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The Role of Women in Punk

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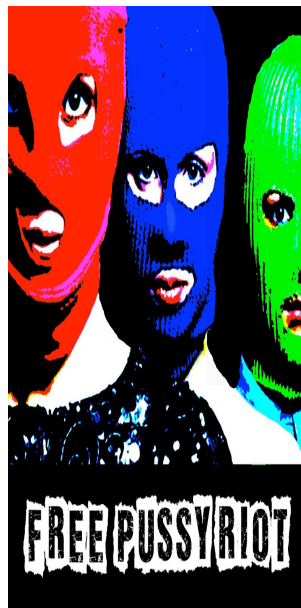
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The Role of Women in Punk

A Senior Thesis by Katherine Barner

Political Science
Anthropology
Union College



The Role of Women in Punk

A Senior Thesis

Katherine Barner

Thesis Prepared For the Political Science and Anthropology Departments

Union College

June 2015

Abstract

This thesis, entitled “The Role of Women in Punk,” is an interdisciplinary thesis of the Political Science and Anthropology Department of Union College. To come to the conclusions of this thesis, I read a variety academic papers and research; numerous books on theory, punk, and feminism; and performed fieldwork at punk concerts and original punk venues of the 1970’s in Albany and New York City. I combined my own findings from my fieldwork with the historical and theoretical analysis of other academics and wirters. Through the combination of political/anthropological theory, historical analysis, and my independent fieldwork, I was able to conclude that women can use punk as a political tool to promote feminism in their own realm. Women worldwide have effectively used punk to develop a place in the rock world that they feel comfortable in. This was effectively done in the 1990’s through the Riot Grrrl Movement in the United States, which greatly contributed in the development of a place in America’s rock culture that women and girls felt comfortable participating in. This has more recently been utilized in Russia, primarily after the arrest of three women from the band Pussy Riot!, which was followed by an upswing of national and international support. This setting has given them an area to discuss political feminist issues,and has given women a voice. This thesis was done under the direction of Professor Robert Hislope of the Political Science Department and Professor Jeffrey Witsoe of the Anthropology Department.

Chapter 1: The Role of Women in Punk: Literature Review	1
Origins of Punk	3
The Riot Grrrl Movement	7
Origins of Feminist Anthropological Theory: Margaret Mead	8
Gayle Rubin and Gender Roles	9
Third Wave Feminism	10
Third Wave Feminism and the Riot Grrrl Movement	11
Postmodernism in Punk	15
Personal Analysis	19
Chapter 2: The Riot Grrrl Movement	20
Before the Movement	20
Third Wave Feminism	23
The Beginnings	24
The Revolution	27
Style	29
Technology and Youth	32
Media	33
The End of the Movement	37
Post Riot Grrrl Movement: The Lasting Affects	39
Chapter 3: Where Oh Where did the Female Punks Go?: A Quest in New York	41
Introduction	41
Ethnographic Methods	43
Limitations	44
Hardcore	46
Albany: The Damn Broads	53
New York City	66
Classic Venue: CBGB	69
Patti Smith	71
Conclusion	73
Chapter 4: Pussy Riot! and Feminist Punk in Russia	74
Punk and Feminism in Russia: A History	74
Pussy Riot!: Background Information	80
The Trial	81
Punishment	83
Support, Criticism, and Backlash	86
The Effects	90
Future of Pussy Riot! and Russia	93
Conclusion	94
Sources	99

Chapter 1

The Role of Women in Punk: Literature Review

It was the 21st of February 2012, at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow Russia. Church was not in session, and a few people were quietly praying in the cathedral on this cold, Russian winter day. Five young women walked into the cathedral, dressed in matching winter coats that went down to their ankles, and appeared to be just like everyone else. Upon reaching the top of the altar in the front of this traditionally decorated Orthodox cathedral, the five young women removed their long winter coats, revealing colorful sleeveless dresses and equally as colorful tights, and simultaneously put balaclava's of different bright colors over their heads. Together, the women stood in a line on the altar, pulled out guitars, began jumping around, punching the air, and singing what we now know was a song called "Punk Prayer: Mother of God Drive Putin Away."

The opening of their song borrowed heavily from the melody and refrain of



Figure 1 Pussy Riot Performs at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

Image courtesy of pussy-riot.livejournal.com.

Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Bogoroditse Devo*, *Raduisya*, or *Ave Maria*. The five women barely got their guitars out before a sizable male guard ran down the altar in an attempt to stop the women from their protest. The guard did not phase them: they continued to jump around and scream the lyrics of their Punk Prayer, with the repeated chorus, "Virgin Mary, Mother of God, banish Putin! Banish Putin! Virgin Mary, Mother of God, become a feminist, we pray thee. Become a feminist, we pray thee!"

Nuns of the Cathedral were frantically shielding the eyes of the witnesses in the church and shuffling them outside. The guard had only successfully stopped one of the women, who he dragged off the altar and held down to the side. Soon enough, another guard, tall and dressed in the same black uniform, forcibly grabbed the guitar out of the hands of one of the women. The four remaining members did not miss a beat and continued screaming the lyrics to their song.

"Black robe, golden epaulettes, all parishioners crawl to bow. The phantom of liberty is in heaven, gay-pride sent to Siberia in chains. The head of the KGB, their chief saint, leads protesters to prison under escort in order not to offend His Holiness women must give birth and love. Shit, shit, the Lord's shit! Shit, shit, the Lord's shit!"

More guards ran to the front of the altar, where all four women had dropped to their knees, bowed, and cross themselves over and over, as if in prayer. As the women get up and attempt to flee, the guards forcibly grab their arms and escorted them outside the building.

This stunt lasted less than two minutes and resulted in no physical disturbance or threat of others, and yet for three women, this resulted in a two-year sentence to a

“medium security” labor camp, in which only one was acquitted of (Timurnechaev⁷⁷, 2012). Soon enough, the Western world was in a hype of the “Free Pussy Riot!” campaign, in attempt to free the three women who went from the unknown underground punk world to international symbols of feminism. This event happened in a minimal span of time, with only a handful of live witnesses. As such a short and physically small event, how could the message and actions of Pussy Riot! have a real impact? Have women created a space for themselves in the rock world through punk music? Is punk an effective method to create a space for women in patriarchal societies? Has punk music been a useful tool for feminist politics?

I will demonstrate how punk music has given women a role and a voice equal to men in punk culture by providing opportunities to defy gender roles within a musical framework. Through punk music, feminist politics have been displayed through both song and action. Punk music has given women a space for feminism to flourish. It has been argued by various scholars and critics of popular culture that punk music is not an effective tool in feminist politics because in most cases, punk messages target a minority. In this thesis, I am going to argue that because women have been given an equal voice in punk culture, they are provided with an effective tool that can be used in feminist politics.

Origins of Punk

Punk is a term first coined in the early 1970’s. Punk music began as a cultural exchange between the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1970’s (Bartelt). The term punk as applied to both style and music was coined by writer and editor Legs McNeil. McNeil was the founder of *Punk* magazine. He thought the term “punk” would,

“sum up the thread that connected everything we liked: drunk, obnoxious, smart, but not pretentious, absurd, funny, ironic, and things that appealed to the darker side,” (McNeil and McCain 2006, 204). Punk Magazine was a music magazine, and featured interviews of musicians who were often seen at New York City’s original punk club CBGB, like Lou Reed, members of The Ramones, Patti Smith, Richard Hell, Debbie Harry etc. The term punk was not used in the mainstream until the mid 1970’s; when punk was first used to describe a musical genre, it was a fanzine term used to describe music so bad, it was a joke to musical critics (Malott and Peña 2004, 50). Punk was used to refer to opposition to music of the mainstream, stylistically and in name. Punk was associated with a delinquent kid, and the style required little musical talent, and in many ways was just noise compared to the melodic music of the mainstream. The punk scene first emerged in New York City, but started to gain more international recognition as it spread and flourished in the United Kingdom. The punk scene in the United Kingdom drew from further subcultures, including skinheads, glam rockers, rockabilly, rude boys, mods, and even reggae (Dunn 2008, 193-210). The British punk scene revolved heavily around class politics, through anti-corporate themed lyrics and the appeal to the youth culture, and in many ways mocked the British society of the 1970s, which was deeply fragmented. The original punks had a tendency to view conventions customary in society as hypocritical to the brutality of reality by romanticizing these conventions. From the outside, punk culture was often misinterpreted as nihilistic due to its embrace of violence and rage in music. From within the punk scene, though, punk has a purpose: the original purpose was to address the everyday issues of a capitalist society for the working class (Dunn 2008, 193-210). This reflection of the working class expanded to a representation of diversity in

general. Chumbawamba's Boff, who was heavily influenced by early punk, said, "A lot of the original punk which fired us up was really diverse and challenging. From the Fall to Wire, ATC, the Slits, the Raincoats, they were not all playing 4/4, male rock music. That was really important to us, that all these people were really a part of punk," (Dunn 2008, 195).

Punk has a major theme of legitimacy and authenticity. A defined punk musician would not fall under the punk umbrella if they did not believe in punk theology, if they went mainstream, or went into the music business for monetary purposes. Punks criticized the big rock bands of that time, like Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, The Rolling Stones, etc. because they represented how rock music sold out. This necessity of authenticity was rooted largely in economic reasons: there was an economic crisis going on that left many of the working class youth unemployed and angry. Many of these young people turned to punk as a result, with economic failure as their fuel (Bindas 1993, 70). Punks felt like they had little or no control of their role in the hegemonic state they lived in. Inspired by Antonio Gramsci's theory on hegemony, punks felt as though the wealthy controlled the state by controlling who does and does not get employment. This encouraged another common punk theme of individualism, as punks questioned their role in the state and used music as an outlet. This led to the trend of individual name changing, like Billy Idol, Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, etc., as a representation of the lack of identity they felt. They did everything against what was deemed "sensible," and this was reflected in their names, hair style, clothing fashion, dancing, lyrics, etc. (Bindas 1993, 76-77).

Since the origins of punk, it has been difficult to define what “punk” means in modern society. Punk is a subculture that has been further broken down into several other subcultures. These individualized punk communities resulted in divergent definitions of punk and have frequently inspired disdain. Kevin C. Dunn recognizes this and finds a common factor with the concept of punk as a cultural field: it is a “relatively autonomous space in society in which people and groups compete for recognition and cultural resources” (Dunn 2006 196). The struggle of the definition of a “true” punk is more relevant than ever, as the corporate music industry continues to expand. Dunn does not further define punk or the “artificial” boundaries of legitimacy, yet this is something that should be recognized in the role of punk in politics, as these boundaries dictate how the message punk music is received. When punk bands achieve financial success, or become multimillionaires, they lose their community base and individual ties, according to “Mike,” the owner of a Los Angeles based recording studio (Malott and Peña 2004, 52-53). If a punk group becomes a multimillionaire, they are seen as sellouts to corporate capitalism in a way that contradicts one of the major founding points of punk. Therefore, through this general concept of punk, it is impossible to be a punk millionaire.

Matthew Gelbart defined punk through three different elements. He firstly defined it as a series of events rather than just a musical sound. Music was a component of the events that introduced the punk culture. Writer for *The New Musical Express* Neil Spencer said, “Actually, we're not into music. ... We're into chaos,” (Gelbart 2011). Punk, in this sense, was an historical event that created a new rock genre of music as a result of an ideology. To Gelbart, punk is not just a series of events, just as it is not just a musical genre. The second definition of punk by Gelbart is through the punk attitude and

behavior. Punk became a style, with torn clothing and safety pins, violent behavior common at punk concerts, and carrying an anti-establishment attitude. The aesthetic aspect of punk is an important part of the punk definition. The third definition of punk by Gelbart is a musical style. The punk musical style emphasized an extreme “anti-musical” aspect (Gelbart 2011). Punk was a diverse genre in terms of musical sound, but this was a shared characteristic. The anti-musical sound was representative of the anti-mainstream/anti-capitalist aspect of punk ideology. Following Kevin C. Dunn and Matthew Gelbart I will study punk through its cultural role and through the tools it equips feminists within Russia and New York.

Riot Grrrl Movement

The Riot Grrrl Movement was a subculture that branched off of punk in the early 90's. The 1990's were a time that women in punk particularly flourished. Of course, there were female punk musicians prior to this, like X-Ray Spex and Patti Smith who were key in the punk world in the late 1970's, but there was a particular surge of women in the punk scene during this time. According to Neil Nehring, this was a time when “the angry white male,” like Rush Limbaugh, was in fashion in the popular culture (Nehring 1997, 150-151). Punk music has traditionally been an art form that speaks out against oppression by the oppressed, and was inspired by the struggle of the working class in a capitalist society. In a patriarchal state, it made sense for women, as the oppressed gender, to be central to the culture of punk. The Riot Grrrl Movement also offered an alternative for the fact that women are often put on display and objectified. Women in Riot Grrrl bands would often write bitch, rape, slut, and whore on their bodies because

they believed that's how men saw women already (Nehring 1997, 153). Riot Grrrl artists knew men would look at them, but they wanted men to hear them. Female punk musicians aimed to give women a voice. Some Riot Grrrl artists were not worried about the particular message they display in the actual lyrics of their music, but by the fact that they have the ability to scream and not be the perfect embodiment of a female that society pushes them to be. The effect of the scream and angry/sometimes vulgar lyrics is shock to the audience. Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon recognizes screaming as an outlet: "Screaming is a kind of vehicle for expressing yourself in ways society doesn't let you," (Nehring 1997, 154). Women in punk defied the traditional role of women, while becoming representative of basic principles of feminism. While not all Riot Grrrl musicians sang specifically of feminism, their lyrics and musical style challenged the typical role of women in patriarchal societies, providing yet another musical outlet for the oppressed.

Origins of Feminist Anthropological Theory: Margaret Mead

I will be using feminism as my first anthropological school of thought for my analysis. Feminist political and anthropological theory should be analyzed from the beginning of the feminist movement with anthropologist Margaret Mead. Margaret Mead's fieldwork in Samoa on adolescent girls led her to the conclusion that gender roles among societies differ. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, released in 1935, was a key foundation of the feminist movement. In her studies, she revealed that each society she examined had specific patterns for male and female behavior. According to Mead, "Standardized personality differences between the sexes are of this order, cultural creations to which each generation, male and female, it trained to conform,"

(Mead 1963, 221). Through analyzing and observing the different roles and attitudes towards three different societies in New Guinea, Mead determined that gender roles are formed in society, rather than in human nature.

Gayle Rubin and Gender Roles

Anthropologist Gayle Rubin further examined behavior and gender in social groups. In Rubin's *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex*, she declares that, "The analysis of the causes of women's oppression forms the basis for any assessment of just what would have to be changed in order to achieve a society without gender hierarchy," (Rubin, 157). Rubin praises Levi Strauss' *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, which she says, "conceives kinship as imposition of cultural organization upon the facts of biological procreation," (Rubin, 170-171). Rubin discusses theory of sex oppression as a construction of a principle of a kinship structure that lies in an exchange of women between men. Rubin's theories are not limited to just the oppression of women, she expands her study of kinship systems to, "the exchange of sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage names and ancestors, rights and people- men, women, and children- in concrete systems of social relationships," which in the end are relationships that develop certain rights for men, and certain rights for women (Rubin, 177). She declares that feminism must call for a revolution in this "kinship." Rubin breaks down the features of kinship, declaring that these relationships have been reduced to sex and gender ("the barest of bones") and stripped of all political, economic, educational, and organizational functions.

Rubin confronts the common misconception that feminists are against men in general by explaining that we should not be trying to “eliminate” men, but eliminating the social system itself, which creates sexism and gender roles. Rubin argues that the feminist movement should dream of removing more than the oppression of women, but the elimination of “obligatory sexualities and sex roles” in general. Relating back to the original principles of punk theory, Rubin calls for a Marxian analysis on the sex and gender system because, “there is an economics and a politics to sell gender systems which is obscured by the concept of “exchange of ‘omen’” (Rubin, 2005). Rubin concludes that when there is a full analysis done on women in a specific society and through history, we must take the following into account: the evolution of commodity forms in women, systems of land tenure, political arrangements, subsistence technology, etc. Therefore economic and political analyses are incomplete if they do not consider women, marriage, and sexuality (Rubin, 2009). Rubin’s view on gender roles show how women have been led to use punk as an outlet against patriarchy.

Third Wave Feminism

The early 90’s marked the beginning of the third wave of feminism, an era that we are still in today. Colleen Mack-Canty discussed third wave feminism in relation to nature and culture. Mack-Canty defines third wave feminism as one that “challenges the idea of dualism itself while recognizing diversity, particularity, and embodiment” (Mack-Canty 2004, 154-179). The third wave of feminism builds from the second wave, which was heavily political. The second wave challenged the hierarchy of gender roles and sexuality in Western thinking. This age recognized that dualism was a major factor in the

construction of gender roles, which frequently misrepresent or disregard women. The aim of this era was to shift politics so it was no longer just in the political and public sphere of men. The second wave of feminism also recognized the dualism found in gender roles.

