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Julia Abelev, "Perceptual Realism and the Winter War of 1939," *intersections* 10, no. 3 (2009): 1-20.

## ABSTRACT

Why did the Soviet Union choose to invade Finland in 1939? Perceptual realism attempts to provide an answer. The theory accepts realism's assumptions regarding power dynamics, but makes individuals the independent variables that interpret the balance of power and security threats. In this way, realism explains the context that incited tension, while the cognitive biases of Soviet leaders led them to choose war. I test the explanatory power of perceptual realism through two lines of inquiry: 1) whether the Soviets demonstrated misperception; and 2) whether misperception, not realism alone, explains their policies. The evidence supports the first hypothesis, but not the latter. Power dynamics alone explain the Winter War, while individuals influenced only the preparations for the conflict.

[http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections\\_Autumn\\_2009/Julia\\_Abelev\\_Perceptual\\_Realism\\_and\\_the\\_Winter\\_War\\_of\\_1939.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Autumn_2009/Julia_Abelev_Perceptual_Realism_and_the_Winter_War_of_1939.pdf)

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# Perceptual Realism and the Winter War of 1939

By Julia Abelev

University of Washington, Seattle

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Nestled within the great conflict of World War II was another lesser known contest—the Winter War between the Soviet Union and Finland. On November 30, 1939, the Soviet Union, an august entity with a population of more than 170 million, declared war on Finland, a country of four million.<sup>2</sup> Finland managed to extend the war to 105 days, even with only a small and underequipped military.<sup>3</sup> This far surpassed Soviet plans for a twelve day invasion.<sup>4</sup> The implications of the war were just as surprising, resonating far beyond the battlefield and impacting the course of World War II. First, Great Britain and France condemned the Soviet invasion of Finland as an aggressive act that violated the conventions of the League of Nations<sup>5</sup> and expelled the Soviet Union from the organization. The removal of such a large power weakened the League (neither Germany nor the United States were members) and ultimately contributed to its dissolution. More importantly, the Soviet invasion propelled Finland to the forefront of world politics and forged it into a key ally for Germany. Operation Barbarossa<sup>6</sup> hinged upon access to Finland's 800-mile border with the Soviet Union. The Winter War offered Germany the perfect opportunity to observe the Red Army and capitalize on anti-Soviet sentiment within Finland.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Elizabeth Kier, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Washington, for her committed mentorship and invaluable insight which not only improved this paper, but made me a better scholar. I would also like to thank Moon Choi, graduate student of Political Science, who helped shape my hypotheses and theoretical framework. Michael Biggins, Head of the Slavic and East European Section of the University of Washington Libraries, was of invaluable assistance in unearthing important primary materials.

<sup>2</sup> William R. Trotter, *A frozen hell: the Russo-Finnish winter war of 1939-1940* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1991), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Eloise Engle and Lauri Paananen, *The winter war; the Russo-Finnish conflict, 1939-40* (New York: Scribner, 1973). Vii.

<sup>4</sup> D. W. Spring, "The Soviet Decision for War Against Finland 30 November 1939," *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 2 (1986): 215.

<sup>5</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among nations; the struggle for power and peace* (New York: Knopf; [distributed by Random House], 1978). From the excerpt "Six Principles of Political Realism," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/morg6.htm> (accessed November 20, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> A code name (*Unternehmen Barbarossa*) for the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Edwards, *The Winter War: Russia's invasion of Finland, 1939-1940* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2008), 15.

Several theoretical frameworks seek to explain the Soviet Union's choice to invade Finland — two of which I discuss here. First I consider *realism*, a theory of international relations developed after World War II by Hans Morgenthau and E.H. Carr<sup>8</sup> which is in many ways indebted to the philosophies of Nicolai Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. Realism generally defines international relations entirely in terms of state actors, all of which rationally strive for security in order to better serve their national interests. Second I discuss *misperception*, which applies insights from cognitive psychology to international relations theory. Proponents such as Robert Jervis, Peter M. Haas and Jonathan Mercer<sup>9</sup> suggest that the perceptions (or 'misperceptions') of individual actors play a significant role in determining state interests and foreign policy. Unlike realism, which characterizes the state as an abstract, unitary and rational actor, misperception allows space for individual limits and biases.

I propose an amalgam of realism and misperception, which I call "perceptual realism." Realism and misperception are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Integrating both accounts for the structure of the international system while anticipating 'irrational' or ideological decisions that may drive state policies on an individual level. Perceptual realism explains the Winter War in the following manner. Realism explains the tensions between the Soviet Union and Finland, Finland's importance for long-term Soviet strategy, and the steady escalation towards a potential conflict. Misperception contributes by allowing the Soviet Union to consider war the only option, leading to the actual outbreak of hostilities. In other words, realism provided a context, but individual perception acted as the true catalyst.

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<sup>8</sup> See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among nations; the struggle for power and peace* (New York: Knopf, 1967); *The impasse of American foreign policy* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1967); *In defense of the national interest; a critical examination of American foreign policy* (New York: Knopf., 1951); *Scientific man vs. power politics* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

See Edward Hallet Carr and Michael Cox, *The twenty years' crisis, 1919-1939: an introduction to the study of international relations* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001); Edward Hallet Carr, *Propaganda in international politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939); and *International relations since the peace treaties* (London [u.a.]: Macmillan, 1937).

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception," in *The origin and prevention of major wars*, Studies in interdisciplinary history, eds. Robert I. Rotberg, Theodore K. Rabb, and Robert Gilpin (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1989); "Hypotheses on Misperception," *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (1968): 454-479;

See Peter M. Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46, no. 1 (1992): 1-35;

See Jonathan Mercer, "Rationality and Psychology in International Politics," *International Politics* 59 (2005): 77-106; and "Anarchy and Identity," *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (1995): 229-252.

## The Outbreak of War

April 14, 1938, marks the resurgence of the Soviet Union's interest in Finland and the vulnerability of the Russo-Finnish border. On that day, a month after Germany's annexation of Austria, Russia sent a low-level official, Boris Yartsev, to the Finnish foreign minister, Rudolf Holsti.<sup>10</sup> The Soviets feared that Hitler intended to eventually attack the Soviet Union on multiple fronts — with the very real possibility of Germany invading Finnish territory and using it to stage an offensive against Russia. Leningrad was located twenty miles from the Russo-Finnish border<sup>11</sup> and had a population of more than 3.5 million.<sup>12</sup> Hitler's incendiary militarism gave Russia little reason to believe that Germany would not conduct such attacks.

For eighteen months, Finland refused to accept Russian demands for bases on its territory. Both parties volleyed proposals and concessions with little tangible outcome. Russia moved cautiously until the August 1939 signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, dividing Poland between Germany and Russia and secretly granting Russia supremacy over the Baltic and Finland.<sup>13</sup> Stalin quickly forced Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into mutual assistance treaties that effectively permitted him to house bases on their territories.<sup>14</sup> The pact, however, did not serve to diminish Soviet paranoia regarding Finland. Stalin stated on October 14, 1939, "We have good relations with Germany now, but in this world everything can change."<sup>15</sup> He soon discovered that the new leverage gained through the Nazi-Soviet pact did not deeply impact the Finns. The 1920 Treaty of Tartu and non-aggression pact of 1932, renewed for an additional ten years in 1934, bound Finland and the Soviet Union to pacific relations.<sup>16</sup> Finland assumed an air of complacency and refused to accept Stalin's requests, even with increased concessions.<sup>17</sup>

Successive months only deepened the impasse between the two nations, leading Stalin to assume that military conflict would be more expedient than continuing

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<sup>10</sup> Max Jakobson, *The diplomacy of the winter war; an account of the Russo-Finnish War, 1939-1940* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1961), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Spring, 210.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Stalin and M. R. Werner, *Stalin's Kampf; Joseph Stalin's credo* (New York: Howell, Soskin & Co., 1940), 347.

<sup>13</sup> Jakobson, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Engle and Paananen, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony F. Upton, *Finland, 1939-1940*. London: Davis-Poynter, 1974), 29.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 16; Trotter, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Upton., 29-30.

to cajole obdurate Finns. Stalin feared that his time was limited, for he wished to reap the full benefits from his pact with Germany before Hitler had trounced the West and amassed the capability to campaign in the East.<sup>18</sup> The Mainila incident, in which seven shots penetrated 800-meters into Soviet territory, killing four Russian soldiers and nine others, provided the Russians with sufficient pretext for liquidating the Soviet-Finnish pact.<sup>19</sup> A few days later, Russia began bombarding Finland on November 30, 1939.<sup>20</sup>

#### Realism and Misperception

Realism bases its perspective on the international level of analysis. Realists assert that power and the objective laws derived from it are the sole motivation for political actions.<sup>21</sup> The drive for power propels all policymakers towards an identical goal, superseding all differences and creating a unitary state. The nature of power and the capacity for its growth depend greatly upon the state's position within the international system. Thus, a given state's relative position within the international system determines its actions.

Realism proposes that all states rationally act within their self-interest, objectively assessing the respective costs and benefits of a scenario prior to acting.<sup>22</sup> "Realism," Morgenthau writes, "considers prudence — the weighing of the consequences of alternative political actions — to be the supreme virtue in politics".<sup>23</sup> This implies that policymakers, as rational actors, do not individually matter for politics. They simply review the requirements of the state and act accordingly, with their personal belief systems never intervening. "Interests (material and ideal), not ideas, dominate directly the actions of men."<sup>24</sup> Since the international system is anarchical — lacking a supranational governing authority — states jostle for power and strive to entrench their position through either external or internal balancing. Importantly, all of these assumptions hinge upon the notion that the only actors worth noting are states.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jakobson, 143-44.

<sup>19</sup> Trotter, 21.

<sup>20</sup> Spring 221.

<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among nations*.

<sup>22</sup> Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International relations* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2009), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among nations*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Goldstein and Pevehouse, 45.

Misperception brings the level of analysis down to the cognitive sphere of individual actors. Robert Jervis defines misperception as "...inaccurate inferences, miscalculations of consequences, and misjudgments about how others will react to one's policies."<sup>26</sup> Misperception nullifies the "rational actor paradigm" and instead assumes that all policymakers act in accordance with their own biases and information filters, either of which could lead them in a direction that counters rationality.<sup>27</sup> The theory assumes an individual's personal appraisal of a situation is a decisive variable in state behavior. This dispels the possibility of states acting in a unitary manner, for all individuals bear their unique approaches to a situation. Though misperception does not assume that a state's position within the international system is inconsequential — policymakers ultimately define the state's approach to foreign policy by interpreting the international hierarchy.

Perceptual realism argues that realism does not independently operate causally within the international system. Instead, it creates a context for tensions and the strategic importance of countries. The policymakers' perception of the balance of power and security threats drives the final decision to initiate war. The Soviet Union's misguided assessment of the situation and Finland's place within it was the true causal factor. By fusing the individual and international levels of analysis the theory does not undermine the integrity of either. Policymakers may assume they act rationally and make every effort to do so, but misguided information processing and a conflict's opacity may thwart their efforts.

Even in realism, much depends upon the clarity of the policymakers' deliberations. Morgenthau writes that it is important to know a statesman's, "intellectual ability to comprehend...foreign policy, as well as his political ability to translate...[it] into successful political action."<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, not all politicians are capable of fully grasping the international situation, much less properly applying the information they gather; thus, this component of foreign policy allows ample opportunity for individual errors to influence state actions. In fact, realism does not dispute this and grants sufficient space for the presence of other theories. As Morgenthau writes, the realist theory doesn't disregard "the existence and importance of...other modes of thought. It rather implies that each should be assigned its proper sphere and function."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception," 101.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *Between peace and war: the nature of international crisis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 101.

<sup>28</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics among nations*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Realism is a legitimate means of assessing the international situation, the respective diffusion of power and the security concerns that dominate the state's interests. However, perceptual realism abandons the assumptions regarding unitary action and states serving as the sole agents. Perceptual realism instead grants a role to misperception by arguing that individual leaders personally assess the system, allowing their internal intellectual constraints to causally influence policy.

This theory provides two hypotheses for the cause of the Winter War, both of which I test here. First, Stalin and his officials repeatedly displayed symptoms of misperception (i.e. irrational consistency and historical analogies) when reviewing the situation. Second, the assumption that realism alone cannot explain the war's outbreak implies that war was not in the Soviet Union's rational interests and could only result from misperception.

#### Misperception's Indelible Presence

**B**efore testing whether realism could have operated causally, I must determine if misperception was actually present. I will focus upon two biases that Jervis and Lebow believe policymakers frequently exhibit: irrational consistency and the use of historical analogies. The former led the Soviets to overestimate Finland's hostility and the latter to underestimate the costs of war. Analysis indicates that these biases were present and deeply influential.

Irrational consistency results from the distortion of a normal cognitive process known as cognitive consistency. Individuals process information in accordance with internal rules. In the case of cognitive consistency, this involves sorting our expectations in such a way as to make them consistent with our beliefs and actions.<sup>30</sup> This procedure permits us to schematize our behavior and act predictably. This process ceases to operate effectively when individuals form an inflexible cognitive framework. Lebow states that policy makers, "are more responsive to information that supports their existing beliefs," and when "confronted with critical information, they tend to misunderstand it, twist its meaning to make it consistent, explain it away, deny it, or simply ignore it".<sup>31</sup> Throughout the entire pre-war period Stalin and his officials demonstrated this pattern of behavior.

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<sup>30</sup> Lebow, 103

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 105.

The Soviet Union's belief that Finland was both hostile towards the Soviets and in collusion with Germany stemmed from the two countries' tumultuous historical relations. From 1890 to 1917 the Russian Empire ruled Finland. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, Lenin granted Finland its independence, while furtively assuming that he could later re-annex it by using the Russian soldiers that remained.<sup>32</sup> Instead, a Finnish civil war between the White Guard, comprised of the bourgeoisie and nobility, and the Red Guard of Russian revolutionaries began. Some of the White Guard commanders had been part of the group of 2,000 Finnish boys sent to Germany for military training between 1915 and 1916.<sup>33</sup> The White Guard, fearing defeat at the hands of the Reds, requested and received assistance from Germany in April 1918. Six weeks later, the Reds surrendered.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, the Germans employed the Aaland Islands to reach Hanko, an island off the southern coast of Finland.<sup>35</sup> Such a precedent brought Soviet attention to the vulnerability of the Gulf of Finland. Logic dictated that if Germany could employ the route with such ease, what would stop it from going a step further and staging an attack against the Russian border? Needless to say, the civil war resulted in tense relations between Finland and Russia. Finnish Prime Minister Pehr Edvin Svinhufvud even tactlessly told a German official in October 1937, "Russia's enemy [Germany] must always be the friend of Finland".<sup>36</sup>

History left an indelible mark upon the Soviet Union, leading it to perceive all Finnish actions in terms of complicity with Germany. During the 1930s, minority political groups in Finland questioned Soviet practices in Soviet Karelia, a territory that the Finnish government regarded as its legal trustee. The outspokenly militant youth that gravitated towards the cause incensed the Soviet Union and instilled within it the belief that such unrest was the majority view. Maxim Litvinov, Soviet foreign minister, believed that Germany, Poland and Finland were clandestinely allied in the hopes of annexing Soviet Karelia.<sup>37</sup> The territory additionally fueled Soviet assumptions that a large state could offer Soviet Karelia as a bribe for the Finnish government in exchange for access to the Russo-Finnish border.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Utpon, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Trotter, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>35</sup> Jacobson, 16.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>38</sup> Trotter, 7.

These tensions gave way to an invasive form of irrational consistency. Soviet Marshal Tukhachevski in a January 1936 speech claimed that Finnish airfields could not be for the small nation's protection.<sup>39</sup> In 1938, the Finnish air force consisted of 150 planes, but the country harbored enough aerodomes to accommodate 2,000. This led the Soviets to believe Finland expected a "guest-fleet."<sup>40</sup> This was a reasonable conclusion, but the Soviets immediately assumed that Germany would be the chief provider. Tukhachevski's claims were coupled by two September 1936 announcements from Moscow: Finnish and German forces had allegedly attempted to ruin the Murmansk Railroad and the German navy's visit to Helsinki indicated planned joint naval exercises in the Gulf of Finland.<sup>41</sup> Andre Zhdanov, Communist leader of Leningrad, on November 29, 1936, conveyed the impact of such rash conclusions on Soviet foreign policy: "If in some little countries, Finland for instance, feelings of hostility to the USSR are being kindled...and preparations are being made to make their territory available for aggressive action by fascist Powers, ...these little countries alone...will be the losers."<sup>42</sup>

The Soviet Union regarded seemingly innocuous commemorative parades as a sign of Finland's common cause with Germany. On April 12, 1938, veterans of the German expeditionary corps, which had assisted the White Guard during the 1918 Finnish Civil War, visited Finland for a military parade honoring their comrades. The Soviets interpreted this affair as an indication that the Germans wished to continue their battle with the Reds. Two days later, the first Soviet-Finnish negotiations began.<sup>43</sup> Another instance of such a mentality occurred when Finland and Sweden began discussing plans to remilitarize the Aaland Islands in the Gulf in 1938. The Soviet armed forces newspaper proclaimed in response, "fascist Germany...tries to achieve two aims at once—to establish a military base against the Soviet Union and to safeguard her supplies of Swedish iron".<sup>44</sup> Immediately the Soviet Union incorporated Germany, even when no evidence for such deception existed. The Soviet Union ignored German attempts to ensure the neutrality of the Aaland Islands, instead imposing a behavior that better fit its assumptions.

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<sup>39</sup> Jacobson, 17.

<sup>40</sup> W. P. Coates, Zeld K. Coates and Frank Owen, *The Soviet-Finnish campaign: military and political, 1939-1940* (London: Eldon Press, 1941), 20.

<sup>41</sup> Jacobson, 17-18.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

Soviet suspicion extended beyond neighboring nations. They also implicated the British in colluding with Finland. A contributor to the Russian paper *Light Industry* declared in a 1939 article “No intrigue or provocations by the incendiaries of war...can prevent the Soviet Union from securing the safety of its...frontier.”<sup>45</sup> Political cartoons in other papers indicated that the writer included more than Germany among the “incendiaries.” A *Komsomalskaya Pravda* cartoon conveys a hand emblazoned with a British flag holding a magnifying glass before the figure of the Finnish Foreign Minister, making him appear threatening. The caption slyly states “Why Errko has an exaggerated opinion of himself.”<sup>46</sup> The implication is more than clear — Finland is only resisting Stalin’s demands because it feels that external support will deter any Soviet action. The paranoia was best demonstrated in a telegram sent by a Soviet envoy to his diplomatic headquarters. “In Helsinki there has been a sudden increase in the number of Englishmen, the great majority of whom speak Russian. Finland is conducting military discussions.”<sup>47</sup> Russia had little patience for external intrusion and consistently feared that such signs of collusion only further substantiated its concerns for the border.

In a speech presented on October 31, 1939, to the Supreme Soviet, Vyacheslav Molotov, Litvinov’s successor, proclaimed that the negotiations had stalled because “the influence of outside powers on Finland [had] been observed.” Even Leningrad Radio incredulously offered its own analysis of Finland’s obdurate resistance to Soviet demands. “Who is Finland relying on? There was another country [Poland] which also expected promised assistance [from Britain] and what did it get?”<sup>48</sup> It had not occurred to the Soviet Union that Finnish resistance stemmed from the fact that the Soviet demands would effectively nullify Finland’s independent defense system.<sup>49</sup> The Soviet Union, however, did not consider the relative impact of its requests. Stalin insisted that he desired only the bare minimum.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> G.E.R. Gedye, “Russians Charge British Abet Finns,” *The New York Times*, November 17, 1939, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki 1939*, 258.

<sup>48</sup> Upton, 39.

<sup>49</sup> Trotter, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Jacobson, 124.

## Selective Lessons From History

Much of the Soviet rhetoric framed Finland in terms of prior experiences with Poland. Indeed, Soviet leaders looked upon the two countries as essentially identical foes, with the same tactics applicable to both. This misperception in particular resulted in a gross underestimation of the costs of war. The Red Army's success in Poland and its admiration for Germany's blitzkrieg generated the belief that such methods could apply anywhere with equal effect. In only a few days, the Soviet Union had overrun a state with eight times the population of Finland, gained thirteen million subjects, 196,000 square kilometers of fresh territory and all at the low cost of 737 men. The German invasion on September 1, 1939, had softened the Soviet campaign, but Russia believed reenacting the annexation with a smaller nation would prove just as simple, even without assistance.<sup>51</sup> Stalin indicated the prominent role of this framework during an October 12, 1939, meeting with a Finnish envoy. "When I asked Ribbentrop why Germany had attacked Poland, he replied, 'We had to move the Polish frontier farther from Berlin.' ... We ask that the distance from Leningrad to the border... be 70 kilometers."<sup>52</sup> The Soviet Union had desires similar to Germany's. Of course, Germany had not made such a concerted diplomatic effort and had moved the border a full hundred kilometers. The Soviet Union, in contrast, wished to shift the border a mere fifty kilometers and offered in exchange for all of its territorial requests twice as much land.

When Soviet diplomatic efforts with Finland failed, Stalin began to believe that war might be a more expedient option. The simplicity of the Polish campaign partly fueled this view. Yet it stemmed from a superficial and highly selective analysis of the similarities and differences between the two countries, and in particular their vulnerability to blitzkrieg. Firstly, German tactics were meant for the tame terrain and modern road systems of Central Europe. Finland, in contrast, had a largely undeveloped network of roads.<sup>53</sup> Twenty percent of Finland was covered by swamp, almost twelve percent consisted of lakes and the country was widely regarded as the most densely wooded in Europe.<sup>54</sup> This impeded any form of mechanized warfare. Only small pockets of territory could accommodate battle, minimizing Russia's manpower advantage and allowed insufficient space for coordinating the massive forces blitzkrieg requires. In

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<sup>51</sup> Allen F. Chew, *The white death: the epic of the Soviet-Finnish Winter War* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1971), 2-3.

<sup>52</sup> Jacobson, 117.

<sup>53</sup> Trotter, 34-35.

<sup>54</sup> Coates, 2.

addition, Russia's human capital did not match the degree of cohesion, drive and independence carefully honed by Germany in order to ensure blitzkrieg's success.<sup>55</sup> These factors alone point to the possibility of drawn-out warfare, not a quick foray.

Stalin and his officials, however, rejected the concerns of some in the Soviet military, refusing to let go of an appealing analogy. General Shaposhnikov, chief of staff of the Red Army, submitted a proposal indicating the need for a large build-up, deployment of the elite forces and incorporation of soldiers from across the Union.<sup>56</sup> Stalin did not heed such warnings and instead believed Zhdanov's claims that only the Leningrad forces were required.<sup>57</sup> General Meretskov, the commander of Leningrad's forces, even went so far as to publicly claim that the campaign would require two weeks at the most. Interestingly, in private, he bemoaned the difficult terrain and believed that a quick victory was not attainable.<sup>58</sup> The Soviet Union, assuming an easy victory along the lines of Poland, had neglected to calculate the adversary's unique geography and its own demographic capabilities, both of which could equalize the Soviet's initial military advantage. Nonetheless, the Russian press continued to urge that Finland act to "escape the fate of Poland".<sup>59</sup>

#### Rational Calculation Versus Individual Perception

The mere existence of misperception does not mean that it was a necessary condition for the outbreak of the Winter War. In order to test this, I first assess whether or not realism can explain the war's occurrence and to what extent. Then, I evaluate whether misperception operated causally, or merely influenced auxiliary elements of the war. The evidence indicates that realism is capable of explaining the conflict, while misperception mainly drove Soviet preparations for the war.

If realism provides a causal explanation for the Winter War, the Soviet Union's actions must be considered rational. A realist interpretation of the Soviet position would frame Soviet perceptions as justified in terms of the Soviet need to preserve its influence and security in the international system. In World War II Europe this was no easy task. Stalin responded to the rising German militarism

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<sup>55</sup> Trotter, 36.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>57</sup> Upton, 45.

<sup>58</sup> Trotter, 34.

<sup>59</sup> *The New York Times*, "Red Blitzkrieg," December 3, 1939, 85.

by securing any vulnerability along Russia's borders. Finland's strategic position made it exceedingly important in this regard. Certainly, Finland posed a sincere threat to Russia, for Finnish territory provided ample access to resources and a vantage point from which to fire over the border.

