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Every Girl Is a Riot Grrrl? Exploring the Intersections of Riot Grrrl and the Third Wave of Feminism

by

Stefanie L. Carter

Adviser: Sheila T. Cavanagh

Department of English

Sheila Cavanagh
Adviser

Harry Rusche
Committee Member

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson
Committee Member

April 11, 2010

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Abstract

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By Stefanie L. Carter

The early 1990s saw the emergence and development of the Riot Grrrl music subculture and the third wave of feminism, two socio-political movements that have since been compared and conflated by scholars in a number of disciplines. Due to the absence of leadership and hierarchy in both movements, as well as their shared historical and cultural contexts, these claims have gone unchallenged. In order to position riot grrrl as an independent cultural phenomenon, the first chapter of the thesis traces the emergence of the movement and examines the artistic and cultural movements that developed methods, techniques, and philosophical components of riot grrrl ideology and production. By examining the work of third wave feminists, as well as scholars and critics of the movement, I have developed a working definition of the third wave for the purpose of comparison with the riot grrrl movement. Chapter three utilizes the textual work of riot grrrl authors through the medium of zines in order to examine the similarities and differences between the two movements. These independent publications have been underutilized in other scholarly examinations, yet represent a significant portion of creative and theoretical production within the riot grrrl movement. Based on the analysis of riot grrrl zines in comparison to third wave feminist theory, it is clear that while superficially similar, the philosophy and praxis of riot grrrl and the third wave are not as clear or substantial as scholars have previously claimed. By establishing riot grrrl as a discrete subcultural phenomenon and utilizing primary textual evidence, this thesis attempts to challenge the assumptions of earlier scholars and recognize the value of riot grrrl texts.

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To my mother

S.L.C.

Table of Contents:

INTRODUCTION

The riot grrrl movement and the third wave of feminism both emerged in the early 1990s, albeit from starkly different origins. The riot grrrl movement began with the frustrations of women in the punk underground and their desire to establish a community and philosophy that addressed the needs of similar young women. By adopting the punk do-it-yourself (DIY) philosophy, creating their own zines (independent publications associated with punk), and forming bands, those involved in creating riot grrrl utilized established punk methods to develop their own independent movement. The philosophy of riot grrrl was developed in response to the exclusion many women experienced within the punk subculture, a movement they had joined to escape their alienation from dominant culture and resist mainstream influences. The rejection of hierarchy, formal organization, and designated leadership was central to the riot grrrl philosophy. Participants were encouraged to adapt the movement to fit their needs, define it in relationship to their experiences, and engage with other riot grrrls in order to expand the influence of the movement.

As riot grrrl music became popular and those associated with it received media attention, young women across the United States began to identify with riot grrrl and participate in the new movement. While many merely assumed "riot grrrl" as part of their identity, others sought out communities of like-minded young women in order to join in and contribute to the movement. These communities were manifested through the formation of "riot grrrl chapters," meetings where women would discuss experiences, beliefs, political goals, and ideas, as well as through the theoretical community of riot grrrl zine networks. While zines are not unique to riot grrrl, their distribution resulted in

the dissemination of riot grrrl philosophy throughout the country. Not only did zine networks expose readers to the ideals and philosophy of riot grrrl, but zines also introduced a medium through which young women could participate in the movement, despite of their proximity to other riot grrrls. Because participation wasn't limited by geographical location and was aided by the simplicity of production, the zines produced by riot grrrls constitute a significant portion of the movement's philosophy.

The third wave of feminism emerged at a similar historical moment, but the impetus for developing this new feminist wave was a combination of cultural phenomena: the erosion of women's rights during the Reagan and Bush presidencies, the proliferation of anti-feminist backlash discourse, and increasing popular attention to "postfeminist" authors. An essay published in the January 1992 issue of *Ms.* magazine marks the first reference to the third wave. The article was written by Rebecca Walker, daughter of Alice Walker, who concluded with the statement "I am not a postfeminist feminist. I am the third wave." Following the publication of Walker's declaration, countless theorists and critics began discussing, defining, and criticizing the new wave of feminist theory and activism.

As feminists began articulating their own conceptions of the movement, the third wave developed into a substantial location for feminist theoretical production. Third wave texts attempted to frame the movement within feminism: some theorists defined the third wave in opposition to the work and methods of second wave feminists while others posited the movement as the development or evolution of earlier feminist ideals. Many identified mainstream culture as the target of their criticism and focused on engagement with popular media, while others articulated their experiences and beliefs through

personal narratives. Regardless of their methodology, the collective works of third wave authors produced a new body of feminist theory, one that was influenced by postmodern and poststructuralist critiques of objectivity and authority, earlier feminists' criticism of second wave essentialism and exclusivity, and the cultural milieu of 1990s America. As a result, third wave feminists do not support a singular ideology or outline definitive "third wave" political goals; instead, the third wave represents a theoretical location wherein inclusivity, difference, subjectivity, and contradiction are embraced as integral components of feminist theory and praxis.

Due to the amorphous nature of both the third wave of feminism and riot grrrl, as well as their shared cultural and political context, it has been easy for many feminist scholars to conflate the two movements. Many of the personal and political issues present in third wave texts, including sexual harassment, body image, sexism, racism, homophobia, and domestic violence, are shared with riot grrrl authors, and these ostensible similarities have allowed scholars' assertions to go unchallenged. In order to illustrate the necessity of this thesis, the following examples illustrate the associations posited by theorists between riot grrrl and the third wave.

In Leslie Heywood's introduction to *The Women's Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third Wave Feminism*, she describes the "cultural dimension" of riot grrrl as "engaged with third-wave feminism and its ideals of using mass culture as a venue for activism to bring about social change."[1] She characterizes the movement as "one of the most visible forms of third-wave feminism," although it was both "limited in its scope (largely white, middle-class girls participated) and did little to affect civic

[1] Leslie Heywood, "Introduction: A Fifteen-Year History of Third-Wave Feminism," in *The Women's Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism,* ed. Leslie Heywood (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2006), xvii-xviii.

institutions or legislation."[2] Jennifer Purvis describes the riot grrrl movement as part of the "impressive third-wave cultural geography that scholars have begun to chart," while Colleen Mack-Canty identifies the movement as one of the "generational and youth cultures" feminist movements that "are significant contributors to U.S. third-wave feminism."[3] Mack-Canty qualifies this assessment by noting that riot grrrl is "class and race restricted," but, regardless, states that the movement "supplies a forum through which some girls can both express themselves and support one another" and "as such,…provides a model of (very) young women empowering themselves to resist patriarchal identity formation."[4] In an article published in the journal *Hypatia*, authors Rita Alfonso and Jo Triglio describe the "riot [grrrl]…way of performing feminism that pushes against the conceptual boundaries of the Anglo-American, liberal feminist tradition," as an example of the "notable differences between second and third wave feminists."[5] The authors identify third wave feminists as "experiencing femininity and reacting to its exhortations in another way—they seem to be reclaiming it, taking it on—in contrast with the predominant androgyny of the earlier wave."[6] Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford identify both "third wave feminism, and specifically its Riot Grrrl configuration" as indebted to second wave feminism, and reference riot grrrl as an example of "third wave forms."[7] In the introduction to part four of *Third Wave Agenda*,

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[2] Heywood, xviii.

[3] Jennifer Purvis, "Grrrls and Women Together in the Third Wave: Embracing the Challenges of Intergenerational Feminism(s)," *NWSA Journal* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 99; Colleen Mack-Canty, "Third-Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality," *NWSA Journal* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 163.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Rita Alfonso and Jo Trigilio. "Surfing the Third Wave: A Dialogue between Two Third Wave Feminists." *Hypatia* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 14.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Stacy Gillis and Rebecca Munford, "Genealogies and generations: the politics and praxis of third wave feminisms," *Women's History Review* 13, no. 2 (2004): 171.

Heywood and co-author Drake describe the movement as " as one of feminism's most active sites" to "many third wave feminists," one which "spawned a new, specifically third wave feminist culture," which, "like many forms of activism in the third wave…relies on the idea of contradiction as a definition."[8] Melissa Klein describes riot grrrl ideology as "much like the 'safe-space,' women-only feminism that characterized the second wave," which used "second wave activist techniques but applied them to third wave forms." These spaces were "more often the mosh pit than the consciousness-raising group," and instead of fighting "for equal access to the workplace, some third wave feminists fought for equal access to the punk stage."[9] Ednie Kaeh Garrison identifies the "hybrid political texts and distribution networks produced by feminists like Riot Grrrls" as "significant in the formation of Third Wave movement cultures," because they are "both 'popular' and subcultural."[10]

While these selections do not represent all of the instances where scholars connect third wave feminism to the riot grrrl movement, they illustrate the several ways these assessments are framed. Several authors qualify their statements by referencing the limits of riot grrrl diversity; others identify contradiction as the characteristic that unites the two movements. Claims that communities of empowerment and support characterize both third wave and riot grrrl philosophies appear multiple times, as well as the notion that subcultural expressions of patriarchal resistance defines riot grrrl's position in the third wave.

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[8] Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, eds, *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 204.

[9] Melissa Klein, "Duality and Redefinition: Young Feminism and the Alternative Music Community," in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism,* ed. Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 215.

[10] Ednie Kaeh Garrison, "U.S. Feminism-Grrrl Style! Youth (Sub)Cultures and the Technologics of the Third Wave," *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 143.

Regardless of the assessment, these authors represent significant scholarly attempts to claim riot grrrl as a movement that comprises or, at least, is associated with the third wave of feminism. However, these arguments allow the differences between the two movements to be diminished and dismissed. In order for a full comparison to be possible, it is necessary to examine riot grrrl as an independent cultural phenomenon and fully situate the movement within its social and historical context.

Riot grrrl bands (and musicians associated with the movement) often receive the greatest attention in literature and criticism despite the substantial body of work by zine authors. The work of public "riot grrrl" figures, namely musicians, is often more closely aligned with third wave ideals than that of zine authors, due to differences in age, education, and public exposure. While many of the riot grrrl musicians and "leaders" were in their early- to mid-twenties, had attended or graduated from college, and were professional performers touring the United States, most zine authors were, at the time of their publications, between the ages of 15 and 20, in high school or attending college, and, while concerned with political issues, were negotiating many of the difficulties that face young women in the U.S. Despite the fact that these zine authors contribute much of riot grrrl theoretical production, the discussion of the zine medium is often absent from feminist analyses of riot grrrl. The lack of attention to this component of riot grrrl is due, in some part, to the difficulty of obtaining zines. The diffuse nature of distribution, fragility of the medium, and collection by mainly individuals has contributed to this difficulty, but interest by libraries and archives in developing zine collections has increased availability. The result is that zines are discussed in reference to other theorists' work that have referenced them, or only mentioned in passing. However, in

addition to recognizing the history and context of riot grrrl, the analysis of zines is integral to a comprehensive understanding of the movement.

Furthermore, while many authors focus extensively on third wave theory and secondarily address riot grrrl as an extension of the movement, an exploration of the third wave is vital to the comparison between the two. Due to the complexity and contradiction present in and between third wave texts, authors frequently address only specific characteristics or components of the third wave when comparing the movement to riot grrrl. Regardless of intent, many comparisons not only result in the appropriation of riot grrrl, but also magnify certain "third wave characteristics" that support these comparisons while minimizing those that trouble their assertions. Until scholars recognize riot grrrl as an autonomous entity and the third wave as a legitimate contemporary feminist movement, these comparisons will continue, thereby undermining the complexity of riot grrrl and ignoring the concerns of third wave feminist scholarship.

This thesis seeks to examine the similarities and differences between riot grrrl and third wave feminism through the in-depth analysis of third wave texts and riot grrrl zines. To investigate these connections, it is necessary to recognize riot grrrl as a cultural phenomenon independent of the third wave and to develop a foundational knowledge of third wave feminism as a discrete body of theoretical production. In order to achieve these understandings, it is necessary to chart the history of riot grrrl, situate riot grrrl zines in a genealogy of cultural movements, and examine the work of third wave theorists and their critics. Only after accomplishing these goals is it possible to scrutinize the associations between riot grrrl and the third wave. Through the analysis of riot grrrl zines and third wave theory, many of the apparent similarities prove to be more complex: while

both movements reflect their shared historical context, riot grrrl zines do not support scholars' assessments that riot grrrl represents or is a manifestation of the third wave of feminism.

The chapters of this thesis are designed to guide the reader through the steps outlined above. Chapter 1 summarizes the history of riot grrrl from its origins by focusing on the founders of the movement, their goals and motivations, and the development of riot grrrl as a subculture, philosophy, and theoretical community. Most of the individuals discussed in this chapter are those who were integral to the development of riot grrrl and those who became its most visible participants. Despite the importance of riot grrrl zine authors to the collective movement, the individual authors discussed in this section are those who fit the above criteria. In order to more fully situate riot grrrl zines within their various contexts, it is necessary to recognize the cultural and artistic influences beyond riot grrrl that correspond directly to these texts. This chapter describes the work of cultural, artistic, and philosophical movements that developed methods and ideologies central to zine production. Chapter 2 explores the characteristics of third wave feminist theory through the analysis of third wave texts and the work of third wave critics. The works discussed in this section belong to one of two categories: they are the product of either theorists who define themselves as third wave feminists or scholars who engage directly with the third wave for the goal of definition, analysis, or critique. This section includes the emergence of the third wave, its relationship to the second, theories central to third wave philosophy, and third wave feminists' engagement with popular culture and media. Chapter 3 utilizes the framework of third wave feminism to explore, analyze, and critique connections between the third

wave and riot grrrl. This chapter focuses solely on the texts of zine authors as the primary source material of riot grrrl and begins with a summary of the movement as defined by zine authors. The analysis of similarities between riot grrrl and third wave feminism that comprise the bulk of this chapter are either based on specific claims made by scholars or ostensible connections I recognized during my research.

There are several parameters that guide the selection and analysis of material within this project. Both riot grrrl and the third wave, while emerging from a U.S. context, developed into multi-national movements by the end of the 1990s. Although the work of theorists and authors outside the United States provides significant contributions to both movements, the addition of these works requires an analysis that places them in relation to their American counterparts, as well as the delineation of their own individual contexts. In addition, the availability of non-U.S. riot grrrl zines was limited by the collections I accessed and my own monolingualism. Due to these limitations, and those of time and space, this thesis addresses and explores the American manifestations of the third wave of feminism and riot grrrl. The zines included here have been selected from the collections in the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke University and the Independent Publishing Resource Center in Portland, Oregon. The zines that are included in this work fit one or more of the following characteristics: the author identifies as a riot grrrl, the zine is identified as a "riot grrrl zine," the author discusses or responds to riot grrrl, and/or the author explicitly states that s/he is "not a riot grrrl." Taking into consideration country of origin, there are 73 zines that fit the selection criteria. The physical characteristics of these texts, and all zines, varies widely: most are printed on 8.5"x11" white copy paper (although there is variation in paper size

and color); many are folded in half or quarters while some utilize full sheets stapled in the corner; the text is either typed, handwritten, or both; most are printed in black and white although some are partially or completely hand-colored; and the length varies widely from four to fifty pages with an average of 10-20 pages (the longest zine included here is *Libel* #3 which has 58 pages). The authors of the zines vary in age from thirteen (*From the Gut*) to twenty-six (*Grope*), although most zine authors are between fifteen and twenty years old. The publication dates are identified by the author, through content (newspaper articles, dated letters, publicized events), or by postmark, and range from the spring of 1992 (*Notes In Response To a Dysfunctional Society* #1) to July 1996 (*DIW* #1), although most were published in 1993 (fifteen zines) and 1994 (seventeen zines). Based on return addresses or contact information, the zines were published in thirteen states and the District of Columbia.

CHAPTER ONE

Riot Grrrl History

One of the most striking characteristics of the riot grrrl movement is the absence of either "a centralized ideology" or leaders.[11] Instead, riot grrrl "made leaders out of anyone who chose to pick up the task of carving out a cultural place for herself where there wasn't one before."[12] While de facto role models emerged from within, the women who began the "task of carving" out a unique cultural space never established a supervisory hierarchy. Instead, through the self-publication of zines and the creation of a unique genre of girl music, riot grrrl embraced the notion of a decentralized creative space. The movement did, however, begin with a handful of women activists and artists who were inspired by a variety of cultural influences: namely, academic and activist feminism and the punk rock music scene.

Although punk music has developed into several related genres, it remains one of the most recognizable forms of rock music. Established in the mid-1970s as a response to non-political rock music produced earlier in the decade, punk attempted to integrate political consciousness into rock 'n' roll and strip down rock music into a simpler, purer form. Bands like the Ramones, the Clash, and the Sex Pistols are quintessential punk bands and arguably the most notorious examples of the genre. These bands embodied a do-it-yourself, or DIY, ethic, inspired by an anti-establishment mentality. According to Michael Azerrad, the "equation was simple: If punk was rebellious and DIY was

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[11] Nadine Monem, *Riot Grrrl: Revolution Girl Style Now!* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 7.

[12] Ibid.

rebellious, then doing it yourself was punk."[13] This philosophy was manifested through the independent release of recordings, bookings of shows and concerts, and creation of goods and merchandise. By establishing independent labels, artists could record, produce, and distribute their music, but, more importantly, "could flourish, enjoy respect and admiration for their work, and actually be applauded and even rewarded for sticking with their vision."[14] The DIY philosophy was also manifested through production of "the indexpensively Xeroxed publications called 'fanzines.'"[15] Additionally, punk rock distanced itself from musical virtuosity and technical skill, instead relying on the ethos and political message of their music to draw fans and establish an underground community.

Punk spawned several notable genres of music, most importantly the hardcore and post-hardcore genres. Separated largely by a generational gap, hardcore arose in the late 1970s and differentiated itself from punk through what musicologist Julia Downes characterized as an "independent punk scene...invested in a more aggressive fast-paced aesthetic, which championed technical ability."[16] Bad Brains (1977), Black Flag (1976) and Minor Threat (1980) are largely considered to be the most influential and important groups in the genre.[17] Later, a sub-genre emerged, post-hardcore, which took the musical concepts and sound from hardcore and combined them with a wider variety of musical genres. After the dissolution of Minor Threat, frontman Ian McKaye formed Fugazi, a

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[13] Michael Azerrad, *Our Band Could Be Your Life: Scenes from the American Indie Underground, 1981-1991* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2002), 6.

[14] Ibid., 7.

[15] Gillian G. Gaar, *She's a Rebel: The History of Women in Rock and Roll*, 2nd ed, (Seattle: Seal Press, 2002), 190.

[16] Julia Downes, "Riot Grrrl: The Legacy and Contemporary Landscape of DIY Feminist Cultural Activism," in *Riot Grrrl: Revolution Girl Style Now!*, ed. Nadine Monem, (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 16.

[17] For detailed descriptions and histories of these groups, see Azerrad.

post-hardcore band that "played an important stylistic role in modern rock music, being extremely instrumental in fostering the rock-funk fusion that eventually dominated Nineties alternative rock."[18]

Punk and its musical progeny, while diverse in sound, were connected by DIY philosophy and the rejection of mainstream culture. Additionally, the genres were characterized by an increasingly male-dominated subculture. While '70s punk included several notable and popular female artists, their presence in the genre was considered exceptional. Rock journalists often cited them, not as an integral part of a diverse music scene, but as token examples of "women in rock." In addition, the only women "to find substantial commercial success were those in the mainstream who adhered to the tradition of woman-as-singer" despite the proliferation of women in all roles of music performance.[19] Some women in the punk genre adopted masculine dress and personas, perhaps in an attempt to situate themselves as legitimate participants in the male-dominated subculture.[20] However, the adoption of punk fashion often resulted in the sexualization and objectification of female punk musicians, despite these attempts at assimilation. At the shows of all-girl band the Runaways, singer Cherie Currie "took the stage as a nymphet, wearing heels and lingerie, while [guitarists Joan] Jett and [Lita] Ford put on a good cock rock show that reflected the band's heavy rock and glam influences."[21] In a 1977 review, *Creem* magazine critic Rick Johnson describes the band as "not any good…not so bad they're good…not *anything*," and writes that their "only

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[18] Azerrad, 377.

[19] Gaar, 203.

[20] "[Patty Smith's] artistic androgyny, which few female musicians had dared to express before her, wound all the way down to her clothing, which often included a tie or a baggy T-shirt—her lithe body and shaggy hair serving as an homage to Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards." Maria Raha, *Cinderella's Big Score: Women of the Punk and Indie Underground* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2005), 18.

