a tease right now, but I just want to be held"...and I know he respects me enough as a person not to pursue it. He'll always be my friend...but I don't know if I really want this from him anymore, nor anybody. no, this does not make me straight...nor is it making me gay. yeah, so you can consider me "confused," but I really don't care. I'm not "confused," I just have more to choose from :) [Emoticon in the original]

Although they became relatively comfortable in the core of the indie sub-scene, queer scene members still felt marginalized outside of the scene’s core, and online journals provided a safe forum for talking about marginalized sexual identity. Nani, who identified as queer as well as other marginalized identities, described her isolation as follows: “…I think a big reason I’ve felt so isolated is because the people I interact with on a regular basis and see all the time are for the most part, white and heterosexual …”

As stated by Markham (1998:224), “Whether as a tool or a place or a way of being, these participants use cyberspace, go there, or exist in the text to achieve a sense of freedom and control. Some feel they are more vocal or are allowed a voice.”

Sexual Action: A Possibility?

The compartmentalization of sexuality by scene participants most typically in the indie sub-scene was altered when they felt they had accumulated enough subcultural
capital and had earned some credibility in the scene. All-women bands became respected both for what they had accomplished (i.e., altering gendered band and fan relations), and for aspiring to be serious musicians. Soon, scene participants became bolder in their attempts to shake up the taken-for-granted gendered and sexualized rules of the scene.

Core scene members in the indie sub-scene tried to push the envelope. Could their action as well as discourse be sexual? Could the show, the most public manifestation of the scene, be as sexual as scene members' presentations of self in their private (for self and close friends) discourse of the online journal? In the following, I demonstrate how scene members began to incorporate “in-your-face” sexual presentations of self at shows, similar to the way in which their presentations were sexual in their online journals. They accomplished this by performing over-the-top overt sexuality in band performances and by layering “cute” style with the added connotation of sexual attractiveness: “hot.” Although the sexually subversive resistance achieved through these means was celebratory, the response of the audience and how core scene members read these responses became obstacles to overcoming the heteronormative nature of the local Hawai‘i scene.

**Over-the-Top Sexual Performance in Public**

The question of whether sexual action or overt sexuality in the public sphere was possible was asked only when scene participants in the indie sub-scene became confident enough and angry enough to go to the next level. Building on the success of bands such as Sistahs with Scars and Julie’s Rooftop, core scene participants—many of whom identified as queer—decided they also wanted non-straight scene participants to have a
presence and a voice in the scene. As Pua explained to me, “Similar to how gay and lesbian movements built on the women’s movement, we want to also empower queer scene participants as well as girls or women.” Given the momentum of the indie sub-scene, core scene participants felt that perhaps they could attempt to bring a more sexualized self presentation into the public.

Core indie sub-scene members used to avoid presenting overtly sexualized selves in the public sphere of the show. Having experienced firsthand how people who came to shows viewed all women on stage as if they were strippers, band members were still apprehensive about presenting an overt sexuality in public. But things looked like they might change. Around the time that Sistahs and Julie’s were increasing their fan base, an openly gay male scene member, Zeke, started coming to shows. The knowledge that Zeke worked in the porn section of a popular video shop was also public information in the scene and created a highly sexualized gay male persona in him. Zeke was also an avid online journal writer, and the amount of sexualized writings in his journal rivaled or surpassed that of Nani’s, Romy’s or Trish’s.

The increasing prominence of queer scene participants coincided with the growing influence of multi-media presentations in the indie sub-scene. In February 2001, the band Le Tigre came to play a show in Hawai‘i. Le Tigre was a multi-media act involving Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill (one of the original Riot Grrrl bands) and two other women. The act used a drum machine, keyboards, video monitors, movie screen, and lots of physical activity including jumping rope, running on the stage, and of course, singing as well as rapping. Soon after the show Airhead was born. Airhead, a multi-
media rap band, utilized two monitors that showed videos of Romy and Zeke. The two rapped lyrics to a drum machine. Pua, Nani, and Boom stood in a row behind the monitors and danced in the background. All of the band members except for Boom had also recently been to Olympia, WA for the big indie rock festival, Yoyo-a-gogo. While there, they had also seen many cross-media indie band presentations.

While the unusual style of presentation in the scene was eye-opening, so too was a new presentation of gender-bending. This was different from the cross-dressing by Priscilla and was less eye-catching. Airhead was still cute/androgynous as in the style of Sistahs and Julie’s (i.e., a-sexual). Nani and Boom, however, wore tight clothes (i.e., leotards, sometimes a size too small, as Nani complained to me about). Looking back, the gender bending by Pua, in which she usually donned a mustache and wrote “do it with girls” on her arm was a sign of things to come. Airhead was also Zeke’s debut as a band member and only the second time that an “out” gay man performed in a band in the scene. The first was Paul, but his performance in his band was not overtly sexual. The knowledge that Zeke, Nani, Pua, and Romy were gay also added to the subtle queering that this act had begun in the scene.

However, the real statement was yet to come. Gravyboat started performing at indie shows at the end of October 2001. Gravyboat (named by me here in reference to the group Gravytrain because of the obvious influence of Gravytrain on this band) was clearly influenced by queercore. Hip hop and rap influences were also clear. Gravyboat’s beginnings were symbolic of the band’s lighthearted approach. When I asked Boom how they got started, she told me they were just fooling around and
stumbled upon the members and materials for a band. She explained:

Nani, Zeke, and I were sitting around at Sistahs practice one day and we were just bored. We started playing rhyming games and we ended up making dirty rhymes. I liked doing that anyway. I used to write dirty rhymes in notebooks when I was bored during class in high school. Eventually, we started rapping the dirty rhymes and that became our act.

