

"One with the underdogs?"

About subcultural style and individual expression in the hardcore punk

Summary

While Punk was officially declared 'dead' by mainstream media in 1979, it revived with the emergence of the harder and more militant Hardcore scene. Initially Hardcore Punk came about as a reaction to the domestication and commercialisation of Punk, which had supposedly lost its ideological edge. This article studies the contemporary Dutch Hardcore scene in light of sociological theories about subcultures and their presumed stylistic resistance against hegemonic class structures. It is shown how specific stylistic practices that Hardcore Punks engage in, like moshing, stage-diving and wearing band shirts, merge individual with collective expression. Not all Hardcore Punks are in the scene for the same reasons. Some *subcultural consumers* are in it for 'the fun' and do not relate much to a collective (class) ideology, while they do embrace the collective style. Their engagement with Hardcore Punk is contrasted by the commitment of *ultimate insiders* who feel a strong connection to the collective ideology, while they reject the collective style as it is worn by non-ideologists. In between these two positions we also find a *tolerant insider* who is also very committed to Hardcore, but does not consider it to be 'a way of life'.

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Introduction

The Birmingham School still takes a central location in sociological studies about subcultures. With well-known leaders as Stuart Hall, Paul Willis, Dick Hebdige and Phil Cohen, this school introduced in the 70s a neo-Marxist approach to subcultures that focused on the symbolism of the characteristic 'style' worn by these cultures. These authors let themselves be inspired by the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971) and his notion of cultural hegemony, in which subcultures could be regarded as a form of symbolic resistance. According to the Birmingham School this opposition came mainly from class inequality, with working class youth who rebel against the prevailing social order and their social subordination inside (eg Cohen, 1972. Hall and Jefferson, 1976). Existing forms of social inequality during this period - after the Second World War - had a character hidden behind the unbridled faith in prosperity and progress (Clarke et al., 1976). With a detailed description of subcultures as the Teddy Boys, Rockers, Mods, Rastafari and Punks, Dick Hebdige (1979) showed that what these groups have in common is that they are using their clothes, rituals, jargon and music, as a way of rebelling against the prevailing norm. According to Hebdige, these subculturalists thus exposed 'the norm'; rather than adopting aspects of reality as "given", they exposed it as a myth (Eq. Barthes, 1972). In the tradition of the

Birmingham School the style of subcultures has an important dual function: they forge a collective that is opposed to the 'collective' (Cohen, 1972; Haenfler, 2004; Hebdige, 1979).

The Birmingham School continues to enjoy popularity. For instance, a new edition of Paul Willis' *Profane Culture* (2014 [1978]) was cited no less than 1156 times last year, where Hebdige's *Subculture* (1995 [1979]) can still count on approximately 397 annual citations, and Hall and Jefferson's *Resistance through rituals* (1993 [1976]) around 141 citations (Harzing, 2007). However, the Birmingham School was not spared of criticism. This criticism mainly arose in the 90s with the emergence of more postmodern subcultural theory, inspired by the work of French sociologists such as Baudrillard and Maffesoli. Authors belong to this new tradition accused the Birmingham School of paying no attention to the subjective views, values and beliefs of the subculturalists (Anderson, 2012; Muggleton, 2000; O'Hara, 1999). Instead, the Birmingham School was said to have adopted a reductionist view in which subcultures were unilaterally considered as a form of collective resistance, inspired by theoretical putative class differences (Williams, 2007). This debate was deployed controversially by Steve Redhead (1990; 1995; 1997) who dismissed the Birmingham School of work as "a fantasized academic creation [That] 'is seen to be no longer appropriate' (Redhead, 1997, Blackman, 2005: 8). In the postmodern approach to subcultures, hedonism, fragmentation, and blurring boundaries between subcultures and between subcultures and the so-called mainstream culture form central themes (Bennett, 1999; 2000; Chaney, 2004; Melechi, 1993; Muggleton, 2000 Rietveld, 1993, 1998). Where according to the Birmingham School, subcultures are about collective resistance, in this postmodern approach they are much more about individual self-expression. In a way that connects to Giddens' (1991) idea of the trajectory of self, indeed it places the individual in the centre of various subcultural memberships and styles, in ways as desired according to one's personal identity (Polhemus, 1996; 1997), According to David Muggleton (2000: 49) what remains is a meaningless and superficial stylistic game. "[S]ubcultures are just another form of depoliticized play in the postmodern pleasuredom" he says.

Post Modernists thus blame the Birmingham School for putting too much emphasis on the collective aspects of subcultures. Blackman (2005) in turn however states that the postmodern approach relies so strongly on individual choices, that substantial collective aspects of subculturalism disappear from view. In this article, we show by means of a case study how in hardcore punk there is a constant and complex interaction between 'individual' and 'collective'. This interaction takes place on the basis of stylistic subcultural practices: these are practices that forge individuals to a collective and at the same time create space for individual expression (cf. Hancock and Lorr, 2012.). In our view, both sociological approaches as described above should be considered reductionist. The Birmingham School analyzes subcultures too strongly at the level of the corporate style and hence does no justice to the individual who carries the style; where the postmodern approach puts too much focus on the individual and thus loses sight of the collective. Both approaches are thus blind to the differences that are inherent to subcultures.

