Total War, Total Anti-War: Music, Holism, and Anti-War Protest

By Justin Patch

Abstract: Since the First World War, warfare has been executed as "total," actively targeting both military and civilian populations, and altering the character, psychology, strategy, and modes of involvement. The broad effects of this shift have necessitated a counter approach by the anti-war movement. The Austin, Texas movement against war in Iraq and Afghanistan was correspondingly holistic in nature, conceptually attacking the root causes of war, and not just advocating for an end to the current conflicts. These metamorphoses are congealed in the altered role that music played in public protests. Instead of booking overtly "anti-war music," organizers recruited popular Austin musicians with the aim of fostering a total anti-war movement that was about gathering like minds together to encourage progressive actions that would proactively prevent the need for war through cultural and behavioral modifications. Music was seen as a catalyst for social gatherings rather than as a vehicle that passed on social and political messages. This comprehensive vein of thinking can be seen in the rhetoric, or lack thereof, in the Occupy Movements. This essay analyzes the case in Austin from fieldwork conducted between 2005 and 2007, and ends with a reflection on the anti-war movement's successes and failures when compared to the Occupy Movement.

In the political imagination there is a stubborn fiction of a time when war was a heroic pursuit. In this narrative the sons of the wealthy and powerful—future elites and civic leaders—sacrificed life and limb for their beloved country in preparation for lives in public good; veterans left the theater with meaningful experience and dignity; battlefields were removed from vulnerable civilian populations and non-combatants morally off-limits; prisoners of war were treated humanely in accordance with international law; and the final victor was agreed upon by all parties involved.[1] War separated and detached from civilian life eventually faded from ideology, betrayed by the brutality of colonization, and eventually arrived in Europe in the industrial age.[2] Gradually the overt strategic approach to combat changed, antique policies were jettisoned, and Total War became the order of the day. Civilians became fair game and non-military installations and columns of tattered refugees became strategic targets. Nature itself was not safe: slash and burn gave way to chemical deforestation, and natural resources were wantonly destroyed in aptly labeled environmental terrorism. The totality of a nation was the new battlefield: its factories, communications, resources, and non-combatants at home, as well as barracks and soldiers on the front lines. Most of all, the bullseye of the total war blueprint was the psyche of the nation, its collective will to fight and resist.

The term "Total War" was coined during the First World War, although the military practice itself pre-dates the twentieth century. War strategically and unapologetically became a conflict of nerves, a test of an entire population, its pugilistic resolve, the depth of its sum resources and reserves—material, psychological, environmental, and affective. Total war was the new official doctrine of combat, enshrined in military documents during the wide-spread destruction and carnage of World War I. However, it has obvious precedents in armed conflicts throughout history and continues into the present (Anderson 2010). Often the barbarism of total war animates and becomes iconic of anti-war sentiment, as Nick Ut's iconic 1972 photograph of Phan Thi Kim Phuc running down the streets of Trang Bang naked, crying, and burned by napalm demonstrates. Similarly, recent photos and videos of battlefield atrocities and military misconduct spark outrage in conflict zones and connect global anti-war communities through shared outrage and disgust.

In the US, the phenomenon of total war is demonstrated in both the military strategy and social aspects of the Second World War, abroad and at home. Total war had dramatic effects on social, economic, spatial, and psychological organization in the US, leaving no aspect of modern life and public culture untouched: the work place, suburbanization, education, and the technoscape. Total war was the order of the day at home and abroad. US culture was irrevocably transformed from the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the firebombing of Dresden (civilian cities with no military or industrial strategic value); women employed in factories (shifting gender relations); heatless, meatless, and wheatless days (public sacrifice); and the GI Bill (class re-organization). Total war has remained in military strategy and rhetoric since, although the tool kit has been expanded to include affective and rhetorical deployments meant to bolster support within the home population.[3]

Following this trajectory, it is logical that in the face of warfare that mobilizes an entire population, economy, psyche, and resources, its opposition does the same. In response to war and militarism, protest and oppositional social organization morphed from a campaign seeking to end a specific military action, like the anti-Vietnam or

anti-Gulf war movements, to one that tackles the holistic problem of war. It simultaneously addresses the multiplicity of root causes: political, material, psychological, and cultural. The corresponding social movement is a total anti-war, intent on creating holistic socio-cultural and political change rather than a single specific policy shift or armistice. Inevitably, these cultural projects gather around specific ideological clusters that include a cessation of military violence as one among a suite of interconnected alterations in macro-social behavior. Numerous thinkers have connected ideas of overconsumption, exploitative global monopoly of resources, structural inequality, and dubious political intents to the advent and necessity of modern war.[4] It is this body of recent holistic anti-war thinking, starting with Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi's critiques of war and colonization, and moving through contemporary concerns over fossil fuels, neo-liberalism, and unfettered lobbying, that animated the total anti-war praxis of Austin Against War (AAW from here on), a volunteer grassroots protest and awareness raising group in Austin, Texas. Like total war, total anti-war practices vary according to social conditions, public culture, affective, and material necessities. This article chronicles the total anti-war praxis of AAW.

While working as a member of AAW from June of 2005 to August of 2006, I noticed a shift in event-planning strategy that represented a change in protest practice from being anti-Iraq and Afghan War to being total anti-war. The group cynically noted that popular sentiment was not going to stop the wars (the Bush administration and the legislature up to that point and beyond were completely unresponsive to public anti-war sentiment and concern), but dramatic cultural changes could prevent future wars. This alteration in focus surfaced during months of planning meetings leading up several major anti-war rallies and protests actions. Discussions about programming music into the large public anti-war rallies in March and October of 2005 and 2006, the anniversaries of the Iraq and Afghan wars, were particularly illuminating. By examining discourses and actions surrounding the role of music in AAW protests, the practices of booking music for rallies, and the expressions of imagined causalities in the minds of members, a changing relationship between protest culture and social change in Austin can be momentarily glimpsed. Music was no longer intended to be a carrier of information, messages, or rhetoric, but a catalyst for a host of attendant actions which would begin the process of changing the everyday practices that cause and necessitate war. Popular music in particular was a lynchpin in AAW's total anti-war praxis.[5]