It is difficult to say whether the lyrics or physical performance of the band was more hyper-sexualized. Gravyboat’s music, as described by Nani, was rap by the three band members layered onto beats and techno sounds taken from computer games. Zeke wrote most of the lyrics that they kept for their performances. Nani told me: “Zeke comes up with the words. He has a lot of inspiration around him at work with all the porn around. He watches a lot of porn in general too.” The following are excerpts of some lyrical content from three of Gravyboat’s songs:

hot shit, is that gonna fit?
strap on so big gonna break your clit,
hot damn, look at them go,
four to one fuck ratio

stuffing poppers up your nose
turning tricks we’re professional hoes
wearing shorts and see through tees
fucking around, collecting vds
blowing johns in dirty ditches
riding six fours, hitting switches
yall might think that our job sucks,
but whatever we get paid to fuck

female ejaculation
homoerotic speculation
chocolate milk lactation
supertrippledouble penetration
slow mo two handed masturbation
and the afro bush blacksploration
and the rainbow connection
The repeated mention of sexualized bodies and sexual acts, in outrageously vulgar language was as overwhelming as it was refreshing. This strategy of hypersexualizing discourse of the members of Gravyboat, as well as other core scene participants, benefited from the parodic "self-naming" by women in rock on the mainland. Gottlieb and Wald (1994) explain this phenomenon as follows:

...many of the new women's bands name themselves in response to a ubiquitous and negative vocabulary for the female body, calling themselves Hole, Burning Bush, Thrush, Queen Meanie Puss, Snatch, Pop Smear, Ovarian Trolley and Dickless...Self-naming here becomes a tactic not only of reclaiming and recirculating masculinist terms (and thereby depleting their potency), but also of outing or enabling women's uses of vocabularies otherwise forbidden to "good" girls, who are never supposed to swear or speak to [sic] loudly in public, let alone refer explicitly to their genitals and what they do with them (1994:254-255).

The significance of such self-naming is much like the empowerment of core women scene participants in their discussion of sex toys and pleasure in conversations among close friends and in journals.

The Gravyboat trio also took great care in putting together their wardrobes. Their look was sexually provocative. On some nights (e.g., at the transvestite bar owned by Elisa's mother), the more mixed retro 70s and 80s themes of Members Only jackets, bordered running shorts with striped leotards and cotton headbands and wrist bands were dominant. On other nights (e.g., at Zeke's house party while his parents were vacationing in the Bahamas), a more "bling bling"31 glam look took over, featuring mink stoles, black lace bustiers, big gold chains and rings, and bags with designer logos.

Their resulting style was significant because it successfully combined a number of styles and ideas that had been seen hitherto as incongruous: rap and punk, queer and
straight, minimalist and conspicuously consumptive. Core scene participants in the indie sub-scene added not gender ambiguous but clearly gay male sexuality (Zeke) combined with gay (Nani) and straight female sexuality (Boom) to create flexibility of performance and of identity on stage. All three band members were also Asian and/or Hawaiian, which was interesting given the incorporation of contemporary African American musical and presentation style (i.e., rap) in their band performance.

Finally, the style brought the gender bending, gender ambiguous glam look of the 70s (as represented by bands like David Bowie and the New York Dolls) together with a 90s queercore (as represented by Team Dresch and Pansy Division) style. As Gottlieb and Wald (1994) say of experimental male rockers of the 70s and similarly of Riot Grrrl:

> Although male experiments with gender did not translate into an equal flexibility for women, glam and disco helped to erode the necessary association of popular music with romance and heterosexuality, thereby preparing the way for female performance in punk rock. Introducing explicit homoerotics onto the rock stage, male glam rockers—like their female successors—revealed the performativity of gender (1994:260).

The performance consisted of the rapping and dancing by Zeke, Nani, and Boom. All three danced and rapped, usually with a focus on one solo rapper as the main attraction for part of a particular song. The all-out hypersexuality of the lyrics were matched, if not transcended, by the visual performance. Dirty dancing, rubbing, grabbing crotches, and spanking climaxed in a threesome of humping with at least one of the three on their backs on the stage floor. The moaning, panting, sighing, and screaming as back vocals also added considerably to the mock make-out sex sessions of the three with their clothes on.

One of the most significant aspects of Gravyboat was the apparent pleasure of the
three during their performance. They were having fun playing by engaging in hypersexualized parodic performance. This enjoyment of those on the stage quickly rubbed off on the audience and made the performance even stronger. This aspect of pleasure of the performance contrasted with the earlier bands that Nani and Boom had been in. Performing had always had a serious component to it.

While the very serious message of queer scene members asserting their presence was delivered, the fun that the three looked different from the fun that Nani, Boom, Bunny, and Romy had in Sistahs with Scars or that Pua, Nani, Jen, and Carrie had in Julie's Rooftop. Especially striking was Boom's presence in Gravyboat. She had been the quiet, sensitive, and serious-looking bass player in Sistahs but in Gravyboat, it was almost as if she had been set free to enjoy herself while she performed. The silly lyrics also accentuated the fun aspect of the band. Nani and Boom explained the silliness as follows:

Nani: In Gravyboat, I feel hypersexualized. You're not kinda sexy, you're super sexy. It's a joke and sexy in a silly way, but I still feel it's hypersexuality.
Boom: It's so sexual that it's silly.

This discrepancy in the individual character of band performers in Gravyboat, contrasted with their roles in their previous all-woman bands, reminded the scene of the often stereotyped personality traits of rock musicians, depending on what instruments they played (i.e.; outgoing loud singer; virtuoso guitar player; crazy but fun drummer; quiet and sensitive bass player, etc.). The discrepancy also added to the impact that Gravyboat had. The fact that core scene members could perform so differently in different contexts—even if these were two different band performances—accentuated the
parodic character of the Gravyboat performance.

