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What is This?

More Than Just a Soundtrack: Toward a Technology of the Collective in Hardcore Punk

Black Hawk Hancock[1] and Michael J. Lorr[2]

Abstract

We study the musical genre of punk to discuss how the embodiment of music and musical practices operate as a "technology of the collective." This furthers our understanding how music, as a cultural form, becomes a tangible resource used in the constitution of collective identity. By utilizing the subculture of hardcore punk as a vehicle for exploration, this approach helps us understand how musical practices operate at the analytical level of embodied practices. We explore how aspects of embodiment illuminate displays of involvement and group membership, as well as solidarity and community. Music becomes the conduit between identity, conventionalized expressions, and the ways people form investments to configure their social worlds.

Keywords

identity, musical practices, punk rock, technology of the collective

People draw on music as a resource to construct individual and collective identities. In this article, we utilize the musical genre of punk to discuss some

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of the ways that the embodiment of music and musical practices mediate individual and collective constructions of identity.[1] We take as our starting point DeNora's (2000, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2011) work on music-in-action, which elucidates how individuals use music, or more specifically "how music gets into the action" (DeNora 2003, 165), to interpret and negotiate social interaction. Building on this, we reconceptualize DeNora's (1999, 2000, 2011) emphasis on the "technology of the self," as a resource for identity-work. We expand on what Roy and Dowd (2010) have suggested as a "technology of the collective," emphasizing how collective identity is constructed and enacted though music. By utilizing three dominant modes of expression within the subculture of hardcore punk as a vehicle for exploration, our approach to music-in-action helps us understand how musical practices operate at the analytical level of embodied practices. We show how identity is mediated by music and musical practices, which opens up a more generalizable way to consider how music is constitutive of the social interactions through which individual and collective identities emerge.

Drawing on collaborative participant observation and interviews, we highlight how music gets "into the action," that is, how the musical practices of hardcore punk are both constitutive and reflective of the subculture (DeNora 1999, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2011). We draw out punk musical practices, which DeNora (1999, 31–32) refers to as "musical reflexive practices" that people use to constitute and reconstitute themselves as specific types of agents, as cultural resources by which musicians and audience members at live music performances collectively and interactively cultivate and sustain their identities as punks. Whereas DeNora's use of musical practices emphasizes self-construction, self-image, and self-knowledge, we undertake our analysis of live hardcore punk shows through three iconic musical practices as windows onto the music-in-action approach as a "technology of the collective." These practices include (1) the mosh pit and moshing, the space dedicated on the floor to dance and the specific form of dance related to punk whereby people slam and push into each other; (2) the stage dive, or the act of leaping off the stage or amplifier into the crowd; (3) the spatial role reversals of band members and audience members, that is, the ways that musicians and band members move into the audience space and become participants in the show while at the same time audience members take positions on the stage and take on the roles of the show's focal point.

The approach offered here illuminates how punks draw on music as a cultural resource to facilitate meaningful interaction (moshing, stage diving, and spatial role-reversals). We explore how aspects of embodiment illuminate and serve as vehicles for expression that are fundamental to people's

experiences and conceptualizations of their situations. Embodiment, manifested in displays of involvement and group membership, becomes the conduit between music, identity, conventionalized expressions, and how people configure their social worlds. The focus on musical practices and embodiment offers a vantage point to further our understanding how music, as a cultural form, becomes a tangible resource used in the constitution of collective identity. As a result, we can come to see music as a central medium through which the experience of collective effervescence and loss of self, catharsis and emotional release, intensity in social bonds and trust, and affirmation of community solidarity, all serve as foundations of group identity.

Music, Meaning, and the Construction of Identity

Music is sociological in that it serves as a mode of interaction that is expressive, constitutive, and embodies cultural assumptions about social relations (Roy and Dowd 2010, 184). Music and its meanings inform people, quite profoundly, about who they are and what matters to them. For example, scholars consider such diverse issues and topics such as punk rock fans' issues of authenticity and identity (Andes 1998; Bennett 2006; Fox 1987; Kotarba 2002), opera connoisseurs' passions (Benzecry 2011), as well as genres of folk (Roy 2010), hip hop (Rose 1994), and jazz (Faulkner and Becker 2009), to signal how music is constitutive of individuals and collectives who participate in those cultural forms. Scholars document how people negotiate their identities and everyday life through the performance, consumption, and reception of music (DeNora 2000; Hennion 2001; Hesmondhalgh 2005; Moore 2007, 2010; Nehring 1997). The emphasis on musical practices draws on and connects to a range of scholars, whether inspired by the Cultural Studies approach (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979; Willis 1978) or by the sociology of Bourdieu (1984). Musical practices as an analytical category cover a diverse array of activities such as (1) listening to music; (2) discussions, evaluations, and taste value; (3) attending concerts; (4) communication through bodily expression, dance styles, movement, and action; and (5) expressions of feelings, dispositions, and emotions (Benzecry 2011; Clarke 2005; Drew 2001; Fonarow 1997; Force 2009; Grazian 2003; Haenfler 2004a, 2004b, 2006; Rimmer 2011; Roy 2002, 2010; Willis 1990).

Drawing on DeNora's (1999, 2000, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2011) approach to the sociology of music, we explore how music is embedded in social life, used as a resource and socializing medium to shape how individuals understand themselves, their communities, and their social world. In particular, we draw on her

notion of how music "gets into" people's actions and behaviors, as well as provides a medium through which people constitute themselves, as specific types of social agents. DeNora (1999) shows how music is used as a resource to forge links between self and society within specific local contexts. Music is "an active and dynamic material" through which people orient and interpret social life (DeNora 2000, 5).