In the analysis below, derived from my fieldwork with AAW, I look at a pivotal moment in the Austin anti-war movement where enthusiasm that galvanized around Cindy Sheehan's 2005 road-side protest at George Bush's Crawford, TX ranch (arguably one of the many experimental prototypes for the Occupy Movement) fizzled and eventually led to demoralization and splintering of the movement. I analyze how the transition to total anti-war was conceived of and demonstrates an altered relationship between music and protest. In the case of AAW, focus shifted from a specific, short-term goal of ending the wars to total anti-war which would stem the tides of aggression though socio-economic justice, anti-imperialism, human rights advocacy, and environmentalism. Music was still an integral part of AAW's total anti-war praxis, but it was utilized for its popular appeal rather than for lyrical content. Unfortunately, the Austin anti-war movement divided under the strain of the multiple messages and organizations it tried to wrangle under the anti-war umbrella and the collective frustration in the face of Washington's insensitivity to popular protest.

In a postlude I compare the shortcomings of the anti-war movement to the more recent Occupy Movement, which has been much more successful in capturing public attention and injecting its rhetoric into media outlets and public discourse (one of the aims of AAW). Although one-year anniversary events seemed more nostalgic than activist, and there have been few two-year commemorations, Occupy has arguably done a better job of advocating for holistic change by tying together threads of socio-economic justice, gross inequality, systemic discrimination, exploitation, and violence, and is still in the mouths and minds of political actors and media outlets ("the 1%" has become common political language). With the war in Iraq wound down, the end to the Afghan conflict on the horizon, and the complex effects of the Arab Spring playing out, what can we learn about public messaging, movement sustainability, and the role that music can and will play in the textures of future mass dissent?

Every day we hear music that is engaged in critical advocacy, messaging, and activism. Methodologically, this analysis argues for a macro-social mode of analysis that builds from the jeweler's-eye view of music and political activism. Beyond the personal agency of artists and those involved in politicized music, the institutional culture which both consumes political music and politicizes music necessitates sophisticated analysis. The ideologies and, more importantly, the imagined causality between the institution, the public, music, and social transformation, need to be examined from the micro to the macro level. These analyses can then contribute to a more nuanced understanding of music in culture and have application to activist and applied research.

Protest in Austin

In January of 2005 Austin Against War, a volunteer anti-war activist group formed in 2002, reached out to seasoned Austin singer-songwriter and booking agent Bill Pasalacqua to recruit musicians for a protest event marking the two-year anniversary of the Iraq War's initiation. He was asked to schedule prominent local musicians to perform (pro-bono) at Austin City Hall, the protest rally point. Although public anti-war protests in Austin had been quite successful preceding the invasion, with an estimated 10,000 voicing opposition to the invasion during the build-up two years earlier (an event that culminated in chaos, tear gas, and charges of police brutality and illegal dissent), attendance at recent anti-war demonstrations was lean. AAW saw its own membership drop dramatically between the build-up and the commencement of the war. Weekly meetings in the fluorescent-lit basement of the University Baptist Church that once contained over 40 participants had dwindled to just seven or eight. With public opinion demonstrating increased numbers disapproving of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, AAW was employing a new two-part strategy to reanimate the local anti-war movement. The first half of the approach was to bring the war home by emphasizing how the effects of the wars can be felt locally. The second was to load the program with high profile musicians—their names prominently displayed in the protest's advertising and PR—to attract people to the event.

To fulfill the former, AAW had a strong and defined theme for the rally: "The Cost of War." They asked local speakers—Austin mayor pro-tem Jackie Goodman and University of Texas journalism professor and author Robert Jensen—to address the effects of the wars on Austin/Central Texas. For the latter, along with engaging Pasalacqua's connections in the Austin music scene, AAW heavily publicized the musical aspect of the rally. The line-up of musicians dominated handbills, postings, ad space in local papers, and AAW's webpage. It included local names South Paw Jones, Lisa Rogers, Frank Meyer, and Bill Pasalacqua who warmed up the audience for national artists Slaid Cleaves, Grammy-nominated Eliza Gilkyeson, and local favorite James McMurtry and the Heartless Bastards. McMurtry's performance was intentionally saved for last as part of a strategy for keeping the long march and rally together throughout the afternoon.

The event was a rousing success. An estimated 2,000 people enthusiastically joined the protest, many with extravagant signage, props, megaphones, and other protest apparatuses. They sang along to Pasalacqua's rendition of "Down by the Riverside" with conviction, and laughed at Meyer and Roger's satirical "Oil in that Soil." Cleaves played "A Beautiful Thing," a newly written politically-themed song, along with favorites from his successful album *Wishbones*, and Gilkyeson played songs from her latest album *Paradise Hotel*. Most in the audience stayed until the very end when rain caused James McMurtry and the Heartless Bastards to retire after only three songs. The event was the subject of group discussions for months after and well into the next year. It also served as a template for future AAW events, which utilized music as a lynchpin.[6]

My inquiry into politicized music and social change was driven by participation in this rally as a spectator/ethnographer. I, like many others, was attracted to the rally by the prospect of hearing famous and well-loved musicians perform for free. Following the rally, I spent the next nineteen months volunteering with AAW, attending weekly meetings and other local anti-war events, was intensely involved in the process of planning subsequent AAW events, occasionally represented AAW on radio and TV, and was the MC for a large protest in March of 2006.

The theoretical perspective on the total anti-war praxis that became the backbone for planning events was derived from the plethora of conversations and exchanges that took place in and after meetings and events. Political activists are passionate and talk avidly about their beliefs, experiences, ideologies, and in this case, their sources of information and opinion. Members of AAW were zealous raconteurs, and I was regaled with legends of anti-Vietnam and anti-Gulf war activities, grassroots protest against Austin's racial segregation policies, and labor activism from Wobblies to United Farm Workers and immigration issues. The stalwart members of AAW who I worked with were a varied lot. Most were long-time progressives from forty to retirement with a handful of younger vets and students mixed in. They were highly literate (Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and Gore Vidal were often discussed) and Internet savvy, although most relied on radio and print for information. Most of all, they were passionate and dedicated.

