

Learning through Resistance: Contextualisation, Creation and Incorporation of a 'Punk Pedagogy'

Mike Dines, BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance, Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (London, UK)

Contact: mike.dines@icmp.co.uk

Abstract

This article explores the many contradictions and complexities surrounding the theory and practice of a 'punk pedagogy.' It begins with a contextualisation, delineating notions of origin using a framework of anarchist models of pedagogy, teaching and learning in subcultural contexts (in this case, the new age traveller movement of the 1980s and 1990s), and the very beginnings of terminology and definition through Estrella Torrez's chapter 'Punk Pedagogy: Education for Liberation and Love.' As a reiteration of practice, case studies of two current practitioners are explored (Tony McMahon in Australia and Rylan Kafara from Canada), unpacking differences and similarities in punk-led models of teaching and learning. In conclusion, the importance of punk as teacher and facilitator is explored, examining links between the autobiographical experience of subcultural membership and punk as a tool for learning. This includes looking at how learning within a subculture draws upon the experiential and heuristic in areas such as political affiliations, lifestyle choices and musical preference.

Keywords: education, punk, pedagogy

Introduction

We can only live these changes: we cannot think our way to humanity. Every one of us, and every group with which we live and work, must become the model of the era which we desire to create. The many models which will develop should give each one of us an environment in which we can celebrate our potential – and discover the way into a more humane world (Illich, 1976: 17).

The anomaly of a 'punk' pedagogy – where a subculture stereotyped by anti-authoritarian sentiments can somehow be associated with the constructive and reflective practice of education – has the habit of raising more than a few eyebrows. The link between punk and pedagogy not only remains incongruous, but also paradoxical, with the oxymoronic notion of the didactic in punk remaining the first response from many. Indeed, I was recently sent an email asking my views on the idea of punk pedagogy by a fellow popular music scholar. 'I recently saw your call for papers on the pedagogy of punk rock,' he begins '[and] I have to say as a scholar of popular music, the call for papers left me scratching my head a bit.' He continues, 'why would punk rock need to be taught in

academia? I thought the whole point of punk rock was that it was anti-establishment and against any kind of orthodoxy? I'm not sure enshrining the music in academia is really in the best interests of the music. Also, isn't the charm of punk...that the artists figure out how to do stuff themselves and present the music in their own way?'

This paper explores such anomalies, raising questions over the complex relationship between subculture and pedagogy. It begins by contextualising the very idea of a punk pedagogy. Beginning with the release of *Critical Pedagogy: A Compilation of Teachers in Punk Bands* (2000) by Six Weeks Records, it traces the beginnings of what is termed as a 'punk pedagogy,' unpacking the relationship between the porous nature of the punk ethos and pedagogic practice, and how both have informed such a development. Here, discussion of Skool Bus (created by the Travellers Aid Trust) will be also examined, along with a look at the anarchist pedagogy of The Anarchist Free Space and Free Skool (AFS) in Canada. This section concludes with an examination of Estrella Torrez's excellent chapter, 'Punk Pedagogy: Education for Liberation and Love,' from Zak Furness' *Punkademics* (2012); a chapter that further contextualises and explores this practice.

One often thinks of a pedagogy of punk in terms of subject matter in the classroom; as part of a syllabus being taught through music, cultural studies or fashion. Although useful, approaching punk and pedagogy in this way almost diminishes the core value of its practice for such a consideration becomes bound up in the politics of curriculum and punk as mere subject matter. Therefore, the second part of this chapter will deal with the relationship between punk pedagogy and the classroom. Through examination of two case studies, punk pedagogy will be approached via the holistic, treating punk not only as subject matter but also as a means of *informing* pedagogic practice. A good example of this can be seen in the first study, where Tony McMahon's teaching of an undergraduate Creative Studies course at RIMT (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) in Australia draws upon ideas around punk to highlight the rebellious and the historical. Here, writers such as Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka and J. M. Coetzee are dealt with in a framework drawn from the punk stereotype, arguing that both share deep-rooted anti-authoritarian – and therefore 'punk' – ideals. The second case study is drawn from Rylan Kafara's excellent free course, 'The History of Punk,' delivered in Edmonton, Canada in 2012. Here, Kafara blends subject matter and practice, building the curriculum around an ethos of student-led democratization, and where a scheme of work makes way for organic extemporization.

Moving away from the classroom, the final section looks at the significance of pedagogy and subcultural membership. Drawing upon the autobiographical, punk is treated as the educator – the facilitator – that provided a framework of enquiry, questioning and interrogation. To be a punk in the 1980s (in particular, an anarcho-punk) often meant an accompanying political exploration around gender, animal rights, pacifism and anti-capitalism. Through lyrical content, fanzines, slogans and the idea of the 'DIY' (do-it-yourself) punk provided new ways in which to interrogate the world around us. For many, growing up in this time still informs the political and cultural values held to this day.