The third wave of feminism expands on the second wave and develops broader concepts within its context. The third wave focused on deconstructing the duality focused on in the second wave. This period of feminism we are in now focuses more on the point of views of feminism by women, and is interpreted with different perspectives. Third wave feminism tends to form a connection between nature, the body, and feminism. Women in punk often show this connection between feminism and the body through dressing the way they want (whether it's in ripped jeans and leather, or outfits that show a lot of skin). This period also represented a mark in capitalism, connecting punk origins with the current brand of feminism. Third wave feminism is more of an evolution of second wave feminism, not a different brand of feminist thought altogether.

Third Wave Feminism and the Riot Grrrl Movement

Third wave feminism has a special focus on youth culture, showing its relevance in punk culture and the Riot Grrrl movement, which consists mostly of the generation of young people. Young feminists of this era make a point to demonstrate how feminism, in ideology and practice, can function in their lives and lives of women, and how personal aspects of feminism, in addition to the political, can be theoretical (Mack-Canty 2004, 161). The Riot Grrrl Movement is an example that can demonstrate this type of movement. Mack-Canty discusses the Riot Grrrl Movement as a way to “serve to empower girls to keep and/or claim their agency, instead of going along with culturally

(i.e., patriarchal) defined sex roles” (Mack-Canty, 162). She argues that this movement was a way to resist girlhood as a “hegemonic interpretation of themselves.” The aim of the Riot Grrrl Movement is to free girls from social gender constructions that have been culturally imposed on them in society. Mack-Canty discusses patriarchal society as an entity that requires girls to be quiet and submissive as they approach womanhood, but the Riot Grrrl Movement allows them to be fierce, aggressive, and loud. Riot Grrrl bands are political, personal, and attempt to raise consciousness of gender roles: there is no singular type of Riot Grrrl, so girls are able to make a decision themselves regarding who they are and what goals they have as a Riot Grrrl. The Riot Grrrl embodies the punk individualist quality. Mack Canty quotes Ednie Garrison’s article “U.S. Feminism-Grrrl Style Youth (Sub) Cultures and the Technology of the Third Wave,” who claims that, “For these ‘punk rock girls,’ and for other girls and women who produce zines and music that aren’t necessarily punk, the production of a new movement space is politically powerful,” (Mack-Canty 2004, 162). This type of feminism has given girls the capability to discover and embrace their voices. Mack-Canty does see a flaw in this type of feminism promoted by the youth: it does not frequently fit the “third-world women” of the United States.

Mack-Canty’s third world feminism also points out the concepts of postcolonial feminism and the modern global capital economy. Again, the roots of Marxism in punk can be seen through this interpretation. They point out the negative effects women are experiencing in this “developing” world. Postcolonial feminism targets the issue of third-world women that youth feminism frequently neglects.

Ednie Kaeh Garrison expands the role of the Riot Grrrl Movement in the third wave of feminism. To preface this interpretation, it is important to know where the term

Riot Grrrl came from. Kathleen Hanna, lead singer of the original Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill, coined the word “grrrl” to reclaim the word “girl” (Garrison 2000, 141). The Riot Grrrl Movement was not the first place for feminism in punk, but rather a resurgence for the female role in punk through the framework of third wave feminism. Garrison defines Riot Grrrl as, “an alternative subculture built around opposition to presuppositions that young (usually white) U.S. girls and women are too preoccupied with themselves and boys to be interested in being political, creative, and loud,” (Garrison 2000, 142). For Garrison, linking politics with subculture is necessary (and risky) in capitalist, hegemonic societies. The tools women use in this subculture include, but are not limited to: print and visual media (music genres, technologies, and cultures), female positive expressions, revolutionary and social justice discourses, shock tactics, nonviolent action, and the Internet (Garrison 2000, 143). Although this article does specifically target young women in third wave feminism, third wave feminism does not strictly apply to young women and Garrison points out that the assumption of the third wave applying to a single generation is false.

Garrison noted that most Riot Grrrl bands did not find it was important to be labeled as “Riot Grrrls” and thought their feminist messages were more important than the labels given to them, including members of Bikini Kill. In fact, Bikini Kill refuses to use the Riot Grrrl label as a personal identity at all. Garrison argued that labels are not important, but how they use the resources at their hands in the name of grassroots girl-positive activism is (Garrison 2000, 154). The punk do-it-yourself ideology that has been infiltrated in the Riot Grrrl Movement encourages girls and women to change their

environment, rather than to wait for someone else to do it for them, and be concerned with given titles/labels.

Garrison ties in the third wave of feminism with postmodernity. She sees this third wave of feminism as a product of “postmodern cultural conditions” (Garrison 2000, 148). Garrison argues that using theories of culture are useful in analyzing the third wave of feminism and understanding how women use their identities as feminists. The use of technology has been a tool in the transition from the second to the third wave of feminism. This use of technology has enabled females to get in touch with each other more easily, and spread their ideas and personal tools used for feminism. Garrison discusses the punk Riot Grrrl scene through an interpretation of third wave feminism. Networking has been a vital tool in the third wave feminist movement, and also in the Riot Grrrl movement. Spirit, a girl who identifies as a Riot Grrrl, said, “Our networking through mail, through the Internet, through music, through zines, and through the punk scene keeps us closely knit and strong,” (Garrison 2000, 153.) Spirit described her connection to the movement, as it was something that represents the “generally anarchist, anti-fascist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic,” and defined Riot Grrrls as “punk rock girls having the (same) beliefs (as I), creating a scene alternative to the one that they found themselves rejected by.”

Many Third Wave feminists do not actually claim the title of “feminists”: that is, they do not identify with the label of a feminist. According to Garrison, while this may seem limiting to their role in feminism or may be thought to disclude them from feminist arguments, this refusal of a label does quite the opposite, and expands feminism by not fitting into one specific mold (Garrison 2000, 159). It expands the front to feminist

revolution. Garrison points out a common fault in this way of thinking, which would label every woman as a feminist simply because she is a female. This should not be the case: a feminist “enables revolutionary forms of consciousness,” that would, “invoke the experiences of women across different locales and identities.”

Postmodernism in Punk

Postmodernism is the second anthropological school of thought I will be analyzing my research through. Jude Davies discusses punk rock through postmodern theory in her article, “The Future of ‘No Future’: Punk Rock and Postmodern Theory.” Davies pays special attention to meaning in punk lyrics, and subjects of punk music and writings. He divides punk in postmodern theory into two separate areas: “its problematizing of community, and its awareness of recuperation even when articulating its most radical political message,” (Davies 1996, 5). Postmodernism consists of pluralism and fragmentation. Davies argues that, “the punks carried through a far more thoroughgoing ironization of conventional modes of subjectivity than is present in many of the critical discourses of postmodernity,” (Davies 1996, 8). Like postmodern theory, punk cannot be analyzed and limited to a unitary construction. The politicization of punk was originally marked in 1978 for Davies, when issues like the war in Nicaragua, racism, sexism, and gay liberation were sprouted as topics in punk through lyrics, benefit concerts, and organizations. Punk became more politicized as time went on, according to Davies. This expanded to the role of punk in political movements. Davies discusses the concept of authenticity, found both in punk and postmodern theory. Maintaining authenticity was important for most punk artists. In punk, consciousness is not

transferable, and this concerns itself with the communication and consensus of the postmodern state (Davies, 1996 21). Punk will never become mainstream (in mass culture) through capitalism (being bought or sold) according to Davies and lining up with punk origins, but it could make politics visible and create new communities. For Davies, punk has been neglected by the academic world as a commodity. He talks of the role of women in punk as a way women could sing and play without having to conform to gender stereotypes and maintaining the female role as the victim (Davies 1996, 22). He also argued that as time went on, women in punk were “subverted to the reduction of sex symbols.” This is a statement I disagree with, as generally most women in punk were not encouraged by major labels (they were signed to independent labels, if signed at all) and were not encouraged to dress in a specific way; they dressed how they wanted to as a form of liberation. Also, as previously discussed, some women of the Riot Grrrl Movement dressed in ways men expected them to for symbolic purposes.

Ryan Moore also discusses postmodernism in punk in his article “Postmodernism and Punk Subculture: Cultures of Authenticity and Deconstruction.” Moore discusses punk subcultures, like the Riot Grrrl Movement, as a response to postmodernity, caused by the “commodification of everyday life” (Moore 2004, 305). Punk has been a response to this in two ways: through a culture of deconstruction, and through a culture of authenticity to become independent of the influence of commerce and establish itself in underground media. In postmodernist society, new technologies (media, celebrity names/reputations, and corporate powers) have made it difficult to grasp reality. To Moore, they have become the backbone of the global political economy and relationships in society. This is where fragmentation in postmodernism is observed. Punk is a response

to this illusion of reality and fragmentation. Punk seeks authenticity and independence from the media and corporate powers that create the illusion of reality. Moore discusses how the “culture of deconstruction” arose in punk in the 1970’s, and developed the subculture as a response to postmodern media. He discusses punk, in music and style, as a commodity that emerged from a reaction to political powers, and shaped by deindustrialization and a mood of social decline (Moore 2004, 323).

Curry Malott and Milagros Peña’s *Punk Rocker’s Revolution: A Pedagogy of Race, Class, and Gender* discussed punk through a postmodern framework. Curry Malott defines punk music starting with the basic genre punk has been pulled from: rock and roll. According to Malott, rock and roll and others like them (i.e. punk rock) was, “created by and for individuals and communities with particular political interests often contrary to those of the ruling class,” which would consequently create a liberating, and even possibly revolutionary, case on a social level (Malott and Peña 2004, 42-43). The authors used postmodernism as a tool of critiquing their methods of study and discussing punk. Malott and Peña argue that punk is postmodern because “it serves to deconstruct the consensus” (Malott and Peña 2004, 35). This has helped punk successfully resist dominant culture by creating their own labels, style, and social construction. Malott and Peña label punk rock as a “postmodernist genre” that resists society and cultural boundaries from within popular culture. The authors discuss punk as a postmodern musical genre as something that is so abstract and “obscurantist” that it can be guided to work in any political angle (Malott and Peña 2004, 39).

The theme of authenticity in punk is continued in Neil Nehring’s *Popular Music, Gender, and Postmodernism: Anger is an Enemy*. This book analyzes the role of

postmodernism in punk, with a special focus on the Riot Grrrl Movement and the role of women in punk. To Nehring, emotion through musical performances are either “phony or inarticulate.” He derives his understanding of emotion in music through feminist philosophy, drawing connections between feminism and postmodernism in punk music. Punk as postmodern was especially relevant after the 1980’s when rock “posers” became popular in mainstream music. Underground punk was a response to this type of illegitimate rock music. Nehring discusses the problems of academic postmodernism, the same problems that I have run into while researching postmodernism. His biggest issue with postmodernism is that postmodern theorists often form abstract theories with very little to no evidence to back them up. He calls this a “smokescreen of seemingly subtle argument(s)” (Nehring 1997, xxx). This issue is especially prominent when discussing mass culture. In order to confront this issue, Nehring has attempted to write in a way that “young smart people” can follow without much difficulty. He is fed up with the way academics treat postmodernity, and this book and his take on postmodern punk is his response.

Nehring continues to define postmodernism as “means pushing modernism over the edge by giving up on the lonely individual as well as possibilities for political action” (Nehring 1997, 6). The concept of identity is relevant in this theory, and it stands as something that is achieved and invented in punk. Marxist hostility to the bourgeoisie is prevalent in postmodern theory, a theme that can be traced throughout the history of punk. Postmodernism is something that challenges conventions: this can be seen in the way women of the Riot Grrrl Movement have challenged gender roles and societal expectations of girls and women. The desire to be something different from the

mainstream, as complex postmodern theory is, helped spark the beginning of the Riot Grrrl Movement. Postmodern theory sees consumerism as a form of social control, and this theme is prevalent in punk music and addressed by Riot Grrrl artists. Candice Pederson, co-owner of indie label K Records, defines working in the punk subculture as involving “a choice whereby, perhaps financially my world’s going to suck, but it’s what I want to” (Nehring 1997, 29). The Riot Grrrl Movement was very much a response to the hardcore movement of the 1980’s, which consisted of aggressively masculine themes, and were in many ways misogynistic. Female independence was vital in this movement, as independence is an overlying theme of postmodernism. They broke from the expectations of stereotypical femininity by confronting male views of women (by writing the words bitch, slut, whore, etc. on their bodies, for example) and playing angry music.

Personal Analysis

Punk music has given women involved in punk culture a role that can be an effective tool in feminist politics. By using postmodernist theory and feminist theory to analyze the current role of women in punk in Albany and New York City and Pussy Riot! both in Russia and on an international level, I will evaluate the effectiveness of punk in promoting feminist politics. It is important to incorporate a historical analysis in order to understand how punk has evolved, and how its role in political movements and feminism has progressed over time. Using an historical context, a variety of theories, and examples from my ethnographic research and beyond, I will evaluate the effectiveness of women in punk movements.

Chapter 2

The Riot Grrrl Movement

Before the Movement

The musicians of the Riot Grrrl Movement were not the first feminists that punk music had seen. Musical influences of the Riot Grrrl Movement can be traced back to the beginning of punk, primarily in the early 1970's. Punk displayed the many contradictions of the 1960's modernist style avant-garde movement: punk offered a movement that included romance and unsentimental values; it was innovative and prompted reaction; punk subcultures offered a place for women and queers, and also for the white male (Nguyen 2012, 176). The variety of people involved in punk made the punk community open and inclusive. Women saw an opportunity and ran with it. Feminist punk artists of the 1970's include Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex, Jennifer Niro of the Nuns, Patti Smith, Alicia Armendariz and Pat Morrison of The Bags, etc. These women laid the framework for feminism in punk. Experimental music of women in rock 'n' roll became a growing fad. Poly Styrene of X-Ray Spex was one of the most prominent feminist figures of female-driven punk in the 1970's, with lyrics like, "Some people think little girls should be seen and not heard, but I say, 'Oh bondage! Up yours!' One, two three four! Bind me, tie me, chain me to the wall. I want to be a slave to you all, oh bondage, up yours," (Styrene 1977). Yet, many were still skeptical to confront the misogyny they witnessed at punk shows, and through the lyrics of numerous punk male musicians.

Punk in the 1970's gave women the setting to play the music they wanted, and participate in the rock music scene. This does not mean that it was easy for women to become involved in punk culture, or that they did not experience sexism, discrimination,

or become targets in punk. Joan Jett, solo artist and guitarist of the 1970's all female teenage rock band The Runaways said:

“The Runaways had nobody. I felt like a feminist, but I felt completely dissed by other feminists, ‘cause they were like, ‘Well, you can’t dress sexy.’ Number one, I’m not dressing sexy- even if I have my pants open from time to time. But what do you mean? You’re saying women can’t have sex? You don’t tell me that girls don’t get horny and don’t wanna fuck! You know why girls ‘can’t play guitar’ and ‘can’t play rock ‘n’ roll’? Because rock ‘n’ roll’ is sex. That’s what I grew up with, and that’s what I wanted to make,” (Marcus 2010, 226).

Women did have a role in the punk culture of the 1970's and 1980's. The punk theme of liberation (from oppression) was something they could directly relate to after experiencing sexism. It can be difficult to relate the culture that included punk king Sid Vicious, who murdered his girlfriend, and continued to include skinhead punks, with highly misogynistic lyrical themes, to any sort of feminist movement/culture that promoted feminism. Women in the rock world were still depicted as sex symbols, despite any message of feminism and gender equality. The media would frequently comment on their bodies in addition to their music during reviews. Men in the audience often targeted and taunted women during their shows (Lee 2002).

Through the 1980's more women played punk music. While there was an increase in number of female punk musicians, the increase was not drastic enough to make them equal in number to men, and it did not alter the stereotype of the female musician Joan Jett discussed. In the music world, women were more frequently seen in supportive roles

rather than on stage; bands with women in them were still looked at as a commodity at this point. “People would be like, ‘ I’m going to see this band, they have a *girl* bassist,’” said Ian MacKaye, of Minor Threat, in regards to female rock musicians of the 80’s (Marcus 2010, 71). Sharon Cheslow from the 1980’s all-female band Chalk Circle said, “It was kinda hard being girls (in 1982). But look, if men can do it, so can women, and we said, ‘Who cares? We’re gonna do it,’” (Marcus 2010, 71). The invisibility of women in punk became a major issue for feminists involved in the punk culture, but it did not stop them from becoming involved.