We explore how the social space or social scene of music and musical practices is saturated with material and cultural resources for different types of agency, emotion, and ways of being (DeNora 2000, 129). More than just products for consumption, musical practices, whether intentionally or unintentionally, are part of the constitution of self, social interaction, social settings, and social worlds. Extending DeNora's concept of the "technology of the self" to a "technology of the collective," we keep in mind Roy and Dowd's (2010, 190) emphasis that the "relationship between a group and music flows two ways: music is identified by people inside (and outside) the group as 'belonging' to it, and membership in the group is marked partly by embracing this music." Musical practices, rather than being epiphenomenal, are some of the basic building blocks, in a "critical constructionist" sense, for informing and shaping the experience and understanding of ourselves, our communities, and our world in daily life (Kotarba and Vannini 2009, 9). In addition, music sensitizes aesthetics and experience through understandings of the senses and constitutes the meaning of interaction between self and society (Vannini and Waskul 2005, 6), as well as makes possible the consumption and embodiment of the cultural norms that are embedded within as a vehicle for self-constitution (Force 2009; Haenfler 2004b, 2006).

By focusing on the musical practices of hardcore punk, we refine and develop DeNora's (1999, 2000, 2003, 2011) music-in-action approach by illuminating how music moves from a "technology of the self" for individual identity construction to a "technology of the collective" by bounding groups together through collective corporeal and symbolic interactions expressed in musical practices. For punks in the hardcore scene, music is more than just a soundtrack; it is a style of life and part and parcel of one's social activity (DeNora 2004, 39).

Drawing on hardcore punk as a particular case study opens a window onto the ways that music is not reflective of social life, but rather constitutive of it. The aesthetic value of music resides not in the abstract nor in the singular personal experience, but in the localized social interactions between individuals and groups. In this way, music is drawn on and embodied in our actions, and musical practices become social practices. As a result, musical practices, as they are enacted and experienced as meaningful in terms of their

membership within the wider hardcore punk community, speak directly to how musical practices, more generally, serve as a "technology of the collective" in how they provide the foundational resources for a sense of collective investment and collective identity.

Methods: Immersed in the Scene

Methodological Framing

By using Burawoy's (1998) extended case method, this study responds to the call of several senior scholars who have offered new directions in relationship to the study of music: for example, Grazian's (2004) suggestion for more ethnographies that focus on the consumption of music in real time and space, Kotarba's (2003) call for collaborative ethnographies that explore popular music in order to address their internal diversity, and Roy and Dowd's (2010) emphasis on ethnographic research embodied in everyday life. The extended case method provides a useful diagnostic wherein we are able to engage a population over extended periods of time in different locations. As a result, we abide closely to Burawoy's (1998) approach by which each intervention into the field is an opportunity to compile situational knowledge that in turn could be aggregated to an account of the social processes at work in a particular world. Following the extended case method, we were mindful of the "field effects" by which extended observations over time and space cannot be isolated from "the political, social, and economic contexts within which they take place" (Burawoy 1998, 12). In addition, we were conscientious in reflecting on how the responses to our supplemental interviews are always "conducted at different points in time or in different places will be shaped by extraneous conditions" (Burawoy 1998, 12). By following these aspects of the extended case method, we both refine the music-in-action perspective through our study of musical practices and advance the approach by moving its focus from the individual experience to the level of collective identity.

   Data Collection and Participants. The choice of Chicago is both circumstantial, in that we are both living there, and ideal, in that Chicago is a strategic site rich with punk culture, presenting multiple examples that illuminate the dynamics of the music-in-action approach. Not only is it the largest Midwestern metropolis, it is also a major tour stop for all hardcore punk bands in the United States. Chicago takes on a special status within the hardcore community since it is home to such punk "institutions" as the Fireside Bowl, the

Metro, the Empty Bottle, and the Double Door, and, in addition, the city is considered the birthplace of the "basement show."[2]

This article draws on more than ten years of the authors' shared experiences in Chicago's hardcore punk scene as both musicians and fans. Informally, the authors have been participant-observers of the punk rock scene since the 1980s; however, formal sociological research began in 2005. Since each of us was previously immersed in the hardcore scene, connections and associations were both explicitly and implicitly in place prior to our collective data collection. One of the main challenges that we faced in data collection was how we would compile and narrow down our field sites, so that if one or the other were to participate or note something of interest when the other was not there, we would be able to do so within a defined set of social and physical parameters. A second challenge in the data collection process focuses on those venues and events that lend themselves to having more lively crowds, as well as making sure we included the central punk "institutions" or venues notable to punks outside of Chicago. As a result, we conducted our participant observations by attending the same show, with a weekly goal of one or two shows a week, primarily on Thursday, Friday, or Saturdays when more popular bands are booked to play. At first, observations were open-ended, and as we progressed over time ideas started to emerge about what was important and we, in turn, began to reorient our observations toward more salient situations, actions, and people (Glaser and Strauss 1967). We began gathering field notes by carrying small notebooks to make quick observations about particularly important/interesting/notable events or social interactions. However, we attempted to use these small notebooks sparingly, since suspicion is easily cultivated with obvious note taking, and therefore we engaged in "off-phase note taking" (Goffman 1989, 130). After each show, we would convene at the nearest late night coffee shop, and each write stream-of-consciousness-style from memory everything that we could with the help of the shorthand notes we took at the show. After doing this, we would compare notes, discuss any possible supplemental thoughts and/or points of interest, and synthesize the notes and our conversation into systematized field notes that were coded by date and venue.