Agitating Education: Punk Pedagogy in Context

The very beginnings of a so-called 'punk pedagogy' can be traced back to the release of *Critical Pedagogy: A Compilation of Teachers in Punk Bands* (2000). Reflecting the self-titled practice, *Critical Pedagogy* brought together over fifteen bands – such as John Holmes, M.D.C. and Destroy Everything – each having a member involved in education. Writing in the accompanying sleeve-notes, the band Abstain note that, '[we] never understood the punk and hardcore bands that dismiss the value of education. A major part of punk to [us] is awareness and very few punks who drop out of school become genuinely self-educated. Our scene could use more awareness at the least and more intelligence at that.' For Abstain, therefore, 'being in school doesn't have to mean becoming a part of the system...everyone controls their own education, and you take from it what you put into it. That is a punk idea to [us], creating [our] own intellect and values by being aware and educated of the alternatives but insisting on the radical with good reason.'

What becomes apparent here is the notion of social responsibility, something not often discussed within the wider punk scene. With a subculture often equated with the chaotic and disorderly, reading Abstain's discussion of the value of education and the importance of social responsibility – and accompanying that, social, subcultural and individual *empowerment* – provides a very different picture. More so, their discussion of intellect, and the social responsibility that accompanies a punk pedagogy, also highlights the complex relationship between lifestyle and the subcultural. The porous nature of punk means that it can draw upon the multifarious to create identity and meaning. It can draw upon a plethora of ideas and beliefs to supplement its core. And, of course, this can go both ways. It means that 'punk' itself (whatever that is) also becomes almost transcendental; a concept, idea or way of life that remains indefinable and ever changing. From the stereotypical mohawks and bondage-trousers to the anarcho; from the Ramones to the bio-centric ranting of Vegan Reich; punk's illusory nature has the ability to transform and reinvent itself.

To explore a pedagogy of punk also means to examine this blurring of boundaries. It means to look at the margins of the subcultural and mainstream to look at the ways in which not just 'punk' (and 'pedagogy') are located, but also at the commonality of underground pedagogical ideas and practices: and how punk had either influenced those choices or how those ideas informed punk. A good example of this can be seen in the United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s and, in particular, new-age travellers; a culture that, although not specifically punk, had much in common with the subculture. Lifestyle here also takes a key role. Living as a traveller meant a full-time commitment to lifestyle, and therefore becomes the everyday; including, of course, education.

Writing in *A Time to Travel? An Introduction to Britain's Newer Travellers* (1994), Fiona Earle outlines the importance of education within the community, where 'children, on the whole, [are] brought up in a caring environment, with an alternative experience of life' (Earle, 1994: 79). Earle remains one of the first practitioners working with Skool Bus, a mobile classroom founded by the Travellers School Charity (TSC) in the mid-1980s to provide on-site educational support for children. Quoting Section 36 of the 1944 Education Act, she outlines the misconception that attendance at a State school is compulsory, noting that, although for the travelling community education has a central role to play, 'the blind acceptance of State provision is not only opposed by parents on the road, but is also, in practice, hard to obtain.' Instead, 'parents were offering their children a broad knowledge of life skills, but little in the way of conventional schooling' (Earle, 1994: 86).

Site-children were often taught through a combination of three options, those being 'learning through life, State provision [and] alternative education.' Here, it is evident that priority is given to the child, and 'discussed in the light of parental opinion and practical possibilities' (Earle, 1994: 86). Furthermore, emphasis is placed upon the child being in close proximity to adults both at work and at play, learning from their elders a multitude of experiences. They develop skills that are both practical but also specific to their lifestyle including 'cleaning, maintenance, cooking, collecting kindling, gathering berries, etc.' Independence is encouraged and gender stereotyping discouraged, with older children getting involved in this form of learning as total provision. Indeed, Earle uses the example of 'Barry' who went to Europe with the band the Tofu Love Frogs, visiting countries such as Belgium, Switzerland, Slovenia, Croatia and France. 'They played some refugee camps in Croatia and Slovenia,' she adds, noting that they also delivered aid to a blind school while there (Earle, 1994: 88).

Although Earle outlines key issues surrounding pedagogy and the travelling community, the exploration of Skool Bus – and indeed the work by the TSC and the Travellers Aid Trust (TAT) – draws us into epistemological debates surrounding punk, pedagogy and wider libertarian ideas surrounding education. As mentioned, due to the fluidity of definition, it is often necessary to explore punk's margins, unpacking the myriad of ingredients that have been incorporated and synthesized into a workable definition. Skool Bus is important here, in that it raises questions over the validity of 'core' ideals of a punk pedagogy. In other words, through a discussion of the multifarious – the release of *Critical Pedagogy* by Six Weeks Records, the discussion of Skool Bus

and the discussion of anarcho-pedagogy below – allows further demarcation of a punk pedagogy to emerge.