[21] Ibid, 23.

hope for crawling out of the mung heap is making those sperms wag their tails and their collective slurp appeal is enough to make your entire body feel like morning mouth."[22]

In addition to poor reception and mistreatment of female artists, punk and hardcore were characterized by stereotypical masculine qualities namely aggression and violence (thus the label "cock rock"). The music itself fit this assessment, and fan responses could be similarly characterized. Several new physical methods of self expression emerged in the realm of audience participation, including stage diving, crowd surfing, and "moshing." Downes describes the result of this male-centric violent participation: "the culture of slam dancing at shows solidified a growing feeling and experience that in DC women remained on the sidelines as photographers, girlfriends or zine writers," an experience which "often culminated in boys-only spaces."[23]

The increased emphasis on technical ability further alienated female musicians who felt that the original DIY ethos of punk was more important than musical virtuosity. Musician and photographer Sharon Cheslow, who was told that her guitar playing was "good for a girl," is quoted in Downes' chapter: "I thought, no, no, no, that's not right. I should be good because I like what I'm doing. And it doesn't even matter if I'm good, because that's not what punk's about! It's about the ideas behind it and the passion behind it and the energy behind it."[24] The realization that a rift had developed between the ideals of punk rock and the reality of the punk subculture sparked the beginnings of what would become riot grrrl music. The "disenfranchise[ment] from their own alternative communities" caused women associated with DC hardcore to realize that the movement

[22] in Raha, 24.
[23] Downes, 16.
[24] Ibid, 17.

in which they were participating "was paralleling mainstream society."[25] As a result, "women and girls in the punk scene...had to look at what was going on right at [their] backdoor, and to address it."[26] These women identified with the idea that "punk rock was all about like getting the access to the means of production and doing things your own way and doing it yourself," but recognized that women were functionally prohibited from participating, embodying, or responding to these subcultural ideals.[27]

The riot grrrl movement emerged from the intersection of three important concerns: 1) the oppression of women, specifically young women, within mainstream American culture, 2) the exclusion of women from the male-dominated punk subculture, and 3) an emphasis on the value and importance of personal experience. The sense of alienation from punk music became the catalyst for the riot grrrl movement. Utilizing the methods and intentions of punk fanzines, young women began publishing their own zines to express their "feelings, frustrations and anger" with the punk underground.[28] Zines provided a vehicle through which women in the punk scene could embody the DIY ethos, connect with like-minded young women, and establish their own alternative underground. Three notable girl zines were published in 1988: *Jigsaw*, a "punk feminist zine," *Chainsaw*, a "queer-girl zine," and *Sister Nobody*."[29] Downes characterizes the atmosphere within the these zines as "love letters exchanged between girls and women who yearned for an underground punk revolution they could call their own."[30] These early zines focused largely on experiences of alienation, exclusion, dissatisfaction with

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[25] in Downes, 17.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid, 18.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Downes, 18.
[30] Ibid.

the punk subculture, and the desire to participate in cultural production. In the second issue of *Jigsaw,* published in 1990, Tobi Vail (who would ultimately join riot grrrl band Bikini Kill) expresses the alienation from "everything that is so important to [her]" and acknowledges that her frustration comes "partly because punk rock is for and by boys mostly."[31] These sentiments were familiar to many women in the punk underground who began publishing their own zines and participating in the girl-zine community. The burgeoning zine network established connections between young women in the punk underground, creating an alternative community separate from, yet related to, the punk scene. Kathleen Hanna, who would join Vail in Bikini Kill, was inspired by *Jigsaw*'s "unapologetic [focus]...on girls in bands," "how it [feels] to be a girl in a band," and "what it feels like to be a woman at a show."[32] Eventually, zine authors extended their criticism to the demands, expectations, and obstacles created by mainstream culture. Situated between large-scale sociopolitical oppression and the inability to participate in a potentially empowering subculture, zine authors used their experiences to create an underground movement that criticized both punk and American society. The shared beliefs, experiences, and feelings of zine authors establish a new philosophy; one defined by cultural criticism, independent production, rejection of patriarchy, and an emphasis on activism and community.

Arguably, the foundations of riot grrrl were established through the publication of these girl-zines and the subsequent formation of bands that would identify with, define, and exemplify the movement. From 1988 to 1991 (when the term "riot grrrl" was coined), the burgeoning community of female punk fans was largely concentrated in and

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[31] Laura Barton, "Grrrl Power," *The Guardian*, March 4, 2010.
[32] Andrea Juno, *Angry women in rock,* (New York: Juno Books, 1996), 97.

around Olympia, Washington. Tobi Vail, author of *Jigsaw*, was living in Olympia when she first published her zine in 1988. In 1989, Vail, Billy Karren, Kathi Wilcox, and Kathleen Hanna formed the band Bikini Kill in Olympia, aspiring to write songs about "how to undo centuries of white-skin privilege,…the connections between class and gender, …[and] being sexual [in a way] that didn't case me as a babe in a tight ZZ Top dress."[33] Molly Neuman, originally from Washington D.C., and Allison Wolfe, from Olympia, met in 1989 while living in the same dorm at the University of Oregon. Together, they visited Olympia in the spring of 1990, where they were introduced to Tobi Vail's zine *Jigsaw*. That summer, Neuman and Wolfe, inspired by *Jigsaw*, decided to start their own zine and a radio show "to promote girls."[34] The first issue of their zine, *Girl Germs*, was published in the winter of 1990. A few months later, in early 1991, Hanna published the first issue of the zine *Bikini Kill*, the first riot grrrl zine. *Bikini Kill* was the first zine written by riot grrrl musicians and inspired the creation of riot grrrl zines elsewhere. Tobi Vail published the third issue of *Jigsaw*, subtitled "angry grrrl zine, in 1991, and her band Bikini Kill, as well as the band Bratmobile (Neuman and Wolfe), performed their first shows in Olympia. Around the same time, Bikini Kill self-released a demo tape entitled "Revolution Girl Style Now," a phrase that would become the philosophical mantra of the riot grrrl movement.

"Riot grrrl" as a movement/subculture/community/music genre

The development of these zine networks and related bands into the riot grrrl movement can be traced back to the race riots in Mount Pleasant in May of 1991, and, secondarily, the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the first Bush administration's gag

[33] Downes, 23.
[34] Downes, 168.

rule banning abortion counseling in clinics that receive federal funding.[35] These two events sparked a sense of urgency and unrest within the burgeoning underground community, leading *Girl Germs* contributor, friend of Neuman and Wolfe, and future Bratmobile band member, Jen Smith, to write to Wolfe: "we need to start a girl riot."[36] The combination of Jen Smith's "girl riot" letter, Tobi Vail's use of "grrrl" in the fan zine *Jigsaw* #3, and Kathleen Hanna's phrase "Revolution Girl Style Now," became the basis for the name and mantra of the riot grrrl movement.

Beginning in the summer of 1991, zine authors and musicians of the riot grrrl movement gravitated towards the DC area. Bikini Kill left Olympia to tour with DC-based punk band Nation of Ulysses and stayed in DC for the remainder of the year. At the same time, Molly Neuman and Allison Wolfe, visiting Wolfe's family in DC, published the first issue of the zine *Riot Grrrl*. While distributing free copies of their zine at concerts, the "need and desire to reach out to more women and get together in the same space became more and more urgent."[37] Neuman and Wolfe, realizing that women in the DC punk underground lacked a space for personal expression, "made announcements at gigs around DC and compiled lists of interested girls' phone numbers and addresses" in order to organize a meeting of like-minded young women.

The first riot grrrl meeting was held at Jenny Toomey's house in Washington, DC in the summer of 1991. According to Bikini Kill band member and zine author Kathleen

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[35] Ibid, 25.

[36] Experience Music Project Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame, "Evolution of Grrrl Style," *Riot Grrrl Retrospective*, www.empsfm.org/exhibitions/index.asp?articleID=668 (accessed March, 1 2010).

[37] Ibid, 24.

Hanna, "about 20 women showed up" at the first meeting, many of whom "had never been in a room with only women before."[38] Melissa Klein described the atmosphere:

> As we began thinking individually about how we experienced oppression on the basis of gender, we also started making connections with each other. We critiqued both popular culture and the underground culture in which we had participated...Girls began drawing parallels between different experiences: shame at being fat and bitterness at caring so much about our looks; secret competitiveness with other girls, coupled with self-dislike for being jealous; the unsettling feeling that we could not communicative with a boy without flirting; the sudden, engulfing shock of remembering being molested by a father or stepfather when we were too small to form words for such a thing. Straight and bi girls talked about having to give anatomy lessons every time we had sex with a boy. Queer and questioning girls talked about isolation and about mothers bursting into tears when they learned their daughters were gay. Girls who wanted to play music talked about not knowing how to play a guitar because they had never gotten one for Christmas like the boys did. Girls who played music complained that they were treated like idiots by condescending male employees when they went to buy guitar strings or drum parts. We began to see the world around us with a new vision, a revelation that was both painful and filled with possibility.[39]

[38] Juno, 99.
[39] Ibid., 99.

Around the same time, Bratmobile began playing shows in New York and DC, with the addition of *Sassy* magazine intern Erin Smith and were on the lineup of K Records' International Pop Underground Convention in August of 1991. Meanwhile in Olympia, Corin Tucker, an Evergreen State College student, and friend Tracy Sawyer, formed the riot grrrl band Heavens to Betsy and accepted an invitation to perform at the convention. The first night of the festival was declared "Girls Nite: Love Rock Revolution Girl Style." In the zine *Girl Germs* #4, contributor Rebecca writes:

> Girl's nite will always be precious to me because, believe it or not, it was the first time I saw women stand on a stage as though they truly belonged there. The first time I had ever heard the voice of a sister proudly singing the rage so shamefully locked in my own heart. Until girl's nite, I never knew that punk rock was anything but a phallic extension of the white middle class male's frustrations.[40]

In the late summer in Olympia Washington, women of the punk underground established a their own riot grrrl chapter. They held meetings in member's homes and in dorm rooms at Evergreen State College, where Neuman and Wolfe had returned to attend school. In the fall, of the same year, Kathleen Hanna and Tobi Vail published the second issue of their zine *Bikini Kill*. Subsequently, the teen magazine *Sassy* covered riot grrrl as the result of Bratmobile member Erin Smith's internship. because of Bratmobile band member Erin Smith's internship with the magazine, wrote a piece on riot grrrl. This coverage of riot grrrl in *Sassy* magazine, is the first time riot grrl was covered by the mainstream press, extending riot grrrls reach beyond the limited geographical regions from whch it began.

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[40] *Girl Germs* #4, 7.

1992 proved to be a year of great importance for riot grrrl bands and for the movement at large. In this year the bands Heavens to Betsy and Bratmobile released their first record, a split 7' vinyl EP, and began a countrywide tour of the United States. With similar timing, the riot grrrl band Bikini Kill released their first vynil EP, *Bikini Kill* in 1992, although not on tour. In the spring of the same year, the New York chapter of riot grrrl was formed, holding meetings and publishing zines, and expanding the network of riot grrrls. Additionally, Erika Reinsten and May Summer, founding members of the New York chapter, established Riot Grrrl Press. Also in 1992 riot grrrl received a boost in media coverage, a result of the movements broadening national reach, and in the July 10th issue of LA Weekly, an article entitled "Revolution Girl Style Now was published. A riot grrrl convention held in Washington D.C. from July 31st to August 2nd, garnered further media coverage as *USA Today* published an article entitled, "Feminist Riot Grrrls don't just wanna have fun," which was followed by Newsweek's "Revolution Girl Style," in November. Although the sudden media attention arguably expanded the audience riot grrrl significantly, its reception by those within the movement was one of resistance. Ultimately, this unwanted media attention resulted in a self-declared media blackout on the part of riot grrrl musicians and zine authors.

Cultural Background of Riot Grrrl

In order to establish the contextual framework that allowed the possibility for and existence of riot grrrl zines, it is necessary to delineate the recent history of independent cultural production, the technique of collage, and the development of the zine medium. Most zines are unified through two important characteristics: they are independently written, published, and distributed, and they make use of collage and photomontage.

While these are not the only distinguishing traits, self-production and collage bear strong connection to previous cultural and artistic movements. In addition to the punk movement, the traditions of the Arts and Crafts movement, Dadaism, and the Situationist International, although not explicitly referenced by riot grrrl authors, developed into the techniques, methods, and ideologies central to riot grrrl zine-making. While these movements may not have directly influenced these authors, the existence of these ideals and aesthetics can be traced back to these earlier philosophies.

The riot grrrl movement's emphasis on do-it-yourself (DIY) ethics draws from a variety of activist and artistic movements from the 20th century. As discussed earlier in the chapter, riot grrrl sought to embody the philosophical goals of self-production and the rejection of mainstream values espoused in the punk underground of the 1970s. Widely accepted as the founders of the DIY ethos, the guiding principles of the do-it-yourself philosophy were largely informed by earlier subcultural movements in the U.S and Britain.

The British and American Arts and Crafts Movements of the late 19th and early 20th century is one of the first cultural movements that primarily emphasized the individual control of production. The movement was largely based on the writings of John Ruskin, an art critic and social theorist in 19th century England. Through essays and notable works such as *The Stones of Venice, The Seven Lamps of Architecture,* and *Unto This Last*, Ruskin emphasized the rejection of mechanization and standardization in production. In the book *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, Oscar Triggs cites an editorial in the Chicago Tribune entitled “Twentieth-Century Economy” in which Ruskin outlines the humanistic and artistic failures of the that century. Ruskin

identifies the "dominant aim of the [20th] century" as "commercial rather than humanistic" and declares, "It has been the century of wealth making."[41] This period, Ruskin continues, "neglected persons as conscious objects" and has instead "trusted for salvation to the instinct of gain."[42] As a result, the 20th century "assured all men that the current waste of flesh and brain was inevitable, and that there could be no other way" than modernization, industrialization, and mechanization.[43] In response, Ruskin outlined the goals of a future economy "in which the emphasis shall be shifted from the material product to the human agent—in which social advance rather than the instinct of profit-making...shall more effectually dictate action."[44]

The two important principles that connect Arts and Crafts to punk and riot grrrl are the attempt to equalize the value of artistic endeavors, regardless of form, and to expand access to creativity and production. The DIY ethos of both punk and riot grrrl centered on the belief that all individuals have the capacity for creativity and should utilize it for expressive and artistic ends. The Arts and Crafts movement was largely concerned with rejecting the characteristics of modernity, namely what Anthony Giddens describes as "a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy," rather than utilizing new means of production and distribution.[45] In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey explains that the Arts and Crafts movement "provide[d] ways to absorb, reflect upon, and codify these rapid changes [of

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[41] Oscar Lovell Triggs, *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (New York: B. Blom, 1971), 26.

[42] Ibid, 27.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1998), 94.

modernity], but [also] suggested lines of action that might modify or support them."[46] Inspired by Ruskin's rejection of mechanized production and the depreciation of artists and craftsmen, the Arts and Crafts movement "had as its aim the spiritual regeneration of a humanity too long in the bonds of an unlovely materialism."[47] According to Elizabeth Cumming, the "most oft-repeated Arts and Crafts objectives were simplicity, utility, and the democratization of art."[48] The movement rejected the late-Victorian hierarchy of artists, which valued painting and sculpture but had little to no appreciation for the decorative arts (pottery, glassware, furniture, metalwork, jewelry, and textiles). Instead, members of the movement argued that "painters, sculptors, architects, and decorative artists should be on an equal footing."[49] The opposition to industrialization, economic greed, and the increasing consumption of mass-produced goods led those in Arts and Crafts to develop an ethic that emphasized the democratization of production.

William Morris, one of the most well known participants in the Arts and Crafts Movement, asked, "What business have we with art at all, unless all can share it?"[50] This sentiment permeated the Arts and Crafts Movement, which espoused that all individuals (not only professional artists) have the right to creative expression, and that "creativity can be part of the daily experience of ordinary people at work [because] it is not something special, not the preserve of fine artists and geniuses."[51] The belief that "everyone should experience the joy of craftsmanship" was integral to the Arts and Crafts

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[46] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity : an Enquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 23.

[47] Robert Winter, "The Arts and Crafts as a Social Movement," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 34, no. 2 (1975), 36.

[48] Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (New York, N.Y: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 146.

[49] Alan Crawford, "Ideas and Objects: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain," *Design Issues* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1997), 16.

[50] Cumming, 167.

[51] Crawford, 20.

philosophy, and members of the movement insisted that one way to "achieve democracy in art [was] by creating it yourself."[52] Ultimately, the movement challenged the effects of modernization, namely "industrialization, the growth of cities, the dominance of the urban bourgeoisie, and secularism," and insisted on the necessity of creativity, small-scale production, and the value of products created by individual artists and craftsmen.[53] Participants in the movement believed that "a craftsman should control the entire design process from conception to finished product" which allowed an artist full expression and the ability to benefit fully from their art.[54] According to Crawford, "there was a sense of social responsibility in the Arts and Crafts movement, a sense of designing and making things in a spirit which did not take profit as its motive."[55]

By means of rejecting the dehumanizing influence of modernization, participants in the Arts and Crafts movement proposed populist control of production. Those who are involved in creating zines frequently espouse these same ideals: "defining themselves against a society predicated on consumption," and manifesting their opposition by "mak[ing] [their] own culture" and refusing to "consum[e] that which is made for [them]."[56] In addition to the democratization of cultural production, Arts and Crafts shared zine authors' belief that expression is the central goal of art, not profit. Many zine authors are "speaking plainly about themselves and our society with an honest sincerity, a revealing intimacy, and a healthy 'fuck you' to sanctioned authority;" and, although some Arts and Crafts artists may have benefitted financially, zines usually result in "no money

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[52] Cumming, 168.
[53] Crawford, 24.
[54] Cumming, 162.
[55] Crawford, 25.
[56] Stephen Duncombe, *Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*, (Bloomington, IN: Microcosm Publishing, 2008), 7.

and no recognition."[57] In fact, "most [zines] *lose* money…[and] the very idea of profiting from a zine is anathema to the underground."[58]

By encouraging individuals to control production, engage in creative expression, and reject financial greed, the Arts and Crafts movement established a philosophy that is reflected in the work of zine authors, including those in riot grrrl. More directly, the movement inspired the emergence of the Bauhaus, founded in 1919. This new movement "initially took much of its inspiration from the Arts and Crafts Movement that [William] Morris had founded," but ultimately adopted and utilized machinery in the production of materials.[59] Participants in the Bauhaus criticized several aspects of Arts and Crafts, including Morris's belief that all should share in art, which failed to address the fact that "objects made by hand were more expensive and thus precluded the majority."[60] Bauhaus recognized that "either art had to be redefined to include machine production or the craftsman ideal had to be restricted to handwork for an elite."[61] The ambivalence of the Bauhaus toward modernity—the simultaneous desire to reject its dehumanizing effects and utilize new methods of production—is one shared by many of the artistic movements of the early 20th century. While Arts and Crafts had hoped to increase the value of artisans and their products, the "result was often a highly individualistic, aristocratic, disdainful (particularly of popular culture), and even arrogant perspective."[62] As a result, Dadaism and surrealism emerged as an attempt to "mobilize their aesthetic

[57] Duncombe, 7.
[58] Ibid, 16.
[59] Harvey, 24.
[60] Cumming, 167.
[61] Ibid., 168.
[62] Harvey, 22.

capacities to revolutionary ends by fusing their art into popular culture" in order to be "profoundly moving, challenging, upsetting, or exhortatory."[63]

According to Marc Dachy in *Dada: The Revolt of Art*, the emergence of Dada was "something like a legend: a group of friends who were young artists, a cabaret, a magazine, then a collection, some more magazines, and several exhibits."[64] This group of young artists, which included Hugo Ball, Richard Huelsenbeck, Marcel Janoc, Tristan Tzara, Jean Arp, Sophie Taeuber, Walter Serner, Hans Richter, and Otto Flake, were living and working in Zurich because either "the war had prevented them from leaving or because they had come there to flee it."[65] Jean Arp explained in 1948 that those involved in Dada "had no interest in the abattoirs of the World War;" instead, they "were looking for an elementary type of art that...would save mankind from the raging madness of those times."[66] Like the zine authors of the late-twentieth century, participants in Dada were "young and the children of professionals, culturally if not financially middle-class…raised in a relatively privileged position within the dominant culture, … [and] embarked on 'careers' of deviance that have moved them to the edges of…society; [they]

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[63] Harvey, 22.

[64] Marc Dachy, *Dada: The Revolt of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 12; According to Dachy, the name Dada first appeared in the only issue of the *Cabaret Voltaire* review. The origin of the word, however, has been the subject of much debate. Dachy provides several accounts, including that Huelsenbeck claimed he and Hugo Ball "discovered the word by chance in a Larousse German-French dictionary" (15), and that Janco claimed that "Tristan Tzara had found the name in the dictionary, and that the group had immediately accepted it unanimously" (16). According to Dachy, Tzara denied that he had originated the term, but later told this story: "I was with some friends, and I was looking in a dictionary for a word that fitted in with the sonorities of every language; it was almost dark when a green hand planted its ugliness on that page of Larousse—pointing with precision at Dada—my choice was made" (Dachy 16-17). Finally, Jean Arp made this "openly mocking" claim in 1921: "Tzara found the word Dada on February 8, 1916, at six o'clock in the evening; I was present with my twelve children when for the first time Tzara pronounced this name, which quite rightly sent us into a state of rapture...at the Café Terrasse in Zurich, and I was carrying a brioche in my left nostril" (Dachy 18). Arp added that he was "convinced that this word is of no importance, and that the only people who care about dates are imbeciles and Spanish teachers" (Dachy 18).