At the same time, we began informally interviewing hardcore punk members in order to supplement the ethnography. This led to fifty semi-structured interviews, forty with white male punks, and ten with white female punks.[3] Our selection process for interviewees began with purposive sampling starting with regulars on the scene (those who were always present at shows and events or openly designated themselves as "hardcore"). Other participants came through those people who during the course of interviews became secondary

participants because of social context. We then followed a snowball sampling approach that evolved out of these networks by asking each participant to recommend one or two people they thought would be of interest to interview. As we coded our field notes, key events and themes emerged that we would then use to drive our theoretical sampling and fill out our conceptual categories (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Finally, we supplemented the interview with countless informal conversations. Our interview agenda sought to either secure a future interview or conduct an interview at every show we attended. All interviews were conducted face-to-face with one or the other or both principal investigators present. All interviews took place at live punk shows or events, whether in the basement, club, or warehouse space. Given the live music venue context, we used a digital recorder if the respondent allowed. Principal investigators tried to take notes during interviews or at least handwritten notes immediately after interviewing. We then discussed our interview notes and coded them in relation to our field notes that were taken that evening. This unstructured format of interviewing, including the spontaneity of participation, provided unsolicited feedback and interview data that was unplanned, but highly relevant to the study. Because of our prior embeddedness in the community, many interviews were undertaken more as general conversations, rather than as question-and-answer sessions, and therefore participants were "interviewed by comment" (Snow and Anderson 1987, 1343). The interview/conversation process was as informal as possible in order to prompt participants to express what the practices meant to them, why they engaged in them, and how the musical practices related to their self-conception, group cohesion, and political disposition, while realizing that music is not always of equal importance for all members of this particular community.

Our transparency in being open about studying the scene, as well as being members within the community allowed for unparalleled access and an ease of interaction that would have proved incredibly difficult if we were total outsiders. In this way, we followed Adler and Adler's (1987, 1994) "insider-outsider" approach of drawing on both our membership and our researcher roles in negotiating our place within the community. Since we each had prior Institutional Review Board permission to undertake our individual studies, we filed for a continuance of fieldwork, and given that our research would now extend beyond the expiration of each individual protocol, we also filed an amendment for revisions to include the extended case study methodology, and these new collective data collection procedures. Accordingly, anyone who agreed to be interviewed, or those who joined in on an interview in progress were always informed that a research project on the punk scene was

taking place and that anything they said would be considered for the study. We also informed any and all participants that at any time they felt uncomfortable with a question, they were free to decline to respond. In conducting the interviews, we assured that no names of individuals would be identified. We took precautions to minimize as much risk as possible and to ensure confidentiality, by coding interviews, whether recorded by hand or by digital recorder (date, time, participants, demographic information, venue). The principal investigators only viewed these interviews and we erased/destroyed them once data analysis was complete. Following precedent, we periodize our research by naming real places, bands, and social contexts to avoid a-historical tendencies, and at the same time we have changed the names of all those interviewed in order to protect their identities and opinions (Grazian 2003). Finally, to respect the institutions and bands, we felt anonymity would detract from the specificity of the scene, and its importance in relation to Chicago's hardcore history.

Data Analysis. Data analysis focused on unearthing the dominant themes and practices going on within the hardcore punk community of Chicago. As a result, we were mindful that this was a localized study of hardcore in Midwest America, and as a result we engaged in well-established grounded theory coding strategies (Glaser and Strauss 1967). We started with a meta-coding of our data identifying core themes and then from there used those meta-codes as a prism to develop a coding for subthemes that would articulate the complex interrelation between the musical practices of the scene (Charmaz 2006; Clarke 2005). Through this multilayered coding process, we found that there were three dominant practices that punks pointed out to us throughout our fieldwork as significant for shaping individual and collective identity. Making these three practices central to our analysis, we then examined our collected data in terms of those analytical frames, as well as pursued new data oriented around those themes of music, embodiment, and identity. These interviews were then used to compare people's actions with their reflections about the meanings those experiences in the punk community had for them. The ethnographic and interview data are complemented by hundreds of informal and spontaneous conversations we had over the years while participating in the scene.

In doing our data analysis, we approached this study through what May and Patillo-McCoy (2000) term "collective ethnography." Each ethnographer took his own independent field notes, in order to highlight, as well as compare and contrast our subjective observations about the world under analysis. This approach increased the depth and breadth of the body of data we collected, provided richer descriptions, and brought inconsistencies to

the foreground (May and Patillo McCoy 2000, 66). This "collective" process was challenging as a methodological approach in terms of sorting and comparing similarly observed data, but beneficial to both researchers, since it increased both descriptive precision and viewpoints for the same phenomena under analysis. The collaborative ethnographic process allowed us to use our involvement as an ethnographic entry point into discussing firsthand, on-the-ground accounts of participation. This comparative-collaborative ethnographic effort afforded us the opportunity to pool our resources so as to provide greater texture and clarity in documenting music's relation to bodily practices and the way music structures the physical activities that go on at punk shows.

Finally, since ethnography can often be isolating, we were able to keep returning to shows and conversations with two sets of eyes that were invested in the same study to further deepen our analysis and capture aspects the other may have missed or thought irrelevant. As the dominant themes emerged, we sought out an analytical framework that would articulate these aspects; therefore, we turned to the music-in-action approach in order to draw out the interrelationships between these different themes. By connecting the extended case method to the music-in-action approach, we were then able to both analytically frame our findings and extend this approach from a focus on the individual construction of identity to that of the identity of the collective through the musical practices at hardcore punk shows.

Musical Practices

How, then, can we begin to understand how music is put into practices that collectively and interactively mediate identities? How can music be understood as a technology of the collective, as a resource and socializing medium, through which to learn socially constructed modes of identity and conduct comportment, and furthermore as part and parcel of the cultural configuration of people's social worlds? To address these matters, we discuss three central musical practices of hardcore punk shows. First, we discuss the mosh pit and moshing; second, we depict the stage dive; third, we turn to analyze the spatial role reversals between bands and fans. After describing the particular musical practice in question, we consider the collective effervescence and loss of self as exhibited by the participants and their ability to reflect on what they experience musically, at different times through different forms of expression. From there, we move on to describe music's role in relation to catharsis and emotional release. We then turn to the role of music in relation to trust, and the ways each of these musical practices increases the intensity

of the social bonds with and to the collective. Finally, we consider music as providing a source in which participants form community and solidarity that both constructs and validates their social world.

