

**Girls, Girls, Girls: Fragmented Voices in the Pittsburgh Rock Scene**

by

Judith A. Harris

and Keren Kurti

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## Introduction

"We must continue to articulate oppositional discourses--recognising them as discourses rather than an ontological truth that recent theory has cast a doubt on."

E. Ann Kaplan in Rocking around the Clock, p.153

Why talk about subculture?

It seems like subculture studies have gone out of style in the mainstream of cultural studies. More specifically, what seems to be out of style is the notion that there *are* subcultures, and that their existence connotes some kind of resistance. Instead, a lot of the current work is on potentials for counter-dominant readings of the dominant in mainstream popular culture.

What I would like to do in this section is map out some of the problems we found in previous subculture studies, and what we intend to do differently in our own project.

One of the landmark texts of subcultural theory has been Paul Willis' Learning to Labour. As summarized in Graeme Turner's British Cultural Studies, Willis observes 'the lads' being reinscribed into the dominant; "Accurately enough, they see the carrot of credentialism offered to them as a giant con; rather than chase the chimera of middle-class upward mobility, they opt to withdraw from the race and seek unskilled employment... A better example of the process of hegemony would be hard to find."<sup>1</sup> Willis' project is praised, by Turner and others, for its detail, its historic specificity. But is his conclusion that inevitably the lads end up where they are supposed to be, true for all subcultures? The question that will continually haunt this project is what is at stake here, what happens when one calls an act resistant? What does resistance mean? Can one find an instance of pure subversion anywhere? Is that what we should be looking for? What do we stand to gain from denying the potential for subversive moments in "traditional" subcultural practices? What do we stand to gain from simply calling subcultures complicit?

A recurring problem in the subcultural studies we looked at is a problem that also occurs relatively frequently in music criticism: for lack of words, the authors end up making some ungrounded, general statements that are at best

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<sup>1</sup>British Cultural Studies p.176

insignificant and at worst misleading. (See excerpts of reviews for examples of music criticism in trade journals.) For example, in chapter 3: Music and Symbolic Creativity of Common Culture, Paul Willis makes a chain of generalizations about the practices of music making without ever qualifying who he is talking about and where he got his information;

"The sense of empowerment achieved by being able to play an instrument and reproduce the sounds of a favourite record is a common starting point for young musicians. To learn by copying and experimenting (the usual mode for young rock musicians) is necessarily to be inventive. Guitarists, drummers, and keyboard players have to work out how to sound like their role models, usually with quite different (and much cheaper) sound equipment."<sup>2</sup>

I don't necessarily disagree with Willis' statements about the learning process but I would like to know where he gets his information. His writing is supposedly based on a specific ethnographic study that he hardly ever refers to. Occasionally, he makes references to one musician, and uses his experience to stand for all young rock musicians:

"For virtually all young rock bands, live performance is the focal point of their work. As many young musicians explain, it is in performance that they experience the most intense feelings of achievement. To be on stage is to be the object of public attention, and to have the glamour of their chosen musical role confirmed. Kevin felt that each one of the gigs they'd played live was a great occasion: 'It was all really good. 'Cause we was all young, and really into the idea of "the band", kind of thing, and everything was for "the band, and we were all together, like... we just had a really good time.'<sup>3</sup>

Reading this section (and the preface to the book where he talks about the enquiry this book draws from) leads me to believe that Willis had surveyed, or at least researched 'many young musicians'. I'm interested in seeing what different musicians had to say. I find it hard to accept Willis' statements with only the evidence of 'Kevin's experiences. While I agree with some of Willis' statements, I don't see the point in talking in such general terms, particularly when the book supposedly comes out of a specific and detailed study. While his aim in this chapter is to open up resources for young people to explore symbolic creativity<sup>4</sup>, his argument is far from compelling. Likewise, Dick Hebdige makes severe generalizations in his discussion of subcultural style. He describes two types of

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<sup>2</sup>Common Culture p.79

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.80

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.82

Teddy Boy, at two separate historical moments(1950's and 70's), but does not allow for differences and contradictions within each type;

"The early teds had marked a new departure... On the other hand, the very concept of 'revival' in the 1970's gave the teddy boys an air of legitimacy... the two teddy boy solutions were responses to specific historical conditions, formulated in completely different ideological atmospheres... the two sets of boys worshipped identical heros... cultivated the same quiffs and occupied approximately the same class position. The twin concepts of conjuncture and specificity (each subculture representing a distinctive 'moment'-a particular response to a particular set of circumstances) are therefore indispensable to a study of subcultural style."<sup>5</sup>

His discussion of punk is done in the same way; it is perceived as a totality, accepted, uncontested, having one set meaning.: "the twin moments of conjuncture and specificity (each subculture representing a distinctive 'moment'-- a particular response to a particular set of circumstances are therefore indispensable to a study of subcultural style."<sup>6</sup> What Hebdige is doing here is creating his subject as he is describing it. That in itself is not necessarily a bad thing, but Hebdige is not self-conscious about it. Hebdige fails to articulate the fact that his is just one take of many possible meanings. He has not stumbled onto an ontological truth, but onto one way of seeing these subcultures. There is a case to be made for a certain immersion in a subject of study, (the kind McRobbie identifies in Hebdige<sup>7</sup>) a slight celebratory tendency, as long as the researcher is up front about it. Just because the writer is outside the subculture does not guarantee an objective, accurate take on the subject. There are always other assumptions that come into play, and they must be put forth, so as to inform readers of what exactly is at stake in the project.

Judy and I are coming into this project knowing that we are fascinated by our subject matter. We have a lot at stake in keeping our enquiry pleasurable, in getting answers that will conform to our pre-existing assumptions about women, about music, about subculture, and about ourselves. That is what we have to keep in mind as we collect data, as we talk to different women--we have to remember our personal baggage, and try to work through it, rather than letting it work us. When we look at the interviews, and interviewees we see people we know, and we see ourselves. What we have to work out is how and how much

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<sup>5</sup>Subculture p.82-4

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.84.

<sup>7</sup>Settling Accounts with Subcultures p.74-5

of the personal we can integrate into the project. We think it would be impossible to play 'objective', 'unbiased' researcher, because we both are implicated in an investment in our subject matter, in relative degrees of outsider/insider. Judy is coming in from the outside, academic field; I play in a band, so I'm inside, and trying to enter the academic field. Every researcher is implicated in some way. We are not interested in attempting to do the impossible, that is, to do an objective ethnographic study. Instead, we would like to integrate the personal with the 'data' from our interviews; our voices are also part of the material we will draw from.

Where are the girls?

In "Settling Accounts with Subcultures", Angela McRobbie observes that women, for the most part, are absent in subculture studies. It is clearly apparent that, in most subculture studies, youth culture is defined in specifically male terms. Books like Hebdige's subculture: the meaning of style can pretend to be general while talking only about boys, when "questions about girls, sexual relations, and femininity in youth will continue to be diffused or marginalized in the ghetto of Women's Studies"(McRobbie p.68) This part of McRobbie's criticism seems so obvious to me, that it was incredibly painful to find that for the most part these issues have not been taken up. What we would like to do is to take up the glaring absence of women, to look for the girls.