[65] Dachy, 18.

[66] Ibid., 12.

embrac[ed] downwardly mobile career aspirations, unpopular musical and literary tastes, transgressive ideas about sexuality, unorthodox artistic sensibilities, and a politics resolutely outside the status quo."[67] Dada emerged from "an inherited culture that had now become unacceptable" and sought "a new inventiveness and a direct relationship between the artist and his art—as opposed to the art that until then had been imposed by social constraints."[68] While Arts and Crafts had attempted to elevate the position of the artist, Dada actively rejected the power of critics and academics through the belief that "a society that had lost respect was no longer in a position to demand that the artist adhere to its aesthetic and ideological values."[69] Dada aimed "to be seen not just as an aesthetic stance, but as a political one as well," in direct opposition to "a world devastated by the barbarity of a terrible war."[70]

Dada, as a movement, includes both visual and performance media. In the realm of performance, Hugo Ball's sound poems attempted to return the performer and audience to "the most intimate alchemy of the word, and even to go beyond it in order to preserve for poetry its most sacred domain."[71] Sophie Taeuber and Marcel Janco created costumes and masks in which Taeuber performed letter poems, which art historian Klaus Shoning describes as "acoustic poetry, musically structured out of individual letters—alphabet poetry."[72] Jean Arp created paper collages arranged "according to the laws of chance,…reliefs made from pieces of wood painted and screwed together," India ink

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[67] Duncombe, 12.
[68] Dachy, 14.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 13.
[71] Ibid., p.26-27
[72] Ibid., 27-28; Klaus Schoning and Mark E. Cory. "The Contours of Acoustic Art." *Theatre Journal* 43, no. 3 (October 1991), 311.

drawings, wood engravings, and embroideries.[73] The works that have come to define Dada, however, are those that fused political stance with aesthetic practice, like Tristan Tzara's "1918 Dada Manifesto," which transcended the distinction between the philosophy and practice of art. The manifesto was advertised with an engraving by Janco, performed on July 23, 1918, and was published and distributed throughout Europe. The most recognizable Dada works continue to be those that exemplify this fusion, most importantly collage, photomontage, and assemblage. Raoul Hausmann, to whom Dachy credits the invention of the photomontage, wrote, "the idea of the photomontage was as revolutionary as its content, its form as amazing as the use of both photography and printed texts."[74] Hausmann attempted to use the conflicting meanings of photographs to "create a new entity that drew from the chaos of the war and the revolution" and follow "contemporary events with biting irony."[75] Through all three of these media techniques (collage, photomontage, and assemblage), Dada artists utilized the juxtaposition of images and materials in order to subvert mainstream ideals and to undermine viewers' assumptions, beliefs, and expectations. In addition, Dada is the first artistic movement to "base itself almost entirely on self-publication."[76] Along with the Dada manifesto, Dada "acolytes produc[ed] journals in various Europen cities."[77] These publications can be understood as "the first proto-zines": they are self-published, independently distributed, and "produced purely for the pleasure of their creators and provocation of readers,

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[73] Dachy, 30.
[74] Ibid., 36.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Schwartz, Steven, "History of Zines," in *Zines!*, ed. V. Vale, (San Francisco: V. Vale, 1996), 157.
[77] Ibid.

ignoring or satirizing all canons and standards of journalism."[78] While Dada performances, and the formal organization of the movement, lasted only five months, its philosophy and techniques "spread to Paris, Berlin and elsewhere in Germany, Holland, New York and Barcelona."[79] In particular, the "deliberate irrationality" of Dada was "taken up in the surrealism which flourished in the graphic art of, for example, Salvador Dali, and in films such as Dali and Luis Bunuel's *Un Chien Andalou*."[80]

The publications of the Situationist International embody the intersection of various cultural, artistic, and philosophical influences that are present in zines. Although the first uses of the term "fanzine" can be traced back to publications by "fans of science fiction…[and] the clubs they founded" from the 1930s to '50s, these zines were "mainly dedicated to publicizing favorite movies and writers, rather than giving vent to the pure intellectual venturings of the producers."[81] The zines of the punk movement and riot grrrl, however, have "more in common with the 'little' magazines" produced by Dada and the Situationists. The Situationist International was founded in 1957 in Cosio d'Arroscia Italy "out of the union of two prior avant-garde groups, the Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (Asger Jorn, Pinot Gallizio and others) and the Lettrist International (led by Guy Debord)."[82] The Surrealist movement, "whose break-up after the war led to a proliferation of new splinter groups and an accompanying surge of new experimentation and position-taking," had influenced the Lettrists and the Movement for

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[78] Ibid., 158.

[79] Paul Allain and Jen Harvie, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 141.

[80] Ibid., 141-142.

[81] Schwartz, 158.

[82] Peter Wollen, "The Situationist International," *New Left Review*, no. 174 (April 1989), 67.

an Imaginist Bauhaus.[83] The Situtationist International reflected these influences through their "avant-garde artistic agitation" which was inspired by "movements like Dada and surrealism."[84] The history of the Situationists is characterized by "a series of internal disagreements…inside the organization," which caused two distinct "splits" in the movement.[85] Despite discord, artists participating in the movement continued to develop on the techniques and methods of their forbears. The movement published twelve issues of the journal *Internationale Situationniste* between 1957 and 1969.[86] These publications represent "the most important single self-publishing effort of the '50s and '60s," and, unlike many publications of the same period, "eschewed mimeo for the highest standard of letterpress printing" in order to "show mastery of the print medium at the same time as they expressed their contempt for…commodity."[87] The technique of détournement, which is translated as "diversion," had "originated in the Lettrist International," but was adopted and developed Situationists.[88] In the third issue of *Internationale Situationniste*, Guy Debord described détournement as "the re-use of pre-existing artistic elements in a wholly new entity" which results in the "organization of another meaningful entity that gives each element its new impact."[89] By appropriating and altering existing images, the Situationists were able to "[foster] the dual presence within [the new images] of their former and new-found instantaneous meanings."[90] In addition, the technique was "practical because it is so easy to use and because the possibilities for its re-use are

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[83] Ibid., 68.

[84] Sadie Plant, *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

[85] Ibid., 69.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Schwartz, 158.

[88] Ibid., 68.

[89] Situationist International, *The Real Split in the International*, trans. John McHale (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 177.

[90] Ibid., 178.

endless."[91] The combination of Dada's collage technique and the Situationist detnournement provided punk and riot grrrl zine authors with methods for critical engagement with mainstream culture. Despite limited access to resources, "anyone armed with scissors, glue stick, a pen and a sense of humor…can puncture a million-dollar ad campaign, lampoon a political candidate or mock a $10,000 Calvin Klein billboard with a 10-cent sticker." In combination with a DIY ethos, the techniques of Dada and the Situationists provided zine authors with a "crack in the seemingly impenetrable wall of the system" and techniques to "[spawn] the next wave of meaningful resistance."[92]

[91] Ibid.
[92] Duncombe, 8-9.

CHAPTER TWO

Since its emergence as a theoretical field in the early 1990's, third wave feminism has been the source of heated debate. Much of the anxiety surrounding the third wave comes from an attempt to define it as a theory, a philosophy, and a social movement. Proponents and authors of the third wave frequently posit it as a response to and critique of the second wave of feminism. Critics, on the other hand, frequently question the understanding of the third wave as an autonomous movement, one separate from the second wave, instead arguing that it is more appropriately defined as a continuation of the second wave. Much of this confusion is the result of a perceived lack of cohesion within the third wave that would allow for a simple definition. While other social movements are perceived as autonomous, cohesive, and centered around a philosophical or theoretical goal, the third wave seems to lack a central aim. In addition, participants in the third wave have not attempted to provide a singular definition, which adds to the confusion and ambiguity that often permeates the debate. Whereas the second wave of feminism was differentiated from the first by a temporal gap of at least 40 years, the third wave emerged when many second wave feminists were still writing, theorizing, and working. In order to utilize the concepts developed by the third wave for the purpose of analysis, it is necessary to analyze the work of third wave authors and activists, as well as the work of those who have sought to understand the third wave, in order to define the movement.

In response to the exclusivity associated with the second wave, a variety of feminisms emerged to address experiences beyond those of middle-class white women

and make feminism "more compatible with their unique perspectives."[93] These groups include "black feminists, Asian American feminists, Third World feminists, lesbian feminists, male feminists, ecofeminists, Christian feminists, Jewish feminists, Islamic feminists, and others."[94] The Black feminist movement is particularly important in the development of third wave theory. Work published by black feminists in the 1980s offered critiques of the second wave that illuminated the essentialist views of earlier theorists. Of particular note are the works of Angela Davis (*Women, Race and Class*, 1981), the Combahee River Collective (*A Black Feminist Statement*, 1986), Audre Lorde (*Sister Outsider*, 1984), and bell hooks (*Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 1984). These authors developed new methods of understanding systems of oppression that would be integral to the works of third wave authors. In her landmark article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989), Kimberle Crenshaw explains that "the value of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged."[95] White feminists' use of an "authoritative universal voice" in the second wave overlooked women of color and enabled white women to "speak for and as *women*."[96]

The theory of intersectionality, which Crenshaw developed in the aforementioned article, is integral to an understanding of third wave feminism. Intersectionality theory hinges on the understanding that oppression functions through a variety of systems which are interrelated and inextricable. Instead of " think[ing] about subordination as

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[93] Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, 1st ed (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 6.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of Antidiscrimination doctrine, Feminist theory, and Antiracist politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989: 154.

[96] Ibid., 154.

disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis" such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, or religious affiliation, intersectionality theory emphasizes that these categories, and any oppression related to them, function simultaneously.[97] In addition, Crenshaw challenged white feminists to abandon the notion that "inclusive feminism" merely required "including Black women within an already established analytical structure."[98] Therefore, recognizing diversity amongst women and encouraging inclusive feminism are only the first steps in developing a feminism that "examine[s] structures of domination."[99] According to Crenshaw, any feminism that "does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated."[100]

As a theoretical framework, intersectionality emphasizes the multiple and possibly contradictory experiences of one individual within a multiplicity of oppressive structures. The theory "opens up possibilities for a both/and conceptual stance, one in which all groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege in one historically created system."[101] As a result, third wave authors frequently acknowledge that they "can be exploitative in one context while being exploited in another," and, as a result, "it [is] impossible to ever see oneself in a position of an absolute moral high ground."[102] In addition to inclusivity and multivocality, third wave authors embrace intersectionality as a guiding principle for feminist praxis. Throughout third wave texts, authors position

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[97] Ibid., 140.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Freedman, 93.
[100] Crenshaw, 140.
[101] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2000), 225.
[102] Leslie Heywood, "Introduction: A Fifteen-Year History of Third-Wave Feminism," in *The Women's Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third-Wave Feminism,* ed. Leslie L. Heywood (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2006), xx.

themselves within a variety of social contexts, acknowledging the ways identities and experiences inform their ability to experience both privilege and exploitation.

By employing intersectionality, third wave authors identify the various social, cultural, and interpersonal sources of their own oppression, which produces a "diversity of positions, attitudes, and locations" throughout third wave texts.[103] Consequently, subjectivity emerges as an integral component of third wave theory, allowing "different identities and different issues [to] emerge as being important."[104] Intersectionality broadens the scope of feminism beyond the boundaries perceived by the second wave, allowing third wave feminists to account for their own experiences and combat exclusive and essentialist practices. This expansion is manifested in the inclusion of men in the discussion of gender, the identification of economic disparities in both the Western world and a global context, and attempts to "link gender concerns with concerns related to the environment, economic and social justice, and women's movements worldwide."[105]

As Barbara Findlen explains in her introduction to *Listen Up*, "women's *experiences* of sexism have always been an important basis for political action," but the third wave embraces the understanding that these experiences "have always been affected by race, class, geographic location, disability, sexual identity, religion and just plain luck."[106] The movement from sexism as the target of political action to an intersectional critique of oppression contributes to a partial definition of the third wave. In her essay "Hip Hop Feminist," Joan Morgan outlines the necessity of a feminism "committed to

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[103] Deborah L. Siegel, "The Legacy of the Personal: Generating Theory in Feminism's Third Wave," *Hypatia* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1997), 50.

[104] Heywood, xx.

[105] Heywood, xx-xxi.

[106] Barbara Findlen, "Introduction," in *Listen Up: Voices From the Next Feminist Generation* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1995), 7.

'keeping it real'."[107] This new feminism would be "one that samples and layers many voices, injects its sensibilities into the old and flips it into something new, provocative, and powerful," in other words, a feminism that accepts intersectionality and subjectivity, and uses the resulting "hypocrisy, contradictions, and trifeness" to "finally confront what we'd all rather hide from."[108] As a result, "what may appear to be a splintering" within the third wave, is actually "an honest assessment of our differences as each of us defines her place and role in feminism."[109]

As intersectionality became a prevalent method of understanding discrimination and personal experience, third wave writers began to articulate "the need for new forms of social justice activism that could address this kind of hybridity within individual identity."[110] Based on the understanding that "it is counterproductive to isolate gender as a single variable," many third wave authors focus on the intersection of identities.[111] By utilizing intersectionality, the third wave "respects not only differences between women based on race, ethnicity, religion, and economic standing but also makes allowance for different identities within a single person."[112] The result of these practices is a feminism concerned with all forms of discrimination and oppression and is, itself, a "form of inclusiveness."[113]

The development of intersectionality relies, as does the development of many theories, on the subjective experiences of theorists. The close relationship between

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[107] Joan Morgan, "hip-hop feminist," in *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost* (New York, N.Y: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 17.

[108] Ibid., 13.

[109] Barbara Findlen, ed. *Listen up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1995), 7.

[110] Heywood, xvii.

[111] Heywood, xx.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

subjectivity and theory and, within intersectionality, between subjectivity and oppression, is embraced in third wave texts. While earlier feminists removed themselves and their experiences from their writings, third wave authors embraced the subjectivity of the personal narrative as a vital component of their work. Drawing on the second wave mantra that "the personal is political," third wave writers frequently utilize their own experiences in order to articulate issues that are pertinent to feminist work and activism. The use of intersectionality and subjectivity create a theoretically viable space for third wave authors to articulate and utilize their experiences. The recognition of personal experience as a legitimate method of theoretical production is manifested in prevalence of personal narrative in numerous third wave texts; the most notable examples are those in *Listen Up* and *Manifesta*, wherein authors utilize the form to explore theoretical issues relevant to the movement.

Third wave authors often include the purposeful use of emotional reactions in their writings in an attempt to better articulate their personal experiences. These authors frequently express anger, rage, or frustration in their writings. Unlike other theoretical fields, they do not strive for emotional distance from their subject or the semblance of objectivity. In addition to objective or factual evidence, third wave authors emphasize personal experience and their subjective responses in order to support the validity of their aims. For example, in "Becoming the Third Wave," Rebecca Walker contemplates what a third wave of feminism would be and why it is necessary. In her essay, she explores her experience on a train as she watches the harassment of another passenger and experiences harassment herself. Her reflections included her emotional responses to the

event and to a larger political and social context, and she utilizes these emotions as a rhetorical tool to emphasize the necessity of the third wave as a social movement.

Postmodern and poststructural theories, which garnered theoretical and academic attention in the 1970s and 1980s, developed criticisms of objectivity and authority that are integral to the third wave. Essential to the postmodern criticism of authority, Jean-Francois Lyotard's rejection of grand narratives "sums up the ethos of postmodernism, with its disdain for authority in all its many guises."[114] This critical practices places postmodernism within a body of philosophical knowledge that "sets out to undermine other philosophical theories claiming to be in possession of ultimate truth."[115] Because "whoever controls knowledge...exerts political control," postmodern theory challenges claims of objectivity and authority, as well as "theories that claim to be able to explain everything."[116] These theories, or grand narratives, function as sources of power because they are perceived to be objective and constant

Sue Thornham, in her chapter on postmodernism and feminism, explains that once knowledge and political power is available to "all of us,...there is an interplay of differing levels of experience, so that our identities, whilst situated, are not fixed but 'nomadic'."[117] The dissemination of knowledge and power amongst identities results in "both a new definition of objectivity (objectivity as partial, situated knowledge) and the possibility of new political coalitions."[118] Influenced by postmodern and poststructuralist understandings of the subject, third wave authors attempted to create a "politics that

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[114] Stuart Sim. "Postmodernism and Philosophy," in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.; Ibid, 7.

[117] Sue Thornham, "Postmodernism and Feminism," in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2001), 32.

[118] Ibid.

acknowledges the multiple and contradictory aspects of both individual and collective identities."[119]

By incorporating postmodern critiques of objectivity and authority, third wave authors reject the essentialism that is frequently associated with the second wave. Functioning under the belief that second wave authors, perhaps unknowingly, utilized the banner of objectivity and authority to claim political power, third wave authors perceive the results of these efforts to be contradictory to their goals for feminism. In response, third wave feminism seeks to disseminate knowledge and power in order to develop a feminism based on "partial, situated knowledge[s]."[120]

As Imelda Whelehan explains, the feminism that emerged as a result of postmodern ideas is one that "differs and moulds to as many identities as there are practitioners and thinkers."[121] The third wave feminist principle "that feminism is not owned" signifies an inclusive feminism that is flexible and open to the interpretation of its many practitioners.[122] One repercussion of this flexibility, however, is that while young feminists "have integrated feminist values into our lives," many do not "choose to use the label 'feminist'."[123] This ambivalence with the label "feminist" may be, as Findlen claims, "an important barometer of the impact of feminism," or, as Freedman notes, it may be an indication that many young people, while "influenced by these feminist expectations...[are] not necessarily comfortable with the term."[124] This ambiguity (whether to understand the phenomenon as a positive indication of the success and

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[119] Siegel, 53.
[120] Thornham, 32.
[121] Imelda Whelehan, "Preface," in *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), xviii.
[122] Whelehan, xv.
[123] Findlen, 8.
[124] Ibid.; Freedman, 5.

applicability of feminism or as a function of anti-feminist backlash) will be examined later in the chapter through the analysis of postfeminist discourse and popular responses to feminism.

By incorporating intersectionality, inclusivity, and the criticism of authority, "feminism" becomes a flexible term, and, therefore, the third wave lacks a singular, unifying goal or position. While some critics have utilized the lack of political cohesion to question the pertinence of the third wave, many third wave authors and proponents view this flexibility as a manifestation of the theoretical underpinnings that differentiate the third wave from the second. By establishing a feminism that includes diverse positions, third wave authors allow for the emergence of political goals that reflect the needs of its practitioners. The utilization of postmodern critiques of objectivity and authority create a theoretical atmosphere that encourages a feminism not defined by the most powerful or privileged, but by the needs of third wave participants. This flexibility enables individuals from a diversity of locations to participate in the development of the third wave's political and theoretical agenda.

While the third wave was concerned with avoiding the exclusivity that they felt defined the second wave, many third wave authors are explicitly *not* concerned with defining "a single feminism to speak for all women."[125] As a manifestation of postmodern discourse, third wave authors understood that monolithic definitions rely on essentialist discourse and are neither useful nor inclusive. *Listen Up* and *To Be Real*, for example, do not posit a definition of feminism to which contributors adhere, but are

[125] Heywood, xix.