As the punk scene evolved and more punk subgenres were formed, women began to be targeted negatively and excluded more frequently. The hardcore subculture of the 80’s was especially non-inclusive to women. Women had difficulty at punk shows where “moshing,” violent dancing while waving around the arms and often hitting others, was present because the men who moshed were often physically bigger and stronger than them, and did not regard for the women in the crowd that they could hurt. Jennifer Niro of the 1970’s band The Nuns describes the dangers of the punk scene for women as the culture evolved in the late 1970’s:

“Later it became this macho hardcore thrasher punk scene and that was not what it was about at first. There were a lot of women in the beginnings. It was women doing things. Then it became this whole macho, anti-women thing. Then women didn’t go to see punk bands anymore because they were afraid of getting killed. I didn’t even go because it was so violent and so macho that it was repulsive. Women just got squeezed out,” (Garrison 2000, 156).

It was difficult for women to overcome the gender bias underlying the punk rock culture. Women were searching for their place in the male-based punk rock music culture. They wanted to “(create) their own turf and (reclaim) the domain of punk rock” (Marcus 2010, 64).

The major feminist movement did not happen for women in punk during the 1970’s and 1980’s, but they still made positive progress for feminism in punk: their messages, confidence, sexist experiences, and role in the early punk scene laid the groundwork for women of the early 1990’s. Caroline Coon, author of many punk articles and books said, regarding the women of the 1980’s punk band the Slits, “What they represent is a revolutionary and basic shift of female ego from one which is biologically defined to one which is made strong by an assertive, mainstream role in society. Thus they are far more threatening than the male musicians they are touring with,” (Lee, 2002). Female punk musicians of the early 1970’s and 1980’s demonstrated how they could use their anger as a means to spread their message in music. This era foreshadowed what was to come with the Riot Grrrl Movement in the 90’s.

Third Wave Feminism

The Riot Grrrl Movement, punk’s most successful feminist movement in America, was able to flourish because of the specific time, setting, and historical background women in punk were surrounded by. The third wave of feminism began in the 1980’s. With this wave of feminism, there was a greater emphasis on the individual, while also reclaiming the term “girl,” in addition to offensive words like bitch, slut, and cunt (Bodansky 2013,13). In addition to the girl culture, women also claimed the same

cultural rights that men enjoy, like sex without judgment and involvement in rock 'n' roll. These values can be observed through the women of the Riot Grrrl Movement, who frequently embraced the “girl” term and qualities that went along with it (nail polish, barrettes, dresses, etc.), while also preaching the necessity for women to be treated completely equally to men. Women were fed up with the stereotype, which came about during the second wave of feminism, that feminists could not wear makeup, were always serious, and completely despised men (Bodansky 2013, 15). Through the third wave of feminism, women wanted to show that they could be girly and feminine, but still stand up for feminist principles. This, along with the emphasis of the claiming the individual in Third Wave feminism allowed girls and women to take their ideal of feminism and expand upon it in a revolutionary way, as the girls of the Riot Grrrl Movement have exemplified.

The Beginnings

Under the third wave of feminism, the Riot Grrrl Movement had its kickoff. At the beginning of the Riot Grrrl Movement, the bombing of Iraq in 1991 by the United States had just begun. Protests surrounded big cities and college campuses. The generation of youth was discovering their political voice. The anti-Bush message women like Allison Wolfe and Molly Neuman were trying to spread was initially almost impossible, as Operation Desert Storm originally had a high amount of support. Allison and Molly decided to focus more on a project that they had control over, which was their feminist punk band Bratmobile (Marcus 2010, 65).

The generation of youth was being raised by the children of the 70's, who, whether it was a parent, teacher, or other mentor, encouraged kids to do what they wanted, and disregard obstacles. When girls in high school found out they were not invincible, they were energized to see what they could do (Marcus 2010, 114). The Riot Grrrl Movement got its start in 1989 in Washington, DC. The setting of the starting point of the Riot Grrrl Movement is important to the principles of their cause: Washington DC in the late 80's and early 90's was ridden with crime, plagued with the crack epidemic, with a murder-rate at an ultimate high. On the other end, there was a class of wealthy youth that would often hold benefit concerts for the city's poor, which is where much of the city's punk scene was found. There was then the group of women who wanted to play punk shows and loved the idea of activism, but could not afford to play without making a profit, like Kathleen Hanna and the rest of the women from Bikini Kill (Marcus 2010, 80).

The main point of the Riot Grrrl Movement was to create a safe space for women and girls who wanted to rock. Many women loved the DIY (do it yourself) theme of punk, but they did not get the sense of belonging and acceptance to the male-run punk culture of the time period. They wanted to reclaim the place women once had in punk, and reclaim their voice. By reclaiming their role in punk, they were also claiming their bodies, music, technology, violence, terminology, etc. (Garrison 2000, 156-157). The original Riots Grrrls wanted to make girls and women in punk feel safer in the punk community.

Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill is credited with beginning the official Riot Grrrl Movement of the United States. The term Riot Grrrl was coined by musician and artist Jen Smith, who expressed the need for “a girl riot” in a letter to Hanna (Marcus 2013,



Figure 2 Kathleen Hanna, lead singer of Bikini Kill, at the beginning of her music career.

[Image courtesy of pixgood.com.](#)

73). Hanna got her inspiration when she became furious after reading an interview in *Time Magazine*, claiming that most women did not consider themselves to be feminists, and after quoting a shooting in Montreal performed by a man who opened fire on the women in the room (after ordering men to leave), calling them ‘a bunch of feminists’ (Marcus 2010, 40). Kathleen was riled up: she knew there was still more progress to be made in feminism, and was nervous that the country thought feminism had already reached its goal. Tobi Vail, member of

Bikini Kill, used Dick Hebdige’s *Politics: The Subculture of Style* as a reference to draw parallels to what their ideal Girl Revolution could potentially be: they wanted to introduce a movement like the mod’s, beatniks, and punks discussed by Hebdige (Marcus 2010, 80).

The Revolution

Starting a band made sense for Kathleen, in relation to her feminist goals. She teamed up with her friend Tobi, who shared her ideals in regards to feminism. In Kathleen Hanna's fanzine, Tobi wrote:

“...This whole punk thing of making up your songs and just singing them for your friends and how that happens at parties and stuff-just the way that I've always felt encouraged in this one way, that people want to hear what other people are doing and encourage each other to participate and that whole support thing,” (Marcus 2010, 59).

This basic ideology became the principle of the beginning of the Riot Grrrl Movement: the girls involved wanted to empower other girls and women by positive encouragement to support each other, hear each other out, and incorporate music to reach these goals. Kathleen began by holding “all girl meeting(s) to discuss the status of punk rock and revolution,” (Marcus 2010, 89). These meetings were held for girls to teach each other how to play instruments, share their personal stories, and talk about current events pertaining to feminism. These meetings became larger than Kathleen could have dreamed of, and she realized how many female sexual abuse victims and women who experienced discrimination due to their gender there were looking for an outlet (Marcus 2010, 91).

“I've had so many people come to me with stories of sexual abuse and being battered by their parents. People talking about sexual abuse and getting beat up and emotional abuse in their house is so important, and making bands around the issue is, to me, the new punk rock- can be the new punk rock- And I want to encourage people to... break their silence.

I'm really interested in a punk rock movement- an angry girl movement- of sexual abuse survivors... I seriously believe it's the majority of people in this country have stories to tell that aren't telling for some reason. I mean with all that energy and anger, if we could unify in some way..."

These meetings were taken back to Olympia, Washington, which become the second home ground for the Riot Grrrl Movement.

While the Riot Grrrl Movement frequently focused on feminist issues and gender roles specifically in punk culture, it is important to note that the Riot Grrrl Movement also focused on issues and instances that extended beyond the music scene. After a Bikini Kill show in 1992, Kathleen and the band got word that a male heckler that Kathleen had thrown out of a show in the past for threatening her had murdered his girlfriend. This was an eye-opening experience for the band: they realized that the people criticizing feminist politics at their shows were also criticizing feminist politics beyond the punk scene. At this point more than ever, Kathleen incorporated the case of outside abuse to prevent it from expanding at her shows as she made sure to keep a careful eye on the crowd, asked the girls to stay in the front rows (creating a barrier between the band and men, while also keeping girls away from male hecklers), and even offered the women the opportunity to sit on stage if they felt threatened in any way by men in the crowd. She would announce, "If anybody is fucking with you at this show for certain reasons, you need to come up front, come up front, and come sit on the stage and get away from them and let us know. Because it shouldn't be one person's in the crowd responsibility to deal with fuckers,"

(Marcus 2010, 155).



Figure 3 Bikini Kill performs with the front row consisting of all women.

Image courtesy of wp-images.emusic.com.

The women of Bikini Kill decided there could not have been a better time and place for a Riot Grrrl convention than in the nation's capital, in 1992, when the hot political topic was the election between George Bush and Bill Clinton. The first national Riot Girl convention had over 200 girls in attendance, and sparked an abundance of (positive and negative) media attention for the movement. At this point, the Riot Grrrl Movement was in full swing, and began to get widespread national attention.

Style

Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* discusses style as a main component of the punk subculture. This is a prominent feature scene in the Riot Grrrl

Movement, as the girls used style as a way to express the goals and features of their revolution. Some women of the Riot Grrrl subculture formed a similar style.

“Many of them cut their bangs short and wore cotton vintage dresses with thrift-shop cardigans, librarian style. Everybody in Olympia’s tight-knit punk scene knew who these girls were. And in the political isolation of the Pacific Northwest, it was easy to be satisfied with that instead of immediately trying to push a broader political agenda,” (Marcus 2010, 125).

Girls started writing on their hands and fingers so they could recognize other Riot Grrrls at school and in public. They would draw hearts, the word riot, stars, and other words in magic marker. This sort of identity marker would allow women of the revolution to make connections anywhere, in hopes to meet and start talking about the revolution.

During performances, women of Riot Grrrl bands would write words like bitch, slut, and rape across their stomach, sometimes with a mocking little “xo” written on the

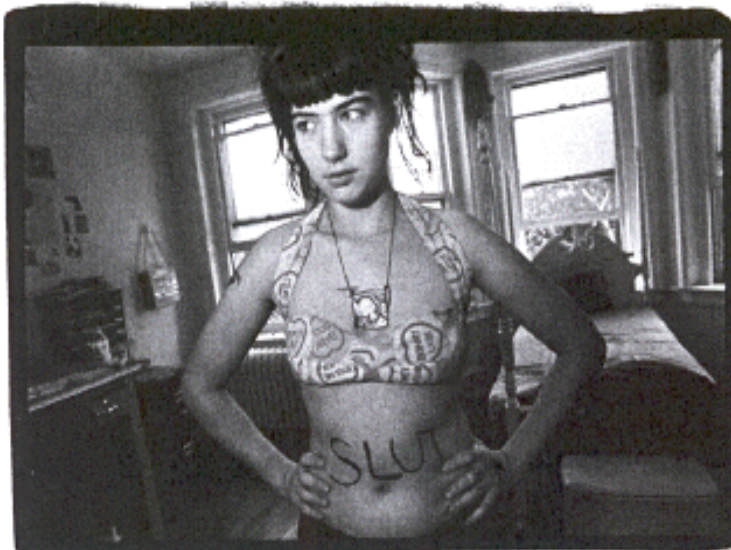


Figure 4 Kathleen Hanna gets ready to perform with the word slut written across her stomach.

Image courtesy of sitemaker.umich.edu.

side, putting into words what they believed men in the crowd were already thinking about them. They would also wear short skirts and dresses, bikini tops, stockings, other varieties of revealing clothing,

etc. They wanted to embody their message of reclaiming the word “girl” in a positive manner by dressing child-like, and also wearing skimpy and tight clothing out of irony. Some women took the opposite approach and performed covered from head to foot, wearing camouflage jackets, bandanas hiding the face, and legs covered. On very special occasions (large protests and concerts), Riot Grrls could be seen carrying a sign that read “keep your first out of my cunt” (Marcus 2010, 150-151).



Figure 5 A group of Riot Grrrls stand outside of the Supreme Court in 1992.

Image courtesy of radgrrrl.wordpress.com.

While some women chose to dress in a similar style and there were definite stylistic patterns of fashion, the emphasis on the individual still trumped style. Women were accepted in anything they wanted to wear, and were not pushed or encouraged to dress a certain way.

Technology and Youth

The use of technology was a major tool for Third Wave feminists, and was especially useful for women and girls in the Riot Grrrl Movement. Technology usage was a contributing factor in making young women politically aware, and the Third Wave of feminism particularly took advantage of the ways technology could be used in a feminist

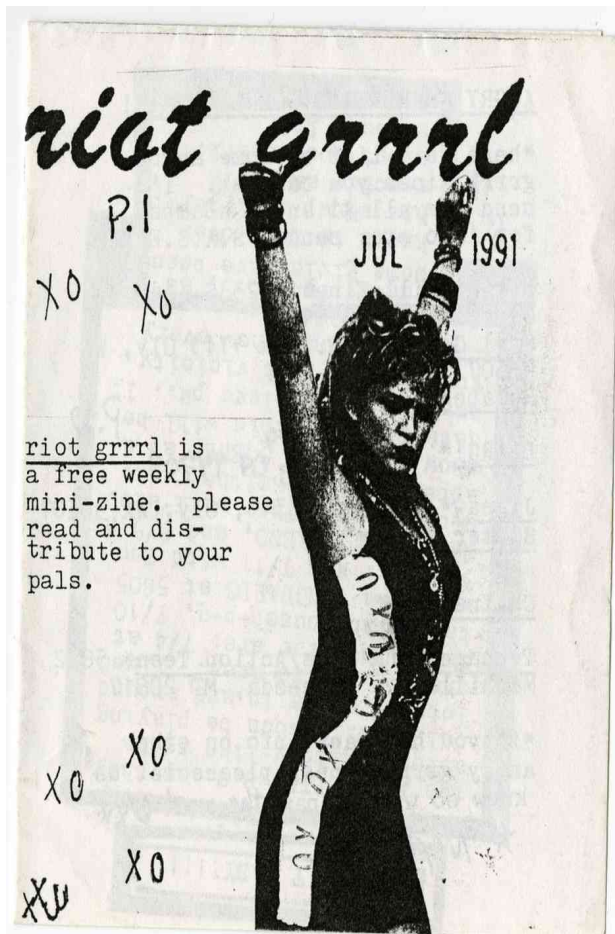


Figure 6 A Riot Grrrl zine, published in 1991.

Image courtesy of s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com.

revolution. The Riot Grrrl Movement was known partially for its use of the zine, a pamphlet or magazine made by the girls of the movement, copied in mass, and usually handed out at shows or mailed to other members of the movement across the nation for free or little cost. Women were able to record their music relatively easily. Video documentaries could be recorded and shared on the Internet, without having many hurdles to cross for publication purposes. (Garrison 2000, 162-163).

Technology of the Third Wave created a system of feminist

networking that helped Riot Grrrls from across the country connect with each other's personal experiences and ideals through zines, music, videos, the Internet, etc. The use of technology allowed girls who were not necessarily in the heart of the movement

geographically to still become involved. By getting girls across the U.S. inspired and involved, other Riot Grrrl chapters began to spring up nationwide.

Media

Riot Grrrls have struggled with media portrayal of women prior to the movement, which turned into a struggle with media portrayal of their purpose. At the beginning of a protest concert near the Capitol building in 1992, Riot Grrrl and fan Jasmine, along with a dozen other fans, was allowed to go on stage after an invite for the girls who organized the show. They were given the chance to say what they wanted, and Jasmine said:

“I’m tired of being told what I should wear, what I should say, what I should be doing with my own fucking body. The media has told you that in order to be a real woman you must be tall, thin, blonde, white, and passive. It has told you that a woman isn’t whole unless she has a male protector, that women who enjoy sex are bad or sluts, that women love to scrub floors on their hands and knees. We have been brainwashed by these myths. It is time to deprogram your head,” (Marcus 2010,152).

Punk was a culture highly concerned with authenticity, remaining against the mainstream, and refusing to sell out. As a subculture of punk, the Riot Grrrls followed these same principles. A major challenge of the Riot Grrrl Movement was fighting the negative portrayal that the media often put on to them.

The first (non-zine) article written on Riot Grrrl frontrunners Bikini Kill was published 1992 in the *LA Weekly*. This article was entitled “Revolution Girl Style Now” by Emily White, and was a major influence on other newspapers, magazines, and

television news sources to start reporting on the revolutionary girl. Initially, these articles were sympathetic to the Riot Grrrl Movement, and were very honest (Marcus 2010, 160). As the movement gained more recognition, the articles written about the girls became more critical and less factual.