McRobbie is interested in looking at female subcultures, but I'm not sure where to find them, or what we might learn from looking at them. However, I think it is very interesting to study what kinds of girls have the access to the escapes that are "monstrously more difficult for women"(p.69)

One way of envisioning a project on girls and subculture is to take them up as they represent themselves, try to enter into their discourses, see how and where they define themselves. From there we can go on and see where things break down, where the conflicts come in. We are not doing a comparison between ways men and women experience subculture. We want to probe questions of 'femininity' as they relate to constructions of the self.

The person whose work comes closest the kind of exploration we would like to pursue is Dorothy Hobson. While her subjects, housewives, would not traditionally count as a subculture, her methodology seems most enabling for further studies. Hobson is much more up front about exploring the boundary

between researcher and subject, which makes her insights much more valuable to this project:

"Spending time watching people at their jobs is a delicate operation. Initially it is necessary to get to know them and to give them time to decide whether they accept your 'being around' and talking to them about their work. To a certain extent they have the power to resist your intrusion into their working lives or to assist in the work you are trying to do. It is certainly within their power to make your stay a difficult chore or a pleasant and valuable experience."<sup>8</sup>

We are all performers, acting out constructions of ourselves for the people around us. Some of us do are more conscious of this process than others. But we do not act out these representations in a vacuum. Likewise, the women we interviewed come out of specific moments, specific discursive networks that we need to acknowledge. Judy and I chose to concentrate on 'female voices', but these voices come out of a tradition that is mostly male. We are not talking about a female subculture, but about the ways a small group of women chooses to describe experiences in a specific subculture.

"Amidst such speculation and hesitation, what can we hope for? First, a realization that women and girls can work together...We need to know more about women's situations...We have to know what we need before we can hope to find ways of getting it. Maybe this is where a new kind of adventure starts."

Angela McRobbie p.5 of Feminism for Girls: an Adventure Story

The importance of doing ethnographic work here, is grounding the object of study in a concrete, specific moment. Instead of creating a fiction around styles and utterances, we want to be exploring conflicted discourses. Turner<sup>9</sup> suggests that ethnography has unifying tendencies. And while might be true in the work of Hebdige or Willis, but we would like to explore the possibility of multiple meanings, multiple constructions of reality, of self and of surroundings even within this small group of women connected in the Pittsburgh music scene. The important question here is not whether or not the girls surveyed are resistant. Rather, it is an attempt to explore the construction of discourses of and around resistance within formations of female subjectivities.

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<sup>8</sup>Crossroads p.11

<sup>9</sup>British Cultural Studies p.178

## Some notes on terminology

We have chosen to use the word 'girl' when talking about and with the women we interviewed because it is the term they use to refer to themselves. We're not making a derogatory statement about their age or maturity level. Rather, we like the deliberate misspelling of it to create GRRL, playing with an aggressive growling image, not passive and polite. We see the use of the word girl as a positively empowering act. The word is taken up and embraced--I'm a girl and proud of it. I like being a girl.

Throughout the paper we will be talking about a 'music scene'. I would like to try and define the territory we're staking here, but that is very hard to do, primarily because by nature this territory is constantly changing. I'm not going to discuss technical aspects of sound in this section. I think its important to define the space for the music without defining the sound. Sharon F., bassist for Salt Chunk Mary said in her interview "people in the experimental music scene can't stand pigeonholing." (To find out what kind of an experiment the interviewees felt they were a part of we asked them to define their music, and what it stood for and against.) The girls we interview are part of the Pittsburgh punk/independent music scene. The best way to define the music is DIY--do it yourself. What that means is make music you like, fool around, make noise, without trying to fit into any sort of market, without conforming to the requirements of a large record company, without becoming part of an industry. The space carved out is supposed to be separated from commercial music--make music for the love of music, not for profit. However, the space is not as egalitarian and open as it might seem when you first conceive of it. You have to know people or make yourself known so that you can get shows, get to play for an audience. Even before that, you have to have the equipment and the space to play, and that takes knowing people too. (Pittsburgh at this time does not have any performance spaces that are dedicated to putting on shows, so most bands play at bars where the music is secondary to the beverage sales.) Then if you want to record your music you need to pay for studio time, and that means having someone put up the money for you, or give it to you for free. (Some other cities have one studio where most of the bands record their music, like Yo-Yo Studio in Olympia. Pittsburgh does not.) Then we get into the whole hierarchy of independent rock labels. Even within this space there are bigger

labels(Homestead, Touch & Go, Amphetamine Reptile, Sub Pop, and Shimmy Disk) that are more well known, and smaller ones. They come in all sizes--some bands put out their own records, other labels put out local bands, other are more national. And whether you put out your own record or find someone else to put it out for you its all a matter of who you know. It all comes down to networking. You have to get your record to stores. You have to convince the stores they want to sell it. It helps if you have a person who is well known and respected helping you out (People like Ian MacKaye, and Calvin Johnson come to mind--they put out a limited number of records, but tend to pass the word around about other people's music.) Same with booking tours. Both on the local and national level you have to have connections, you have to have access. What we would like to explore is how girls negotiate this space, how they represent themselves in relation to this space.

## Fanzines and Female Authority

There's this feeling that it is o.k. for boys to pick up guitars and fool around, and it's fun, they can criticize and tease each other but it is all o.k., because they just have this right to rock, eventually they will of course figure it out. They are very supportive of this formless experimentation. But as soon as you, The Girl, pick up a guitar its like you're doing it all wrong, you'll never be able to do it. You have WRONG inscribed in your head, years of being a girl do that to you, and it is continually reinforced by the boys around you. You're supposed to understand when they tell you you suck, they are trying to help you. After that it takes forever to get over the fear, to be able to play with your friends, people you are close to, not be afraid to mess up in front of them. Boys seem to have it much easier--if they fuck up they think its a fluke. When I mess up I feel like a failure, and its hard to know that no matter what, you will make mistakes as you learn. I'm at this point now where I know I want it, I want it bad, and I'm entitled. I'm going to be there, screaming into their faces. I'm going to be loud, be raw. I'm going to work at it no matter how hard it is, no matter what people say. No one is going to take that away from me. No one is going to tell me what to want. No one is going to tell me what to do. I've been led by other people all my life, not because they wanted to be exploitive or malicious. These are people who thought they had my best interests in mind. But somehow my interest was always their best interest... Well I don't want that help right now. I want to explore things for myself, mess around, not have to explain myself. It feels really good, liberating to find your voice, to be able to express yourself in front of other people. Its very scary when you feel it slipping away. No one is going to take that away from me.

Keren and I decided on our research topic: girls in Pittsburgh who are involved in the rock scene, how they talked about themselves, their lives, and music. Before we started interviewing, we began with "girl" fanzines. These zines were much in the style of "Keren's spoo" (what Keren and I named the above as I saved it on the computer). After I saw this bit of Keren's writing, I wondered if we could write our whole research paper that way.