"rightly understood as feminist anthologies" despite lacking "the fixity of one feminist agenda in view."[126]

The necessity of embracing personal contradictions emerges as a prominent theme in third wave writings. The understanding of intersectionality is integral to the position that contradictions within individuals and within a larger feminist movement are not only unavoidable, but are necessary to the development of an inclusive feminism. As Joan Morgan explains, accepting "hypocrisy, contradictions, and trifeness" is an unavoidable step toward "finally confront[ing] what we'd all rather hide from;" by embracing the complexities of individual experience the third wave can develop a feminism that fully examines privilege and exploitation.[127]

Development of an inclusive third wave feminism requires the confrontation and examination of the boundaries of feminist ideology. Many third wave authors share Joan Morgan's experience that "[hers] was not a feminism that existed comfortably in the black and white of things."[128] Instead, these authors attempt "the task of unsettling...definitions of feminism and feminist goals by outlining their own experiences and their own feminist ideals, which are frequently at odds with previous conceptualizations.[129] As with the third wave in general, individual authors must "engag[e] with some pretty thorny ambiguities" in order to develop a new feminism.[130] These ambiguities range from simultaneous experiences of privilege and exploitation to the seemingly apolitical "'rock-and-hard place of wanting-to-get-those-good-ass-jeans-

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[126] Siegel, 53.
[127] Morgan, 13.
[128] Ibid., 10.
[129] Freedman, 324.
[130] Whelehan, xviii.

without-giving-[your]-money-to-the-Gap'."[131] While the latter may seem to be outside the theoretical concerns of a social movement, the conflict between consumer desires and an anti-capitalist ideology exemplifies the third wave's concern with abolishing the line between personal and political. As third wave authors attempt to integrate their political beliefs into the functional aspects of their personal lives, they must explore the "complexity, multiplicity, and contradiction[s]" that come with the acceptance of intersectionality and inclusive feminism, in order to "enrich [their] identities as individual feminists and the movement as a whole."[132]

As Deborah Siegel describes in "Legacy of the Personal," the third wave is not a generation of feminists that belong to the same age demographic, but is "a stance [rather] than a constituency, a practice rather than a policy."[133] As with any definition, an understanding of the third wave based on concrete and measurable characteristics would be simpler and more widely applicable. However, since third wave authors are unified, at least in part, by a shared philosophy of "how" feminism should be instead of "what" feminism should be, the third wave is not a social movement defined merely through a list of political concerns. Some have found it appropriate to characterize the third wave as an apolitical movement due to its apparent lack of unifying political goals, or as a failure to continue the political legacy of the first and second waves. However, the third wave represents the integration of political action with "the feminist legacy of assessing

[131] Heywood, xx, note 5.
[132] Cathryn Bailey, "Making Waves and Drawing Lines: The Politics of Defining the Vicissitudes of Feminism," *Hypatia* 12, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 26.
[133] Siegel, 56.

foundational concepts," which results in a feminism that remains a political movement, but one "without the fixity of a single feminist agenda in view."[134]

One of the challenges that those who attempt to define the third wave face is that without a "monolithicaly identifiable, single-issue agenda," it is often difficult to "[distinguish] it from other movements for social justice."[135] Because intersectionality plays an important role in developing the third wave political agenda, other social movements share many of these issues. These shared goals give many critics the impression that the movement is not distinct, and therefore not pertinent to the struggle for social justice. Additionally, the apparent "splintering in this generation" of feminists is often cited as an indication that the third wave is a movement in search of a political goal, rather than a movement centered on the belief that each participant "defines her place and role in feminism."[136]

In addition, the absence of a singular third wave agenda has allowed critics to question the pertinence of the third wave. While many critics insist that viable social movements require the objective assessment of discrete political issues and a rational outline of political goals, third wave feminists embody "the postmodernist lesson...that the demand for logical consistency should be treated as a psychological obsession to which the modern era has been especially susceptible."[137] Instead, third wave authors spend less time "forging a monolithic identity," and are "more interested in 'weaving an identity tapestry.'"[138]

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[134] Ibid.
[135] Heywood, xx.
[136] Findlen, 7.
[137] Bailey, 26.
[138] Ibid.

Many critics of the third wave question the movement's pertinence through claims that it lacks a theoretical foundation. Starting with the first wave, the interaction between theory and political action has been central to feminism. However, as illustrated by the second wave tenant that the personal is political, "[feminist] theorizing...is often in narrative forms," and inextricable from personal experiences, which are, in turn, related to political goals.[139] As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), theory is "a conception or mental scheme of something to be done, or of the method of doing it; a systematic statement of rules or principles to be followed" (OED). The first wave of feminism exemplified this definition—theoretical production of early feminist theorists was through the articulation of experience and the identification of related political goals. The theories present in first wave feminism differ from those in the second as the understanding of theory shifted from a set of goals and principles towards an understanding of theory as a body of work unique to academic philosophy. The distinction between these two conceptions of theory is integral to understanding third wave as a social movement and philosophical body of knowledge. Since theory has been a ubiquitous characteristic feminist social movements since their inception, "the question of theory—how we do it and for whom has been a focal point of debate among feminist academics."[140] As the second wave emerged, both activism and theoretical discourse became integral to the success of the movement, and the political goals of the second emerged through the articulation of experiences of oppression. These formulations resulted in general theories that outlined "something to be done." However, unlike the first wave, second wave feminists were able to access, utilize, and produce theory in a

[139] Siegel, 48.
[140] Ibid.

academic setting. The use of academic philosophies allowed second wave feminists to develop more complex theories of systems of oppression and the nature of patriarchy. The production of academic feminist theory was beneficial to feminists in the second wave (and after) through the development of these new formulations and the emergence of feminism as a viable and dynamic body of philosophy. However, the understanding that academic feminist theory is the only viable feminist theory reveals a shift from theory as "a conception…of something to be done" to "the assumption that all theorizing takes place in the academy."[141]

The criticism that the third wave is theory-free results is not unique to critics of the third wave, but is also internalized by third wave authors who struggle to redefine feminist theory as existed existing outside of academic discourse. Rebecca Walker, in her essay "Becoming the Third Wave," explains her belief that she must "push beyond [her] rage and articulate an agenda" for the third wave by "reach[ing] beyond [her] own voice in discussion, beyond voting, beyond reading feminist theory."[142] By identifying feminist theory as a monolithic entity separate from her experiences, Walker identifies theory as a purely academic endeavor that is useless in forming a new feminist movement. Many critics have cited Walker's rejection of theory as evidence for their claims that the third wave is devoid of theory. However, this conception by critics of the third wave, as well as Walker, is not only a miscalculation of the existence of the theoretical components of third wave thought, but is "epistemologically naïve, historically inaccurate, and ultimately misinformed."[143] As with the first wave, theory in the third wave "is often in narrative forms, in the stories [individuals] create, in riddles

[141] Ibid, 49.
[142] Walker, 5.
[143] Siegel, 49.

and proverbs, [and] in the play with language."[144] Despite recognizing multiple forms of theoretical production, third wave authors struggle to reposition their work as a viable source of knowledge production in light of the emphasis on academic theory.

The third wave's complex relationship with theory is the result of the many triumphs of the second wave. The rise of academic feminist theory provided novel ways to understand individual experiences and political systems of oppression but overshadowed previous feminist methods of knowledge production. As a result, third wave authors struggle to justify their own theories as legitimate sources of knowledge and must "reinvent the wheel," so to speak, in order to overcome challenges by their critics. However, as will be discussed later in the chapter, third wave theory is not only produced outside of the academy, but is the manifestation of second wave feminist academic theory through the goals and actions of third wave authors. Third wave feminists are frequently individuals who grew up with and were exposed to second wave feminist beliefs and as a result, third wave authors are often the "effects of...the production and dissemination of feminist theory."[145] The tension between the simultaneous embodiment of and opposition to academic feminist theory is one of the defining characteristics of the third wave and contributes to its ambivalent relationship with the second.

The second wave's deconstruction of the separation of public and private spheres (the insistence that the personal is political) resulted in feminist theory that revealed the systemic and pervasive nature of patriarchy. Second wave authors analyzed and critiqued social structures that contributed to and were functions of patriarchal systems of

[144] Christian, 52; Siegel, 48.
[145] Siegel, 50.

oppression, which included the criticism of popular representations of women in mainstream culture and the media. Third wave authors continued and expanded the critical legacy of the second wave through engagement with popular culture and the creation of alternative modes of cultural production. While many second wave authors positioned themselves in opposition to popular culture, third wave authors articulated a more complex and ambivalent relationship. The editors of *Bitch* magazine (subtitled "A feminist response to pop culture") describe themselves as "fed-up, pop-culture-obsessed feminists," a position that reflects many third wave authors' desire to simultaneously consume popular culture and "to point out [its] insidious, everyday sexism."[146] Members of the third wave seek to "appropriate and reuse [popular culture] to their own purposes" by "propos[ing] alternatives, and celebrat[ing] pro-woman, pro-feminism pop products."[147] One of the methods employed by third wave authors in their efforts to critique popular representations of women is the linguistic reappropriation of derogatory terms. Both *Bust* and *Bitch* magazine provide examples of reappropriation in their titles, which allows for the manipulation of stereotypes in order to "[redefine] them in a positive way" and to challenge dominant social structures that encourage the use of derogatory terms.[148]

The efforts by third wave feminists to engage and explore contradictions and ambiguities (as outlined earlier in the chapter) is exemplified through the relationship to popular culture: third wave authors "[admit] complicity with and a place inside popular culture" while simultaneously "making use of popular culture to effect social change."[149]

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[146] "Our History." *Bitch Magazine*. http://bitchmagazine.org/about/history.
[147] Whelehan, xviii; Ibid.
[148] Heywood, xix.
[149] Ibid.; Ibid, xx.

Third wave authors' engagement with mass media not only criticizes popular representations of women, but integrates feminist theory into "an arena of people's lives which is arguably more meaningful to them than their political identities or any kind of social or civic responsibility."[150]

However, as with the second wave, third wave feminists could not critique popular culture without also becoming the target of negative media attention. The emergence of several social phenomena resulted in the conflation of these disparate movements with the third wave. The popularization of the Spice Girls and the phrase "girl power" in the 1990s was frequently associated with young feminists and the third wave movement. While third wave authors rejected this association, "the mass media and the academy...represented [the third wave] as 'lipstick feminism,' 'consumer feminism,' or 'feminism lite.'"[151]

Outside of the association with "girl power," third wave feminists were often conflated with the developing genre of postfeminism, which assumes "that the gains forged by the second wave have...invaded all tiers of social existence [so] that feminists themselves have become obsolete."[152] The emergence of postfeminist discourse occurred during the "formational period" of the third wave, and the association between them developed as a result of ostensibly shared characteristics.[153] Postfeminist authors such as Naomi Wolf, Katie Roiphe, and Rene Denfeld "were overtly critical of second-wave feminism" and "[positioned] themselves as spokeswomen for the next feminist

[150] Whelehan, xviii.
[151] Heywood, xix.
[152] Siegel, 52.
[153] Heywood, xv.

generation."[154] Wolf's "popular, media-friendly work," namely *The Beauty Myth*, resulted in her identification "as the most visible representative of third-wave feminism."[155] As a result, "the term 'third wave' became synonymous with a new version of liberal feminism."[156] In the final line of "Becoming the Third Wave," Rebecca Walker illustrates the power of the conflation of the third wave and postfeminism by declaring: "I am not a postfeminist feminist...I am the Third Wave."[157] Walker's delineation between the third wave and the popular postfeminist movement was mirrored by the emergence of *To Be Real* and *Listen Up*, which "began to appear and to distinguish the third wave from the more controversial, and possibly post-feminist, work of writers like Naomi Wolf and Katie Roiphe."[158]

The emergence of postfeminism presented several challenges for the third wave: authors spend significant time and energy refuting the claims that the 1990s marked the beginning of a postfeminist era and correcting conflations of the third wave with postfeminism. Despite these efforts, stereotypes and popular representations of feminists in the media "work[ed] insidiously on feminists, especially developing feminists."[159] As a result, many third wave authors had to undertake the theoretical task of "understanding...what it means to be a feminist in a society in which many vocal and influential people have said that feminism was no longer necessary."[160]

While postfeminism presented unique challenges to third wave authors in their attempts to define themselves as a new feminist movement, the relationship between the

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[154] Ibid.; Siegel, 47.
[155] Heywood xv; Ibid., xvi.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Walker, 5.
[158] Heywood, xix.
[159] Bailey, 24.
[160] Bailey, 25.

second and third waves poses an immense challenge to constructing an accurate definition of the movement. In order to establish the third wave as separate from the second wave, third wave authors defined the movement in opposition to both patriarchal systems of oppression and the second wave itself. The perception of the second wave as a movement by and for white, middle-class women is clearly outlined in the work of third wave authors, who "[define] themselves against...the ideas and ideals of second-wave feminism."[161] While the term "second wave" was adopted to "[emphasize] continuity with earlier feminist activities and ideas," the declaration of a third wave was an attempt to "[distance] itself from earlier feminism, as a means of stressing what are perceived as discontinuities with earlier feminist thought and activity."[162]

The desire to separate the third wave from the second is complicated by the fact that "those who identify themselves as 'second wave' remain active in feminist circles."[163] Not only does this result in tension between the two groups of feminists, but limits the ability of third wave authors to define their movement "clear[ly] and uncontroversial[ly]."[164] The overlap between the two waves and the perceived age gap between second and third wave theorists has resulted in the characterization of "feminist conflicts...in generational terms inside and outside the academy."[165] In 1995, "Generations of Feminism" was the title of the annual National Women's Studies

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[161] Heywood, xix.
[162] Bailey, 17; Ibid., 18.
[163] Devoney Looser and E. Ann Kaplan, "Preface," in *Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), ix.
[164] Bailey, 17.
[165] Ibid.

Association meeting, as well as the theme of a City University of New York Graduate School conference.[166]

The distinction between second and third wave is complicated by the fact that many of the political issues and philosophical tenants of the third wave have roots in the second wave of feminism. While the third wave sought to unify various feminisms, the existence of these groups (Radical feminism, Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Womanism, Lesbian feminism) reveals a plurality of voices present within the second wave.[167] In addition, many of the social justice issues addressed by third wave authors first appeared in the 1970s and 80s, including "violence against women...and an emphasis on abortion rights...[as well as] issues surrounding racism [and] lesbianism."[168] Problems facing third wave authors, including "[the role of] men in feminism, violence and feminism, a woman's dilemma about her name and marriage, [and] ambivalence about motherhood" are similar to those faced by participants of the second wave.[169]

While these similarities indicate strong connections between the second and third waves, their existence does not undermine the notion that the third wave is a movement distinct from the second. Instead, the third wave can be understood as an attempt to "link gender concerns with concerns related to the environment, economic and social justice and women's movements worldwide," as well as "linking [the] third wave...more fully with activists in the second wave."[170] In the preface of *To Be Real*, Gloria Steinem emphasizes the necessity for third wave authors to acknowledge connections with the

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[166] Ibid., x.
[167] Bailey, 23.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Heywood, xxi.

second so that "tactical and theoretical wheels don't have to be reinvented."[171] While the declaration of the third wave signaled the emergence of a new feminist movement, "to call something a wave implies that it is one among others in some sort of succession, both similar to and different from the other occurrences."[172]

Due to the complex relationship between second and third wave feminists, authors' attempts to bound the third wave have caused tension between the two groups—often resulting in unsavory characterizations of both second and third wave theorists. Devoney Looser and Ann Kaplan describe the stereotypes that developed due to the notion of "feminist generations":

> Younger feminists are sometimes said to be undutiful daughters, careerists, and theorists who are not political enough—not sufficiently grateful to the past generation for fighting the battles that made today's lives possible. Older feminists are often painted as bad mothers who long to see themselves in their offspring, who resent deviations form their second-wave plan, and who can't properly wield the power they have garnered.[173]

Cathryn Bailey, in her essay "Making Waves and Drawing Lines," describes the danger of animosity between second and third wave feminists:

> For younger feminists to ignore the work of earlier feminists is not only to fail to wrap their hands around valuable tools, it is to join their shovels to the backlash forces that would bury the history and significance of

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[171] Rebecca Walker, ed. *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), xix.

[172] Bailey, 18.

[173] Looser, ix.

> feminism. Older feminists should not merely be heard as nostalgic nags when they remind younger women of work that has already been done. Younger women, however, should not be dismissed out of hand by older feminists as ungrateful, ignorant brats when they read their mothers' feminisms with critical eyes. Such a dismissal is just another way of telling younger women that their voices do not matter, a message they receive far too often from society at large; a society that, by the way, is likely to see a feminist as a strident, humorless, man-hating fanatic whether she is old or young, whether she defines herself in terms of the second wave or the third.[174]

While the generational model contributes to characterizations of second and third wave theorists as participants in a stereotypical mother/daughter relationship, many third wave authors, while not supporting an immediate feminist genealogy, recognize the legacy of earlier feminists and embrace the notion of a feminist heritage. The political goals and ideologies of the third wave represent "a pledge to expand on the groundwork laid during waves one and two."[175] In concert with the need to carry on the second wave's legacy is the understanding by third wave authors of the gratitude owed to the efforts of second wave feminists. Participants in the third wave were "the first generation for whom feminism has been entwined in the fabric of [their] lives," coming of age "during one of those moments in history when the feminist movement was becoming so large, so vocal and so visible that it could reach into and change the life of an eleven-

[174] Bailey, 27.
[175] Siegel, 56.

year-old suburban girl."[176] While "scripts that assume that the gains forged by the second wave" provide a challenging social context for the movement, third wave authors recognize that "sexism may be a very real part of my life but so is the unwavering belief that there is no dream I can't pursue *and* achieve simply because 'I'm a woman.'"[177]

[176] Findlen, 7; Ibid., p.6.
[177] Siegel, 52; Morgan, 12.

CHAPTER THREE

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the shared and dissimilar characteristics of riot grrrl and the third wave of feminism. While riot grrrl is a subcultural movement that features a strong musical component, much of the philosophical construction of and participation in riot grrrl is through zines. These zines provide a more holistic view of the movement than the analysis of either riot grrrl lyrics or popular interviews with prominent riot grrrl musicians. In keeping with the central ideologies of riot grrrl, the analysis of zines respects the idea that riot grrrl is a movement without leaders or a central hierarchy, and that while the theoretical and philosophical production of riot grrrl musicians is an essential aspect of the movement, that it should not be considered more important or a better representation of riot grrrl than the zines and their authors.

As discussed in the first chapter, zines as a literary and visual form are the product of numerous cultural movements. Zines that are produced within a specific cultural context reflect the characteristics of zines in general and those that are singular to the movement with which they are associated. The zines produced by riot grrrl authors include several characteristics that may be foreign to some readers; this introduction is intended to familiarize the reader with these techniques before engaging with the zines in a critical manner.

Because zines are independently produced they do not conform to many of the standards used by the publishing industry. In a description of punk zines of the 1970s, theorist Dick Hebdige describes characteristics that are also present in riot grrrl zines, namely the proliferation of "swear words," as well as "typing errors and grammatical

mistakes, misspellings and jumbled pagination."[178] In addition, riot grrrl zine authors frequently employ the second wave feminist practice of spelling "girl(s)," "woman," "women," and "female" in non-traditional ways. According to Gillian Gaar, Tobi Vail (the drummer of Bikini Kill) was the first to employ the spelling "grrrl" in reference to the zines being published prior to the emergence of the riot grrrl movement.[179] Vail's spelling was both "parodying the way some '70s-era feminists spelled 'womyn' and conveying a playful energy."[180] While Vail's initial spelling was a caricature of second wave techniques, many zine authors use alternative spellings for both "girl" and "woman." These spellings include grrrl, grrl, gurl, gurlz, gerll, womyn, wimmin, and femyle, among others.

Chapter Overview

The first part of this chapter addresses the task of creating and defining riot grrrl as a philosophical undertaking. This section takes into consideration both the theoretical production of zine authors and the analysis of textual evidence for the purpose of discussing the philosophical legacy of riot grrrl and outlining various definitions of the movement. The goal of this section is to provide the reader with the foundational knowledge of riot grrrl necessary for comparison with the third wave of feminism. The second section outlines the relationship between riot grrrl and feminism as identified by zine authors, as well as the analyzing these associations in connection with the third wave. The third section contrasts the presence of essentialism within riot grrrl zines with the anti-essentialist goals of third wave theory, and the three subsequent sections on race, class, and sexual orientation discuss the implications of essentialism to zine authors who

[178] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1991), 111.
[179] Gaar, 380-381.
[180] Ibid., 381.

are not white, middle-class, and heterosexual. The next section outlines the role of community building and zine production to the development of the riot grrrl movement, as well as the connections between these methods and second wave techniques. The penultimate chapter describes the influence of the punk subculture on the riot grrrl movement and individual zine authors, and the final section addresses critiques of the media and popular culture in both riot grrrl zines and the third wave of feminism.

Riot Grrrl Definitions

In order to understand riot grrrl as a theoretical and philosophical phenomenon, it is necessary to provide a definition of riot grrrl. The information in chapter one is intended to provide the cultural legacy upon which riot grrrl was constructed, as well as a timeline of the movement's progression. In order to answer the question "What is riot grrrl?," it is necessary to explore the definitions that riot grrrl authors present in their own writings. These definitions share many characteristics with those of the third wave of feminism, but in order to allow riot grrrl to "speak for itself," the analysis of these similarities will be addressed after an in-depth explanation of riot grrrls' own definitions.

Central to the ideology of riot grrrl is the belief that the movement should be free of hierarchy and formal organization. In *Riotemptresses*, the author explains that "there are no guidelines, no restrictions, no rules" and that "there is no set goal."[181] The author of *Free Gurlz* echoes this sentiment, explaining that like many other prominent philosophies (she references communism), riot grrrls do not "follow any type of 'riot grrrl guidelines.'"[182] The authors of *Riot Grrrl DC* reinforce these ideals, stating that "Riot

[181] *Riotemptresses*. Zine. Issue 1. Riot Grrrl Kentucky: Lexington KY. Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, 9.

[182] *Free Gurlz*. Zine. Issue 3. Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005. Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, 3.