In the punk tradition, Gravyboat had grabbed people’s attention and challenged heteronormativity by confusing the audience and forcing them to re-think what was happening. They challenged the audience to enjoy the silly and fun performance, but they also challenged the audience to catch on to the serious message that was contained. People did not know what to make of this act for many reasons. The performers broke rule after rule about what was expected of a punk rock act. Gravyboat used no instruments besides bodies and voices. Most of all, Gravyboat was queer. And it brought to you “in-your-face” (queer) sexuality.

There was still some concern among Zeke, Nani, Boom, and other core scene members that many people would not understand their effort and that audiences would not be shocked and confused in the “correct” way. Playing for the indie sub-scene was fine because indie sub-scene members were progressive-minded and the performance would have the intended effect on that crowd. But when the band agreed to play in a festival of resistance on campus at the University of Hawai‘i, Nani told me of her concerns. She said, “I don’t think they’ll understand what we’re trying to do. I mean, what if they take the lyrics literally and try to attack us or something? We don’t have any security.”

However, the fact that Gravyboat agreed to perform at this festival led me to think that they were counting on at least some measure of security (in the form of informal social control) from the regular scene member audience that would also come to the Gravyboat performance at the resistance festival. In the end, the performance that was
meant to be for non-scene member as well as scene member audiences only attracted a few of the more progressive students anyway. The festival itself only interested a limited population within the University of Hawai‘i student population, and much of that population was already part of the indie sub-scene. Perhaps the larger student population did not have as much interest in the punk scene or in organized resistance in general (the theme of the festival) to want to see Gravyboat. As a result, no harm was done to band members, but the band’s message was also not delivered to those outside of the scene.

Adding “hot” to “cute”

A related change in the local Hawai‘i indie-sub-scene occurred when the sub-scene’s core scene participants added connotations of “hot” to “cute” style. While the retro thrift shop chic look that combined parts of feminine or “dorky” fashion (i.e., skirts, dresses, plastic black-rimmed glasses, Converse sneakers, T-shirts, turtleneck sweaters, etc.) constituted “cute” or androgynous, core scene participants eventually started adding the dimension of “hot” (i.e., sexy and sexually attractive) to the definition of indie style. In other words, scene participants began re-defining their style as “hot” in addition to the cute and androgynous connotations these styles had, by layering on a sexually attractive component of meaning to what used to be a-sexually attractive (i.e., cute or androgynous).

This gradual change in the meaning of the style of indie sub-scene members occurred mainly because of band members’ and other core scene members’ confidence in their own style and ideas (namely, feminist and queer). The birth of Airhead and Gravyboat played no small part in adding to scene members’ confidence. As noted
earlier, Nani had explained in the past that the reason the Hawai`i indie sub-scene incorporated only the cute style but not the overtly sexualized style of Riot Grrrl into its own style was because the Hawai`i scene was too small and the community was not ready to support the “in-your-face” sexualized style of Riot Grrrl. But because the indie sub-scene with additional support from the larger gay community responded positively to Gravyboat, “in-your-face” sexuality became more acceptable.

While the usage of “hot” was hitherto relegated to the private spheres of online journal writing, or in conversation between close friends or lovers, usage of the term gradually moved into the public sphere of the show. This change was heard as verbal comments in public. The same outfits, pieces of style, band performances, relationships that used to be “cute” were now being referred to as “hot” as well as cute. For example, “She’s (He’s) hot.” “That is a hot bag.” “We’re (Our relationship is) hotty hot.” In defining rad, the term “hot” was replacing “cute.”

In addition to hearing “hot” a lot, in the latter part of 2002 and into 2003, I started noticing that several female core scene participants who had hitherto specialized in cute or androgynous style, started dressing “hotter” or sexier, combining cuteness with more overt (as opposed to covert) sexuality or donning a sexualized androgyny, as opposed to the earlier a-sexual version of these ensembles. For example, in a performance of keyboard and vocals, Traci (who, by now, had a monopoly on the use of lace and frills) wore an extremely short white mini dress adorned with her signature lace and frills. That Traci stood upright during her performance added to the intrigue. The dress was so short that one wondered what might be seen, were Traci to lean or bend over ever so slightly.
Another example of a “hot” dresser was Elisa, who just three years earlier, was the one woman scene participant who could consistently be mistaken for a man because she always dressed in plain T-shirts, jeans, and sneakers, with her black hair worn in a pageboy-mop-top cut. Elisa wore a tight mini jeans skirt, tank top, fancy sandals with heels, a purse, and dyed and permed hair to a show in 2003. She was no longer in a band. When I spoke to her at the show, she told me, “I’m going to a fashion design school in Los Angeles now.”

Even I was complimented when I dressed up to go to Zeke’s house party, at which bands like Gravyboat and Traci’s then two-women-two-keyboard act played. This particular party/show had a theme (glamour/gore) so we, as participants in the party, were supposed to dress in accordance with the theme. Pua, who met me inside, looked at my outfit of black T-shirt, torn-up old jeans shorts over magenta tights, John Fleuvog black leather shoes, pigtails, with purposely smudged mascara and red lipstick, said, “Fumi, you look so hot!”