Much has already been written concerning the relationship between anarchism and punk, most notably in their culmination in the anarcho-punk scene of the 1980s. A brief discussion of anarchist pedagogy is useful in unpacking and exploring a delineation of its punk counterpart. Writing in Robert H. Haworth's *Anarchist Pedagogies: Collective Actions, Theories and Critical Reflections on Education* (2012), Jeffrey Shantz discusses the complex relationship between anarchism and pedagogy. For Shantz, anarchist pedagogy looks towards 'developing and encouraging new forms of socialization, social interaction and the sharing of ideas in ways that might initiate and sustain non-authoritarian practices and ways of relating.' It is, through this model, that the author looks at the embedding of 'revolutionary changes in people's perspectives on society, encouraging broader social changes' (Shantz, 2012: 126).

Shantz contextualises his discussion by looking at the idea of the 'free school,' a model inspired by the Spanish anarchist and pedagogue Francisco Ferrer. Taking its starting point from Ferrer's *The Origin and Ideals of the Modern School* (1913), the movement emerged in the 1950s and continued to grow through the 1960s 'as an effort to develop forms of education and self-development in a context that was considered increasingly alienating, rationalized and industrial' (Shantz, 2012: 127). Here, free schools evolved into a space that remained relatively autonomous from the bureaucracy of an education system seen by Paulo Freire (1996) and others as a 'banking system' involved in the depositing of knowledge. Instead, the free school engendered the notion of creativity, freedom of expression and the development of critical thinking. As an example of such a free school, Shantz draws upon the The Anarchist Free Space and Free Skool (AFS) founded in 1990 in Toronto, Canada.

For Shantz, 'The Free Space was intended as a venue for committed anarchists, novices and non-anarchists alike to come together and share ideas about the prospects, difficulties and strategies for creating new, anti-authoritarian social relations' (Shantz, 2012: 128). Courses were delivered that reflected this counter-cultural backdrop. 'Love Songs of the '20s and '30s' and 'Street Art' sat alongside courses entitled 'Understanding Violence Against Women' and 'Alternative Economics.' Other classes focused primarily on anarchist thought, with 'Introduction to Anarchism' and 'Class Struggle Anarchism, Syndicalism and Libertarian Socialism' being two particular examples. Another, 'Drifting as Foundation for a Unitary Urbanism' drew on the Situationists' concept of the *dérive*, where aesthetic experience is derived through urban exploration.

In common with Skool Bus, The Anarchist Free School became a space where the everyday appears to move beyond the political and subcultural. Shantz's idea that 'The Free Skool participants were successful at taking anarchist ideas beyond the confines of anarchist subcultures and radical political 'scenes'' (Shantz, 2012: 142) holds strong for both. Although the exponents of Skool Bus were not particularly anarchist – in the sense that they were not espousing a specific political ideal – the similarities between both are evident, as complexities surrounding the subcultural (Skool Bus) and the political (The Anarchist Free Skool) may be found in their intent. For both surpass the theories and ideas they wish to draw upon; both are not 'alternative' or 'subcultural' in their practice, merely because that is language that demeans their purpose and aspiration. Placing them 'against' something – Freire's 'banking system' for example, or within the confines of ideology – anarchism and the subcultural – devalues the creativity and aspiration in their practice.

If discussion has strayed from the specific focus of a punk pedagogy, then it may be wise to conclude this section on the work of Estrella Torrez who, writing in *Punkademics* provides a clear basis for the relationship between pedagogy and punk. In her chapter, 'Punk Pedagogy: Education for Liberation and Love,' Torrez draws upon the biographical to contextualise and formalise her thoughts and ideas surrounding this area. 'As a teenager,' she writes, 'hardcore's undeniably anger-drenched, politically charged music drew me in and plunked me into a group of kids that were eager to question hegemonic ideologies' (Torrez, 2012: 131-132). As with Skool Bus and anarcho-

pedagogy, it is evident that subculture became synonymous with lifestyle, emerging as a space where concepts such as hegemony, identity and the self could be questioned; and a space where new ideas surrounding schooling and learning in particular could flourish.

For Torrez, punk went hand-in-hand with the critical pedagogy of Freire in thinking about how the modern education system is structured, how '[it] holds steadfast to the notion that teachers are the owners of knowledge, while students are empty receptacles into which knowledge is poured' (Torrez, 2012: 133). Instead, Torrez draws upon Ivan Illich's distinction between 'education' and 'schooling,' where the latter 'is an institutionalized space meant to socialize individuals into societal norms, while *education* is a fluid process by which knowledge is transmitted, contextualised and transformed' (Torrez, 2012: 134). As such, she believes that a pedagogy of punk operates at a number of levels, and the latter part of her chapter provides an insight into how punk as a subject matter is delivered in the classroom; of how 'course objectives challenged students to interrogate and deconstruct their ideological positions on rebellion, complicity and social roles in a dominator-culture' (Torrez, 2012: 137). With echoes of anarcho-pedagogy outlined above, pedagogy becomes both the means and the end. Embodied within its delivery, its subject matter and its practice, this punk-inspired curriculum was an attempt at Freire's thoughts of education becoming the practice of freedom, of the liberator. Here, punk sat side-by-side with practice, drawing upon the anti-authoritarian and libertarian to explore key issues such as social responsibility, hegemonic structures and 'heal[ing] an ailing society' (Torrez, 2012: 137).