At the close of my involvement the inevitable conclusion was that the relationship between music and these anti-war rallies had changed. In AAW's articulation of total anti-war, music was no longer principally about the lyrical messages; it was part of the animating process, and a tool for popular expansion, interpersonal exchange,

and progressive amplification. It was a catalyst for participation, designed to spark numerous progressive activities, beginning with interpersonal contact. For members of AAW, music was essential for attracting a conspicuously large audience to anti-war events, which was far more important than specific lyrical content and message.[7] In group deliberations, the textual substance of the music—the need for anti-war lyrics, sing-along collective anthems, and the transmission of anti-war rhetoric and sentiment—was downplayed in favor of booking well-known Americana artists with broad popular appeal. Emphasis was placed on artists' popularity within Austin's progressive community and the pure numbers who would attend if they were performing. Through a dense mesh of reasoning and conjecture, the particular textual aspects of rally music were rendered secondary to the creation of a public affective spectacle.

In the case of AAW's total anti-war praxis, discussion about music focused on how the music was utilized by the actors and collecteds involved in the anti-war movement.[8] The ways in which music was theorized and actively incorporated—the idiosyncratic reasoning behind the choices made by protest organizers—speaks to larger cultural changes that have and are affecting public protest. Alterations in the expected role of music in protest stemmed from social transformations that occurred in the decades since the US's past large-scale military operations. Many of these changes are connected to what is called the Information Age: the availability and accessibility of information and opinion, the potential to create a communally shared vocabulary and referential familiarity, and the rapid spread of specific, pointed political views and policy critiques. In light of this glut of information and technology, music was no longer useful as a tool for propaganda and information,[9] as more lucid versions existed and were easily located. Music was positioned as a prelude to awareness raising, community building, and collected action. It was necessary to bring people together, give them a sense of hope and belonging, and construct a safe space for meaningful encounter.

Music, as members of AAW saw it, was no longer about transmitting anti-war discourse or raising awareness about the holistic nature of war. This information was already public and accessible through the Internet and various media. Music was not an independently functioning anti-war weapon, but a fully integrated piece in a much larger corpus of actions imagined and planned to holistically bring about an end to the necessity of warfare through copious small personal decisions. Music was used to attract people, embolden intercommunication and public dissent, and motivate citizens to participate in a host of progressive actions. Together this total anti-war would build the progressive inertia needed to end the necessity of war. In these progressive motions, broadly based in social justice, reduction of consumption, and human rights writ large, the root causes of war and militarism were addressed in a more holistic way than just focusing on the legislative pressure to cease combat. The catalyst for these actions was a robust public protest, which necessitated music.

The theoretical and methodological apparatus behind AAW's use of music in protest show cognitive praxis and a notion of political change that does not assume legislative response to mass protest. In the remainder of this essay, I discuss how the placement of music in protest fit into the collected group's total anti-war praxis which imaginatively moved from protest to macro-social change. In conclusion, I reflect on the failures of the anti-war movement as compared to the Occupy Movement, which utilizes similar holism, but has accomplished a great deal in far less time. While both movements endeavored to encompass a wide range of voices, the anti-war movement emphasized the brutality of war as the combination of persistent social ills and injustices, and the Occupy Movement tenaciously stayed off message. Contemplating these differences opens up new questions on the intersections of music, protest, democracy, and mass dissent.

Theoretical Considerations

When reflecting on music at AAW events, I found myself needling the question of how this particular deployment of expressive culture is imagined and shaped by, and in conjunction with, larger social factors. My field experience echoed what historian E.P. Thompson pointed out in his historical work on *Charivari*: the fact that older forms of expressive culture are still practiced is of importance precisely because the *function* of their ritual is different and has changed to reflect larger social changes (1991:259).[10] In this particular case the specific role of music, long a staple of the stereotypical anti-war event, had changed as a result of significant societal metamorphoses. For AAW, there was a vital alteration in the intended outcome of a rally, derived from the experiences and intentions of those involved in planning them. In spite of social developments brought on by increased, complex knowledge of geopolitical and environmental issues, nuanced post-MacLuhan media criticism, and political cynicism, the form of the event—a march and rally with speakers and Americana music—still served as the dominant model for anti-Iraq and Afghan war protest in Austin. The intended function of this particular modern ritual had changed in response to

the contemporary moment, while the form—in the most general of terms—had not.[11] [12]

A disquisition into anti-war music with practical application for further study necessitates a project that is simultaneously broad and narrow: understanding music within the wide conglomeration of cultural situations that constitute human life, but focused within a specific group in a tapered time frame. Instead of treating music as something that reflects, stands in for, or represents a whole, I am interested in how music is enmeshed in the cultural and political imagination of this specific politically-motivated group. I do not draw strict parallels between this particular group and any other one in the US or internationally (indeed in Austin there were other anti-war groups that had competing notions of protest that clashed with AAW, sometimes violently). However, this case study points to other considerations and possibilities in the ongoing examination of music and protest. While much of the literature on music and protest focuses on music, attendant actions, and forms of sociability (Mattern, 1998; Turino, 2008), this study concentrates on how music creatively encounters macro political beliefs. Looking through the eyes of activists rather than musicians provides a different and equally meaningful vantage when researching music in political life.

Key to this theoretical frame is the work of political theorist Louis Althusser (1965, 1971). Following his inquiries, I am asking the question of imagined responses to historical and material conditions,[13] as well as material responses to imagined conditions and envisioned futures. According to Althusser, we all live theoretical lives which depend on our cognitive composition of what is not immediately seen, and the future repercussions of our actions. By constantly incorporating new sensual and abstract information into our conceptual apparatus, we form causal imaginations. We envision the benefits and consequences of our actions and base our present decisions on these imagined causalities.[14] For example, many in AAW believed that a dramatic reduction in personal and industrial fossil fuel consumption would lead to decreased militarism, since substantial military power is directed at the Middle East to influence oil producers. These include dangerous and costly policies that prop up brutal, repressive dictatorships and support inequality and exploitation to secure global oil flows. With this in mind, anti-war protests often contained rhetoric about blood for oil, conspicuous consumption in the form of SUVs and pickup trucks, and missives about public transportation, cycling, Austin Green Energy, and decreasing individual carbon footprints. While there is no information or case study to prove that reduction of carbon footprints would alter foreign policy, the imagined outcome of lessening fuel usage was strong enough to shape members' personal actions and group rhetoric at protests.