Especially in terms of women’s self-presentation, local Hawai‘i scene participants were finally incorporating both aspects of the cutting-edge feminist expression of Riot Grrrl: in the forms of a-sexual cute as well as in-your-face sexual expression. Marion Leonard (1997) explains the overtly sexual component of Riot Grrrl expression as follows:

... many grrrls chose to adopt particularly feminine dress codes, wearing bunched hair and hairslides with patterned dresses. The critique of the construction of femininity is abundantly clear when this attire is juxtaposed with bold words such as ‘whore’ written on the body... there is a clear semiotic intention behind such modes of display (1997:235-236).
The progression of Nani and Boom's band involvement itself (as examples of women active in bands in the indie sub-scene in Hawai'i) is an indication of the evolution from just “cute” to “cute” combined with “hot.” From the cute style of Sistahs and Scars and Julie’s Rooftop, Airhead added gender bending and Gravyboat performed in-your-face sexuality. Thus, the progression of these four bands (Sistahs with Scars, Julie’s Rooftop, Airhead, and Gravyboat) was symbolic of the changes in sexual presentation of scene participants in the scene.

Rearticulated boundaries

While the indie sub-scene and larger gay community received Gravyboat warmly, some reactions within the non-core scene member audience at their shows reinforced the public/private divide. Indie sub-scene members, many of whom were themselves queer or sympathetic to the queer cause, enjoyed the performance of Gravyboat. They gradually came to understand the performance in the way intended by the band: to assert the voice of gay scene participants, similar to the way in which the voice of women scene participants had been asserted earlier.

Unfortunately, audience response to Gravyboat brought to light a differentiation between acceptable and unacceptable homosexuality. The band soon realized that when they played shows with other punk bands that were not indie sub-scene bands, the straight men in the audience walked out of the venue when Gravyboat began to play. When I asked Nani to explain why some people in the audience were doing this, she told me the following: “They like the fact that two girls are humping on stage. Of course, they like watching that. But they can’t handle Zeke’s gay male sexuality. They can’t
watch it so they leave before our set."

While Gravyboat pitched their overtly sexual performance to the punk scene audience, scene members who were not of the indie sub-scene and/or unsympathetic to the queer cause rearticulated the public/private split by leaving. Leaving the scene venue was a statement on their part that they didn’t want gay male sexuality asserted in public. This behavior on the part of straight male scene members was telling of the differential responses of these men to woman-on-woman sex and man-on-man sex, even though both were homosexual in orientation. Moreover, because Zeke was the only man in the act, observing actual man-on-man sex was not possible. Yet, the knowledge of Zeke’s sexual orientation combined with his gyrating and humping was enough to aggravate the homophobic tendencies of some audience members.

Some heterosexual male scene members were critical of the behavior of their fellow scene participants who spoke ill of Zeke’s “out” homosexuality. As Kanoa said to me when I asked what he thought about those who left the venue before Gravyboat performances: “I don’t agree with those guys. I’ve heard some of them say really harsh things about him [Zeke] like faggot and stuff. I think they should let people be who they are.” Clearly, Kanoa was more open-minded than some of the other heterosexual male scene participants. Furthermore, it is important to note that because the indie sub-scene and ska-/punk sub-scene shared show venues, straight male scene participants from both sub-scenes attended the shows. Male indie sub-scene participants, for the most part, supported Gravyboat’s efforts and stayed for their performances.

Whether people should be allowed to be who they are and whether or not it is
okay for them to assert who they are publicly were two different issues, however. On a separate occasion during a conversation with Kanoa, we talked about a political hardcore band that we both liked. The band was a three-man outfit from Canada. Kanoa said that he really liked everything about them except for their homosexuality. He said, "If you listen to their lyrics, they make a lot of sense. And they're ho, so good. If only they weren't gay, though. During a show the drummer even stuck his drumstick up the guitar player's ass!"

While the intentions of the act of the band members in this particular band that Kanoa and I talked about are unclear (I also did not see that particular performance myself), it was clear that Kanoa was somewhat conflicted about the issue of male homosexuality. And while he is possibly much more supportive of queer scene members than some of his fellow scene members, it was also clear that he was not comfortable with public gay male sexuality. This discomfort is problematic because it allows some kinds of sexuality (straight male sexuality and straight as well as gay female sexuality) to be publicly asserted while gay male sexuality is suppressed. This tendency to be accepting of gay female sexuality but not gay male sexuality remains the most common and acceptable among the society at large. This was also the reason why the indie sub-scene continued to engage in sexually subversive resistance.

This differential acceptance of openly gay sexuality was also evidence of the intersecting oppressions within the scene. Ross (1994) describes how some groups' resistance inevitably becomes oppressive to others who are also oppressed but for different reasons. He states:

Although it was only one of the many semitribal formations within the hip
hop nation, gangsta rap became a highly visible forum for debating the limited roles and opportunities available to working poor African-American youth. The fantasy and theatricality associated with the gangbanger role was a dramatic space for reconciling the tension between public enemy stereotypes and masculine images of strength and agency for ghetto youth. Among other things, the overwrought sexism and homophobia associated with this theater was an intrinsic product of the physically threatened conditions under which black male youth negotiated their social survival (1994:5).

In negotiating social survival, racially and economically marginalized scene members in the Hawai‘i scene similarly fell back on reconciling the tension between negative stereotypes of minority youths and hegemonic masculinity. Separating out sexism and homophobia becomes increasingly difficult especially in multiply marginalized male youths.