The first of several articles written about the Riot Grrrl movement that either misunderstood the girl's message or spoke negatively of Riot Grrrls was Elizabeth Snead's publication of "Feminist Riot Grrrls Don't Just Wanna Have Fun," in *USA Today*, written after Bikini Kill's first national convention. This article described the women of the movement as "teen angststers, punkettes, and self-absorbed" (Marcus 2010, 169). She pulled specific quotes from Riot Grrrl meetings, which is supposed to be a private and safe space, claiming that she was not told she had to do otherwise. She also emphasized that these women despised men and wanted to intimidate them, rather than their emphasis on equal treatment and protection from abusive men. She advertised this movement as one that revolves around fashion, demeaning the political purpose of the revolution.

Following this, Bikini Kill's Kathleen Hanna chose not to give an interview to *Spin* magazine, and in response they published an unbecoming photo of her grabbing her breast, followed by criticisms of Hanna's character and purpose, quoted from other artists. Hanna's response was to change some lyrics to a song, and perform them as, "Does it scare you, *Spin*, that we don't need you?" (Marcus 2010, 190-191). This media-induced negativity put the Riot Grrrl Movement in a bit of a rut: Riot Grrrls were surrounded by negative public attention, Riot Grrrl meetings were happening less frequently as the leaders were getting more attention, and the safe space for girls-only

sharing was losing its credibility as a trustworthy and open-minded area where secrets were kept and no questions were asked.

Perhaps the most damaging article written and published about the Riot Grrrl Movement appeared in *Newsweek* in November of 1992, by Jessica Hopper, who had initially appeared to be an ally to the Riot Grrrls. Hopper had guaranteed the girls that she would only use photographs from posed group shots, and not the ones that were taken when they were relaxed, casual, and goofing off, yet she primarily used the photographs she promised she would not. The article itself made the Riot Grrrls feel like Hopper did not think that they took gender seriously, and she belittled their goals and political positions. The girls felt that the article was patronizing and limited their position. It portrayed the Riot Grrrl Movement as a fad: a style girls and women could choose to have, rather than a cause that they could fight for.

The article was a guide for how females can acclimate to the Riot Grrrl fashion lifestyle, rather than explaining their purposes and reasoning behind their appearance, messages, and protests. By dismissing the political credibility of the Riot Grrrl Movement, this article diminished the revolution to strictly a movement of individual appearance, and a how-to guide for girls to have this style (Marcus 2010, 217-218). This article sparked a lot of discouragement from girls and women in the movement: the frequency of the media misinterpreting and misrepresenting their movement caused many to believe that their fight was no longer productive. While this was not the first time the Riot Grrrl Movement was painted in a negative light, it was the first time that the girls could not shake the damage it had done to their reputation. This article was also making the Riot Grrrl Movement mainstream, which went against a major punk principle.

Negative media portrayal was a key cause for the downfall of the Riot Grrrl Movement. These women were speaking out against the abuse of women by men, and they themselves now felt abused by the media while standing up for their cause.

From here, Riot Grrrls began to use the media to their advantage as much as possible. Some girls came to terms with the fact that the Riot Grrrl Movement would be in the media with or without their consent; they figured if this was the case, they should be the ones making money from the stories. This idea abandoned the principles on capitalism derived from Marxism during the founding of punk. This plan was formed after the *Newsweek* article blew up nationwide, while the girls (primarily the original Riot Grrrls from Olympia) were doing their best to avoid requests for interviews from talk shows, magazines, news stations, and newspapers. The girls also created the Riot Girl Press, a project encouraging girls to create and send in zines that they would further send out to girls who did not have access to these zines.

Media blows then began to get more personal. The movement in itself would be attacked, and so would the individual lives of famous Riot Grrrl musicians. A particularly vicious article from the *Washington Post* was written about Kathleen Hanna in 1993, and reported on her history of sexual abuse, without her permission to put these details into print. Kathleen was traumatized by her personal secrets being exposed in such a public way, and even more so when it resulted in an abundance of journalists trying to contact her constantly for weeks following the publishing of the article (Marcus 2010, 254).

Using punk music- a form of popular culture- as a feminist tool comes with the risk of negative media portrayal. A major reason for the negative media portrayal was prevalent sexism in the field of journalism in the early 90's. There were few successful

female journalists, and even fewer opportunities to publish feminist based articles. Women dealt with sexual harassment, accusations of using their gender to get promotions, and an imposed label that women cannot write (Marcus 2010, 191). Feminists now recognize that their activism will almost always be undermined or disrupted in some way by the media. The greatest challenge for feminist movements in punk is how to respond to these portrayals, whether they are positive or not, and how to move on from the damage media may potentially cause.

The End of the Movement

By 1993, the Riot Grrrl Movement identified themselves as an “underground feminist movement that the media wanted to exploit” (Marcus 2010, 234). After the detrimental *Newsweek* article was published, Riot Grrrls tried to reclaim the movement by advertising the Riot Grrrl as whatever the individual wants it to be. This theme was spread in zines, song lyrics, concerts, and Riot Grrrl meetings. They emphasized the individual of every girl more than ever. The media definition of what the Riot Grrrl Movement was interfered with this individualism: the original Riot Grrrls wanted girls to make the movement whatever they wanted/needed it to be. They did not want the movement to be able to fit under a singular, cookie-cutter definition, as this would be discriminatory. As Riot Girl musicians gained more infamy, they lost time to dedicate to the movement: that is they could no longer frequently attend meetings, create zines, etc. After awhile, they began to feel like they were on the outside of the movement. This was recognized by Riot Grrrl bands and self-identified Riot Grrrls alike.

By 1996, the Riot Grrrl Movement had officially died out. This does not mean that the progress and principles that were built up since 1989 had been lost; it means that the principles of the movement and the goals achieved were carried over and applied to the music scene and feminism fitting to an ever-changing society.

Post Riot Grrrl Movement: The Lasting Affects

The Riot Grrrl Movement's purpose was to be a part of the feminist revolution prevalent through a variety of subcultures in the United States during the early to mid 90's. Riot Grrrls recognized that their movement alone would not change the world, but they wanted to change the dynamics of gender roles in the punk scene. "There was this possibility to change punk because I belong there. It didn't feel possible to change the rest of the world, because I didn't feel part of the rest of the world," said Riot Grrrl Michelle Noel (Marcus 2010, 126).

Part of the reason why the Riot Grrrl Movement was so successful in the punk culture was because of the time and place the nation was in during the early 90's: feminism was a hot topic, and the trend caught on in pop culture subcultures, from music to literature. In 1992, *Back: The Undeclared War Against American Women* by Susan Faludi was on the New York Times bestseller list for 35 weeks. Mike Tyson and William Kennedy Smith's rape trials gained national attention, and sparked a national study on rape. Rape on college campuses was also getting an abundance of media attention, influencing the publishing of several magazine and newspaper articles, and inspiring the "Rape in America" report in *Time* magazine (Marcus 2010, 113). Bill Clinton's presidential election win gave women and girls new hope coming from the Bush era. The

presidential candidate debates were largely centered on feminist politics, like the right to get an abortion. Feminism was in the limelight, and the Riot Grrrls took great advantage of this fact. 1993 was dubbed “The Year of the Women,” with 10 percent female representation in Congress for the first time in U.S. history, and a democratic president in power for the first time in over a decade (Marcus, 2010, 226).

Riot Grrrl music embodied music that could be popular and girly, yet also uphold the hegemonic ideals of punk (Bodansky 2013, 16). Many girls in the Riot Grrrl Movement recognized that the framework in which they used from the outside may not seem like the most effective place to bring about positive social change. These women used their work and their goals as an extension of social justice movements that have occurred (and were happening at that moment in time) to create social change on their own turf (Garrison 2000, 159). Women of the Riot Grrrl Movement took feminist theories and other movements, and made it work for their own unique subculture. By adopting Riot Grrrl Nomy Lamm’s theory of polymorphous feminism, the Riot Grrrl Movement shows how feminism can be incorporated into a variety of subcultures, while being adapted and altered for the specific needs and goals for that culture (Garrison 2000, 160). The Riot Grrrl Movement showed how feminism could be successfully incorporated into different fields and scenes.

By 1993, the amount of women in bands had dramatically increased, as noted by the *Washington Post* (Marcus 2010, 240). In the realm of the feminist punk in the Riot Grrrl movement, the fact that a large number of females were inspired enough to dive into the punk community with their own music would define the movement as a success. Despite the struggles with the media and conflict that they were met with surrounding the

movement, the Riot Grrls did what they aimed to do: they provided more girls and women with a role in punk culture, and gave them their space to rock. Zines written by girls were initially few and far between, but by 1993, they were being sent to Kathleen Hanna at such a fast and heavy rate, she had difficulty keeping up with the Riot Grrrl literature. Women and girls had found a place to express themselves in the punk community. While the movement in itself had fizzled out, the progress for women and girls in the punk world had remained. One of the most important accomplishments of the Riot Grrrl Movement was giving girls the opportunity to have feminist bands, built of a female majority, to listen and look up to.

In America today, it is difficult to find a true Riot Grrrl/female punk band. They do exist, but the musical and fashion style has evolved, and the message has morphed into feminist issues that fit today's need for feminism. The Riot Grrrl Movement had been successful, and for that reason, it became a causality of its own achievements. The role of women in punk created through the movement eliminated the need for the movement to continue with the same methods. Female punk bands of today, like Perfect Pussy (who have a female lead singer) and Potty Mouth, typically use interviews to express their political messages, rather than through lyrics, concerts, and zines (Mason 2014). Women in music have more of a place in music than they did 20 years ago in the U.S. Feminist punk is hard to come by in the US now, as a similar movement has sparked up across the ocean in Russia with the Pussy Riot! controversy.

Chapter 3

Where Oh Where did the Feminist Punks Go?: A Quest in New York

Introduction

I was sitting at my computer on a cold night in late November in Upstate New York, planning a trip to Brooklyn. The hostel was booked, bus tickets were bought, and my list of classic punk venues to visit was made. It was time to find punk concerts to attend, and discover where exactly the punk scene of Brooklyn lies in 2014. I had hit a bit of a brick wall with my search of live punk concerts in the Capital Region of New York, and was quickly learning that I would hit a similar brick wall during my trip to the big city. I did not believe my friends from the city when they told me the punk scene of New York was dead, and I also refused to believe the same theme that I saw with everything that came up in a general Google search. Punk is largely underground, and I believed with an intensive search I would come across something/someone of use.

After days and hours of research and still coming up almost empty, I was beginning to think that the punk scene in the Northeast was in fact dying. 20 years ago, tracing feminist punk music and discovering the scene would have been as simple as requesting a zine or following a website. It was 2014, a time where modern technology allowed any information to be at your fingertips within minutes, and through every Internet search, venue calendar, and conversation with musicians and locals, I could barely find a handful of punk shows, and even fewer punk shows featuring female musicians. I was getting very frustrated, thinking that I had hit a total dead end with my research. I did not get the easy find that I had anticipated. This forced me to shift my thinking, which lead me to the question: what role does feminism play today in punk?

Ethnographic Methods

I used several different methods to conduct research for this project. First off, I read a lot of a various amount of literature. I read a variety of political theory, feminist theory, case studies with music and/or feminist themes, interviews with musicians, song lyrics, scholarly articles, biographies, memoirs, historical accounts, ethnographies, etc. I wanted to get a basis for feminism in punk culture in places I could not physically go to, like places of the past and areas in Russia I could not travel to at this point. I began reading different books on the origin of punk. With this, I got a basic understanding of why punk musicians played the music they played, and how the genre was formed. From here, I took the general principles and themes of punk and read political and feminist theory that would be applicable. I then read a variety of case studies, so I could look at different ways I may be able to successfully conduct my own fieldwork.

I began conducting my own fieldwork in October. I attended a variety of punk and hardcore shows in Albany and New York City. I discovered which shows to attend by following the calendars of the venues in the Capital Region of New York that I had already known of, by asking friends, and by asking people I met at shows where they usually go for concerts. I joined mailing lists and checked calendars to a variety of venues and bars regularly. This is where I first noticed how difficult it was going to be to find punk concerts in the area that I could easily get to. From September through January, there was only one punk show featuring a full female or even female fronted band. Since I got such a quick reply and agreement from the Damn Broads for an interview, I was encouraged to e-mail a variety of punk bands that have achieved levels of fame all across the scale. Unfortunately, I did not get any further responses. I decided to attend the shows

I could find, see if I could strike up conversations with bands while there, and also focus a lot on the fan base.

My strategy while I was attending shows was to speak with as many people as possible to get a feel for why they decided to attend the show. Are they fans? Do they just like the venue? Do they listen for the music or the message? What else do they listen to? What do they like and dislike about shows like this? How involved are they in the local punk rock music scene? Participant observation and casual conversation was an effective way to build rapport for musicians and fans alike. We shared a passion (music) and were able to make connections based upon this common factor. Prior to each concert, I made sure I researched the bands I was seeing so I could be familiar with their messages through lyrics and with the dynamic of the bands. I have been to many punk/rock shows in the past, so I had the advantage of prior knowledge of the type environment I would likely encounter. I also already knew some people who attended these shows, and was able to easily build rapport with those I met because of my previous experiences.

Limitations

While conducting my fieldwork, I ran into a few limitations and difficulties that impacted my research. As I mentioned, it was very difficult for me to find punk shows in the area, and even more difficult to find punk shows that included female musicians. In the end, I was only able to find two shows in the Capital Region and New York City featuring female punk musicians from September through January. There were very few shows featuring male punk bands as well, only three that I could find on dates that I could not attend. My struggle in finding relevant concerts is where I first noticed my time

constraint limitation. If I have had a greater span of time, as opposed to two academic terms and a winter break, to conduct fieldwork, I may have been able to attend a wider array of shows. I did attend several shows over the summer, when there are more concerts, prior to my first term of research, but at that point, I did not have a main goal for my research, and was not sure exactly what to look for that I could connect to this project. This time constraint led me to my third major challenge, which was the ability to travel to shows. I could not travel far to attend a show because of mobility restrictions and time constrictions. As a full time student with four part-time jobs, it was difficult for me to have time to attend concerts. I made the time and effort to attend shows in the area, but if there was a show more than two hours away from me, I simply could not make it during the school year. Luckily, my time during winter break allowed me to travel to New York City. Beyond winter break, though, I was basically stuck in the music scene of the Capital Region.

These limitations were not detrimental enough that I could not make the conclusions that were necessary for this project. In fact, these limitations led me directly to some of the answers I was searching for. My inability to find shows that were relevant to my thesis in a hundred mile radius led to question why this was the case. What happened to the days where Riot Grrrl bands could be easily traced after obtaining a single name or venue? Has feminist punk transformed into a completely new subculture in New York? Or has it simply faded? Is feminist punk even relevant or needed at all in millennial age of America? Through my fieldwork and the brick walls I repeatedly ran into, I was able to answer all these questions, and more I did not know I was looking for.

Hardcore

While researching concerts I could attend in Brooklyn, I really noticed the difficulty my friend Ryan previously warned me about when trying to find punk shows: there really were not any at the time I would be there. Instead of losing hope and giving up, I decided to attend a couple shows at St. Vitus Bar that fell under the hardcore genre. Hardcore music is often confused with punk for the outsider, as they are both loud subgenres of rock. One of several reasons that the Riot Grrrl Movement in the U.S. began was because women were not welcome in the hardcore music culture of the 80's: lyrics were often misogynistic, mosh pits were dangerous for women, the typical fan was male, and women at these shows often felt like they were at risk. I wanted to see for myself if the hardcore culture of New York City today was similar to the hardcore world of the 80's I read about. These shows served as my opposing comparison to punk.

I have had some experience at hardcore shows in the past, so I was not expecting anything drastically different from my past experiences. As someone who frequents different types of rock shows on a regular basis, I expected to automatically feel comfortable diving into a new setting, considering music was involved. This expectation quickly allowed me to immediately be observant of my surroundings and keep in mind my goals, what I was looking for, and allowing space to observe the things I also was not necessarily seeking.