In other words, Torrez looked at how punk *itself* can function as a space where individuals can experiment, create and interrogate. For Torrez, 'to be punk, one must not only reject complacent consumerism but simultaneously question why she yearns for the material objects that occupy the spaces in our lives meant for love toward humanity' (Torrez, 2012: 135). Therefore, punk provides a space for a freedom of expression; a place where the DIY (do-it-yourself) ethos allows alternative means of production and where the aesthetic (through fanzines, lyrics, artwork, etc.) is fundamental in forging a 'punk' identity. Torrez believes that punk pedagogy reinstates personal responsibility instead of relying upon the dominant ideology of teacher as transmitter.

As with the discussion surrounding Skool Bus, it can be easy to paint an overly picturesque scene of a punk pedagogy. It can be argued, for instance, that Torrez's definition of punk in rejecting the complacent is too overriding and, ironically, far too confined. As discussed below, debate surrounding the definition of punk continues to rage, but Torrez's conclusion to the chapter is as interesting as that discussed above. The course was not as much of a success as envisioned: to have students throw-off 'thirteen years of schooling fashioned on the "banking model"' was rather naïve, 'blindly disregard[ing] their expectations of [Torrez] as a professor' (Torrez, 2012: 139). On a positive note, however, the idea of a punk pedagogy, and Torrez's example of good practice, remain; as will be explored in more detail below.

Chalk and Cheese: Deliberating on a Punk Rock Curriculum

To examine further the relationship between punk and pedagogy, it is useful to draw upon two current practitioners whose teaching has been informed by this practice. The first is Tony McMahon, a PhD student and lecturer of Creative Writing at RMIT University (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). More than just an academic, McMahon is a published author and an established journalist, writing for magazines such as *The Big Issue*, *Time Off* (Brisbane) and *Inpress* (Melbourne). His research centres on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, Situationism, punk and the notion of building/establishing urban landscapes to explore and unpack notions of the self.

For McMahon, creative writing – and the links towards historicity and traditional modes of storytelling – provides an interesting framework in unpacking the complexities of 'punk': not least through his drawing upon of Greil Marcus' *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (1990). Marcus' account of punk is interesting, in that he not only attempts to trace a subversive thread back to the student revolts of the 1960s, or indeed even to the formation of the SI

(Situationist International) in the 1950s, but even as far back as 1534 and to the Dutch heretic John of Leydon (Marcus, 1990: 90-94). 'The question of ancestry in culture is spurious,' writes Marcus in the book's prologue, 'every new manifestation in culture re-writes the past, changes old maudits into new heroes, old heroes into those who should have never been born.' He concludes, 'new authors scavenge the past for ancestors, because ancestry is legitimacy and novelty is doubt – but in all times forgotten actors emerge from the past not as ancestors but as familiars' (Marcus, 1990: 21).

Here, the author draws upon a number of examples to illuminate his ideas of ancestry. 'In the 1920s in literary America it was Herman Melville; in the rock 'n' roll 1960s it was Mississippi bluesman Robert Johnson of the 1930s...In 1976 and 1977, and in the years to follow, as symbolically remade by the Sex Pistols, it was, perhaps, Dadaists, Lettrists, Situationists and various medieval heretics' (Marcus, 1990: 21-22). Marcus found himself caught up in a line of subversives – a cultural genealogy – using a fine mix of facts, storytelling and intrigue to trace the line between each one. Moreover, during my correspondence with McMahon (McMahon, 2015), the latter admits that it was the hypothesis of a 'subversive thread' that gave birth to his exploration of punk pedagogy. Turning to authors such as Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, J. M. Coetzee and Kim Scott, McMahon believed that 'all of them were punks in their own way who had something important to say about how we might use this musical genre as a teaching tool to better convey to students the importance of them doing things in their own way.' In other words, McMahon believed that

it seemed relevant to communicate to my students that their literary ancestors – even before they knew the meaning of the word punk – were indeed doing this already, dancing to their own drumbeats, and that the results of thinking outside of the box or however one chooses to describe it, are precious and life affirming and, well, a hell of a lot of fun as well. (McMahon, 2015)

As such, McMahon would draw upon both the ambiguity of punk – and thus its freedom of definition – to approach his teaching. 'At the beginning of my candidature, I had no conception of what punk pedagogy might actually look like,' he notes. 'At the time, I had never heard of the Punk Scholars Network or the academic journal *Punk & Post-Punk* [but] on the first morning of the first class I ever taught, a preternaturally dry subject called 'Literary Realism to Postmodernism,' it felt somehow appropriate to lug my portable record player into the classroom along with my papers and laptop.' It was then that he began taking the students on a Marcus-like tour of pedagogy and storytelling, with the playing of Sid Vicious and his cover of Frank Sinatra's 'My Way.'

Although the subject matter was not specifically punk, McMahon's approach to authors cited above highlights much of what was (and still is) seen to embody a punk 'spirit' or 'ethos.' For McMahon, the notion of marginality accompanies a propensity for self-reflection, a celebration that can lead towards emancipation. Students are encouraged – as we have seen through anarchist pedagogy above – to question an existing hegemony and instead look to new, creative ways in which to discover self-empowerment. Storytelling is used to illuminate that which we cannot see, the ethereal nature of punk as *frondeur*, as an *idea* that permeates each generation in different contexts. By drawing upon Marcus' genealogical approach McMahon has the freedom to incorporate punk into pedagogical practice.