Germany had vested interest in Finland because much of its war-making capacity depended upon easy access to Swedish iron ore and the area's rich deposits of nickel, making Finland's neutrality and independence important. Germany had also demonstrated its connection to the region by supporting the Finnish White Guard during the Civil War. After the Civil War Germany maintained cordial ties with the Finnish government. The Soviets understood this clearly, but were more unnerved by the border's proximity to Soviet arteries. The Russo-Finnish border ran a mere one hundred kilometers from Murmansk, the only ice-free Russian ocean port, and paralleled the Murmansk railroad that connected Leningrad to Murmansk.<sup>60</sup> Any interception of this route would greatly disrupt Russian trade and provisions for the bustling city of 3.5 million. Stalin considered Leningrad the Soviet Union's "second capital" because of both its symbolic value and its control of more than a third of the defense industry.<sup>61</sup> A hostile Finland would greatly inhibit Russian access to the Gulf. "In theory," Upton writes, "whoever controlled [Finland's southern coast] could block the Gulf of Finland and all sea access to Leningrad," making it exceedingly important for the Soviet Union to fortify the region's defenses.<sup>62</sup>

On the basis of geography, Finland posed a clear liability; historically, only a moderate one. During the Finnish Civil War in 1918 German troops had arrived on Finnish soil through the southern islands of Finland.<sup>63</sup> If such feats could be accomplished once, they could certainly be repeated by an army as formidable as Hitler's. Demanding southern bases was justified, but Russia interestingly demanded northern territory as well. Never in history have forces sought to besiege Leningrad by arriving from the north.<sup>64</sup> Soviets did not care for history in this regard and felt that every corner should be protected, with or without an historical justification.

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<sup>60</sup> Upton, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Alexander O. Chubaryan and Harold Shukman, *Stalin and the Soviet-Finnish war 1939-1940*, Cass Series on the Soviet (Russian) study of war (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 263.

<sup>62</sup> Upton, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Jacobson, 16.

<sup>64</sup> Upton 31.

These vulnerabilities, however, existed several decades prior, and did not foment war. Indeed, other strategic factors must have influenced the Soviet foreign policy. The main factor, by far, was Stalin's suspicions regarding Hitler's true intentions. Stalin believed that Hitler was merely attempting to dismantle the West before turning eastward and quenching his initial thirst for *lebensraum*, or living space.<sup>65</sup> With this pressing shortage of time in mind, Stalin could not tolerate extending the diplomatic negotiations further and began to sense that more stringent methods were required. In a speech presented to the Supreme Soviet on October 31, 1939, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov stated that the uncertain times provided the Soviet Union with, "not only the right, but also the duty...to adopt serious measures for strengthening its security."<sup>66</sup> When negotiations finally soured on November 3, 1939, he famously stated that "We civilians can't seem to do any more. Now it seems to be up to the military. It is their turn to speak."<sup>67</sup> Finland had left the Soviets little choice. Stalin could not risk allowing Finland to continue with its obduracy without conveying weakness to the Germans and an inability to manage affairs within his own sphere of influence. Finland had to be silenced, but the Soviet Union did not wish to do this unless it could remain uninvolved in the war between Germany and the European powers.<sup>68</sup>

Certainly, the daunting political atmosphere could incite warfare, but key considerations should have stalled any leader operating on rationality alone. For instance, beginning a war when the possibility of one with a major power looms on the horizon is hardly logical; unless one can be absolutely certain that the small skirmish will be quick and painless. The Soviet Union could not risk any prolonged battle, for if Germany conquered Britain and France, it would be able to turn against the Soviet Union while Stalin was still mired within Finland. Not only that, any setbacks during a Russo-Finnish war would lead the Germans to assume Soviet weakness. Khrushchev suggests as much in his memoirs. For Khrushchev, "Our miserable conduct of the Finnish campaign," encouraged Hitler in his plans for blitzkrieg."<sup>69</sup> Moreover, any loss of men and ammunition could prove decisive later in a war between major powers. Realism acknowledges all of this and offers an explanation: rational considerations led the Soviet Union to assume a short conflict,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>66</sup> A.T. Anderson, "Origins of the Winter War: A Study of Russo-Finnish Diplomacy," *World Politics* 6, no. 2 (1954): 182.

<sup>67</sup> Engle & Paananen, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Jacobson, 142.

<sup>69</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, Edward Crankshaw and Strobe Talbott, *Khrushchev remembers* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1970), 156.

First, the war would have posed no risk to alliances and interactions with other states. Germany, Sweden and other European powers had firmly sought to convince Finland that acquiescing to Soviet demands was in its best interests. In fact, Germany had little desire to intervene on Finland's behalf, for such action would risk angering the Soviet Union and possibly lead to a Germany "nipped between two fronts".<sup>70</sup> Britain also had little desire to interfere; in fact, the British welcomed Soviet control in the Baltic as a means of diminishing German influence. War was not in anyone's interests, but having the Soviet Union depose Finland was not a matter over which the British were willing to risk their own men. Thus, the Soviet Union could easily attack Finland and not fret over fighting one of its fellow nations.<sup>71</sup>

Second, Stalin viewed this as a window of opportunity. In a speech delivered to his generals in 1940, Stalin defended the campaign as the only *rational* choice; "in the West," Stalin stated, "the three biggest powers were locked in a deadly combat — this was the most opportune moment to settle the Leningrad problem".<sup>72</sup> He understood prior to the war that no one in the international community sympathized with the Soviets, so any war with Finland would ultimately involve some Western interference.<sup>73</sup> Stalin anticipated that other states would support Finland materially, but he believed the pressing international situation would prevent them from offering anything significant or decisive.

The Soviets had little to fear even if Finland received munitions from other nations. Per division, Russia had 40-50 tanks and 15 armored cars, while Finland had none. Russia had 14,000 rifles to Finland's 11,000; 419 automatic rifles to a mere 250. In fact, in almost all major forms of ammunition and total manpower Russia surpassed Finland.<sup>74</sup> If war was to be fought on the predictable plains of Continental Europe, Finland would have been a satellite long ago. Unfortunately for the Russians, this was not the case. Finland had other features that partially overrode the numerical advantage: namely, a geographical advantage and a highly disciplined army that had been steadily building and training throughout the diplomatic negotiations.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Lothrop Stoddard, "Finnish War Stirs Stormy Reich Echo," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1939, 2.

<sup>71</sup> Upton, 25-27.

<sup>72</sup> Chubaryan and Shukman, 264.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>74</sup> Engle and Paananen, 158-59.

<sup>75</sup> Jakobson, 109.

The Soviet decision for war was rational considering the tumultuous state of affairs and the potentially lethal German intentions. In order to counter Finland's defensive advantage Stalin would have to meticulously prepare his troops. At this point, the role of misperception becomes clear.

#### Soviet Misconception of Finland

Since realism provides a theoretical means of explaining the Soviet decision to fight, the question becomes determining if or what role of misperception may have played. Evidence indicates that it greatly influenced the manner in which the Soviets estimated the difficulty of the war and the preparations required. The Soviet Union understood that a short war would ensure the greatest use of the window of opportunity, so it set about ensuring that the war would not exceed two weeks. At this point, Stalin begins to demonstrate the muddled conception of Finland and its readiness.

Andrei Zhdanov pressed upon Stalin the absolute simplicity of fighting such a war. He argued this on the basis of two points. First, the Finnish military capacity could not withhold more than a "token" defense. Second, the discontented Finnish working class would fight on behalf of the Soviet "liberators".<sup>76</sup> The latter reflects a deeply rooted sentiment within Soviet politics. Even in 1938 Russian newspapers lauded the restless peasantry that would quickly "turn their weapons against the [Finnish government]."<sup>77</sup> In essence, the Soviets were hoping for a fifth column that would act as a force multiplier.

Soviet correspondents reported the disparities within Finnish society. The Tass correspondent in Helsinki wrote that the "Finnish working class was on the point of revolt" and the Soviets began to believe that the "Finnish 'masses' were ready to receive the Red Army with flowers and banners."<sup>78</sup> Zhdanov was so confident in the proletariat's support for the Soviet campaign he believed only the Leningrad forces would be required.<sup>79</sup> These assumptions, however, were based upon an extreme lack of knowledge, either willing or accidental. In reality, the Finns were extremely supportive of their government and had no intention of defecting to their former master. The German Minister in Helsinki, Wipert von Blucher, provided an astute analysis of the Finnish people in an August 1938 dispatch. He stated that "eighty to ninety percent of the nation is

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<sup>76</sup> Trotter, 18.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>78</sup> Jakobson, 142-43

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 145.

democratically minded, and they will not deny their convictions in a war that is presented to them as an attack on democracy.”<sup>80</sup> In a letter to Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov, Finnish Foreign Minister Vaino Tanner described the popularity the Finnish government enjoyed. The dominant Socialist party in parliament received 42.5% of the working class vote in the Summer 1939 elections. “Behind the Finnish Government and the policy they are pursuing,” Tanner wrote, “is a unanimous Parliament. And behind Parliament is a unanimous nation.”<sup>81</sup> More importantly, the Soviets represented nothing more than totalitarianism to the Finns, making it highly unlikely that they would be welcomed as heroes.

The amount of support granted to Finnish delegations before they left for Moscow should have informed the Soviet perception. On their departure to Moscow for negotiations with the Soviets, Juho Passikivi and his fellow diplomats were greeted by spontaneous throngs of joyous people who sang patriotic songs and sent well-wishes to the delegation. “Wherever the train stopped,” Jakobson writes, “there were more crowds to sing courage and faith into the hearts of the nation’s representatives.”<sup>82</sup> These were not hollow gestures, but the sign of a country willing to fight tooth and nail for its liberty. If Stalin and his officials had paid sufficient attention to the Finnish people, they would not have uttered “All we had to do was raise our voice a little bit, and the Finns would obey. If that didn’t work, we could fire one shot and the Finns would put up their hands and surrender.”<sup>83</sup>

The poor preparations rested upon more than supposed pro-Soviet sentiments in Finland. Soviet memoranda indicated a clear belief in the poor state of Finnish troops and affairs. A foreign policy official drafted a letter on November 12, 1939, that purported to explain the status of Finnish troops. In great detail he explained the number of troops, their caliber and the degree of preparations along the Russo-Finnish border. He chose to emphasize what he deemed the growing resentment among the reserve troops at being uprooted to face what appeared to be a non-existent enemy. “Within the Finnish army discipline is falling and it appears to be fragmenting... On the streets of the capitol one can often see drunken soldiers roaming at night... causing the citizen population to avoid them.”<sup>84</sup> The soldiers’ behavior could alienate public support for the war

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>81</sup> Finland, *The development of Finnish-Soviet relations*, 113.

<sup>82</sup> Jakobson, 114.

<sup>83</sup> Khrushchev, Crankshaw and Talbott, 152.

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *Dokumenti Vneshnei Politiki 1939*, 284.

and the Finnish government that caused it. The Soviets reveled in these developments, for they saw the potential to erode Finnish popular will.

The author buttressed his assertion with the fact the Finland had burdened its own finances because of the extraordinary expense of its defense preparations. “The Finnish position continues to worsen,” he wrote. “Its main source of funding — trade — continues to fall as a result of war preparations on the East. . . . The government is eating away its 3 billion [currency not specified] war savings.”<sup>85</sup> The belief in Finland’s dire financial straits may have been well-founded, but the situation did not substantiate the writer’s conclusions. Finland had been fortifying the border since at least 1937. By the time Finland began depleting its war funds in 1939 much of the taxing work was already complete.<sup>86</sup>

#### Soviet Lack of Self-Awareness

Sagacity should have propelled the Soviets to look inward at their own level of preparedness, as opposed to speculating over that of Finland. The Red Army was not as battle-ready as Stalin would have liked and it most certainly was not fully prepared for a high-intensity conflict in densely wooded terrain. In 1937 Stalin had staged his infamous purge of the Red Army. He arrested 44,000 officers and executed at least 15,000. Those who escaped death suffered in labor camps and exile.<sup>87</sup> This served to dismantle the most experienced and intelligent core of the military, leaving only the infantry and militia officers. Stalin’s purge eroded any sense of initiative among the officer corps, leaving a mass unwilling to take political risks in order to secure victory in battle. Oddly enough, this hard-line elimination was coupled by a lenient training regimen for those that remained.

The Red Army did not exercise or train when the temperature fell below 15 degrees centigrade and took hour-long naps each afternoon.<sup>88</sup> Brigade Commissar Semyonov recounted to Stalin the poor state of his troops. 20-30 percent of those at the front had little combat training and large numbers of men were over 35 years in age, complicating logistics and frustrating commanding officers.<sup>89</sup> This lack of readiness was coupled with defunct army manuals that

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Chubaryan and Shukman, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., xxii.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., xxiii.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 12.

offered suggestions highly impractical for the demands of Northern warfare.<sup>90</sup> Even if realist considerations made the war a necessary route, Stalin should have considered the state of his troops and their potential to complicate matters at the outset. Yet, there was little planning on the part of the Soviets as they continued to assume their present state could allow for a quick incursion, even when ample evidence pointed to the contrary.

#### An Argument for Perceptual Realism

The international system forced Stalin to decide upon war, but misperception defined how he prepared for the conflict. All of his actions hinged upon seizing the window of opportunity and silencing the Finns. However, his infatuation with exploiting the state of affairs to the greatest possible degree resulted in hasty preparations and misguided assumptions. He misguidedly assumed that his current troops could offer the necessary intensity and strength to make the invasion short and swift. Stalin did not give his men the time to train, assemble and properly develop techniques. Ultimately, realism pointed towards a quick war, but misperception intervened.

Perceptual realism's core hypotheses may not apply to the Winter War entirely: however, this test does not preclude the theory from ever serving as an accurate explanation. The Winter War may have not fulfilled two key assumptions of perceptual realism.

First, *individuals have access to all of the required information*. Misperception and ignorance differ on how much knowledge is expected of the agent. Perhaps Stalin allowed for the troops to move with haste because he was not fully aware of their degraded condition or his advisors had not been veracious. In a 1940 discussion with his generals, Stalin was surprised when his generals spoke of their charges' abysmal training. Future research will seek to determine whether or not Stalin's surprise was genuine and the amount of information available to him in 1939.

Second, *comments made to the public convey the actual perception of advisors*. This includes cartoons, articles, speeches and perhaps even transcribed diplomatic meetings. I extract some of my evidence from such sources to determine whether or not the Soviet leaders were actually ensnared within historical analogies and cognitive inconsistency. Using public documents may be misleading in a totalitarian country firmly committed to controlling popular

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 33.

opinion. As a result, some of my examples may indicate the leaders' attempt to galvanize the public and may be entirely divorced from their personal views. Future research will focus on private discussions, journals and narratives as a basis for discerning the officials' opinions.

Even though this test is not yet definitive and only serves to offer insight into the variables at work during the months preceding the Winter War, it does demonstrate that individuals are integral agents within the international system. Even if they are not causally responsible for a war's inception, their presence and interpretations define how a state prepares for war. This in turn guides the progression and final outcome. Perceptual realism may have not entirely succeeded in explaining the Winter War, but individuals cannot be denied their place in international affairs.

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# intersections

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## ABSTRACT

In 1972, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* unleashed an extended polemical attack on the foundations of Marxist and psychoanalytic orthodoxy. While the primary target of the book was Sigmund Freud, the innovative theories of Jacques Lacan did not emerge unscathed. Because of the brevity of their critique, many have interpreted Deleuze and Guattari's relationship to Lacan as one of antagonism and rejection. This, however, obscures many important connections that they maintained with Lacan. Deleuze and Guattari insisted that they were actually extending Lacan's theories to their necessary conclusions. Through an analysis of *Anti-Oedipus* in relation to core Lacanian theories, I investigate how Deleuze and Guattari transform Lacan, both faithfully and unfaithfully, to give support to their utopian project.

[http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections\\_Autumn\\_2009/Luke\\_Caldwell\\_Schizophrenizing\\_Lacan.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Autumn_2009/Luke_Caldwell_Schizophrenizing_Lacan.pdf)

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# Schizophrenizing Lacan

Deleuze, [Guattari], and *Anti-Oedipus*

By Luke Caldwell

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In 1972, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*<sup>1</sup> exploded like a bombshell on the French intellectual scene. Unleashing an extended polemical attack upon the foundational elements of orthodox psychoanalysis and Marxism, it quickly became a bestseller. While the primary target of the book was Freud, the innovative theories of Jacques Lacan did not emerge unscathed. Because of the brevity of their critique, many have interpreted Deleuze and Guattari's relationship to Lacan as one of antagonism and rejection. This, however, obscures many important connections that they maintained with Lacan and their insistence that they were actually extending Lacan's theories to their necessary conclusions. Through an analysis of *Anti-Oedipus* in relation to core Lacanian theories, this paper will investigate how Deleuze and Guattari transform Lacan, both faithfully and unfaithfully, to give support to their utopian project.

In a style that Deleuze and Guattari would affirm, we will not start in the 70's—in history—but rather with more contemporary events to elucidate the stakes motivating this inquiry. In the Fall 2004 edition of the journal *Criticism*, a debate unfolded about the relationship between Deleuze and Lacan.<sup>2</sup> Centering around two reviews of neoLacanian Slavoj Žižek's subversive study of Deleuze, *Organs without bodies*,<sup>3</sup> and a response by the author, the short debate ironically revolved around a largely absent signifier—one might even say a phallus-like “organ without a body”—that established or dissolved the connections between the Deleuzian and Lacanian projects. That bracketed term was [Guattari], the man who tore Deleuze from a “good” Lacanian trajectory, or the man who helped him realize it. In *Organs without bodies*, Žižek polemically took up the former position, saying that Deleuze was infected by his collaborations with Guattari—“guattarized” in Žižek's terms—and that Deleuze only turned to him for help because he had reached a philosophical impasse and was looking for an “easy

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> Daniel W. Smith, “The Inverse Side of the Structure: Žižek on Deleuze on Lacan,” *Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2004): 635-650; Eleanor Kaufman, “Betraying Well,” *Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2004): 651-659; Slavoj Žižek, “Notes on a Debate 'From Within the People',” *Criticism* 46, no. 4 (2004): 661-666.

<sup>3</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without bodies: Deleuze and consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

escape”.<sup>4</sup> Žižek reads in Deleuze’s corpus two different ontologies, one engaged with in his solo work and the other in his collaborations with Guattari. The first—the proper Lacanian position—presents the event as an *effect* of primordial causes, or rather, as the “irruption of the [Lacanian] Real within the domain of causality”.<sup>5</sup> The second—the philosophically contaminated position—affirms the event as a continuous, virtual process of *production* that creates the discontinuous structures of the actual.<sup>6</sup> Žižek sees Deleuze struggling between these two positions in his last book prior to meeting Guattari, *The logic of sense*,<sup>7</sup> but the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* marks a decisive turn away from the former position in favor of the latter—a turn that Žižek sees as largely precipitated by Guattari’s radical politics. *Anti-Oedipus*, in Žižek’s eyes, therefore marks a critical turn away from Lacan and is worthy of being dismissed as “arguably Deleuze’s worse book”.<sup>8</sup>

Smith, in his review of Žižek, challenges this perspective, calling into question whether Deleuze’s move toward Guattari and *Anti-Oedipus* was really a rejection of Lacan. Citing an interview Deleuze gave shortly before his death, Smith argues that Lacan actually saw the transgressions of *Anti-Oedipus* as a continuation of his work. In the interview, Deleuze recounts being summoned by Lacan a few months after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*. In their meeting, Lacan denounced all of his disciples (with the exception of one), calling them “all worthless” and then told Deleuze, “What I need is someone like you”.<sup>9</sup> Lacan biographer Elisabeth Roudinesco recounts the same story, but complexifies the issue, claiming that at the same time Lacan was praising Deleuze, he was also “grumbling about him to Maria Antonietta Macciocchi: [Lacan] was convinced *Anti-Oedipus* was based on his seminars, which already, according to him, contained the idea of a ‘desiring machine’”.<sup>10</sup> From these stories, we can see that Lacan himself saw a clear connection between his project and that of Deleuze and Guattari.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, 638.

<sup>6</sup> Žižek, *Organs without bodies*, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The logic of sense*, European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Žižek, *Organs without bodies*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Smith, 635-636.

<sup>10</sup> Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 348.

In several interviews after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari reiterated their belief that they saw themselves as remaining faithful to the Lacanian project and that they both “owed so much to Lacan”.<sup>11</sup> This however, did not stop them from transforming certain problematic notions that they saw as barriers to the development of a truly materialist psychiatry. As Deleuze put it,

I felt it would all work even better if one found the right concepts, instead of using notions that didn't even come from Lacan's creative side but from an orthodoxy built up round him. Lacan himself says “I'm not getting much help.” We thought we'd give him some schizophrenic help. And there's no question that we're all the more indebted to Lacan, once we've dropped notions like structure, the symbolic, or the signifier, which are thoroughly misguided, and which Lacan himself has always managed to turn on their head to bring out their limitations.<sup>12</sup>

While Deleuze is being a bit facetious—such a transformation of Lacan would seem to leave him rather amputated—this interview illustrates the complicated relationship that Deleuze and Guattari maintained with psychoanalysis generally. Even though *Anti-Oedipus* was a polemic attack on key psychoanalytic theories, it was more of an internal reversal than a rejection and it was their intention to move beyond psychoanalysis to what they call “schizoanalysis”. Deleuze and Guattari therefore maintain many key analytic concepts like the unconscious and repression, transforming them to give support to their revolutionary and utopian paradigm.<sup>13</sup>

To gain a sense of appreciation for the transformative potential of *Anti-Oedipus*, one must set aside Žižek's call for a rejection of Guattari in the name of saving Deleuze's Lacanianism and instead engage with the multiple becomings that were produced through the introduction of Guattari into the equation. Guattari was, after all, a trained and practicing psychoanalyst, one who had studied with Lacan for many years. And while Deleuze and Guattari's position toward Lacan ended up navigating a thin line between fidelity and betrayal, Deleuze, Guattari, and Lacan all emerged from the project transformed.

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<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, European perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Buchanan, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: a reader's guide*, Continuum reader's guides (London: Continuum, 2008), 65.

## Making Machines Desire: The Cure is Just a Little Schizophrenia

A bizarre book, *Anti-Oedipus*'s mode of argumentation is elliptical and, in many places, seems caught in a schizoid performance. The main positions that it advocates, however, are easy to pick out and there are several thematic elements that persist throughout. The central concepts it addresses and transforms are the psychoanalytic construction of unconscious desire, the role of the symbolic/culture in shaping subjectivity, and the Oedipus complex.

Deleuze and Guattari most directly address Lacan in their reformulation of desire as a form of productivity rather than a manifestation of lack—the core element of Žižek's critique. For Lacan, subjectivity is permeated by lack, and desire is directed toward regaining a completeness that is impossible to attain.<sup>14</sup> As the subject gradually emerges through the “mirror stage” (the Imaginary), the Oedipus complex (the Symbolic) and into culture, it is increasingly fragmented and divorced from the Real—the unformed abyss of primordial non-being. This is not to say that this subject is juxtaposed against a deeper, more authentic self, but rather the whole concept of an internal, personalized subjectivity is, for Lacan, wholly misleading. Everything that the self is or becomes is structured through the internalization of incomplete symbols and fragmented desires made present by the speech and actions of people surrounding the child, particularly the mother.<sup>15</sup> As Lacanian disciple Jacques-Alain Miller puts it, Lacan “took the unconscious not as a container, but rather as something ex-sistent—outside itself—that is connected to a subject who is a lack of being”.<sup>16</sup> Unconscious desire is caused by this “lack of being” in the Other/self and is directed toward attaining the absolute recognition of its impossible completion in the eyes of the (m)Other. Every articulation of this *need*, however, is fragmented by the *demand* to have it recognized, and the surplus desire that escapes the symbolic is endlessly deferred through chains of signifiers that constantly elude any determinate meaning.<sup>17</sup> Lacan's formulation for this was that “desire is the desire of the Other”<sup>18</sup> and he came to symbolize it as the “*objet petit a*”—“the object which can never be attained, which is really the CAUSE of desire rather than that

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<sup>14</sup> Kaja Silverman, *The subject of semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 151-153.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-166.

<sup>16</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller, “An Introduction to Seminars I and II,” in *Reading seminars I and II: Lacan's return to Freud: seminar I, Freud's papers on technique, seminar II, The ego in Freud's theory and in the technique of psychoanalysis*, SUNY series in psychoanalysis and culture, eds. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Dylan Evans, *An introductory dictionary of Lacanian psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 37-39.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The seminar book XI: four fundamental concepts of psycho-analysis*, The International psychoanalytical library, no. 106 (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 235. Seminar taught in 1964.

towards which desire tends".<sup>19</sup> As a force beyond both the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the "*objet petit a*" is the residual of the Real that resists completion.<sup>20</sup>

While Deleuze and Guattari support Lacan's decentering of the Cartesian subject, they find certain elements of this formulation of desire reactive from a Nietzschean perspective.<sup>21</sup> By defining desire in terms of lost objects, Lacan—and psychoanalysis generally—forces desire into "an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception".<sup>22</sup> Rather than remaining stuck within this pessimistic formulation, however, Deleuze and Guattari see Lacan's idea of the "object *a*" as a means through which to bring about a reversal of this situation, making desire an instrument of liberation rather than *ressentiment*.<sup>23</sup> In a note in *Anti-Oedipus*, they claim,

Lacan's admirable theory of desire appears to us to have two poles: one related to "the object small *a*" as a desiring machine, which defines desire in terms of a real production, thus going beyond both any idea of need and any idea of fantasy; and the other related to the "great Other" as a signifier, which reintroduces a certain notion of lack.<sup>24</sup>

In the opening chapters of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari radicalize the former and raise it to an ontological principle and, in so doing, overturn the latter.