Through an investigation into the conceptual apparatus behind the organization of a protest and its intended effects, the changing role of music in protest can be seen in two lights. As E. P. Thompson would have it, the change from a bearer of informative rhetoric to an attraction and crowd-builder is a manifestation of greater, over-arching shifts in cultural practice and knowledge (1991). As Althusser would have it, this change is part of a conceptual alteration in the minds of organizers. With new information, AAW's reactions to wartime circumstances are changed, leading to different imagined outcomes for anti-war rallies. As I demonstrate below, the conceptual-causal political views of the group, the conceptual imagination exerted clear influence on the prescribed use of music at AAW rallies.

To situate the creation of a political protest imaginary and the acquisition of material and abstract information, the theoretical framework of Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison adds a critical dimension of historical understanding to Althusser's and Thompson's theories. What I am investigating coincides with their concept of cognitive praxis: "If we broaden our understanding to include the creation and recreation of interpretive frameworks within social movements—defined as cognitive praxis—and relate this to wider historical processes, a new grasp of the relations between culture and social movements becomes possible" (1998:19). Eyerman and Jamison's concept, applied to both long-running social movements like labor organizing and social equality, and relatively short-term projects like the anti-Vietnam War and anti-Gulf War movements, allows for an understanding of how movement culture adapts to success and failure as well as to greater socio-political economies. On a fieldwork level cognitive praxis frames analyses of past experiences, myths, legends, and erasures, and explains their effect on present decisions. The triumphs and tribulations of protest movements in Austin—from de-segregation in the 1950s and a decade of anti-Vietnam war activism to ongoing labor and environmental advocacy—influenced AAW's imaginary causal relationship between protest and social change and shaped the intended outcomes of their activist practices.

By simultaneously looking at the discourses surrounding the role of music in protest, the practice of booking music, and the expressions of the collected imagined causalities of AAW, a changing relationship between protest culture and social change in one locale is glimpsed. The fact that anti-war protest, workers' strikes, anti-capital and student demonstrations, and the Occupy Movement have all retained music as an element throughout the past

century makes the implementation of Eyerman and Jamison's and E.P. Thompson's frameworks applicable to this and other contemporary projects. The planning and execution of a public protest depends on the interpretive frameworks of the individuals involved, the theoretical lives they live, and the ways in which they conceptualize and articulate the causal webs of their world.

My experiences with AAW showed that music's utility to total anti-war is different from music's role in previous anti-war movements. The alteration in the purpose of music in AAW's rallies was colored by Austin's local culture, as well as by the previous experiences of the collected who were involved in planning events. Memories of past movements and the innovations of the Information Age re-formed members' conceptual relationship to events and their effects. What emerged from this inquiry was a clearer picture of the multiple and complex functions that live music was intended to serve at these anti-war rallies. Music was no longer about lyrics, it was about being popular, and making protests larger and more visible through increased attendance. I begin by addressing the practice of booking musicians at a rally and then move back and look at the overlapping logics which necessitated this change.[15]

The Process of Booking Music for Events

The stated function of music in AAW rallies, from the 2005 event and subsequent Austin gatherings, was to act as "a draw."[16] This linguistic fragment was ubiquitous in conversations and event planning. Members speculated, and later grew to expect, that music would entice sympathetic individuals to come out, commune with like-minded progressives, and create a public show of disapproval, the bigger the better. The pure numbers at the rally were of paramount concern. By this logic, higher profile musicians attract more people to the rally, since it contained a free performance by a noted artist. One of the members even stated in an email that "we're interested in attracting air heads who are more into the music than politics" (personal communication, 2005).[17]

In this aspect of group discourse and practice, the fan base of the musician in question was the primary concern (along with availability and willingness to play pro-bono). Other potential factors like lyrical content, public image, and previous association with progressive causes were less important than general popularity. Pragmatic factors dictated that there were a group of artists who were nearly always called and asked to play, but it was less a reflection of their lyrical content than their own politics. When proposing potential new groups for the musical part of rallies—i.e., musicians who were unfamiliar to other members of the group—often the first question was asked was: what kind of draw do they have? In other words: how many people will come out to see them play for free? Are they going to fill out the crowd with their fans? Possible performers were screened, usually by a member of the group who would make time to see a live show, listen to a CD, or stream music from their web page. The purpose of this exercise was principally quality control: the designated scout rarely if ever made comments about the lyrical content and was primarily concerned with having professional sounding live music that would not turn off their main audience—middle-aged, predominantly white, middle-class residents of Austin.[18]

In the buildup to the first "Million Musicians March" in March of 2006, in the wake of the successful rally in the March of 2005 and the protests with Cindy Sherman in Crawford, Texas, popular music became a defining element. In the scramble to execute a musically-themed march, many of the Monday night meetings dealt with music. In these exchanges, which occurred before the proliferation of smart phones, Facebook, and other social media, music was discussed almost entirely as a way of increasing the size of rallies. Members, mostly the younger participants, suggested musicians to play—artists we knew, songs and CDs we had heard—to which the primary response was the question of popularity. The exception to this was when I suggested a salsa band or a hard-core band. Both notions were rejected for either technical or aesthetic reasons.[19]