In this case study we have chosen for the hardcore punk subculture because it is considered the modern successor of punk, a subculture that has been rigorously studied by members of the Birmingham school and subsequent studies (see, eg, Clark, 2003. Hebdige, 1979; Bennett, 2006) . Until now, hardcore punk is seen mainly as an ultimate and distinct example of a resistance culture: socially critical, sometimes militant and with pronounced ideological values (Haenfler, 2004; Kristiansen et al, 2010; Williams, 2007; Wood. , 1999).

Also, hardcore punk contains distinctive stylistic features and rituals in the form of music and dance (Haenfler, 2004; Hancock & Lorr, 2012), whilst the hardcore scene is also a place for individual expression (Ibid).

In this article we specifically look at the complex relationship between the individual and collective expression in hardcore subculture. How does the interaction between those two take place? This question will be answered in an inductive manner in which, in the course of the article, theory and empiricism are discussed together. Therefore, what follows first is a more detailed description of our case, hardcore punk, with subsequent data collection and analysis methods that we used in this study. This is followed by an analysis and the conclusion, summarizing the main findings which be discussed in relation to previous research and relevant theory. Eventually we come to a typology of subcultural participation in the hardcore punk scene, finding a typology in which we distinguish a 'subcultural consumer', an 'ultimate insider' and a 'tolerant insider'.

Hardcore punk

In the 70s, a new form of music known as punk rock emerged in the United States and the United Kingdom and quickly spread to mainland Europe. Famous punk bands such as the Sex Pistols and the Ramones, played relatively simple, fast and aggressive music through which they rebelled against the commercialization and what they saw as the ideological emptiness and security of Western culture. Much of their music contained rebellious lyrics about social and political issues such as unemployment, inequality, social alienation and depression. From this music the punk subculture was born, with young people who were linked together by their taste in music, but also through fanzines and their unique dressingstyle - with lots of leather, spikes, safety pins and the "typical" Mohawk - to distinguish themselves from mainstream culture. According Hebdige (1979) such style utterances were intended to shock outsiders and to evoke negative reactions, thus confirming the subculture in its separate status.

Though still popular, around 1976 Punk in the United States reached was over the hill as a form of cultural resistance. Since that time, punk moved back and forth between two completely separate worlds, each with their own ideology and in both class struggle was hard to find (Blush, 2010). On one side there was a - literally - dying group of hard drug addicts; socially marginalized people for whom punk was mainly an excuse to keep the housingcompany out the door of their squatted building. And on the other side there were pretentious avant-garde punkflaneurs for whom punk was primarily a fashion statement. These were interesting customers for record companies, who we're quick to adopt elements of punk and thus brought into being a more socially acceptable and less ideologically loaded new wave flow (Ibid). The symbols of punk that once stood for social criticism we're commercialized and pacified in this way and became part of the hegemonic culture (Hebdige, 1979). As was the fate of many of the subcultures that were formed as part of the 'countercultural' 60s and '70s (Frank, 1998; Heath and Potter, 2004; Slater, 1997). In the Netherlands, the punk movement came way later than in England and the United States. Dutch punk was launched only in late 1976 as a new genre in which record companies at the time had little, if any interest. According to radio producer Hubert van Hoof, punk simply did better in countries with greater social inequalities than in the Netherlands in which punk "still mostly [is] (was) just a weekend-punk culture" (Goossens and Vedder, 1996: 4). In the early years the Dutch punk scene was small and heavily concentrated in

Amsterdam's club DDT and record label No Fun (Ibid). But after punk in 1979 officially was declared "dead" by mainstream media, several local scenes developed around leftwing bands and collectives, as did some larger scenes in the big cities (Berkers, 2012). Goossens and Vedder (1996) call this the second phase in the development of punk in the Netherlands, which in their view ends around the year 1982 with the emergence of hardcore punk.

In the early 80s in Washington DC a new punk movement arrived, represented by bands like Bad Brains, Teen Idles and Minor Threat and soon followed by bands from the West Coast of the United States such as Black Flag and the Dead Kennedys . These bands rebelled against the, in their eyes, 'safe' and commercial nature of new wave and the loss of ideology in the original punk scene. This new movement was called hardcore punk, and musically was much faster, harder, more aggressive and more political than the original punk (Blush, 2010). The threat of an imminent nuclear third world war, the social injustice perceived under *Reaganomics* and in particular the oppression of minorities and lower classes, and with the unequal opportunities experienced for self-development, all played an important role in the development of this new hardcore scene (Azerrad, 2001).

From the semiotic approach that characterizes the Birmingham School, the lyrics written by hardcore punk bands indeed would be interpreted as a contemporary form of protest pamphlet of the working class. In one song by popular band Terror (2004, 'One with the underdogs') present day Marxist notions of impoverishment and class consciousness are clearly to be heard:

"Born with nothing. And that was most of us. Raised in unemployment lines, Grew inside domestic crimes. Always against the odds. One with the underdogs. "

From the mid-80s on, the hardcore scene also became popular in Europe, and more and more subgenres emerged (Rettman, 2014). These subgenres often had an ideological basis. For instance, straightedge spoke out against drugs, alcohol, immorality and the eating of meat (Kuhn, 2010); some other influential bands were inspired by the Hare Krishna movement; in the 90s a queercore scene emerged around gender and sexuality issues; and also a feminist movement Riot Grrrl was born (Peterson, 2009). If ideological opposition disappeared from the original punk, in the hardcore punk indeed it was revived (Haenfler, 2004; Kristiansen et al, 2010;. Wood, 1999). But this all is observed at the level of the collective (music) style: the lyrics of the music and the names and images of the bands that are worn in the hardcore scene T-shirts (for example, Minor Threat, Terror, Bad Brains, Bikini Kill and Dick Less). But this in itself is yet to prove anything about the ideological intentions of the individuals carrying the hardcore style and are thus, just like the bands, part of the scene.