As a result of this wall—the suppression of gay male sexuality—that core indie sub-scene members came up against, the public/private split in the sexual presentation of core scene members was rearticulated. New binaries had been formed. The behaviors and attitudes of scene members who refused the Gravyboat performance also refused Zeke the platform to assert his sexuality, while they allowed Nani and Boom’s assertions. Overt sexuality was only differentially allowed in the eyes of these scene members, depending on whether the gay scene member was a woman or a man. This new development was disappointing for queer women as well as men, because this also meant that the acceptance of the overtly sexual performances by women were not being understood in the “correct” way—women were once again relegated to second-class sexual objects under the male gaze.
CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

We live in an increasingly stratified society where abuses of power regularly go unchecked, unrecognized, and ignored. In such a climate, resistance is a cause for celebration—sometimes, great celebration—given the existence of oppressive institutions in a socio-political climate that steers people’s attention away from society’s real problems. According to Antonio Gramsci (1971), this is the problem of hegemony wherein structural inequalities are legitimized by way of dominant discourses and normalized unequal relations between social groups. Thus, resistance is healthy. It is a way to check social injustices that have begun to spiral out of control. We should worry when we see no signs of healthy resistance.

The findings of this study support the celebratory reading of subcultural resistance of the Birmingham School. At a time when many popular culture specialists and general music fans have decided that punk music was a thing of the past and that “punk died in the 80s,” it is interesting to find the subculture very much alive. Moreover, while some punk rockers keep the tradition alive in much of its original form (music, style, ethos), creative variants on the subculture have also developed. In the Hawai‘i local scene, the ska/punk sub-scene retained much of the punk tradition of the early 70s except for the presence of some Asian/Pacific Islander faces and some Hawaiian and Hawai‘i local themes. The metal/hardcore sub-scene adopted the spectacular in its loud and fast sound and grating lyrics that speak of power, alienation, fear, etc. The indie sub-scene, in its ideology of the small-scale, independent label embraced the anti-capitalistic, anti-mass production politics of punk.
The study also builds on the critiques of the Birmingham School understanding of subcultural resistance. The Hawai'i local scene was extremely multi-dimensional in its resistance. Due partly to the diverse population of Hawai'i, the local scene was not based on a specific social class or race/ethnicity. Also due to modeling recent movements in subcultures on the mainland, women and queer youths became prominent scene members in the local scene. Thus, a unidimensional view of resistance was not possible and an ethnographic approach indeed revealed that there were three different forms of resistance going on in the local scene. Furthermore, these forms of resistance (romantic, DIY, and sexually subversive) sometimes contradicted each other. For example, the indie sub-scene's sexually subversive resistance involved large amounts of money to be spent on clothing and accessories regularly. This conflicted with the anti-capitalist resistance of the ska/punk sub-scene.

An ethnographic approach that studied not only the show situation but also scene participants' lifestyles and daily routines revealed the very unspectacular day-to-day existences of these individuals. While some participants led political and activist lives, they still had to work as baristas in coffee shops, care for disabled individuals, or finish up school. Others passed their days changing oil in cars, washing dishes, or working construction sites while desperately waiting for another chance to practice in the studio or play at a show. Watching three movies on video in a row and shooting the breeze over cups of coffee or bottles of beer were often how most of the non-work hours were spent killing time.

Semiotic and textual analyses used in this study as a part of observation/interview
and also in analyzing zines, song lyrics, and online journals revealed homology in the three sub-scenes. Affective alliances of the different sub-scenes with ska, punk, metal, hardcore, and indie subcultures became clearer when observations were paired with interviews and participants’ explanations of these situations. Textual materials revealed another side of scene members’ private everyday thoughts. All of the materials and methods were necessary to gain an understanding of the symbolic fit between music, style, ethos, and resistance of the three sub-scenes.

Core and periphery took on a particular significance in the Hawai‘i local scene both temporally and spatially. Aside from the more obvious issues of geographic isolation and time lag in subcultural trends catching on, the differences in what constituted “success” in the metal/hardcore sub-scene and ska/punk sub-scene were telling with regard to issues of core and periphery. The former is more core-oriented while the latter is more locally based. This difference can only be explained by understanding the specific characteristics of the sub-scenes as their scene members connected through affective alliances with the different worldwide subcultures.

As evidence of the fluctuating micro-relations of dominance and resistance, core and periphery can also shift. For example, it is ironic that scene participants of color were relegated to a lower status compared to white scene participants in the ska/punk sub-scene because whiteness made a scene member a more authentic punk rocker. This is an example of a selective reading of history. Early punk rockers were white, but punk music came from reggae and rock and roll, both with roots in non-white populations. Therefore, while the Caribbean and African continents and association with these places
are sometimes seen as subcultural resources (i.e., core), they can also quickly become marginalized into the periphery.

These shifts in core and periphery are common and are evidence of the difficulty of resistance efforts. The status of cultural resources is unstable. Just because something has cultural capital one day does not mean it will have that capital the next day. Claims of authenticity by disadvantaged groups can be made to acquire power, but these claims always entail coming up against the more dominant discourses of authenticity. Clearly, changing these discourses takes great efforts of resistance.

As a function of the diverse population and the oppression resulting from distinction in the Hawai‘i local scene, gender, race/ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation intersected in complex ways. The question of subcultural identification, also closely associated with affective alliances, played out in significant ways in this local scene as the subcultural capital one possessed or achieved in one sub-scene sometimes limited one’s chances of becoming a core member in another sub-scene. For example, while being gay was considered “rad” in the indie sub-scene, this did not translate very well in the other two sub-scenes. Similarly, minority race/ethnicity was embraced by the metal/hardcore sub-scene but could inhibit an individual from becoming a core member in the ska/punk or indie sub-scene.