To AAW, musicians essentially functioned as an advertisement for the event: come for the music, stay for the political gathering.[20] Like manufacturers of material goods, AAW acted as the producer of a specific product—an oppositional public demonstration. This required a good deal of time and labor: behind every rally there were two to three months of meetings, the expenditure of small amounts of money to print signage and handbills, rent a PA system and a sound technician, and hours of personal time procuring city permits, asking for free ad space in local papers and zines, printing and hanging flyers, posting to blogs and listservs, and booking speakers and musicians. Hope was that the initial investment would entice others to spend—not their money, although a bucket was always passed in hopes of recouping the funds spent for the PA system and sound technician—their leisure time at the

event. The greater the number of spenders, the more buzz/media would be generated, contacts made, and consciousness and behavior transformed. By advertising logic, the higher the profile of the spokesperson for the event, the more consumers will be tempted to part with their valuable leisure time to attend. This equation depended more on the sympathetic politics of the artists themselves, as they were uncompensated, than on the content or intention of their music. As with any ad campaign, although the greatest audience is hoped for, the pitch is designed with a specific consumer in mind. This particular consumer was the stereotypical Austin progressive—white, middle-class, and old enough to remember the Vietnam War. Although the audiences were typically a demographic mixture, the intended audience was obvious from the choice of music and the places where flyering and advertising were done. The result was that the music rarely deviated from acoustic Americana, with the occasional electric singer-songwriter.[21]

To carry the analogy one step further, a product does not exist without the ability to market it, to bring it to the minds of potential consumers. Within the group, it was acknowledged that without high-quality, well-known music a rally does not happen (amateur progressive artists without a following were routinely rejected when suggested). An event without popular musicians would be sparsely attended, and by extension the press would pay scant attention, negating an important event function. While this is clearly not the case—a successful music-free protest was held on a central artery through downtown Austin at the start of the Iraq war, and subsequent successful "bridge actions" were also without music—the sentiment is strong. Musicians are necessary to attract, they are marketing and advertising tools, and they are indispensable to bring a protest to life. Their specific textual message was secondary to their presence, quality of their performance, and reputation.[22]

This particular praxis was demonstrated on multiple occasions at weekly AAW meetings and in emails and phone calls with members. However, there are a number of other logics that fed into this configuration that prevent a simple, blatant conclusion of market-driven shallowness (and the contradiction of an anti-consumerism group deploying advertising/market logic). Within member's dense articulations of their material and imaginary conditions, there were also critiques of the media, demographic assumptions, pop-sociological theories on the psychological state of the individual in the US, and a different conception of the causal relationship between a rally and social action that deviates from the erroneous assumption that popular social pressure causes political change. The incorporation of these new ways of thinking profoundly altered the relationship between music and protest for members of AAW.

Music Embedded in Protest

What transpired in the collected minds of AAW were several logics based on previous activist experience, increased information, and beliefs about the modern psychology of the wealthiest nation in the world. A commonly held and discussed belief among AAW members was that most of the US population lives in relative isolation from each other and the world at large. People go home, watch TV, surf the Internet, and have only limited meaningful interaction with their neighbors, co-workers, and greater communities.[23] Members believed that this isolated way of life effectively stunts the potential for collective action and eventually fosters either apathy or a sense of helplessness. As disconnected (or only electronically/virtually connected) monads, the gargantuan problems of war, corporate domination of government and economic life, and overconsumption seem surreal and insurmountable. The practice of living a meaningful communal existence is lost to radical individualism, fatigue, suburbanization, geographic transience, and social taboos of discussing politics in polite company. Members believed that to many Texans, Iraq and Afghanistan are a long way away, and the wars taking place there have no practical bearing or effect on their lives (this was before the economic crisis).

This theory is not far away from both the well-worn "TV is the opiate of the masses" argument or Neil Postman's (2005) postulate that amusement passes for news and purveys non-information in the guise of awareness. This is augmented by post 9/11 paranoia with additional xenophobic patriotic conformism. The difference is that members of AAW felt that this slumber could be interrupted without the conventional "kill your television" or "get off the grid" strictures that are often prescribed. While mass media is part of the problem of isolation and apathy, it is also an essential element of the solution. Despite the constant critique that major media outlets silence dissent and are complicit in a hawkish agenda, all of AAW's members found alternate news outlets which provided them with what they construed as the "truth" or the "real story." While media producers are part of the perpetuation of unsustainable and inhuman policies, its peripheral instruments were actively conveying oppositional messages. If one had the initiative and proper direction, these stories, opinions, and facts are available.

In reaction to this, AAW adopted specific media-centered goals engineered to force local media to pay attention to

dissent. Thousands of protesters rallying against the war, drawn together by the sounds of popular musicians, would be impossible to ignore. The event would be covered, even if only briefly, by news outlets, and images would be posted online and in print. By causing a buzz and putting protest onto mainstream TV, radio, newspapers, and the Internet, like-minded but silent others would be inspired to get out and look for alternate news sources, expand their views, and come to understand the importance of their own small personal decisions.

The idea was to use the media against itself. One AAW member, a retiree and long-time Austin activist, was quite fond of the MacLuhan-esque mantra, “The media makes it real.” According to his formulation, mass media makes the anti-war movement—or dissidence at large—real to those who feel hopeless, alienated, isolated, and politically abandoned. If secluded individuals see a large gathering of dissenting citizens, even on TV, they might feel that they were not alone. When individuals get the idea that their politics are widely shared, they are freed to express their own views publicly in a contagious, progressive mimesis. They might also open up to the idea that mainstream media is not giving them the full story on anti-war sentiment or a host of other political issues, and search out alternate outlets to inform, augment, and nuance their comprehension of geopolitics. Ultimately, the hope is that these un-alienated individuals would find ways to commune with others and become involved in other progressive social movements and virtual progressive communities, all of which play into the theory of total anti-war.

Locally, AAW thought of Austin as a majority progressive city (anti-war, pro-choice, environmentally conscious, GLBTQ friendly, etc.). As such, AAW was doing the work of the majority that had been rendered silent by the media. AAW needed to motivate action and simultaneously provide the left-leaning populous with the means to learn about their options, particularly local progressive groups and community resources. The inevitable outcome would be a critical mass of progressive actions. In an age where the homogenization of media is legend, there was also optimism that the long tentacles of media also turned the small wheels of independence, and in the shadows of media leviathans diamonds of truth persevered. If concerned citizens altered their existing news consumption patterns to include freely available alternate news sources and literatures, their understanding of the total war forced upon them would be clarified. They would also realize their own agency in tacking these issues and join in. Through a total anti-war approach, active participants working together for a host of small changes that ran the gamut from recycling to reproductive rights will create positive social transformation.