Data and Methods

Since our research focusses on the interaction between collective subcultural style and motives and the individual experiences of subculturalists wearing this style, we have collected data in various ways. On the level of collective style, data was collected by making observations during four hardcore concerts, during which the first author of this article, in particular, looked at social manners and style attributes in dress and dance. This information was supplemented by information from zines, newspaper articles and internet forums. To find out about the individual motives and experiences of hardcore punks, in-depth interviews were conducted with an average interviewtime of one and a half hours. Topics that were addressed included herein: the meaning of hardcore for the respondents, the characteristics

of the scene, how the respondents first came in contact with the scene, why they are attracted to the scene, what their personal involvement in the scene is and in what ways hardcore plays a role in their daily lives.

The in-depth interviews were conducted by the first author with a total of 17 Dutch hardcore punk fans. These were all men aged 18 to 42 years. All the men interviewed are white (which is fairly typical of the punk scene); their level of education and socioeconomic class range (see Appendix A for a list of background characteristics). It proved not possible to interview female hardcore punks and therefore we urge to that one should be reluctant to declare the conclusions of this study as equally valid for women. Finding female hardcore punks proved extremely difficult, simply because the hardcore scene exists for the vast majority of men (Bennett, 2006; Vroomen, 2004). Although there are female punk bands and hardcore riot girls also broach feminist themes, and although punk potentially leaves for the questioning of gender roles, punk is traditionally a white male-dominated world (Berkers, 2012). With its tougher, more masculine style, the emergence of hardcore only drove women further from the scene. This is the paradox of hardcore, argues Lauraine Leblanc (1999: 51) "while some of these important hardcore bands rhetorically espoused egalitarianism, self-esteem, and social change, in reality, they edged women out of the scene. "

The ethnographic and interview data were converted into field notes and interview transcripts. These were analyzed using a constant comparative method; analytical categories were inductively determined by in different stages comparing these fragments and observations on recurring similarities and differences (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss and Corbin, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During this process we continued our data collection until theoretical saturation occurred. To ensure the reliability of the investigation all the information collected during this research was thematized, encrypted and then stored in a digital database (Braster, 2000; Yin, 1989). Through systematic analysis of this evidence, we managed to distinguish a number of themes and 'types' of subcultural participation that sheds new light on the complex relationship between individual expression and (collective) style within the hardcore scene. This analysis thus reveals a number of fundamental problems in the approach to subcultures by both members of the Birmingham School and writers who work from a more postmodern tradition.

Homology up to discussion

In the tradition of the Birmingham School, the idea exists that as a rule there should be a strong relationship between subcultural style expressions and the ideologies and experiences shared by subculturalists. This is the idea of "homology" as observed for skinheads by Hall and Jefferson (1976) in *Resistance through rituals* and by Paul Willis (1978) for rockers and hippies in *Profane Cultures*. Subcultures here exist of a relatively well-defined community and for their coherence rely heavily on the fact that they are formed around the main concerns of that community (see eg. Clarke et al., 1976). Subcultural style in this way represents a way of life:

"The objects chosen were, either intrinsically or in their adapted forms, homologous with the focal concerns, activities, group structure and collective self-image of the subculture."
(Hebdige, 1979: 114)

When we apply the concept of homology onto hardcore punk, the texts and the hardness of the music, the provocative and socially critical band names printed on T-shirts, the zines and other style displays of hardcore punk should be understood from experiences and ideological

preferences shared by the punks. However, our research instead shows that this idea of homology is in fact largely based on a myth.

The current generation of Dutch hardcore punks seems at first glance to have few shared interests, experiences or values. Indeed, our research shows that the Dutch hardcore scene is populated by people from all walks of life. Tim (25 years, guitarist in the hardcore band Wreckage) for instance claims to be from the middle class.

Tim: I grew up in Zwolle. My parents both have a decent job, work hard and are have enough money to live comfortably. My life actually was pretty simple. I didn't have any problems, except that I noticed that I did not fit in the normal groups.

The "working class struggle" which is designated often by the Birmingham School as the reason for subculturalism (eg. Cohen, 1972), is therefore not applicable on Tim. This is confirmed by Thomas (22 years, soundengineer).

Thomas: I come from a normal family. I live in Arnhem. My parents have a normal job. No specific problems. I'm not one of those so-called troubled teens or whatever, no.

Frank (42 years) works as a booker for a hardcore record label and is a sceneveteran. Whilst having a working class background, for him this is not a requirement to participate fully in the hardcore culture. He says that hardcore can be an outlet for individual feelings of frustration. Such feelings and emotions are, according to him, seen in all layers of the population.

Frank: I come from a working class family and I relate more to people living in relative poverty. And based on those experiences yes I have some feelings of frustration being pissed off. But I can imagine that if you come from the middle class, it's also very well possible that not everything is always hunky-dory. You could be in a divorce, or have a stillborn baby. Could be anything. And hardcore consists of a gut feeling, that people can project through hardcore. I do not think that has to do with class. Sure, you may have a lot of money but that doesn't automatically mean that you're happy.