Doing away with the Lacan's language of the "subject" and collapsing his ontology of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real, Deleuze and Guattari argue that everything is Real and that everything is a machine.<sup>25</sup> Liberating the "*objet petit a*" from its subordination to lack, they transform Lacan's concept into a primordial source of energy that transforms and is transformed through the ways it is organized. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this energy as a *hylè*—a pure continuous

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<sup>19</sup> Evans, 128.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian subject: between language and jouissance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 90-91.

<sup>21</sup> Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Routledge, 1989.), 89.

<sup>22</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 25.

<sup>23</sup> For the preliminary development of this position, see Félix Guattari and Stéphane Nadaud, *The anti-Oedipus papers*, Semiotext(e) foreign agents series (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 128-132, 152-157. A good discussion of this position is also available in Félix Guattari, Sylvère Lotringer, and François Dosse, *Chaosophy: texts and interviews 1972-1977* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 75-84.

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 27.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

flux or material flow—and define a machine as a “*system of interruptions or breaks*” in this flow.<sup>26</sup> In the opening lines of *Anti-Oedipus*, they claim,

Everywhere *it* is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ machine is plugged into an energy source machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts.<sup>27</sup>

Through the connection of one machine to another, desire produces reality. This should not, however, lead one to believe that they fall into a naïve realism of concrete identities. Rather, because all machines consist of other machines, which consist of other machines...*ad infinitum*, there is never any whole that actually unifies an object in a complete way. Identities are only “produced as a residuum alongside the machine, as an appendix, or as a spare part adjacent to the machine” and subjects are, following Lacan, “not at the center...but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states” that they pass through.<sup>28</sup>

This internal reversal and radicalization of Lacan’s theory of desire forms one of the core critiques that much of the rest of *Anti-Oedipus* follows from. If reality emerges from historically contingent formations of desire, the Imaginary and Symbolic are therefore not dimensions that obscure desire but are rather secondary manifestations of it.<sup>29</sup> This allows Deleuze and Guattari to collapse the difference between the libidinal economy and the political economy—the latter being merely a more complex machine that emerges from the former and feeds back to shape flows of desire in specific ways.<sup>30</sup> While organization is imperative for the productive capacity of desire to function—unbound energy falls back on “the body without organs” and becomes unproductive and “sterile”—codification that is too rigid likewise prevents desire from proliferating: “the body suffers...from not having *some other sort of organization*...Desiring-machines work only when they break down, and by continually breaking down”.<sup>31</sup> This

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 345: “Libidinal economy is no less objective than political economy, and the political no less subjective than the libidinal, even though the two correspond to two modes of different investments of the same reality as social reality.” See also Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: introduction to schizoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1999), 24.

<sup>31</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8, emphasis added.

movement between disorganization and organization—or, as Deleuze and Guattari call it deterritorialization and reterritorialization—is what is referred to as desiring-production.<sup>32</sup>

As a model for this connective/disjunctive process of continual transformation, Deleuze and Guattari turn the schizophrenic against the stability of the psyche and develop a form of schizoanalysis to revolutionize psychoanalysis. While Freudian analysis aims to treat the psychotic by helping them acknowledge and control their unconscious desires in the name of securing stable subjectivity, schizoanalysis aims to free the process of desiring-production from social constraints. To this end, Deleuze and Guattari celebrate the *process* of schizophrenia as a force that breaks through the rigid codifications of the social field and resists being trapped in any singular identity. Rather than helping people, they see psychoanalysis an extension of the repressive society that introduces lack into desire, thereby restraining it in subordination to an abstracted complete object:

Lack is created, planned, and organized in and through social production... Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression... There are those who will maintain that the schizo is incapable of uttering the word *I*, and that we must restore his ability to pronounce this hallowed word. All of which the schizo sums up by saying: they're fucking me over again.<sup>33</sup>

One of the strongest ways that psychoanalysis fulfills this function is by forcing the schizo into the Oedipus complex. In order to escape the trap of Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari historicize psychoanalysis to expose it as an ideology that is anachronistic and repressive. Looking historically at how different modes of social organization (“social machines”) codify desire in specific ways, Deleuze and Guattari examine what they call the “savage territorial machine”, the “barbarian despotic machine” and the “civilized capitalist machine”.<sup>34</sup> The territorial machine, they claim, rigidly codifies desire, but distributes power equally throughout the population. The despotic machine, on the other hand, is a regime of overcoding, where society is hierarchically constructed in subordination to a transcendental signifier. Under the “name-of-the-despot”, patriarchal

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<sup>32</sup> Adrian Parr, *The Deleuze dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 65-69.

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 28, 26, 23.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 184-262.

domination is replicated at every level of social organization, especially in the family. The capitalist machine, in opposition to the others, is built upon a regime of decoding, where material flows of production and consumption are constantly transforming.<sup>35</sup> While Deleuze and Guattari see the decoding power of capital as a force capable of liberating the creativity of the schizophrenic process, it is also coupled with a force of recoding that aims to maintain the stratification of society and consolidation of power. The liberatory power of decoding therefore functions as a mode of repression, allowing people in power to convert labor into surplus value more effectively.<sup>36</sup>

One of the ways that capitalism desperately avoids dissolving the power differential that maintains social hierarchies is by fortifying the patriarchal family. While the deterritorializing power of capitalism is so strong that even the organization of the family is not safe from its grips, psychoanalysis, wielding the Oedipus complex, serves as an important vector through which desire that escapes the family is suppressed.<sup>37</sup> Rather than describing a certain repressed state of affairs, the Oedipus complex really functions as a deterritorializing force that frees desire only to reinscribe it again as lack within the strict limits of the family. As a throwback to the despotic machine, the psychoanalyst pushes the analysand to renounce their schizophrenic desire and internalize the totalitarian signifier of the father and his law.<sup>38</sup> Instead of placing blame on the vested powers that maintain the conditions that repress desire, psychoanalysis secures these repressive conditions by “socializing” those that harbor the capacity to break free from their chains. The ideological misconception of psychoanalysis resides in its failure to recognize that *Oedipus—not the father—is the agent of castration and that the cure is really the disease*; as Deleuze and Guattari write, “castration as an analyzable state...is the *effect* of castration as a psychoanalytic act”.<sup>39</sup>

While this critique directly implicates Freudian analysis as a form of ideology, Deleuze and Guattari believed that Lacan was actually heading in this direction and, in fact, paved the way for the destruction of Oedipus. By making the Oedipal structure symbolic, yet organizing this structure around the absent

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<sup>35</sup> Eugene W. Holland, “Schizoanalysis: the postmodern contextualization of psychoanalysis,” in *Deleuze and Guattari critical assessments of leading philosophers. Volume 2, Guattari*, ed. Gary Genosko (London: Routledge, 2001), 761-762.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 762-763.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 765.

<sup>38</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 51-55.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-67.

signifier of the phallus, Lacan showed that “Oedipus is imaginary, nothing but an image, a myth” and that “these images are produced by an oedipalizing structure” (capitalism) that “reproduces the element of castration”.<sup>40</sup> Lacan’s work therefore illuminated how the whole Oedipal house of cards was founded upon a “despotic Great Signifier acting as an archaism” and led psychoanalysis “to the point of its self-critique”.<sup>41</sup> This allowed *Anti-Oedipus* to tip the scales and reveal the “reverse side” of representation and structure “as a positive principle of nonconsistency that dissolves it”.<sup>42</sup>

With the house blown down and a new world constructed, we find not Oedipus but the schizophrenic at the root of our desire, and see the unconscious not as a theater but as a factory mobilized toward continual transformation and social revolution. Rather than rejecting the insights of Lacan, as Žižek claims, Deleuze and Guattari radicalize him in an effort to overturn the ideological apparatus of capitalism and liberate desire from reactivity. Whether their project is successful remains dependent not upon abstract principles of ontology but rather in the ways that people can use it. As Guattari says, “We’re strict functionalists: what we’re interested in is how something works”.<sup>43</sup> What we find in *Anti-Oedipus* is an example and an inspiration for how revolution could work if we move outside ourselves and embrace the creative and subversive potential of the desire coursing in and through the world of which we are a part. Let’s give it a try, incipit schizophrenia!

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 310. In his *Écrits*, Lacan writes, “the Oedipal show cannot run indefinitely in forms of society that are losing the sense of tragedy to an ever greater extent”, Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: the first complete edition in English* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), 668. See also Guattari’s commentary on this and other similar passages in *The anti-Oedipus papers*, 123-127.

<sup>41</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 310.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>43</sup> Guattari in Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 21.

Nishant Batsha, "Gandhi and Chauri Chaura: A Lacanian Reinterpretation of Gandhi through the Chauri Chaura Riot," *intersections* 10, no. 3 (2009): 31-45.

## ABSTRACT

On February 4th, 1922 the peasant population within the small town of Chauri Chaura, India engaged in a protest that would eventually culminate in the burning of a police station and the brutal murder of the 22 police officers inside the building. Up until this event, Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress had spearheaded a campaign for non-violent non-cooperation that had gained enough momentum to exist as a legitimate threat against British colonial rule. Immediately following the riot, Gandhi denounced the actions as a crime, and by February 12th, the Indian National Congress had halted non-cooperation on the national level. I seek to reanalyze the "riot" that occurred at Chauri Chaura by using a Lacanian framework. I argue that interpreting the events of Chauri Chaura in reference to the Symbolic and Imaginary orders provides a better understanding of the peasant behavior in the historical moment. Gandhi is recast from a Hegelian World-Historical figure into a nationalist leader who gained power through the nationalist peasantry. The riot becomes not a paroxysm of violence, as nationalist elites would want one to believe, but a natural and planned result of politics reformulated within the peasant imaginary. I propose a subaltern reinterpretation wherein nationalism is no longer predicated upon the World-Historical, but rather as a function of a tension between the leader and those "from below."

[http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections\\_Autumn\\_2009/Nishant\\_Batsha\\_A\\_Lacanian\\_Reinterpretation\\_of\\_Gandhi.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Autumn_2009/Nishant_Batsha_A_Lacanian_Reinterpretation_of_Gandhi.pdf)

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# Gandhi and Chauri Chaura

## A Lacanian Reinterpretation of Gandhi through the Chauri Chaura Riot

By Nishant Batsha

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In 1922 Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress (INC) had spearheaded a campaign for non-violent non-cooperation, which by then had gained enough momentum to exist as a legitimate threat against British rule. The success of the movement came in part from an attempt to garner support outside of elite nationalistic circles, wherein Gandhi utilized the pledge form to create the satyagraha-volunteer,<sup>1</sup> a nationalism that operated on the ground.

A turning point of the non-cooperation movement occurred on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 1922, when the peasant population within the small town of Chauri Chaura<sup>2</sup> engaged in a protest that would eventually culminate in the burning of a police station and the brutal murder of all twenty-two officers inside the building. During the riot, peasants were heard chanting the phrase, “victory to Mahatma Gandhi!”<sup>3</sup> Immediately following the event, Gandhi denounced the actions at Chauri Chaura as a crime, and by February 12<sup>th</sup>, the INC had halted non-cooperation on the national level.<sup>4</sup>

I seek to reinterpret Gandhi's centrality in Indian nationalism through the lens of the events that took place on February 4<sup>th</sup>. A Hegelian account of Gandhi's importance would view his ability to halt an entire national movement as proof of his status as a World-Historical individual. However, I use an analytic framework based upon the Lacanian notion of the imaginary and symbolic orders in order to reinterpret Gandhi's position within the nationalistic framework as a construct of the peasant imaginary. This is not to say that Gandhi was not a central figure in the Indian nationalist movement. Rather, his centrality was not a function of his own status as an elite nationalist — it was a direct result of a mass imaginary of

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<sup>1</sup> *Satyagraha* roughly translates to “truth force,” and refers the core of Gandhi's non-violent theory of resistance. However, it is distinct from “passive resistance,” in that it refers to the political ideal of living one's politics through control of the body. For example, *brahmacharya* (abstinence outside of intentional procreation) becomes subsumed into *satyagraha*.

<sup>2</sup> Chauri Chaura is located near Gorakhpur in the North Indian province of Uttar Pradesh (then known as the United Provinces of British India).

<sup>3</sup> Rajmohan Gandhi, *Gandhi: the man, his people, and the empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 248.

<sup>4</sup> Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel, a life* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Pub. House, 1990), 105. See also R. Gandhi, *Gandhi: the man, his people, and the empire*, 250.

Gandhi that rested within peasant populations. Chauri Chaura will be used as an example to clearly enunciate this point.<sup>5</sup>

#### Chauri Chaura and Non-Cooperation

To understand how Chauri Chaura serves as a site to analyze how Gandhi functioned within Indian nationalism, it is important to understand the events of February 4<sup>th</sup> and contextualize them within the framework of the non-cooperation movement.

In response to the anti-seditionary Rowlatt Act<sup>6</sup> and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in Amritsar<sup>7</sup> in 1919, Gandhi met with a group of Hindu and Muslim leaders in a meeting in Delhi to discuss how nationalists should move forward. In his autobiography, he noted that, “I felt that something new, over and above boycott of foreign cloth, would be necessary ... I described it by the word ‘non-cooperation’, an expression that I used for the first time at this meeting.”<sup>8</sup> However, the term “non-cooperation” would fall to the wayside until the INC convened at Calcutta in 1920. At the Calcutta meeting of the INC, Gandhi stated that, “I have therefore placed before you my scheme of non-cooperation to achieve ... you can gain swaraj in a year.”<sup>9</sup> His plan for non-cooperation would include a boycott of foreign goods (especially foreign machine-made cloth) and institutions of British rule (schools, courts of law, etc.) in order to establish *swaraj*, or “self-rule.”<sup>10</sup> Foreign industrial rule would be replaced by *swadeshi*<sup>11</sup> — for example, Indians would wear *khadi* (homespun cotton) as a means of detaching India from institutional modernity and economic dependency as established by the British.

Gandhi's concept of swaraj was markedly different from his vision for self-rule that he developed eleven years earlier in his book *Hind Swaraj*, wherein he poignantly described the ills of modern Western civilization and expounded upon the reasons as to why India should engage in a nationalism that disconnected itself

<sup>5</sup> I use ‘Chauri Chaura’ and the events that occurred within the town on February 4th interchangeably.

<sup>6</sup> The Rowlatt Act (March 1919) extended the earlier anti-seditionary Defense of India Regulations Act (1915), and authorized the imprisonment, without due process, of anyone suspected of revolutionary activities.

<sup>7</sup> On April 13, 1919, General Reginald Dyer moved a column of troops into Amritsar, Punjab and fired upon a peaceful group of men, women, and children who had gathered in an open space. The Raj, in an official tally, noted 379 casualties and 1,100 injured.

<sup>8</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *An autobiography; the story of my experiments with truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 481.

<sup>9</sup> M.K. Gandhi, and B. K. Ahluwalia, *M.K. Gandhi: select speeches* (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1969), 131.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133.

<sup>11</sup> *Swadeshi* refers to economic self-sufficiency. The term is derived from the Sanskrit root *swa-*, meaning self, and *deshi*, the adjectival form of *desh* – country. A literal translation would mean “from one's country.”

from the conceptualization of modernity as introduced through colonialism.<sup>12</sup> What his text lacked, however, was a map as to *how* citizens were to access and enact swaraj. The text rested upon a somewhat elitist approach to an Indian nationalism: the text can be seen as an ambiguous political road map to swaraj. Thus, those with the access and influence on the national stage could perhaps follow through on Gandhi's advice. For the citizen on the ground, however, the text read as an abstract polemic.

Gandhi's 1920 incarnation of swaraj was based upon ground-level nationalism that was increasingly dependent upon the satyagrahi-volunteer. Due to the violence and chaos of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Gandhi began to see the masses as a disparate mob in need of discipline and leadership. He accomplished creating an "on-the-ground" satyagrahi through the use of the pledge, a strategy he had previously used to rally individuals during his satyagraha movement in Kheda.<sup>13</sup> The pledge form was not only to be documentary proof of civil disobedience in the wake of anti-sedition laws and hostile colonial rule, but also a method for contractually binding a satyagrahi to the ideals of non-cooperation.<sup>14</sup> Thus, this new iteration of Gandhi's move towards swaraj contained both a new ideal of how to attain self-rule, and also an apparatus in which non-cooperation could manifest itself within the mass peasantry. The process of recruiting was an immediate success. During the months of December 1921 and January 1922, more than thirty-thousand non-cooperators were imprisoned in colonial jails due to their participation.<sup>15</sup>

In January 1921, during this campaign for mass enlistment, a local unit of the movement was established in Chotki Dumri, which was one mile west of Chauri Chaura. An official was dispatched to Chauri Chaura, who elected a few satyagrahi-officers and distributed pledge forms. Interestingly, local volunteers, in addition to pledging to uphold the values within the pledge, also agreed to the extension of abstaining from meat and liquor. A few days before February 4<sup>th</sup>, volunteers demonstrated for a fair price of meat, and were beaten back by the local police force. In retaliation, volunteers were encouraged to gather and hold a non-violent protest on February 4<sup>th</sup> against the police force at the local bazaar. On the day of the protest colonial police were dispatched from the local *thana* to

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<sup>12</sup> M.K. Gandhi, and Anthony Parel, *Hind swaraj and other writings*, Cambridge texts in modern politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Gandhi, *An autobiography*, 434.

<sup>14</sup> Shahid Amin, *Event, metaphor, memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 13. See also Shahid Amin, "Remembering Chauri Chaura: Notes from Historical Fieldwork," in *A subaltern studies reader, 1986-1995*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: nonviolent power in action* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993), 48.

hold back the crowd. As the volunteers marched towards the site of their protest, the police officers attempted to dissuade the volunteers from protesting by assembling in “an intimidating fashion.” The crowd ignored this and continued forward through the police line. As the group marched towards the bazaar, the police fired warning shots, which acted as a siren-song for the group to retaliate. The volunteers charged the police, who shot directly into the crowd. As the fighting intensified, the volunteers eventually locked the police in the local station, and set fire to the building. By the end of the night, the building had been razed to the ground, and twenty-three police officers were burnt to death.<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi and the INC's response to Chauri Chaura was swift – after Gandhi had recommended a halt to mass civil disobedience, Congress brought all non-cooperation activities to a suspension by February 12<sup>th</sup>, a mere eight days after Chauri Chaura.<sup>17</sup> Soon after the event, Gandhi penned his most serious condemnation of the riots in his essay, “The Crime of Chauri Chaura.” In this essay, he stated that, “God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura ... the *mob*, my informant tells me, therefore set fire to the Thana [police station]” [emphasis added].<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that here, Gandhi refers to the mass of satyagrahi-volunteers as a mob – in doing so, he disconnects them from the larger structure of the non-cooperation movement and places them into a autonomous crowd of individuals who are removed from the greater ideals of Gandhi's vision for satyagraha. Gandhi went even further to dismiss these individuals from the movement for non-cooperation when he stated that, “non-violent non-cooperators can only succeed when they have succeeded in attaining control over the *hooligans* of India, in other words, when the latter also have learnt to ... refrain from their violent activities.”<sup>19</sup> The act of suspension of the movement now comes as a moment of discipline: since the mob, or rather the group of hooligans, could not control their murderous desires, Gandhi felt the need to halt the entire national movement. He stated that, “the tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index finger ... suspension of mass civil disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for our further progress.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, in Gandhi's view, Chauri Chaura was a symptom of a greater problem lurking under the auspices of the national movement. Gandhi had initially utilized the pledge form to bind individuals to non-violence. However, only when the populace was able fully restrain themselves from turning towards violence could India strive to attain

<sup>16</sup> Amin, *Event, metaphor, memory*, 15-16.

<sup>17</sup> Dalton, 48.

<sup>18</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “The Crime of Chauri Chaura,” in *Mahatma Gandhi: selected political writings*, ed. Dennis Dalton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1996), 32.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

swaraj. The restraint against violence became a clearly enunciated point in his writings on civil disobedience in the months following Chauri Chaura. In an article in *Young India*, Gandhi stated that “every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness.”<sup>21</sup>

In a speech before the Sessions Court at Ahmedabad in 1922 during the trial of those who partook of the violence at Chauri Chaura, Gandhi said that, “I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay, the Madras and the Chauri Chaura occurrences ... it is impossible to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chauri Chaura.”<sup>22</sup> Clearly, Gandhi saw himself as intricately connected to the events at Chauri Chaura; likewise, those who partook of the violence saw themselves as connected to him when, as the police station burned, they yelled, “victory to Mahatma Gandhi!” However, was this truly the case? How can one analyze the connection between the peasant imaginary and Gandhi during this critical juncture of the nationalist drive towards independence?

#### Chauri Chaura: A Traditional Hegelian Account

One may find it problematic to conflate a historical narrative that centers around the study of one historical figure with what I dub to be “an Hegelian account” of these events. However, as Ranajit Guha noted at the dawn of the Subaltern Studies movement, “the historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism.”<sup>23</sup> The ability to see Gandhi as nationalist figure who paternally led and controlled an entire nationalist movement and additionally view him as imminent in each individual during an action that was physically separated from him<sup>24</sup>, is a primarily elitist position which needs to be questioned. Additionally, it has been noted that political mobilization within subaltern groups has often been dismissed as a purely spontaneous act; when in actuality, subalterns often had far too much at stake in the institutions of power that situated their daily lives and would not engage in an act of insurgency except in a deliberate and pre-meditated manner.<sup>25</sup> Hence I adopt the subaltern perspective by questioning the

<sup>21</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, and Shriman Narayan, *The selected works of Mahatma Gandhi*, volume 6 (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968), 212.

<sup>22</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Select Speeches*, 147.

<sup>23</sup> Ranajit Guha, “Introduction,” in *A subaltern studies reader, 1986-1995*, ed. Ranajit Guha (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>24</sup> By this I mean that, while Gandhi was present in that he was vocalized during the protest, he was not present in leading the protest.

<sup>25</sup> Ranajit Guha, “The prose of counter-insurgency,” in *Selected subaltern studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 45-46.

elite status of Gandhi in an attempt to transcend the notion of high-level elite politics. I wish to ponder how the *idea* of Gandhi functioned within a peasant imaginary and how said population simply did not act in a paroxysm of violence.

However, one may simply be wondering, why take contention with Hegel? My response to this criticism is that, in many historical narratives that are encountered on a day-to-day basis, Hegel looms invisibly in the background. By “day-to-day,” I am referring here to the ubiquity of historical narratives wherein the crux of history occurs on the shoulders of the world-historical. In these accounts, one is sincerely left believing that history can only occur when “great men” take action. By extension, these individuals are the driving force behind history and remain its true agents. However, as subaltern histories have shown, agency and subjectivity are not limited to a small stratum of community. While they may be important, it must be realized that agency is not a nodal apparatus, but extends in all directions.

At this juncture, however, it may be fruitful to expound upon the meaning of Chauri Chaura from an Hegelian standpoint. When analyzing Gandhi as a *historical figure* in this vein, one must see how he fits into the model of the World-Historical Individual. Hegel states in *The philosophy of history* that there exists a “universal concept [that] is a moving force of the productive Idea, an element of truth that is forever striving towards itself.”<sup>26</sup> The World-Historical Individual takes this universal conception and embodies it: “the historical men, are those whose aims embody a universal concept of this kind.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, these individuals eventually harmonize the ideal of World Spirit – which seeks to attain the consciousness of its own freedom – with the particularities of situations on the ground. That is to say, the passion of the World-Historical Individual within its contextualized moment “is thus inseparable from the actualization of the universal principle; for the universal is the outcome of the particular and determinate, and from its negation.”<sup>28</sup> Now, individuals “on the ground” find an intense affinity for the individual because of the omnipresence of the universal world spirit as previously mentioned: “this is why the others follow these soul-leaders; for they feel the irresistible force of their own spirit coming out in the heroes.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, and Leo Rauch. *Introduction to The philosophy of history: with selections from The philosophy of right*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1988), 32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 33.