In terms of student output, McMahon has seen a 'marked increase in assignments reflecting heteronomous storytelling [and] consistently high CES [Course Experience Survey] scores for the subjects involving punk.' Submissions are far more interesting and creative, as the notion of storytelling is absorbed by the correlation between creative writing, history and the subversive (both in terms of the political and the creative). Students are more imaginative – and more confident – in submitting work that pushes boundaries and explores new areas that the student had not thought of in the past. Furthermore, McMahon's approach has drawn attention from fellow academics at RMIT, interested in formalising what McMahon calls 'punk intervention,' taking

his ideas wider than the Creative Writing Course. Here, RMIT's already well-established interactive tutorials for students' academic wellbeing and development of study skills is looking to draw upon McMahon's 'subterranean syllabus' as a means of stimulating students, encouraging them to find new approaches to subject matter and study.

McMahon's cross-disciplinary approach in presentation and subject matter provides an interesting experience for both student and lecturer. As with the earlier mention of the Situationist *dérive*, McMahon's delivery of subject matter means a new exploration for students who may be more at home with 'traditional' teaching techniques. From conversation with McMahon, it is evident that he is aware of the issues that Torrez faced; and has put certain processes in place to make sure that his 'punk intervention' does not supersede subject matter, but instead works alongside course content to continue to provide an interesting and experimental form of delivery. As evidenced by the interest from his university, McMahon's approach has made great tracks in providing a new learning experience for his students.

Another way in which punk pedagogy is utilised in the classroom can be found in Rylan Kafara's course 'The History of Punk,' a free course started in May 2012 in Edmonton, Canada. Here, Kafara utilises the ethos and attitude of punk in both delivery and subject matter, with the course not only being about punk, but also being driven by a 'punk' ethos with learners deciding in which way the course should go. An emphasis on creativity, the desire to learn and the drive to exchange knowledge with like-minded peers are part and parcel of the delivery and structure, also allowing the overcoming of obstacles that face many who would like to study. 'There are...many barriers facing those whose interest in learning might not match societal qualifications,' notes Kafara (Kafara, 2015) in a recent correspondence. 'Cost may be prohibitive for a student, as could admission requirements. Age may be a factor. Additionally, challenges and issues may arise, which mean a student may not sufficiently complete course requirements within a limited time frame.'

The non-restricting of age also provides a space where new ideas can be circulated and contested. As Kafara so rightly notes, 'a person's age does not equate with being more knowledgeable [and] all participants benefit from the exchange of ideas outside of age cohort and traditional hierarchy.' Furthermore, 'this gave youth experience in having their voices heard and legitimised by their elders.' In this sense, critical consciousness is encouraged and developed. Young students are able to learn the history of punk and subculture from those who were 'there' while older students are able to discover new repertoire and ideas from upcoming punk bands.

As well as working around traditional qualification frameworks and admission procedures, Kafara also began to build a course built upon the holistic. The delivery itself is teacher-led but collaborative, with the 'amateur' (another trait of the punk rock scene), to be celebrated. For Kafara, 'The History of Punk' would be communal, lacking the often-obstructive barriers between teacher and student. As in punk, where barriers between musician and audience are broken down, and where fanzines and music production are often DIY, teachers and pupils should, as Kafara notes, 'be indistinguishable from each other.' Instead, 'everyone is there to learn from everyone else, and to develop their own critical consciousness through participation.' The first session of 'The History of Punk' was held in May, 2012 and dealt with the origins and definitional issues surrounding punk. Yet, as a way of moving away from the New York Scene/London scene dichotomy that is often evident around this debate, discussion turned to the relationship between the definitional and the geographic. As Kafara notes, 'we discussed how a similar attitude arose in different regions in reaction to mainstream politics and culture,' looking at how the subversive in punk could be traced further back than the mid-1970s. Discussion surrounding 1960s counterculture and the folk idiom also arose, and discussion turned to the importance of music as a form of protest.

The inclusiveness and openness set a precedent for the following seminars. The second class was held a week later and looked at the punk scene in Vancouver in the late-1970s and early 1980s.

Discussion centred on the importance of distribution networks, looking at local record labels, record stores, venues and fanzines, in particular looking at the link between an alternative means of production and the wider mainstream. From here, the class turned to the Canadian band, the Subhumans (no relation to the Subhumans discussed below) and the arrest of band member Gerald Hannah when a member of the group Direct Action. Here, by examining the role of direct action and political agitation opened up further issues including feminism, pacifism, environmentalism and activism in Canada as a whole.