Now research has indeed shown that people by listening to music regulate their mood (Saari Kallio and Erkkilä, 2007), reduce stress (Behne and Deliège, 1997) and release frustrations (DeNora, 1999, 2000, Tarrant et al., 2002). More importantly, our interviews show that subcultural resistance in the Dutch hardcore scene differs in two respects from what we would expect based on the theory of Birmingham School. Firstly, it is not specifically something coming forth of a opposing working class; for indeed it shows that the hardcore scene (here anno 2016) is quite heterogeneous. Secondly, it is not an ideologically 'collective' form of resistance, based on shared experiences, values and a shared view of an undesirable or injustice. Instead, what is at stake here is functional rather 'individualistic' resistance, which focuses on whatever it may be that the individual does not agree with in life and would like to see different. For example Henk (36 years) tells us that resistance in the hardcore punk can focus on various issues.

Henk: Maybe it's more about rebelling in general ways. A frustrated student that feels misunderstood. Or your boss just being an asshole. Just an outlet for bands to spew their bile. And as a spectator you can apply these feelings and frustrations on your own personal situation. Like in that song 'Us versus Them' by Sick of It All. Society. The establishment with

whom we do not agree, and whom we oppose, in whatever wide ways you can see this..

What Henk proposes here is that the style of hardcore opposition itself can be based around the subjective feelings of the individuals who hold her. The style in itself however has no clear ideological meaning (as a spectator you can just 'load' it yourself with whatever it is that resonates with you"). Bjorn (32 years) adds that this can also be a about struggle that someone has with himself.

Bjorn: What it's about? That could be anything. The boss who calls you out of bed, everything else that can be against you. Also your inner demons certainly play a role. Self-empowerment is an important thing within hardcore.

In many lyrics of hardcore bands personal themes such as alienation from society, loss of a loved one or the fight against depression are addressed. According to Haenfler (2004) fans see their own problems reflected in these themes and derive support from the feeling of not being alone in it.

Thus, the style of hardcore here is filled with what Giddens (1991) would call a narrative of the self. The style takes on meaning in relation to an individual autobiography of life stories, choices, problems and future image. In our study, the resistance that the hardcore punks attribute through their style statements thus has a much more individualistic instead of a collective nature, and this subculture is thereby seemingly permitting much more fragmentation than the homology concept. This is also a common criticism of the approach that the Birmingham School holds (Bennett, 1999; 2000; Malbon, 1998; Muggleton, 2000; Williams, 2007). Argues Bennett (1999: 605) in this regard:

"Indeed, at the most fundamental level, there is very little evidence to suggest that even the most committed groups or youth stylists are in any way as 'coherent' or 'fixed' as the term 'subculture' implies. On the contrary, It seems to me that so-called youth 'subcultures' are prime examples of the unstable and shifting cultural affiliations all which characterize late-modern consumer based societies. "

Although our findings in this section seem to confirm this, there are also issues to be raised about this post-modern idea that subcultures are volatile and fluid and are above all an expression of hedonistic utilitarianism: for example all interviewees speak with passion about the feelings of unity and brotherhood they experience in hardcore. Apparently they know how to unite within the hardcore scene both individualism and collectivism. Our research in this respect confirms earlier research by Hancock and Lorr (2012) that shows that three stylistic practices play an important role. These are: moshing, stage diving and singalongs.

Style as a bridge between the individual and collective

Moshing is dancing, but full contact. It usually takes place directly in front of the stage, where a circle is created in which the moshers give in to what for outsiders seems like an energetic orgy of physical violence. Bodies collide and (typically for hardcore mosh pits) go into wild dance moves inspired by martial arts, in which physical contact indeed is not shunned. While this causes non-punks to consider hardcore as being violent, Henk says that this is in fact incorrect.

Henk: To outsiders it always seems to be a very extreme scene. People are often heavily

tattooed, and at concerts the pit looks very violent. Outsiders may be put off, when in fact it really isn't all that bad. My parents said they have never known such sweet and gentle people known as my friends from the scene. If you really want to see aggression and fights, then you should go to techno raves, because there you will find really aggressive people, taking drugs and stuff.

One who is willing to look beyond first appearance will find that besides the sweat and the – not to be ruled out - risk of bruising and bruised limbs, a deeper and more complex meaning of moshing. The mosh pit on one hand is a place of ultimate freedom, where it is allowed to express all the pent-up frustration and aggression in a physical form of self-expression that would never be accepted outside the context of the concert. Simultaneously, the mosh pit is also a social process, if only because physical contact with others is necessary to moshing.

Out of the chaos of the mosh pit a new social order rises, with unwritten rules that if necessary are enforced with iron fist. The main rule of the mosh pit is that people look out after one another. Someone who falls in the mosh pit is not trampled by others but is immediately helped to his feet. A found wallet, lost in the violence of the moshing, is held up in the air until the owner has it back. Thomas says that in the mosh pit gives space to express and unleash any frustrations, even if this leads to an occasional "accident", but on the other hand moshers do in fact take each others wellbeing into account.

Thomas: In the pit you can throw out all the frustrations you've build up being at school all week. It's like, one goes to the gym to do just that, and another chooses to go to a hardcore concert. If someone falls he will be picked up immediately. We care about each other. It may be rough, sure, and it should be. But you do not smash someone's face in. Yes, every once in a while accidents happen or things get out of hand, but hey, that's all part of hardcore life.