Grrrl is NOT a closed group with a certain leader" and that the movement "do[es] NOT have any rules."[183] The author of *Fantastic Fanzine* expands this philosophy, explaining that riot grrrl "[doesn't] have a cohesive philosophy or dogma" because it is "a movement of individuals working together without some kind of map or chart or set of rules" and that it "[doesn't] have leaders [because]...we are actively and continually trying to eliminate hierarchy when possible."[184] In addition to the rejection of hierarchy and formal structure, riot grrrls express the desire for a wholly democratic movement that encourages the participation of any girl willing to join. One of the phrases that echoes throughout riot grrrl zines is that "every girl [grrrl] is a Riot Grrrl."[185]

Due to the fact that riot grrrls consistently identify the lack of hierarchy and organization as a foundational principle of the movement, these individual definitions of riot grrrl exist independently while simultaneously composing a broad categorical definition of the movement. It is important and necessary to note, however, the logical inconsistency riot grrrls' argument that their movement is both without set goals but includes "common themes" or a "sole purpose."[186] Despite this incongruity, the development of the riot grrrl movement and the proliferation of riot grrrl zines indicate that those who identify as riot grrrls share some commonality. The following

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[183] *Riot Grrrl DC*, Zine, Issue 7 (*Riot Grrrl DC*: Washington DC, August 1992, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), insert 6.

[184] Erika Reinstein, *Fantastic Fanzine*, Zine, Issue 3 (Arlington, VA, 1992, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 40.

[185] *Riot Grrrl DC #7*, 2; Ibid., 6; Heather Jenkins, *Hissy Fitt*, Zine, Issue 3 (San Jose CA, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 15-16.

[186] *Riot Grrrl DC #7*, insert 6; excerpt from *Cheese Log* in Leah Baldo, *I Kicked A Boy*, Zine, Issue 2 (Clifton VA, c. 1994, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 3-4.

characteristics contribute to a definition of riot grrrl and represent patterns of belief present in numerous zines.

Because riot grrrl strives to be free of leaders and inclusive of all willing participants, many authors explain that joining the movement or becoming a riot grrrl is not equivalent to joining a club or organization, but comes from a shift in perspective. The author of *Riotemptresses* explains that in order to become a riot grrrl, one is required to do "absolutely nothing" except take the newfound knowledge that "there's a name for who you are: riot grrrl."[187] In one of the earliest riot grrrl zines, *Girl Germs* (founded by two of the members of riot grrrl band Bratmobile), the authors explain that "there's no copywrite [sic] on the name so if you are sitting there reading this and you feel like you might be a riot grrrl then you probably are so call yourself one."[188] The author of *Gecko In My Toilet* adds that one "[doesn't] need to go to meetings or conferences," although "it sure does help," and that the author herself is "not involved in any sort of organization and [doesn't] hold a card in [her] wallet saying 'Hi! I'm a certified riot grrrl!"[189] In the zine *Rag*, the author states that "you become a riot grrrl as part of your identity, as opposed to being involved in riot grrrl the movement."[190] In an interview with Tien Lee in *Fake*, Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill explains that her goal for riot grrrl is "to reach a

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[187] *Riotempresses* #1, 9.

[188] Molly Neuman and Allison Wolfe, *Girl Germs*, Zine, Issue 3 (Olympia WA, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 27.

[189] Lindsay Oldenski et al., *Gecko In My Toilet*, Zine, Issue 1 (Gulfport/Seminole FL, January 1994, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 32.

[190] Erin, *Rag*, Zine, Issue 1 (Hot Springs AR, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 11.

point of accessibility where any girl could say to another 'You're a Riot Grrrl, and I'm a Riot Grrrl too.'"[191]

Riot Grrrl definitions are characterized by their emphasis on individualism. Building on the understanding that all girls can be (or are) riot grrrls, many definitions explicitly address the fact that participants "don't have to change to suit anyone else, [and] can keep living the exact same way [they] always did."[192] The belief that riot grrrl can encompass many perspectives and beliefs stems from the conviction that riot grrrl exists without a central ideology. In *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted*, the author explains that "riot grrrl is a...movement that is unique to the individual."[193] In *I Kicked a Boy*, the author quotes the zine *Sourpuss*' explanation that riot grrrl is "not about assimilating into something," but is a community where one can feel comfortable "being who [they are]," "do[ing] what [they] want and support[ing] Riot Grrrl at the same time."[194]

Along with reinforcing the compatibility of individualism with riot grrrl, several authors underscore the differences between participants. The author of *Fantastic Fanzine*, in a critique of popular conceptions of the movement, explains that "[reporters] seem to think that we all dress alike or something which is mildly funny but totally untrue," and the author of *Free Gurlz* explains that "not all grrrls in riot grrrl are exactly 100% alike."[195] In *Riot Grrrl DC*, the author explains that riot grrrls are "not all the same," and, despite media characterizations that riot grrrls are all "white vegetarian

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[191] Irene Chien, Fake, Zine, Issue 0 (Potomac, MD, 1992, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 19-20.

[192] *Riotemptresses* #1, 9.

[193] *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted*, Zine, Issue 1 (1994, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 1.

[194] *I Kicked a Boy* #1, 28.

[195] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 40; *Free Gurlz* #3, 3.

straightedge punk[s]," the movement is "a very diverse group with very diverse interests."[196] In Hissy Fitt, the author explains that each riot grrrl "supports different causes and believes different things."[197]

Another integral aspect of the movement is the belief that women and girls are equal to boys and men and that the goal of riot grrrl is to fight for the realization of this equality. To the authors of *Riot Grrrl DC*, riot grrrl is "about being sick and tired of being treated like an inferior, and wanting to be treated like an equal."[198] The author of *Fantastic Fanzine* explains that "riot grrrl is a new form of the larger idea of feminism, that has been created by the younger generation" in order to combat the effects of "this cultural disease called sexism."[199] To the author of *Free Gurlz*, riot grrrl is concerned with "grrrlz who are still in school and being harassed to grrrlz at work & being harassed," and fighting these conditions by "writ[ing] [their] thoughts on this fucked up society from [a] struggling feminist point of view."[200] She adds that due to the realities of "this total patriarchally dominated world, where [women] don't even have freedom of choice," riot grrrl provides girls with the ability to "do something on [their] own for once."[201] The author of *Function* explains that "grrrls in the [punk] scene and in society have to take a lot of bullshit, sexism, [and] harassment in many forms," and riot grrrl provides the means through which girls can "empower themselves" despite these influences.[202] The author of *Gecko In My Toilet* explains that riot grrrl is the "state of

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[196] *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, 6.
[197] *Hissy Fitt* #3, 15-16.
[198] *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, insert 6.
[199] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 39.
[200] *Free Gurlz* #3, 3.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Dawn Williams, *Function*, Zine, Issue 5 (Newbury Park, CA, 1993, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 13.

mind" that "society-may-be-against-me-but-damnit-I've-still-got-my-grrrl-power."[203] The author of *Hissy Fitt* imagines that riot grrrl is "like a dream that women and girls can...be respected in society" and "stop putting up with the sexist bull shit [they] deal with every day."[204] Despite the fact that "Riot Grrrls can't agree on everything," she believes that no riot grrrl is "going to accept being treated as inferior or incapable," and that riot grrrl can improve "women and girls[']' treatment in society."[205] To other authors, riot grrrl is "about remembering that [she is] a good person" despite the negative influence of "television, magazines, and peers," "combat[ting] stereotypes of how women should look, feel, and act," and girls "standing up for [their] rights and...breaking the chokehold of...stereotypes."[206]

In an attempt to fight patriarchy and sexism for the ultimate goal of gender equality, riot grrrls define their movement as one designed to encourage and empower girls through an environment of love, acceptance and support. The author of *Riotemptresses* explains that "Riot Grrrl IS about acceptance [and] it is about love," and the authors of *Riot Grrrl DC* insist that "the only common theme" of riot grrrl "is love and support."[207] *Riot Grrrl NYC* explains that riot grrrl is "grrrls getting together and...empowering each other," and the author of *Function* outlines "giv[ing] support to grrls in whatever they may do" as one of the main "meanings for what riot grrrl is."[208] Other authors declare that "RIOT GRRRL is a SISTERHOOD," with the "sole purpose

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[203] *Gecko In My Toilet* #1, 32.
[204] *Hissy Fitt* #3, 15-16.
[205] Ibid.
[206] *I Kicked a Boy* #1, 28; *I Kicked a Boy* #2, 3-4; Misty, *Just Like A Girl*, Zine, Issue 3 (Olympia WA, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 33.
[207] *Riotemptresses* #1, 2; *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, insert 6.
[208] *Function* #5, 13.

of empowering women to love themselves."[209] In a call to interested girls, the author of *Just Like a Girl* explains that "riot grrrl is a place where girls can talk openly about anything and get support," while also "empowering each other."[210] In almost identical language, the author of *Function* explains that "this group can be a place where grrls can get a sense of empowerment from each other and talk openly."[211]

The characteristics of riot grrrl definitions present the first point of entry into a comparison with the third wave of feminism. Most obviously, riot grrrl's belief in equality and focus on subverting patriarchy and sexism is consistent with the goals of feminism, including the third wave. However, as will be discussed later, the methods through which riot grrrls articulate experiences of oppression and the statements of their political goals and concerns troubles this similarity. The inherent lack of organization demanded by a rejection of hierarchy and leadership means that riot grrrl, by definition, is an amorphous philosophy. This lack of organization is strongly aligned with third wave feminism's understanding that "whoever controls knowledge...exerts political control,"[212] and third wave authors' attempts, through inclusion and the rejection of objectivity, to establish a movement that is critical of claims to authority. Both the third wave and riot grrrl reject and discourage categorical definitions of their movements, instead allowing participants to construct individual definitions that are pertinent to their own experiences and political goals. The acceptance of diverse theoretical understandings of both riot grrrl and third wave feminism results in what the editors of *Manifesta* describe as "activists [working] in their own individual ways in every tributary of the

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[209] *Hissy Fitt* #3, 15-16*; I Kicked A Boy* #2, 3-4
[210] *Just Like A Girl* #3, 33.
[211] *Function* #5, 13.
[212] Sim, 7.

mainstream."[213] These intersecting practices generate a "disparate movement" in the case of both third wave feminism and riot grrrl.[214] The understanding that "every girl is a riot grrrl" and that "not all grrrls in riot grrrl are exactly 100% alike" can be loosely understood as an expression of the anti-essentialism present within many third wave texts.[215] However, these statements, while an attempt at inclusion and diversity, are not synonymous with the complexity of anti-essentialism that is characteristic of the third wave. This incongruity between the two movements will be discussed later in the chapter in the section on the demographics of riot grrrl zine authors.

Riot Grrrl and Feminism

While chapter 1 provided the cultural legacy of zine production, riot grrrl zine authors consistently identify their movement with feminism. It is necessary to keep in mind, however, that the association with feminism is NOT synonymous with an association with the third wave. In addition to the numerous definitions of riot grrrl that include gender equality and anti-sexism as foundational ideologies of the movement, many authors directly identify feminism as a component to their own understandings of riot grrrl. However, as with the definitions of riot grrrl itself, the connections between riot grrrl and feminism are presented among varying degrees.

Some authors explicitly state that riot grrrl is a component of feminism: the author of *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted*, who claims that "Riot grrrl is a faction of radical feminism."[216] The author of *Free Gurlz* describes riot grrrl as "a

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[213] Amy Richards and Jennifer Baumgardner*, Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 289.

[214] Ibid.

[215] *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, insert 6; *Free Gurlz* #3, 3.

[216] *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted* #1, 3.

[women] oriented group of younger feminists."[217] Other authors view riot grrrl as a movement through which one can access feminism, as expressed by the author of "Tribute to Kathleen: Queen of all that is punk rock" in which she addresses renowned riot grrrl musician Kathleen Hanna. The author identifies riot grrrl music, and Hanna specifically, as the vehicle that "gave [her] NEW feminism," as opposed to the "proclaimed non-feminist" work of Juliana Hatfield and PJ Harvey, which left her "yearn[ing] for more."[218] More common is the loose association between riot grrrl and feminism as sympathetic or closely associated movements, rather than one as part of the other. In the same issue of *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted*, the author identifies "feminism, riot grrrl and any women's political branch of thought" as issues that frequently cause some female readers "[to be] turned off" despite the fact that Riot Grrrls, and feminists by association and her own definition, "are just like everyone else."[219] A similar grouping is provided in the second issue of Liar, where the author discusses the importance of female friendships that unites "feminism, riot grrrl, sisterhood, [and] girl-love," and is "the most most important part of any kind of feminism."[220] The sixteen-year-old author of *Fat Ugly Venus* identifies herself as "a riot grrrl/feminist," indicating that the two labels co-exist and are at least partially interchangeable.[221] For the author of *Fantastic Fanzine*, "riot grrrl and [her] own personal radical feminism" are the sources of criticism and disdain with the punk community.[222] While she identifies them separately, she does not dispute the association

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[217] *Free Gurlz* #3, 3.
[218] *Be A Pussy* #1, 7/8.
[219] *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted* #1, 3.
[220] Danielle, *Liar*, Zine, Issue 2 (Riverwoods IL, September 1993, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 20.
[221] *Fat Ugly Venus* #1, 1.
[222] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 5.

posited by her critics and concludes that "they obviously feel threatened by feminism" present in her own political beliefs and, to some degree, the riot grrrl movement.[223] Outside direct comparisons, many authors utilize their riot grrrl zines as a platform for identifying as feminists and discussing feminism. The author of *Fantastic Fanzine* utilizes the zine as a space to consider "why [she] call[s] [herself] a feminist," while the author of *Grope* uses it as a platform from which she declares that she is "a feminist for all the reasons [other women] are not."[224] The authors of *Gecko* #3 and *Libel* #3 attempt to discredit the perception that feminists are man-haters. The author of *Libel*, in a list of "questions [she doesn't] want 2 b asked anymore," responds to the question "feminism—does that mean u hate men?" with a resounding "NO," while the author of *Gecko* explains that "feminism has little to do with men at all."[225] While there is no direct association with riot grrrl in these discussions, both authors self-identify as riot grrrls, and by addressing questions related to feminism within their zines they identify feminism as a movement associated closely enough with riot grrrl to warrant extensive discussion. In addition, the fact that riot grrrl authors can identify as feminists without explaining the relationship between the two movements illustrates an assumption by authors and riot grrrl readers that the two movements are related.

However, despite these associations between riot grrrl and feminism, several zine authors choose to posit riot grrrl as an evolution of feminist theory and activism or a reaction against an "older" feminism. In the third issue of *Cupsize*, the author believes that riot grrrl "positions itself in opposition to 'older feminists, seventies, NOW, *Ms.*,'" and is therefore "not in a position to learn tactical tricks...from more experienced

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[223] Ibid.
[224] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 36; *Grope* #1, 6.
[225] *Libel* #3, 33; Ibid.; *Gecko* #3, 5.

activists."[226] While the author of *Cupsize* does not support this view, her assessment that other riot grrrls do is reflected in *Don't Be A Pussy*, where the author expresses her dissatisfaction with other feminist work, stating "*Ms.* Only went so far," but the "NEW feminism" of Bikini Kill is able to "[take her] confusion and [give] it a voice."[227] The author of *Fantastic Fanzine*, in her definition of riot grrrl, explains the development of riot grrrl in relationship to feminism: "So way at the beginning of this century, a movement was started to fight this disease [sexism]--a movement called feminism. And riot grrrl is a new form of the larger idea of feminism, that has been created by the younger generation."[228] The author of *I Kicked A Boy* believes that feminism is only partially relevant to riot grrrl, because it both "fails to identify with the isolated individual," and "has nothing to do with being punk."[229]

The sentiments expressed in the statements of solidarity with feminism and dissatisfaction with feminism in its current form reflects many of the experiences of third wave feminists. As illustrated in the second chapter, third wave authors devote significant textual space to the negotiation of the movement's relationship with earlier forms of feminism. The understanding that riot grrrl is an attempt to redefine earlier feminism in order to increase it's accessibility and pertinence to young women is incredibly similar to the theoretical goals inherent in the declaration of a "third wave" of feminism. The desire expressed by zine authors to have a feminism that can relate to their individual experiences (as in *Don't Be A Pussy* and *I Kicked A Boy*) is also sympathetic to critiques by third wave feminists of the essentialism of the second wave.

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[226]Emelye and Sasha, *Cupsize*, Zine, Issue 3 (New York, Winter 1995, Ailecia Ruscin Zine Collection, 1994-2002, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 8.

[227] *Don't Be A Pussy* #1, 7/8.

[228] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 39.

[229] *I Kicked A Boy* #2, 3-4.

The inclusivity and flexibility of the third wave was an attempt to remedy the exclusion that resulted from essentialist arguments.

In addition, riot grrrl zines imagine the same kind of generational relationship between themselves and earlier feminists that is present in understandings of the third wave, exemplified by the author of *Fantastic Fanzine*'s assertion that riot grrrl is a "younger generation" of feminism.[230] Unlike third wave authors, however, there seems to be little concern or criticism for the implications of a generational model. In fact, riot grrrl zines rarely address the existence of any other contemporary forms of feminist practice or the possibility that earlier feminists may, in fact, still be working towards feminist goals. In addition, the backlash politics present during the 1980s and 1990s resulted in the popular belief that feminism had lost it's potency—an understanding that is reflected in zine authors claims that earlier feminism was no longer useful. This reveals that riot grrrl authors have little exposure to feminist work contemporary to their writings, and have been strongly influenced by media backlash.

The belief that feminism is no longer viable or active is not founded in a critique of the inadequacies of earlier feminism, but is solely rooted in the popular idea that "feminism is dead." This is supported by the types of feminist references present in riot grrrl zines. In *Draw Yourself Naked*, a section of the zine is devoted to important historical figures who "got us where we are today," including Sojourner Truth, Amelia Bloomer, Emma Goldman, Amelia Earhart, Fannie Lou Hamer, Virginia Woolf, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Elizabeth Blackwell. The author explains that riot grrrls need to "learn about and from [these women] to move forward and into the future," because "if

[230] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 39.

you don't know about your past...then you don't know about your future."[231] The zine *Ms. America* includes a similar feature, titled "Riot grrrrandmas," with images of Virginia Woolf, Anne Sexton, medusa, a witch, Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, and "cool suffrage womyn going to the slammer."[232] These collections of feminist forbears indicate that several zine authors have an historical understanding of the feminist movement and believe that the success of riot grrrl hinges upon educating other members in this area. However, with the exception of Hamer and Bethune who were involved in the U.S. Civil Rights movement, the women included in these collections were active in the first wave of feminism or immediately after. In addition to these montages, other zines emphasize the importance of first wave figures and include quotations from Margaret Sanger and Carrie Chapman Catt, and one author includes a political cartoon discussing women's suffrage from 1915, with the caption "By Lou Rogers, riot grrrl and pro-suffrage cartoonist."[233]

Other riot grrrl zines reference more contemporary authors, such as *Riot Grrrl DC*'s list of "Top 10 Riot Grrrl Favorite Books or Authors," including Toni Morrison, Isabel Allende, Susan Faludi, Sarah Bernhardt, Sandra Cisneros, Rita Mae Brown, Zora Neale Hurston, Mercedes Lackey, Gael Baudino, Gloria Naylor, Gloria Steinem, Marge Piercy, Alison Belchdil, Ai, and Karen Finley.[234] While this list does reflect authors publishing during and after the second wave of feminism (with the exceptions of Sarah

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[231] *Draw Yourself Naked*, Zine, Issue 4 (Eureka, CA: *Riot Grrrl Eureka/Arcata*, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 9-10.

[232] Sarah and Jeni. *Ms. America*, Zine, Issue 2 (Normal IL, February 1994, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 16.

[233] Dawn Williams, *Riot Grrrl Seattle*, Zine, Issue 1 (Seattle WA, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University,) 2; *Function* #8, 2; Sarah-Katherine, *Pasty*, Zine, Issue 4 (Seattle WA: July 1995, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), back inside cover.

[234] *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, 17.

Bernhardt and Zora Neale Hurston), only Gloria Steinem and Susan Faludi's works are non-fiction. This is not to say that the works of fiction were not viable for the development of feminist consciousness, only to note that the references do not include feminist theorists or activists other than these two. Other zines include excerpts from *Ms.* magazine and Angela Davis's *Women, Race, and Class*, a quote from Betty Friedan, and a pamphlet from the 1969 protest of the Miss America pageant, indicating that several zine authors have a knowledge of second wave publications and activism.[235] These references indicate that many zine authors have at least a cursory knowledge of feminist history, as well as an awareness of contemporary women's fiction.

However, the absence of contemporary feminist scholarship and theory indicates that many of the beliefs about feminism's inability to address contemporary problems stems from a lack of exposure to later works of feminist authors. Outside the reference to Faludi's *Backlash*, there are two zine authors who include works published during the period of riot grrrl activity, and both are excerpts from Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth*, published in 1991. These excerpts reveal the engagement of some riot grrrl authors with contemporary publications, but both books were bestsellers the year they were published (*The Beauty Myth* debuted in the 16th spot on the August 11, 1991 New York Times Best Seller List and remained on the list for three weeks and Susan Faludi's *Backlash* was appeared on the Best Seller list for 35 in hardback alone), and are consistent with an engagement limited to historical feminist activists and contemporary feminist activists in the popular media.[236] In addition, the fact that only one author referenced Faludi's work

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[235] *Ms. America* #2, 8; Ibid.; *Just Like A Girl* #3, 8; Ibid., 34.