Multiple oppressions were evidenced most clearly in how all women faced oppression in a masculinist local scene, but what the women in the metal/hardcore sub-scene and the indie sub-scene did to fight that oppression were quite different. While women were drawn to the metal/hardcore sub-scene for reasons similar to the men, they
were not as supported as men in becoming band musicians. In contrast, women in the indie sub-scene became prominent in the sub-scene in their own bands because the indie sub-scene was created just for this reason: to give women more prominence and creative input in the scene. While some women in the metal/hardcore sub-scene were seen as "rad" and as "one of the boys," they were not considered for core participant status as their male counterparts were.

Women scene participants also participated in the scene for different reasons, however. For some, it was a way to spend time with their boyfriends or enjoy a fun party. For others, it was because they didn’t fit in at school or with other aspects of their lives. And for some, it was their creative outlet. Most were attracted to the particular music of the sub-scene. A parallel exists here with girls in gangs. Girls join gangs for several reasons and the level of tolerance for sexism and discrimination depends partly on their reasons for joining and the type of gang they join (boys’ gangs with girls or girl gangs). In both the local scene and in gangs, it was when the reasons for joining were not fulfilled that oppression became apparent.

The birth of the indie sub-scene was a reminder of how masculinist the Hawai‘i local scene had been. After the indie sub-scene became firmly established, however, it also demonstrated how the scene was not only masculinist but also predicated on a strong foundation of hegemonic masculinity. The indie subculture is queer-friendly and this aspect of the subculture was quickly embraced by the sub-scene in Hawai‘i. The intersecting nature of the scene as a whole and the overlap between sub-scenes also made it difficult, however, to avoid the influence of other sub-scenes, and this made for some
queer-unfriendly situations, especially for gay men, in the overlap of sub-scenes. Such overlaps were common at shows where bands from different sub-scenes played on the same bill.

Utilization of the concept of sexual resistance helped to explain the process by which women scene participants became prominent and “rad” scene members in the indie sub-scene. The poststructuralist model in which physical performance, talk, and writing happen all at once and are interpenetrating was the most informative model for explaining how sexual resistance occurred. However, there was also an organizing principle for forms of sexual resistance in public presentation and writing for oneself or one’s in-group. Thus, although covert and overt displays of sexuality were interpenetrating, the front and back split of the modernist model was also evoked. When the overtly sexual body was evoked in discourse, it became personalized or directed to a very specific in-group consisting of the self, close friends, lovers, and possibly members of a subculture as in consumers of pornography or erotica. In contrast, the body present was given an a-sexuality or covert sexuality that could be pitched to a general audience.

When overt sexuality was attempted in public presentation, a rearticulation of boundaries regarding whose “in-your-face” sexuality was acceptable occurred. Whether gay or straight, overt female sexuality was acceptable and even invited. In contrast, gay male sexuality was not acceptable. This articulation, in turn, reinforced the split of the modernist model, while the boundaries were slightly changed. What audience reaction to a 2-woman 1-man rap group communicated was a wish to reinstall the male gaze: one that likes to watch overt female sexuality but cannot handle overt gay male sexuality.
This tension forced the modernist split of public/private back in and attempted to push gay male sexuality back into the private sphere. Thus, we once again see that while the poststructuralist model is quite useful in making sense of the sexually subversive resistance attempted in the indie sub-scene, we gain a full understanding only by combining this model with the modernist one.

This finding has implications for sexual resistance in other social situations and other social groups. While sexual resistance may accomplish some goals, the need for both poststructuralist and modernist models to understand the process reminds us that social change is much more complex and difficult than it looks on the surface. Radicals who want to change things for the better are constantly up against the power of the status quo. If we are not careful, all efforts could quickly be nullified by a reinstallation of what the efforts tried to change in the first place: the male gaze.

The logical explanation for the emergence of the two different kinds of women scene members as represented by Nellie and Romy was the difference in social class. Social class differences generally guided a girl/woman towards a more male-dominated sub-scene or a sub-scene in which the process of becoming a musician or other core scene participant was more egalitarian. Access to new technology and higher education brought more opportunities for hooking into sexually progressive online communities and chances to acquire knowledge of the newest feminist and queer theories. Women from lower or working class backgrounds tended to live in environments in which hegemonic masculinity prospered without being questioned. It was much more difficult for women from lower social class backgrounds to “rock out of the box” (Schippers 2002).
It is easy for privileged women to criticize or pity their less privileged comrades in the struggle for sexual equality. More privileged women found it difficult to understand why their sisters would put up with sexist and heteronormative treatment in the other sub-scenes. The attitude of indie sub-scene members is seen as more radical and more progressive. However, this criticism by the more privileged overlooks one important aspect of the music subculture of punk and the Hawai‘i local punk scene, in particular. The music, which is the foundation of the sub-scenes, the local scene, and the subcultures, is omitted in an argument that glosses over the efforts by women of lower social classes.

Comparing the two kinds of music themselves, there is no universal standard, according to which indie is superior to heavy metal. The different musics take on different meanings over time, depending on who decides to own the sounds and how they use them, including writing the lyrics. Meanings can also change. Some indie music is referred to as “head music,” avant-garde, discordant, or art rock (e.g., Sonic Youth, Tool, etc.), while metal has a misogynist and violent image. But it makes no sense to pit this “intellectual” music against one in which it takes years to master virtuosity in guitar techniques and in which classical music cadences and tones are creatively interwoven with heavy blues chords. Furthermore, since the term “indie” comes from a way of producing recorded music rather than from the sound, plenty of indie music—especially that which is produced in the Hawai‘i local scene—is not art rock.