The writers of these zines refer to them as "grrrl" zines, or sometimes "angry grrrl" zines; one of them is even called *RIOT GRRRL*. Only a handful in number, these are put out by girls who are involved in a specific rock circuit: Olympia, Washington--New York City--Washington D.C. . The ones we read were *Bikini Kill*--put out by a girl band of the same name--and *Girl Germs* come out of Olympia, *RIOT GRRRL* from D.C., and *secret teenage nothing* from NYC. These publications contain the thoughts and experiences of the people that put them out (and it's not exclusively girls), their friends, and other people read their zines and send in their own material.

"The Many Myths of Masturbation", "Street Harassment" and "Comfortable and Free To Walk Down the Street", "Understanding Privilege", and "The Liberation of Marcia Brady", are just a few names of segments that appeared in the zines we read; you might only think of these "articles" as examples of *feminist* issues, but this is a lame classification once you read the zines. Music--the beat, the language, and the sound of girls who are involved in this underground music circuit--permeates the zine texts, both in the rhetorical style and content, so what you have is a lively forum of girls speaking out about all sorts of topics that concern the writers and their intended public. Poems, stories, interviews, reviews, letters, top 10's, and graphics serve as vehicles through which personal thoughts are made public, much in the same vein of the writing process that Debbie, the drummer of Annie's Hot Cargo, describes:

I think our songs are a combination of being something very personal and something very sort of universal\*, a universal type of experience. A lot of our songs deal with issues surrounding things like sexuality and expression, communication, and sort of speaking out, and a lot of them come from experiences that we have, just everyday. If I look at the words written down I take them as all very personal and representing very specific things in my own life, but I think that they're not so specific; you could also read into them a more broader interpretation. And they are a lot about living in a patriarchal society, and about the way our society silences women, and makes women feel uncomfortable about speaking out or even getting up in front of people and making a lot of noise. Or the way women are not supposed to talk about or think about sex. I guess it's more of a combination of all those things, and personalizing those experiences.

\*The world "universal" is considered taboo in cultural studies; consider, however, the context of what Keren expresses when she says "It's *so good* to know that you're not the only one to feel that way!"

The girl zines are "home-made"--some parts in handwriting others typed with mistakes on a typewriter, pictures pasted in, xeroxed--and sent to friends and fans. Note the excerpt from *Girl Germs*. These letters sent to *Girl Germs* show how small and segregated this sphere of circulation is. Because they are not written for major consumption and profit and don't fall under any type of marketing censorship, one can speak freely in them--the result of which makes the girl zines potentially exciting, dangerous (just in the mere act of *talking* about such things!), and empowering.

This appeared in RIOT GRRRL. It was too blurry to photocopy for this paper, so I printed it verbatim:

RIOT GRRRL...believe in me!

Clarity of agenda is not really something that is important to me. RIOT GRRRL is a total concept. there is no editor and there is no concrete vision or expectation, or there shouldn't be. In the tradition of NEW Modrockers and hypocrobrats, we riot grrrl are not aligning ourselves with any one position or consensus, because in all likelihood we don't agree. One concrete thing we do agree on so far is that it's cool/fun to have a place we're we can express ourselves that won't be censored, and we're we can feel safe to bring up issues that are important to us. To me riot grrrl along with other angry grrrl zine's, exists in the face of boring nowheresville fanzinedom to confront as well as to be something fun. Those of us who have been working on these past four issues might not do them again, but this name is not copyrighted... so take the ball and run with it!

The whole notion of authority--of an authority on our subject matter--gave us problems. We found that the problems, however, were related to the dilemma of writing about the female voice. One of the many things these girl zines made me realize is something very obvious: that women seldom speak out against the oppression and repression of our gender--we don't want to jeopardize our position as a nice girl (especially if we don't believe that we are!).

In her article called "Settling Accounts with Subcultures: A Feminist Critique", under the subheading "Silences", Angela McRobbie writes:

One of the central tenets of the women's movement has been that the personal is political. Similarly, feminists recognize the close links between personal experience and the areas we choose for study --our autobiographies invade and inform what we write. Even if the personal voice of the author is not apparent throughout the text, she will at least announce her interest in, and commitment to, her subject in an introduction or foreword.

She goes on to say:

The point is that this absence of self (this is quite different from the authorial "I" or "we") and the invalidating of personal experience in the name of the more objective social sciences goes hand in hand with the silencing of other areas, which are for feminists of the greatest importance. (*On Record*, p. 68)

Sex, sexual abuse, incest, sexual discrimination, domestic violence, male domination and aggression, are some of the common themes in the girl zines we read. The power of these zines is unquestionably tied to my own reading response and reactions, my own social circles and personal experiences. And as Keren constantly reminded me, there are many contradictions in the way a "truth" is conceived, between different people as well as within one subjectivity. Who knows how the texts of these zines are actually constructed, what motives let's say Molly and Allison of *Girl Germs* have when they produce their zine? And, what effect do the zines they have on other girl readers? Again, the terrible question arises: how does a female speak about females speaking out about being a female? In researching the existence of a female subculture, what mask of authority need we wear?

*Fanzines and the shaping of our project*

### **Chris**

Most of our interviewees from Pittsburgh never read a 'girl zine'. Chris is a seasoned musician and a native Pittsburgher who is currently working with a new band, The Northern Bushman. When I brought up the subject of these zines to Chris she pointed to the corner of her living room where there were a half dozen crates full of zines. For a second I thought I hit the jack pot. But they weren't girl zines. They weren't looked nothing like the homemade texts that I had been reading. These were "glossy promotional" type zines, as Chris

described them. They reminded me of car mechanics-type magazines. Chris worked at Jim's Records for a few years, one of the best alternative record stores in Pgh. Her finance currently works there. He brought home several cd's and an album when I was there interviewing Chris. Where we sat, two walls were filled to the ceiling with records. The two opposite corners of the room held cassettes and cd's. Those guys *knew* their music, yet, as they were well aware, there is always something outside your immediate knowledge of music, some new thing you've never heard.

I had to call Manny, the main promoter of bands that play at the Upstage, a club in Oakland, for phone numbers of some of the girls. "I have hundreds of zines you can look at", he said, but when I named my zines, he said, oh, you're talking about *girl* zines--I don't have any of those. He seemed to know what they were--why didn't he have one? Though he then went into a discussion of several of the girl bands that put them out. Of Bikini Kill he said, "They're separatists." What do you mean separatists? I asked him. "Their goal is to play for only girls." Where'd you hear that? I asked. "They were quoted saying it," he said. It was interesting to see Manny's position in the Pittsburgh music scene as promoter of most of the small rock shows. He kept saying, though, that Bikini Kill was four girls, when they have a boy guitarist. There is a tendency, especially with more girls playing music, to overlook the boys in what you call a girl band.

### **Erin**

Toward the end of my interview with Erin, who plays cello, upright bass, bass, and guitar, and is currently playing with six different bands, I started explaining our interests in incorporating the feminist issues of the fanzines into our project. Up to this point in the interview, Erin had pretty much said that gender is not an issue with her in playing music.

J:have you ever read any fanzines or girls zines or anything like that?