For Kafara, then, the importance of 'The History of Punk' is that it is not only 'important to be learning like a punk, but learning from punk.' In other words, complexities around punk – the multifarious and porous marginalization of many in the punk scene, or the establishing of alternative means of education through fanzine production – becomes part of the curriculum. Subject matter becomes a both a means and an end, informing curriculum and delivery. Discussion centred on the importance of social media, the relationship between fanzine production and the blog, the importance of accessing information via the Internet and the correlation between the on-going production of, and innovation of, syllabus content remains democratic and non-hierarchical.

As the course grew, so a Facebook page was started, posting updates around class content, including information concerning the syllabus and any other resources members might find interesting. This included relevant gigs, interviews and music which would inform course content and beyond. 'Members of the group discussed the posts and were able to transmit the information to their online social media networks if they chose,' notes Kafara, 'again, this meant the information covered in class (and ensuing discussions online) were more accessible, as people who did not attend...could still engage with the material.' For those not on Facebook, a Twitter account was started, using hashtags as a means of searching for relevant material. From here, a Tumblr account was also created, allowing the course to incorporate a blogging platform into its delivery and structure.

More recently, 'The History of Punk' has secured a weekly slot on Edmonton's community and University of Alberta campus radio station, CJSR. 'Just as college radio became the bastion for independent music in the AOR height of the 1970s,' notes Kafara, 'it remains so today. Show hosts can play whatever songs they like, and do not have to abide by industry recommendations, format standards, or approved music.' As its intention, the generational has informed new learning and new participation. As bloggers learn from their older fanzine editors and vice versa, the process works alongside subject matter. Ideas inherent in much of the punk scene – freedom of expression, the building of alternative means of production and the importance of the political – not only provides syllabus content but also informs delivery.

As will be discussed further below, it is interesting to note how punk *itself* becomes the educator. Kafara talks about how 'The History of Punk' became a framework where individuals can explore new cultures, new ideas. The author cites the Canadian protest movement 'Idle No More,' whose concern lies with the aboriginal people of the country. He notes that, with a surge of indigenous activism in Canada, 'a class was held at a coffee house in downtown Edmonton. Along with several students who consistently attended the course, the topic drew many new participants who were interested in engaging with the subject in an educational context.' Organised as a 'sharing circle...everyone took turns talking about Idle No More from their own perspective, how it resonated in mainstream society.' Also, the movement was 'placed in the wider lineage of protest movements and activism in other grassroots communities.'

Kafara's efforts to build and maintain a punk curriculum based on a punk attitude of creativity and democratization says much for his commitment and knowledge in the area. 'The History of Punk' remains a course that merges the punk with the pedagogy to a notable standard. The course is still running in Canada, with Kafara involved in a number of community-led projects away from the

everyday running of the curriculum. Instead, the course does indeed 'run itself,' looking at different parts of the punk/protest scene that correspond with locality, punk history and current affairs.

'Straightline Thinking': Where Marginality Becomes Pedagogy

The relationship between punk and pedagogy remains complex and intricate, not least because a discussion of punk's involvement in the classroom – both as practice and as subject matter – excludes an analysis of a punk pedagogy that lies beyond the school and university. Drawing upon the work of Freire (1996), Henry Giroux (2001) and Peter McLaren (1997), a more subtle and inclusive analysis of punk pedagogy can be seen through the lens of critical pedagogy, whereby punk *values* are enabled within practice; where authoritarian affinities, development of consciousness and the questioning of power per se, becomes part and parcel of the learning process. In this instance, one looks deeper into the experiential of punk, exploring processes of subcultural membership, personal and group consequence, and ideology. Punk is not seen in the abstract but instead through the heuristic. It becomes the living counterpart to the subject matter of the curriculum, as a complex space where (sub)cultural practice becomes reciprocal.

In this sense, marginality – an often-quoted inherent trait of punk – ceases to be seen as the negative, and instead becomes a source of empowerment. In the learning and the teaching of the global punk scene for instance, one brings into play a range of social, political, religious and philosophical ideologies. From the anarcho-punk scene of the 1980s, to the American straight edge scene; from the Riot Grrrl Movement espousing feminist ideals, to the Hare Krishna crossover between hardcore and Krishna Consciousness (Krishnacore); from the tenacity of DIY scenes all over the world, including those in Iran, China and Indonesia, to the LGBT aesthetic within Queercore. Punk has used a myriad of devices and practices to side step and undermine authority.

A way of exploring this may be seen through Peter Woods' idea of 'alienated learning.' Writing in 'Critical Students: Breakthroughs in Learning,' Woods notes how learning in schools is almost alienated at source, in that learners are conveyed another's knowledge through 'transmissional mode [with] pupils hav[ing] no share in the knowledge or any control over the learning processes. In addition, it is difficult to see the relevance of such learning for their own interests.' Instead, as Woods notes, critical pedagogues 'aim to empower students through emancipating them from ideologies and discriminatory practices' (Woods, 1996: 127). The author discusses a case study whereby a teacher – named here as 'Peter' – compares two very different learning experiences: one from the school environment, and the second from his own fascination in the natural world. At first, he talks of the experience that he gained at school, an environment that was 'constraining, directive [and] alienating' (Woods, 1996: 131). On the other hand, he talks of the autonomous, the holistic, realistic and, as Wood describes it, 'totally absorbing world of nature.' The author notes:

It is what gave him a point of reference, his epistemological framework, for defining other situations. It gave him choices, where the world of school stamped them out. It was expansive, not restrictive; inspiring rather than deadening; educative rather than indoctrinating; cooperative rather than conflictual...This kind of escape was a necessary tonic for him to balance the alienative forces of school and to maintain the fine productive edge of marginality. But the school viewed marginality as deviant. Degradation ceremonies were frequent (Woods, 1996: 131-132).