What ties these logics of media and social psychology together with the practice of booking musicians as an advertising tool is a diffuse causal relationship between an anti-war rally and resultant action. For AAW, the problem of war was completely holistic, based in a culture of exploitation, expectation, inequality, and domination. Diverse issues like low-wage labor; undocumented cheap labor and outsourcing; gender and racial inequality; global capital and neoliberalism; social addiction to cheap consumer goods and planned obsolescence; centralization of wealth; disregard for human rights; environmental degradation; immigration and citizenship; the death penalty; corporate monopolism and lobbying; and US imperialism (military and cultural) were all part of cultural practices that necessitate war. Combined, these policies and social forces breed alienation, disconnection between policy makers and popular anti-war sentiment, and persistent hawkish militarism.

Withdrawing troops from Iraq and Afghanistan would not ensure lasting peace if social justice, human rights, reduced consumption, equal distribution of global wealth, and environmental conservation were not also part of the solution. Public displays of opposition alone are of little use because it is clear that public sentiment does not directly affect policy. After profound dissent, disputed facts, a total lack of credible proof, and a scandal concerning false claims of the delivery of African yellow-cake uranium to Iraq had failed to prevent war, there was little faith that politicians would acknowledge or act on public pressure, no matter how large the protest (hence the calls for campaign finance reform and charges that politicians only respond to corporate pressure). An end to militarism necessitated mass small actions to reduce consumption, raise consciousness, and foster equality, fairness, and acceptance. Individual actions drove militarism, and mass culture needed to become more humane, humble, and sustainable. The solution was total anti-war, and mass protests were the catalyst.

Given this complex social critique, to relegate music’s function to being informative or uplifting would be overly simplistic. Protest music was more than a vehicle for a specific anti-war message or a persuasive image of dissident masses that affected politicians. Music and protest together were envisioned as an agent for a total anti-war, a holistic solution to a systemic problem. Combined, they attracted isolated individuals and provided them emotional uplift, pedagogy in progressive actions, and exposure to progressive organizations. Through musical stardom, protests attract individuals in such numbers that news media is compelled to provide coverage—pictures of thousands holding signs, chanting, laughing, and cursing—reaching thousands more. At these rallies, individuals have the opportunity to gather, create a collected sense of community, have their fears of being alone assuaged, and learn about various progressive actions and alternate sources of information. Protest fostered freedom to act in

progressive, anti-war, and oppositional ways. To these ends, local groups that represented progressive interests were invited to participate in activities by flyering and setting up tables to distribute literature, openly converse with participants, network, and recruit for their causes. These included Austin Green Energy, Texas NARAL, School of the American Watch, the Texas State Employees Union, Austin Wobblies, UFW, Austin International Socialists Organization, and others. Music set the atmosphere and attracted the protesters, activists, and media.

Events were meant to inspire dialogue about politics, to share ideas and voice dissent. On the individual level, they were intended to get participants involved in advocating for social justice and redistribution of wealth, use the bus or a bike instead of driving, search the AM dial and the Internet for alternative news, recycle, and receive information more critically. It did not matter if the rally reached people sensually, through word of mouth, or through the TV and Internet after the fact; the intended effect was the same. It was meant to combat silence, frustration, and defeatism rather than to create a single specific policy change or provide political discourses. Lasting change would come from a collected body of small and varied actions, and trickle up into policies which included an end to combat now and in the future by limiting consumption, fulfilling basic human rights and needs, and widening collective knowledge and global awareness.

Rallies were the imagined starting point of a total anti-war. While the hawkish government had the bully pulpit, and the legislative and executive powers to promote total war through policy and PR, the grassroots had the right to assembly, information, and collected action to resist. AAW believed that the anti-war movement was one issue that brought diverse groups into communion and could spur holistic, interconnected actions. By focusing on the local effects of the war, they hoped to inspire awareness, empathy, resonance, and ultimately a host of local actions. Together these could end war now and prevent war in the future.

Conclusion

In examining AAW's perspectives and imagined causality we see that the decision to book bands with a large draw, rather than those who play explicitly anti-war music, is a decision thoughtfully embedded in collected beliefs and cognitive praxis. Protests were no longer viewed as a method for providing messages, teaching, providing slogans, or directly influencing state politics. Instead, they were envisioned as places to commune, network, and create a spectacle. This manifestation of dissent was not imagined to have any material impact on legislation, but to inspire actions that are diffuse and diverse, but in the end (theoretically) more effective in addressing and severing the root causes of war.

To reflect back on the theories of Thompson, Althusser, and Eyerman and Jamison, the study of music and protest is as important now as it ever was, as this form persists in the midst of immense cultural change. This examination shows a transformation in macro-social relationships between citizens, communities, and the state, and an attendant shift in the ways individuals and collected groups imagine the means at their disposal of creating meaningful social changes. In the case of AAW, lyrics and slogans do not create social change, meaningful contact with neighbors and like-minded individuals, and small, intertwined actions that address consumption, equality, and expression do. Musicians and their music facilitate these social interactions and politicized actions, the more popular the better.

Finally, if anti-war music is what happens in anti-war spaces, then questions must be asked about the practical, aesthetic, conceptual, and intellectual processes of placing musicians and their music into these spaces. From the viewpoint of the rally producers in mid-2000s Austin, musicians served the overall aim of an anti-war event as a marketing tool and attraction. Further inquiry elucidates more complex and holistic social logics which necessitate these very specific responses to knowledge and total war. AAW's total anti-war praxis embeds this particular articulation into larger social conditions, processes, understandings, experiences, and transformations.