E:Yeah, have you ever read *White Heat Saturn*? Oh, God you got to read it, it's the greatest. You'd love it, you'd love it.

J:Where'd did you get--how would I get that?

I have a copy at home I could lend it to you, it's just the most fantastic thing you'd ever... it's a... Actually, a guy wrote it which shocked the hell out of me because it such a female perspective. I mean it's exactly what it's like...

I mean the main character was me exactly... I was the main character, that was me talking!

Erin and I talked about girl zines. Actually, I did most the talking about them, but we both traded various opinions about the usual connotations of the label "feminist", and for the remainder of the interview Erin became more vocal about her experiences of being a girl musician.

E:The only thing gender specific I ever encountered is like when I played bass sometimes people commented "Oh it's so cool having a chick play bass." That's about it. But when I play cello, it's just...

J:neutral ground...

E:...Totally neutral, right, right. Though I did have one time--I'll never forget it--it was like my first and most potent encounter of sexism, I think. I was playing with Thin White Line in Youngstown and the guy that plays bass for the Psychedelic Firs was there, and he kept saying over and over, he kept saying "I can't believe your a girl, I can't believe... he kept saying "Man that can't be a chick, that can't be a chick". I think he was trying to compliment me, but I was...

J:Because of the music that you played he thought that you can't...

E:He just thought I was so good that there was no way I could be female and... I think he thought he was paying me a compliment but I got really pissed off. [laughter] I was like "Well fuck you! What do you think! Why couldn't I! --you know. I think it makes more of an impression like if you're playing bass than a cello.

### **Mecca Normal**

Mecca Normal is a band from Canada, who records on K label from out of Olympia. Jean Smith is the singer and David Lester plays guitar. Keren had booked them to play at the Women's Center on CMU campus.\* For two weeks

preceding the show, I listened repeatedly to two Mecca Normal albums, could recognize all the different songs and knew some of the lyrics by heart, as well as read about Jean Smith and Mecca Normal in the fanzines. She was mentioned a lot in the zines:

In short, I had all sorts of crazy ideas of what Jean would look like (the xeroxed photographs in the zines are far from picture perfect), what she would say, and how she'd act. How was I to talk to this hip feminist musician, who from all my built-up notions about her, was a giant in my mind, rolled up sleeves, tattooed arms, cigarettes in the sleeve, dressed in black, dyed, greasy and punked out hair, gum chewing, loud and powerful.

Turns out she had long wavy hair, was petite, and had on a sort of sixties attire--multicolored out of date dress with clashing tights and high tie up fringed boots. She was powerful, but not in any of the ways I had imagined. My biggest impression at the moment I started talking to her I was--I am dealing with a sophisticated artist here, one who was used to interviews.

I felt kind of silly asking her about her involvement with "Revolution Girl Style Rock." This is a phrase, or various versions of it, that appeared repeatedly in the girl zines, so had come to represent for me a wide movement of solidarity in the girl band scene. Instead I started with questions about the history of Mecca Normal, followed by questions about the lyrics and their sound.

JH:Do you consider yourself part of the Revolution Girl Style Rock scene or is what you do is just totally yours and Dave's music?

JS:I know the people in Olympia that are putting out the slogan or that idea Revolution Girl Style Now, and I like them and I like their music and I like their ideas. I guess I'm a little older than them and they kind of have been inspired by to some degree by what we've done; so I am part of it and that's great. It's the critic that starts lumping you together, "well these people are a part of this"--it's an overview that's really false when you're actually part of making music, because it is a very personal thing, especially the singing, you're just totally opening up your soul and taking a really big risk, and that's what it feels like mainly, everyday. And then some days I think "Oh, I'm a part of the

underground music, oh I'm part of Revolution Girl Style Now, or whatever other project or touring capacity we're in. So there's all sorts of ways of breaking it down and looking at it. But I really like that energy of women being really supportive or women coming into music. And to not try and say, "oh you know you can't do that", "it's not very good", or "you don't play like some guy or another." It just feels to me like there's an awful lot of support for women making bands of their own or being in bands."

There were other notions Jean exploded besides the physical image I had of bigger underground girl musicians. Once bands go commercial, they are no longer a part of this scene and often forgotten. I wondered what "getting bigger" would therefore mean for Mecca Normal. She answered in terms of *comfort*--making enough money to pay the rent from it, staying in motels and not sleeping on people's floors, another driver (she does all the driving--Dave doesn't drive). Jean's the "mechanic and tour manager", Dave's the "navigator and dietician". She said, "The longer you keep doing it it just can wear you down so far to the level to fatigue where it becomes almost prohibitive to be out there." Currently they were on "a tour of Motel 6's," Jean said. They had played in Providence, Boston, NYC; the night before in Cleveland, that night in Pittsburgh (they had blown a tire en route from Ohio and arrived right before the show time). The next night they were to play in North Carolina.

Dave Lester is the most terrific guitarist I have ever seen. He never stopped moving once, was moving up and down the whole time, making his guitar sound like so many *different* instruments--I've never heard that much sound come out of a guitar--it was itself a band. The crowd loved him. At points, it seemed as if his guitar was the voice the way it sung, and Jean's voice the instrument. Jean had on leg forward and one back and rocked moved forward and back the whole time. I was glad I knew all the lyrics (it would have been hard all the words out unless you were used to her singing style), because as soon as she started singing the songs I couldn't believe how they made me feel (and I thought they were powerful before I saw Jean sing them). At one point Jean put down her microphone and walked into the audience singing; her voice strong the whole time. Their performance was an entirely different musical experience for me, and I think so for a lot of the crowd, too. They were really quiet, you didn't hear any talking between the songs, however their clapping and

cheering got louder with each song. I asked Jean what she thought about that sort of crowd in comparison to playing at clubs. She said, "It's was nice to have so much attention, but I felt like saying, hey everybody, loosen up, we're all friends here. Anyway, I can't wait til they come back to Pittsburgh. I'm going to take all of my friends.

\*We decided to interview Mecca Normal before deciding to do our project on girls in the *Pittsburgh* rock scene. WRCT, the CMU radio station, had planned to air it (Keren worked there as well as at the Women's Center).

## Going Underground

I didn't realize this until the interviews, but before this project I *was* familiar with the rock scene in Pittsburgh. The girls brought up some of the bands they used to play with, bands I had seen, or bands that friends of mine were in. When I interviewed Chris the whole time neither of us remembered that we had met--that we *knew each other*--six years ago. Until I was I was leaving I told her that so and so said hi and she said: You're *Judy!* (she had red hair then, and was I fat).

I never went to shows much, but after seven years in Pittsburgh, I knew and recognized various people in the Pittsburgh music scene from the few times that I went to clubs. There was a bar I used to go to where a lot of the people who went to shows hung out. Later, through a boyfriend--a native Pittsburgher, I got to know some other people from the band scene.