Through this mode of analysis, one could suppose that a Hegelian depiction of Gandhian nationalism is accurate. In terms of the latter point of the synthesis of spirit between the World-Historical and the individual, one can see this manifest clearly in Gandhi's commentary on Chauri Chaura. It is interesting to note that Gandhi sees himself as the extension of the individuals at Chauri Chaura. For him, it was as if he too were present when the police station had burned down: "for me the suspension of mass civil disobedience and other minor activities is not enough penance for my having been the instrument, however involuntary, of the brutal violence by the people at Chauri Chaura."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, one could argue that the very speed at which the non-violent non-cooperation movement gained footing supports this claim; for if nearly thirty-thousand people had been arrested for joining the movement by January of 1922, then Gandhi clearly harmonized the Spirit of the desire to become conscious of freedom within the masses to a point where in a large cadre of the population joined his ranks to challenge British rule and authority.

But, would a Hegelian analysis apply to Chauri Chaura? The answer to this question is a resounding 'no'. The difficulty with a Hegelian analysis is that it fails to capture how Gandhi functioned within the imaginary of the peasantry, wherein a large part of his following was found.<sup>31</sup> This analytical framework would posit that there existed a consistent Gandhian image which resonated within the minds of all individuals. The actualization of universal principle is predicated upon a notion of attaining freedom wherein agency is a nexus between the World-Historical Individual and the World Spirit; the peasantry would merely be a localization of the ideals that occur within these two groups. If this were true, then one would posit that each manifestation of non-cooperation within a rural setting would never exist as a Chauri Chaura; each individual would harmonize personal passion with the universal principle in such a way that would always find itself in line with the doctrine on the Pledge Form. Though this has been explored in depth, it must be repeated: peasant nationalism was not simply a derivative discourse of elitist nationalism; though the two were intimately connected with each other, peasant nationalism utilized its own lexical functionalities.<sup>32</sup>

When the peasants at Chauri Chaura yelled out, "victory to Mahatma Gandhi," they partook of two processes. First, by declaring Gandhi as 'Mahatma', they

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<sup>30</sup> Gandhi, "The Crime of Chauri Chaura," 33.

<sup>31</sup> Dalton, 48.

<sup>32</sup> The use of the term "derivative discourse," is borrowed from: Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist thought and the colonial world: a derivative discourse* (Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

linguistically recreated him as a *Mahatma* (Sanskrit for ‘Great Soul’). This *Mahatmaization* of Gandhi occurred as independent of his views on colonial emancipation or non-cooperation; it was a contextualized decision to cry out his name. This follows the argument that Gandhi was created and contested *through* the peasantry. Peasants propagated rumors regarding Gandhi which often included ideas about testing the power of the Mahatma, opposing the Mahatma, opposing Gandhian creed, and receiving boons.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, by yelling out Gandhi's name, the peasantry recontextualized Gandhi into a new discursive apparatus. Within Chaura Chaura, for example, he became disconnected from his views on *ahimsa* (non-violence) and now became a tool for *himsa* (violence). Thus, based upon this preliminary reinterpretation of Chauri Chaura, it becomes evident that a Hegelian analytic may not be the most prudent approach to understanding how Gandhi functioned within the peasant imaginary.

#### A Lacanian Analytic Framework

Two structures within Lacanian psychoanalysis are central to this analysis: the imaginary and symbolic order. Within the imaginary order, one must consider the relevancy of the development of the subjectivity of language and ideal-ego formation during the mirror stage. When describing the subjectivity of language, Lacan utilizes the notion of the imperative (the call). When describing how this grammatical mood functions in terms of the imaginary, Lacan notes that “at the level of the statement, from its style to its very intonation, everything we learn bears on the nature of the subject.”<sup>34</sup> Lacan further explicates that the imperative is a “question of the tone in which the imperative is uttered. The same text can have completely different imports depending on the tone,” however, one must also consider “what is at issue, and its reference to the totality of the situation.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, one can reduce the call to two planar categories: the tonality and the subjectivity of the statement. However, what one can garner from this information is that language processing is an entirely subjective experience. To borrow from Ferdinand de Saussure, the imaginary is the realm of the signified.<sup>36</sup> What this implies is that language gains meaning and signification through an interpretive process that is within the contexts of the imaginary order. Planes such as tonality and subjectivity are imminent within the subject; that is to say,

<sup>33</sup> Shahid Amin, “Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1921-1922,” *Subaltern studies: writings on South Asian history and society*, No. 3, ed. Ranajit Guha (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1984): 314.

<sup>34</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book I, Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1991), 84.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, and Roy Harris, *Course in general linguistics* (LaSalle (Illinois: Open Court Publishing Co., 1972), 75.

these categories only gain meaning when attached to an individual who has the ability to interpret them within the imaginary order.

A second structure within the imaginary that one must be aware of is the development of the ideal-ego during the mirror stage. The Lacanian mirror stage is referential to the formative moment within the development of the ego when a child begins to recognize him or herself in the mirror.<sup>37</sup> The representation of the self in the mirror becomes the ideal-ego, a term that represents the idealized notion of a self that one can construe from the reflection in the mirror; this self is idealized not only because it exists in the imaginary (rather than the symbolic), but because its bounded nature within the mirror allows for complete vision of the self; this is opposed to the chaotic reality seen around the viewer on the level of the symbolic; Lacan states that the “ideal-ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the true ego.”<sup>38</sup> The ego-ideal, in turn, is the realization that occurs when one has the opportunity to view himself from the point of view of the ideal-ego – at this juncture the viewer is disgusted by the fact that his actual self is far from the perfection he imagined via the ideal-ego.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, while the symbolic order is a nuanced and far-reaching construct within Lacanian psychoanalysis, this paper will only consider the nature of signified notions of language. In short, within the symbolic order, language is only the signifier – interpretive actions are made on the basis of individuals via the imaginary apparatus. Thus, the symbolic is what binds “subjects together in one action. The human action *par excellence* is originally founded on the existence of the world of the symbol, namely on laws and contracts.”<sup>40</sup> One needs to note the lack of subjectivity in this order: the symbolic simply acts as a presentation of the binding force of language between individuals – the actuality behind this force always rests in the imaginary.

But how do these structures translate into political analysis? One must consider national politics as operating within the symbolic. The nationalist figure is a synchronic symbol of the national movement within any political situation. In the relationship between nationalist and individual, the individual's imaginary holds the nationalist figure as the ideal-ego – a manifestation of the self's political desires on the political/national stage. This is extrapolated from the idea that, the

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<sup>37</sup> Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 1*, 132.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

nationalist represents a stable, coherent, unified, and whole vision of the political self that the individual cannot attain in his everyday existence. In short, due to limitations of subjectivity the peasant cannot simultaneously be a peasant *and* Gandhi. Instead, the self is displaced into Gandhi. Therefore, political action is an interplay between the realization of the self as the ego-ideal – the fact that one's political self is not a coherent plan as created within a nationalist framework (the fact that one is a peasant and not an elite political figure) – and the ideal-ego of the nationalist. This tension between the ideal-ego and the ego-ideal is drawn from the idea that the imaginary is where signified notions of language are present. However, the “language,” here is not limited to a linguistic system of signs or speech, but rather encapsulates the notion of a language within politics itself. Now, the tension between egos is resolved when the individual utilizes one's own subjective interpretation to re-seek national politics in the self, and the subjectivity of political discourse is taken up in the imaginary to become an individuated and subjective notion of interpretation.

It must be noted that these notions of tension between the symbolic-nationalist and the individual are completely contextualized. One cannot enter into the subject's internal discursive apparatus to determine how linguistic or symbolic gestures, such as clothing, tonality, or language functioned within a personalized imaginary. However, it is from this vantage point, agency begins its shift down from the top and back into the masses.

#### Reapproaching Chauri Chaura

Now, how can one reapproach Chauri Chaura through the use of a Lacanian psychoanalytic structure? When using this analytic approach, it becomes clear why the peasants yelled “victory to Mahatma Gandhi” as they burnt down the police station, even after they had signed the Pledge Form. As previously stated, the symbolic order within political discourse is the nationalist figure; thus in this situation, the symbolic is Gandhi. If Gandhi acted within the purview of the symbolic order, then the signifier within nationalist politics was Gandhi *as* a nationalist figure in that he represented a readily available differentiation of ideals. This may have come from the fact that he not only was a figure who was not British, but also from the fact that he literally did not fashion himself as an elite – he was known to don the *dhoti*.<sup>41</sup> As previously stated, the signifier is based upon a use of language that binds individuals within a given structural unit. Perhaps it was also Gandhi's literal use of language – his stress upon Gujarati, Hindi, and

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<sup>41</sup> A *dhoti* is a piece of traditional menswear. It consists of seven yards of undyed and unstitched rectangular clothing tied around the waist. It is similar to the *lungi* or *sarong*.

Urdu – that acted as a signifier to present him as readily available to the peasantry.<sup>42</sup> Nationalist politics tended to be elitist in terms of language choice: it was conducted in English, or in distinct versions of Hindi or Urdu; that is to say that the Hindi or Urdu used by nationalist figures tended to be overly Sanskritized or Persianized in order to accomplish a certain resonance within a specific population within India (an example of this would be Dayanand Saraswati's *Satyarth prakash*).

Thus, Gandhi's choice of language (the language of speech or presentation) – as language is all that binds the signifier within the symbolic – presents him as a readily available nationalist figure to enter the peasant imaginary. However, Gandhi within the symbolic goes beyond a notion of language. If one is to consider Gandhi a manifestation of national politics which was readily available to the peasantry, then he already begins to lose status as a World-Historical Figure wherein all agency within a nationalist movement is predicated upon him. It is likely that a peasant population would look to Gandhi as a signifier of nationalism that could be manipulated to accomplish their own goals. Only four years prior to the non-cooperation movement were the Kheda and Champaran satyagraha campaigns. Within these campaigns, certain figures within the peasant and working-class communities approached Gandhi to act as a figurehead in order to accomplish their goals to battle what they deemed as the oppressive structures of land tenure or working conditions.<sup>43</sup> At the time (and also today), a popular communicative device was rumor: it was often used to spread information about Gandhi through India. As previously mentioned, the idea of Gandhi as a Mahatma was spread through the use of rumor – it can only be inferred from this that the idea of Gandhi as nationalist figurehead for the peasantry was also spread through the use of rumor. Combining both Gandhi's use of language as well as the rumor lends credence to the idea that Gandhi was not necessarily a figure that could be considered to be bounded within him. The pledge form, ahimsa, and satyagraha are merely extensions of the symbolic form of Gandhi; while these symbols come *from* Gandhi, they dually represent and signify a manipulated nationalism within the peasantry.

Although Gandhi is the signifier, he is also the ideal-ego. Individuals displace political idealism into nationalist figures because the nationalist is a bounded, coherent individual; that is to say, the nationalist is what one would imagine the self to be if one were to only focus upon his or her political desires. However, due to the demands of everyday life, the political self is often unstable or incomplete.

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<sup>42</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, 480.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

One cannot address the full demands of the political self as it is constantly bound by the self of the everyday. Thus, to the peasant imaginary, Gandhi was the ideal-ego – he represented the coherent, stable image of what the politics for the peasantry would manifest as on the national stage.

The analysis of the symbolic thus far has considered the signifier/ideal-ego nexus from the point of view of the imaginary. It must be noted that the preceding analysis relies on the interpretive element of how the symbolic functions within an imaginary; that is to say, how the peasantry would react to a specific nationalist framework. To summarize, Gandhi may be simultaneously considered the ideal political self as well as the hollow shell of politics to place one's desires into.

Chauri Chaura represents these ideas as manifesting into a moment within the purview of the non-violent non-cooperation movement. One may recall that a month before the event, the satyagrahi-volunteers who participated in the riot signed the pledge form. The pledge form represents the previously discussed conceptualization of the political signifier – though it bound the satyagrahis to the Gandhian cause through a contractual agreement, the imaginary does not necessarily have to perceive the contract as extending beyond the symbolic and into the self. The demonstration that occurred a few days prior to February 4<sup>th</sup> was not predicated upon the wholesale ban of the trade of meat; rather, the protest was contesting the current market prices of meat – once again the use of the symbol was manipulated within the imaginary as a something related, but also wholly different. The march of February 4<sup>th</sup> represented this idea taken to its extreme. If one were to espouse Gandhian values as delineated by Gandhi, then the satyagraha-volunteer would clearly not burn a police station and kill the police officers inside. However, this was not the case. The anger against colonial policing had peaked within each individual and could be expressed via the newly codified political ideal-ego that they had acquired within their own political imaginaries: the result was deadly. It is here when the notion of this moment of counter-insurgency as spastic violence begins to come undone. It is nearly impossible at this moment to return to the moment of Chauri Chaura to come to understand the motives of each and every protester. But what one can learn is that the event did not come from a vacuum, but rather held antecedents in the violence of the state against the peasantry. A desperate attempt to regain agency in the face of colonial violence does not necessarily equate to hooliganism.

However, how can one reapproach the stoppage of the movement after non-cooperation? The power to halt an entire form of protest would to some seem to be the best case for a Hegelian interpretation of Chauri Chaura. However, one

needs to remember how the interaction between the symbolic and the imaginary functions. In order to create a nationalist imaginary, the peasantry relied upon the symbolic ideal-ego. When Gandhi halted the non-cooperation movement, he dismantled an apparatus to displace the ego-ideal into the ideal-ego. One could naturalize the ideal political self into the body through the conceptualization of the satyagrahi-volunteer; by being a part of the movement, one was a part of the ideal-ego. Thus, the eventual end of the non-cooperation movement due to Chauri Chaura was not necessarily a function of Gandhi; most likely it was predicated upon the peasantry not having the ability to displace their political imaginary. One cannot see either the peasantry or Gandhi as the World-Historical; rather, both Gandhi and the peasantry are inextricably linked through the symbiosis of the symbolic and the imaginary. Here one is left at a strange intermediate point – neither Gandhi nor the masses can claim theoretical control over the end of non-cooperation. But, within the same gesture, it cannot be said that agency within this historical moment lies wholly within any single group or individual. Instead, one is confronted with a historical tension between the groups. The fact remains, how can the masses look up to the shining figure of the World-Historical if each agent/subject in the historical field is level?

#### Sustained Reinterpretations

At the very time when men appear engaged in revolutionizing things and themselves, in bringing about what never was before, at such very epochs of revolutionary crisis do they anxiously conjure up into their service the spirits of the past, assume their names, their battles cries, their costumes, to enact a new historic scene in such time-honored disguise and did with such borrowed language.<sup>44</sup>

Within a Lacanian framework that utilizes both the symbolic and imaginary order, one can now reapproach Chauri Chaura. The mass peasant imaginary utilized the Gandhian image vis-à-vis the conceptualization of the imaginary. Gandhi existed as a political ideal-ego to displace the self into; one's ego-ideal was inadequate to manifest itself as a political form. Thus, within Chauri Chaura, the peasantry employed Gandhi through the *form* of him as a nationalist that was readily available to them through the use of language and rumor. As the symbolic was interpreted through the imaginary, peasant discontent manifested itself through this apparatus, and the result was the violent uprising at Chauri Chaura. As the non-cooperation movement came to a close,

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<sup>44</sup> Karl Marx, and Daniel De Leon, *The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Chicago: C.H. Kerr, 1913), 9-10.

the symbolic-imaginary apparatus began to crumble, and it was through this dismantlement wherein non-cooperation failed: one cannot place importance on either Gandhi or the peasantry, as it was both working simultaneously within the purview of the political imaginary-symbolic nexus that brought the event to a close.

However, what makes my analysis any less elitist than a Hegelian interpretation? A possible critique of this paper would perhaps address the idea that this seemingly structuralist application of Lacanian psychoanalysis cannot apply to an undeniably dynamic subaltern community. To answer this criticism, I return back to Lacan, who wisely stated that “one of the things we must guard most against is to understand too much, to understand more than what is in the discourse of the subject.”<sup>45</sup> I cannot stress the importance of the contextuality of my argument. Perhaps the usage of the symbolic and imaginary may stretch beyond Chauri Chaura, but we must not assume that this is so. I must remain staunch in the idea that this analysis does not extend beyond the limits of these moments in the historical record. This analysis simply returns to the Chauri Chaura and uses the fragments of discourse that remains from those peasants to rightfully recast them from rabble-rousers to political actors and insurgents.

With this in mind, one has a historical moment close to what Marx described within his *eighteenth Brumaire*. However, it was not history that the peasants called upon, but the lived reality of the present – the history that synchronically emerges from the past into the everyday. They took both the names of political structures and the names of nationalists and reformed it into their own manifestation of peasant-centric nationalism. The result was not a movement that necessarily came from above, but one that emerged from below.

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<sup>45</sup> Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book 1*, 73.



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## ABSTRACT

When the Bush administration launched the Gulf War in 1991, they followed the guidelines of an intervention strategy that would later be dubbed the Powell Doctrine. This strategy demanded the use of overwhelming force to achieve clear military and political goals that could be quickly and obviously achieved. When the basic tenants of the Powell Doctrine were employed strategically in the Gulf War to reverse the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, the benefits of the Doctrine became clear. The war was quick, decisive, did not cost the intervening coalition very many lives, and helped the US protect its vital national oil interests in the Middle East. In many ways, the Gulf War validated the benefits the Powell Doctrine. However, Iraq was plagued by instability after the Gulf War. The economy and infrastructure were crippled and harsh sanctions and military interference only exacerbated the problems. Internationally, Iraq was labeled a rogue state and relegated to diplomatic inferiority. Many of these problems, it turns out, link directly back to the military and political strategies dictated by the Powell Doctrine. First, the use of overwhelming force decimated Iraq's infrastructure. Then, the United States' adherence to the strict objectives outlined prior to the conflict prevented it from helping repair the damage inevitable in war, especially one employing overwhelming force. Finally, the pre-war vilification of Iraq, specifically Saddam, isolated Iraq so completely that post-war interactions were impossible. Separately, but especially together, these failings surely caused a majority of the instability in Iraq after the Gulf War. It turns out, therefore, that despite its benefits the Powell Doctrine does not fully account for the effects of war and will likely exacerbate instability as it did in Iraq in 1991.

[http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections\\_Autumn\\_2009/Jessica\\_Willard\\_Completing\\_the\\_Powell\\_Doctrine.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Autumn_2009/Jessica_Willard_Completing_the_Powell_Doctrine.pdf)

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# Completing the Powell Doctrine

## Theorizing Post-War Instability in Iraq

By Jessica Willard  
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Iraq suffered from substantial instability following the 1991 Gulf War intervention. Among other acute conditions, Iraq was labeled an international rogue, its people suffered in poverty, the Iraqi economy was in shambles, the Kurds were massacred in the North, and prominent UN member states were prompted to intervene on a fairly regular basis. President George H. W. Bush, who had professed a desire for regional stability in the Middle East prior to the Gulf War, certainly failed to achieve his end. The question then arises: what caused this post-war instability? Ironically, the failure of the Powell Doctrine, as an intervention theory, may suggest that the very strategy used to win the Gulf War caused a significant portion of the problems following it.

I begin by exploring the potential gaps in premises of the Powell Doctrine that might have contributed to the post-war instability. I establish that the Powell Doctrine may cause substantial instability in the enemy country because of its reliance upon the use of overwhelming force, its reluctance to plan for or participate in post-war activities, and its vilification of the enemy state. I then proceed to test these hypotheses against the events following the Gulf War. Since the hypotheses fit well with the aftermath of the Gulf War, I conclude that the Powell Doctrine did contribute to the instability that followed the war. While some would argue that the mere presence of Saddam caused a majority of the instability, I posit that Saddam certainly contributed to episodic periods of extreme unrest but was actually a predominantly stabilizing force. While not the sole cause, the intervention style used in the Gulf War had specific theoretical failings that caused and aggravated a number of problems after the conclusion of the conflict.

Efficiency ruled United States military policy in the 1991 Gulf War. With vital national economic interests at stake, the US reacted strongly against Iraq's invasion of the oil-rich country of Kuwait in August 1990. Without delay the US, led by President George H. W. Bush, condemned Saddam's actions. Days later, it deployed defensive troops to protect the Saudi border from potential further aggression should Iraqi forces continue their offensive military actions into Saudi

Arabia. Then the US directed the international diplomatic and economic pressures that led to several UN mandates and international sanctions. Within days, Bush declared that the invasion ‘would not stand’.<sup>1</sup> He immediately began to assess the necessity and viability of a military offensive to drive Saddam out of Kuwait. Rallying international support, Bush built up a force of over half a million military personnel along Saudi Arabia’s northern border. Using impressive, though largely coercive, strategic diplomacy, Bush persuaded the UN to set a January 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for Saddam’s withdrawal from Kuwait. When Saddam failed to comply, Bush immediately launched a massive air campaign that took control of Iraqi air space, eliminated strategic targets, and prepared the battlefield for a massive ground offensive. After six weeks, the ground offensive cut through Iraqi forces, ejecting them from Kuwait and all of Southeastern Iraq in less than one hundred hours. Despite their momentum, however, the military pursuit stopped well short of Baghdad, leaving Saddam in power. The war ended officially on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1991, only seven months after the initial invasion of Kuwait. After the war, Iraq was diplomatically isolated and stripped of its sovereignty for years by sanctions, inspections, the introduction of a no-fly zone, and the repeated interjection of military force.

The US intervention strategy executed during the Gulf War strategy was both a statement against the failures of Vietnam and the test run of an emerging model of intervention that would drastically reduce military failures. Following the military success of the Gulf War, the model’s viability was confirmed. Indeed, “After the war, political and military leaders in the US hailed the conflict as a model for the future of warfare”.<sup>2</sup> Casper Weinberger and Colin Powell are generally credited with the establishment of what is now known as the Powell Doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Essentially, the Powell Doctrine promotes, “full spectrum dominance”—“the capability to prevail, quickly and cheaply, in any and all forms of conflict.”<sup>4</sup> This approach was derived from Colin Powell’s experience as an Infantry Captain in Vietnam. Weary of future military failures, Powell

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<sup>1</sup> See President George H. W. Bush, “Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait August 5, 1990,” Margaret Thatcher Foundation, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=110704> (accessed December 26, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Patricia L. Sullivan, “War Aims and War Outcomes: Why Powerful States Lose Limited Wars,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 3 (2007): 518.

<sup>3</sup> A.J. Bacevich, *The limits of power: the end of American exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 128-29. Bacevich notes that the Powell Doctrine was a body of principles first developed by the post-Vietnam officer corps, adopted by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, and “expanded” by Powell during his tenure as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He writes that:

According to Weinberger and Powell, the US would fight only when genuinely vital interests were at stake...mobilize the necessary resources...to win promptly and decisively. It would end conflicts expeditiously and then get out, leaving no loose ends (129).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

categorically refused to put the US or its Armed Forces in a debilitating and hopeless position again. As such, when Iraq invaded Kuwait and endangered the US' access to reasonably priced oil, Colin Powell and the Bush administration felt substantial pressure to react forcefully. With the failings of Vietnam in mind and the underpinnings of coherent doctrine at their disposal, the Bush administration started down the path to war. Indeed, the Gulf War was everything Vietnam was not. US objectives were limited and gave rise to specific military goals. The force used was overwhelming and strictly oriented toward achievable objectives. The coalition received widespread international support. Military victory was quick and decisive. By the end, "both President Bush and Colin Powell...claimed that the war in the Gulf had exorcised the ghosts of the Vietnam War."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the actual result was much more complicated.

After the war, Iraq's internal instability led to a dire humanitarian crisis. Beyond its borders, Iraq was in a precarious position. Alienated from the international community, Iraq desperately tried to regain its former glory, but was cornered by coercive US containment policies and international distrust. Because of the many religious and political factions in Iraq, the intense regional competition in the Middle East, and the stigma produced by Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, hypothesizing the cause Iraq's internal and external instability is complicated. However, the nature of the Powell Doctrine and its influence on the Gulf War may have significantly contributed to the post-war instability. The all or nothing intervention style of the Powell Doctrine coupled with strict military objectives conceivably contributes to, and then fails to help rectify, conditions that lead to both internal and external instability in the rogue state.

The nature of Powell Doctrine warfare suggests several potential doctrinal weaknesses that would cause post-war difficulties. Drawing from gaps in the theory, three hypotheses follow. First, the use of overwhelming force would likely debilitate the enemy state by decimating their army and robbing them of essential infrastructure. Due to the nature of the all or nothing strategy, there would be acute casualty asymmetry, which would noticeably undermine the enemy state's ability to police its citizens after the engagement. Furthermore, any factory, refinery, power plant, or military unit that could help the enemy wage war would certainly be disabled. Accidental or collateral damage would also probably harm or destroy other essential infrastructure. In this situation, economic recovery would be critical for regaining stability in the impaired state

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<sup>5</sup> Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in international relations: power, politics and ideology*, The contemporary Middle East, 4 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 2005), 14.

after the conflict but difficult to secure in light of the damage the country sustained.