Obviously, one has to be careful in romanticizing this marginality, but Peter's experience sounds very similar to experiences I felt as a member of the subcultural. For many, punk became a source of expression that made more sense than those in the classroom. In terms of anarcho-punk especially, issues such as vegetarianism, animal rights, anti-war protests and anti-Thatcherite sentiment became an alternative to much of what the mainstream media were reporting and what was taught on the curriculum. If *The Sun* shouted 'Gotcha!' and encouraged 'our boys' in its jingoistic reporting of the Falklands War, then Crass' *Yes Sir I Will* (1983) provided an alternative backdrop to that sentiment. Accompanying punk's overt use of political lyrical content came a

focus on protest, propagating punk's ability to absorb and accommodate ideas and beliefs that would otherwise sit on the periphery of subcultural lifestyle. Here, the subcultural moved beyond the dancehall or seafront and instead supported organisations allied to anti-establishment sentiment. Punks were now supporting the Animal Liberation Front, playing gigs at the Wapping Anarchy Centre and taking part in anti-capitalist demonstrations such as Stop the City. But of course, punk did not merely absorb and integrate these ideas, but also reciprocated – through musical object and political posturing – views on animal rights, pacifism and anti-capitalism.

In terms of the pedagogical then, punks like myself rubbed shoulders with anti-vivisectionists, anarchists and other groups. Alongside Crass, Extreme Noise Terror and The Clash came the reading of anarchist newspapers *Freedom*, *Class War* and *Green Anarchist*, and fanzines such as *Cobalt Hate*, *Mucilage*, and *Scream and Shout*. Alongside anonymously written booklets such as *Against All Odds: Animal Liberation 1972-1986*, the anarcho-punk band Conflict (1986) sang 'direct action in animal rights means causing economic damage to those who abuse and make profits from exploitation.' While Mortal Terror sang of 'cutting up meat for a couple of bob, killing innocent animals that's the butcher's job.' Indeed, the latter's lyrical content ranges from McDonald's, to the horrors of nuclear war and issues surrounding apathy. 'Open up your eyes,' they sing on 'Ignorance Kills,' 'see through all their shit, it's time to stop the system and all who govern it' (Generic/Mortal Terror: 1988).

Commonalities between groups such as the Animal Liberation Front and punk rock highlight the political solidarity that many felt. Sympathy for individuals such as Jill Phipps and Ronnie Lee (two animal rights protestors) informed bands such as Conflict and Mortal Terror, while a whole plethora of groups felt the pinch in the government's Criminal Justice Bill of 1994; an obviously vindictive piece of legislation aimed at new age travellers, free festivals and so-called illegal raves. If anything, it meant that individuals like myself found subcultural membership synonymous with being politically and socially aware. Through fanzines, record sleeves, lyrics, etc., I was part of a network that stretched across subculture into many underground political movements consisting of Hunt Saboteurs, anarchists, new age travellers and ravers. In terms of the everyday, this membership informed my lifestyle choices that I still adhere to today. I am still vegetarian, I still support Class War and I am still, underneath this 'professional' façade, wary of authority.

A good example of this relationship can be seen in the Subhumans' 'From the Cradle to the Grave' (1983); a track that outlines the political and social alienation felt by many in the early 1980s. The term itself refers to the implementation of the National Insurance Act of 1946, when the Labour government introduced a 'comprehensive, universal system of benefits and pensions covering unemployment, sickness, motherhood and retirement...to ensure that all citizens [are] effectively guaranteed a minimum income, whatever their circumstances, from 'cradle to grave'' (Dorey, 1995: 14). Although positive in the immediate post-war climate, twenty-five years later the Subhumans – and in particular their lead singer and lyricist Dick Lucas – reflected upon the use of this legislation in Thatcher's Britain; with Lucas' thoughts on education being of particular interest in this context. 'Well they took you from your mother's womb/And put you in a school/Taught you how to run your life/By following the rules,' sings Lucas in the first verse. 'And when they send you off each day/Remember what you're told/You may think you don't need teaching, but you'll need it when you're old.'