The Mosh Pit. Moshing is the punk form of social dancing. Rather than leading and following as in partner dancing, or isolated in place like dancing to disco or techno, moshing splits the difference by allowing individual expression while involving everyone who wants to participate. To the outside observer, the mosh pit may look like chaos, but in fact it is a highly constrained and regulated set of practices. The mosh pit is the space in the venue where moshing develops as individuals come together to form a mass; the participants in this self-defined circle of space slam into and bounce off one another in an endless game of body pinball—punctuating the surging sound of the music. A successful mosh occurs when the whole audience is inspired to mosh, where the chaotic blends into something uniform, whereas an unsuccessful mosh is one in which some dancers become too aggressive to the point of discouraging others from joining the group. In this way, the mosh pit must strike a delicate balance between excitement and exclusion. The mosh pit serves as a catalyst for a show as the mosh pit must form and people must mosh for the scene to come alive.

The pushing and shoving of the moshing mirror the sound and texture of the music, one feeding directly off the other. Typically, the music starts first and then the moshing follows, although for a few popular bands, the moshing begins before the music, when the crowd is overexcited. The faster and the more aggressive the music becomes, the rougher the mosh pit gets. As bands play harsher, they use more distortion in the guitars, which will then send the moshers into an ever more rowdy and frenetic pace as they feed off the energy of the band. The audience tries to match their moshing to the band's intensity. The rougher the pit becomes, the more intense the music.

For many punks, this intensity forms a feedback loop, between music and participants, which helps inspire both feelings of being alive and connectedness. As one musician, Pete, a twenty-five-year-old bike messenger, expressed:

> When people get really into it, it makes you more amped up, because you know . . . people are into what you're playing. The more people are into what you're playing, it makes you want to play harder. The mosh dictates how hard we play. The mosh is like the heartbeat of the music for me. The more into it they get, the more into it we get; that way the scene just blends in together as one. That's what I think makes an awesome show.

As both band and audience members become invested in moshing, the more divested of self they feel as the musicians seek to connect with the enthusiasm of the fans and the fans seek to connect with the enthusiasm of the musicians. Another musician, Hank, a twenty-three-year-old community college student, further explains the significance of moshing:

> It's all about the intensity. If people are just standing around, then you know the show sucks. If there is no mosh pit, it's like, why play? Without the mosh, there is no show. It's like moshing and the music go together; you can't just have one. Music is moshing, it's all part of the whole. When you hear the drums pounding and the guitars grinding, the mosh is the physical part of the music. You can't have punk without the moshing, and you can't have moshing without punks. One is just the extension of the other in a way.

In this way, the mosh pit is both a reaction to and a stimulus for the music. This reciprocal relationship blends the band and its fans visually and sonically into one coherent entity. Moshing is an example of how music generates a sense of social euphoria in which the individual self dissolves into the collective effervescence of the mosh pit.

Just as any other form of dance, there are many "moves" that unfold in the mosh pit, many of them look very much like the martial art capoeira, or a more violent and aggressive form of break dancing. Individuals dive onto the ground and throw their feet up in the air, twist and spin their legs around doing a " windmill," while other punks start "picking up change," which is a stylized stomp through the mosh pit in which an individual stomps while punching the floor and elbowing backward with the alternate arm. Still others do "the lawnmower man," in which an individual pretends to start up a pull lawnmower, then chase after it as if it were out of control. As the music escalates in tempo, even more elaborate gestures unfold. Several punks are in the middle of the pit doing "the pizza man": an individual lifts one arm up as if holding a pizza, his other hand rubbing his belly while spinning around in circles. Other dancers are joining up to do "the hostage situation": one person pretends that he is pointing a gun to the other's head from behind while holding the hostage around the neck with his other arm. The hostage keeps his hands up and waves them frantically like a character out of a slapstick comedy while running around the outside of the pit.

The aggressiveness of moshing mirrors the anger and frustration many individual punks feel outwardly toward society, yet here in the mosh pit, they vent this frustration inwardly toward each other. In this way moshing serves

as a both a form of self-expression and emotional release in strenuous physical activity. Mike, a twenty-nine-year-old mechanic, expressed the relationship between moshing and music:

> The mosh is like our way of physically expressing anger and being pissed off at society. You hear it in the music itself. I hear the volume of the guitars and the drumbeat and the screaming vocals, and I want to punch my boss in the face and kick my landlord in the dick. The pit is a way that you express that with the music.

For many punks, moshing is the cathartic practice of channeling thought and energy into the expression of frustration and anger. Collectively, moshing shows other punks that they are not alone in their frustration with larger society; it operates as a vehicle of identity formation whereby people can use different steps or movements to interact as they see fit within the group environment. Phil, a twenty-seven-year-old uniform delivery driver, informed us:

> When I hear this music and I think about how screwed our society is . . . I mosh to express my anger and solidarity with the other punks that are in the same situation with me. Getting in the pit and moshing to the music makes me wanna kill stupid white politicians, businessmen, and soccer moms. They're the reason the U.S. sucks and why we have to work shitty jobs for shitty pay. When I listen, every drumbeat, every scream is a fist punching those assholes in the face.

Many punks feel this is an extension of their antagonism toward politics and society at large, where many feel marginalized because of either their current work conditions or the state of the economy. In a world where many punks feel they have little voice or agency, in terms of feeling respected and their concerns not a part of a mainstream political agenda, moshing is a way to be noticed and taken seriously. When someone pushes someone, they have to respond, acknowledging their body; in turn, that person must acknowledge the other's body. Moshing with other punks is a visceral and sonic confirmation of who one is and why one is at the show.