A woman might be drawn to heavy metal music because of its sound, because it makes her feel powerful and energetic. It might also make her feel mellow and sad (as
metal music is, in fact, known to do). Since the social class backgrounds of women in the heavy metal sub-scene parallel those of the men, these feelings they get from the music are also symbolic of a united front with the men. This is similar to the phenomenon in the rap subculture in which women rappers feel a bond with male rappers, who come from the same hard world as they do, and that lambasting them for their treatment of women in their music does not help their united cause (Rose 1994). Thus, it isn’t because Nellie isn’t a feminist that she likes the mosh pit. Her own reasons for going into the mosh pit could be very feminist.

The analysis is more complex. The root cause of the danger to women is not that female heavy metal fans are complicit in their situation. The root cause is that the typical core scene member continues to be white, heterosexual, male, and middle class. The oppressions are multiple and intersecting for scene members who don’t fit this description on several counts. Feminist efforts do not rise out of a vacuum. Rather, they rise out of specific individual life trajectories. It is within these confines and opportunities that individual women try to empower themselves to better their situations.

These issues echo the concerns of feminists of the Third Wave. While exciting advances are being made on the radical feminist front, it is highly problematic if the efforts don’t benefit large groups of women because of their multiple oppressions. Unfortunately, we see this phenomenon on a daily basis with women of color and/or poor women. More privileged women cannot blame these women because of what initially appears to be complicity in gender oppression. Rather, privileged women need to take a closer look at the reasons for these women’s actions and situations. They may be
humbled by the extraordinary efforts of these disadvantaged women. In this sense, perhaps the labels “radical” versus “liberal” feminism need some re-working.

In the local scene, there were scene participants who felt alienation from their own sub-scene. I also found, however, that although the number was small, there were a few scene members who were conscious of the intersecting oppressions and tried to rid themselves of the oppressive character that accompanied their privilege (i.e., a privilege of social class, race, gender, or sexual preference). Peggy McIntosh’s (1992) work on white privilege and male privilege is highly relevant here. As McIntosh elucidates:

One factor seems clear about all of the interlocking oppressions. They take both active forms that we can see and embedded forms that members of the dominant group are taught not to see... To redesign social systems, we need first to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions. The silences and denials surrounding privilege are the key political tool here. They keep the thinking about equality or equity incomplete, protecting unearned advantage and conferred dominance by making these taboo subjects. Most talk by whites about equal opportunity seems to me now to be about equal opportunity to try to get into a position of dominance while denying that systems of dominance exist (1992:81).

Resistance always involves distinction. Reiterating Eliasoph and Lichterman (1999), the study of resistance by the dominated includes the study of the dominating. Studying the marginalized also means studying those who marginalize. Paying attention to distinction is important, especially in “alternative” communities, because if there are community members who are being oppressed in their own community, that community is engaging in the same oppression/domination that the rest of society practices—the same society that the community was supposed to be alternative to.

I would like to end on an optimistic note, but with caution. As seen by the different kinds of resistance in action, it is clear that radical social change does occur in
the Hawai‘i local punk scene. My hope is that the scene never lose its potential for positive social change and that each scene participant learn to be critical of his/her own position in the scene and by the same token, in the rest of society. This is because each position holds simultaneous privilege and oppression. If the scene can teach scene members to be conscious of this simultaneity, then the scene must indeed be a progressive and humane alternative community.
APPENDIX: INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT MATTER

Junior high school and high school years were not fun times for me. I still refer to those times in my life as my *dark ages*. My lifesavers were loud rock music and the thought that high school (and junior high school before that) was not forever. In school, I found myself strongly drawn to hard rock music. I switched schools often starting in the first grade and constantly found myself in different social contexts and demographic mixes. As a native-born Japanese raised first in New York City and northern New Jersey and then in Osaka and Tokyo, displacement felt like the one constant in my life from early on other than my immediate family. In NYC and NJ, people usually assumed or understood me to be Chinese even when I explained I was Japanese. In Japan, I looked like everybody else but didn’t act appropriately, like not bowing enough to the senior students in school. Hard rock music entered my life at a time when I was seeking something that could take me away from school (where I didn’t fit) and the life that revolved around school.

Listening to hard rock music transported me to a different place and state of mind. I often tell people that Van Halen got me through high school. I was initially attracted to hard rock music because of its sound. I found that I had immediate physical as well as mental responses (i.e., tapping feet, moving my head, humming, singing, an energy boost, or cleared head) to Van Halen, Billy Squier, and later, Metallica’s amplification of sound, booming bass, pounding drum rhythms, fast and intricate guitar work, and loud vocals.

As a result of frequently finding myself in different social dynamics and being confused about my cultural identity, I felt that although there seemed to be a place for everyone in
high school, that there wasn’t a place for me. Hard rock music became my coping
mechanism for not fitting in, because listening to it made me feel like I had a place.

Through my experiences with the demographics in different schools, I learned
that social class differences made a difference in people’s lives. For example, at the
public schools I had attended both in Japan and in the US before high school, students’
parents could not always buy required school supplies or nutritious lunches for their
children. At my high school in Japan, which was a nationally funded experimental
school for children of “returnees” (Japanese nationals who were sent overseas for
business and diplomacy and had since returned to Japan), the picture was quite different.
This high school was exclusive to students who had spent at least part of their upbringing
abroad, and some of these families were of the upper middle class: especially diplomats
and financiers. I still recall my mother (the handler of the family finances) raiding the
family rainy day fund so that I could go on a school trip by airplane with everyone else
and wondering out loud, “I don’t know how everybody else in your school does it!”