At about 7pm on the Thursday of my arrival, I ordered an Uber, and was on my way to St. Vitus. Upon arrival, my driver called over a guy who was smoking outside the bar to make sure I was in the right place. There was no clear indication or sign that I was, just an address number on the outside of a tall, dark building that looked like every other

building surrounding it. Upon confirmation, I walked in behind two women who appeared to be around my age, got my name checked off of the will call sheet by a girl who was sitting at a small, portable table at the entrance, and headed inside. The bar was on the right side of the entrance, had dim to minimal lighting, and music videos of rock bands were being projected on the wall. There were three bartenders behind the bar, all tall, tattooed, bearded men wearing a variety of leather and denim. As I scanned the length of the bar, I noticed that almost everyone in there was male, besides the occasional female with a man, which typically seemed to be a girlfriend with a boyfriend. Most people appeared to be in their mid-late 20's, with a few in their early 20's. There were about 75 people in the venue. Walking past the bar, there was a connected room where the first band was playing. The room was full, but with enough space for me to squeeze to the front of the crowd. Again, the few women I noticed in the room were accompanied by a man. I seemed to be the only solo female in the entire venue. I was pleased to notice that while most of the crowd was standing, no one was moshing and everyone just seemed to be moving with the music. I was also pleased to notice that the opening band had a female lead singer. The room was dark, and there was a violet light shining on the lead singer, giving the small, dark haired woman an almost demonic aura. The music was transgressional rock, with slow but powerful guitar melodies, and her voice deep and strong. The two following bands were all-male, transgressional rock, and included what I like to call melodic screaming. My first night at St. Vitus allowed me to get familiar with the layout of the venue, the clientele, and the general environment. These bands were definitely a mild form of hardcore, and I was pleasantly surprised that the crowds were calm. Throughout the night, I did not notice any other women come in who were not with

men, and I also noticed that the female lead of the first band left immediately after her set was complete, while the second band stayed for the headlining band's set. The female fans that were in the room with the stage almost completely stayed towards the front half of the room (closest to the stage), and stayed with their male companions. The two women that I had followed in to the bar upon arrival ended up being the girlfriends of a couple band members. I had a difficult time starting conversations with fans. I did not want to come across like I was hitting on the men in the venue. I was hoping my second night at St. Vitus would lead me to more interactions.

Going in to my second night at St. Vitus, I was curious if the dynamic of the female fan would be different from what I had experienced the night before. Again, I took an Uber taxi to the venue and arrived at St. Vitus at around 8pm. This time, I was carded by a bouncer at the door, and then I walked in to get my name checked off of will call. There were more people in the bar this time around, closer to 100-125.

I immediately noticed the high percentage of men in the venue. The only women I saw were with a man. I did notice a group of girls taking shots throughout the night sitting at the corner of the bar, but by the end of the night, they had all left with a different man. 1`Four bands were playing that night. There was not one female in any of the bands. Their sound was much harder than the transgressional rock I saw the previous evening. I ordered a Jack and Coke, and walked from the bar to the room with the band playing to see the first band. I was able to get pretty close to the front. This time around, I could not help but feeling the male eyes on me as I worked my way through the crowd. Again, I appeared to be the only solo female in the venue.

I only caught the last couple songs of the first band's set. As I scanned the room, I noticed that a majority of the crowd were men in their 20's, clad in band t-shirts, leather, and denim jackets. The few that were with women typically made it very obvious that they were "with" the woman, with an arm around her or frequent kisses on the cheek and/or lips. I noticed three couples in the room at this time, and they all stayed towards the sides of the room and away from the main crowd. Between the first and second band, I decided to spend time wandering through the bar, and seeing who or what I could find. The crowd was getting thicker, and I was momentarily thankful for my small stature for giving me the ability to squeeze by people. While walking through the crowd, I again felt the eyes of several men on me. There was one guy who appeared to be around my age in particular who seemed to be wherever I ended up.

I went into the room with the bar, stood by a table, and people watched. Everyone in the room appeared to be in a group or with at least one other person. The girls were at the corner of the bar were still there taking shots. There was one, who appeared to be in her early 20's, with cropped hair, a tight skirt, and tank top despite the cold December weather, who was paying more attention to the men walking past her than her friends. I ordered another drink, and the bartender I did not order from made me promise to allow him to make my next one. After about ten minutes of leaning against the bar's wall with a drink in hand, I returned to the room where the next band was setting up. Again, I noticed the man in his early 20's who appeared to be following me. I was not thrilled, but he seemed to be harmless. Besides the occasional glance, he did not say a word to me. As the lights went off, the next band began to play. They had a similar hardcore sound as the band before, and more people were in the room, so I hung in the back. I decided I did not

want the drink I had purchased and put it down on a side table. About ten minutes later, a man who appeared to be in his early 30's asked if I was okay, and offered to buy me a drink. I declined politely, and I noticed that he kept glancing back at me throughout the set.

During the set, as the room filled in more, I noticed that the people in the front shifted from the couples to the younger males of the crowd. There were six men in their early 20's who started to mosh. The women and older people of the crowd moved to the back, and I stayed in the back because I did not want to get hit by the moshers. I did not feel physically safe going near them. I then noticed the girl with the cropped hair I saw earlier taking shots at the bar stumble into the room, push through the crowd, and go into the mosh pit. Almost as soon as she got into the pit, she fell, hit her head so hard I could hear the thud from the back of the room, and went unconscious for a moment. One of the male moshers, who I had not noticed interacting with her earlier, picked her up and tried to shoo away the bouncer who had walked over afterwards. They walked to the back of the room, he put her down, and she tried to walk on her own. She was even wobblier than before and refused any help offered to her. She then tried to sit at the bar, and the man who carried her out tried to get her to go outside with him. The bouncer intervened, made her sit down, and waited with her while an ambulance was on its way. I was glad that there were bouncers everywhere keeping an eye on things, as I was worried for this girl's health, and was unsure if she actually knew the man trying to get her to go outside. After she had left, I noticed him watching some of the other females in the room. I kept my distance between him.

By time all this activity was over, the second band had finished their set and the third was setting up. I was in the bar again, and I noticed the man who had previously offered to buy me a drink in front of me at the bar. He got up and said, “Are you sure you’re good and don’t want a drink or anything? You kind of look like you want to kill someone.” This comment made me physically laugh out loud, and mentally curse my own resting bitch face. I said, “No, I’m fine, really. Just very observant of my surroundings, and trying to avoid creepy men.” At this, we both laughed, and he reassured me that he was not a creepy man. I was skeptical at first, but he seemed friendly and almost nervous to talk to me, so I decided to talk to him to see what I could learn about the music scene in Brooklyn from someone who lives there. I proceeded to explain my purpose of the night, and he said, “I thought you were here for a reason. I don’t usually see women here on their own like that, and you seemed observant.” I asked him if he comes to St. Vitus a lot, or other venues like this, and he said that he is a musician and he performs all around the city. He also is a big fan of hardcore music and has been a frequent concertgoer since he was a teenager. I learned that his name is Ken and he is 33 years old. I asked Ken if he notices a lot of women at the shows he attends, or if the gender dynamics typically look like this. He said, “I honestly never really notice a lot of women and girls coming out to shows like this. The women who don’t come out are either with their boyfriends, or looking for band members to hook up with. Like those girls over there,” (he pointed to the women taking shots at the corner of the bar). “I don’t know why more girls don’t come out alone, but I feel like most of the female fans come out for men.” He told me about his music and the friends he came with and after about 30 minutes of small talk, the headlining band had begun, he asked me if I wanted to go into

the other room, and proceeded to talk my hand and lead me to the music when I said yes. At this gesture, I couldn't help but be concerned that he mistook me for one of the girls coming to shows in order to seek men. I wanted to see if I could get any more information out of Ken, so I went with it.

During the headliners set, there were about ten men moshing at the front. Ken and I got to the middle of the room. The crowd started to get pushy, and Ken put an arm around me for protection. I thought I would have been fine without him, I frequently go to pushy shows solo, but nonetheless, I was glad to have a bit of physical protection for the moment. I was closer to the front than any other female: again, the only other women in the room were attached to their male significant others. The band played for about 40 minutes, and when they were done, Ken and I headed back to the bar. I met his friends, who were highly intoxicated and trying to figure out how to meet the band. While they went to meet the band, Ken and I went over to the merch table to see what the band was selling. On my way over, a man at the bar said to me, "Baby, I hope I see you in my dreams." I quickly walked away and found myself staying closer to Ken, who seemed trustworthy. After he bought a cd, we went to a table so we could talk more about my project. He was excited to meet an academic at the show, as "girls like this" do not usually show up at shows he attends. He told me he would think more about my project, and if he could think of anything else that would help, he would call me (maybe this was his way of getting my number). He asked if I needed a ride home, and I told him I had a taxi on the way. I left St. Vitus at about 1am, with a much better understanding as to why the women of the Riot Grrrl Movement wanted a music scene of their own, one that they could feel comfortable at. As a side note, I did here back from Ken very quickly. He gave

me the same information he already gave me that night, and proceeded to (unsuccessfully) try to date me for the next month.

From this experience, I understood why the women of the Riot Grrrl Movement felt the need to create a female-friendly space. I initially had no concern coming into these shows regarding my own safety, as I am a regular concert attendee. Particularly the second night at St. Vitus, I did not feel comfortable at the show. I constantly felt like men were watching me. I was concerned for the girl who had fallen, and even more concerned about the intentions of the man who was “helping” her out. The one person who I was able to speak to most likely only spoke to me with other intentions in mind. The comment made to me by the man who wanted me in his dreams and the other man who appeared to be following me caused me to put my guard up. I did not feel like this was an environment safe for women.

Albany: The Damn Broads

In late September of 2014, I was trying to find concerts of female punk musicians in the area that I could attend. I knew of a few venues through previous experiences, and I looked at several online calendars of these venues. While looking at the calendar of a music bar I have gone to in the past, I came across an event headlined by a band called the Damn Broads. I did a Facebook search and found their music Facebook page. The profile picture was black and white and featured three women in their 20's. One girl had black hair with thick black rimmed glasses, a septum ring, a lip ring, a chunky silver necklace, a black leather jacket, a black t-shirt, and a slight, close mouthed smile; one had similar glasses and black hair, and a toothy growl; the third girl had aviator sunglasses,

long black hair, a leather jacket, and her tongue sticking out. I proceeded to read their biography in their page:

“Damn Broads! are an all-female punk/hardcore band from Northwest Connecticut. The broads formed in May 2010 after meeting through an ad posted on Craigslist. By August they were playing shows and by the end of the year they had released their first demo, "The Damn Demo." They are a punk band that happens to consist of all girls but don't let their gender fool you - they are NOT a girl band. They are a punk band. The broads have a unique sound. They're influenced by punk rock, street punk, ska, oi ,and alcohol lots of alcohol. They've been compared to Black Flag and the girl version of Minor Threat. In April 2011, the band released their second demo, "Politics and Lady Parts."

I decided to e-mail the band and ask if I could interview them when they played at The Low Beat in Albany, which is about 20 minutes from where I live. They emailed me back and said they would love to talk to me.

It was 6:15pm on October 11th, a Saturday night, and my friend Maddie had just picked me up from my college dorm in her silver sedan. This would be Maddie's first punk concert and she was excited but nervous at what to expect. We arrived at The Low Beat about 20 minutes later. There is a black and white bubble letter sign hanging from



Figure 7 The profile picture of the Damn Broads, found on their Facebook page.

Image courtesy of s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com.

the top of the brick-building bar on the outside. When we walked in, we were met with a small bar (capacity of 75) with wooden and brick walls that were decorated with a variety of posters, banners, and photos of rock bands and advertisements for upcoming shows and a variety of alcohol, and a bar running down the right side. The bathrooms were on the right side between the bar and the stage, and the signs on the bathroom doors read Yoko (for women) and John (for men). The stage was small and set up at the back of the room.

When we reached our destination, we were the first people to arrive to bar besides the bartender, a woman in her 30's who was going back in forth from the bar to the back room (I assumed she was involved with The Low Beat), and a bouncer. The bartender at the moment was a guy in his late 20's, with glasses, shaggy blond hair, and a skinny build. I ordered two ciders, one for me and one for my friend, and he gave them to us at "the first customer discount." Maddie and I chatted at the bar for about 20 minutes and then the women from the Damn Broads arrived with their music gear, merchandise, and one other person with them (and heavy set man in his late 20's, with a scruffy face and short black hair). The women were dressed very similarly to how they were in their Facebook picture, with a combination of black jeans, black converse sneakers or combat boots, black t-shirts, multiple studded belts, and black leather jackets. They spent about 15 minutes bringing their things inside, and then two of the members sat down at one of the three small, round tables on the left side of the room, between the bar and the stage. I got up from the bar and walked over to introduce myself. In my black combat boots, black ripped jeans, black shirt, and black leather jacket, I felt like I fit in with the girls

already. They asked me if I wanted to step outside to talk (there was loud music playing in the background at the bar), and they called their third member to tell her I was here.

We stepped outside of The Low Beat to conduct the interview. I had my questions mostly in my head, but saved on my phone if I needed a quick reference. The women said they did not mind if I recorded the interview, so I used my phone for that as well. They seemed genuinely interested in my project and helping me out, and they were asking me about my successes with the project so far. I spoke to them about my hopes of talking to other musicians, and my desire to start a radio show, which never ended up happening due to a variety of complications. I was able to build rapport relatively quickly with the two band members, who go by Taytoxic and Michelle Threat, as we were waiting for the third member Crazines to arrive. While waiting for Crazines, we were casually talking about music and bonding over how awkward we are as human beings, as prompted by Michelle's apology for being such an awkward group of women. Crazines arrived, and was greeted with an enthusiastic "Hiiiiidyho!" from Michelle. After a few more minutes of laughter and casual conversation, I explained my thesis again to the women.

Me: So as I've said, my thesis is on the role of women in punk. I'm focusing on Russia and Eastern Europe, and comparing movements in the Northeast where I can do fieldwork. So you guys started playing together in 2010, right? From an ad on Craigs List?

They all laughed and confirmed my statement.

Me: Who have been some of your musical influences?

Michelle: I don't know, I've been inspired by different things, not just punk. Obviously like the older bands like The Misfits, Minor Threat,

things like that. Things like that. I don't know, what about you guys. I know you guys like music too, haha!

Taytoxic: No other music, everything else sucks! Haha. I was inspired by Joan Jett to start even playing at all. Local bands too, I was inspired by local bands a lot.

Crazines: Yea, I was mostly inspired by local bands.

The Damn Broads did not technically have a single front woman or lead singer. From the beginning of the interview, it became clear to me that Michelle was the undefined leader. Michelle was the first to answer a majority of the questions, unless she asked one of the other girls to answer or looked their way. She also took the initiative to ask the others to answer the question themselves once she was finished speaking. Michelle became my main source of information out of the three girls, and was also key in getting the other two girls to open up more. Crazines was especially quiet throughout the interview, and Michelle continued to push her to speak, whether it was through verbal questions or just by looking at her.

The emphasis on inspiration drawn from local music had me wondering is the meant local music from when they were younger (they are in their mid-20's now), or if there was a prominent punk scene in their home state of Connecticut that I was unaware of. Considering that I had difficulties finding a punk scene that was somewhat easy to follow in New York, I wondered if I just was not looking in the right state. To no one specifically, I asked if there was a large punk scene in Connecticut and what the scene was like.

M: There is a punk scene, but it's more like aggressive, kind of, which is pretty cool, but it's more heavier than other scenes. It used to be bigger when they had the LMG but that kind of closed up, so you have to kind of search for it now, punk it's still there.

T: Yea there's not many places left to play.

Me: I understand that, I have been having a hard time finding places around here that really have things I can go to. The Low beat is great, they have stuff here every so often. Albany has some things, but where I'm from, Schenectady, it has nothing at all. It is very pop punk, where I am from. I can't really do much with that.

All three girls started laughing at the mention of the pop punk genre. Pop punk is much more mainstream than punk is. It is a subgenre of punk, but calling it punk is a stretch: it is more like mainstream pop music with guitars and drums, and typically consists of young male musicians. One band that both the Damn Broads and I simultaneously identified as pop punk is Fall Out Boy. I mentioned that most of the local bands in my hometown consisted of only men, hoping to prompt conversation about gender in punk music.

M: I think it's funny though because even though we're like a girl band it's funny that people automatically assume that we're going to be some (she does a high-pitched "ahhh" in a sing-song voice) girl band, like a riot grrrl band, which is whatever but we're not, so we kind of scare the panties off of them, which is kind of cool.

Me: So what is your view on feminism in punk? Do you think it is still a thing?

M: Ehhhh. Let me think about that.

T: I am starting to think that there are some more females coming out and playing instead of staying on the sidelines, which is great, there should be more of that, more women just picking up instruments and saying ‘Fuck it!’ Ya know?

Michelle and Taytoxic both laughed.

C: I don’t think people make a big deal of it anymore, ya know?

Me: I thought it would be much more apparent to me than it has been so far. I have been reading about women in punk in Indonesia, where women are not considered equals at all, but they are in the punk scene.

All three women expressed their belief that this was a wonderful fact. We talked about how great it was that punk gave women the opportunity to be equal to men in patriarchal societies. From here, I asked the women about the typical shows that they play. I wanted to know what the demographic of their fan base is, and the typical size of their shows, to see if they were in line with the typical punk shows I have read about. Taytoxic told me that they rarely play large shows because that would mean that they would have to sell “a shit ton” of tickets.