It is useful to cross-reference Lucas' ideas concerning education with his thoughts in Martin Sprouse's *Threat by Example: A Documentation of Inspiration* (1990). Here, Lucas outlines his own thoughts and experiences of school: 'I was young, I was innocent, it was all new...constant change belongs to those unfettered by the problematic thoughts of security, futures, pasts and other people's present.' He elaborates by focussing on the juxtaposition of innocence with the inculcation of greed. 'We are born wanting nothing and are told to want all we can get...but all you're likely to get is attention, most of which is patronising or derisory.' For Lucas, this is summed by the overt authoritarianism when attending a boarding school at the age of eleven, an experience

that he still looks back on with trepidation. 'Previous to this I can't recall being continuously miserable,' he notes, 'it was an all-boys school, you lived and acted macho to avoid the rut of persecution.' Through the constant persecution that he received while at school the musician questions the petty – and often vicious – nature of those around him. He concludes,

I had no choice but to think it was 'human nature,' and that they'd all grow into more mature people one day – not realising that boarding school was to later seem like a miniature version of the 'outside world,' where ideas and communication came second to obtaining the means to survive in an atmosphere of material gain and control over others (Lucas, 1990: 14).

Lucas's commentary concerning his school days reflects the fraught relationship between authority and the individual that he explores within his lyrics. More importantly, whereas punk's otherwise derogatory comments towards authority were predominantly focussed upon those forces that are politically 'established' (the government or the police for instance), Lucas attempts to deal with the way in which a sense of control works on other, more complex levels. In other words, the way in which he encountered the so-called 'pettiness' of his contemporaries in the education system is also mirrored in his thoughts in the way in which individuals create hierarchical relationships on an everyday basis.

It is also obvious that Lucas draws upon the biographical – the experiential – within his work. Certainly for me, his lyrics provide intelligent insights into the oppressive and often contradictory nature of schooling. As I have already noted above, lyrics such as this became more personal, and indeed more informative, than the textbooks in the classroom or the 'transmission teaching' of many of my teachers. They reinforced ideas and thoughts that I felt, but did not have the experience to unpack and formalise. Punk therefore became central in my learning: 'and if you're too intelligent/They'll cut you down to size/They'll praise you 'til you're happy/Then they'll fill you full of lies', begins the third verse. 'Cos intelligence is threatening/And genius is sin/If you could ever see through them/They know they'd never win.' And, in a concluding line that felt very 'real' to me at the time, the singer finishes the line: 'racism, sexism/Teacher to class/From school to work remain the same,' he sings, 'are you white and middle class?'

As the track continues, Lucas takes you on a journey that includes his protagonist joining the army, of being a slave to 'attitudes...subconsciously devoted/To the morals of our time,' and to 'be the system's slave/From birth to school to work to death/From the cradle to the grave.' Lucas' take on the education system – and the truth they held for my own schooling at the time – provided an alternative educational backdrop beyond that of the classroom. Yet, the very thought of learning from a lyricist instead of a teacher seemed absurd. His lyrics carried me forward into a world of subversion and creativity; a world that still informs my living today. It would also be extremely unfair to disregard my schooling. It was not all bad, and I do not wish to merely dismiss the process. It is just that the two seemed to go hand-in-hand. Perhaps the knowledge-building environment of school worked well with the attitudinal, marginal pedagogy of the marginal. I have to be honest, however, the latter seemed a lot more fun.

Conclusion

It is obvious that punk pedagogy reflects the intangible, almost transcendental, nature of its subcultural counterpart. Definition and meaning cannot be pinned down but delineated and observed through the piecing together of a myriad of different sources. Punk pedagogy draws upon the theories and practices surrounding anarchist pedagogies, writers such as Ivan Illich (1976) and Colin Ward (1988), and the experiential learning of marginalisation and alienation often experienced through subcultural membership. Although a recent acquisition as a theoretical framework, it obviously shares many attributes and characteristics of the work of Paulo Freire, Francisco Ferrer and the wider ideology around the school of critical pedagogy. And yet, it is still distinguishable from these ideas. Through a sense of the biographical, a DIY ethos and its reliance on subcultural identity, punk pedagogy can still be set apart.

With a formalising of definition, punk pedagogy continues to expand. A perfect example being the project 'DIY DIGITAL: Doing Punk Online,' a course run by Lucy Robinson and Chris Warne at the University of Sussex, UK. Winning a Technology Enhanced Learning Scheme Award by the university, Robinson notes how their goal was to 'think not just about teaching students about punk, but also how punk might be a way of teaching.' Using sources from the Punk Scholars Network and the Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change Network, Robinson and Warne developed 'ways of doing historical research that take the interactivity and the DIY element of social networks seriously' (Robinson, 2015). Using software such as the Mahara ePortfolio System software, students were able to create international, but DIY-based, projects to share on-line. Content from the course was sent to other participants (Kafara and myself included), and thereby providing a dissemination of student ideas and examples of good teaching practice for our own digital courses. The course is an on-going project and is still up-and-running to this day.

Consequently, punk pedagogy seeks to remain far-reaching, up-to-date and exploratory. 'The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a 'circle of certainty' within which reality is also imprisoned,' writes Freire. Instead he notes, 'the more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it.' Punk pedagogy seeks to build upon the work of critical and anarchist pedagogies, seeking new ways in which to address and interrogate marginalization. Here, through the instigating of dialogue between punk and curriculum, new avenues of learning and teaching can develop, using alienation, disaffection and subculture as a means of expressing the radical.

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