The second hypothesis posits that the strict objectives, which must be achievable militarily, would probably engender resistance to involvement in political issues after the military campaign. This is especially true in a situation that might evolve into a nation building mission—a mission fraught with risks and the possibility of long-term entanglement. On the path to war, the heads of state would clearly delineate an ultimate goal and direct all action toward achieving that goal. In all likelihood, there would be no plans for handling problems that occur post-victory. Thus, any unforeseen conditions caused by the war, or occurring in its wake, would simply linger like festering wounds. As conditions reach extremes, the intervening country would probably have to either intervene again or use ad hoc measures to deal with the problems.

The final hypothesis predicts that in the search for political support prior to the war, the rhetoric used by the intervening country might vilify the enemy state so completely that civilized post-war interaction is impossible. Such a volatile condition simply preempts regional stability. The treatment of Germany after WWI is the best example of this reality. Because Europe and the US blamed Germany for the war, they isolated it, demanded substantial post-war reparations, installed harsh containment measures, and continued these punishments even in the absence of significant threats. Pre-war vilification followed by victory, in accordance with the Powell Doctrine, would facilitate similar conditions. It is also likely that the losing state would be treated as inferior and therefore excluded from international diplomatic forums and future negotiations. Separately, and especially together, these Powell Doctrine tendencies would cause substantial instability for the enemy state, both internally and internationally. Gutted, alienated, and left to rot, the enemy subdued by Powell Doctrine warfare would be anything but stable.

The state of Iraq in the years following the Gulf War clearly demonstrates that the prospective failings of the Powell Doctrine translated into reality. Largely consistent with the aforementioned hypotheses, the outcome of the Gulf War highlights the theoretical failings of the Powell Doctrine. First, the effects of overwhelming force used during the Gulf War sufficiently mirrored the predicted effects on both the army and the infrastructure of the state. Indeed, between the six week air war and the one hundred hour ground assault, “tens of thousands [were] killed on the Iraq side, a few dozen [were] killed on the

coalition side.”<sup>6</sup> This result affirms that the use of overwhelming force produces highly asymmetrical losses. Contrary to the hypothesis, however, the Iraqi army was damaged, but not decimated. Enough of the army, particularly Saddam’s ideologically loyal Republican Guard, remained to suppress several uprisings that occurred directly after the war. Several events prevented the full realization of the Powell Doctrine during the Gulf War. Iraqi forces were toppled so quickly that many immediately surrendered or fled. While coalition forces bombed the fleeing Iraqi convoys, graphic news coverage of the destruction put an end to the coalition pursuit. What is more, “Iraq asked for a ceasefire to prevent further destruction of its forces.”<sup>7</sup> The US was not interested in breaking apart the finely balanced coalition or involved in a nation-building effort, and thus allowed the Iraqi forces to retreat. In accordance with the hypothesis, casualty distribution in the Gulf War was highly asymmetric. Furthermore, the graphic media coverage, quick retreat, and ceasefire, prevented the intended crippling of Iraqi forces. Though Saddam’s Republican Guard did escape and subsequently suppressed citizen uprisings, it was a result of unforeseen and mainly political influences, not the Powell Doctrine.

The second potential outcome of all-or-nothing warfare, namely the strategic demolition of vital infrastructure, certainly occurred during the Gulf War. Woodward writes that the initial invasion plan specifically, “directed that civilian casualties and damage to Iraq should be minimized consistent with protecting friendly forces.”<sup>8</sup> During the war, quite contrary to initial intentions, the coalition air campaign leveled Iraq. Tripp states that, “within the space of six weeks, the air bombardment had destroyed more of Iraq’s economic infrastructure countrywide than had the eight years of war with Iran.”<sup>9</sup> The air campaign primarily targeted military installations or structures that promoted military efficiency. However, over time the air campaign expanded. Saddam’s army was wholly unequipped to handle such an intense aerial offensive, and so the dictator attempted to divert coalition attention by launching Scud missiles into Israel and Saudi Arabia. Iraq intended to stir up Arab inclinations and undermine the unity of the coalition by inciting an Israeli retaliation. Even in the face of these attacks, “the allied bombardment continued unabated, targeting not only Iraq’s military apparatus but also much of its civil infrastructure.”<sup>10</sup> Even the

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<sup>6</sup> Halliday, 223.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Tripp, *A history of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 255.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Woodward, *The commanders* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 366.

<sup>9</sup> Tripp, 261.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

militarily relevant structures were sometimes bombed superfluously. Halliday observed that, “the destruction of the civilian electricity generating plants had a legitimate military purpose, to disrupt Iraqi military communications, but it was in retrospect excessive and unnecessary.”<sup>11</sup> In the end, the coalition used so much force during the six-week air campaign that Iraq was essentially relegated to the status of a Third World nations.

After the war, the Secretary General of the UN observed that, “the recent conflict has wrought near apocalyptic results on the economic status of what was until recently a highly urban and mechanized society.”<sup>12</sup> Quite in line with the predicted outcome of a strategy employing overwhelming force, Iraq’s infrastructure suffered extensively during the Gulf War. By itself, the annihilation of Iraqi infrastructure created internal unrest. Left unchecked, these problems quickly escalated into a humanitarian crisis that required international aid. Simultaneously, the infrastructure damage prevented the stabilizing forces of economic growth, reintegration into the diplomatic community, and civilized interpersonal relationships from taking hold. Not only, then, did the use of overwhelming force cripple Iraq’s internal mechanisms, it also obstructed future stabilization. Interestingly, the effects of infrastructure damage were intensified by the sanctions that resulted from the realization of the third hypothesis.

In order to prove the validity of the second hypothesis, several conditions must be met. To start, the limits of the military objective must be clearly defined. This objective was stated three days after Saddam’s initial invasion. Though Bush stated four objectives, only “the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait” was militarily achievable.<sup>13</sup> In accordance with the main tenants of the Powell Doctrine, the US strictly adhered to this stated goal. The US secured Kuwait and went no farther. Even when Iraqi forces were in full retreat and Baghdad was only miles away and completely undefended, the US Third Army Commander, General Schwarzkopf, under instructions from President Bush, order coalition forces to stand down. “Frankly my recommendation had been... continue the march,” General Schwarzkopf

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<sup>11</sup> Halliday, 128.

<sup>12</sup> Ninan Koshy, “The United Nations and the Gulf Crisis,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 47 (1997): 3011.

<sup>13</sup> H. W. Brands, “George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2004):124.

stated “I mean we had them in a rout.”<sup>14</sup> But, despite the military advantage, Bush and his advisers were not interested in the nation building that would be required if Baghdad was captured and Saddam was removed from power. Feeling that the coalition had already successfully secured its oil interests, the US National Command Authority opted to encourage Saddam’s overthrow from a distance. This policy falls directly in line with the limited objective missions encouraged by the Powell Doctrine. The US refused to get mired in messy political missions despite their appeal.

Past the ceasefire, however, the US acted impulsively and reluctantly. Such action corresponds to the second half of the second hypothesis, namely that the US would focus so intensely on its main objective that policy makers would fail to prepare for situations arising after the strategic objective was met. In conjunction with this hypothesis, the US policy after the war, in stark contrast to its intervention policy, lacked direction and vision. For example, the US half-heartedly encouraged an Iraqi uprising. Then, reluctant to intervene on the rebel’s behalf, the US allowed Saddam’s Republican Guard to massacre those involved in the insurrection. In fact, the uncertainty about how to handle Saddam was pervasive in US policies following the Gulf War. The US simultaneously refused to acknowledge Saddam’s legitimacy and refused to remove him from power.

The Powell Doctrine asserts that military involvement in post-war internal or political affairs of the enemy state is largely unacceptable because it falls outside of the ultimate objective. But when combined with the damage caused by the conflict itself, this policy becomes unrealistic. A potent demonstration of this difficulty occurs after Saddam ordered the destruction of the Kurdish insurrection in Northern Iraq. Even in the face of extreme aggression toward a US inspired rebellion “the realpolitik-oriented Bush hoped to avoid any greater entanglement in Iraq’s internal politics, but the televised plight of the Kurds forced the president to send U.S. troops to their aid or lose his world leadership role over the U.N. alliance.”<sup>15</sup> What is more, US troop involvement on behalf of

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<sup>14</sup> Lawrence E. Cline, “Defending the end: Decision making in terminating the Persian Gulf War,” *Comparative Strategy* 17, no. 4 (1998): 368. Schwarzkopf added that, “We could have completely closed the doors and made it in fact a battle of annihilation... There were obviously a lot of people who escaped who wouldn’t have escaped if the decision hadn’t been made to stop where we were at that time” (368).

<sup>15</sup> R. H. Swansbrough, “A Kohutian Analysis of President Bush’s Personality and Style in the Persian Gulf Crisis,” *Political Psychology* 15, no. 2 (1994): 227.

the Kurdish rebels in the North only came after Britain and France, prompted by Turkey's concern over the refugee situation, threatened to act without US leadership. The defeat of Saddam's forces in the Gulf War and US encouragement incited the rebellion; however the US was subsequently unwilling to help deal with the aftermath. As demonstrated in this episode, the US was also forced to respond to the Kurdish problem reactively. Diverging briefly into a counterfactual, it is arguable that the US' initial strategy to destroy the Republican Guard would have given the rebels a fighting chance and thereby precluded the need for further US intervention. But since this was not the case, the US' hesitation to aid the rebels demonstrates its reluctance to get involved in Iraqi political issues beyond the scope of the military objectives. It also demonstrates that the inherent instability caused by war may make it impossible to stay out of them. As such, the ad hoc measures taken by the US following the conflict were very shortsighted. The Kurdish problem, for instance, required recurrent interventions and involvement. It also ended up separating the Kurds into factions and reinforcing their distance from Iraq, rather than fostering integration and acceptance. The frequency and nature of the interventions reinforced the diplomatic inferiority of Iraq and angered Saddam, which caused further isolation and reinforced the need for harsh containment measures.

The final hypothesis suggests that in the effort to secure support prior to the Gulf War, the US vilified Saddam Hussein to such an extent that civilized post-war relations were impossible. Bush, with a certain moralistic flair, certainly vilified Saddam: "Besides comparing the Iraqi regime's harsh occupation of Kuwait to Nazi storm trooper atrocities in Poland, Bush suggested Hussein was even more horrible than Hitler because he employed hostages as human shields."<sup>16</sup> Of course, because Bush used strategic diplomacy, namely bribes and threats, to persuade the members of the UN Security Council, he didn't really need rhetoric like this to secure support. At home this type of characterization probably had the best effects. However, "President Bush used inflammatory rhetoric against Saddam Hussein and threatened to place the Iraqi dictator on trial for war crimes, which only reduced the chances for a political resolution of the confrontation and raised expectations regarding the ultimate goal of the war."<sup>17</sup> Logically, since Bush's incendiary characterizations of Saddam prior to the

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<sup>16</sup> Swansbrough, 267.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

conflict limited the potential for negotiation, the likelihood of mutual respect after the conflict further diminished.

In further support of the hypothesis, the US treatment of Iraq after the Gulf War reflected the schism created between Bush and Saddam in the pre-war period. From the Gulf War on, Iraq was labeled a rogue state and therefore largely excluded from international diplomacy. This in itself puts Iraq in a precarious position in the world and creates unease, if not instability. In many ways, the punishments levied on Iraq after their loss resembled the ones imparted on Germany after World War I. Immediately following their defeat, Iraq was forced to sign on to Resolution 687. In line with Bush's dislike and distrust of Saddam, "Resolution 687 [was] unquestionably the most intrusive and wide-ranging array of demands made on a sovereign state since the creation of the UN."<sup>18</sup>

The list was indeed long. Iraq had to officially recognize Kuwait, relinquish all nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, disassemble all ballistic missiles, submit to UN weapons inspections, implement regional arms control measures, avoid hostage taking and terrorism, comply with a whole litany of humanitarian concerns, adhere to the No-Fly Zone restrictions, and pay Kuwait reparations.<sup>19</sup> In addition, the harsh sanctions initiated before the war would not be lifted until Iraq completely complied with the resolution. Certainly, Bush's vilification of Saddam prior to and during the Gulf War contributed to the severity of these measures. Iraq was stripped of its sovereignty. Its label as a rogue in the international arena also robbed it of negotiating power and relegated it to a realm of inherent inferiority. Essentially, "the 'mother of all resolutions' turned Iraq into a kind of delinquent ward of the Security Council."<sup>20</sup> Of course, strict containment measures are expected after a war like the Gulf War. Since the US did not occupy Iraq, it had the responsibility to ensure post-conflict regional stability. These measures, however, were excessive. The extent of punishment inflicted upon Saddam surpassed containment, appearing much more like vengeance. The alienation of Iraq not only created instability by angering Saddam, it also blocked any chance of Iraqi integration into the international community and exacerbated the internal damage done during the war. Consequently, it is clear that the Gulf War confirms the theoretical failings of the

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<sup>18</sup> Koshy, 3018.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Powell Doctrine, all of which clearly contributed to internal, regional, and international instability.

Though the impact of the theoretical failings of the Powell Doctrine have been assessed independently from one another, when taken together it is astounding how the failings exacerbate the negative effects of one another. Though the Powell Doctrine failings antagonize each other in a number of different scenarios, observing one scenario reveals a sufficient idea of the potential for the failings to exponentially magnify a problem that occurs in war. Beginning with a discussion about Iraq's damaged infrastructure, the US could have presumably pursued one of three courses of action. One: Help restore at least a basic living standard in Iraq. Two: Stay out of Iraq's internal affairs but allow the necessary goods in to help fix the infrastructure. Contractors could be used to ensure parts do not get into the wrong hands. Three: Block all aid into Iraq, thereby aggravating already dire circumstances. Option one can be discarded on the grounds that few countries would choose to undertake this burden following a defensive war against a hostile dictator. So between options two and three, two obviously seems preferential. This option allows the citizens of Iraq have a chance at a decent standard of living, which fosters stability, but also takes into account potential risks.

However, a combination of US biases, generated by the Powell Doctrine intervention style, prevented the US from choosing the obviously preferential option. The vilification of Saddam, for instance, complimented the US' desire to contain Iraq's potential aggression via harsh sanctions. Unfortunately, the US' post-war plan was purely reactive. Because of this, the US failed to appreciate the long term effects that sanctions would have on the internal stability of Iraq. In the end, the US was forced to intervene anyway because the situation was simply too dire. This trifecta of theoretical failings is frustrating and self-perpetuating. Wars, especially ones relying on overwhelming force to achieve their objectives, cause extensive damage to important societal mechanisms, in this case the infrastructure. Limited objective interventions fail to prepare for the instability that will inevitably result from such occurrences. Reluctance to get involved allows these damages to fester. Injuries are then made worse by the effects of vilification, specifically exclusion from negotiations, isolation, and harsh punitive measures. As demonstrated in Iraq, the result is certainly not stability.

Of course, a number of other factors certainly contributed to the instability in Iraq. Leaving Saddam in power, for instance, is blamed for a significant portion of the post-war instability. In fact, Saddam's tactics have certainly caused

episodes of instability. The Kurdish refugee problem, for instance, stemmed directly from Saddam Hussein's brutal and relentless tactics. For years, "Kurds have died by the hundreds of thousands from the savage depredations of the Baath Party [led by Saddam], which for decades has sought to crush the least degree of separatism or political resistance to its policies."<sup>21</sup> In other words, Saddam and the Baath Party set the stage for Kurdish uprisings years before the Gulf War. But, "with the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein, the greatest opportunity yet emerged for the Kurds to assert their aspirations for autonomy."<sup>22</sup> Perhaps giving the US any credit for the Kurdish uprising after the war, then, is overly self-important. In fact, years of oppression by Saddam and his clan prompted the uprising. Saddam's method of handling the uprisings, furthermore, created an intense humanitarian crisis that caused international unease. Eventually, France and Britain, prompted by Turkey's concern about an influx of refugees across its southern border, decided to step in on behalf of the Kurds. This intervention, which the US joined at the last second, led to a Kurdish safe-zone and continued intervention over time. Far from stabilizing the situation, this safe-zone actually led to inter-Kurdish fighting as Saddam erected a trade blockade and prevented the Kurds from getting sufficient aid and supplies.

It is obvious, therefore, that Saddam's brutal tactics certainly contributed to the Kurdish problem and a number of other instabilities in Iraq. The uneasy position of Iraq in the world was also attributable to Saddam's betrayal of US trust and his resistance to comply with the UN mandate. There are, therefore, multiple reasons to think that Saddam contributed to the instability of Iraq. However, Saddam was also a unifying force that effectively suppressed internal unrest and worked hard to establish Iraq's place in the world. In fact "the ability of Saddam Husain to maintain his regime and much of his ruling circle intact during the years that followed the defeat of 1991 was a testimony to the resilience of the system he had constructed."<sup>23</sup> Though Saddam used brutal tactics to achieve his ends, the control that Saddam had over the many factions of Iraq was astounding. He was the cult of personality that held the country together. Furthermore, many of the tactics that contributed to the international distrust of Saddam were simply realistic measures taken to ensure national security in a highly volatile region. Thus, while some of Saddam's tactics surely contributed to instability, Saddam was predominantly the unifying force that held his country together despite the incendiary presence of several competing ethnic and religious factions.

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<sup>21</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "The Fate of the Kurds," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 2 (1993): 111.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>23</sup> Tripp, 265.

The Powell Doctrine, therefore, largely contributed to the instability in Iraq after the Gulf War. Furthermore, I believe that the post-Gulf War period is instructive for US policy makers attempting to formulate an effective intervention policy. The Powell Doctrine shows definite potential in the early stages of intervention. In its current form, however, it lacks the ability to help establish effective post-war strategies to help handle the inherent instability generated by massive and destructive conflicts. The Gulf War brings to light many of these failings. In the future, perhaps the positive attributes of the Powell Doctrine can be matched with a viable post-intervention doctrine that will facilitate the achievement of national objectives while minimizing the damages of war for all parties involved.

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# intersections

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Jeff Ostrove, "The Effect of Liberal Opinion on Post-War British Interventions," *intersections* 10, no. 3 (2009): 61-68.

## ABSTRACT

British military interventions changed qualitatively after the Second World War. According to realism, this transformation should be rooted ultimately in a difference between pre and post-war British power. However, an analysis of domestic British opposition to the 1956 invasion of Suez indicates that ethical, not realist considerations may be responsible for less aggressive British foreign policy. Much of the British public opposed the Suez intervention because of a perception that it violated liberal norms of international law. This finding suggests that public opinion is informed by non-realist considerations, and that these attitudes may powerfully affect international relations.

[http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections\\_Autumn\\_2009/Jeff\\_Ostrove\\_The\\_Effect\\_of\\_Liberal\\_Opinion\\_Suez.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Autumn_2009/Jeff_Ostrove_The_Effect_of_Liberal_Opinion_Suez.pdf)

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# The Effect of Liberal Opinion on Post-War British Interventions

By Jeff Ostrove  
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The History of British military intervention changed qualitatively after the Second World War. Although Britain has intervened 34 times since 1950, these interventions primarily occurred within British imperial territory, with the consent of local authorities, and only after political violence.<sup>1</sup> Whereas pre-war British intervention pursued national interest without qualification, post-war Britain tended to decline the use of force to protect its interests unless these criteria had been met. Such limitations defy realist expectations by confining British power with normative force. The mechanism responsible for this policy shift is therefore important to understanding the limits of realism, as well as recent British history.

Because long-term trends are usually the result of long-term causes, intuition suggests that the limitation of British post-war intervention cannot be explained by outstanding individuals, governments, or events. Instead, we should look to historical factors that were constant throughout the post-war period, but not before it.

The most obvious constant in post-war British politics was the relative decline of British power. Second-rank powers tend to be less capable of projecting force than great powers, and the Second World War had left Britain a second-rank power. A more circumspect British foreign policy might therefore be thought unremarkable. However, the post-war change in British policy did not cause Britain to become a simply less active version of its former self, as the power hypothesis would suspect. Britain intervened extensively throughout the post-war period; in purely quantitative terms no change in British behavior is perceptible. Whatever the state of post-war British power, the high number of post-war British interventions demonstrates that Britain still possessed the capacity to intervene. A reduced military capability would predict a quantitatively different but qualitatively similar British intervention policy—we see the opposite.

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<sup>1</sup> John Van Wingen, and Herbert K. Tillema, "British Military Intervention after World War II: Militance in a Second-Rank Power," *Journal of Peace Research* 17, no. 4 (1980): 300.

It is probable however, that Britain's decline limited its interventions to its former imperial territories. Second-rank powers tend to avoid confrontation with great powers, and British intervention in either the Soviet or American spheres of influence would have invited such confrontation. The geographic limitation of post-war British intervention can therefore be explained as a manifestation of Britain's 'second-rank power' status in the Cold War order.

The logic of power cannot as easily explain either Britain's reluctance to undertake "hostile" interventions or its reluctance to intervene in the absence of political violence in the target country. These criteria instead suggest an ethical dimension to British policy; both the consent of the intervened and the presence of ongoing political violence augment the moral justification for intervention. I hypothesize that the limited character of post-war British foreign policy can be explained by transformation of domestic attitudes towards aggressive intervention. The invasion of Suez was a high-profile hostile intervention. If the British public had any reservations about aggressive interventions, Suez should have brought them to the surface.

Before examining the domestic opposition to Eden's intervention, it will be helpful to give a brief outline of the events leading to and constituting the Suez Crisis, both to aid the reader and establish firmly Suez as a hostile intervention.

When Gamal Nasser succeeded at installing himself president of Egypt in 1954, the strategically and monetarily valuable Suez Canal was controlled by British interests. Nasser quickly embarked on a program of reforms, including massive infrastructure investment. His projects stalled, however, when the international community refused to tender the loans upon which they depended. . Faced with domestic pressure to complete the Aswan Dam and deteriorating diplomatic relations with the West, Nasser decided to nationalize the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956 in order to gain control over its considerable income.

This action provoked Britain, where it was portrayed by Prime Minister Eden's Conservative government as a 'communist attack' against vital British interests. By August 1<sup>st</sup>, Eden had secretly determined to use force in concert with France and Israel. On October 29<sup>th</sup>, Israel attacked Egypt, providing Britain and France with a necessary pretext to seize the Canal. This was quickly accomplished, but mounting domestic and international pressure forced Eden to withdraw before the end of the year, effectively ending his career and confirming the end of the British Empire.

Domestic opposition to British role in intervention in Suez was from the outset associated with the Labour party. Although Adamthwaite suggests that the intervention “alienated Conservative supporters,”<sup>2</sup> his only evidence for the claim is the fact that the overwhelming majority of letters sent to members of parliament opposed the intervention, and that some of these were authored by Conservatives. Unfortunately Adamthwaite did not take selection bias into account; if we consider that a citizen might be more likely to write his representative when he opposes government policy, Adamthwaite’s claims of widespread bipartisan opposition becomes unconvincing.

Instead, a highly partisan narrative emerges from Suez scholarship. Open political opposition to the government’s policy first became visible in mid-September, shortly after Eden’s declaration that, in the event of Egypt refused to restore Western control of the canal, “Her Majesty’s Government and others concerned will be free to take such further steps as seems to be required either through the United Nations, *or by other means*, for the assertion of their rights.”<sup>3</sup> The implication of unilateral military action produced an immediate reaction in parliament, which pressured Eden to renounce “force outside of the United Nations.”<sup>4</sup> While this early parliamentary opposition included some Conservatives, its overwhelming majority was drawn from Labour’s ranks.

Labour had by this time quietly but firmly established its hypothetical opposition to any potential unilateral use of force. Even in the unanimously anti-Nasser atmosphere of early August 1956, Labour party leader Hugh Gaitskell reminded the House that “We are signatories of the United Nations Charter... we must not, therefore, allow ourselves to get into a position where we might be denounced in the Security Council as aggressors.”<sup>5</sup> Labour’s position was further defined a few weeks later when the party unsuccessfully sent a delegation to Eden to extract his promise that the government would not use force outside of the United Nations.<sup>6</sup>

When Eden did exactly that two months later, partisanship dominated the parliamentary debate. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, two days after the initiation of hostilities in Egypt, Gaitskell issued the Labour party’s official position. In the statement he

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<sup>2</sup> Adam Adamthwaite, “Suez Revisited,” *International Affairs* 64, no. 3. (1988): 455.

<sup>3</sup> Leon Epstein, “Partisan Foreign Policy: Britain in the Suez Crisis,” *World Politics* 12, no. 2 (1960): 203. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-08.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

unequivocally reaffirmed Labour's opposition to intervention in Suez, and promised to use "every constitutional means," to make that opposition effective.<sup>7</sup> Labour immediately brought its dissent to parliament, where its MP's unanimously and vocally attacked the government. Their efforts succeeded in bringing the Suez intervention to a vote, where the policy carried by a strictly partisan vote of 270 to 218.<sup>8</sup> Conservatives MPs overwhelmingly supported the intervention, while Labour MPs overwhelmingly opposed it.