   Like other forms of social dancing, there are informal rules of what to do, when to do it, and how to engage others in proper fashion. Knowing how to mosh means knowing how to push and bump without hurting your fellow dancer. It requires that each mosher knows how and when to get out of the

way. To the uninitiated, moshing can come as a surprise if you do not understand your surroundings or the moves that go on in the pit; many a novice has left the pit after being clocked in the face with a steel-toed boot. Dana, an eighteen-year-old college student, described the practice of moshing through a sense of informal rules that promote a sense of community or group cohesion between punks as they mosh:

> It's really not as brutal as it looks, like when we get beat down or fall down, the other punks always pick us up, and if someone loses a hat, their glasses, a contact, people circle around and protect the person looking. If you lose a shoe, the band or another mosher holds it in the air until the owner grabs [it]. In a way, it shows how much respect we have for other punks.

In this way, experienced moshers police the pit enabling everyone to participate without getting seriously injured and preventing the muscle-bound from dominating. Even those who do not enter into the pit have a role to play for the show to work; they must form the circle, push people into the pit, or throw people back in when they get shoved out to ensure the continuous flow of music and dance at the show. A successful "pit" is one in which the music and the people moshing enable total band and audience participation, which in turns heightens the trust that punks have in each other and in their community. The symbolism of the mosh pit is about collective activity, in which everyone is an equal participant among others who share the same aesthetic and social worldview.

The acts of pushing and being pushed, of bumping or slamming into each other and then ricocheting into someone else, are not done with the intention of harm, but in a playful way, much like kids wrestling. The practice of moshing serves as a vehicle for both personal expression and social camaraderie by connecting the participants in the mosh pit to each other, to the musicians, and to the rest of the crowd. Jim, a nineteen-year-old barista, described the significance of the practice of moshing in creating identity, community, and solidarity:

> People don't understand what moshing is all about. Moshing gets everything going. If you don't mosh, you have no balls. You mosh 'cause you demonstrate your style. You mosh 'cause it's what brings us together. You're showing everybody you're punk. It's not just a hairstyle and or an outfit. You do it because it's part of who we are.

Similarly, John, a twenty-two-year-old art school student, explained how moshing is an integral physical and musical confluence, supporting the complexity in how punks define their identity, community, and solidarity:

> It's not just picking up flyers at the merch [merchandise] table. Moshing is what being punk is all about. You can talk p.c. all you want; that doesn't make you punk. Moshing shows you're punk because you're willing to put your body on the line and show people that you're punk because you're punk. That's what makes us us.

Moshing is one of the main ways that punks maintain a larger sense of community, since moshing ensures that everyone participates in the show. Just as the defiance in the dissonant tones of punk, distortion and feedback are used to create dissonance against harmony, the mosh pit embodies the sound of punk as it both bounds the group together and serves to splinter it all at once. Moshing translates the aggressiveness of the music into a bodily expression that simultaneously serves to animate the group in their shared activity. While each individual in the mosh pit may be expressing himself in his own particular movements, it is through the collective interaction of moshing in the pit, where the cognitive and the corporal meet, that moshing as a musical practice generates a sense of belonging and community.

The Stage Dive. At punk shows it is common for the audience members to mount the stage, turn and, like dolphins, shoot up into the air and back into the crowd in what is referred to as "stage diving." Stage diving is arguably the most dramatic of all punk musical practices and occurs at the zenith of the show. Both band and audience members stage dive. Band members who stage dive jump off the stage or amplifiers, speakers, or the drum kit to further incite a more intense mosh. Similarly, audience members stage dive to illustrate the heightened level of enthusiasm they have for the music and the band above and beyond moshing. Stage divers hurtle into the air, and right before they hit the floor, they are suspended in the air by the outstretched arms of the crowd. The crowd then guides them down to the floor. Stage diving typically sends the crowd into a frenzy, as more punks clamor onto the stage, each one pulls someone up behind him and then soars off into the air. This practice is much like a relay race with audience members jumping on and off the stage; just as someone climbs up, another person jumps off. Similar to the way the mosh mirrors the intensity of the music, stage diving exemplifies the full exhilaration of participation in the hardcore scene. Stage diving does not happen automatically, nor does it begin by any one person granting permission to do so; it is an improvisational practice that occurs

when the music builds to a certain intensity, such as when a band plays one of their more popular songs, creating the ideal moment—the moment in a show when everyone loses control in elation.

Like moshing, stage diving has a multiplicity of styles or "dance moves" that can be stylized to increase individual self-expression. In addition, the act of stage diving cultivates an emotional release and feeling of catharsis through exercising their individual creativity among their peers. Punks often do a move called the "twister," in which the punk spins around with his arms wrapped around himself like an Olympic diver, rotating as many times as possible while keeping his feet tightly locked together so as not to kick anyone. Another style is called the "the sacrifice," which entails jumping backward into the crowd with his arms spread out wide in a crucifix-style position. This move is done with blind faith that his fellow punks will catch him. Another punk does a swan dive into the crowd with arms fully extended like wings. The divers resemble kids diving at a swimming pool, each one trying to outdo the other in how creative, crazy, or stupid he can be. One of the most extreme versions of the stage dive is known as "walking on water" whereby a punk runs feet first off the stage onto the crowd keeping his momentum as long as possible as his feet land on people's shoulders and heads, until he can no longer stay afloat and drops down into the crowd.

Punks describe the musical thrust of the stage dive in various ways. Todd, a thirty-year-old bank teller, describes how the stage dive is the epitome of excitement:

> Of course the music motivates me to stage dive. When I hear the music, I feel like my perspective on life matters. I'm also supported by an indefinite amount of people willing to catch me when I throw myself to the crowd. I'm no longer an individual suffering the oppressions of school and wage slavery by myself. I can just let myself loose. I can just lose myself in the crowd.