What was I bringing into the interviews? Love for girls, love for music--mostly excitement about talking to girls. I have *just* started (at 30 years old) making a number of good girl friends my age, more than any other time in my life. It is so good talking to them--I can't believe how similar our experiences are, and all of our backgrounds are really various (in terms of class, culture, and race). One of my friends and I thought that maybe it was because of our age that we're starting to talk about what it was like growing up, being teen-agers, and how in our twenties we went through so many changes. At any rate, feeling particularly good about talking to my friends lately, I was eager to meet and talk to the girls we called up to interview.

Along with the social experience, mostly what I was interested in in interviewing these girls was how they saw themselves as both performers in Pittsburgh, and as women, and how they talked about themselves. How did they feel about their music? What were they interested in besides music? What kind of jobs did they have or want? Would they tell me anything about relationships? Did they feel they were a part of any movement in music or in feminism? Being younger than me, were they much more liberated? Did they think differently from me about things?

As for issues of resistance, a common entry point for subcultural studies, I wanted to examine how they were being resistant, and if they saw themselves or presented themselves as being resistant. I was curious about what *I* would find as being "resistant".

We asked them three sets of questions: the first having to do with the kind of music they played or listened to, the second pertaining to issues of gender, and the third, questions about their backgrounds.

### **How would you define your music?**

First of all, what kind of music are we talking about? How would the girls each personally describe the music? What do they call it? That's was the first bit of information we tried to get from our interviewees, starting out by asking the question--how would you define your music?

D:Punk.

J:Ok, well, thanks for being so simple [laughter]. Everyone I've talked to so far had a lot of different versions of what punk is.

D:Yeah, I mean there is. There's a lot of different ways to describe it. I guess like, the music I play is loud, it's strong and... kind of aggressive Punk can be anything, it can be anything that, you know, you feel strong about, I guess. I mean that's the real the meaning of it, isn't it? Like it all kind of started from like kids doing what they believe in, you know, kind of like, going against the grain of things, whatever that might be.

J:What's makes punk different from rock 'n roll?

D:I think punk is--the way it sounds--I think punk is louder and more aggressive. I think rock 'n roll is a little more polished, maybe a little more bluesy kind of thing. I think with punk people are just kind of like playing whatever they want to play. And you don't have to be a great guitar player, you don't have to be a great musician, you know, it's just kind of your own thing. As opposed to the--it's not commercial and I think maybe rock 'n roll tends to be.

Loud, strong, aggressive--words that would seem to in themselves connote resistance. This was a common description of the sound amongst the girls, though not always to this question. However, if you think about it, loud, strong, and aggressive could describe many types of music. The question is, how did the girls say it? How did they identify with this particular sound?

Debbie C. first used "punk" to describe her music. The "real meaning" of punk: doing your own thing, doing what you believe in, "going against the grain of things, whatever that might be." Natasha connects her kind of music to the beginnings of punk too, but by qualifying it against old hardcore scene.

Most of the music I listen to is, well it's considered the underground alternative scene. Not specifically hard core because I think that hardcore barely exists at this point and what does exist is usually just male dominated thrash music, which I think is really repetitive and boring, and I don't get anything from it. But there are a lot of bands that are changing the scene, are not so--I mean I think a lot of hardcore music is just aggression, and I think that anger is good in music but... I think that, I there are other ways of expressing yourself. But because that was it just seems to me, that it's angry, young, and I noticed, almost always, *men*, angry young men like... screaming... it just didn't hit me at all. After a while--I mean it was interesting at first and then that quickly fades.

Later on in the interview she brings up these particular roots of punk, saying

I was thinking about what I said about it being a more educated scene but maybe people don't see it that way. They still see it as the same scene it was grounded into--a straight hardcore scene, which--I think is a bunch of stupid people.

Positive and negative connotations of punk: again, how do the girls identify with it?

It takes four pages of transcribed conversation before Natasha brings her answer to a close, or comes near to drawing a complete picture of the music she listens to, because she engages in describing the *punk scene* she was involved in. From the very beginning Natasha make it obvious that it's a male dominated scene:

For some reason, my friends in high school were guys and so they were all into the hardcore scene. So I first started going to shows just to see their bands. Then I started getting in it and I was interested in the punk scene--not very social child in high school, so anything anything alternative seemed really...

Other interviewees might have hung out with the boys in high school, and felt themselves not very sociable, but didn't necessarily say so. I hung out with the boys in high school, though I felt I was very sociable. I think that interesting, not being close to girls in high school. What does that have to do with being into punk music?

We'll go back to these questions, perhaps numerous times, but let's continue forward for now.

### **The sound of punk, rock, alternative, underground, and much more.**

Here's how Erin answered "how would you define your music":

It depends entirely on the bands. My main band Watershed, that's like, they play what's called avant-jazz, you know, whatever, it's kind of like Lounge Lizard type stuff. I play in the Feral Family which is supposed to be a country western blue-grass rock-n-roll punk thing, I guess. It's pretty much a free for all. I play for the Ratty Bovines right now, that's strict rocker-billy. I play cello in classical trio--piano, violin, cello, it's like Beethoven's trios, Hyden, that kind of thing. Right now I'm doing a show in a Fox Chapel, it's like Broadway show tunes, stuff like that. And I play bass in a mainstream pop band, I guess you would call it.

She named six bands she was playing with. Six different kinds of music, too. The other girls brought up jazz, rock, and experimental in talking about and describing their music. It would be misleading to give the impression that the musicians in this scene play music that is exclusively outside more mainstream-orientated music.

The sound of the music in this scene is as various as the bands. Debbie's hesitation in defining the music speaks of the difficulty of confining it to a particular sound:

I think the thing I hate to do most is try and classify it, because I don't, I hate, any descriptive words that you use would be something that everyone is going to interpret really differently. I think of it as just that it as being like rock music, but if you say that, most people will think you're talking about Y97 Rock Music. I don't know, I don't like to say it's punk rock music because I don't really feel like it is. I really don't know anything about playing music, so it's sort of like whatever, it's like whatever comes up to me. I feel like it's rock music, and I guess that's what... I don't know most people that come to see us would say that. I don't know.

Debbie resists defining it. She says "I don't like to say it's punk rock music because I don't really feel like it is." The most she can say about what it is to her exactly is "it's like whatever comes up to me"--again, both an independent and a personal relationship to music that all the girls have on some level within their bands, or in their musical tastes. That they must first accept a certain music, that if it pleases their sensibilities, they identify with it, no matter what others might think of it--it is safe to say, this is the impression all of girls gave. Was this in itself a form of resistance?

For our present purpose is not necessary to judge whether they really like certain music, or if they just like it because their friends like it or it's supposed to be good. Many of the girls said that their musical preferences are constantly changing and developing. Erin says "It's an on-going process. I'm still... every week it's like a different band or type of music that influences me."

Natasha says,

Its sort of like if you see one band than you start comparing them. After seeing Mecca Normal I sort of like, it's a whole new comparison for the things I listen to now. Like there's a lotta things I listen to and think like wow, they're not Mecca Normal. So the more you see..

Sharon is interested in developing the some jazz elements in her music. Debbie C. says that her favourite type of music is Spanish music:

I see myself playing some sort of music no matter what, even if the band doesn't go through. I used to study like flamenco guitar, and I want to do that more than anything, I want to really get good at that. So I think maybe one day when I do have the time...