T: These big shows, it’s just... it’s just a business, basically. Man, I don’t want to sell into that crap, so I just do shows like this, people have a good time, we don’t have to be like ‘hey, come to my shows...’ People can get right up front with ya, it’s a better vibe really, that’s all.

Me: So what is your fan base usually like?

The three women smirked, glanced at each other, and laughed.

T: We can have like a five-year-old little girl...

M: (Still laughing) Yea.

T: ...To like a 60 year old man.

Me: (Laughs with the girls) That's awesome.

T: It like ranges, hahaha.

Taytoxic had begun to take over the initiative to answer questions first, and Michelle would often sit back and listen and nod her head. Crazines remained to be pretty quiet, and often would only contribute with a quiet agreement.

T: I saw this picture online and it was of this five or six-year-old girl, and she had a back patch on with our name.

The girls laughed together at the memory, and remarked on how they felt bad that they swore so much if young children were listening. I laughed with them and in jest said, "Well they're going to hear these words soon anyways," and Taytoxic responded and said, "Yea, haha, they might as well hear it from us." My final question was a request for advice for women that want to make punk music comparable to what they do.

M: Just don't be scared, just, can I swear on this? Don't give a fuck, do whatever the hell you want to do...

T: Don't ever quit.

C: Don't EVER quit.

M: It is very easy to quit, but just don't quit.

T: We could have easily quit so many times. We originally had a lead singer. But she left for other reasons. It wasn't anything bad it was whatever, but then we were trying new singers and it was terrible.

M: Horrible.

T: But we just kept going. Because none of us ever sang. But we were like, let's just do it. Let's keep going, keep going. Just don't give up. That goes for everything. Just listen to THAT song for inspiration. (A car blasting loud, heavy rap was stopped at a sign in front of us).

At this point, we had ended the interview on a high note and with comedic relief. I had concluded my first (and only) formal interview with an all-female punk band.

I walked back inside the bar while the three girls stayed outside to get a few more things from their vehicle. They came back in and sat next to me at the bar. I ordered another cider. There was a different bartender, who was a female, short and heavy set, in her 40's dressed in a long black skirt and a black shirt, with long black, purple, and pink hair, and a nose ring. We talked about how annoying yet worth it keeping up with our strange colored hair is, as my hair has basically been every color of the rainbow in the past year.

At this point, the opening bands had arrived and the first band had the stage already set up. Maddie was sitting next to a guy in his early-mid twenties with glasses, a scruffy face, brown hair, and a t-shirt. Maddie introduced me to him as Matt, and he told me he was in the first band. After about ten minutes of small talk, he went up to perform. The crowd in front stood there with little movement, besides head nodding to the beat. After a set list of about 25 minutes, the band was done and the second band began to set

up. Matt became an informant for me. He added me on Facebook the following day, and we talked about meeting up at potential shows we would both be at. Unfortunately, we both struggled to find more punk shows to attend in the area.

The second band, The Drunken Cuddle` was a male and female couple appearing



Figure 8 The Drunken Cuddle performing on tour before their show at The Low Beat.

Image courtesy of www.facebook.com/drunkencuddle.

to be in their late 20's. The woman was the drummer and backup vocalist, and the man was the lead singer and guitarist. When they took the stage, the lead singer said, "I've been waiting all damn day to play music." The lyrics ranged from topics of whiskey to love to death ("and other depressing things"). The crowd had shifted slightly from earlier, when almost everyone was on the floor: all the men were out on the floor and all the women were sitting at the bar (myself and Maddie included).

The second band exited the stage and packed up their equipment, and then the third band began to set up. This band consisted of three men who appeared to be in their mid twenties. Most of the people who were on the floor moved to the back of the room and to the bar when the band came on.

While they were playing, three more people came into the bar (a man who appeared to be in his 40's and two men who appeared to be in their 30's). One of the men in his 30's (both came together) took my hand and Maddie's hand and shook it without saying anything. They sat on the left side of Maddie at the bar (I was on her right) and spoke to each other in another language I could not recognize, while glancing at Maddie and I. After about 25 minutes of playing, the band completed their set, packed up their equipment, and the Damn Broads began to set up. I decided to go to the front of the room and near the stage for their set. I was there along with the woman who worked there and three men. The three women shared vocal parts in each song. They screamed the lyrics to their songs, rather than sang melodically, in a true punk fashion. The songs they played varied from topics like their hatred for Miley Cyrus ("fuck the media, fuck the hype!"), to the "perverts that make girls hide in bathrooms, like they did to us," to their hatred for the Westboro Baptist Church (with repeated lyrics "do not discriminate!"). They moved around a lot while they were playing, and Michelle spoke a lot to the crowd between songs, most frequently requesting that everyone drink more and get really drunk. She said, "Did we scare you? I hope we did," after the first song, and, "I don't think you're drunk enough. Get more drinks. Tip the bartender well." The band played a 30 minute set, thanked the crowd, and starting to pack up their instruments. At this point it was about 11:15pm.

I walked back to the bar and sat next to Maddie. I noticed that the man who shook our hands and his friend had left. I asked her how she liked to show, and she said she actually really liked it and was surprised because she usually only listens to country music. Maddie said the people were much more friendly than she thought they would be.

I ordered another cider and began speaking to the bartender with the pink and purple hair. She said, "That second band was really fantastic." I agreed with her and said I really enjoyed them and walk to listen to their music though. She said, "I notice there's not a lot of female drummers in bands. A lot of singers and keyboard players, but not drummers. The drummer in the one band was really great, I was surprised when I saw her." I told her how excited I was to find another female punk musician at the show, and then I told her about my thesis topic. I asked her if she was a musician herself. She said, "I've been in many bands as a keyboard player. I just bought a guitar. I don't need to be great at it, I just wanted to learn another way to play music. I really like it. I like how I can feel the music physically, you don't get that on a keyboard when you just hit the keys. I play more 60's punk though, not 70's or 80's." I asked her about the type of bands that usually comes to The Low Beat. She said they don't get many female punk bands, but there is a lot of rock music that comes through. She said the listing of upcoming shows is all on their website.

At this point, the girl from the second band came up to Maddie and I. She said, "Goodness you girls have been here all night, thank you for coming out!" She had a slight Midwestern accent, and her words were very expressive. She asked us what our names were, and she got excited when she found out her and I have the same first name (Katie). Maddie told her that she loved her band, and I said I thought they were great. I asked where she was from and she said they came from Colorado and this is the furthest east they have come on their tour. I told her I was glad that they ended up here. She said, "Well let me give you ladies our card so you can find us later." We followed her to one of the tables where she had some cds, cards, and rags with the band's name spray painted

on, in a punk do-it-yourself way. I asked how much she wanted for the cds, and she said \$10 each (there were two) but she'd give us both for \$15. I told her I would buy both, and then Maddie said she would get both too. She gave us each a rag as well and said, "Oh my God ladies thank you so much, you just saved our asses. Now we have gas money, this is great. You have no idea how much we appreciate this. Katie and Maddie, I will never forget you! I apologize, I may be a bit drunk." She then laughed and gave us each a hug. She came and set with us at the bar, after she took her bandmate's pitcher of beer and started drinking it straight from the pitcher. She asked us if we were from around here, and I told her we lived about 20 minutes away and I was here for research for my thesis. I explained to her what I was doing, and she said, "What that's awesome! What a great topic to have."

The girl who I thought worked at The Low Beat who we saw on and off all night then walked over and said, "That was interesting (in regards to a drunk woman who just stumbled into the bar, took pictures with the band, and left). By the way, I haven't seen you guys around before. What are your names?" We introduced ourselves. She said, "My name is Nicole, I book all the events here and I book shows in a few other venues in Schenectady. Did you come here to see the Broads?" I told her about my interview and what it was for. She said, "That's great. This show was a good one to come to, although it was the lowest attended show we've had here in awhile." I asked her how often she books female punk bands in Albany. She said, "There are not many punk bands with women in them around here, so not often." I said I was having a hard time finding a true punk scene in the area and I asked her if there was one. She said, "Yes. Although it has died out a lot, but it was pretty big in the area in the late 90's and early 2000's. I'm 35,

I've been here to see it all." I thanked her for taking the time with me and asked if I could pick her brain a little more. She gave me her full name and told me to add her on Facebook right away. She then gave me a bunch of flyers and told me to encourage friends and other students to come out to shows. I asked her if she has people who help her out and she said, "For things like this, it's all about networking. Keep in contact with me and keep coming, I'll introduce you to people I know." I thanked her again for talking to me. Katie walked up to Maddie and I and hugged and thanked us again. Maddie and I left the Low Beat at about 12:45am and were on our way back home. Nicole added me on Facebook the next day, and sent me regular Facebook invitations to various rock concerts in Albany. Unfortunately, none of these shows were relevant to my research, and this night began and ended my punk fieldwork in Albany.

New York City

Over my winter break from school in December, I decided to make a couple trips to New York City in search of punk music, and to see the sites still standing from the original punk scene of the 1970's. I began searching for venues and punk bars the same way I searched when I was looking for shows in the Capital Region: through a general internet search. I searched deep through the internet, and from every blog, question site, and post I saw, the same theme was repeated: there was no true punk scene left in New York City as of 2014. I decided to e-mail an acquaintance of mine who I mentioned earlier, Ryan, who lived in Brooklyn, was into the same music as I, and offered to help me as much as he could. When I told him I would be spending three days in Brooklyn, he emailed me back and said, "Brooklyn is huge as fuck. What part will you be in. Also

level of punkness will help. Also by punk to do you mean tattoos and cool people or do actually mean punk cause that's sparse in bk (Brooklyn)." I explained to Ryan that I was searching for legitimate punk. His response was:

"Anchored inn which is right around the corner from my apt (apartment) is an awesome metal bar with a venue next door. St. Vitus is one of my favorite rock bars and it's in green point north of Williamsburg. It's not very punk rock, actually quite the opposite, but questlove from the roots does a Thursday night party at Brooklyn bowl that is banging. Also check out knitting factory, the levee, trash bar, the Charleston, spike hill, and if anything comes to mind I'll shoot you a message."

Through my Internet searches, I found out that St. Vitus was close to my hostel, and had a larger amount of rock shows than the other places he listed, which were mostly bars with rock themes. Since I was looking for the musical side of the punk scene, I immediately bought tickets for the two nights I was able to attend shows while in Brooklyn.

I arrived in Brooklyn on the first Thursday of December. Coincidentally, one of my best friends, Kathy, was going to Brooklyn the same day I had planned my trip. We parted ways once we spent some time together after arrival, and I was off to my hostel. As soon as I stepped out of the subway station in Brooklyn, it was very clear to me that we were no longer in the commercial part of Brooklyn that I have seen on TV. This part of the city was much more urban, and much less commercialized than what I had previously seen. There were kids running everywhere without the supervision of parents, men catcalling me everyone two minutes ("Hey babygirl, I love that lipstick."), graffiti on

a majority of the once empty walls of buildings, and run down apartment complexes.

After having a Dorothy, you are not in Kansas anymore moment and almost getting very nervous, I decided to just roll with it and continue on to finding my hostel. I was definitely stepping outside of my comfort zone.

My second trip to New York City was much more spur of the moment than my first: through the online newsletters I had signed up for, I found out that Patti Smith, queen of punk rock, was playing two shows at Webster Hall in Manhattan. I immediately booked a hostel, this time in Chelsea NY, booked my bus tickets, and planned my second three day trip to New York City. This time, I was able to explore what was left of the original punk scene in Manhattan instead of Brooklyn, when I was not able to find much relevant punk information.

This time around, I traveled completely independently and was confident to do so after getting through Brooklyn with little help. I took a Megabus down to the city on an early Sunday morning, the last Sunday of December. Using a map app called Transit, which I had found during my first trip and had saved me from getting lost many times, I found that the concert venue that Patti Smith was playing at was only a 25 minute walk from the hostel.

Since this trip was more spur of the moment than the last, I did not have much of a plan on where I could go, besides the concert I revolved my trip around. I took the majority of Sunday afternoon and night to research places to go, and to walk around Chelsea and get familiar with my surroundings. Chelsea was very much the New York City I had known from the movies and television shows I had seen: there were stores of every variety, a Starbucks on every block, the sidewalks full of people walking like they

were in a grand hurry, taxi cabs beeping their horns constantly, and I could even see the Empire State Building, which was only about a dozen or so blocks up. That evening, I finalized my list of places to travel the next day, and went to bed early, so I could be rested for a day full of exploring what was left of the punk world in Manhattan.

Classic Venue: CBGB

Classic punk's original and most famous venue, CBGBs, is still a standing building in Manhattan. It is not a functioning punk club any longer: in fact, it is quite the opposite. What was CBGB's is now a high-end men's clothing store. The white overhang on the outside of store that used to read "CBGB OMFUG" in red letters was now solid black. Many of the original features of the club are featured in this store, though, but they



Figure 9 CBGB's before and after it turned into a John Varvatos clothing store.

Image courtesy of ajournalofmusicalthings.com.

are largely blocked off and marked as a display-only feature. Walking through this store, I could not help but sense all four members of the Ramones rolling in their graves: this store was a pure representation of capitalism and commercialism, principles that the core of original punk were completely against, and principles that punks had developed themselves around. The store was complete with records selling for \$50, \$1,200 leather jackets, \$1,000 studded combat boots, and original photographs of punk artists selling for \$1,000 each. Through the many interviews I had read with punk artists of New York in the 1970's, I could not help but think that most of these people in the photographs selling for such a high price would either think that it was terrible to make such a profit off of a photograph of a person, or that it was humorous and ironic a picture of them would be worth so much to someone. The layers of old stickers and flyers advertising concerts from the 1970's through the early 2000's were covered by a glass casing. The area where the original bathroom used to be is still there, but is no longer a bathroom. It is now has no door and has a red velvet chair sitting in what looks like a small cove. I never got to experience what CBGB's once was in the 1970's and 1980's, due to the fact that I was born in 1993, but I could not help but feel disturbed by what this classic New York punk site had turned into: it is now a standing example of commercialism that the original punks of the 1970's were so adamantly against. This emotional experience I felt while walking through what CBGB's had turned into was the moment that I felt like a true punk at heart.

Patti Smith

During my stay in Manhattan, I had the privilege of seeing Queen of Punk Rock Patti Smith at Webster Hall. The benefit of this venue was that it is standing room only, so everyone paid the same price for an equal chance to get close to the stage. I walked to the venue from my hostel and arrived to a line of people behind a gate. The show had just sold out, and there were a few men in the side of the street asking me if I had tickets. I got in after being carded by the bouncer, and was led to the upstairs ballroom section of Webster Hall. Webster Hall has three separate sections, including a room for small-scale shows and a room for clubbing/dance shows. There were many girls in there early 20's going to the clubbing room in tight skirts and heels. Walking up the stairs to the ballroom was a wide array of people in gender, age, style, and race. I noticed people from my age to people in their 60's, a representation of men and women, people there alone and with family and with significant others. I heard a variety of languages being spoken, from the obvious English to French and Spanish. I could tell I was at the show of an icon, not just a small hardcore or punk band. I bought a glass of wine and was able to get to the center of the room. I cursed my short stature, as I could barely see over the heads of those in front of me. After about 15 minutes, the lights went down, and Patti Smith appeared on stage. She wanted to introduce her "good friend" Michael Stipe, lead singer of band R.E.M, who would be opening for her. This opener was a surprise, and even more of a surprise for someone going to see a punk legend, as R.E.M. is an alternative rock/pop band. Stipe played six songs, varying from Sinatra's "New York, New York," to his original songs. It was definitely not punk music, but Stipe made his respect for Patti

obvious as he talked her up between songs. After his six songs were up, Stipe left the stage, about 20 minutes passed, and finally Queen Patti came out to play.

Patti opened up with “Dancing Barefoot,” a song she wrote with the Patti Smith Group. As she was playing the first song, two French women in front of me were talking loudly and kissing their boyfriends. They all had at least four inches on me, and I was getting a bit frustrated. As time went on throughout the night, I noticed the people around us start to space themselves from them. The mother and daughter, who appeared to be around my age, next to me kept glaring at the women as they spoke to each other loudly in French, spilled their beers, and kissed each other and their boyfriends.

Between two of her songs, Patti was talking about her newfound obsession with Dr. Who and David Tenet. She was talking about her massive crush on Tenet, when a fan yelled, “Happy Birthday, Patti!!” (her birthday was the following day). She responded with, “Well thank you, but my birthday is tomorrow. They say you can still get a man at 67, but not at 68!” A male fan then yelled, “Patti, you can have me anytime!” Patti started laughing, said a quiet thank you, and continued to laugh. Every time she started to speak, she kept giggling again. Patti continued to play her classics along with a few cover songs. She left the stage for two songs while they played some covers of their own. Lenny Kaye, who has been playing with Patti since the 70’s, said, “I remember playing at this place back when it was The Ritz.” Another of Patti’s classic band members, Tony Shanahan, chimed in and said, “Yea, we used to look for women over here (points to the left balcony) and do our drugs over here (points to the right balcony).” They played two very loud rock songs, complete with a light show.