Prior to a performance by the metalcore band Hatebreed, an anonymous fan stated:

"We do not know each other. And yet we are a unit, a group. we belong together. Even though we are all different. One person is unemployed, the other earns tons of money. Who cares! Because later in the pit when all hell brakes loose, we take care of each other. If someone falls: you pick their ass up. I do not give a fuck what you look like, whether you're rich or poor, or how you think about the world. "

While postmodern theories about subcultures assume chaos (everybody just acts based on personal feelings and needs), what we in fact found here is order. The moshing in this case is a stylistic subcultural practice that provides simultaneously space for individual self-expression as well as collective order. The moshing consisting of individuals with different backgrounds and experiences creates in fact a unit.

In the mosh pit, we see how individual self-expression depends on and is transformed into a collective entity. The same can be seen in two other rituals in the hardcore scene: stage diving and crowd surfing. Stagediving is climbing the stage, or on to the speakers (in the absence of a stage), to then dive from there in the expectation to be caught by the crowd. Tim said: "With stagediving you show that you can trust each other. You do not let each other fall." A variant is crowd surfing, in which one with the assistance of another fan, climbs on the crowd to be then passed over their heads. Niek, a 23 year old soundengineer tells us how passionate he is about stage diving and crowd surfing, and how the individual is literally

carried by the collective.

Niek: stagediving is fucking awesome. You stand on stage or on the amplifier and then just jump , stretched out right into the audience. That feeling when you are caught: it is such a huge thrill. People who you do not know catch you and won't let you fall. At that moment, you really are one with each other. It's the same with crowd surfing. People help you up if you help them. That personal connection at such a moment, that's so cool. You look at each other, in the midst the pit raging on. And then you help each other to get an incredible experience.

Niek again shows us that through these practices, out of individual expression ('this time you're really one together ' / 'you help each other to get an incredible experience'), a unit is created within the hardcore scene.

A third stylistic practice common in the hardcore scene is the singalong. Here, the audience takes over the role of the band. In its mildest form the singer keeps control, holding his microphone to the audience and letting one or more fans sing through it. However, it is not unusual for a fan to come on stage to completely take over the vocals, or even an instrument for a whole song. Through this, the distance between band and audience disappears, and the role of the audience changes from a relatively passive "recipient" of the music to active participation. With all this, hardcore fans show their appreciation and personal commitment to the lyrics.

Tim: singalongs, is singing along with the ones on stage. It shows that you dig what they do, that you know what it's about, that you agree.

Our interviews show that singalongs play an important role in hardcore concerts, even if sometimes it's at the expense of musical quality. For Rohrer (2013), this indicates that a hardcore concert is above all about engagement and active participation and therefore goes beyond just the music.

The rituals described above are relevant because they show that in the hardcore scene there is a constant interaction between individual and collective expression. In their work on this subject Hancock & Lorr (2012: 321) state that music "is not only technology of the self (DeNora, 1999), but also a "technology of the collective" (Roy and Dowd, 2010). Our research clearly demonstrates that these stylistic subcultural practices form a bridge between typical subcultural contradictions: between individual and collective, chaos and order, unity and difference - and to a larger extent also between pleasure and politics (cf. Van Bohemen, 2013.). It is not, as the postmodern studies suggest, that subcultures include individuals based only on hedonistic motives which collectively do not matter anymore, causing unity to no longer exist (eg, Bennett, 1999;. 2000; Chaney, 2004; Muggleton , 2000; Redhead, 1990; 1995; 1997). The collective is one important condition for individual expression, but it also means that the individual must be prepared to comply with (often unwritten) collective rules. An example is mosh pit etiquette, which in turn serves to protect the individual from the collective violence of moshing. Conversely, the individual will need the collective to get rid of individual frustrations, including to be able to mosh.

Subcultural variations in participation

The preceding paragraphs show that behind the style of hardcore punk people are to be found who connect to the scene based on different sentiments and personal experiences.

Little is seen to confirm the concept of homology of stylistic practices, ideology and experiences that is presumed by the Birmingham School. The postmodern approach on the other hand, in which subculturalism is seen as a relatively superficial striving for self-expression and individual gratification, does not reflect the feelings of unity created by the stylistic practices in the hardcore scene. Now of course we do not claim to be the first to plead for an intermediate position, with greater attention to the specific practices and contexts in which individual and collective subcultural expression takes place (see eg. Also Haenfler, 2004). However, what we do want to add to this kind of research is a typology of subcultural participation, which will shape the relationship between the individual and the collective in different ways. Namely our interviews indicate that there are three main forms of its subcultural participation in hardcore, on the one hand coming forth from the different experiences and ideological views held by people in the scene, and on the other also lead to different treatment of the subcultural style. These three forms of participation we describe as "the subcultural consumer, " the tolerant insider" and "the ultimate insider.

The subcultural consumer

Within the hardcore scene there is a group of fans who participate in the subculture mainly based on hedonistic reasons. We call this group is the 'subcultural consumer' because they mainly go to concerts to have a nice evening, and they do not, or only to a very limited extent, identify with the ideological and socio-critical aspects of the hardcore scene. Peter for example tells us that he just as easily will have a nice evening in a different scene.