For many punks, like Todd, stage diving represents the commitment to the music and the scene as they are part of a larger whole in the expression of their enthusiasm. As indicated by Todd and others, this sense of participation is both individualistic, in that the punk feels he matters, and collective in that his individualism is lost or dissolved into the community.

Liz, a twenty-three-year-old vegan activist, claimed that diving is an escape from the alienation of everyday life into the supportive environment cultivated by the punk community:

> To go flying off the stage is like total freedom. . . . You just throw
> yourself out there. . . . You have no idea where you're going, total free-
> falling. . . . But at the same time, it's total community for us. Just like
> anarchy, it's like an extreme way of supporting each other, 'cause the
> crazier the dive, the more people will run to catch you. It's total free-
> dom and total community, that's what makes it punk.

This feeling of freedom that Liz speaks of, highlights a certain tension in the
musical practice of stage diving. Stage diving is an act of total abandonment
as one leaps into the air "free-falling" into a crowd of people, and yet it is
also one of total control as the community is always there as a safety net to
catch and support the diver. Again, we can see how the individual and the
collective dissolve in the effervescence of the live punk show.

The chaos of people jumping high off the stage or off stacked-up ampli-
fiers onto one another is dangerous to both the jumper and the audience mem-
bers. Therefore the act of stage diving, like moshing, necessitates intense
social bonds and physical trust. In addition, like the mosh pit, there are "rules"
to stage diving. The rule-bounded nature of this practice relies upon a mutual
sense of trust in order for it to be undertaken. All participants must know how
to dive (throwing one's body out to be caught, not putting elbows or fists out
into the crowd when diving, and not kicking while in the air) and how to
catch (holding the diver up, grabbing the torso and supporting the head) so
that the diver does not fall to the floor. "Real punks stage dive!" is a refrain
we heard when questions arose about the practice of stage diving. Noah, a
thirty-year-old bartender, remarked:

> You have to be a punk to stage dive. If you're not, and you don't know
> what the fuck you are doing. Why are you here then? When someone
> is at the front of the stage and they don't catch you when you dive,
> you're gonna get your ass kicked, 'cause if you let me drop, I'm gonna
> bash your head in. That just is not allowed. Ever.

Not stage diving or not catching a fellow diver can lead to expulsion from
the group or accusations of being a poser and not a real punk. This violates
the implicit codes of the show whereby each is beholden to the other for
moshing and stage diving to be a viable practice without anyone getting hurt
or injured. As expressed by Noah, this goes beyond simply keeping the show
going, it has to do with the very basis of group membership and identity.

Symbolically, the stage dive is akin to the corporate-world retreat practice
of "trust falls," in which each member of the group is responsible for making
sure no one gets hurt, regardless of his or her station within the corporation.

Ed, a twenty-four-year-old tattoo artist, explained how stage diving is as much about individual expression as it is a representation of trust:

> Diving is a way to show how into the band you are, as well as how much you trust the other punks around you. Plus it just makes the punk show that much more intense for you and the other people in the pit. When people are moshing around and other people start diving into the crowd, it becomes total catharsis. It's the most awesome experience because everyone allows everyone else to be themselves and let their rage out.

Without this sense of trust, built through group participation and understanding, stage diving would not be possible. Each person must play a supportive role so that no one gets hurt and to allow everyone to fully participate. Stage diving allows individuals to express their individuality while at the same time literally their faith in the hands of the punk community.

Stage diving not only forms greater ties of trust, it also forms more fundamental notions of solidarity among the members of the punk community. This sense of connectedness exceeds the physical connectedness and collective responsibility in that the stage dive becomes symbolic of the larger goals and ideals that punks share. Since punks see both groups as responsible for a successful show, moshing and stage diving become symbolic markers for the success of group cohesion and community building. For Brad, a twenty-two-year-old bar back, stage diving represented the quintessential definition of community for punks:

> You know that when people are diving, people are into it. They are into the song. They are into each other. They are into punk community. They are into punk politics. If you're that into it to the point you're jumping off an amp, [that's] nuts. But that to us is the best sign that the music matters to people. If what we were playing didn't matter, then what's the point? If you're gonna throw yourself into the crowd, that's reason to play. It's really about getting everyone involved in the show. Either you're diving or catching or pushing people up on stage to dive or whatever, but it gets everyone involved. That's what is so great about it [the punk scene] . . . that everyone is part of it; no one is left out. No matter what. You can't go to a show and not be involved.

Alice, a twenty-five-year-old server, added:

> I think hardcore is about having fun while still realizing that the society we live in needs radical changes. When I listen to hardcore, it's comforting

to know that others hate society as much as I do. It's also comforting to know that we kids have created an alternate space of information and community that flies directly in the face of the FOX News/Bill O'Reilly crap that my parents religiously defer to for the "truth." Stage diving is one example of how we take it a step further, and in terms of the extreme degree, we are willing to spontaneously support other punks who listen to meaningful critiques of society in music.

In this way, stage diving represents the ideas, goals, and purposes that punks attribute to their social world; stage diving promotes risk and safety in community, it requires individual expression and collective responsibility, all of which define finding one's own identity and acceptance within the larger community. Stage diving works both literally and metaphorically as a way to level hierarchical distinctions and to agitate each other's consciousness into demonstrating solidarity and commitment to their local community. Just as punks put their bodies on the line, literally and symbolically, whether at a show or a political protest, the act of stage diving and of catching the divers reflects the collective investment necessary to sustain the very practice itself. This apparently individual reckless and chaotic practice is regulated through a meaningful collective structure of interaction and orientation. In turn, the collective structure that gives individual bodies in motion and the communities they are a part of their unique form of expression, an expression that signifies a much deeper and material collective of community and solidarity.