What I'm trying to show you in this section is that the girls in this music scene don't identify themselves with one kind of music. A common route, however, taken to the music they currently preferred, was mainstream rock to new wave, in high school, and then from college alternative music to this rock/punk/underground music. Another common route was from a classical background to rock. You could say there was a general move away from popular or commercial music in all of these girls' experiences. What does this move offer them? Two prerequisites of music that were frequently mentioned were room for self-expression and it's got to be fun. These girls have chosen to be involved in this scene, they deliberately participate in this particular subculture. Here, the moment of resistance recalls McRobbie's' notion of *adventure*.

Adventure? The feeling Joelle described when she went to the rainbow gathering and when she was walking by one of the camps...a couple of people said to her, hey, we've been waiting for you all day, we want you to play with us. And they gave her some bongo drums and as soon as she started beating on them, people started dancing... she couldn't believe it, they were dancing in front of *her* to *her* beat, and it was the most incredible feeling.

Natasha: I think the things that I look for when I'm watching a band, is... it doesn't even have to be technical ability. If I can look, like, up on the stage--and I think that listening to bands is different from, like listening to records is different than going to see bands.--there's a lot of bands that I'd rather see live rather than listening to a record of them, and vice versa. But if I went to a concert and had never heard the band before, I would definitely look at the people on stage, and how they acted and how they represent themselves. I'd want to know they're strong, and how they interacted with the audience, because it isn't all about music, it's definitely how you react to people interact. Just interesting, complex thing I much prefer rather than... or even if it doesn't sound good, trying to

experiment is much more in tune to my aesthetics than anything that would just be the regular... I mean if there was a drummer there just playing the same beat the whole time.

Chris: The relationship between the audience and the band is clearly like a, like a hormonal type of thing. It doesn't have to be verbal "Like Hi, I recognize you," to the audience, It's like "I am giving you my best," it's that. I think it's purely like a chemical thing, it's a magic, a chemical magic. When you're seeing a good band, you know, because no one in the audience gives a shit about what anybody else is... But when you're seeing a bad band people are standing around like this, and looking to see what other people are doing. When you're seeing a good band, no one cares about what other people are doing, because everybody is just like engrossed.

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### **Musicians or Girl Musicians?**

None of the girls we interviewed earn their living as musicians. Some of them have full-time jobs, others go to school and have part-time jobs. All of the girls we interviewed either have jobs, and some are in school and have jobs. All of them gave me the impression, however, that they would always play music. They had various *ideal* goals when it came to music: to eke out a living from music; to go on tour--in Europe and in the States; to record with their current band; to play jazz with old black musicians at the Crawford Grill; to learn to play flamenco guitar; and, to make it to the top. How easy would it be for these girls to pursue their goals?

One question we asked the girls was "do you they see any advantages or disadvantages to being a girl in the Pittsburgh music scene?" The girls gave conflicting answers:

Debbie C.:Yes and no, I mean, I don't think it's so special. I think anybody can do it, you know, and I think sometimes people like put too much weight on the fact that you're a girl, you know, in the music scene. I mean, anybody can play guitar, anybody can do what they want to. And I think, you know, both females and males deserve the same kind of respect. You know, I'm not trying to wave a flag because I'm a girl or anything. But I do find... I find it a little hard sometimes just because... like when we went on tour lot with like bullshit remarks from people and stuff, and that bothered me just because I worked so hard to set that tour up. Like me and Blair pretty much set the whole tour up ourselves. And that was a lot of work, I just kind of felt like maybe I did deserve a little more respect, or I don't know what it was. So I just kind of felt like, felt pretty shitty about that.

Judy:Like what kind of comments? People like ...

Debbie C.:No not so much that, pretty much like internal comments, pretty much like, I mean stuff I should have been able to deal with. But like girlfriend type comments things like that.

Judy:Like what?

Debbie C.:We went on tour with Doomwatch. Blair's in Doom Watch. So we were together the whole time, so a lot of the time it was kind of like you know if I was upset for whatever reason it was, whether it was because we had a bad show, or I was just like generally pissed about not wanting to be there or something, you know I would get a comment from somebody, you know about oh you're upset because you're boyfriend this you're boyfriend that. I was like, "No, that has nothing to with it!" And that bothered me a whole lot because it had nothing to do with him whatsoever! I mean I set up a good part of the tour and it was just like I wanted certain things to happen. It had nothing to do with... and that bothered me that someone would think that little of me... do you know what I mean?

Judy: Yes, yeah.

Debbie C.:It's like in business. It's like, you know, I'm a salesperson so I deal with that *a lot*, and it pisses me off, it's like men... men... some men are very hard to work with. So like I deal with at work and I had to deal with it at work and it's just like bad. I mean I don't get that all the time and I do, people treat me very well, I can't like say that I don't get respect, cuz I do, but I'm sure when you're with the same people for 2 weeks every single day you're sleeping with them eating with them, you're going to get irritated with one another. I'm not trying to bring anybody down or like...

Debbie's responses to my question contain a number of conflicting messages. Such as, don't talk bad about anybody, because it will make you sound bad-- that's a lesson I learned when I was barely the age when I could talk bad about someone-- and at the same time, well hell, these people, who are supposed to be friends, are they blind to who I am am what I've been doing here! Is there something about girls getting mad that makes peoples immediately link it to a relationship problem? Is Blair that much bigger than her than they can't allow for her being in a bad mood without him being involved? Or is it, what in the world do girls have to be angry about? No valid reason to be enraged at the way men treat you in the workaday world, because that's just the way society is! So don't gripe about it! At any rate, I bet Debbie did a fine job in setting up that tour.

Sharon's response to the same question: "do you they see any advantages or disadvantages to being a girl in the Pittsburgh music scene?"

Sharon:Well if you would have asked me that question a year ago, it would have been a different answer. Two years ago, it would have been *way* different. My opinion changes all the time. Right now it's my own attitude that it doesn't matter what your toward gender is. 'Cause women can do the same things as men, except men can lift a few more pounds., that's about it. This is a hard question. Wait a minute. Can you ask it again.?

Keren:... you can just think of it in terms of how people treat you. Do you think people treat you differently?

Sharon:No, I don't think people treat me differently, 'cause I have everyone from members of the northern bushmen who are immature high school kids totally accepting me, now hanging with me or any thing but "Hey Sharon, how's it going. You're band sounds great. Yeah!" I just feel equal in that kind of a sense. Because of the scene that I'm involved with, they treat me equal. There is an unspoken rule--and everybody has their bad days and their bad periods--but there's this unspoken rule of conduct understood by all of us ... no one ever viciously ostracizes anyone... people aren't openly sexist... there's just little things...that's just because of the way we were brought up

Keren:What do you mean by little things?

Sharon:Well sometimes women are just shy, they just stay back, hide behind their boyfriend. Or they act really extroverted and silly, they aren't really saying anything, but I just look at them and I know inside they're as whole of a person, as much as a person as a all the guys who are like hey, you've got the latest blah, blah, blah...