This partisanship was also evident in the British public. When asked in December 1956 if the government was "right to take military action in Egypt," 81 percent of Conservatives said yes, as opposed to only 22 percent of Labour voters. Labour supporters were also more skeptical of the Eden's motivation for intervention, the majority citing "to get control of Suez," as the government's main reason for intervening.<sup>9</sup>

This is important for two reasons. First, partisan policy offers a reasonable mechanism for the change in British intervention behavior. To explain the variable, public opinion must at some point be translated into policy making. In a parliamentary system this implies that anti-intervention voters chose representatives with whom they ideologically identify. Had political opposition to Suez not divided along ideological lines, public opinion would therefore not be a compelling explanation for the limitations of post-war British policy.

Partisanship is also helpful in isolating the character of the opposition to Suez. Because Labour *was* the opposition, the statements of its leaders can be taken as the arguments of the opposition itself. It is also important that the opposition came from the Left, where moral anti-imperialism has a long intellectual history. If the self-imposed limits of post-war British intervention were the product of a moral change in British public opinion, we would expect that change to manifest in Labour.

The actual arguments employed by Labour were not, however, technically moral. Instead Labour emphasized the illegality of the action according to international law. From the beginning Gaitskell had insisted that military force proceed only within the framework of the United Nations, citing the United Nations charter and the importance of Britain's commitment to international law in world

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Guillaume Parmentier, "The British Press in the Suez Crisis," *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 2 (1980): 440.

opinion. Labour never declared itself against force, as long as force came with UN sanction.

There is however reason to question whether the justification given by Labour politician's necessarily reflected the full motivations of their opinion. Labour's position as the left of center active opposition to an ongoing war naturally placed them in an awkward political position. In this context arguments of international illegality might appear more politically viable than explicitly ethical claims of universal self-determination and anti-imperialism. At the time, maintaining imperial prestige was a point of pride for the Conservative party, which enjoyed a comfortable majority. If anti-imperialist conviction played a part in Labour's unanimous opposition, it would have been politically foolish to articulate it.

Arguments concerning international law would have entailed far less risk. While moral anti-imperialism limits the scope of British self-interest on ethical grounds, arguments that Britain ought not to violate international law can be seen as an attempt to prevent Britain from foolishly harming its diplomatic position. Because the argument from international law is politically safer but indistinguishable in terms of policy, it is reasonable to question whether Labour's rhetoric expressed all aspects of its collective mind.

Reasonable doubt is not, however, genuinely confirming evidence. Although anti-imperialism was an important ideological component of the contemporary British Left and almost certainly motivated opinions, it is very difficult to know the extent of its role in the absence of open articulation.

Against this difficulty Adamthwaite's mailbag analysis becomes invaluable. The letters of private citizens are less inhibited by political expedience, and should therefore reveal whatever ethical opinions were held by the British public. Surprisingly, Adamthwaite's findings overwhelmingly support arguments of international law. Only one letter fixed solely on moral outrage, demanding the resignation of "those dragging Britain's name in the dust," but the author does not elaborate on how, specifically, this was being done.<sup>10</sup> International law meanwhile was a common theme. Elector's attacked the "blatant disregard of the terms of the UN charter," and charged the government with jeopardizing "the only possibility of maintaining international law and justice in our time," by

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<sup>10</sup> Adamthwaite, 455.

sidestepping the Security Council.<sup>11</sup> The tenor of the British public opposition matched Labour rhetoric.

Although this does not necessarily deny the relevance of anti-imperialist attitudes given the degree to which such opinions accord with the liberal world order envisioned by the UN, it does clearly establish concern for international law as the dominant force of the argument. This offers a possible explanation for the entire phenomenon. The United Nations was a creation of the post-war world, and also a historical constant within it. It is chronologically well positioned to explain the post-war restriction of British interventions.

It is unclear however, why the popular appeal of the rule of international law would manifest as a reluctance to intervene without consent or ongoing violence. If international law was the dominant criteria, we should expect instead to see a pattern of British intervention in accordance with the will of the Security Council. That we do not validates instead the earlier possibility that rationale centered on international law is actually a manifestation of ethical political feeling. In other words, the contradiction is best resolved by understanding that part post-war British opinion opposed to Suez as what Adamthwaite termed “liberal-minded.”<sup>12</sup> Liberalism tends to perceive interventions as being more justified if they have the consent of the target country, and occur only in response to violence. A post-war liberalism could therefore explain post-war Britain’s reluctance to intervene in the absence of these conditions. Liberalism also explains Labour’s tendency to emphasize the norms of international law, while not necessarily advocating strict adherence to the letter of the UN charter.

The pattern of limited intervention which has emerged in post-war Britain is profoundly unusual both within British history and international relations theory. While realist notions of power help explain the ‘where’ of post-war British intervention, the when and the why appear to follow non-strategic, ethical criteria. This preference for at least a superficially ethical policy is best explained by liberal attitudes within the British electorate.

Why the Second World War is associated with an increase in liberal attitudes is a far more complicated question. It is possible that the experience of fascism discredited the political right generally, but any claim stronger than possibility demands research. At any rate, the forces which liberalized British attitudes seem

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<sup>11</sup> Adamthwaite, 455.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

to have influenced Britain's post-war foreign policy. The finding that ideological opinion limits military intervention imposes important qualifications upon realist claims, and suggests that a better understanding of public opinion and the forces which motivate it may considerably further the study of democratic foreign policy.

Jeff Ostrove is a sophomore interested in ethics, history, and international relations. He hopes to pursue postgraduate studies in political theory.

# intersections

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Calla Hummel, “Tenho Minhas Ideias e Não Posso Ficar Calada’: Riot Grrrl in Brazilian Civil Society,” *intersections* 10, no. 3 (2009): 69-111.

## ABSTRACT

Through the study of Brazilian and American riot grrrl, I join a growing number of scholars asserting that an interconnected youth culture is a democratic force of globalization that challenges the cultural hegemony of any one country or region. However, it is apparent that unequal relationships remain entrenched in the structures that facilitate cultural flows. To illustrate the possibilities and limitations of contemporary youth culture, I examine the transnational trajectory of riot grrrl, a youth-based feminist movement centered upon music that embraces a variety of art forms and activism. Riot grrrl began in Olympia, WA in the early 1990s and quickly spread throughout North America and Europe, but by 1997 had largely disbanded. Yet the movement continues in Brazil, where local scenes connect through the internet to form the largest contemporary riot grrrl scene. However, Brazil lacks many of the mechanisms that formed the base of the movement in other countries, such as an underground zine network and cheap music technology. Why did riot grrrl continue in Brazil after it had faded elsewhere? To answer this question, I recount the spread of riot grrrl activity and consider how the meaning of the movement changes when it crosses national boundaries and introduces new methods. I inform my analysis with the work of scholars such as Chandra Mohanty, Andy Bennett, and George Lipsitz, as well as primary sources from the Brazilian and American scenes.

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# ‘Tenho Minhas Ideias e Não Posso Ficar Calada’<sup>1</sup> Riot Grrrl in Brazilian Civil Society

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Introduction: Papai Só Quero Rock Roll<sup>3</sup>

Riot grrrl — as a movement, network, music, and way of thinking — is a powerful youth-based feminist movement that emerged in Olympia, Washington in 1992. Riot grrrl revolves around music, while embracing a variety of art forms and activism. Riot grrrl radically altered my worldview in an after school art program when I was 13 years old, and the music has become bound up in my identity and way of thinking. Unfortunately for me, as a movement, riot grrrl has been considered dead since 1997. I participate within the remnants of the riot grrrl network by working as a sound engineer and an all-ages organizer in the independent music scene<sup>4</sup> in Seattle, Washington.

In 2004, I saw a show headlined by the band Dominatrix from São Paulo, Brazil. Between songs, they told raunchy jokes in Portuguese and spoke of their experiences as dykes within the Brazilian riot grrrl scene. I was too young to have participated in the original Northwest riot grrrl movement, and was drawn to the idea of visiting an active scene elsewhere. Three years later I found myself in Rio de Janeiro with the pretext of conducting research and with one contact, who invited me to a small feminist festival in the neighboring state of Minas

<sup>1</sup> “I have my ideas and I can’t stay quiet.” The chorus of *Revolução Mental (Mental Revolution)*, by Inkoma.

<sup>2</sup> This article is based upon an Honors thesis and project I completed while studying at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica in São Paulo, and funded by a Boren scholarship in 2008 and 2009. I would like to thank my advisors Deborah Porter and Sasha Su-Ling Welland. I would also like to thank Andreia, Elisa, Bruna, Bullas, Kerby, Mayra, and the dozens of other musicians, grrrls, and friends that have helped me with this project.

<sup>3</sup> “Papa, I just want rock n’ roll,” Song by Poser Pride of Goiânia, Goiás.

<sup>4</sup> I use “scene” as my unit of analysis — defined as spaces and actors whose work generates an area of activity organized around a specific style of music. Scene is a term accepted and used colloquially and formally, and thus adequately bridges the everyday and academic musical frames of reference while avoiding unnecessary jargon on both sides. As Bennett notes, “scene” is used to describe both the overall musical production of a country or national production in one genre (aka “the Brazilian scene” or “the Brazilian riot grrrl scene”) or local activity (“local” being defined as people and activities operating within specific geographic boundaries, which are almost always city limits).

See Andy Bennett, *Popular music and youth culture: music, identity, and place* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000).

Gerais. I was able to make connections with both the organizers and the bands, and spent the next several months traveling around Brazil, meeting and interviewing grrrls and going to shows.

Why the Brazilian riot grrrl scene still exists as a potent movement — and indeed remains the largest riot grrrl scene in the world today — is the underlying research question I consider here. Other riot grrrl scenes that flourished in wealthy Western countries had largely disbanded by 1997. Moreover, riot grrrl originally spread through a well-established underground media network that, to the best of my knowledge, was not as established in Brazil. Yet Brazil — a middle-income country with a recent history of authoritarianism and inflation — has a huge scene that has lasted over fifteen years with a network of thousands of grrrls and hundreds of bands. This begs the question, why has riot grrrl remained uniquely potent in Brazil?

There is increasing evidence that with the advent of the internet and other communication technology, youth culture is global. While neither globalization nor broad-based youth movements are new phenomena, interconnections are deepening and dynamics are changing dramatically with the advent of wireless technology. I join a growing number of scholars asserting that global youth culture is a democratic force of globalization that is challenging the hegemony of any one country or region, at least in terms of cultural flows. However, it is apparent that exploitive relationships remain entrenched in the structures that facilitate these flows. In exploring the possibilities and limitations of contemporary youth culture, I recount the spread of riot grrrl activity and consider how the meaning and significance of the movement changes when the genre crosses national boundaries.

In this article, I analyze the Brazilian riot grrrl scene as a case study and consider both the Brazilian and U.S. riot grrrl scenes comparatively. I begin with a literature review outlining the five theories that frame my analysis, before presenting a brief history of the riot grrrl movement and detailing the complexities of the international music industry with which it is entangled. I follow up with a surface treatment of 20<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian social history, with particular emphasis on music and feminism. With this background established, I move into a discussion of my research. The discussion is split into two main parts; the first examines themes and activities, focusing first on lyrics and performance, then on expressions of sexuality, and finally analyzing one major theme in riot grrrl media: beauty standards and resulting eating disorders. The second part of the discussion looks at the organization of the scene by examining

media and resource management strategies. Finally, I conclude by raising further questions.

#### Literature Review

For Brazilian grrrls, the scene holds significance as a truly unique space inside Brazilian civil society. The groundwork for the scene was laid through spaces created by the women's movement and gay rights struggles at the end of the dictatorship in the 1980s, and draws on a history of popular music as a powerful vehicle of critique for young people, with the highly critical Brazilian punk and metal scenes of the 1980s and the *tropicalia* movement of the 1960s as direct forerunners to riot grrrl in the 1990s and 2000s. I argue here that riot grrrl is a link between these political struggles and youth culture in Brazil.

Riot grrrl joins the debates introduced by gay and women's movements several decades ago, but brings an entirely new perspective on youth and sexuality through its transnational connections. Gilberto Freyre and Richard Parker have both theorized gender relations through history in Brazil, and have discussed how gender roles are maintained and subverted.<sup>5</sup> These subversions and alternatives, however, have all been created in reference to national ideologies of gender.<sup>6</sup> Riot grrrls deconstruct national ideologies of female sexuality by simultaneously referencing national and international alternatives. Through referencing identities and strategies generated by a transnational movement, Brazilian riot grrrl builds new ideals of inclusion and resistance.

I draw on the work of several theorists to further analyze explanations put forth by sources in the riot grrrl scene. My analysis draws primarily on theories developed by George Lipsitz, Andy Bennett, and Ian Condry. I frame my analysis within the pedagogy of comparative feminist studies developed by Chandra Mohanty, as well as Mark Slobin's agenda for modern ethnomusicology. Mohanty developed her pedagogy to foreground evolving links and relationships between feminists and to analyze how feminist networks are enmeshed in global distributions of power.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lorraine Leu, *Brazilian popular music: Caetano Veloso and the regeneration of tradition*, Ashgate popular and folk music series (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Chandra Talade Mohanty, *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity* (Durham: D.U.K.e University Press, 2003), 242.

Slobin recognized patterns across seemingly disparate modern micro-musics, described as “small musics within big cultures,” around the globe.<sup>8</sup> The scholars that attached his agenda to their own research soon found increasingly interconnected processes – many under the term “globalization,” which I define as the increasing interconnectedness of people, politics, and economics on an international scale. Academics studying music scenes began using those scenes as research sites – Condry’s *genba* or Lipsitz’s ‘crossroads’, for example – as representative of larger shifts occurring on national, generational, or global scales.

Mohanty argues that the micropolitics of everyday life capture concrete changes wrought by larger forces, and can be carefully extrapolated to inform other situations. Broad generalizations, however, obscure actual mechanisms and effects, and often simply privilege the author’s experience.<sup>9</sup> By placing my research within these frameworks, I analyze how layers of interconnection in the Brazilian riot grrrl scene are articulated through riot grrrl productions in ways that simultaneously connect to transnational networks and the micropolitics of everyday life in specific localities.

Lipsitz creates a “theorized understanding of social relations by understanding the interplay of art, culture, and commerce” in an increasingly global context.<sup>10</sup> Due to advances in communication technology, shared culture no longer depends on shared geographical space.<sup>11</sup> I adopt this framework to explore the transnational resonance of riot grrrl. I also concur with Lipsitz’s claim that “culture enables people to rehearse identities, stances, and social relations not yet permissible in politics,” but that culture is simultaneously “a concrete place where social relations are constructed and enacted as well as envisioned.”<sup>12</sup> Lipsitz concludes that “popular music has provided a means of tapping collective memories of the past and shared aspirations of the future.” This partially illustrates the Brazilian riot grrrl scene’s position in Brazilian civil society and its use of transnational connections, and sheds light on the support and power available to its members.

Bennett has personalized this concept through theories of locality and identity by conceptualizing “music as a cultural resource in the everyday lives of young

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Slobin, *Subcultural sounds: micro musics of the West* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Mohanty, 22, 42.

<sup>10</sup> George Lipsitz, *Dangerous crossroads: popular music, postmodernism, and the poetics of place* (London: Verso, 1994), 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

people.”<sup>13</sup> In particular, he posits that through music “audiences simultaneously acquire new ways in which to both address and negotiate systems and structures that govern their everyday lives.”<sup>14</sup> U.S. riot grrrl was a catalyst for Brazilian grrrls to build a space through which grrrls could collectively critique systems and structures that shape their experiences as Brazilian women. Furthermore, Bennett develops theories of symbiosis and interconnectedness that posit that the underground and the corporate music world are not mutually exclusive categories existing in spite of each other, but can be symbiotic. In particular, he points out that the cheap music technology that precludes underground dissemination and innovation is developed by the corporate music industry and that the underground provides the innovation and new talent that the industry’s profits depend on. While my case study illustrates the limits of that symbiosis, it also highlights interconnections through resource management strategies. Condry’s work in the Japanese hip hop scene illustrates and theorizes dynamics in global youth culture. I will critique other theories on localization through Condry’s assertion that globalization and localization are not separate or opposite forces, but work in tandem – local connections deepen as transnational ties are strengthened.<sup>15</sup> Other scholars that focus on localization through ideas of ‘local reworkings’ of Western music run the risk of implying a static or standard music, a template, from which other youth cultures develop. In illustrating his theories on global cultural processes, he uses the concept of the *genba* to discuss clubs as an amalgam of social interactions that “actualize the global and the local simultaneously.”<sup>16</sup> No scene or art form is static and, as Condry shows, deepening connections between scenes result in innovations across borders.

As Condry, Slobin, and my own research imply, youth musics are proliferating across the globe, contributing to global cultural diversity, not the homogenization that so many predicted. Plenty of other scholars have argued that the localization of global media channels signals the strength of local cultures in the face of or in opposition to globalization – and an increasing number of scholars, business people, musicians, and everyday fans are in agreement.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bennett 2000, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Condry, *Hip Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, 208.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>17</sup> See Richard A. Peterson, and Andy Bennett, “Introducing Music Scenes,” in *Music scenes: local, translocal and virtual*, eds. Andy Bennett and Richard A. Anderson (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 8-12; See also Condry, *Hip Hop Japan*; and Livio Sansone, “The Localization of Global Funk in Bahia and Rio,” In *Brazilian popular music & globalization*, ed. Christopher Dunn and Charles A. Perrone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 135-160.

Yet these interactions are constructed in “fields of unequal relations,”<sup>18</sup> and the visibility of this proliferation is tipped in overwhelming favor to those scenes and actors in wealthy countries. Lipsitz addresses this by acknowledging increasing interconnectedness that is characterized in part by inequality in resources and distribution.<sup>19</sup> Tony Mitchell elaborates on this sentiment by detailing the paradox of U.S. hegemony through the commercial hip hop industry and the exploding production of independent hip hop in literally every corner of the globe — little of which ever leaves its locality.<sup>20</sup> I will discuss the challenges that Brazilian riot grrrl raises in this context, and its successes and failures.

In researching this scene, I am addressing the lack of scholarship on Latin America with regards to popular music and youth culture, especially rock music. Slobin has called for more research in this region,<sup>21</sup> as has Mitchell (albeit for hip hop).<sup>22</sup> While my position as an upper-middle class Caucasian American limits the extent to which I can do justice to this gap, this is a step in the right direction. I am part of the riot grrrl community — I came of age listening to riot grrrl CDs with my girlfriend, volunteering in women-run DIY art spaces, and going to post-riot shows — and this research has made me a transnational actor in the Brazilian and U.S. scenes. Thus, I write and speak with more insider information on the scenes and culture I study than many ethnomusicologists. However, I am a privileged actor within a privileged music scene and that is why this youth music is being discussed.

When “global” is mentioned in relation to rock culture, scholars conventionally refer to certain scenes in Europe and its offshoots, with an occasional token mention of Latin America or Asia. For example, *Cultures of Popular Music* includes a chapter entitled “Global Punk” that analyzes scenes in the U.K., U.S., Hungary, and Germany — four countries that do not represent the globe.<sup>23</sup> This trend extends to riot grrrl as well. Marion Leonard highlights *Ladyfests*, feminist cultural festivals, in Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, and Brazil, to show that the festival has reached all corners of the globe. Leonard’s analysis, however, is

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<sup>18</sup> Condry, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Lipsitz, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Tony Mitchell, “Maori and Pacific Island Hip-Hop in Aotearoa — New Zealand,” in *Global noise: rap and hip-hop outside the USA*. Music/culture, ed. Tony Mitchell (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2001) 281.

<sup>21</sup> Slobin, 112.

<sup>22</sup> Tony Mitchell, “Another Root — Hip-Hop outside the USA,” in *Global noise: rap and hip-hop outside the USA*. Music/culture, ed. Tony Mitchell (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 7.

<sup>23</sup> See Andy Bennett, *Cultures of popular music*, Issues in cultural and media studies (Buckingham, U.K.: Open University Press, 2001).

entirely based on festivals within the United States, Canada, Australia, and Western and Eastern Europe. My work attempts to counter this invisibility and tokenization.

In wider ethnomusicology studies, youth from Latin America are often mentioned as an immigrant group to the U.S. and Europe, not as participants in youth culture in Latin American countries.<sup>24</sup> When Latin American music is studied, it still follows the *ethnic music* paradigm that ethnomusicology has been moving away from due to its imperialistic and tokenizing qualities. Salsa, samba, and Andean folk music are studied while youth culture musics such as reggaeton, metal, and hip hop are ignored. This is being challenged by younger academics, but their work is still novel.<sup>25</sup> With the exception of two articles on Brazilian heavy metal<sup>26</sup> and Bennett's discussion of politically dissident 1970s rock in Mexico,<sup>27</sup> an analysis of young rock musicians within Latin America is absent from the literature.

To summarize, I will use these theories to support the ideas and explanations postulated by the Brazilian riot grrrl scene and through this synthesis give a comprehensive explanation of why and how riot grrrl has developed in Brazil. In the end, my research begins to address the gap in research on Latin American youth culture and contributes to the discussion on the globalization of youth cultures.

Punk Rock Não É Só Pra Seu Namorado<sup>28</sup>

To understand current Brazilian riot grrrl rhetoric and activity, one must have a working knowledge of riot grrrl history. Riot grrrl emerged in the early '90s as first a scene and then a movement of young artistic feminists. A core

<sup>24</sup> Mitchell, "Another Root," 5-6; See also Ed Morales, *The Latin beat: the rhythms and roots of Latin music from bossa nova to salsa and beyond* (Cambridge: De Capo Press, 2003), 27; and Jaqueline Urla, "'We Are All Malcolm X!': Negu Gorriak, Hip Hop, and the Basque Political Imaginary," in *Global noise: rap and hip-hop outside the USA*. Music/culture, ed. Tony Mitchell (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> See Ian Condry, *Hip Hop Japan*; See also Raquel Rivera, *Reggaeton* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme metal: music and culture on the edge* (New York: Berg, 2007); and Idelber Avelar, "Defeated Rallies, Mournful Anthems, and the Origins of Brazilian Heavy Metal," in *Brazilian popular music and globalization*, eds. Christopher Dunn and Charles A. Perrone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 122-134.

<sup>26</sup> See Avelar, "Defeated Rallies"; See also Keith Harris, "'Roots'?: The Relation Between the Global and the Local in the Extreme Metal Scene," *Popular Music* 19 (2000): 13-30.

<sup>27</sup> Bennett, *Cultures of Popular Music*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> The chorus from Bulimia's song *Punk Rock* (translation: punk rock isn't just for your boyfriend). The lyrics echo a popular sentiment carried by riot grrrls trying to get scene girls involved in making music.

group of musicians and organizers in Olympia and Washington D.C. — fed up with the increasing sexism and violence in underground music communities<sup>29</sup> — began to form overtly feminist bands and zines.<sup>30</sup> As one zinester put it, “Riot grrrl was about creating the culture you wanted to live in.”<sup>31</sup>

Riot grrrl emerged in the tradition of the punk DIY ethos, accompanied by a history of radical grrrls in underground scenes. The twin punk scenes that emerged in New York and London in the 1970s featured radical women at the center of the scenes, such as Patti Smith, and The Slits and X-Ray Spex, respectively. As punk spread to the West Coast, The Germs, X, and The Cramps paved the way for other grrrl punk bands and a second surge that featured The Bags and the first dyke bands in San Francisco.<sup>32</sup> Despite backlashes from peers and the public, these artists enjoyed enduring popularity in the underground, to the point where The Slits toured with The Clash before splitting up.<sup>33</sup> There seems to be something particularly threatening about young grrrls participating in what are perceived as boys’ subcultures, and as Maria Raha notes, their stories and contributions are often cut out or minimized in punk histories.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1980s grrrls in radical music scenes felt the backlash against feminism generated by conservative U.S. politics.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, a number of female musicians were publicized via their membership in popular rock bands, and while they avoided feminist or the later riot grrrl labels, they inspired many of the bands that came later. The end of the 1980s and the early 1990s saw a proliferation in grrrl bands on one hand and rising violence and exclusion on the other.<sup>36</sup> Along the West Coast, hardcore and Nazi punks divided underground scenes. At the same time, the queercore movement began in San Francisco and grrrl bands proliferated.<sup>37</sup> Tribe 8 ignited debate in the largely heterosexual indie scene, while major labels promoted Hole and L7 on the radio and MTV.

<sup>29</sup> See Lauraine LeBlanc, *Pretty in punk: girls' gender resistance in a boys' subculture* (London: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 111-119.