These social class background differences in students even affected the active
rock band culture that students became involved in for an annual festival in high school.
Some students had their own electric guitar, drum set, and amplifiers that their parents
had bought them. Students were free to form their own bands, practice, and then audition
for spots in the festival. While I had thought that forming a hard rock band gave not-so-
popular kids a face, the popular kids ended up being chosen to play because they were the
ones with the equipment. Bands also ended up just playing covers of American Top 40
hit songs.
During this time in high school, I occasionally managed to sneak out to a hard rock show with a partner—always a girl—in crime. I was the "quiet type who’s into heavy metal" that Billy Joel mentions in his song, "Modern Woman." My friend and I preferred dark colors when we didn’t have to wear our public school uniforms. We wanted to be the rockers. We didn’t want to be with them. But because we didn’t have the means, going to shows and listening to tapes in our bedrooms were the closest things to becoming musicians ourselves. Pretending that I was Eddie Van Halen could take me away from the unattractive reality of being in school. Hard rock music was provocative in its style and sound and embodied meanings of resistance. It helped me to understand that the social standards in school were but one measuring stick by which one could be evaluated.

Although I was a newcomer to Hawai‘i and to the local Hawai‘i scene in 1995, as an Americanized, female, native-born Japanese growing up with the experiences I had, I blended in with the diverse racial, ethnic, sex, and social class constitution of the Hawai‘i scene. In the scene, I met individuals who struggled with issues similar to those that I had been struggling with during and since my school years. The difference was that these scene participants were a younger generation and already participants of a local punk scene.
NOTES

1 "Scene member" and "scene participant" are used here instead of "scenester," a term that has its origins in jazz scenes, due to the poseur and wannabe connotations of "scenester" to some scene participants in the Hawai’i local scene.

2 Sometimes band and show activity on the neighbor islands on a smaller scale is referred to as an independent scene in itself such as the Maui and Kauai scenes. The Maui scene is described in the zine, uprising! (Autumn 2000) #9:8: "While there has been quite a scene here (Maui), it’s shelf life usually lasts fifteen minutes at a time." Another show promoter who organized an interstate tour for bands also stated about a show in Kauai, "I was really impressed with Kauai ...[a Kauai band] played in a barn in the middle of nowhere and everyone came out." (Shawn Lopes. 1999. “Punk goes island-hopping.” Honolulu Weekly, June 25.) Generally, however, the outer island scenes are small and from those scene participants on Oahu, are considered part of the same Hawai’i scene.

3 Individual names, band names, and show venues are replaced with pseudonyms.


5 Racial and ethnic composition and social class composition of Hawai’i music scenes have been explored in earlier studies of Hawai’i local music scenes (Tarantino 1990; Osumare 1999).

6 The station was off the air in 1994 and was booted off the air in 1997 due to the station’s inability to pay for maintenance and training of new staff.


9 Zine writers have their own subculture and scenes that are not necessarily based on punk scenes (For more on zines, see Gaines 1995, McLaughlin 1996, Duncombe 1998).

10 The zinesters list is an Internet site where those interested in doing zines could communicate with each other.

11 As examples of total cultures, Gans (1974) lists the drug-and-music hippie culture, communal cultures, political cultures, neo-dadaist, and religious cultures.

12 Jawaiian is a hybrid form of Hawaiian and reggae music. For more on Jawaiian, see Weintraub 1993.

13 Unlike hybridity, syncretism refuses synthesis and implies more of a heterogeneous community of pieces in altered relations to each other.

14 This does not include children of military personnel who grew up in Hawai’i, several of whom were in the scene.

One of my students once told me that when he was attending a Van Halen concert in the early 1980s, no one could figure out what song was being played for the first 5-10 minutes of each song, because Alex Van Halen’s double bass drums were so loud during the intros to the songs.

It should be noted that although some scene members smoked marijuana (some more than others), the local scene was not a drug scene. On one occasion, I saw an individual scene participant with cocaine and on another two incidents, I heard two friends of scene members discussing taking acid. While drinking beer was fairly common at shows at over 21 clubs and smoking cigarettes was rampant, this scene would not be considered a drug scene.

Several Christian rock bands—in the genres of punk and ska—also sprouted up in the late 1990s.

A music video representative of early 1980s MTV.

Straight edgers were hardcore punk scene participants who abstained from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and often did not eat meat. They claimed a healthy and virtuous lifestyle.


A well-known, commercially successful, alternative hard rock band from the West Coast of the mainland

Food Not Bombs is an international organization started in the punk subculture on the mainland. Activities of the organization in Hawai‘i involved such efforts as gathering day-old food from friendly restaurants and stores and giving it to mainly homeless people in public parks who needed food. Benefit shows were also held.

Queercore is a musical genre distinguished by lyrics dealing with issues such as homosexuality, gay rights, and gender identity, sometimes in a serious way, sometimes more lightheartedly. Musically, queercore resembles punk rock, power pop, and other similar genres.


Fabulous Disaster. Put Out or Get Out, Pink & Black 2000 (Compact disk).

Sympathy for the Record Industry. Alright, this time, just the girls 1999 (Compact disk).

Once going to quizilla.com, one can choose from a list of topics, each of which can be clicked on to reveal a questionnaire concerning one’s preferences in relation to pop culture trivia. The questionnaires for the topics are designed to reveal something about one’s personality but are more for amusement than as psychological evaluation. Online scene participants often incorporated outcomes of quizzes into their journals.

Gravytrain is a 3-woman 1-man queercore band. Especially in its style, public performance, and lyrical content, the band is very similar to Gravyboat.
"Bling bling" is obvious and appealing wealth, by extension of the origin of the term, as the sound of jewelry knocking against other jewelry, as in the style of some rappers. This can be seen to fit in with the parodic display utilized by rappers as suggested by Lipsitz (1994):

"Answering a culture of surveillance with a counterculture of conspicuous display, they constitute their own bodies, ghetto walls and city streets as sites for performance and play" (1994:20).

REFERENCES


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