She goes on to speculate why guys have more records, possibly because they make more money. Is this in any way related to why *guys* needn't worry about being whole? What she said about shy and extroverted girls was poignant. Isn't

silly a silly word? It's so silly. Seriously, sometimes when girls *aren't* saying anything--what is the significance of that?

Later Sharon talks about her mom, who even though she is in public relations, the PR person for Penn United Technology, because the company is going through financial trouble, she has to do her job, plus cover for the job of the receptionist. Sharon goes into detail about what her mom has to do and what she notices about the company and her superiors, that there's a lot of disorganization and inefficiency. Sharon sees the detail in the everyday things. With her explications there's a curious relationship between what she accepts and what she doesn't accept--as with all the girls' to a certain extent; what is one to do, what can one with this resistant/complicit relationship?

One thing that all the girls we talked to apparent from the girls we talked to was that there was little networking between the different girls in the scene. Some mentioned the bands that they hung out with or especially liked, but all and all, there was very little "girl bonding":

Chris:There is no bonding in Pgh. There never has been. Well, though it used to be a long time ago before I was involved. It's really catty now. Everybody is really like anti everybody else.

Judy:So it's not supportive

Chris:It's not supportive at all. It's like You suck. Everybody's like that.

Judy:I wonder why

Chris:Because it's so small. It's such a petty little town. Where are you from?

## **Sugar and Spice and Everything... spills all over the place?**

When we first started to think about how to divide up the sections, I brought up the question of style. Judy said that she thought I had a style, but that she really didn't, especially since she hadn't bought any new cloths in a while. I thought this was kind of strange, since at the time she was wearing a purple sweater and bright blue pants. Judy also wears funky hats and scarves, so I figured there was some question of style there somewhere. I mentioned this to her, and she said "I guess you're right--I never really thought of it before." That seemed to also be the answer most of the interviewees gave us. However, I think that whether or not the style question is something that is conscious or unconscious, it does play an important part in how a female musician and/or girl band are perceived by their audience. It is also a way that critics can latch on to a band's 'femaleness', so they can package it neatly for their articles:

"Any spandex clad pansy can do his hair up and pose on some sort of androgeny-is-pain platform. But no matter how confused he is (or i am), no one is ever gonna forget that the phallic guitar neck he is stroking is nothing more than a colossal exaggeration of what he's got between his legs. He's not in pain: He's in love with himself.

Lately its taken on an onslaught of psycho-cum-Lizzie Borden female rock n' roll to inject us with a much-needed cap of TOUGH to help lay (figuratively) that embarrassing cock-rock spooge to rest. Call it Foxcore-some reviewer already did, and it sticks" OK!?"<sup>10</sup>

Foxcore is a term (like many other terms) that doesn't really have a set meaning. It is always, however, used to refer to bands whose members are primarily women. I thought it was kind of funny when the heading "FOXCORE RULES" appeared on a promotional poster for a show my band, Annie's Hot Cargo, was to play at, together with Hole from Los Angeles, and locals the Barbed Wire Dolls, and Blunderbuss (who by the way are three 19 year old boys...) I wasn't very happy with the foxcore billing--the use of the term foxcore was, for me, a way of sexualising a band's entire sound, draining it of (important) musical or political content. A band like Hole, that seemed to celebrate being named foxcore... well, I just didn't understand it.

Debbie C.:you know I think some girls might think of it that way, you know just because they... I don't know, I've seen some girl bands that can kind of like get up on stage with a skirt and like not really know how to play their instruments, but they have more roadees, and they have like all these people there to see them because they look good and so for them it's an advantage I suppose, I don't

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<sup>10</sup>from the Pitt News, 12/31/91

know, I don't really believe in that. To me it's more important just to be able to play.

A girl drummer in a black velvet mini dress that came from a thrift store, with red lipstick and baby doll shoes, who is also 6'3" tall and has a giant knot in the back of her multi-colored, uncombed hair, most probably makes even the densest audience member do a double take. Hole's on-stage look is a cultivated one--singer/guitar player Courtney Love decided to put on her 'little girl dress', an ultra short pink number, with ice cream stains and a giant hole under the left breast, after a conversation we had backstage. For each show, she picks her dress to reflect both her mood and 'vibes' she picks up from the crowd, but always to confront her audience with a relentless, in your face parody of vulnerability. I was surprised at how much fun I had just watching them get ready for their set, and how they seemed to be able to recuperate some of the negative connotations of foxcore in their performance.

Chris: I don't feel like you need to be like a... I don't feel like you need to be androgynous, which a lot of women do. If you notice when you go see... especially girls in bands with guys, they feel like well I got to look like one of these guys. And that's not necessarily something--you should be secure of yourself as you're a person, and you shouldn't need to worry about what sex you are, I feel.

But whether you worry about it or not, in a scene that's primarily male, as soon as a woman gets on stage, she is perceived as different, a difference that even the girls who didn't call themselves feminists saw very clearly:

Chris: Because it's hard to overcome, because you're a girl that means you're not as good to a lot of people, men and women. So you almost have to be better. And people are real surprised when you are good if you're a girl, because you're a girl, so obviously you couldn't be a musician, because obviously that's the way it works.

Sharon, bass player for Salt Chunk Mary, says she thinks clothes are "a personal psychosis":

Fun is like everything, you know, thrift stores, whatever. Sometimes I feel like Madonna and I just wanna just be all like beautiful because I'm feeling happy about my body. Sometimes I think the body is not important, I just want to cover it the way it needs to be adequately covered, and just go out there... A lot of times when we play out I try to get everyone to dress up, and Matt's usually into it. Ray likes it too, sometimes Ray wears a dress, and that's pretty great... 33-50% of the time we dress up to play because you go to a show and *people are dressed in black*. They're just being stiff, and copying people, or maybe they're just not thinking about it, maybe they just want to throw on some clothes too. Or maybe they are really thinking about it. They're just neurotic about it to. Its hard to say, about clothes... Clothes are important, clothes are really important .

The Pittsburgh scene seems to be different from a lot of other cities, in that a lot of women do dress 'like one of the guys' most of the time. In an over the phone conversation I had with Michele, who grew up in Pittsburgh and recently moved to San Francisco we discussed how she saw those differences:

Growing your hair long, wearing doc martins big black belts and faded jeans that's the San Francisco look. People dress up for shows more. (here I asked if more women went to shows in S.F.--I noticed the dress up thing in NY too where the scene is split more evenly between men and women, at least audience wise) Yeah I think there are more women at shows. All the shows have a bar, its more of a drinking scene, people have jobs, they look nice, neat, they are older, more sophisticated, they look off mainstream but they aren't punked out. Its more of a singles scene. On the other hand, the Berkeley scene is more like a real social scene--they all come see their friends play, sometimes they don't even stay to see the headlining band. The crowd at Gillman is more punked out, younger, but still they don't dress down quite as much as in Pittsburgh.