[236] "Best Sellers" September 15, 1991 http://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/15/books/best-sellers-september-15-1991.html?scp=5&sq=%22the+beauty+myth%22&st=nyt; "Best Sellers" August 9, 1992 http://www.nytimes.com/1992/08/09/books/best-sellers-august-9-1992.html?scp=14&sq=backlash&st=nyt

indicates that many other zine authors likely fall prey to popular conceptions of feminism's impotence, leading to a belief that a "new feminism" is necessary.

The sentiments of zine authors who are concerned with founding a new feminist movement is reminiscent of similar beliefs in third wave writings. In addition, the awareness of first and second wave feminist theorists and activists is shared with many third wave authors. However, the absence of second wave work outside Gloria Steinem, Ms. Magazine, the Miss America protest, and Betty Freidan underscores the limitations inherent in riot grrrls perceptions of this earlier feminist movement. While one can argue that many of the criticisms levied against the second wave by the third are based on generalizations about the demographics, goals, and ideologies of second wave feminists, many third wave critiques are based on active engagements with the texts and writings of second wave authors. In addition, third wave criticisms revolve around the inability for the second wave to be an inclusive movement and to reject essentialist ideals. In contrast, the understandings of earlier feminist movements in riot grrrl are founded on a limited knowledge of their work and are critiques of the usefulness of "older" feminism for contemporary young women. This presents some of the fundamental differences between the riot grrrl movement and the third wave of feminism. Ostensibly, both riot grrrl and the third wave are concerned with developing a new feminist praxis in response to the inadequacies of earlier feminist movements. However, while third wave feminism's critiques are founded in knowledge of and engagement with the work of second wave authors, the impetus for riot grrrl's desire to construct a new feminist movement results from limited knowledge of earlier feminist work. Additionally, while many third wave authors are concerned with the inability of increasingly inaccessible

feminist theory to intersect with women's lives in a meaningful way, zine authors critiques of feminism's usefulness reflect the popular belief that feminism is dead.

Essentialism/Anti-Essentialism

In many ways, the beliefs by some zine authors that they are aligned with current feminist ideals while others believe that feminism is no longer useful reflects the discussions present in third wave texts. However, one of the characteristics that unites third wave feminists despite their relationship to the second wave is a rejection of essentialist views of women, or the belief in the "inability of a single feminism to speak for all women."[237] Marysia Zalewski explains the shift as the move toward a postmodern feminism from a modernist perspective, in which "there is an ultimate core to the self or the subject which inspires modern feminists to...say what woman is and should be."[238] Postmodern feminists, however, "claim that there is no vital core" to the subject, and, therefore, no essential characteristic which unites "women" or any other demographic. While the definitions of riot grrrl may seem, through their attempts at inclusivity, to be the result of a similar rejection of essentialist views of women, the understanding of the categories of "girl" and "woman" have not undergone the same transformation. The insistence that "every girl is a Riot Grrrl," exemplifies the notion that not only does the category of "girl" exist, but, despite some claims that riot grrrl exists without goals or beliefs, that all those who belong to this category have an inherent characteristic that qualifies them to be riot grrrls. Other zine authors claim that riot grrrl's sole purpose is "empowering women to love themselves," and that both feminism and riot grrrl "[support] all women," reinforcing not only the category of woman, but the belief that all

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[237] Heywood, xix.

[238] Marysia Zalewski, *Feminism After Postmodernism: Theorising Through Practice* (London: Routledge, 2000), 24.

women, due to shared circumstance and experience, require both empowerment and support.[239] *In* the zine *Fat Ugly Venus*, the author argues that riot grrrl is "a whole network of grrrls that all have the same feelings and are all trying to accomplish the same goals," which, while perhaps in opposition to the goal-less ideal of riot grrrl, represents the impression this author has of the zines she has read, an essentialist view that is perpetuated in her own work.[240] In *Gecko* #2, the author explains that, in opposition to popular representations of women, "wimmin are supposed to have fat on their bodies," which is "what makes us beautiful [and] what makes us wimmin." This not only reifies the existence of "women" as essential subjects, but identifies characteristics that constitute the category.[241]

Perhaps the most notable examples of the belief that essential characteristics unite women emerge in the negotiations of the role of men in riot grrrl. In a justification of separatism, the author of *Ms. America* insists that "womyn need womyn," and that "femyle support is the most important thing in a woman's life," thereby affirming the category and defining women by her perception of their shared experiences. The author of *Free Gurlz* categorizes women's experiences indirectly through an explanation of what men can't do: "get pregnant...[or] get abortions...[or] miss [their] period and wonder if they're pregnant."[242] The author, therefore, defines womanhood as the ability have these experiences, despite the fact that many women cannot relate to these events. The author of *I Kicked a Boy*, in an excerpt from the zine *Cheese Log*, explains that "guys aren't discriminated against, and aren't grrrls," therefore, not only do both guys and grrrls exist

[239] *I Kicked A Boy* #2, 3-4.
[240] *Fat Ugly Venus* #1, 2.
[241] *Gecko* #2, 4.
[242] *Free Gurlz* #3, 3.

as apparent categories, but all girls share the experience of discrimination.[243] The author of *Liar* explains that the word "grrrl" is the "important word in the phrase riot GRRRL," and that "guys...can find other movements to accomadate [sic] [their] needs," indicating that riot grrrl is a movement that does accommodate the needs of girls, which are separate from those of young men.[244]

Even zine authors who support the inclusion of men in riot grrrl rely on defined categories of "men" and "women," or "girls" and "boys," to explain the necessity for their inclusion. The author of *Riotemptresses* explains that she doesn't feel "change...should be exclusive to just one gender," but her perception is that "few boys seem to give a shit," "maybe boys don't see the things that bother [girls] as problems," and that "mabye guys don't realize that things they do or say can intimidate or offend [girls]." Not only do these comments stereotype men in general, they also categorize girls as having experiences that bother them which are foreign to those (men), who are essentially different from themselves.[245] Later in the same issue, the author explains that "excluding those who are different (boys) from shows or meetings or bake sales proves nothing except our reluctance to accept others," simultaneously identifying boys as intrinsically different from girls and, in relation to girls, identifiably "others."[246]

Race

The essentialism present in riot grrrl zines, like that in many other movements or philosophies, is subtle and difficult to pinpoint unless one is coming from a perspective that is in conflict with these categories. The fact that these essentialist views are

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[243] *I Kicked A Boy* #2, 3-4.
[244] *Liar* #2, 16.
[245] *Riotemptresses* #1, 13.
[246] Ibid., 20.

regularly reified without question is closely related to the demographics of the riot grrrl movement, which is "mainly white people," as identified by the liner notes of the track "White Girl" on Heavens To Betsy's 1994 album Calculated.[247] As one of the original riot grrrl bands, the members of Heavens To Betsy were long acquainted with their audience, which included other members of the riot grrrl movement. In addition to the characterization of riot grrrls by a riot grrrl musician, sociologist Karen Schilt, in an analysis of whiteness in riot grrrl zines, explains that zine-editors "tend to be white, young, and middle class" due to the fact that "zine making...requires access to time and resources,...emerge[s] from the predominantly white punk subculture....[and because] teenagers in general have more leisure time than adults."[248] Consistent with Ruth Frankenberg's conclusion in *White Women, Race Matters* that white people frequently do not identify themselves as being "raced," few authors of riot grrrl zines identify their race, and most of those that do are people of color. In my consideration of riot grrrl zines, only one white zine author explicitly identifies her race. In *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, the author not only identifies herself "as a white person," but also discusses understanding her "white privilege" as something "invisible to those who have it."[249] Other instances of racial self-identification do occur, however, but in every instance by women of color. In an issue of *Girl Germs*, contributor Lainga identifies herself as a Chinese woman born in Hong Kong and describes both the "struggle to retain [her] cultural identity in a society which denies non-anglos their identity," and the fact that

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[247] Corin Tucker, "White Girl," in *Calculated*, by Heavens to Betsy [CD Booklet] (Olympia, WA: Kill Rock Stars, 1994).

[248] Kristen Schilt, ""The Punk White Privilege Scene": Riot Grrrl, White Privilege, and Zines," in *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women's Movement*, edited by Jo Reger (New York: Routledge, 2005), 39.

[249] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 6; Ibid.; Ibid.

"the physical differences between Chinese and whites...[makes] 'assimilation'...difficult for non-anglos."[250] The author of *I Kicked A Boy* identifies herself as asian in issue #1, and the author of *Housewife Turned Assassin* describes herself as "Mexican born but hav[ing] resided in the U.S. since [she] was two."[251] In the first issue of *Lost ID*, Claudia von Vacano introduces herself as "a Hispanic woman who immigrated to the U.S. in 1981."[252] The fact that riot grrrl authors, with few exceptions, are white women is of significant note when considering the presence of essentialism in the zines. Because zine authors are largely white and middle class, the oppression they experience is almost entirely due to their gender. The race and class privilege that many authors experience remains invisible and leads them to believe that patriarchy and sexism are not only the source of their own oppression, but the sources of all other women's as well. As with many in the second wave of feminism, zine authors present a belief in the existence of the category of woman and the assumption that those within the category share characteristics and experiences. This essentialist view, in combination with riot grrrl's own definitions of the movement as inherently focused on gender equality and anti-sexism, reflect the fact that riot grrrl is a movement comprised of a mostly white constituency largely unable to see or understand the impact of race and class in women's experiences. This provides another considerable difference between riot grrrl and the third wave of feminism. Despite claims that riot grrrl is "a very diverse group with very diverse interests," the focus on "women's issues" and anti-sexism directly conflicts with

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[250] *Girl Germs* #3, 7-8.

[251] *I Kicked A Boy* #1, 5-7; Dani and Sisi. *Housewife Turned Assassin*, Zine, Issue 2 (North Hollywood CA, January 1994, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 19.

[252] Claudia Natalia von Vacano, *Lost ID*, Zine, Issue 1 (New York, Sarah Dyer Zine Collection, 1985-2005, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University), 5.

the third wave understanding that "it is counterproductive to isolate gender as a single variable."[253] Instead, it reflects earlier feminist practices of "asking which is more important, gender or race," and, in the case of riot grrrl, the answer is gender, with the addition of racial awareness—not the third wave understanding of "the indivisibility and interaction of these social categories."[254] Riot grrrl zines reflect the understanding that "women's *experiences* of sexism [are] an important basis for political action," but, unlike the third wave, do not reach the conclusion that these "experiences of sexism are far from universal...[and] have always been affected by race, class, geographic location, disability, sexual identity, religion and just plain luck."[255] Instead, many zine authors reflect what, in 1984, bell hooks identified as "a central tenet of modern feminist thought," which is "the assertion that 'all women are oppressed'...that women share a common lot, [and] that factors like class, race, religion, sexual preference, etc. do not create a diversity of experience that determines the extent to which sexism will be an oppressive force in the lives of individual women."[256]

This is not to say that all riot grrrl zine authors are unaware of the impact of racism and classism. In fact, several zine authors address issues of racism, classism, and privilege. In *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, the author describes an interaction with "two white boys" who oppose the organization of a "black dance" by black students at their school.[257] The author explains that she "used [her] position of safety as a white person talking to other white people to try and explain why it's important for the people at the school who are feeling marginalized to organize activities for themselves instead of

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[253] Heywood, xx.
[254] Freedman, 6.
[255] Findlen, 7.
[256] hooks, 5.
[257] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 6.

trying to work within a white system for change."[258] She adds that "rather than criticizing the steps [the black students] are taking to survive in a racist society," she and her friends should be "looking more at the way we perpetuate racism by using unfair privileges or perpetuating stereotypes about people of color."[259] While the author's recognition of white privilege signifies a more developed racial consciousness, her statements reflect many of the second wave positions bell hooks critiqued in her 1984 book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Firstly, the authors advocacy of black students' attempts to "organize activities for themselves," rather than "work[ing] within a white system for change," is an example of white feminists' advocacy for others to "organize around [their] own oppression."[260] This is, despite the appearance of racial sensitivity, not only the mark of "race and class privilege," but allows the author to express the "notion of common oppression" against her white male counterparts, whose assessment stems from their inability to understand oppression while the author, due to her experiences of gender discrimination, shares experiences with these students.[261] Secondly, this example illustrates hooks' critique that attempts by white women to help others "unlearn racism" is frequently "aimed solely in the direction of a white audience and focus solely on changing attitudes rather than addressing racism in a historical and political context."[262] In fact, the author of *Fantastic Fanzine* suggests only that she and her male friends look "at the way [they] perpetuate racism" as a potential solution for the problem she is addressing, which is the white students' inability to understand their

[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid.
[260] hooks, 6.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid, 13.

classmates actions.[263] There is no mention in her discussion of what the white students should do to address the fact that their black counterparts "felt alienated by and excluded from the school sanctioned dances."[264] Finally, the author reflects that "part of [her] white privilege is never ever having to confront racism when [she] see[s] it because it's 'not my problem,' because it's too difficult, [she] [doesn't] feel comfortable" but recognizes that "it is [her] problem...and it's [her] responsibility."[265] This realization, while an important component of addressing white privilege, does not address the fact that the author doesn't recognize herself as capable of racism or influenced by racist views and that her experiences of oppression grant her the insight and awareness to confront racism, an understanding that centers on the belief that those who are victims of racism are incapable of addressing it themselves.

The author of *Grope* #1 doesn't address the issue of white privilege, but in her explanation of why "there's no such thing as reverse racism" declares that she "think[s] EVERYONE is racist," and that "it goes all ways—whites can be racist against blacks, blacks against blacks, latinos against asians, catholics against jews, men against women, straights against gays, thin people against [fat]."[266] It's difficult to determine what underlying principle guides her selection of these oppositions, perhaps that racism is not based in race, that other forms of discrimination are synonymous with racism, or that, regardless of other identities, all individuals are capable of racism. Regardless, her analysis ends with the conclusion that "in this society we are force fed images of what we should be—white, upper-middle class—and we resent anyone who isn't—even if that

[263] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 6.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.
[266] *Grope* #1, 5.

someone is ourselves," a conclusion that, as hooks discusses, does not suggest "addressing racism in a historical and political context," only that racism exists.[267]

In a later issue of the same zine, the author prints her letter of resignation from The Works, a record store in Eureka, CA. The impetus for her resignation is "the sexually exploitative and racist calendar [that was] hanging in the back of the Eureka store."[268] Despite introducing the material as racist, however, she concludes her letter by explaining that "there already is enough blatant sexism in rock and especially rap music," and, therefore, she doesn't "feel [she] should be subjected to this type of what is legally termed as 'sexual harassment' in the workplace."[269] Although the author does address racism, the substance of her resignation addresses the sexism of the calendar and those who placed it in the break room, as well as her own experience of sexual harassment.

Despite the fact that zine authors are largely white, middle-class, young women, there are, as identified earlier, several examples of authors who fall outside these categories. These authors' self-identifications draw attention to the unspoken identities of other riot grrrls, who, due to their various privileges, do not feel the need to identify their race, class, etc. In addition, many of these authors provide, from within riot grrrl, important critiques of the movement. Within the zines I assessed, the most notable examples of this criticism are in the zine *Lost ID*, authored by self-proclaimed "feminist of color" Claudia von Vacano.[270] Vacano opens her zine by asking her readers if *Lost ID* "is the 1st all women and all non-white zine [they've] seen?!!!!" before explaining that she "had never read or heard of a women of color zine...[which] made [her] feel really

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[267] Ibid.; hooks, 82.
[268] *Grope* #3, 3.
[269] Ibid.
[270] *Lost ID* #1, 2.

shitty."[271] She explains that the title comes from the experience of "fail[ing] to see others of [her] race, gender, and sexual orientation" when she moves outside her "neighborhood that is hispanic...to political organizations, social events, galleries...[or] go[es] to a flick, a show, anything."[272] For Vacano, the experience of "feel[ing] alone" extends into riot grrrl as well. She explains that she "want[s] riot grrrl to be full of women all ages, who are Hispanic, African-American, Asian, African...[and] to be for and by lesbians of all social classes," and imagines her zine "to be the beginning of closing a huge gap" in the movement.[273]

The author of *Housewife Turned Assassin* offers a general critique of attempts by white people to relate to individuals of color: "I'm tired of those who try too fucking hard to sympathize with blacks or latinos or any poor race or any group that suffers. They think wearing a public enemy shirt or listening to ice-t makes them a fucking genius on social oppressive issues. Well that shit does not cut it! The 'wetbacks' and the 'niggers' don't need your lame pity."[274] Unfortunately, it is likely that many white riot grrrl readers perceived these attacks to be directed toward other, less enlightened individuals and ignored the relevance of these critiques to their own, possibly "colorblind," perspectives, as well as to their own diatribes against racism.

In addition to critiques by women of color of the structures and beliefs within riot grrrl, there is one example in the zines I assessed of a woman of color justifying the movement's focus on mainly women's issues. In *Fake*, the editor, a woman of color, explains that while "different races and classes and ages have intense problems as

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[271] Ibid., 1.
[272] Ibid., 2.
[273] Ibid., 2; Ibid., 6.
[274] *Housewife Turned Assassin* #1, 39.

well,...compared to sex they are more cleanly divided and easier to deal with."[275] While this statement may simply function as an observation, it justifies devoting significant time and energy to the more difficult "whole gender problem," and illustrates hooks' assessment that individuals who have "directly benefited from [a] movement...are less inclined to criticize it or engage in rigorous examination of its structure than those who feel it has not had a revolutionary impact on their lives."[276]

Class

Outside of discussions of race and racism, there are few examples within the zines of a focused class discussion. Along with the author of *Fake*'s assertion that different "classes...have intense problems," one other author identifies a concern with "acknowledg[ing] (and confront[ing]...) when issues of class...privilege come up."[277] This author, however, identifies herself as growing up "as a poor/working poor/working class person," who was "called 'slut' because [her] clothes didn't fit [her] right 'cause [she] didn't buy them at places with dressing rooms where [she] could try them on."[278] While the acknowledgment of class privilege is an important part of a class-based critique, this author, along with the only other who identifies issues of class, has developed class consciousness from experiences of classist oppression. The other example of a zine author discussing class issues comes from the author of *Housewife Turned Assassin*, who explains that "because [her family] is god damn poor," "not many of those around [her] can see or feel the way I do."[279] These expressions of alienation represent not only the concerns of individuals who grew up or are working class, but

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[275] *Fake* #0, 3.
[276] Ibid.; hooks, 10.
[277] *Fake* #0, 3; Ibid., 4.
[278] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 8.
[279] *Housewife Turned Assassin* #1, 39.

reflect on the experience of being an individual with class awareness in a community that shows little concern for class as a source of oppression.

The purpose of identifying and criticizing the discussion of racism, classism, and privilege within the zines is not to portray zine authors as racist, classist or ignorant. Instead, the goal here, as with the rest of the chapter, is to present the textual evidence and criticism that illustrates ways in which riot grrrl zines diverge from the work of third wave feminists. Despite the presence of a few women of color and/or non-middle-class zine authors, the mainly white, middle-class authorship of riot grrrl zines represents a significant point of departure from third wave feminist ideals and practices. As chapter two shows, a significant amount of third wave feminist philosophy stems not only from their own critiques of the second wave, but from the work of earlier theorists in response to second wave practices. Works such as hooks' *Feminist Theory*, which I have used here, were integral to the development of the third wave as a movement that would fulfill hooks' call to "[repudiate] the popular notion that the focus of the feminist movement should be social equality of the sexes" so that "race and class oppression [will] be recognized as feminist issues with as much relevance as sexism."[280] The creation of the third wave was an attempt to address that fact that "the value of [second wave] feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a white racial context that is seldom acknowledged" by forging a new movement that, from it's beginning, not only took intersectionality into account, but was constituted by women from a wealth of locations.[281] As discussed previously, the riot grrrl movement, by contrast, emerged from a predominantly white, middle-class subculture and, therefore, was composed of a mainly

[280] Ibid., 27.
[281] Crenshaw, 154.

white, middle-class female audience. As a result, many of the primary concerns of the riot grrrl movement reflect these positions. Despite attempts to recognize the role of racism, classism, and other oppressions, riot grrrl was, like the second wave of feminism, inherently the product and producers of race and class privilege.