Coda: The Occupy Movement

The contrasts between the anti-war and Occupy movements are far too long to list in an epilogue, but what I find most striking, looking back to 2004-6, is that AAW shared a great deal with the Occupy Movement in sentiment and praxis. Cindy Sherman's summertime encampment at Crawford, Texas, during George W. Bush's 2005 vacation (which was materially supported by AAW and other Texas and national anti-war groups) is a particularly good example of the similarity. Both movements legally inhabited public space in order to raise awareness and discomfort. Both movements also shared the idea of multiply connected, and sometimes contradictory, ideologies

and concerns that share the broad umbrella of “justice,” “equity,” or “change.” Likewise, the goal of sustained contagious involvement and activism that AAW held dear was better accomplished by Occupy as they created multiple spaces for protesters to maintain their engagement for days, weeks and months at a time under harsh conditions (and smaller Occupy actions have emerged in the wake of natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy and the Oklahoma City tornadoes). While I do not deny that timing—the available technology and economic crisis—was a factor in the overwhelming success of Occupy when compared to the present anti-war movement, that conclusion evades the burden of solid, reflective thought. Two similar movements so close together offer the potential for comparative analysis and conceptualization of new activist strategies.

As difficult as it is to conceive of now, in 2005 Facebook, YouTube, and much of the social networking done through wireless networks and smart phones was new technology, or did not exist. As a consequence of the age of the members and a lack of precedent, these essential tools, which are now used as direct conduits to media outlets, other activists, and a plethora of indispensable information, were not utilized. AAW and other Austin groups still used phone trees and print ads to alert members of events and gatherings. Perhaps a lack of communicative creativity is to blame for this oversight. Another possibility is that the once-revolutionary generation of the Vietnam War, while politically motivated, was ill-suited to attack a holistic total anti-war approach with decades-old tools that were unfit for the speed of the Information Age. Their memories of victorious anti-Vietnam war activism may have been responsible for their tenacious adherence to these outdated strategies. While they adapted their concept of how a protest affects change, their material methods remained staunchly outmoded. Perhaps cognitive praxis was blinded by past success and was inflexible. The Occupy Movement was able to utilize the tools of modernity better than the anti-war movement. By incorporating improvements in movement culture to lessons from other successful oppositional movements (as opposed to those drawn from effective marketing), AAW overlooked the value and applicability of new technology.

There is also something deeper and inchoate that contributed to the success and failure of involvement, rhetoric, and sustainability between AAW and Occupy. Occupy was a theory and practice of popular protest that actually *listened,* an omni-directional populism that holds appeal at times like this when there are too many diverse discontents to fit under any single umbrella. In a space where much of the populous feels alienated from the halls of power, their opinions and needs unheeded, the openness of the Occupy Movement’s pan-messaging holds tremendous appeal as it actively subdues and glosses contradiction. There is no notion of speaking with one voice in a singularity, but rather a space where each person can be subjective, articulate their story, and be listened to and accepted non-judgmentally by empathetic others. While AAW sought to alleviate the judgment of being non-patriotic fomented by the Bush Administration’s total war, it did not attempt to do the same with other forms of discrimination, even while they professed sensitivity to injustice. By being overly focused on war as a blanket issue, they were often deaf to voices of dissent in their midst. When controlling the message of a protest, as they did in March 2005, they consciously did not address issues like student debt, immigrant rights, and predatory lending, all of which were relevant to both Central Texas and a total anti-war strategy. Opportunities were likely missed because AAW communicated with and explicitly appealed to an older crowd with specific experiences to the detriment of genuine outreach and dialogue with the future Occupy generation (one that earlier theorists would have termed “revolutionary”).

AAW’s anti-war protests did tap into popular sentiment, but were planned around specific themes, and assembled pieces (music, speakers, activities) to fit that theme. For all the supposed breadth of AAW’s approach, it was still a choreographed event, from the date and time to the speakers and musicians. Part of this was an avoidance of a free-for-all open mic, which in the past had been out of control, lost focus, and lacked message. But it was this insistence on having a focal point through which a prism of actions could be projected that was a stumbling block. For a movement to truly be popular, there are times when it has to be a headless, omnivorous creature that can embrace contradiction and augmentation in the name of expansion and democratization. Supple and successful social movements sometimes necessitate more than a single voice to speak out from the midst of the masses, particularly as we grapple with increased diversity, plurality, and difficult coalition building.[24]

In contrast, the Occupy Movement listened. They accommodated a plethora of voices and concerns, and did not necessarily speak out as much as they talked to themselves (some protests groups were vehemently opposed to getting on message, making demands, or giving a caption of any kind, other than broad generalities). The “human microphone” is perhaps the clearest example of a popular movement that listens, transforming a single voice into a chorus for amplification, and allowing for mass participation. In this articulation of a personal story, experience, and sentiment, we see a sonic sculpting of the popular that is reflective of the diversity and plurality that makes up a democratic society with all of its inherent contradictions. While this method was critiqued for not having clear demands, it allowed the movement to carry its internal contradictions in multi-sided opposition to a system that has

failed. This is a manifestation of listening democracy, sometimes totally without an external voice, and that is perhaps why it is still on the minds of so many. Our discourses of democracy often focus on the right to speak. The Occupy Movement and its lasting ripples in public discourse and imagination indicate that it is listening that we need to do more of.

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Notes

[1] Stewart Ewen (2001) reminds us that the captains of industry imagined themselves as deliverers of modernity and positive transformation.

[2] Modern reliance on laser-guided smart bombs and drone strikes is an example of a rhetorical change in total war strategy, as the American public exhibits less patience with heavy-handed military tactics. Although administrations tout the accuracy of precision intelligence-guided strikes, there is a plethora of evidence that points to civilian terror and casualties at the hands of drone operators continents away that is similar to the effects of the total war strategy.

[3] Although it has been argued that the home front aspect of war was neglected during the “war on terror,” it can also be argued that the civilian toll is currently being paid in the form of national debt and widespread economic hardship.

[4] See Robert Jensen, *Citizens of the Empire* (2004) and Christopher Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* (2002) for two excellent material and psychological analyzes from a recent perspective.