Peter: I'm actually someone who is only going to the concerts and just loves the music. But I'm actually, um ... look, I play no instrument myself. And to me it is not so much about the ideological stuff that you see in hardcore sometimes. To me it is purely about, well, to just have a beer and listen to nice music. The energy, all together, you know, just let go and jump into the pit. But I can have equal fun on another party of in another scene. I check out loads of very different groups and scenes, so to speak. So I do not always think there's... Look, I enjoy going to metal concerts, to punk, hardcore. But also to rockabilly, psychobilly.

Everything Peter says here fits perfectly with the postmodern notion that subcultures are characterized by contemporary consumer culture. To him it's just about having (just a beer '); he feels no ideological bond and his involvement in the hardcore scene is volatile and not exclusive. This is a point that Muggleton (2000) makes: that people today simultaneously participate in multiple subcultures based on personal preferences. Polhemus (1996, 1997) in this context speaks of style surfing as a way in which people playfully switch between various subcultural styles. This can also be seen at Michel (29 years):

"I think hardcore music is definitely cool and I love going to concerts. But I also go to ordinary metal concerts and I also feel myself at home there, even though the audience is different than in the hardcore scene. Longer hair and stuff and maybe a little less leftwing. But I certainly I can still have a good time. "

Michel works as a plasterer and Peter works as a researcher at a university, which again shows that people that feel attracted to hardcore come from very different (classes) backgrounds. Peter does indicate that he himself by his background in the middle class often cannot relate to hardcore ideology.

Peter: I'm not so much lyrically focused. The lyrics they sing actually sometimes are about me as forming an opponent. I am relatively close to the establishment, I am highly educated. Then you're a dick. Then you're the enemy. But at concerts actually I don't notice that so much. It's not that people are excluded because they are not being active or idealistic enough. But hey, look, they start to preach I usually go get a beer.

For Peter the ideology of hardcore is not important because he himself does not relate, especially since he is not part of the working class. He has a 'different' background, 'other' experiences, 'other' reasons to be part of the scene. And that such a motivation is especially hedonistic in nature we also find reflected in the fact that he is going to get a beer as soon as things get ideological.

Interestingly enough for subculturalists like Peter, who do not care much about the opposition ideology of the subculture, the collective subcultural style is very important; indeed the same style through which the Birmingham School identifies "resistance". The subcultural consumer in general puts great effort in adopting stylistic practices like moshing and wearing band shirts. For the subcultural consumer, visual style is important precisely because they do not have any other ways by which they can show that they are part of the scene, such as for instance playing in a hardcore band. We see this for example quite clearly being the case by Chris (36 years).

Chris: I do not see myself as being 'hardcore'. I think that is far too limiting. That whole anti-capitalist bullshit and fuck society, you know, that's all cool but ultimately at home the rent is due. I find it all a bit naive. But when I go to a concert, of course, then I'll wear the shirt and scream that life is fucked and that we are going to overthrow the system. That's just cool to do. But that's it. The next day I drive to work in my luxury company car.

Like Peter, Chris does not relate to the ideology of the hardcore scene: he has a job as a financial advisor, has a house, rent to pay. Yet for the duration of the concert he conforms to the hardcore style: he screams along and wears a band shirt. Also with Peter, we saw that he takes much pleasure from participating in the stylistic practices considered typical of the hardcore scene, like moshing and the singalong.

In the postmodern approach the subcultural consumer seems to be taken as the starting point for the entire sub-cultural population. Our research however shows that this is only a very specific group within the hardcore subculture, that clearly distinguishes itself from two other groups.

The ultimate insider

For the subcultural consumer subcultural participation can be summarized as individualistic, non-exclusive, but volatile and fluid. The style of the subculture (collective expression) is needed especially to be able to have a nice evening together, but we found to active symbolic resistance. The subcultural consumer represents one far end of a spectrum of which the other side is occupied by the 'ultimate subcultural insider'. For this ultimate insider, hardcore is not volatile and not hedonistic, but a chosen way of life. The group of people we gathered under this type, cares deeply about the ideology that is associated with hardcore and that is expressed through the lyrics. Frank for instance compares his relationship with hardcore that of religion.

Frank: Faith. I think that's a very close description. I can understand that people treat certain

hardcore lyrics like a Bible. I, for example, do that a lot with Bad Religion.

Ultimate insiders like Frank attach great importance to the lyrics, partly because they describe on an individual level, elements of their daily lives, and partly because the collective-as-ideology is an important recurring theme.

Here, participation in the hardcore subculture is not fluid, but solid. So, Frank, being a booker at a record label really is working in the scene, and telling us that he will remain 'hardcore' until the day he'll die.

Frank: Before, when I was 25 or so, always I was told by family 'ah dude, you still listen to that music. You'll grow over that as soon you hit 35. "But I'm 42 now and I still listen to it. I'm still very much a part of the scene. Coincidentally, I recently spoke a fellow booker who said "if the last thing I can do is to arrange a concert and die afterwards, I would not hesitate." And exactly the same applies to me.

For the ultimate insider, subcultural participation is not only solid, we also see within this group clearly a distinctive punk 'do it yourself' mentality (Hebdige, 1979; Barrett, 2013). This mentality may take the form of playing in a band, but also by publishing a zine or arranging performances, as we saw with Frank. The ultimate insider plays a visible and active role in the scene. Frank, for example, in addition to his work for a hardcore record label is also active in the local music venue. His work there as a programmer allows him to fairly easy provide a platform for still lesser known hardcore bands and this makes him an important player in the scene.