Patti completed her set, but returned for an encore soon after. She gave a small speech on the importance of having a place to speak one's mind and participate in self-expression. The last song of her encore was her controversial "Rock 'N Roll Nigger," a song she wrote in the 70's about the rebels and misfits of the world, which she defined as a nigger. The opening of the song is one of Patti's poems, which starts with, "I haven't fucked much with the past, but I've fucked plenty with the future." She then yelled to the crowd,

"We are going to win! We're going to do our work, we're going to be the kind of people we want, and if they're going to fuck the whole world up, if we can't stop it, they're not going to stop us. You are the future! You'll decide what will happen to our earth, to our water, to our children! People! Wake up! Be happy! Be strong! And live your fucking life the way you need to live it! You are the future and the future is now!"

This was Patti's last song. After she finished it, she thanked the crowd several times, bowed, and left. The crowd cleared up quickly, as the bouncers were telling everyone to leave promptly. From this experience, I feel that Patti the Icon was more of a presence than Patti the Punk, even though her punk individualism was still very present. I overheard someone in the crowd saying, "I'm surprised she didn't go on any long political rants, she does that sometimes." The change of shows that Patti plays now compared to shows she played during the beginning stages of punk represented how punk in America has evolved over the years.

Conclusion

Between my conversations with musicians and fans, and my struggles in finding punk music, I concluded that feminist punk has faded in both quantity and popularity in New York. I got an understanding of how the hardcore concert scene provoked the beginning of a punk feminist revolution in the U.S. in the late 1980's. There has not been a recent feminist revolution or a major event regarding sexism to spark the beginning of another feminist movement in punk, like the series of events in America that lead to the Riot Grrrl Movement. The Riot Grrrl Movement was successful in creating a place for women in the punk world. Female punks of today, like the Damn Broads, are able to enjoy a space paved for them by their Riot Grrrl predecessors, even if they do not identify as Riot Grrrls. Original punk artist Patti Smith still has political beliefs she advocates for, but she definitely attracts more of a mainstream crowd than she did in the 70's. This may be a good thing, as her message could spread to a greater number of people. Yet, it is definitely safe to say the Patti's role in punk is not the same as it was 40 years ago. Feminist punk tends to gain popularity and relevance when it is especially needed. Feminist punk has evolved in the United States from a needed movement for equality in the punk world to a normal component of punk. In the millennial age, feminist punk is needed in Russia, as seen through the actions and widespread following of the band Pussy Riot!

Chapter 4

Pussy Riot! and Feminist Punk in Russia

Punk and Feminism in Russia: A History

While a lot in Russia has changed since the fall of the Soviet Union, a lot has also stayed the same, in regards to the role of women. After the Soviet Union was dissolved, women in the Soviet Union were pushed to obtain an education and seek professional jobs. While this was a step forward for Soviet women, the traditional characteristics of masculinity and femininity were never challenged, which maintained the traditionally highly patriarchal society. Women were still expected to do the housework, be mothers, and follow the rules of a housewife or stay-at-home mom, while also working and frequently experiencing sexual harassment in their place of employment. Women were not protected from sexual harassment in the workplace, and they were not provided with any service that would have made their role as a homemaker and an employee more reasonable to handle (Holmgren 2013).

Under Putin's rule, program funding for gender centers and nongovernmental organizations dropped dramatically. Feminist friendly organizations felt the need to operate under the radar in fear of retaliation. In addition to severed funding, post-Soviet capitalism frequently featured advertising that sexualized women. Mail-order-bride agencies advertised their women as the type of traditional wife Western men could no longer find. Sex trafficking is also a major issue, exploiting women in a horrific manner. Women across Russia were encouraged to package themselves as the perfect wife, with the ultimate goal of pleasing their men (Holmgren 2013). It is important to note that during Soviet times women were not discouraged on the jobs they could have and education they could obtain, it was the patriarchal ideology that transferred the way they

were treated in these jobs, and outside of the jobs as well. Women did not have the proper programming or training to recognize the opportunity for equality they were provided with through education and employment. Women did not challenge men as natural leaders in the workplace, politics, and at home. Female-targeted healthcare was very limited, and abortion was the main source of birth control. Soviet women suffered limitation through patriarchal principles and the minor possibility of equal job/education opportunities that were clouded to them through traditional patriarchal ways. Patriarchy was far too powerful for women to gain even hope for equality during Soviet times. This tradition carried over to Post-Soviet Russia. Putin took the classically patriarchal country, and rebranded this patriarchy with misogyny, as he displayed himself as the ultimate macho man.

The feminist issue in Russia lies in deep patriarchal roots. While no protest, policy, organization, etc. can undo these roots singlehandedly, they most certainly can have an impact in their own realm and can encourage others to speak out as well. If enough actors from different societal realms come out and do this, it most certainly can have an impact on feminism in Russia. Pussy Riot! used musical protest effectively in the punk world. Their arrest uniquely had the ability to connect with people worldwide, making their protest influential on a global level as well. While this action did not completely solve feminist issues in Russia, or even come close to it, it did bring awareness to many political issues in Post-Soviet Russia.

Russian punk developed as a subgenre of Russian rock. Shared characteristics of Russian rock can be observed in the developed of Russian punk culture, as they were borrowed from Western punk, like the do-it-yourself attitude and theme of challenging

traditions and conventions. The punk scene did not emerge until the late 1980's and early 1990's. Rock culture emerged with strength in the Soviet Union during the 1980's. At this time, the rock music gaining attention was very poetic and appreciated for literary reasons more than musicality reasons (Steinholt 2003, 89). Lyrics of Russian rock music have traditionally been very important. Russian rock gained its popularity after rock blew up in the West. Cover bands of Western rock music began to spring up in the Soviet Union during the mid 1960's, with the Beatles as a major influence. Hard rock started to become included in the rock scene of the Soviet Union during the 1970's. Amateur rock artists were discouraged through the authorities at this time, who offered the chance to join the Vocal-Instrumental Ensemble, where they would be offered a salary, equipment, uniforms, and the opportunity to go on tour and record albums. Amateur bands were targeted by authorities, who would break up their concerts and take away their equipment. This regulation was an attempt to control the growing hard rock scene, and was effective in doing so, but amateur bands who experimented with different types of rock music still existed. When the Leningrad Rock Club opened in 1981, rock had a place in a major Soviet city, and rock musicians had a place to let their culture expand (Steinholt 2003, 91-92). Musicians of early Russian rock were influenced by punk musicians of America and England but did not necessarily mirror their musical style. The loud and rebellious punk rock sound would not have passed by strict Soviet authorities. It was the punk ideology they admired and were inspired by. Early Russian rock music did not have a commercial aspect, similarly to punk music of the West. It was largely an outlet for rock musicians and fans, and provided them a place where they felt that they could be free. Punk bands, by Western definition, simply did not exist in a large

movement as in the West because they could not legally exist at this point. There were some small pockets of underground punk in the late 1970's and into the 1980's, but a major movement had not yet taken place.

Early Russian punk expressed frustration and desperation to show disgust for Soviet cultural traditions, like discouraging amateur bands, through lyrics and language. They were sick of the way their society was being operated, and used punk music as a tool to express their personal war on society (Gololobov 2014, 32). In 1984, Siberian punk was born and the band Grazhdanskaya Oborona served as a musical framework for contemporary Russian punk (Gololobov 2014, 29). Lead singer Letov, who left the band after dealing with mental health issues, began to perform with a female artist Yana 'Yanka' Dyagileva. She became a leading punk artist in the Soviet Union, which was remarkable given her status as a woman. Her music was in line with the poetic/romantic themes of Soviet rock music in the 1980's. This type of punk was very different than Western punk, but the theme of outspoken rebellion towards tradition was prevalent: her raw honesty on romantic and emotional topics were taboo for Soviet women, and were not often seen in the punk scene of the 1980's in the Soviet Union.

Original Russian rock bands consisted primarily of men. There was a ban on dancing in shows in the 1980's. The media did not give Russian rock a high amount of attention, leading its development into an underground world. Later on, as punk emerged from this new world of rock, it already had the punk principle of authenticity. Russia had a history of underground music due to authoritative restrictions. The role of women in rock was incredibly limited and was not prominent through the beginnings of Russian rock. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russian rock turned to more "profane rock

concerns” like sexuality and civic and religious issues (Steinholt 2003,105). Men were still primarily the main actors in the punk scene, which was very aggressive and largely involved alcohol and heavy intoxication. Frontrunners of punk were known to frequently insult the crowd, play controversial and explicit music, and move around on stage in a bizarre manner.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, artistic cultural practices were no longer discouraged at an authoritative level. Suppression of musical ideology and aesthetics disintegrated, and unfortunately with them, so did the foundation for the production of music and places where (regulated) Soviet music was performed. Punk in the early 90’s was largely based on how punk was supposed to look, and how punk music should sound. Punks in the 90’s were searching for ways to achieve cultural autonomy, and for ways to confront the traditionally narrow-minded themes of 1980’s Russian rock punk (Gololobov 2014, 34). In 1991, major club TaMtAm opened, and served as a major venue for punk in St. Petersburg, as CBGB’s was vital to punk in New York in the 1970’s. Punk in the mid-late 1990’s in Russia grew into a punk movement smaller yet comparable to America and the UK 20 years prior.

Politically active punk began to emerge in the late 1990’s, and was largely left-winged. This side of punk was non-violent. By 1995, members of the punk scene began to publish politically themed zines, similarly to the women and girls of the Riot Grrrl Movement. Although punk musicians of this time were largely leftist, their takes on politics and punk were very diverse, allowing people with different backgrounds to become involved with personal interest.

When Vladimir Putin came into power in 2000, his aim was to squash anarchy and to build a strong state. Punk had been developed, and people in the scene began to be more confrontational with opposing ideological groups. The left-winged scene was forced into forming their own network (Gololobov 2014, 43). Hardcore openly no longer related to the punk scene, creating a divide between two partitions I am looking at. As the Riot Grrrl Movement partially stemmed from inspiration to create an alternative to the hardcore scene (for women), punk subcultures in Russia were developed in the early 2000's as an alternative to the violent hardcore scene and in search of their own unique identities. From here, a small feminist punk subculture was formed. This was not a major movement like the Riot Grrrl Movement was in the United States, but rather a few female bands and musicians who sang about their role as women in Russian society and oppressive masculinity in relation to the lives of Russian women. One such band was BARTO, formed in the mid 2000's, whose lead singer Mariya Lyubicheva sang about "the commodified female body, the lack of female agency and the oppressive cult of



Figure 10 Russian band BARTO performs in Moscow.

Image courtesy of www.farfrommoscow.com.

masculinity in Russian society” (Gololobov 2014, 44). BARTO criticized the cultural mainstream and the new middle class that emerged with Putin’s Russia. A major feminist punk moment had never really started. Then Pussy Riot! made waves across the world after getting arrested for a musical performance that lasted less than a minute. This may be the spark that Russia’s feminist punks need to develop a movement of their own.

Pussy Riot!: Background Information

Pussy Riot! was founded in August, 2011, and consisted of 11 revolving female members. From the beginning, they started to organize and stage protests wearing brightly covered balaclavas over their heads, tights, and dresses. Their immediate reasoning for banding together was a reaction to the news that Vladimir Putin would be running for another term as president, who had already served two terms from 2000-

2008, in addition to feminist reasons and the fight for political freedom. In only six months after their formation, three members of Pussy Riot!, Maria Alekhina, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, and Yekaterina Samutsevich (Masha, Nadia, and Katya) were arrested for their protest at Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow after performing their “Punk Prayer.” The lyrics to Pussy Riot’s! music was their tool for expression, embodying the Russian rock tradition of emphasis on lyrics more than musicality. Before the arrest, Pussy Riot’s! most notable performance was in Red Square, where they donned their dresses, tights, and balaclavas despite the cold Russian January weather.

The Trial

The women of Pussy Riot! were arrested on counts of hooliganism. Hooliganism was largely looked down upon as a female offense in Russia, as acting like a hooligan is considered a masculine characteristic and did not fit into traditional female gender roles (Holmgren 2013). The prosecution against Pussy Riot! based their argument on Pussy Riot’s! alleged hate towards the Russian Orthodox Church. Witnesses denied seeing anything political about the message of Pussy Riot’s! protest in the church. Many witnesses emphasized how the women had desecrated a space that is meant to be sacred for men (Schuler 2013, 12).

Many “Free Pussy Riot!” events led to further arrests and violence among protesters and police. The morning before the sentencing, which would happen at 3pm, consisted of very few people gathered outside and virtually no protesters. This surprised observer and Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies at University of Maryland Catherine Schuler, who expected a larger turnout, especially considering the amount of

journalists and political activists that filled the courtroom during the period of the trial, but suspected that protesters were afraid of the big day (Schuler 2013, 8). The arrests and violence of the Free Pussy Riot! protests seemed to have largely squashed spontaneous protest, much to the delight of Putin and the Russian police.



Figure 11 Yekaterina Sametsevich, Maria Alekhina, and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova sit behind a glass wall in court.

Image courtesy of designyoutrust.com.

Schuler believes that Pussy Riot! never really had a chance for acquittal, as their defense was not much of a defense. Samutsevich's father, under oath, said that his daughter was good until she began to spend time with Tolokonnikova, who was a bad feminist influence, as feminism was unethical for the Russian civilization and an ideology meant for Westerners, not Russians (Schuler 2013, 12). Alekhina and Samutsevich had two character witnesses, and Tolokonnikova had none. The defense based their argument off the idea that the three women had a mentally altered state of

mind at the time, and that the church where they protested was not nearly as important as the prosecution was making it out to be.

Punishment

The three members of Pussy Riot! arrested, Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, Maria Alekhina, and Ekaterina Samutsevich, spent five months in jail during trial, and were sentenced to two additional years in of confinement in a medium security labor camp after the trial for hooliganism. Samutsevich was acquitted on the counts that she was pulled away before she technically participated in the performance. The sentencing itself took Judge Marina Syrova 2 hours, 41 minutes, and 38 seconds to read more than 70 pages that included charges, details of the incident the caused arrest, prosecution, defense, material evidence found, the symbolic and historical significance of the Church the incident happened in, and then finally the sentencing (Schuler 2013, 10). Hooliganism covers a wide array of actions and can include the use of weapons. It typically covers anything that motivates hatred towards a racial, political, religious, or ideological group. This sentence stated that the members of Pussy Riot! were directing their hate towards the members of the Russian Orthodox Church and Christians worldwide, and their anti-Putin message in their lyrics was never confirmed by witnesses. This sentencing shows that the arrest was largely about motive and much less about the action of the event. Tolokonnikova argued that their act was not a protest of religious hatred, but merely an artistic political expression. The defense chose to ignore the edited (and artistic) videos Pussy Riot! put out while searching for evidence against their character. Despite the fact that the three women are educated (Alekhina studied photograph and avant-garde and

Samutsevich was a journalism student) the defense and Pussy Riot's! largest critics said that the art Tolokonnikova spoke of never actually happened. They claimed if there was any sort of art to the situation, the witnesses (that they called victims) could not tell. While the art of Pussy Riot! was not traditional, through its punk format, it was art nonetheless.



Figure 12 Nadezhda Tolokonnikova with fellow inmates at the labor camp.

Image courtesy of i.dailymail.co.uk.

Conditions of the labor camp the women were sent to were harsh at best. Nadya and Masha spent their days working as sewing machine operators. A journalist from *Novaya Gazeta*, a liberal opposition newspaper, was able to interview Nadya about these conditions, film it, and post the video on the newspaper's webpage. The journalist started off focusing on Nadya's hands, once again focusing on a part of the body, since they are now knobby after sewing through her fingers multiple times on the job (Bernstein 2013).

Journalist: Is this because one has to sew very fast?

Nadya: Of course, you have to sew very fast. You cannot let your brigade down.

J: How many of these inner linings do you need to produce in a day?

N: 320.

...

J: Do you have hot water?

N: No, only cold water.

J: How do you wash?

N: We go to the public bathhouse once a week.

J: What do you do the rest of the time?

N: It's OK, you can deal with cold water. (Previously she mentioned that the temperature outside reached -30 degree Celsius, and the premises were not well heated.)

J: What other everyday maintenance and household difficulties do you experience besides the fact that you do not have hot water and cannot wash every day?

N: You know, I do not think much about everyday maintenance issues. I have always been a bit of an ascetic, and household issues are the least of my concerns.

J: And what about food?

N: The food is fine.