Unlike most of the other interviewees she wasn't afraid to link up 'clothing consciousness' and personal identity:

well I've sort of been through this metamorphosis. I wore lots of black cloths first, lots of makeup, weird hair, combat boots. Then from about 10th grade to last year went through this anti style thing messy hair running shoes cutoff jeans, you know that Minor Threat straight edge nothing negative thing. Then in 12th grade I had dreadlocks, wore jeans and T-shirts. Last year I felt like I had no identity. I was sick of looking like shit. People take you more seriously like on my floor in the dorm more people say hi to me and I don't think they would if I started dressing down again. I'm dressing nicer in a more mainstream kind of way.

Style is more than just clothes, though. It is also an attitude, a mood the performers reflect to their audience (that sounds just like something out of self-help article in a teen magazine, doesn't it: "Be happy! It shows...." ugh.) That is something that an audience member can really relate to, hook on to--that really helps me get into a show. I remember driving out to see a Laughing Hyenas show in Cleveland. We were sitting around, waiting for them to go on. Once in a while one of the band members would get up and fiddle with their equipment. At one point, Larissa, the guitar player, got up there to tune her guitar. She stood up on stage, with her back to the audience, right under a spotlight, reached her hands into her denim skirt and hiked up her pantyhose. It was just great. Like the passage from Girl Germs: "when Madonna grabs her crotch, the social order is transgressed."

Some of the girls who didn't talk about clothes per se were more explicit about how they felt to go up on stage:

Erin: One of the things that I like most about playing is that I can really bimlify. I mean I put on lots of make-up and make my hair big. I feel uncomfortable about doing that any other time, but it's fun to do it on stage. Clothes wise, I usually, you know, just flannel shirts, jeans, that kind of thing.

Feeling comfortable on stage is an important part of playing out, its something I haven't quite gotten yet. Its easier for some people:

Chris:And I've never had stage fright of any sort. I totally look at the people and I enjoy it and I kind of just actually I'm not really myself during that time.

Judy:Did that take a while to do?

Chris:No, it came naturally-- I'm a ham, naturally, so I have no problem speaking my mind in front of whoever.

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Debbie C.:Yeah, it's great. Because I have so many people tell me that whenever I play, that I'm like a completely different person. It's like a complete catharsis for me, I like get everything out, all my anxieties, and all the way I'm feeling, you know, like if I'm upset about something... Like most of my songs tend to be angry. I don't know why, I'm not a really angry person but I guess it's because you know maybe I don't vent a lot of my anger so I do in my songs. So it's just kind of like a complete washing of everything I feel, you know, and I just get completely immersed. Like I don't really see anybody when I'm playing, just because I'm like so much in my own little world.

Not so easy for others:

Debbie B.:I think I was always the type of person that was self-conscious about being in front of people, and having an audience, like I find it kind of bizarre that I am involved in this now, because I hate for people... I hate to think of the fact that I'm up on stage under a light and people are watching me do something.

Judy:Is it still difficult?

Debbie:Yeah it is. I find that I'm more intimidated in front of people I know. For instance when we played in Ohio it was in front of this completely anonymous audience, and I found that I was much less intimidated, I felt much more comfortable with myself. I knew I wasn't trying to impress anybody who had this preconceived notion... It was a lot different of a show because you knew when people looked like they enjoying themselves that they were actually enjoying what we were doing and when we play in Pittsburgh the people that stand up front are our friends and roommates, and I'm always wondering if they are just doing it because its sort of this obligatory thing or if they really enjoy it. I want criticism, and I want constructive criticism, and I don't want anyone to sugar coat it for me.

There's only one way to overcome stage fright, and that's to play out A LOT:

Debbie C.:I was way nervous, because like I said it was my first band. I would shake the whole time I was playing because I was so freaked out. I had all these people watching... I guess I was kind of intimidated, so it helped like if I didn't

look at anybody, or I just kind of kept my head down or something like that. And now, it's like I don't--well in the end, I never got nervous. No I think I would be nervous just because I'm with a new band. And you have the anxiety.

Chris: Yeah, but see there's where you come to the question of the most important thing that is true--who cares who likes you, you're not doing it so somebody likes you. Your goal is that this is a form of relax--it's like yoga, you know what you're doing so you relax, and you have a little bit of freedom in a life where you really don't have any. And so here is like your moment where you can just do what you want. You have a format in which you can do it. The whole point of you doing it is your personal freedom, and you get to express it for that hour, where you never really get to express it any other time.

I think that this moment of escape is the same one McRobbie is talking about. That's the point I wish more women could access. You don't have to be in a band to do it, you just have to tap into some point of release. I don't think women can't access that point, I just think usually the doors to that point are or seem closed to them. So how do you go about opening them?

## Concluding Remarks

KK: So this is the end, the conclusion. We really wanted to keep this open-ended but we feel that it won't be unless we critique the way we conducted the interviews. I think I tried to compensate too much for being "in", and I played the researcher, just asking a question and letting the interviewee sort of like go with it. I tried to explain as little as possible, talk as little as possible. I guess that's one thing that I learned from doing this project, is that I tend to shut-up when I'm uncomfortable. I also learned to be more critical of how I talk about the things that are pleasurable to me without being uncomfortable and without becoming silent.

JH: I tended to talk too much in the interviews. I didn't want to appear as a "typical" interviewer or reporter, nor an academic who was a know-it-all but didn't really know anything at all. I was believe it or not sort of embarrassed about bringing up feminist issues, felt more comfortable talking about the music and their backgrounds; this lead me to explain our project too much to the girls to the point where I undoubtedly influenced some of their answers and takes on certain issues. The one positive result from that is that I think they enjoyed learning about where I was coming from as much as I enjoyed hearing about them.

KK: Obviously this wasn't a "scientific" study. It also wasn't a far-reaching ethnographic study. Since we started our interviews late in the semester a lot of the people we wanted to talk to were either unavailable. So I don't feel that we can make any sort of conclusion about what women in Pittsburgh are like, but that's not really what we wanted to do in the first place. I think we wanted to see how discourses work, moving in and out of lots of different conflicted spheres, and I think the interviews showed that pretty well.

JH: I think that what we did thus far is an important first step for any ethnographic study. I realized early in the project that we weren't going to have any big conclusions, new theories, brilliant discoveries. I wanted to find out just what these girls thought about their lives and how they would express it. I never concentrated on that before--I felt like I had to do it, like it was something that should be done.

KK:I guess I felt like that too, and I'm really glad we did it. Although at various points I got really frustrated and thought that it was never going to happen. The only thing that I think is still missing is that we didn't talk to enough people to be able to talk about where the access to the subculture comes in. There really aren't any common like points of entry except maybe age, with the small sample that we talked to. And that's something that I would like to explore maybe in another paper.

JH: I disagree somewhat with that. True, we could have talked to more girls, but I feel that most of the work was done in gathering data--where I would have liked improvement is in spending more time with the data, in discussing it and putting it together. I can think of numerous places in what we have that we could examine for entry points or access to the subculture.

KK:I would have also liked for us to do longer interviews. There were all these things that I thought of after the interviews. Maybe you had an advantage in the way you asked the questions that you got more information than I did. I would've liked to ask questions like, what do you think of the term foxcore?

JH: Anything else?

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