<sup>30</sup> Zines, sometimes known as fanzines, are do-it-yourself magazines about anything (bands, news, bike maintenance, comics, poetry, stream-of-consciousness, etc) that are published and circulated in a number of underground communities.

<sup>31</sup> Susan Corrigan, “Red Chidgey — Art, politics and how one grrrl joined the feminist riot,” in *Riot grrrl: revolution girl style now!* ed. Nadine Kathe Monem (London: Blackdog, 2007), 101.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Raha, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Raha, xii.

<sup>35</sup> Raha, 107.

<sup>36</sup> Leblanc, 49.

<sup>37</sup> David Ciminelli, and Ken Knox, *Homocore: the loud and raucous rise of queer rock* (New York: Alyson Books, 2005), 8.

Then, in the late 1980s, grunge revived punk, focusing an international spotlight the Northwest indie music scene.<sup>38</sup>

The shift in the 1980s of punk and its subset grunge from the radical underground to the mainstream meant that many of the original ideals of these communities were slowly being replaced with notions closer to the status quo. Punk had lost its place as a Petri dish of ideas and lifestyles, grunge's mainstreaming largely ignored radical grrrls, and the new underground genre, hardcore, was infamous for violence and xenophobia.<sup>39</sup> However, there were a number of radical women involved in these communities who were prepared to challenge these shifts.

#### Beginnings

Key actors collaborated translocally and transnationally on projects throughout the riot grrrl movement. After a summer of collaborating with members of Tsunami and beginning the *Riot Grrrl* zine in Washington D.C., Bikini Kill returned to Olympia for K Records' International Pop Underground Convention in August 1991.<sup>40</sup> The first event, "Grrrl's Night", showcased punk grrrl bands. The energy of that one event was the catalyst that launched the movement.<sup>41</sup>



The *Riot Grrrl Manifesto* was the first of many calls to be made through the zine network. Some excerpts from it read:

BECAUSE viewing our work as being connected to our girlfriends-politics-real lives is essential if we are gonna figure out how we are doing impacts, reflects, perpetuates, or DISRUPTS the status quo.

BECAUSE we don't wanna assimilate to someone else's (boy) standards of what is or isn't.

<sup>38</sup> Leblanc, 59.

<sup>39</sup> Raha, 151-163.

<sup>40</sup> Kerri Koch, *Don't need you: the herstory of Riot Grrrl* (New York, NY: Urban Cowgirl Productions).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

BECAUSE we are unwilling to falter under claims that we are reactionary "reverse sexists" AND NOT THE TRUEPUNKROCKSOULCRUSADERS THAT WE KNOW we really are.

BECAUSE we know that life is much more than physical survival and are patently aware that the punk rock "you can do anything" idea is crucial to the coming angry grrrl rock revolution which seeks to save the psychic and cultural lives of girls and women everywhere, according to their own terms, not ours.

BECAUSE we are interested in creating non-hierarchical ways of being AND making music, friends, and scenes based on communication + understanding, instead of competition + good/bad categorizations.<sup>42</sup>

The message that the riot grrrl media was sending was a direct, personal and political call that resonated with grrrls in many locales. Themes were drawn from the daily realities of the musicians and were clearly stated – and thus accessible to listeners. Grrrls were empowered to pick up instruments, start zines and labels, organize all-grrrl tours and festivals, and create their own discursive and physical spaces. Through the underground media network and some early tours, the Olympia and Washington D.C. scenes moved from small scenes to the dual hubs of a national network.

Bands began to play all over the country and the scene swelled to a movement that now had dozens of bands and zines, annual festivals, record labels, a number of shoot-off causes and organizations, and some successful international tours. Feminism, sexism, violence, homophobia, and empowerment were all broad issues, but the details and discussions became highly localized as personal experience was brought in. This resulted in numerous chapters connected through broad ideas and means of communication, but individually defined by local politics, dynamics, and actors.<sup>43</sup> Zines expressing these ideas and weaving together chapters, came to be a particularly strong symbol and media format for the movement.

Zines are self-publications made in small numbers and distributed by the authors (known as "zinesters") or distribution channels set up by other authors. Most are

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<sup>42</sup> Corrigan, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Schilt, 120.

made using collage appliqué and reproduced on copy machines. Zines have a long history (starting with science fiction fans in the 1930s) and have served many functions, but they are currently utilized primarily by actors in music scenes.<sup>44</sup> Zines were central to the riot grrrl network and served as the main lines of communication connecting local scenes to the larger movement.<sup>45</sup> Chigley's explains that women, "have historically been encouraged to write diaries and letters," but now grrrls are blurring the public and private spheres, with the dialogues that have, "turned up in their zines."<sup>46</sup> Between 1991 and 1997, this network encompassed hundreds of zines,<sup>47</sup> the vast majority in North America and Europe.

#### International Riot Grrrl

The grrrl zine network built on top of trans-Atlantic communication lines established by punk distribution systems stretching back to the 1970s. Riot grrrl chapters began across the Atlantic, with the biggest forming from old punk scenes in the U.K. – especially in London and Leeds. Huggybear from London became the premier band, and a tour with Bikini Kill in Europe solidified Europe's participation in the riot grrrl movement. Dozens of zines and bands were established and scenes were formed in most major cities, causing a stir in media outlets such as *Melody Maker* and primetime talk shows.

Almost simultaneously, riot grrrl arrived in Brazil on the heels of punk zines and a tour by L7 in 1992. Brazilian grrrls that went to L7 shows saw for the first time a band formed entirely by women. In the following weeks, grrrls looked for similar music and found Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy and other emerging riot grrrl bands.<sup>48</sup> By the end of 1992, the first Brazilian riot grrrl band was formed in Brasília by a group of high school grrrls active in the punk scene and christened Bulimia. A few months later, their friends created Kaos Klitoriano, and the following year riot grrrl arrived in São Paulo with the founding of Dominatrix by sisters Elisa and Isabella.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For a brief history of zines in the riot grrrl network, see Corrigan 115-116.

<sup>45</sup> Marion Leonard, *Gender in the music industry: Rock, discourse, and girl power*, Ashgate popular and folk music series (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 118.

<sup>46</sup> Corrigan, 118.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Leonard collected over 160 for her research, but believes there were hundreds more that she was simply unable to find; she puts the number well over 400 (ibid).

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Flavia

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Bianca

Because most of this activity was through underground networks, it is difficult to gauge how far riot grrrl reached. Participation all over Europe as well as in Canada and Australia is well-documented, and Leonard's zine list includes one from Yamagata, Japan, published in the late 1990s. Brazil and to a lesser degree Argentina are on the map, though mostly through the contacts of a few bands, individual zinesters, and festival websites. A few networking websites for festivals and zines have registered individuals from countries other than the above, but the extent to which riot grrrl is known in youth cultures around the world is unknown.

As the momentum grew, mainstream labels began courting the most popular bands and the mainstream media became interested in reporting on the phenomenon. Following a number of offensive and inaccurate articles (including a magazine in which letters sent by Bikini Kill were edited beyond recognition and published with an unauthorized photo of several members in little clothing), a call for a media blackout was distributed through the zine network.<sup>50</sup>

It speaks to the power of the movement and collective identity that the media blackout was effective. Large media outlets put considerable pressure on individuals to provide information for widely-distributed pieces.<sup>51</sup> But the blackout held and for over a year the only accurate media released about riot grrrls was by the women themselves, distributed through zines.

The result killed the movement. Mainstream media wrote articles and filmed segments based on rumors and impressions. Riot grrrl became a marketable phenomenon instead of a political and artistic movement: the media's symbol for the movement was a clothing style (skirt, combat boots, and a band t-shirt) and the slogan of "Grrrl Revolution Now" became the Spice Girls' clichéd "Girl Power!"<sup>52</sup> The movement crumbled when young grrrls began to hear of riot grrrl through the mainstream media but followed the sugary aesthetic outlined on TV instead of the counterculture movement.<sup>53</sup> In the end, the core bands broke up and the actors vowed to continue their work in other arenas.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>51</sup> Koch, *Don't need you*.

<sup>52</sup> Leonard, *Gender in the music industry*, 158.

<sup>53</sup> Schilt, 124.

<sup>54</sup> Corrigan, 174.

## Legacy

Though the movement was short-lived, riot grrrl inspired tens of thousands of young grrrls, wrought changes in underground hierarchies, and established a base for further work. Jenny Toomey went on to found the Future of Music think tank; the self-defense organization Home Alive was founded in Mia Zapata's memory; Heavens to Betsy members formed the indie hallmark band Sleater-Kinney; Bikini Kill members formed political electro-pop band Le Tigre; and many of the record labels founded in this era continue to support gay and feminist artists (KRS, Mr. Lady, Chainsaw, and K records).<sup>55</sup>

The truth was that mainstream media could reach many more people in many more places than could any underground media network. While this spelled the end of U.S. riot grrrl by propagating a false image, the flipside was the international promotion of large, proto-riot grrrl bands that had risen to a position of influence during the grunge era. Lipsitz has argued that the power of transnational capital means that all of us must become transnational,<sup>56</sup> and the international music industry clearly demonstrates this theory as it distributes media, people, and technology all over the globe.

The unintended result of this distribution was that the same big label bands that had inspired Jenny Toomey and Kathleen Hannah (L7, Hole, and Joan Jett and the Blackhearts are the holy trinity in this respect) easily made their way across national borders to inspire women in other countries to form independent scenes. These three groups caused many young women to discover and delve further into the small underground world of grrrl rock, where many found Bikini Kill, Huggybear, Bratmobile, Heavens to Betsy, the zine network, and the new world of internet message boards and chat rooms. This was a story I heard over and over in Brazil, where Bulimia and Kaos Klitoriano in Brasília and Dominatrix in São Paulo were becoming the center of a growing scene.

## Global Industry, Local Scenes, and the Role of Technology

**R**iot grrrl is imbedded in global music industry structures as well as networks of loosely-connected local scenes. I attempt here to establish an understanding of the global music industry and how it fits into the fast-evolving

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<sup>55</sup> Raha, 223-230.

<sup>56</sup> Lipsitz, 17.

maze that is global communications. The global communications industry has been criticized by scholars, politicians, critics, and others who have expressed fear that the growth of this industry will lead to cultural homogenization. I intend here to counter this perspective using the work of previous scholars. As Condry argues, local scene interactions with these technologies are integral to shaping the paths of global forces<sup>57</sup> — these are not one-way, center-periphery flows.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Brazilian riot grrrl is one of the youth cultures demonstrating that widespread advances in technology facilitate *multidirectional* cultural channels.

The global communications industry consists of thousands of corporations, companies, small businesses, and entrepreneurs working through innumerable formal and informal channels. Much of this traffic is mediated through complex networks made up of companies specializing in distribution, translation, legal issues, marketing, etc., for specific countries.<sup>59</sup> ‘Global communications’ can be broken down into different sectors, which in turn have distinct ways of conducting business.

Within these interactive networks, I am interested in the international music industry. The global music industry is dominated by five companies that control eighty percent of the industry’s profits,<sup>60</sup> apart from the tens of thousands of independent labels, distributors, and bands, as well as amateur artists and those that support the structure with money and organizing efforts. Condry portrays the industry as a pyramid, with a small number of labels and artists at the top, making most of the profits and getting the most visibility. But supporting that top echelon is a broad base of artists, smaller labels, and clubs<sup>61</sup> where the line between producer and consumer is blurred.<sup>62</sup> Every producer is also a consumer and many consumers are amateur musicians, an activity highly encouraged by most scenes, and certainly within the do-it-yourself ethos of riot grrrl. As a metal grrrl told me, “If [grrrls] really like [the music], really feel it, they need to play to really show it. You don't need another person to show that.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, these networks do not break down along corporate/underground, commercial/amateur lines, but are in fact fluid.

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<sup>57</sup> Condry, 90.

<sup>58</sup> Sansone, 136.

<sup>59</sup> Tony Kiewel (Director of Artists & Repertoire at Sub Pop Records), interview with author, March 27, 2008, Seattle, WA.

<sup>60</sup> Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture*.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 19, 22, 90.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Leticia (bassist of *Voices of Hell*), interview with author, August 1, 2007, Goiânia, GO.

The global distribution of popular music and culture is nothing new. The traveling mandolin orchestras of the early 1900s or the evolution of Jamaican sound systems throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century are examples of the global scope of independent music scenes. It is the unprecedented access to mediums such as radio, TV, and the internet now available to billions across the globe that present us with a new and changing dynamic. The internet has allowed more people to have access to more music at a lower cost, and many artists are capitalizing on the opportunity to self-promote and self-distribute on increasingly larger scales. In this respect, Brazilian artists have done particularly well.

Sepultura and Os Mutantes, globally renowned Brazilian bands, owe a good part of their prominence to the internet. Harvey states that Os Mutantes's revival was enabled solely by advances in communication technology.<sup>64</sup> They were virtually unknown outside of Brazil during their prime in the 1970s, and only "discovered" by the U.S. grunge scene in the 1990s when the internet allowed an easier exchange of media across borders.<sup>65</sup> Sepultura grew to prominence in the international extreme metal scene through internet message boards and digitally-circulated tape trading lists.<sup>66</sup> Kahn-Harris chronicles how the global extreme metal scene was built transnationally through zines, letters, and tape trading, and that a switch to email has led to a proliferation of outlets that makes access to the scene easier.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, Cansei de Ser Sexy (CSS), a prominent band from the São Paulo riot grrrl community, exploded onto the U.S. market in 2005 after being signed to Seattle-based Sub Pop Records. Prior to Sub Pop, they had built their hype as the first band signed to a label under Tramavirtual, a Brazilian file sharing site.

The transaction costs and national barriers that are erased by internet networking are leading to further democratization of the music industry, a process that was begun by home studios and MIDI technology decades ago.<sup>68</sup> This is raising challenges to the hegemony of the U.S. entertainment industry on a global scale, and Brazilian riot grrrl is one of the sites where Western cultural hegemony is being called into question.

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<sup>64</sup> John J. Harvey, "Cannibals, Mutants, and Hipsters: The Tropicalist Revival," in *Brazilian popular music and globalization*, eds. Christopher Dunn and Charles A. Perrone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 120.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>66</sup> Harris, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Khan-Harris, 78.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Théberge, "'Plugged In': Technology and Popular Music," in *The Cambridge companion to pop and rock*, Cambridge companions to music, eds. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13.

Tony Kiewel, head of Artists and Repertoire (A & R) at Sub Pop, states that the lion's share of international presence goes to U.S. media because the U.S. simply has a better entertainment machine.<sup>69</sup> That said, hegemony of the U.S. entertainment industry, Kiewel adds, is not unchallenged. It is slipping, and it may fall considerably in the future. Sansone and Condry agree, but their research indicates that the underlying challenge is to Western – not just U.S. – dominance.

Sansone acknowledges the power of the U.S. entertainment industry in asserting that everyone has to come to terms with the existence of U.S. youth culture — everyone knows MTV. In Brazil, the U.S. media's portrayal of hip hop style was reflected in the development of *baile funk*. But MTV was not the only influence — *baile funk* also built on samples of funk from around the world, European techno, and Afro-Brazilian rhythms and instruments. This leads Sansone to assert that local youth cultures are based on international bricolages.<sup>70</sup> He then argues that through the synthesis of this bricolage into new forms, the music produced by the Black Atlantic periphery calls into question the hegemony of Western youth culture.<sup>71</sup>

To give weight to these statements, Japanese, French, Brazilian, and Israeli hip hop have begun to creep into international DJ repertoires through the success of a few individuals serving as vectors for media in their region. While the presence of these artists in the international dance, hip hop, and indie arenas is a milestone, it is important to note that these vectors are almost always individuals without the backing of multinational media conglomerates that market U.S. hip hop within their home countries — and they all come from middle to high income countries.

Kahn-Harris discusses these hierarchies in his study on networking within the global extreme metal scene. While the scene has survived through transnational connections and multidirectional channels, clear hierarchies between members from different countries have emerged. He explains this by stating that “Global flows of music are facilitated by global flows of capital that are subject to severe inequalities.”<sup>72</sup> However, because of an intentionally transnational network, the

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<sup>69</sup> Kiewel.

<sup>70</sup> Sansone, 138; Condry concurs (190). For a succinct example of international youth culture bricolage, consider Tigarrah's *Myspace* tagline: “The First Japanese Baile Funk Crunk Rapper” — six words spanning Japan, Brazil, the US, and cyberspace.

<sup>71</sup> Sansone, 138.

<sup>72</sup> Kahn-Harris, 13.

inequalities reproduced in the scene do not necessarily mirror those present in commercial structures.

Khan-Harris's statement holds true for the Brazilian riot grrrl scene. Members are intentional about combating sexism through youth culture and thus gender and age hierarchies are subverted. However, class structures are replicated through the assertion that true membership means playing in a band, which requires expensive instruments. In detailing the hierarchies in the global extreme metal scene, Khan-Harris places at the apex the privileged few from countries that subsidize artists; then those whose national economies make scene activity within the reach of most; and finally those who live where participation is limited to the upper classes.<sup>73</sup> All scenes, then, are imbedded in commercial structures and replicate to some degree the hierarchies created by those structures.

These barriers and opportunities are reflected in the history, structure, and frustrations of both U.S. and Brazilian riot grrrl scenes. Riot grrrl spread to Brazil through channels carved by new music technology and the fluidity of industry structures and networks. However, dialogue between the disparate national scenes is sparse, facilitated by a very small handful of transnational actors. These individuals are vectors that carry media, ideas, and news across national boundaries, but their limitations are reflected in the lack of U.S. grrrls' awareness of other scenes. Nevertheless, when Brazilian riot grrrl has entered the U.S. scene, it has garnered attention and received widespread support (take the success of CSS and the Dominatrix tour). Furthermore, Brazilian riot grrrls are not only attempting contact with the U.S. scene, a number of grrrls are in correspondence with scenes in Argentina, Spain, and Portugal. Through these channels, Brazilian riot grrrls distribute their own media which challenges international ideas of Brazilian femininity as tied to bossa nova, samba, and Carnaval.

#### Brazilian Cultural and Political Context

Riot grrrl came to Brazil following the drawn out transition to democracy, a prolonged period of volatile politics and economics.<sup>74</sup> Civilian governance had been gaining power since 1982 and the military dictatorship had officially ended in 1988 with a new constitution forged by nearly every sector of civil

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Smith, and Francisco Luiz Teixeira Vinhosa, *History of Brazil, 1500-2000: Politics, economy, society, diplomacy* (London, New Longman, 2002), 208-213.

society<sup>75</sup> - including significant contributions and visibility from the women's movement and the gay rights movement.<sup>76</sup> However, the transition had experienced numerous set-backs and blockages, and the 1980s became popularly known as "a lost decade."<sup>77</sup> The Brazilian riot grrrls grew up in this period and were coming of age during crippling inflation.

The transition to democracy began in 1982 with a campaign to create a democratic constitution. The campaign was strengthened by the authoritarian regime's inability to halt a hundred percent per annum rate of inflation, and in 1985 the two presidential candidates were civilians. However, hopes were dashed by the death of the popular president-elect, and the economic stabilization resulted in an exponential rise in the rate of inflation and generated violent strikes. Democracy was fully restored by the 1989 direct elections, and the presidency was assumed by Collor de Mello, a backwater governor whom campaigned on morality and anti-corruption. However, disillusionment in Brazil's political system was solidified when de Mello and his family were implicated in a large embezzlement scheme in 1992. By 1993, inflation topped a record 2,670 percent.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the lost decade of the 1980s, in which the riot grrrls had grown up, shifted to a new social crisis in the early 1990s while the Brazilian grrrls were coming of age. A newly liberated national press documented the presidential corruption scandal and initiated a high-profile investigation into the Carandiru massacre in 1992, the largest prison massacre in the country's history. While the two scandals demonstrated a freedom of the press unheard of under the previous military dictatorship – and signified an expansion in the communications network that encompassed L7's tour and promotion through MTV Brasil – press freedom was little comfort in the face of record inflation and political ineptitude.<sup>79</sup>

Sustained pressure throughout the 1980s eventually produced democracy and a comprehensive constitution that set forth unprecedented rights for indigenous

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<sup>75</sup> Teresa Pires do Rio Caldeira, *City of walls: Crime, segregation, and citizenship in São Paulo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 55.

<sup>76</sup> James N. Green, "The Gay and Lesbian Movement in Brazil," in *The Brazil reader: History, culture, politics*, The Latin America readers, eds. Robert Levine and John Crocitti (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 454; See also Jaqueline Pitanguy, "Bridging the Global and the Local: Feminism in Brazil and the International Human Rights Agenda," *Social Research* 69, no. 3 (2002): 805.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, 211.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 208-213.

<sup>79</sup> Caldeira 175-178; See also Teresa Meade. *A brief history of Brazil* (New York: Facts On File, 2002), 50.

groups, women, workers, and people of color, and set up a sweeping social welfare system.<sup>80</sup> The social changes that were promised in the constitution – one of the most progressive documents ever passed by any government in the Americas – have not been delivered.<sup>81</sup> While the government used the existence of this document to champion itself as the defender of the poor, women, and people of color, the progressive discourse failed to turn to action and as a result daily life continued as it had.<sup>82</sup> The outcome has been disillusionment and lowered expectations of the government.<sup>83</sup> The situation generated a discursive paradox in which institutionalized rights and the legal framework to enforce them exist, but in reality the recipients of these rights are denied access.<sup>84</sup>

Activists questioned this paradox using traditional political and academic channels as well as populist channels and underground networks.<sup>85</sup> Universities took advantage of the end of censorship to publish articles critical of the Brazilian body politic, and leftist politicians came back into the open by mounting campaigns against corruption, violence, and illiteracy.<sup>86</sup> Few succeeded in creating lasting change. Caldeira argues that democracy brought “the expansion of political citizenship but the delegitimization of civil citizenship.” Public space shrunk after democracy was re-introduced.<sup>87</sup> In this environment, the discursive spaces created by riot grrrl are even more significant.

#### Women in Brazil and the Role of Feminism

The last four decades have wrought incredible changes in the role of women throughout the world, and in Brazil this movement has been profound and radical. As Soares writes, the last century has been monumental for Brazilian women, “We can say that women, white and black, arrived at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century illiterate and ended with a level of schooling higher than that of [Brazilian] men.”<sup>88</sup> In addition, women have entered the work force in huge

<sup>80</sup> Charles H. Blake, *Politics in Latin America: The quests for development, liberty, and governance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 177-186; See also Pitanguy, 807.

<sup>81</sup> Meade, 186-7.

<sup>82</sup> See Mary Castro, and Laurence Hallewell, “Engendering Powers in Neoliberal Times in Latin America: Reflections from the Left on Feminisms and Feminisms,” *Latin American Perspectives* 28, no 6 (2001): 17-37.

<sup>83</sup> Smith, 214.

<sup>84</sup> Caldeira, 339.

<sup>85</sup> Castro and Hallewell.

<sup>86</sup> Caldeira’s book is an excellent example of the kind of things being published after this, and it chronicles a lot of these movements as well.

<sup>87</sup> Caldeira, 52.

<sup>88</sup> Soares, 164. My translation of: “Podemos dizer que as mulheres, brancas e negras, chegaram ao início do século XX analfabetas e terminaram com um nível de escolaridade maior do que os homens.”

numbers and penetrated a public sphere that thirty years ago was the exclusive arena of elite men.

Despite these successes, paradoxes and challenges remain. Brazilian women suffer high rates of domestic violence and some of the highest maternal death rates in Latin America. Women also make considerably less (up to 45 percent less) than men, suffer higher unemployment rates, and are more vulnerable to changes in the economy.<sup>89</sup> Very few women are in positions of power in politics and business, which Rago attributes to a modernization pattern that privileges the advancement of only those women that reproduce power relations and disrupt the status quo as little as possible.<sup>90</sup> Speaking on the reproduction of tradition power structures, Parker states that the rigid gender roles from colonial times became an ideological construct reflected in modern gender roles.<sup>91</sup> Chacham and Maia elaborate in their study, claiming that “The sexuality of the contemporary Brazilian woman is caught in the ambiguity between the progressive discourse and the traditional models.”<sup>92</sup> Fanny Mitchell acknowledges this in her discussion on expectations for young women, but notes that the reality is often different than the rhetoric.<sup>93</sup> Over time, these ideologies have been questioned and alternatives formed, but always in reference to older traditions.<sup>94</sup>

The opportunities available to Brazilian women began to change in the post-war years, with the massive entrance of women into the labor market and into the growing social movements. Feminism emerged as an intellectual movement among the university elite in the 1970s, but began collaborating with other social movements in the 1980s. Through these efforts, feminism became integrated into rural and urban periphery women’s movements, contributing significantly to the *abertura* process and the constitutional congress.<sup>95</sup> The most concrete success was the establishment of the first women’s police station in the world in 1985 (Delegacias de Defesa da Mulher or DDMs) and the proliferation of such stations around the country. These have “demystified the sacred character of the

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<sup>89</sup> Castro.