J: That is, you can eat it?

N: Yes, the food is quite bearable, that is you can eat it, and nothing will happen to you.

Support, Criticism, and Backlash



Figure 13 Femen shows their support bare breasted for Pussy Riot!

Image courtesy of www.polyvore.com.

The actions and arrest of Pussy Riot! inspired anti-Putin protests by Pussy Riot! supporters that are still happening today. A feminist guerilla performance group from Ukraine, Femen, showed their bare breasts in support of Pussy Riot! and against Putin.

Political leader Aung San

Suu Kyi from Burma voiced her support for the members of Pussy Riot! arrested, as one woman who experienced political discrimination to the next. In response to the actions of Pussy Riot!, the Duma created more legislation regarding religious opposition, further suppressing the opposition (Schuler 2013, 16).

The coverage that exposed the living conditions of Nadya and Masha in the prison camp in *Novaya Gazeta* proved to be an effective way to get support for Pussy Riot!.

This interview was raw, honest, and did not try to openly persuade the reader to either support or critique the actions of Pussy Riot! for moral reasons of their political action. Rather, it showed the harsh condition of Russian Labor camps, which is relatable to the average Russian citizen. Through a comment in the newspaper's webpage, an anonymous viewer changed his/her mind from negative to positive support, yet still focused on the physical appearance of Nadya, further treating them as sexual objects rather than people.

“First, my attitude to this prank was very negative. I thought it was a pure provocation and PR. Now that I watched the interviews, I really feel sorry for the girls. I think it is time for our government to start thinking about releasing them. And one more thing: they look so much better without balaclavas. Some life we have: first you see them in masks in a church, then you finally see them with open faces—but they are already in prison,” (Bernstein, 2013).

While this type of media portrayal did result in Pussy Riot! support, it also further reflected the patriarchal attitude of the average Russian.

Pussy Riot! critics were outspoken and easy to find in Russia. Most of this criticism was largely related to their gender and views influenced by a heavily patriarchal society. From journalists to politicians to everyday people, Pussy Riot! faced terrible threats, criticism of their character, and were condescended. One such critic was journalist and TV personality Maksim Shevchenko, who wrote: “I think Orthodox women should catch and flog these little bitches with birch rods. Let them also have a ‘performance.’” Similarly, political conservative Egor Kholmogorov, said that, “...if I was working for this church, I would first call the TV crews and then undress them, cover

them with feathers and honey, shave their heads, and kick them out to the freezing cold in front of the cameras,” (Bernstein 2013). Critics often targeted the sexual nature of the three women. Running themes of threats directed towards them included whipping, stripping them naked, tarring/feathering them, and spanking. These types of threats were demeaning and insulting to the intellect and characters of the members of Pussy Riot! arrested, speaking of them as if they are lesser people, a reflection on Russia’s view of women. Even Putin’s main critic, politician Boris Nemtsov, said, “If I could get my way, I would spank these girls and let them go. What is going on here is sadism and cruelty,” (Bernstein 2013).

As outspoken critics of Vladimir Putin, his reaction to Pussy Riot’s! protest and arrest is particularly important. Putin said that the event itself was a witches gathering, and he accused the women of performing in group sex during one of their previous musical protests. He even made a joke of this accusation, implying that group sex can be fun but can allow one to get lazy (Bernstein 2013). This joke showed that Putin did not take the protest or message of Pussy Riot! seriously, as he focused on sexualizing the female body. Putin was also concerned that Pussy Riot! was going to corrupt the “moral health” of Russian society. This statement equated the Russian Orthodox Church with the Russian state (Bernstein 2013). He claimed that Pussy Riot’s artistic political event was labeled as such to create an excuse to commit hooliganism. Putin’s government largely desired to be a strong state, in practice and in reputation. This desire was reflected in the punishment for Pussy Riot! Putin’s Russia is openly anti-West, and the strong reaction towards the women was very different of how a Western nation would have reacted. Putin’s desire for a strong/intimidating state and to be opposite of the West, combined

with a lesser view of women (compared to men) explain why the women got such harsh punishments, for such a short and non-physically threatening action.

Russian Pussy Riot! supporters held a variety of reasons behind their support for the three arrested members. One issue that the three women ran into with some supporters was that they did not actually support Pussy Riot's! message but rather they opposed the reaction of the Russian government. While their support was helpful and appreciated, the fact that these supporters openly separated the action from political reaction did not embrace the feminist message Pussy Riot! was trying to convey through punk music. In a nation where a majority of the population were not proponents of equal rights for women, the band experienced difficulties getting open support for their feminist message in Russia. The feminist message of Pussy Riot! was so unique in this traditionally patriarchal culture that it was often misunderstood, even by Russian liberals, who did not promote a feminist agenda. Advocates often spoke of Nadezhda and Maria's physical beauty and their role as mothers. Ekaterina, who was single and had no children, was praised as a true Russian, advocating for Russian women. Their political feminist message was ironically distracted by their characteristics as women, in traditional Russian terms. Andrei Kuraev, a senior deacon and unexpected supporter, spoke of being able to forgive the girls for their actions, and wrote them off as children playing a prank, and would, "...give them a fatherly pinching... To bring them back to their senses," instead of acknowledging that they are educated adults. His message showed how patriarchy was ingrained in the everyday lives of men and women, and how this is displayed through speech patterns and treating women like children, not adults. Yet, because Pussy Riot! attracted activists for a variety of causes, their impact on feminist

politics was unique: they attracted political advocates, anti-Putin supporters, feminists, etc. (Bernstein 2013).

The feminist message largely misunderstood by Russians was one that Western nations could easily connect with. The Pussy Riot! case was unique in that it turned into an international phenomenon regarding artistic freedom of expression and human rights (Talanova 2015, 2). Entering a global sphere was significant for their role in the public sphere. Major human rights organization Amnesty International openly labeled the three arrested women as prisoners of conscience and spent a lot of effort spreading their story and encouraging nonviolent action from people worldwide. Public protests sprung up in Western capitals and Russian Embassy sites in Europe and America. “Free Pussy Riot!” shirts could be seen worn on supporters worldwide, and Pussy Riot! benefit concerts were performed by bands supporting the arrested women. The Red Hot Chili Peppers and Madonna performed on behalf of Pussy Riot! in Moscow, for example. Patti Smith spoke up for the girls on many occasions, especially at her shows in hopes of influencing her diverse fan base. Yoko Ono, Bjork, Stephen Fry, and countless other Western artists and writers openly showed their support for Pussy Riot!, and Maria and Nadya received many letters from celebrities across the world while in labor camp.

The Effects

A large amount of the support Pussy Riot! got in Russia was for reasons other than the feminist political message they were trying to spread. Women of the Riot Grrrl Movement in the United States ran in to similar struggles, as the media misinterpreted their cause and their bodies were frequently exploited. Yet, this misinterpretation and the

variety of attention the Pussy Riot! got in Russia, in addition to the preexisting tension between the Western world and Russia, made it so the women got a wide international following, especially in the West.

Westerners who were familiar with the Riot Grrrl Movement were able to easily connect with Pussy Riot's! style, which was similar to the Riot Grrrl style. They were also able to utilize technology and social media to spread Pussy Riot's! message and gain support. The band themselves used the media to plan and carry out their protests. According to Symon Hill, these political protests were built upon a media strategy that planned upon the use of hashtag activism, clicktivism, promoting an event/a video online by putting them on Facebook and Twitter pages, using social media as a tool of social change, and communication "in new and imaginative ways" (Talanova 2015, 17). These techniques helped Pussy Riot! go from an internet phenomenon to a band internationally covered by mainstream media. Even the performance that resulted in their famous arrest could be very easily found from several angles on Youtube. Easy access to information on Pussy Riot! helped them gain international fame. The risk of Western infamy was that the Pussy Riot! story became romanticized, in a classic Hollywood way. Yet this romanticism appealed to many Westerners, and could be a reason behind some of the support coming from the West, as the girls became heroes (Talanova 2015, 20).

Pussy Riot! did inspire other Russians to form musical groups, perform in artistic protest, and show their support. Their inspiration in the art realm was undeniable. Russian artist Artem Loskutov from Novosibirsk was inspired to create and sell t-shirts of the Virgin Mary wearing a Pussy Riot! style balaclava. Russian performance artist Petr Pavlensky sewed his mouth shut, stood in front of Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg, and

held a sign that read, “The performance of Pussy Riot was a replay of Jesus Christ's



Figure 14 Petr Pavlenski shows his support for Pussy Riot! with his mouth sewn shut.

Image courtesy of www.daringtodo.com.

famous action,” (Talanova 2015, 4). Other Russian artists performed cover songs of Pussy Riot’s! “Punk Prayer.” Several documentaries were filmed by Western directors, exposing Pussy Riot! for what they truly stood for and tracing their history. Even symphonies and operas were created in their honor, like Ilya Demutsky of St. Petersburg who wrote an opera putting music to pieces of Maria Alyokhina’s speech in the court. “The Rite of Spring” ballet in Vienna in 2013 was altered by choreographer Christine Gaigg, who included a presentation of “Punk Prayer” and the story of the arrest of the three women (Talanova 2015, 4). Unfortunately, many Russian supporters were arrested for reasons similar that landed two members of Pussy Riot! into a labor camp, which had a visible decreasing effect on the amount of Pussy Riot! support in Russia.

Future of Pussy Riot! and Russia

The jailed members of Pussy Riot! did not throw in the towel after they were released from the labor camp. They were interviewed on a variety of Western news programs, performed in New York City, protested and got arrested during the Sochi Olympics in 2014 for planning a protest (and were quickly released), and most recently released a song with Nick Zinner of American band Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Andrew Wyatt of Swedish band Miiike Snow, on Eric Garner's behalf called "I Can't Breathe." Pussy Riot! has inspired others in Russia to express themselves through artistic protest. Pussy Riot! was not a part of a large feminist punk movement, as the bands involved in the Riot Grrrl Movement, but a movement could possibly be in its infancy with Pussy Riot! in a position that could make them comparable to Bikini Kill's position in the Riot Grrrl movement. The international spotlight on Pussy Riot! makes their situation unique from the feminist punk movement in America. As the Riot Grrrl Movement was effective within the musical realm, the case of Pussy Riot! was effective in bringing national attention to patriarchal Russia, and Russia under oppressive Putin power. Pussy Riot's! use of feminist politics through punk music was effective in getting widespread attention and influencing other Russian women and artists to use music as a form of artistic, political expression.

Conclusion

Women across the world have used punk to create a place in the rock music world they felt they belonged in. Women of the United States successfully created a female friendly place in punk through the Riot Grrrl Movement and their “girl revolution.” Pussy Riot! in Russia took punk music and the Russian emphasis on lyrics to stand up for women’s rights in Putin’s heavily patriarchal Russia. Women of the Riot Grrrl Movement effectively used punk to promote feminist politics in the music scene. This movement grew to a national level and inspired girls and women in America to embrace Riot Grrrl punk as they embrace their own individuality as strong women. The Riot Grrrl Movement did not directly inspire formal legislation but it did create a platform for women and girls to express their frustration of a patriarchal society, where they could defy gender roles imposed on them. Women like the Damn Broads now feel welcome and comfortable playing punk music as women, to the point that they do not feel the need to identify as feminists or relate to Riot Grrrls.

Although a feminist punk scene in the United States does not currently exist like it did in the early 1990’s during the Riot Grrrl Movement, it does not mean that feminism in punk is nonexistent. Feminism in punk does not have its own movement anymore because of the success the Riot Grrrls achieved. My difficulty of finding punk music in New York shows that the genre of punk is on a natural lull, similar to the 1980’s after the initial punk movement swept America and the United Kingdom. Punk was an effective tool used by a generation of youth in the 1970’s who felt like misfits in a capitalist society. Riot Grrrls then revamped the punk genre after the 1980’s lull, using feminist expression inspired by a misogynistic hardcore music scene. Punk will most likely be

revamped into another revolution when a movement that can utilize the subgenre arises. While hardcore still exists today, as I experienced in New York City, there are alternative punk rock shows that offer a safe place for women, like I experienced with the Damn Broads, the Drunken Cuddle, and Patti Smith. There is no movement dedicated specifically for feminist political expression today in the United States because female punk rockers are now an integral part of the scene, rather than a separate genre. The ability to assimilate in punk culture gave women in punk the equal place to rock that the Riot Grrrls of the 1990's were fighting for.

Pussy Riot! was able to gain international attention and support for their form of punk feminist political action. Part of this support could be thanks to the Riot Grrrl Movement, as the women involved in the movement could relate to the struggle the women of Pussy Riot! felt, although they never had to deal with as much state-induced discrimination and punishment. Pussy Riot! is just getting started, and so is a potential feminist punk movement in Russia. It is hard to tell if the actions of feminist punks will have legislative effectiveness in Russia, but they have already empowered female musicians and artists to use artistic expression as a tool for feminism and politics. Inspiring others to express frustration towards patriarchy is the first step that allowed the Riot Grrrl Movement to have success in the punk world, and this could have a similar outcome in Russia.

The effectiveness of the Riot Grrrl Movement and Pussy Riot! protests on national and international levels show how music can be used for a variety of purposes. Artistic expression through punk music was used by women to create a space where they could be who they wanted to be and ignore the gender roles of the culture they were born

into. Music is more than just a melody and words: in this case, music symbolizes women's fight for equality and desire to create a space where they no longer experience gender discrimination. Music brings in emotion, raw honesty, symbolism, fashion, and literary elements to create a political revolution. Music is a prevalent feature in many cultures worldwide. It has the ability to reach a variety of people at massive levels and develop connections among these people by providing them with something in common.

Punk music is a subgenre that represents a variety of political causes and welcomes all who feel connected to punk ideology. Punk primarily attracts the youth, which is important because the young are motivated to fight for what they believe in. Young people have the physical capability and mental energy to start revolutions and motivate their peers to do the same. In America, Riot Grrrls did this through the use of zines, developing safe space meetings where women could say what they wanted without judgment, using the structure of college campuses to strike interest in the movement, and encouraging each other to pick up an instrument and start playing music. In Russia, Pussy Riot! practiced nonviolent protest through playing music in very public places, where they would be seen and heard by women and girls they could inspire. After the arrest, international support by celebrities and public figures informed the youth worldwide who may not have heard about Pussy Riot! in any other capacity, and inspired them to attend benefit concerts, write letters in support of Pussy Riot! to the Russian Federation, purchase and wear "Free Pussy Riot!" shirts, and use art as self expression. Inspiration of the young is a key element of a successful revolution: they are motivated, have fresh minds, and different perspectives than the generations who have been in power for the entirety of their lives.

Because of the potential effectiveness music can have on society, its purpose should not be underestimated in politics and anthropology. Music can be used as a form of nonviolent action, and its unique ability to spread to the masses makes it a vital political component of popular culture. Musical protest can be an alternative to violent protest, or protest that has a strong possibility of turning violent. The potential uses of music in a symbolic and/or political way are endless. Music is applicable to anything that can be expressed, and can mean whatever the individual musician wants it to mean. Music can be relatable and bring people together; it can also inspire anger, resulting in the development of a new genre or subgenre, as Riot Grrrl punk was inspired by the negative factors of hardcore. Writing off music as just an art form undermines the potential that music can have on a variety of cultural aspects. Looking under the gender umbrella that would include gender roles, misogyny, and patriarchy is just one general example of where music can have effective outcomes in a specific sphere. Music can be and has been used effectively in revolutions for racial equality, LGBTQIA rights, animal rights, exposing class warfare, etc. Hip hop, for example, has been a particularly widely used genre in urban areas in regards to the crack epidemic and institutionalized racism. Music can be used in local, national, and international platforms. The variety of genres and messages offered through music provides people with musical variety, so they have different platforms to find something to fit their musical taste and personal ideologies. The options for the use of music are endless and have proved time and time again to effectively spread political messages to the masses.

Music is an artistic form with the potential to encourage massive amounts of people at local, state, national, and international levels to protest in a nonviolent manner,

providing them with a political voice where they may not otherwise have one. Punk music provided women in America with a voice to fight against gender discrimination and misogyny. Pussy Riot! in Russia have taken punk music and used it in their fight for equality in the traditionally heavy patriarchal state of Russia. America was socially, politically, and culturally in the right place for the feminist punk movement to have a chance to flourish. I believe with the international and internal support Pussy Riot! has received during their trial, imprisonment, and after their release where they picked up where they left off, Russia has been put in a position where a feminist punk movement could have similar success rates in the near future. Under Putin's rule, Russian punk feminists could potentially face greater consequences than Riot Grrrls in America did in the 1990's, but Pussy Riot! has put an international spotlight on Russia's treatment of women. If the world does not forget Pussy Riot!, a punk feminist revolution in Russia may be on its way.

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