Our research shows that ultimate insiders often talk negatively about the subcultural consumer, who they consider as being 'not hardcore'. Hodkinson (2002) found something similar in his study of Goths, with whom he encountered what he called a "more Gothic than you" syndrome. Our interviews show that this same syndrome is found among hardcore insiders and this calls upon aversion. So Bjorn, who cannot be considered an ultimate insider, shows dissatisfaction with what he sees as "a kind of hardcore police." "They say 'if you don't like this record and if you don't know this band then you're not hardcore. I really don't care for these kind of people. " Thomas shows similar dissatisfactions:

"Yeah, that elite kind of behavior, yes, definitely. Those guys who only like bands that are completely underground. But if a band makes good music, and people like it, of course they will become better known. But for these people, they immediately call them sellouts, who are just in it for the money and are willing to adapt their music and their style to whatever people want to hear. I think that's bullshit. Terror for instance, a band that became popular, still make the same music. If you ask me, it's just whining for attention"

Bjorn and Thomas both describe situations where people we gathered under the ideal type of the ultimate insiders, dismissively comment on bands and other fans that are considered less 'authentic'. This is consistent with previous research done by Fox (1987) on the letters section of alternative magazines. His research showed that a battle was fought in most of the letters about what is and what is not "punk", and who is and who is not "authentic". In the transcripts of Bjorn and Thomas we see that the ultimate insider sees himself as being "more hardcore than others because they have more subcultural capital: the capital takes the form of 'knowledge', for example of the prevailing style, unwritten rules, ideology, history of punk, or the jargon (cf. Gelder and Thornton, 1997. Thornton, 1995). One way in which the ultimate

insider claims subcultural capital is by knowing unknown bands and by distancing himself explicitly from bands that have become popular with a wider audience.

Subcultural capital provides the ultimate insider the ability to claim within the collective of the hardcore scene, space for his own individuality by relieving / dispensating himself from the collective style rules, such as wearing the right clothes or to actively participate in the mosh pit. This is reflected in the interview with Frank, who makes a clear distinction between the newcomers and the "establishment" to which he reckons himself. For newcomers style (music, band shirts, moshing, etc.) still important. The established order, however, no longer need style to prove that they are 'hardcore'.

Frank: Right now, I think, call me old fashioned, you will see the hipster scene within hardcore. As many oldschool tattoos as you can wear. The most weird hairstyles. Or those skinny jeans. That's how nowadays I recognize someone who claims to be hardcore. That hipster look. I'm not saying it's fake or not authentic. But it is very strongly about 'I'm wearing the right brand cap on' stuff. But if you want to see real, pure hardcore? Then you can take a picture of me as I am sitting here now. For me, that image has no style. I always wear a normal T-shirt, vest, pants, working shoes. And i've been hardcore since the beginning.

Bennett (2006: 225) found something similar in his study of older punks:

"From the point of view of older punks themselves, sustained commitment to punk over time has resulted in them literally absorbing the 'qualities' of true 'punkness', to the extent that these exude from the person, rather than clothing and other surface items."

For 'ultimate insiders', hardcore punk is not an optional commodity. They do however have a feeling that others use the subculture that way and therefore they oppose the collective style of hardcore: being embraced too much by the mainstream, non-idealists. For ultimate insiders hardcore is something that is, something you are and something you do. Lyrics and ideology are important: the themes that are addressed provide them a sense of unity.

The special status that the ultimate insider ascribes himself is based on subcultural capital, enabling him to be part of the collective but also to transcend it. This way, the ultimate insider derives his individuality to his exclusive and strong commitment to the collective of the subculture. This is in sharp contrast to the sub-cultural consumer, who on a relatively superficial level is part of ever changing collectives, precisely on the based on his individuality, especially hedonic motifs. The ultimate insider and the sub-cultural consumers have become the two ends of a spectrum, where somewhere also a 'tolerant insider' is in the middle.

The tolerant insider

For the tolerant insider subcultural solidarity is similar to that of the ultimate insider: not fluid but permanent. But unlike the ultimate insider, the tolerant insider explicitly reserves the right to also participate in other subcultures. For the tolerant insider the main subcultural participation however remains in hardcore. Therefore, participation for the permissive insider is less fluid than is the case with the sub-cultural consumer. For example, for Bjorn hardcore has an important function, but he does not consider it a way of life as the ultimate insider would.

Bjorn: What is hardcore? To me hardcore is many things. Aggression expressed in a good way. Playing a record when you have a fucked up day. But I wouldn't call it a lifestyle. It is true that I take strength out of it. And my way of dealing with things partly comes from my hardcore background so the speak. For example, I try to not immediately have a first judgment or impression about someone. That sense that passing judgement on someone based just on how someone looks makes no sense, I learned from hardcore.

What we see here is that Bjorn feels attracted to hardcore for various reasons. His motivation is not hedonistic as the subcultural consumer: he puts on a record if he has a 'fucked up day', and he derives personal strength out of it. The content of the music lyrics is important to him, but not as ideological as for the ultimate insider.