Spatial Role Reversals. An often overlooked but extremely important musical practice of punk is the multiple spatial role reversal punks explicitly create while playing and appreciating their music. These reversals often come in the form of an audience member stepping in to sing along or play an instrument a musician may have lost or dropped in the process of the mosh. These spatial role reversals for punks are integral to constituting a sense of community and camaraderie. Because the musicians and fans are intertwined, spatial role reversals change the audience from being passive recipients of music, simply receiving it from the distant musicians, to being at the center of the action, and in turn the band members are allowed to participate in the crowds with the dispositions and appreciations of fans. Because the musicians and fans are intertwined, this changes the audience from being passive recipients of music, simply receiving it from the distant musicians, to being at the center of the action. The collapsing of space heightens emotions and the intensity of experience as people feel taken over by the music or moved by the music in visceral ways.

When a band plays on the floor as opposed to the stage, the collapsing of space heightens emotions as people feel taken over by the music. The proximity these spatial reversals create allow for the band and the audience to blend into one; here individual identity dissolves into the larger community similar to what is seen in moshing and stage diving. Proximity is not just an issue of nearness or farness; rather it provides a sense of social and musical investment. As Julie, a twenty-one-year-old union organizer, commented,

> You can get into the show so much more 'cause you're part of it, not left off to the side. It makes you connected to everyone there 'cause you're not just standing around. If I don't get into it, I'd rather listen to it on my boom box at home. When you're right there and the music is in your face, that's what a real show is and that's what makes a real show real.

The sense of "realness" comes from the feeling of connectedness or the larger sense of community within which everyone participates. This sense of "realness" extends beyond just the physical face-to-face, it manifests itself in the experiences and feelings of participants at the show. Jodie, a thirty-two-year-old adjunct art instructor, commented further on punk spatial role reversals:

> It's just realer that way. I don't get this whole standing-around thing, watching people from far away. Our world is about being together, and this [the band playing on the floor with the fans] is it.

When we asked how the interaction between musicians and fans mattered to them, several punks responded with their thoughts. Chris, a twenty-three-year-old college student, expressed his feeling as follows:

> I seize the opportunity to sing along with the band on stage in unison with 50 of my punk friends. Every time we [the audience] take the stage like that towards the middle or end of the show . . . it's like storming the Bastille or something like that. If only we could do that to the White House. It just gives you this sense of power, this sense of having a say in things.

Spatial role reversals are significant because they demonstrate the interchangeability between individuals and the collective; the bands and the fans speak to how this collective energy breaks down barriers and dissolves dif-

ferences. Rather than a loss of autonomy, the melding of the self into the community bolsters feelings of belonging and recognition. At the hardcore punk show, conventional musical performance boundaries are fluid and constantly being challenged in the ways that audiences come to dominate the stage while at the same time musicians use the floor space to perform. For hardcore punks, participation in the show is purposive in that "breaking down" the normal show-participation barriers, both the physical and social distance between bands and fans, is a collective effort in raising the consciousness of the scene itself.

Spatial role reversals at punk shows cultivate a sense of co-presence and immediacy of feedback that extends between bands and audience members. The heightened feeling of connectedness also serves as a way of coming together in a cathartic and emotional release. As Phil, a twenty-six-year-old singer, explained that the music constitutes itself in the cathartic emotional action of the show:

> I know my lyrics mean something to people when the punks take the stage and take my microphone from me and sing them together. It's actually the best part of the show for me. Until the fans want me to sing again and give me back the mic, I can just hang out with everybody, it's like I don't have to do a job. That's what I think makes hardcore so awesome is that it isn't a job, even being in a band, it's what we do but it isn't work. If people did this at any other type of show or in the context of our political system, there'd be anarchy because people wouldn't know what to do. I think that's why so many people fear the hardcore scene, 'cause sometimes there aren't any rules.

Again, as expressed here, there is a pleasurable or cathartic feeling in giving up authority or the abdication of leading, as the fans take over and make the decision as to when the singer is allowed to regain the microphone. Spatial role reversals allow the audience to become "the voice" of the band, and the show to continue in a remixed format without breaking the flow.

Like fans who stage dive, many musicians also choose to jump into the crowd while playing. As with the impromptu nature of fans' stage diving, if the musicians do not jump at the right moment, the act will fail and throw off the performance. Contrary to the roles played by classical conductors and musicians, who hold complete control of the performance, punk musicians only have control over setting the performance in motion; the other portion is up to the audience. Through the music, punk bands create the timing within which social interaction, like moshing and stage diving, unfolds. The

musicians, in many ways, direct the flow of the show as they are the ones who write the songs and play them in a semi-structured order. In this way, bands control some aspects of the performative balance of punk. This notion of bands trying to influence the timing of the way punks engage each other in the scene in turn acts, not as a gatekeeper, but as a reinforcement of social bonds and trust.

David, a twenty-three-year-old college student, added:

> It's all about boundaries. In life it's all about keeping distance from people, being standoffish or not getting too close. Here [in the punk community] none of that matters. Here everyone is the same. We are all in this together. You don't have to be apart from people. It's like one big family.

Spatial role reversals represent some of the social trust and bonds punks have with one another by demonstrating the willingness of the band to let go of control over the show, in letting the audience members dictate what happens, who in turn relinquish control of the performance back to the band. This performative balance pushes the excitement of both the crowd and the band to the point that distinctions blur—and the scene melts into one collective. Matt, a twenty-seven-year-old server, discussed the kind of feeling spatial role reversals inspire:

> Being right next to the band, on the floor, makes me feel like they care who I am. They are interested in me actually being at the show. I'm not just a punk in a crowd who they are making money off of. I'm part of the scene, and after their set, they remember who I am and we can have a real conversation about the set and the lyrics and the politics of punk and Bush, our idiot president. Shows like that weed out the real punks from the posers. That's what's real.