Sexual Orientation

Unlike the discussion of race and class within riot grrrl zines, there is significant space devoted to issues of sexual orientation. While only three authors discuss class (two of whom identify as poor or working class) and five authors discuss race (four of whom are women of color), there are eight zines that discuss sexual orientation, five of which are written by straight women and three by self-identified bisexual or queer authors. The author who writes the most extensively about her sexuality is Erika Reinstein of *Fantastic Fanzine*. In the two issues of the zine I was able to access (#3 and #3.5), Reinstein discusses her sexuality extensively. She declares that she "want[s] to try and let people know that [she is] a queer white trash girl," who "[doesn't] want to date boys," but is a "sexual relativist," in issue #3.[282] She ponders the influence of socialization on her sexuality, wondering "how bisexual [she] would be without [her] conditioning," because she "can't be sure how [she] feel[s] about boys 'cause [she's] been trained to see them in a romantic, sexual way."[283] In issue #3.5, she addresses the biphobia expressed by her straight friends, who thought that bisexuality was "so trendy...right now, [and]...so dumb" or told Reinstein "you're not bisexual," as well as dealing with biphobia in the queer community.[284] She expressed the feeling of alienation when "at queer functions...[she] was made to feel like [her] bisexuality wasn't real, or 'just a phase' [she]

[282] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 8.
[283] Ibid.
[284] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3.5, 8.

was going through," and statements by "dykes...who would say 'I would never date a bisexual woman, she'd leave me for a man...[because] so many girls just want to experiment with a dyke and then go back to being straight."[285] Reinstein explains that her experiences of biphobia is "real and it hurts [her]," and simultaneously recognizes the difficulties she faces in being bisexual, because "the dominant ideology in [the U.S.] is based so much on dualities, [she] find[s] it difficult to settle into an identity that's not either/or, but somewhere in between."[286]

The author of *Function*, Dawn Williams, discusses her bisexuality in issue #5. She, like Reinstein, struggles with the influence of socialization and coming to terms with her sexuality. She begins her narrative by declaring that "it's time to come out of the closet," but then wonders if she "was...ever in the closet."[287] She explains that she "never gave much thought to [her] sexuality as [she] was growing up, [because she] just assumed that grrrls were with boys and that was the way it was and anything else was wrong and evil."[288] However, after two years of "discovering [her] sexuality and finding out it can and it is more than what...stereotypes tell us," she explains that while "still in [her] head [she] hear[s] all the old stereotypes saying that its wrong to love your own gender," she is "telling [her readers] that [she] love[s] [her] own gender as well as the opposite gender."[289] Williams also includes queerness in her definition of riot grrrl, which is headed by "RIOT GRRRL is..." and concluded with "QUEER as fuck," which could be interpreted as a statement that "RIOT GRRRL is QUEER as fuck," or that Williams' assessment of riot grrrl's philosophy represents a "queer" opposition to

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[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid., 7; Ibid., 9.
[287] *Function* #5, 36.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.

hegemoic structures, that Williams' is identifying her own queerness as compatible with riot grrrl, or that Williams is re-defining riot grrrl as a movement sympathetic to and constituted by a queer subject position.[290] Williams also includes a quote about coming out from *The New Our Bodies Ourselves*, as well as definitions of the terms "bi-sexual," "monosexual," "biphobia," "heterophobia," and "homophobia."[291]

The presence of the term "biphobia" in both Reinstein and Williams' zines and Reinstein's extensive discussion of experiences of biphobia reveal the particular difficulty of "settl[ing] into an identity that's not either/or, but somewhere in between." While it is clear that these zine authors feel comfortable expressing their sexuality within the zine community and that their experiences and critiques are not explicitly directed toward riot grrrl, Williams' definitions reveal an intent to educate her riot grrrl readers about "queer" terms with which they may be unfamiliar. This indicates Williams's understanding that many readers have not been exposed to these terms, that, as a result, many riot grrrls are not associated or familiar with politics of sexuality, and therefore, that the riot grrrl movement is not inherently connected to the LGBT rights movement. The addition of "QUEER as fuck" is the only example of "queerness" in a riot grrrl definition in the zines I analyzed. Williams' inclusion of this statement reveals that queerness is not antithetical to the movement, but, when positing her own definition, the author feels compelled to add queerness to riot grrrl since it is not an assumed aspect of the philosophy. Additionally, the fact that this is the only instance of queer sexuality in a riot grrrl definition indicates that other authors either do not feel that queerness is a riot grrrl

[290] Ibid., 13.
[291] Ibid., 37; Ibid., 35.

concern, or that queer sexuality is a source of oppression with which most authors are unfamiliar.

Along with these two narratives of bisexual or queer women, the zine Riot Grrrl DC includes discussions of queer experience and visibility. Based on the signatures, it appears that the author of the first discussion is Erika Reinstein (author of *Fantastic Fanzine*), who explains that "at every QUEER function [she] go[es] to, all [she] see[s] is boys, boys, boys" and "want[s] to see more bi grrrls and dykes out there," and wonders if there is "some kind of signal to recognize each other [she's] missing."[292] Along with May Summers and the unidentified "J," Reinstein asks "Queer and Bi grrrls, where are you?"[293] The authors then explore possibilities for increasing "visi**BI**lity" by "start[ing] a secret signal for [queer] grrrls to recognize each other...without causing tension (in other words without hetero grrrls noticing and getting freaked out!)."[294] Reinstein's desire to "see more bi grrrls and dykes" and the feeling that she must be unaware of the way other queer grrrls identify each other indicates that, while she assumes there are other queer women in riot grrrl, her inability to identify them has left her feeling alienated and alone. By asking where other queer women are and suggesting ways they can identify each other, all three authors reinforce Reinstein's perspective. However, while Reinstein says she wants to see "more" queer women, the collective letter asks *all* queer women where they are, indicating that they are *all* conspicuously absent from riot grrrl events and the community at large. While these two statements reveal that there is little non-straight presence in riot grrrl, the desire to develop a signal that doesn't cause tension or result in

[292] *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, 33.
[293] Ibid., 34.
[294] Ibid.

"hetero grrrls noticing and getting freaked out," indicates that there is potential for homophobia within the movement which queer members seek to avoid.

While the work of these queer/bisexual authors indicates that riot grrrl did have queer contributors and that queerness is not in conflict with the tenets of the movement, there are no critiques by queer/bisexual writers that focus on the absence of queer women in riot grrrl or the lack of attention to queer women's issues. It is possible to read the inclusion of "queer" in Williams's definition as a subtle attempt to draw other authors' attention to this fact, but most of the criticism is directed outward. This indicates that, like the author of *Fake*'s assessment that sex is more important than race or class, many queer/bisexual authors who have "directly benefited from [a] movement...are less inclined to criticize it or engage in rigorous examination of its structure than those who feel it has not had a revolutionary impact on their lives."[295] In addition, because these authors feel that their sexuality and discussions of sexual orientation are already or potentially part of the movement, they do not associate their alienation with the structure or composition of riot grrrl, but as their own inability to identify other queer women. Even when faced with the possibility that non-queer riot grrrls will "freak out" when queer women identify themselves, queer or bisexual authors do not critique these potential reactions as expressions of homophobia, but attempt to avoid confrontations through other means.

Much of the space devoted to sexual orientation in the zines by straight women is spent discussing homophobia, advocating for gay rights, or encouraging queer women to join the movement. The author of *Out of the Vortex* opens the third issue by explaining her use of the term "queer" in an earlier issue. She writes that she uses "queer" because

[295] hooks, 10.

"it means lesbians and gay men and bis and sometimes transgenders and anybody else who identifies him/herself as a sexual minority," and because, like many re-appropriations of derogatory terms within riot grrrl zines, "every time somebody uses the word queer, it loses some of its ability to wound."[296] It is clear that the author is aware of the LGBT movement, including the reclamation of the term "queer," and concerned with the rights of "sexual minorit[ies]."[297] However, her use of the term queer as a straight advocate invokes some concern, namely the question of whether a person who is not an oppressed community can participate in linguistic reclamation.

Riot Grrrl Seattle also utilizes the term "queer," but presents (perhaps) fewer concerns since it is the publication of a riot grrrl chapter, not the work of a singular author (as with Erika Reinstein's contribution to *Riot Grrrl DC*). However, based on their call for "QUEER GRRRLS...[to] come out and be noticed," it seems that the presence of non-straight women in their organization is limited or non-existent.[298] The zine encourages "queer grrrls" to "write about [being queer], talk about it" because riot grrrls, and this chapter specifically, "need to know your [sic] out there."[299] Like Reinstein et al's plea for queer grrrls to identify themselves, this request illustrates the conspicuous absence of queer participation. In this case, however, the request for queer grrrls to write and discuss their queerness is similar to second wave feminists' attempts to remedy the "problems of exclusion...by including Black women within an already established analytical structure."[300] While recognizing the absence of queer women in riot grrrl indicates the author(s) of *Riot Grrrl Seattle* are aware that, without queer grrrls,

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[296] *Out of the Vortex* #3, 2.
[297] Ibid.
[298] *Riot Grrrl Seattle* #1, 4.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Crenshaw, 40.

the movement is not wholly inclusive, the need "to know [they're] out there" indicates that their request is an attempt to force inclusivity, not to address the privileged structure of riot grrrl.

The second issue of *Gecko* zine, the author states that "gay rights is a major issue with [her] right now" and she "actually get[s] more angry at homophobia than...at sexism," which is "interesting because [she's] not a lesbian but [she is] female."[301] The fact that gay rights is important to her "right now" (but has not been and potentially will not be important to her in the future) illustrates the author's privilege. The qualifier "actually" indicates that she believes her anger is surprising, because, to the author, it is assumed that a straight woman would be more focused on sexism and not concerned about homophobia. In addition, the fact that her sexuality is "interesting," reveals the belief that mostly lesbians (and possibly "queer" women) are concerned with "gay rights" and that straight women are usually not. She goes on to speculate that her concern may stem from the fact that "wimmin are not a minority and [they] have oodles of people fighting for [them]," or because "there are a lot more homophobes out there than there are sexist pigs (if you can believe that anything is larger than the # of sexist pigs)."[302] While the intention to remedy an injustice is undoubtedly a component of the author's focus on gay rights, her justification stems from a feeling that the source of her oppression, sexism, is being adequately addressed, and, therefore, she can move on to more pressing concerns. She does state that "the biggest reason" for her attention is "that, while [her] male friends continue to support feminist endeavors, [she is] still hearing [her] 'open-

[301] *Gecko* #2, 6.
[302] Ibid.

minded' straight friends admit that queers make them feel uncomfortable."[303] However, in the explication of her beliefs, she makes the argument that homophobes would "rather see a violent, abusive relationship between a man & woman than a healthy relationship between two people of the same sex" and that attempts to keep gays out of the military "because they are supposedly 'perverts' and will 'lower moral'" aren't justifiable because "the amount of rapes and harassment done by men to women is infinitely larger than man-on-man crimes of the same nature."[304] Despite the possible validity of the first conjecture and the logic of the second, the author's inability to describe the injustices of homophobia without using contrasting and more oppressive images of sexism reveals the belief that homophobia is merely an obstacle to dealing with issues of gender discrimination and violence.

In addition to zines that include original textual consideration of queer, bisexual, or lesbian women, two zines by straight authors include images and excerpts that reference non-straight sexuality. The cover of *Girl Germs* #3 features a photo of two partially nude women embracing and page 28 features images of comic strip characters Nancy and Sluggo, both of whom are featured in their characteristic attire and in the other's clothing, over the words "QUEER NATION."[305] The same page features the reproduction of a undated publication from the Indiana University Empowerment Workshop entitled "When You Meet a Lesbian: Hints For the Heterosexual Woman."[306] The zine *I Kicked A Boy* includes excerpts from unknown sources that discuss "fear of

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[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid.
[305] *Girl Germs* #3, 28; Ibid.
[306] Ibid.; Indiana University Empowerment Workshop, "When You Meet a Lesbian: Hints for the Heterosexual Woman," in *Women in Culture: A Women's Studies Anthology* ed. Lucinda Joy Peach (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), 80.

lesbians and our unity as women," urging straight women to overcome homophobia and identify as feminists, and several clippings that discuss anti-sodomy laws.[307] These zines represent the two techniques that are most successful in addressing homophobia in general and within the riot grrrl movement. While the authors of these zines are straight, the inclusion of visual representations of "queer" sexuality on the cover of Girl Germs confronts the reader with the reality of lesbianism (and bisexuality) and the possibility that the author is queer.[308] The use of excerpts in both zines allows the authors to address issues of concern while simultaneously allowing others to speak for themselves within the context of the zine.

While there are more discussions of sexual orientation than race or class in the zines, queer zine authors are represented in numbers equal to those of non-white and non-middle-class writers. Despite greater attention to homophobia and issues of sexual orientation, the lack of participation by queer women in riot grrrl zines reifies the conclusion that riot grrrl, despite attempts at inclusivity, represents the subject position of mainly white, middle-class, straight women. In addition, the absence of criticism by riot grrrls (both queer and straight) of the movement's assumptions of straight sexuality is problematic and does little to challenge false claims of inclusivity and diversity.

Taking into consideration the discussion of race, class, and sexual orientation within riot grrrl zines, as well as the demographics of zine authors, it is clear that the riot grrrl movement does not represent the "multiracial, multicultural, multiethnic,

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[307] *I Kicked A Boy* #1, 23.

[308] While there are numerous examples of girls embracing each other within the zines, these can be read as a manifestation of "girl-love." By presenting undressed women embracing, the editors of Girl Germs ensure that their readers cannot ignore the presence of lesbian sexuality.

multisexual" characteristics of the third wave of feminism.[309] While third wave feminists recognized, developed, and included "contributions of working-class women, lesbians, women of color, and activists from the developing world" in order to "[transform] an initially white, European, middle-class politics into a more diverse and mature feminist movement," riot grrrl zines do not reflect a movement that is essentially constituted by a diversity of positions and locations.[310] The demographics and subject matter of the zines not only differ significantly from the third wave of feminism, but also represent the failure of the movement to support the belief that riot grrrl is "a very diverse group with very diverse interests."[311]

Alongside inclusivity and anti-essentialism, intersectionality is central to the development of third wave feminist theory. Despite musicologist Marion Leonard's claim that "rather than deny [the] sense of complex identity and differing positions, grrrls have embraced this as a facet of their existence," there is little evidence that zine authors embrace differing positions, much less have a sense of "complex identity."[312] While it is clear that zine authors with non-hegemonic identities contribute to the body of riot grrrl work, conflating their presence with embracement allow claims of inclusion by white, middle-class, straight women to remain unchallenged and ignores the marginalization of those in "differing positions."

Community Building and the Zine Network

For those participants in riot grrrl who felt that the movement represented and addressed the sources of their oppression, participation provided the empowerment and

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[309] Heywood, xvii.
[310] Freedman, 6.
[311] *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, 6.
[312] Leonard, 251.

support that many zine authors desired. Despite claims by Leslie Heywood that, although it "was one of the most visible forms of third-wave feminism" riot grrrl "did little to affect civic institutions or legislation," the power of the movement was the result of community building.[313] In fact, several authors who connect riot grrrl and the third wave of feminism reference these communities as examples of third wave praxis. In her essay "Third-Wave Feminism and the Need to Reweave the Nature/Culture Duality," Colleen Mack-Canty describes "the Riot Grrrl example of youth cultures" as one of the "significant contributors to U.S. third-wave feminism" because it "supplies a forum through which some girls can both express themselves and support one other." She claims that these support and communication networks provide "a model of (very) young women empowering themselves to resist patriarchal identity formation."[314] In addition, Melissa Klein explains that "early Riot Grrrl ideology was much like the 'safe-space,' women-only feminism that characterized the second wave," but that "Riot Grrrl often used second wave activist techniques but applied them to third wave forms...[such as] the mosh pit...[or] the punk stage."[315]

One component of community development was the establishment of riot grrrl chapters, or groups of girls who met and "talk[ed] to each other about personal issues etc. but sometimes...talk[ed] all business (ie- doing benefits, upcoming actions, etc.)."[316] In several cases, these chapters held workshops or conventions to "help strengthen [the] girl scene," which included "speakers, workshops, bands, meetings, [and] performance

[313] Heywood, xviii.
[314] Mack-Canty, 163.
[315] Klein, 9.
[316] *Riot Grrrl DC* #7, insert 1.

art."[317] *DIW*, a zine from Katy, Texas, advertizes a future "grrrl meeting/convention" with a program that includes "workshops on starting a grrrl record label, putting out and starting 'zines, and running a distro," as well as "hopefully...speakers there to discuss topics such as date rape, teen pregnancy, etc."[318] Also included is a request for "some people to do improv poetry or spoken word" on subjects that are "political, pro-equality, and empowering."[319]

While chapter meetings and conventions were and important part of riot grrrl communities, many zine authors lived in places without a large riot grrrl presence. As a result, much of the community building in riot grrrl was established through a network of zine distribution. The author of *Fat Ugly Venus* explains that zines provide "a really great way of being heard and that's why [she] chose to do one—so that people can read about how [she] feel[s]...and maybe someone will identify with some of [her] feelings and maybe it will inspire them to do a fanzine too."[320] The author of *Sourpuss*, in an excerpt published in *I Kicked a Boy*, feels that zines "could bring a lot of people together, a lot of girls could decide they would want to be a part of a group like Riot Grrrl, and take power to help other girls."[321]

Many zine authors identify catharsis as the central benefit to zine production. In the first issue of *Man Candy*, the author, who is "kinda new to the riot grrrl scene," describes feeling "like all my thoughts and feelings are being shared with all of you out there...[and she] really feel[s] like there is someone out there to turn to and let it all

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[317] Ibid., 7.
[318] *DIW* #1, 10.
[319] Ibid.
[320] *Fat Ugly Venus* #1, 2.
[321] *Sourpuss* zine by Sara, in *I Kicked A Boy* #1, 28.

out."[322] The author of *Oppression* explains that the title of her zine stems from "feeling weighed down with problems," but that "this zine is [her] outlet."[323] In an interview with *Just Like A Girl*, Dawn Williams of *Function* explains that "doing *Function* has really helped [her] get out a lot of anger and pain," and that "if what [she] write[s] somehow helps someone out or change's someone's thinking about wimmin or anything then that's all [she] need[s]."[324] One of the authors of *Grope* describes childhood experiences which led her to "question [herself]," but explains that since she "found some other girls who felt the same way and [they] started doing a zine together so [they] could tell everyone what [they] thought and how [they] felt...NOW PEOPLE LISTEN."[325]

In addition to desire for an outlet of emotions, several zine authors encourage readers to make their own zines. The author of *Pussy Cat Vision* explains that she is "not doing this zine to win some creativity points or whatever, [she] did it to express [herself], [her] beliefs and observations."[326] She describes the experience of zine making as "the best thing ever...absolutely divine" because "its really been quite an experience for [her]...[she's] thinking, questioning, resisting (all that good stuff)," and encourages her readers who "don't do a zine [to] give it a try [because] it's fanfuckintastic."[327] The author of *Gecko In My Toilet* also describes the feeling of "hold[ing] in your hands something you produced" as "the awesomest feelin in the world," and tells her readers that if they "don't already do a zine then get off your patudie and start now."[328]

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[322] *Man Candy* #1, 1.
[323] *Oppression* #1, 1.
[324] Interview with Dawn of *Function* in *Just Like A Girl* #3, 31.
[325] *Grope* #1, 3.
[326] *Pussy Cat Vision* #1, 8.
[327] Ibid., 7.
[328] *Gecko In My Toilet* #1,1.

These reflections on the role of both riot grrrl chapter meetings and the zine network support Mack-Canty's assertion that the movement "supplies a forum through which some girls can both express themselves and support one another."[329] However, Klein's assessment that the movement is more closely aligned with the "'safe-space,' women-only feminism" of the second wave is a more accurate connection between riot grrrl and a singular wave of feminist praxis.[330] In fact, many of the ideals of consciousness-raising groups in the second wave reflect those outlined in riot grrrls' definitions of the movement and reflections on zine-making.

Women-only communities have functioned as "safe spaces" in a variety of temporal, geographic and cultural locations. The most frequently cited examples of these communities are consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s and 70s, while the most infamous is most likely the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Founded in 1976, the festival was open only to "natural womyn-born womyn," and the exclusion of transgendered women drew extensive criticism from those excluded by the policy, as well as their advocates.[331] Women-only spaces are designed to be conducive to critiques of patriarchy and sexism, as well as a venue for women to discuss individual experiences. Theoretically, the exclusion of men is an attempt to remove privileged and hegemonic perspectives, thereby constructing an environment that encourages dominant-negative or dominant-critical perspectives. This environment is designed to promote discussions of shared experience, the effects of patriarchal society on individual lives, and methods of addressing or eliminating sexism.

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[329] Mack-Canty, 163.
[330] Klein, 9.
[331] Burkholder, 4.

Much of the motivation for establishing a women-only space in riot grrrl resulted from the violence of the punk subculture. As I will discuss in the section on riot grrrl and punk, many riot grrrls identify themselves as participants in punk and cite the violence of punk shows as influential in the emergence of riot grrrl. In addition to physical women-only spaces established at riot grrrl shows, several zine authors address whether the riot grrrl movement as a whole should be a women-only space. Some instances of separatist and inclusive beliefs have been mentioned previously in the section on essentialism. The understanding that riot grrrl is an environment of empowerment and support is linked, for many zine authors, to ideals of separatism. The author of *Free Gurlz* is not "totally comfortable with guys in riot grrrl" because many women "don't feel comfortable talking about some things in front of guys," including rape and abortion.[332] The author of *Ms. America* cites the fact that "patriarchal society refuses to acknowledge the importance of femyle friendship/relationship[s]" and that women "need each other for emotional support" as evidence for the exclusion of men in riot grrrl.[333] Other zine authors reflect this position, identifying the "sole purpose" of riot grrrl as "empowering women to love themselves and exist in a world they should hopefully learn to infiltrate," and that the focus on women's participation is not about "hating or liking guys," nor is it about "excluding" anyone, but is a venue for women to share their experiences.[334] The author of Just Like A Girl

[332] *Free Gurlz* #3, 3.
[333] *Ms. America* #1, 10.
[334] *Cheese Log,* in *I Kicked A Boy* #2, 3-4.

definines riot grrrl as a place where "girls can talk openly about anything and get support" and "[empower] each other," and encourages "interested girls to call" for more information.[335]

The development of women-only spaces in riot grrrl shows and discourses on the movement as a women-only space provide one link between riot grrrl and the "'safe-space,' women-only feminism" of the second wave. In addition, the discussions of zine networks as communities resemble the development of consciousness-raising groups during the second wave.