The tolerant insider takes its name from the fact that he is on the one hand very involved in the scene, and often has a lot of knowledge, but on the other hand distances himself from the ultimate insider and his criticism of the subcultural consumer. So for Henk this means "that you need to let everyone just do their own thing"

Tim: For me, the message of hardcore is: equality, fairness, integrity. Help people who need it. Be nice. Do whatever you think is cool and accept what other people think is cool.

Unlike the ultimate insider, the tolerant insider does not feel he is 'more hardcore' than the consumer. This is clearly reflected in the words of Bjorn, where he takes an opposing stand on fans who comment dismissively on the authenticity of other fans.

Bjorn: I don't I believe anyone should have to prove themselves in the scene. Just have a good time together, then it's all good. I think it's important that we put the music in front and that no one has an attitude like 'I'm the only truth. " Do not go whining that someone is not hardcore. That's really nonsense, that hardcore police. Fine if you don't like a record. I am entitled to have my own opinion, you to have yours. Should I like the last album of Lady Gaga then that should be fine.

For the tolerant insider his knowledge of and involvement in the hardcore punk subculture can be as large as that of the subcultural ultimate insider. Bjorn for example, can tell at length about the international history of the hardcore scene. He also has a program on the local radio in which he offers plenty of space to emerging bands. But unlike the ultimate insider, the tolerant insider does not make use of this subcultural capital to make a distinction between themselves and the collective of the subculture. The tolerant insider thus embraces the overall style of the hardcore subculture, participates in wearing band shirts and subcultural practices such as moshing and stage diving. However, the reasons to join here, as with the subcultural consumer, are not so much (class) ideological.

Conclusion

Based on the work of the Birmingham school we should expect that there would be a great similarity between the class inequality inspired ideological resistance that can be "read" from the familiar styling cues of the hardcore punk (music, band names, moshing, etc .) and the ideological desires, motives and experiences of the subculturalists wearing this style (Cohen, 1972; Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978). But class contradictions in the Netherlands are found to play much less of a role than in the birthplaces of the (hardcore) punk: the United Kingdom and the United States. The Dutch hardcore scene proves to be

much too heterogeneous to speak of homology. Moreover, our research shows that this so-called "resistance style" is worn by groups that have virtually nothing to do with collective hardcore ideology. To the tolerant insiders we found in our research, style is important because they can herein vent their personal problems and frustrations, so their resistance is much more functionally individualistic than ideologically collective (Eq. Malbon, 1998). The subcultural consumer adopts the style from hedonistic motives: to just have a nice evening ("a beer" and "listen to cool music").

Ironically, the subculturalists that relate most to the collective oppositional ideology are also the ones who may relate the least to the characteristic style of the hardcore scene. This is the group of ultimate insiders who oppose wearing the style because they feel that it has become too commercial, is not authentic anymore, where it is now worn by subcultural consumers. In the displeasure of these subculturalists we find a paradoxical reflection of the postmodern approach to subcultures. If subcultures are considered a reflection of the late modern consumer culture (Blackman, 2005). Just as this consumer culture, subcultures are considered empty, fluid, hedonistic, superficial and fragmented (Bennett, 1999; 2000; 2006; Chaney, 2004; Melechi, 1993; Muggleton, 2000, Redhead, 1990; 1995; 1997; Rietveld, 1993; 1998), wherein the majority of the authors referred to here call into question the whole concept and existence of "subcultures" (see, in particular, Bennett, 1999 and Redhead, 1990; 1995). According to Muggleton (2000: 47) subcultures only form a stylistic game that is empty and meaningless. People participate on the basis of individual preferences simultaneously in multiple (sub) cultures without being limited by sub-cultural boundaries.

"They do not have to worry about contradictions between their selected subcultural identities, for there are no rules, there is no authenticity, no ideological commitment, Merely a stylistic game to be played" (Muggleton, 2000: 47).

These are ideas that correspond with Don Slater's (1997: 30) description of the late modern consumer culture in which "society appears as a child or fancy-dress party in which identities are designed, tried on, worn for the evening and then traded in for the next. "

Such kind of style surfing (Polhemus, 1996, 1997), indeed we found in our investigation, the subcultural consumer who trades in effortlessly the hardcore style for that of another subculture. However, the fact that there is also a group of ultimate insiders who are contemptuous about these subcultural consumers, immediately shows the flaws of the postmodern approach to subcultures. For indeed there is a group of subculturalists whose involvement in the subculture is still firm and not empty and meaningless. For the ultimate insider's involvement is ideologically strong and forms a true way of life. Whereas subcultures are not as solid and consistent as is believed by the Birmingham School, they are also not as fluid and inconsistent, as is assumed by the postmodern approach. Our research into the hardcore scene shows that this subculture is full of this kind of contradictions.

A related contribution of this study is that it shows that these contradictions are repeatedly mediated by what we have here called 'stylistic subcultural practices. Whether we are talking about listening to a tape by the tolerant insiders or subcultural consumer; or listening to an 'obscure' band by the ultimate insider; or wearing a band shirt by consumers or tolerant insider; or wearing an 'obscure' band shirt by the ultimate insider; playing in a band or publishing a zine by the ultimate insider or tolerant; or join in with the moshing and stage diving by consumers and tolerant insider; or refusing to take part in this by the ultimate

insider; these are all stylistic practices that eventually bridge the gap between individual and collective, and thus raise related opposites: between order and chaos, unity and difference, fun and politics, and between commerce and the resistance against it. And thus they eventually form the bridge between the Birmingham School and the postmodern critique of "subcultures".

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