These role reversals demonstrate the ability of punks to trust each other and to solidify the social bonds they have with one another, at the same time act to create the boundaries between those who are punk as defined by other punks and those who have not quite been accepted into the group. When bands play on the floor as opposed to the elevated stage, the proximity breaks down the boundaries between musicians and fans. Many hardcore bands do this to have the audience closer to them, something an elevated stage prevents. This allows the audience and musicians to blend into one; there is a sense of dissolving one's personal identity into that of the larger community.

The collapsing of band/audience distinctions heighten the sense of camaraderie and community many punks experience when describing how the music gets into the action. Bill, a twenty-seven-year-old construction worker explained:

> The best shows are when the bands play on the floor. It's the only way to be at a show. It's not like a concert or anything where you just sit or stand there and watch the band or whatever . . . here the fans are just as important as the musicians, we're all part of the scene. No one is better than anyone else.

This proximity of bands and fans forms a reciprocal interaction, each group shaping the other to the extent that the intermixing deconstructs traditional interactions of playing and watching or producing and consuming, creating a blurred world where everyone is actively participating in the music scene simultaneously. No one is placed above anyone else and everyone matters equally. Both the bands and the audience appreciate the lack of separation and the ability to talk with each other; it levels feelings of inequality and leads to a stronger notion of solidarity between the two. Exemplifying this attitude, Mark, a twenty-eight-year-old high school teacher, described how this breakdown mirrors the sound of the music:

> At the last show I was at, it was so important . . . that the band played on the floor. Listening to the music they were playing right next to me made me feel like we were close but also made me feel a part of something larger. . . . Once the show starts, it doesn't matter if you are a musician or whatever; at the show the music makes us all punk. Our music motivates us to think and fight collectively. If we didn't, we wouldn't be punk, and punk would be dead.

Punks often connect these reversals with the more overt political themes and sentiments by linking them to the ways that they symbolically subvert traditional hierarchical social interactions. Greg, a twenty-nine-year-old zine writer, described his excitement:

> When I listen to punk and see a punk show, that's what I think is meaningful—the potential to screw the U.S. corporate caste system up. But it will only happen if we take control. That's what this is about. When 20 of us can take over where the band left off, that's where the real power of this music is. No one is better than anyone

else and we are all needed to make the show fun and punk. We need to take control of our political system like the way we take control of our punk shows.

The musical practice of spatial role reversals within the hardcore scene blurs musician-fan boundaries, as well as the distinctions between music producers and music consumers. Hardcore punk music inspires spatial role reversals, which animate punk collective interaction, deconstructing traditional boundaries of hierarchy and authority. Punk music facilitates the spatial role reversal actions requiring mutual responsibility, accountability, and investment on the part of the audience and the band for individual punk identity, the performance, and the punk community in general. Spatial role reversals are paramount in creating the kind of environment that facilitates the trust and camaraderie necessary for the mosh and the stage dive to occur. These actions, where the band takes on the role of the audience and the audience takes on the role of the band, symbolize the kinds of individual and collective identities that they musically, lyrically, interactively, and socially cultivate through their musical practices.

Conclusions

This study moves the music-in-action approach beyond the technology of the self, by which individuals are constituted through their use of music as cognitive and corporeal resource, to a "technology of the collective." By exploring the hardcore punk scene in Chicago, the three dominant musical practices discussed here (moshing, the stage dive, and spatial role reversals) allow us to highlight embodiment and musical practices as frames to explore how music as a cultural form is a resource drawn on and into the constitution of social life. In this way, as the music is channeled into interaction and expression, we can understand how musical practices are simultaneously social practices. When considered in this light, social interaction and social spaces are not just saturated with music for ambiance; rather music is constitutive of the different types of agency, modes of expression, emotions, and ways of being that take shape. Focusing on the live music show as the medium through which all action unfolds, physically, socially, and sonically, dramatizes how musical practices are active and participatory in nature, through which the experiential character of the collective cultivates their identities and investments in each other as punks.

As a result of bringing DeNora's music-in-action approach together with an extended case study of hardcore punk, we advance past the specificities of this musical genre and explore more generally the ways that people utilize and

embody musical practices as mediums and mechanisms of collective expression. The embodiment of musical practices highlights the multifaceted modes of expression through which the loss of self into the collective effervescence of the community, the feelings of catharsis and emotional release, the increased intensity and trust in their social bonds, as well as sentiments which both construct and validate their social world are experienced and cultivated. This approach affords new possibilities by which we can begin to understand music as a visceral and meaningful artistic expression that is not, in addition to or on top of social life, but emanates outward from the inside of cultural practices to structure social interaction and collective understanding. By focusing on the "musical practices," our aim has been to contribute to the ongoing dialogue among sociologists of music and culture about how music matters for ethnographic inquiry in real time and place and illuminates the textures and rhythms of everyday life that are at the heart of any ethnographic inquiry.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

1. For a history of punk that these practices are grounded in, see, amongst others, McNeil and McCain (2006); O'Hara (1999); Sabin (1999).
2. The "basement show" is considered a Chicago phenomenon since other parts of the United States do not have the same housing design in which basements are prevalent. On the West Coast, "garage shows" serve as the equivalent informal venue.
3. While most of the people we interviewed were between the ages of eighteen and thirty, the scene is open to people of all ages. However, older punks usually play different roles in the community than do younger punks. Because of the volume, often cramped spaces, and sheer physicality of hardcore venues, older punks will often wear earplugs, stay on the outskirts of the moshpit, or enter it on rare occasions. There are parallels with this kind of older punk participation with Fonarow's concept of zoning at indie gigs (Fonarow 1997) and Bennett's work on the way aging punks create discourses of belonging to compensate for their lack of physical participation (Bennett 2006). More pragmatically, older punks set up the shows, own the record stores, and mediate the message boards among other practices to keep the community alive.

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