Kathie Sarachild, in "*Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon*," describes the process as "studying the whole gamut of women's lives, starting with the full reality of one's own" in order to prevent it from "getting sidetracked into single issue reforms and single issue organizing."[336] This process of analyzing one's own experience is clearly an integral component to the production of riot grrrl zines as evidenced by the understanding that zines are both an outlet for emotions and a way to inspire other women to do the same. In addition, the belief that focusing on individual experience in consciousness-raising in order to avoid "single issue reforms and single issue organizing," is much like the riot grrrl belief that zine communities provide "strength in numbers" without "meaning we are all the same."[337] Sarachild identifies consciousness-raising as a method of "carrying theory about women further than it had ever been carried before," a feeling expressed by the author of *Pussy Cat Vision*, who sees riot grrrl zine networks as

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[335] *Just Like A Girl* #3, 33.

[336] Kathie Sarachild, "Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon," in *Feminist Revolution,* ed. Kathie Sarachild (New York: Random House, 1978).

[337] *Sourpuss zine* in *I Kicked A Boy* #1, 28.

"spreading the word of feminism to the near and far corners of the world."[338] The founders of Riot Grrrl Press, May Summer and Erika Reinstein, explain that their organization is designed to distribute and copy zines by "young women who can't afford to distribute their zines, or whose zines aren't well known," which will "help [the] feminist movement in general because it will create another vehicle of communication for women nationally and internationally."[339]

Sarachild identifies consciousness-raising as an effort to "awaken people [and] to get people to start thinking and acting," as well as " an ongoing and continuing source of theory and ideas for action."[340] Many riot grrrl authors see zine-making as a way to get individuals "communicating,...thinking, learning, [and] questioning," and a vehicle for getting others to "do a fanzine...or become more active in someway or another."[341] Zine authors frequently express the belief that zines "give girls much more strength to change things," and that "the more active [they] become, the closer [they] get to being heard and changing things."[342]

One of the most important similarities between riot grrrl philosophies of zine-making and the second wave practice of consciousness-raising is that they both rely on "the assumption, an assumption basic to consciousness-raising, that most women were like ourselves -- not different -- so that our self-interest in discussing the problems facing women which most concerned us would also interest other women."[343] This belief, which emerged from the understanding that "all women faced oppression as women and

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[338] Sarachild*; Pussy Cat Vision* #1, 9.
[339] *Riot Grrrl Press* #1, 2.
[340] Sarachild*,* 9.
[341] *Pussy Cat Vision* #1, 9; *Fat Ugly Venus* #1, 2.
[342] *Sourpuss zine* in *I Kicked A Boy* #1, 28; *Fat Ugly Venus* #1, 2.
[343] Sarachild, 9.

had a common interest in ending it," is similar to zine authors' belief that riot grrrl is "a whole network of grrrls that all have the same feelings and are trying to accomplish the same goals."[344] Not only are the characteristics of zine networking similar to the goals of second wave consciousness-raising, but the shared belief that these communities are founded by women with similar goals and interests reveals the essentialist practices of both. The criticism of consciousness-raising groups by feminists like bell hooks and the limitations of riot grrrl claims of inclusivity reveal that, while both "suppl[y] a forum through which some girls [and women] can...express themselves and support one other," the essentialism and exclusivity present in each presents a significant obstacle to "carrying theory about women further than it had ever been carried before."[345] Therefore, claims that zine networks represent a "significant contribut[ion] to U.S. third-wave feminism" through "a model of (very) young women empowering themselves to resist patriarchal identity formation" ignores the numerous incongruities that refute these connections.[346]

Despite outlining the similarities between riot grrrl zine networks and second wave consciousness-raising, Klein describes riot grrrl as utilizing "third wave forms," indicating that these forms, rather than the techniques, are the most important component of the movement.[347] However, as illustrated above, to minimize the similarities between zine networks and consciousness-raising and "safe spaces" ignores the evidence that riot grrrl community building is more closely aligned with second wave practices and beliefs, despite their use of "third wave forms." Furthermore, Klein's assessment that the "mosh

[344] Ibid.; *Fat Ugly Venus* #1, 2.
[345] Mack-Canty, 163; Sarachild.
[346] Mack-Canty, 163.
[347] Klein, 215.

pit" is more closely related to the third wave than consciousness-raising "safe spaces" are to the second reduces third wave feminism to a cultural phenomenon, rather than a location of considerable theoretical production.[348] In addition, these second wave practices were frequently criticized as essentialist forms that inherently or functionally ignored the experiences of many women. Shane Phelan identifies the heterosexist "analysis of oppression" and the discussions of "issues that seemed to focus on relations between men and women as sexual and life partners" in women-only consciousness-raising groups as alienating to lesbians, who "wonder[ed] where their problems fit with those of other women."[349] In addition to the essentialist and exclusive practices within these groups, other theorists questioned the notion that all women needed women-only communities for support and empowerment. Bell hooks criticized the belief that women share a sense of alienation that leads to the desire for community, explaining that "many black women as well as women from other ethnic groups do not feel an absence of community among women in their lives despite exploitation and oppression."[350] In addition to undermining the complexity of the third wave, Klein's assessment of riot grrrl as utilizing second wave techniques fails to acknowledge the conflicts between those methods and third wave philosophies.

Riot Grrrl and Punk

Klein's identification of riot grrrl as a movement related to punk, along with Catherine Orr's description that it "emerged in the early 1990s from the punk music scene," is not unfounded.[351] In addition to connections between riot grrrl and feminism,

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[348] Ibid.
[349] Phelan, 38.
[350] hooks, 54.
[351] Catherine M. Orr, "Charting the Currents of the Third Wave," *Hypatia* 12, no. 3 (Summer

many zine authors describe the punk subculture as a movement closely associated with riot grrrl. While some authors directly identify as participants in "this (punk rock) community," many others describe a more distant relationship between the two.[352] The author of *Free Gurlz* explains that riot grrrl is "not just 'punk rock & feminism,'" but also contains "grrrls...who don't even like punk rock."[353] The author of *Hissy Fitt* views punk as "a vent and medium" which utilizes "punk rock...ideals to further [riot grrrl's]" while remaining autonomous, but explains that "RIOT GRRRL is not about punk rock."[354] These two understandings of the role of punk in riot grrrl reflect the ambivalent relationship many riot grrrl authors describe: many authors are or were participants in punk, but feel alienated by the violence and male-centeredness of the movement. In an interview of Bikini Kill, author Tien Lee explains that "a lot of girls might feel sick of the socalled punk scene" because while "it should include any one who chooses to be a part of it...most shows are dominated by testoserone [sic]-pumping guys."[355]

In addition to almost exclusively male performers and largely male audiences, the violence that characterizes punk shows alienated and excluded many women, who "haven't felt comfortable being in front of the stage, as many male moshers feel the need to exhert [sic] their power and aggression by blindly knocking each other around."[356] Many authors echo this sentiment, being "afraid to even get near the stage" for fear that "some big stage diver (who is male and taller than you!) will boot you in the head," leaving a woman in punk to decide between "fight[ing] for [her] life to be in the front

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1997), 38.

[352] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 5.
[353] *Free Gurlz* #3, 3.
[354] *Hissy Fitt* #3, 15-16.
[355] *Bikini Kill Interview* by *Tien Lee, Fake* #0 1992, 19.
[356] *Liar* #2, 17.

row or stand in the back."[357] These experiences of fear bred a sense of alienation as well as "anger and frustration," which led zine authors to the conclusion that "we have to reclaim the music on and off the stage."[358]

Riot grrrl-associated band Bikini Kill (along with other riot grrrl bands and queercore band Tribe 8) encouraged this reclamation by "inviting only women to the front of the stage during their shows," an action which mirrors much of riot grrrl's concern with establishing women-only spaces and building a new grrrl-centered community.[359] In *Function* #5, the author explains that "grrls in the scene and in society have to take a lot of bullshit, sexism, harassment in many forms," including "fight[ing] to get their opinions heard in society and in punk/hardcore," as well as overcoming the beliefs by male members of punk who "don't think grrls can handle doing zines, being in bands and esp. putting on shows."[360] As a result, the author explains that it is necessary to form an organization, riot grrrl, where "grrls can get a sense of empowerment from each other and talk openly" in order to "have support and make zines, bands, and do shows...to empower themselves."[361] Many of these attempts to remedy the sexism of punk resulted in heavy criticism by the men in the punk movement, however, who claimed that "now...many girls are forming all-girl groups and catering to womyn it's...discrimination," or that girls in bands, frequently composed of individuals who had never played instruments before, "can't play very well...[and] shouldn't be in a band."[362] The criticism that female participation in punk and establishment of women-only spaces

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[357] *Girl Germs* #3, 3; *Ms. America* #1, 10.
[358] Ibid.
[359] See description of Tribe 8's women only space in *Ms. America* #2, 6; Ibid., 17.
[360] *Function* #5, 13.
[361] Ibid.
[362] *Ms. America* #1, 10; *Ms. America* #1, 9.

and communities was tantamount to "hat[ing] guys" is one that riot grrrls constantly address in their writing.[363] Coupled with their ties to the feminist movement, a philosophy frequently characterized as "man-hating," riot grrrls designated considerable space in their zines to warding off these criticisms.

The connections between the punk subculture and riot grrrl, while having little to do with third wave feminism, represent one of the foundational elements of the movement. Many characteristics of riot grrrl, including the "DIY" ethic and zine production, were directly influenced by the punk movement, and many participants in riot grrrl were associated with the punk underground. While the focus of this chapter is to examine connections between riot grrrl and the third wave, it is important to recognize that, although feminism is inherently a component of the movement, zine authors also identify punk as a formative aspect of riot grrrl. While Klein addresses the connection between riot grrrl and punk, her assessment that "third wave forms" include "the mosh pit...[and] the punk stage" appropriates aspects of the punk subculture into a third wave context and thereby undermining the cultural complexity of riot grrrl.[364]

Riot Grrrl, the Media, and Popular Culture

Leslie Heywood describes the "cultural dimension" of riot grrrl as "engaged with third-wave feminism" through the use of "mass culture as a venue for activism to bring about social change."[365] In many ways, riot grrrl's relationship to popular culture and media represents the strongest connection to the third wave. Catherine Orr describes the third wave's "[return] to popular culture, the medium through which feminism captured the popular imagination—and political clout—in the late 1960s and early 1970s" as

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[363] *Cheese Log* in *I Kicked a Boy* #2, 3-4.
[364] Klein, 215.
[365] Heywood, xvii-xviii.

"tantamount to a kind of populism."[366]

While riot grrrl zine authors did not produce popular media designed for mass consumption, their self-created, self-published, and self-distributed medium functions as a "populist" mode of production. This independent production is similar to the third wave's attempts to "[produce] media itself and [make] use of that media and its representations to bring about social change," although riot grrrl's use of this method results from the "DIY" ethic and production of zines in punk. Several zine authors encourage others to engage in zine-making, as described earlier in the chapter, and the list of workshops mentioned in the convention program in *DIW* includes several DIY activities, including "starting a grrrl record label, putting out and starting 'zines, and running a distro."[367] Some authors directly address the reasons for self-publication: the author of *Gecko In My Toilet* encourages those who "don't like the news [to] go out and make some of [their] own," and the author of *Housewife Turned Assassin* included the phrase "OUR FUCKIN' MEDIA" on the back cover of her zine.[368]

Along with producing their own media, zine authors reappropriate popular media in order to subvert mainstream images. Imelda Whelehan and Leslie Heywood both identify this technique as a component of third wave feminist engagement with popular culture. Heywood, referencing *Bust* and *Bitch* (zines that became published magazines), identifies "taking old stereotypes about women and redefining them in a positive way" as an example of "the way third wave interacts with popular culture."[369] Whelehan identifies third wave feminists' "embracing of popular culture—which young women

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[366] Orr, 41.
[367] *DIW* #1, 10.
[368] *Gecko In My Toilet* #1, cover; *Housewife Turned Assassin* #2, back.
[369] Heywood, xix.

consume, appropriate and reuse to their own purposes" as a way in which they are "winning territory in an arena of people's lives which is arguably more meaningful to them than their political identities or any kind of social or civic responsibility."[370] Numerous zine authors utilize the technique of reappropriation to supplement their critics of popular culture, mass media, and stereotypical views of women and girls. Many of the images are from comics, films, advertisements, and books.[371]

Riot grrrl zine authors critically engage with media representations, much like Heywood's assessment that third wave authors occupy a position "inside popular culture that is simultaneously critical, and...sees the third-wave mission as making use of popular culture to effect social change."[372] The most extensive example of this criticism comes from the zine *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted*. The author criticizes "society['s]...view of womyn in the house" and the message from television that "if [she doesn't] find a husband soon, [she's] never gonna have one."[373] She also critiques "talk shows supposedly aimed at women's issues," which focus on "banal, idiotic themes" including "Tonya Harding,...hair replacements, diets, fathers screwing their daughters' friends, and womyn with seventeen husbands" instead of "using the power of television to enlighten the housewives sitting at home...about health issues and empowerment."[374] After a friend mentions that "there [aren't] even any positive womyn in cartoons," she notes that out of her cartoon heroes, "Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Mickey Mouse, Bevis and Butthead, Akira, Ren and Stimpy, that martian guy always trying to

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[370] Whelehan, xviii.
[371] For examples, *see Riot Grrrl Press July, 3; Riot Grrrl DC* #7, 33, 14*; Oppression* #1, back,1-2*; Just Like A Girl* #3, 4*; Girl Germs* #4, 28; *Gecko* #3, back, 8; *Gecko* #2, back, front, 3; and *Grope* #1, 6.
[372] Heywood, xix-xx.
[373] *Definition of Grrrl and Other Rants by Skunk the Hunted,* 4.
[374] Ibid., 4-5; Ibid., 5.

blow up the world," the "only womyn [she] could even think of that's cool and says witty comments is Betty Boop."[375] She goes on to critique "gender programming" in commercials, noting that "the video game commercials...are basically just footage of future football jocks bonding," and advertisements for G.I. Joe consist of "boys screaming, 'Kill!!! Kill!!!'... [because] boys like to be dirty and roll around in the mud."[376] She assesses doll advertisements as encouraging girls to "learn to be a little housewife," and that the "oven that actually bakes" should come with "a book that...teach[es] you to be submissive and pleas[e] your man."[377] She concludes by identifying television as having "such a big role in [growing up]," and stating that advertisements and other media forms result in "gender assignments given, and children's power to [choose] taken away."[378] Despite the fact that "when they become adults, they will choose,... [choosing] away from a norm that almost beats you over the head with its point" is nearly impossible.[379]

Dawn Williams of *Function* levies similar criticism against the fact that "boys and grrrls are still being taught that pink [is] for grrrls and blue for boys, dolls are for grrrls and trucks are form boys and any other way is NOT right."[380] Along with these critiques of media socialization, the author of *Fake* considers the "idea of the self-destructive, bitter, and inarticulate but profoundly deep and sensitive male anti-hero," who is "celebrated in everything from *Catcher in the Rye* to HATE comic to Kurt Cobain to every movie with a protagonist under thirty," and wonders why "women are completely

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[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid.
[380] *Function* #5, 38.

excluded from the whole romantic brooding angst thing."[381] She critiques the media images of women as "shallow femme fatales that seduce and defile men...or as nurturers with arms and legs always open but who don't really have the capacity to understand the more complex, abstract torments of the men."[382] The author of *Gecko* notes that "movie classification is one of the many examples [of] sexism," wherein "guy movies are classified as those that contain violence, nudity, and/or heterosexuals" while women's movies "are those which are dramas, romance or movies that make the general public cry."[383] The author of *Just Like A Girl*, in a two page spread, discusses the "Cinderella complex," which she describes as "the need to be rescued," the belief that "wimmin...should expect to be saved from their pitiful lives by a man," and that idea married women are "protected, supported, buoyed up by wedded happiness until they day [they] died."[384] Later in the same issue, she writes that "MEDIA IS MIND CONTROL."[385]

In addition to direct media criticism, many zine authors address the commoditization of the female body in media and advertizing. In the third issue of *Free Gurlz*, the author criticizes the objectification of women's breasts "because society has turned them into sexual objects" and hopes for "the day wimmin reclaim their bodies from the legal system as their own, not as something to be bought and sold."[386] The author of *Housewife Turned Assassin* declares that "womyn's concocted sexuality is a commodity 4 CORPORATE AMERICA," and asks, "Doesn't this scare you?"[387]

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[381] *Fake* #0, 3.
[382] Ibid.
[383] *Gecko* #3, 13.
[384] *Just Like a Girl* #3, 3-4.
[385] Ibid., 28.
[386] *Free Gurlz* #3, cover.
[387] *Housewife Turned Assassin* #1, 14.

Zine authors devote considerable space to exploring the impact of representations of women on their body-image and self-esteem. The author of *Fantastic Fanzine* explains that, despite knowing that not "fit[ting] society's judgment of beauty...doesn't make [her] bad," she is "not happy with [her] weight or the way [she] look[s]" and the "fear of [her] fat being ugly governs the way [she] view[s] herself."[388] The author of *Grope* addresses the perception of ideal beauty by declaring "kiss my fat fuckin' ass...cellulite and stretch marks are beautiful."[389] The author of *Gecko* explains that "no matter how many times [she tries] to tell [herself] that 5'7" 132 lbs is not fat, no matter how much time [she] spend[s] cussing out that goddamn fucking anorexic Kate Moss," she sees herself "as some sort of ugly disgusting lump."[390] The author of *I Kicked A Boy* encourages others to reject popular beauty ideals by declaring, "don't diet RIOT!"[391]

By utilizing the space within zines to criticize media and address its influence, riot grrrl authors utilize the control of production to express their dissatisfaction with popular culture. In addition, the zine network provides a theoretical community within which these critiques can be shared and experiences supported. As with third wave feminists' engagement, zine authors utilize "old stereotypes about women and redefin[e] them in a positive way," as well as critiquing popular culture in an attempt to "effect social change."

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[388] *Fantastic Fanzine* #3, 29.
[389] *Grope* #4, 14.
[390] *Gecko* #2, 4.
[391] *I Kicked a Boy* #1, 23.

CONCLUSION

Despite scholars' attempts to connect the riot grrrl movement and the third wave of feminism, the work of riot grrrl zine authors and the guiding principles of third wave theorists defy simple categorization. While there are similarities between the movements, many of these collapse under close scrutiny. In addition, by conflating riot grrrl and the third wave, or even by categorizing riot grrrl as a manifestation of third wave ideals, critics have undermined the autonomy of riot grrrl and ignored the complexities of third wave feminist thought. This thesis represents the first step in addressing these effects. Specifically, the goal of this project is to re-establish the riot grrrl movement as an autonomous cultural phenomenon through the exploration of riot grrrl's various influences and the analysis of primary riot grrrl texts.

By engaging in a detailed analysis of both riot grrrl and the third wave, the thesis reveals a number of conclusions that are significant departures from similar projects. These findings are based largely on the consideration of riot grrrl zines, which represent an important yet under-utilized method for analyzing the movement. Due to increasing availability, other scholars interested in the riot grrrl subculture can engage with these texts in ways that were prohibitive only a few years ago. While riot grrrl zines comprise a significant portion of the theoretical and philosophical production of the movement, they are also the autobiographical works of young women. Although the proliferation of the internet has provided an outlet and community to many individuals who feel alienated from mainstream society, these zines represent the collective expressions of a small but vocal group of individuals in opposition to hegemonic culture and their privileged peers.

This project is merely an initial step toward understanding riot grrrl as an independent cultural movement, albeit with myriad influences. This understanding, in combination with the use of zines, establishes a new method of analysis for riot grrrl. By utilizing the developing collections of zine archives, future scholars will be able to explore the intricacies of these texts and come to new conclusions about the riot grrrl movement, specific zines and authors, geographical locations of production, and the nature of zine networking and communities.

The scope of this thesis is limited to the collections of two archives, and, within those, only zines produced in the United States. In addition, the goal of this project is the examination of the broad characteristics of both riot grrrl and the third wave. By analyzing zines produced outside of the U.S. within their own cultural contexts, or by focusing on specific, detailed characteristics of riot grrrl zines, other authors can improve upon the conclusions I have drawn.

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