[5] Although this article is derived from activist fieldwork, it is difficult to capture particular ethnographic images and vignettes because of the nature of institutional ethnography. In this case, these theories grew out of hundreds of hours of meetings, conversations, and deep hanging out. These methods rarely yield the kind of stories and narratives that are often found in ethnographies. For more in-depth ethnographic writing, see Justin Patch, *Anti-War Music: A Case Study from Austin, Texas* (2008).

[6] The following spring, AAW held the “Million Musician March,” which encouraged marchers to bring their own instruments and focus on making music during the march through downtown Austin. In the past, participants have even gone as far as to have a flat bed sporting a full band be part of the march. Like the “Cost of War” event, the stage showcases local speakers and high-profile local musicians. Because of the date of the Iraq War invasion, the events occur during South by Southwest week, a musical week in Austin. The Million Musician March has been repeated annually since its inception. This model was not popular with all members, some of whom disliked the format and the primacy of musicians over speakers.

[7] There is one disconcerting caveat to this and that is when musicians and artists outside of the Americana-type genre were suggested as potential performers, their lyrical content was pressed. There was a feeling that a mainstream political movement (as AAW saw itself) necessitates popular music, but barely beneath the surface was a perhaps misguided concern for offending the white, liberal middle-class that comprised AAW’s listserv, and other activist organizations.

[8] James Young, in *The Texture of Memory* (1993), makes a key distinction between the terms collective and

collected: “A society’s memory…might be regarded as an aggregate collection of its members’ many, often competing memories” (xi). Although Young is writing about memory, his emphasis on outward and inwardly felt social factors renders this piece of terminology necessary for describing the myriad contrasting voices that have come together to protest the invasion of Iraq and continued occupation of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

[9] Eyerman and Jamison (1998) refer to the union songs of Joe Hill in this particular model, especially since literacy rates were low among the early working classes.

[10] In retrospect I find it amusing that what I consider to be long-practiced culture can be dated to between 40 years and a century old, depending on whether the model used derives from US labor organization or the anti-Vietnam War era. This is a truly post-modern perspective, where a few years of cultural practice are equal to a lifetime.

[11] I keep harping on intention because the fact of the matter was that there were conflicting receptions and interpretations of public protest among participants. While AAW held a specific view, which I expand on, there were many in the audiences with whom I spoke, who still believed that massive public protest would have the effect of ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through political means and ended their engagement at that.

[12] This is not totally true; there were members of the group who criticized the brevity and lightness of political speech. They often likened it to anti-war cheerleading rather than being informative or substantive.

[13] At this point, it would seem normal that I would divert to imagination in reference to Appadurai-through-Anderson. While this may seem like a logical step, I have found that, *in this case*, while Appadurai and others’ use of the imagination points more towards a study of new conceptions of community, where as Althusser’s Lacan-infused analysis is better suited for the analysis of a small group of individuals whose intention is community, but not one that necessarily has to do with them personally. As I show, their intention had more to do with helping others form community for solutions to broad problems, the symptom of which, war, was what briefly unified them. Most members had little need to personally form more communal links than they already maintained.

[14] Neurologist Antonio Damasio draws much the same conclusion based on clinical research into how emotion and empathy shape future action. See *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999).

[15] It has been noted that this conceptual apparatus is quite heavy for this particular article. To this I would reply that many authors take their own pre-research thought for granted and provide theory only for the analysis of experience and not for the conceptual frame that set up their humanistic inquiry. This leaves the reader on a beautiful yacht with no anchor and no direction home; we are only welcomed aboard for the joyous arrival. The journey is much more meaningful when one knows both the start and the end point. My preference is for scholars to discuss not only what they think and how they think about it, but to start by explaining how they got there to begin with. To revisit Michel Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge*, investigation into the humanities is dependent on the formulation of the question. Once that step is taken, the answer becomes obvious. What I attempt to do here is to show how I arrived at the question as well as analysis of what I found.

[16] The notable exceptions to this were events in the summer of 2005 that featured celebrity protester Cindy Sheehan, who camped out in protest at the Crawford, Texas ranch of George W. Bush. Her name was a draw in itself and attracted all-star musicians like Joan Baez, The Flatlanders, James McMurtry, and Carolyn Wonderland.

[17] Throughout this paper, I refer to members only as members for the purposes of privacy.

[18] There were some obvious issues with this practice as conjunto, hardcore, and punk bands were systematically dismissed when suggested. The implication was that they would actually serve to lose audience, rather than

growing it. This type of conservatism, a preaching to the anti-war Vietnam-era baby boomer was, I believe, part of the downsizing of the anti-war movement in Austin. For a more detailed analysis, see Patch 2008.

[19] Salsa was deemed too complicated to set up, with the band being 7-10 players, depending on availability. Despite the fact that the local hardcore scene was fervently anti-war and their fans would be younger activists who usually avoided the more established AAW events, AAW members worried about turning off their base, which was older and unlikely to see the demographic potential or the political similitude of noisy, aggressive music.

[20] I am implying a model, as in a magazine ad, not as in a TV plug or radio spot where they address the viewer directly.

[21] Typical artists included James McMurtry, Guy Forsyth, Carolyn Wonderland, Lisa Rogers, Frank Meyer, and Rich Bowden. As AAW splintered and divided, and critical human resources were lost, these names became constant, because contacts were lost.

[22] This analysis is in no way meant to detract from the contributions or agency of the many musicians who played at rallies. Most of them spoke in between songs, had their own nuanced rhetoric, political arguments, and reasons for participating in anti-war rallies. A number of them asked if AAW had any performance requests and were more than willing to play anti-war standards.

[23] For an excellent recent summary of a similar theory put to scientific challenge, see Stephen Marche's recent "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?" (2012).

[24] The difficulties in the post-Arab Spring vividly show this. Popular movements that accomplished regime change and democratic transition are fraught with contradictions and in-fighting. However, to accomplish herculean tasks, they banded together. Analysis of Syria points to the same difficulties should the Assad government fall.

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