<sup>90</sup> Rago, 36

<sup>91</sup> Leu, 17.

<sup>92</sup> Chacham and Maia, 85. My translation of: “A sexualidade da mulher brasileira contemporânea está presa na ambigüidade do discurso progressista a dos modelos tradicionais.”

<sup>93</sup> Fanny Mitchell, “Family Life in Recife,” in *The Brazil reader: History, culture, politics*, The Latin America readers, eds. Robert Levine and John Crocitti (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 341.

<sup>94</sup> Leu, 18.

<sup>95</sup> Soares, 170-175

family... making violence against women visible”<sup>96</sup> and taken such violence out of the private sphere and placed it firmly in the public.<sup>97</sup>

From the 1990s to now, the feminist movement institutionalized itself and introduced debates regarding space for women in power and the polemic topic of abortion, which is illegal.<sup>98</sup> Rago states that “The only revolution that truly succeeded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was that of the feminists, provoking not only access to full citizenship for women, but a phenomenon equally profound if less perceptible... the feminization of culture.”<sup>99</sup> The riot grrrls bridge these two phenomena by acting simultaneously in cultural and political arenas through performances, youth media, and NGOs.

#### Music, Politics, and the Academy in Brazil

Music is strongly tied to Brazilian national identity, most intimately through samba as the, “national music,”<sup>100</sup> and bossa nova as its image abroad.<sup>101</sup> The connection between popular music and Brazilian identity has resulted in strong ties between music, politics, and academics. Samba in particular became a manifestation of nationalism in the mid-twentieth century and its production was explicitly encouraged by the government.<sup>102</sup> At the same time, *tropicalia* and bossa nova, developed during the dictatorship, were highly critical of the Brazilian political atmosphere and reached prominence through exiled artists.<sup>103</sup> Musical Popular Brasileira (MPB) also generated political commentary, but as it was produced almost exclusively within Brazil, it was veiled in complex metaphor until *abertura* in the 1980s.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Saffioti, 46. My translation of: “demistific[aram] o caráter sagrado da família... tornando visível a violência contra mulheres.”

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Though from personal and anecdotal experience, very common. Top doctors frequently provide abortions for a high fee (R\$1000-\$10,000, keep in mind that the federal monthly minimum wage is R\$500), but abortions are extremely risky for those that cannot afford private clinics; feminist organizations estimate that thousands of women die from complications every year.

<sup>99</sup> Rago, 33. My translation of “A única revolução que realmente vingou, no século XX, foi a feminista, provocando não apenas o acesso das mulheres à cidadania, mas acentuando um fenômeno igualmente profundo, embora menos perceptível, pelo menos até recentemente: a feminização da cultura.”

<sup>100</sup> See John P. Murphy, “Samba: Brazil’s National Music,” in *Music in Brazil: experiencing music, expressing culture*, Global music series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1-27.

<sup>101</sup> Charles A. Perrone, and Christopher Dunn, “Chiclete com Banana,”: Internationalization in Brazilian Popular Music,” in *Brazilian popular music and globalization*, eds. Christopher Dunn and Charles A. Perrone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 16.

<sup>102</sup> Murphy, 7-18; Perrone and Dunn and Perrone, 31-32.

<sup>103</sup> Christopher Dunn, *Brutality garden: Tropicalia and the emergence of a Brazilian counterculture* (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 47.

<sup>104</sup> Chris McGowan, and Ricardo Pessanha, *The Brazilian sound: samba, bossa nova, and the popular music of Brazil* (New York: Billboard Books, 1991), 78.

The Brazilian academy and popular music have been close since the *modernismo*<sup>105</sup> movement of the early twentieth century. Gilberto Freyre, stated that “black song forms, black dances, mixed with traces of [Portuguese song traditions]... are perhaps the best thing that Brazil has to offer.”<sup>106</sup> Camus apparently agreed, and samba and bossa nova became top Brazilian exports following the making of *Black Orpheus* in 1959.<sup>107</sup> However, racism and classism were inherent in these statements and productions.<sup>108</sup> Official state rhetoric during the dictatorship promoted the idea of Brazil as a harmonious “racial democracy.” This was echoed in most of the cultural production sanctioned by the state – especially through samba exaltação<sup>109</sup> - and has only recently been widely critiqued in Brazilian society.<sup>110</sup>

In more recent years, prominent Brazilian musicians have published articles that bring academic writing to popular arenas. Caetano Veloso and Chico Buarque have been prolific in this sense, though Tom Zé merits a mention as well.<sup>111</sup> The result, Robert Stam argues, is that popular music has been more successful than any other area of Brazilian culture in keeping itself on the social edge, being at once pleasurable and political, local and cosmopolitan, popular and experimental.<sup>112</sup> Thus, with a strong history of popular music in the public sphere, it is not by chance that riot grrrl became an arena in Brazilian civil society through which young grrrls could generate debate.

Despite popular music’s role as an active and experimental facet of civil society, Brazilian popular music and national rock culture follow the international norm as a male-dominated, if not exclusively male, sphere.<sup>113</sup> Murphy states that women are discouraged from participation in traditional genres excepting

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<sup>105</sup> A movement that encouraged the development of Brazilian artistic culture through selective fusion of European and folk tradition.

<sup>106</sup> Murphy, 14.

<sup>107</sup> Charles A. Perrone, “Myth, Melopeia, and Mimesis: *Black Orpheus*, *Orfeu*, and Internationalization in Brazilian Popular Music,” in *Brazilian popular music and globalization*, eds. Christopher Dunn and Charles A. Perrone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 46.

<sup>108</sup> Most of the profits from *Black Orpheus* went to the French side of the production – nearly everything was done to minimize the money paid to Brazilian actors and artists. See Perrone, 53.

<sup>109</sup> Samba exaltation, which were “romantic patriotism” sambas. See Perrone and Dunn, 13.

<sup>110</sup> Pitanguy, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Perrone and Dunn, 10; See also Caetano Veloso, “Carmen Mirandada,” in *Brazilian popular music and globalization*, eds. Christopher Dunn and Charles A. Perrone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 39.

<sup>112</sup> Dunn, 10.

<sup>113</sup> See Bennett, *Popular music and youth culture*; See also Mitchell, *Global noise*; See also Sheila Whiteley, *Sexing the groove*; and Sara Cohen, “Men Making a Scene: Rock Music and the Production of Gender,” in *Sexing the groove: popular music and gender*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (London: Routledge, 1997), 17-36.

specific singing and dancing roles.<sup>114</sup> While independent female singers Rita Lee of Os Mutantes, Gal Costa, Maria Bethania, (tropicalia)<sup>115</sup> and Adriana Calcanhato (bossa nova) are significant role models that counter the objectification of female Brazilian artists (epitomized by Portuguese-born Carmen Miranda), female instrumental musicians are unaccounted for. Despite strong influence from Os Mutantes, Brazil's rock movements from the Jovem Guardia pop rock of the 1960s to punk and death metal in the late 1980s have ignored the few female participants and their contributions.<sup>116</sup>

After *abertura*, youth cultures took different routes than political movements, and breaking into the different *tribos*<sup>117</sup> that persist today.<sup>118</sup> *Baile funk* celebrated a decrease in military presence by creating huge dance parties in the *favelas*,<sup>119</sup> and brought a number of *favelado* DJs to national prominence – though mostly through songs about dancing and *popozão*.<sup>120</sup> The *favelado* youth of São Paulo, in contrast, created a dynamic rap scene that publicized critiques which had previously been violently censored. The metal scene critiqued the “civic mythology of Brazilian democracy” through destroying symbols (such as crosses) in a “poetic strategy of negation.”<sup>121</sup> The punk movement energized the middle class youth of São Paulo and Brasília with social commentary (which broke down in the 1990s), even as it reproduced the social structures it claimed to critique.<sup>122</sup> The punk and metal grrrls, excluded from male-dominated stages, formed the riot grrrl scene.

Riot grrrl linked at least one part of youth culture to the political movements. The scene established a place where grrrls could have huge parties as well as critique current events and network for feminist projects.<sup>123</sup> This is reflected in the long-standing goals articulated by those I interviewed, which included

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<sup>114</sup> Murphy, 156.

<sup>115</sup> McGowan and Pessanha, 185.

<sup>116</sup> Harris, 14; Murphy, 156.

<sup>117</sup> While the “tribes” theory has been discarded in most intellectual circles, Brazilian academics acknowledge that it still describes many of the youth cultures that are present in Brazil today, especially in the larger cities.

<sup>118</sup> Abramo, cited by Melo, 4. From Erica Isabel Melo from “*Riot Grrrl: feminismo na cultura juvenil punk*.” Presented at the conference *Fazendo gênero*. Florianópolis, August 28-30, 2006.

<sup>119</sup> Sansone, 139.

<sup>120</sup> *Popozão* is one of the many words that literally means “large ass.” Big butts get the same kind of attention in Brazil that big breasts often do in the States.

<sup>121</sup> Avelar, 128, 133, 134.

<sup>122</sup> Entrevista com Bianca.

<sup>123</sup> Mayra (bassist of The BIGGS and vocals and bassist for The Dealers), interview by author, October 20, 2007, Goiânia, GO; Elisa Gargulio (co-organizer of Ladyfest Brasil, director of Quiteria, guitarist for Fantasminas, vocalist and lead guitar for Dominatrix), interview by author, October 18, 2007, São Paulo, SP.

expanding riot grrrl from a network to a national movement, fully integrating feminism into youth culture, and establishing a widely recognized safe space for women in every rock scene.<sup>124</sup>

Riot grrrl came to Brazil during a prolonged period of volatile politics and economics, the oft-documented environment for the rise of new forms of radical political music.<sup>125</sup> After decades of repression and a broad popular movement that had toppled the twenty-five year dictatorship, the population believed that positive change was imminent. Yet democracy plunged Brazil into the lowest of lows in memory. The first Brazilian riot grrrls were informed both by the national discursive paradox and the contradictions that they saw in the selectively progressive underground rock scene, and they used grrrl rhetoric to link the pleasure and support of youth culture with the activism and aspirations of change in established political movements. The result was the creation of a cohesive national riot grrrl scene that has continued to generate critique and debate.

#### Discussion: Transnational Riot Grrrl Themes and Activities

Riot grrrl is a movement of young feminist artists that simultaneously challenges the ideas and positions of older feminists and the sexism embedded in grrrls' societies. As it moves across borders, riot grrrl becomes a form of transnational feminism – and grrrls must address how ideas and material originating in a given locale may resonate, change, or delegitimize ideas and work in another. This is a central premise of Mohanty's comparative feminist studies pedagogy, and transnational riot grrrl addresses this only in part, due to the Brazilian scene's invisibility to many U.S. and European grrrls. Brazilian grrrls are keenly aware of how central riot grrrl themes clash with the rhetoric espoused by their peers. They express frustration that simply claiming "feminist" as a title is still an extremely charged statement in Brazil, one that can be labeled as anti-man or neo-colonialist. In addressing this problem, Brazilian grrrls opt to intensify connections with both feminist movements and youth culture in an attempt to affect wider change through deepening ties.

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<sup>124</sup> Elisa, October 18, 2007; Mayra, October 20, 2007; Attetika, Bullas (co-organizer of Festival Nacional Punk Feminino, vocalist of SpunkE, bassist of Poser Pride, web designer), interview by author, August 1, 2007, Goiânia, GO

<sup>125</sup>See Condry, *Hip hop Japan*; See also Cohen, "Men Making a Scene".

## Lyrics

Mohanty discusses the importance of analyzing the micropolitics in everyday life - the larger implications drawn from daily experience that coalesce into larger trends.<sup>126</sup> Riot grrrl art and rhetoric hone in on this assertion. Riot grrrl is about expressing and supporting what individual grrrls go through - it is an enactment of “the personal is political.” Thus, when I asked what groups or individuals sung or wrote about, most participants would list off macro-political topics and often end by relating those to their personal lives. Bianca and Mayra, who have both been in and out of riot bands for ten years, shrugged this off as obvious and put it succinctly:

Mayra: The themes are women’s position in society, space for youth; the stuff that I live.<sup>127</sup>

Bianca: It all came from conversations, from our worries – very literal.<sup>128</sup>

The literal and direct use of lyrics to address issues in daily life and society writ large is a characteristic that the Brazilian scene shares with its U.S. counterpart - and with other branches of third wave feminism. Following in the punk tradition, lyrics are often stark and explicit, leaving no room for misinterpretation.

Both Bikini Kill and Bulimia were bands that kick-started their local scenes in Olympia and Brasilia, respectively. At the beginning of their careers both bands wrote songs that impelled grrrls to stand up for themselves. Bianca’s band Bulimia demonstrates riot grrrl themes articulated through direct lyrics throughout their one full-length release, *O Maior Erro que Cometiu Foi Julgar Incapaz*.<sup>129</sup> This is particularly evident in “Chegou a Hora”:<sup>130</sup>

500 years in Brazil, and what has changed?  
 How old are you and what have you changed?  
 To judge incapable was the worst error committed  
 A rational individual is a God in actuality  
 To think is your weapon against this oppression

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<sup>126</sup> Mohanty, 22.

<sup>127</sup> Mayra, October 20, 2007.

<sup>128</sup> Bianca (lead guitarist of Bulimia and Pulso), interview by author, October 20, 2007, Brasilia, DF.

<sup>129</sup> Translates to “The Biggest Error Committed was to Judge Incapable”

<sup>130</sup> Translates to “The Time has Arrived”

It just depends on you to make the REVOLUTION!<sup>131</sup>

This song directly connects the composers and audience to Brazilian history. It empowers the individual and at the same time questions organized religion and the state, through claiming that a rational individual committed to change is holy and then through a call for revolution that simultaneously references radical Brazilian politics and the Riot Grrrl Manifesto.

The lyrics of Bikini Kill's "Double Dare Ya," especially the first two lines, literally became a rallying cry. It also demands reclamation of the word 'girl', a key point in with early riot grrrls who felt that feminist academics had cut young grrrls out of feminist identities and discourses.<sup>132</sup>

We're bikini kill and we want revolution  
Girl-style now!!!

Hey girlfriend  
I got a proposition  
Goes something like this:  
Dare ya to  
Do what you want  
Dare ya to  
Be who you will  
Dare ya to  
Cry right out loud  
You get so emotional baby<sup>133</sup>

Bikini Kill imbues these trite phrases heard throughout a grrrl's life with a new sense of meaning. The childhood 'double dare ya,' the teenage 'hey girlfriend,' and the young adult 'you get so emotional, baby' are redeployed within lyrics that relate a 'grrrl-style revolution' to different stages of growing up. Riot grrrls take youth culture styles and phrases and relate them directly to empowerment and action. These calls take different forms, and different grrrls have very different ideas on what kinds of actions should and can be taken, but the importance of young people making visible change is diffused throughout.

A number of grrrls that I interviewed also pointed out that while their lyrics might not directly discuss corruption, abortion, or the roles of church and state

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<sup>131</sup> Bulimia, "Chegou A Hora," *Se julgar incapaz foi o maior erro que cometeu* (Protons, 1999).

<sup>132</sup> Leonard, 117.

<sup>133</sup> Bikini Kill, "Double Dare Ya," *CD Version of the First Two* (Kill Rock Stars, 1994).

as Bulimia does, they were already making a strong statement by being women in charge of artistic and cultural production:

Flavia: Not all of the lyrics are explicitly political. But to be in a girl band it's already political. Women playing music is political.<sup>134</sup>

Kerby: There's something inherently political about having all girls on stage, all girls playing rock. Especially when you bring in the technology thing - Fantasma is all about technology but it's only girls involved in this very traditionally male thing. However, with the lyrics and the performances, we're more interested in producing art than being obviously political.<sup>135</sup>

Flavia and Kerby note that, given the sexism in Brazil and throughout the international rock community, they don't need to directly address politics to implicate themselves in critiques of power. Simply playing on stage as a woman challenges the hierarchies implicit in the wider rock culture. Bayton's work on *grrrls and technology* analyzes this sentiment in music shops, clubs, engineering firms, and elsewhere, and her theories are supported by a number of other scholars who have noted similar trends of discouragement, disbelief, belittling, and derision when *grrrls* use music technology in front of men.<sup>136</sup>

Others commented that while they did not always intend to deal directly with politics or feminism in their songs, these themes came up anyway when writing about their experiences:

Lovelace: We sing about the things that happen to us – no specific ideology, but feminism comes up. We make lyrics that talk about us.<sup>137</sup>

Plano Proximo: We write lyrics that are simple, not pretentious, but we have critiques. Not on every song, but on some.

...Organized life, middle class rules, social critiques. Other *realidades* exist.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Flavia, October 20, 2007.

<sup>135</sup> Ferris, Kerby (drummer and lead vocals for Fantasma, web designer), interview by author, October 17, 2007, São Paulo, SP

<sup>136</sup> See Cohen, "Men Making a Scene"; See also Paul Théberge, "Plugged In': Technology and Popular Music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, eds. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>137</sup> Lovelace (Natalia, vocals; Estefanie, guitar; Tallita, bass; Cassiana, drums), interview by author, October 20, 2007, Goiânia, GO.

Feminism, social roles, and national politics are so imbedded in the scene and in individual's lives that these issues come out even when bands originally did not intend them to. The challenges inherent in playing as a woman are what ties personal experience to large political issues in riot grrrl. The further challenges to young women organizing spaces in Brazil make the analysis of the everyday even more pertinent. In this way, riot grrrl becomes the *necessary* link between political issues and movements and youth culture.

#### Activism

Brazil doesn't have a history of feminism; it's not ok just to be a feminist. People think you're anti-man or a lesbian. Our culture, our government, doesn't pay attention to [alternative] education.<sup>139</sup>

Flavia speaks of a frustration that was echoed throughout the riot grrrl scene, especially by the organizers. The term 'feminist' is a highly charged and stigmatized term throughout the country, especially in hyper-masculine rock cultures. Long-standing feminist organizations have had a large impact on contemporary Brazil, much of it manifest in policy constructed during the *abertura* and ongoing debates on sexuality and abortion.<sup>140</sup> Brazilian feminists have had considerable success in creating a women's movement spanning class and race,<sup>141</sup> but programming has a lot of blind spots, such as the youth population:

Elisa: The older feminists... will say I sold out; I'm not being feminist doing something like this. It'll be "oh, Elisa, that young one..."

Kerby: Yea, but there's a lot of problems with that feminist movement, especially when it comes to youth culture. It's removed. They missed the boat. Fuck, they missed the coast line.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Plano Proximo (Carol, vocals and keytar; Raquel, bass; Gustavo, drums; Daniel, guitar), interview by author, October 20, 2007, Goiânia, GO.

<sup>139</sup> Flavia, October 20, 2007.

<sup>140</sup> Pitanguy, 5.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ferris and Gargiulo, October 17, 2007.

Elisa and Kerby speak to some of the tensions within the scene and the Brazilian women's movement. While feminism is a central tool in the scene and the lives of individual riot grrrls, ageism and competition for scarce funding in the larger national and regional movements present obstacles. Through feminist rhetoric and individuals active in both arenas despite the conflicts, riot grrrl is a link between the older feminist movement and youth culture.

Grrrls who are both organizers and musicians have intensified their connection to older feminist networks and individuals through direct political activism. Elisa organizes Ladyfest Brasil, attends conferences around the world, and founded Quiteria, an advocacy organization that works with young lesbians.<sup>143</sup> Andreia works with Centro Popular da Mulher as a coordinator;<sup>144</sup> Bullas designs websites and writes educational articles for feminist groups; and university students involved in Juiz de Fora's Mulheres na Volante<sup>145</sup> festival formed an anarchist-feminist collective and organize women's demonstrations in the capitol with an older organization.

While most of my interviewees mentioned feminism as part of their world view, a small but significant number talked about feminism as a strategy for survival in dealing with past violence and *machismo*:

Elisa: I saw this blog that this girl had written and she was about how I'd inspired her and feminism has been her life and if it leaves - if we leave or stop - she can't live. It's making sure that something will always be there, that you have something permanent that holds the scene together, inspires people, gives security.

Isabella: As long as we keep getting letters from the middle of the jungle, from a tiny, three person town in the Amazon, from some girl saying, "Feminism saved my life, thank you," we will keep doing it.<sup>146</sup>

All of these women say that the purpose of their activities is to devise new strategies and build a national movement of young feminists that is stronger than

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<sup>143</sup> Gargulio, Elisa (co-organizer of Ladyfest Brasil, director of Quiteria, guitarist for Fantasminas, vocalist and lead guitar for Dominatrix), interview by author, August 20, 2007, São Paulo, SP

<sup>144</sup> participant observation notes, July 29, 2007, Goiânia, GO

<sup>145</sup> MnV was a feminist cultural festival in June 2007. Translates to "Women at the Wheel."

<sup>146</sup> Shepherd, 52.

the scene network.<sup>147</sup> In these statements, the link between youth culture and feminist movements results in grrrls working towards a stronger youth *movement* – not just a more cohesive or prolific scene.

#### Riot Grrrl Sexuality

Sexuality is a central theme in riot grrrl and in Brazilian feminists' debates. While rock has always been extremely sexual – rock 'n' roll is a '50s euphemism for sex – female sexuality is usually prescribed.<sup>148</sup> Riot grrrl set out to deconstruct this. Their challenge to traditional rock sexuality was threefold: first, riot grrrls asserted themselves as sexual beings. Secondly, many of the grrrls were queer,<sup>149</sup> a sexual minority invisible in rock until that point. Finally, riot grrrl developed in direct response to scene violence, including sexual assault at shows and the alleged rape of a number of women by popular punk musicians.

These three challenges are manifest in the Brazilian scene as well. Grrrls discuss and act on their sexuality, and build these articulations into music and other art forms. The scene is the main community space outside of bars for young lesbians, who play a larger role in the Brazilian scene than in the U.S. counterpart. Finally, sexual violence is actively discussed and prevented.

Young queer women have held a number of key roles in riot grrrl, and in the US in particular riot grrrl was closely associated with queercore. However, the young dyke community is almost synonymous with the riot grrrl scene in Brazil.<sup>150</sup> This has resulted in the scene being the only space for young lesbians to gather as a politically active community, and continues in part because of the plurality of roles it plays in young queer Brazilians' lives. As Mayra explained:

The scene liberated, in the gay *realidade* it brought a space where we could be open. If you think in this way it will last forever because it's created this space where we can continue making

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<sup>147</sup> Gargiulo, October, 17, 2007; Flavia 20 October 20, 2007; Attetika, Bullas (co-organizer of Festival Nacional Punk Feminino, vocalist of SpunkE, bassist of Poser Pride, web designer), interview by author, August 1, 2007, Goiânia, GO.

<sup>148</sup> Reynolds and Press, 204.

<sup>149</sup> There are multiple take upon the word "queer." Though it is most widely known as an epithet, it has been reclaimed in many places as a word of identification for young people that denotes undefined sexuality – allowing many young people to define their sexual identity in their own terms. It has also entered academia through Queer Theory. The term is still extremely controversial, though, and there are plenty of gay and lesbian identified people that refuse to use the word. I use it here because it is widely used in riot grrrl media.

<sup>150</sup> Mayra, October 20, 2007; Elisa, October 18, 2007.

cultural changes and critiques. And it's a place where we can hook up.<sup>151</sup>

Thus, for Mayra and many other grrrls, the scene was a break through as an alternative to gay bars and the gay rights movement where young lesbians could both engage in debates and fulfill objectives in their social lives. Similarly, when Bullas and Andreia talk about expanding the scene to be a movement of young feminists, Bullas (only half jokingly) alluded to the role it plays for her as a lesbian:

CM: What more do you want to see?

Bullas: More people participating - writing articles and playing [music].

Andreia: More consciousness.

Bullas: Yea.

Bullas:...more hot girls!

Again, the scene is simultaneously a place where Andreia and Bullas can articulate issues through songs, write articles on the role of feminism in youth culture,<sup>152</sup> and enjoy themselves as sexual people. One of Elisa's projects, Quitéria, references this in the "What is Quitéria?" blurb on the back of the zines and pamphlets the NGO produces:

Feminism, a fight for social change, produces an immense quantity of culture and – why not? – fun. Bands, zines, books, discussions at the bar, all of this is a little more, consolidated in a young feminist culture in Brazil over more than 10 years. Put riot grrrl + Brazil in google and you'll be certain. Quitéria is the bar for intellectual grrrls, the all-grrrl punk show, and the dyke party – so go play there!<sup>153</sup>

#### Beauty Standards and Eating Disorders

As evidenced in the past three sections, the themes addressed in riot grrrl art and activism are numerous, and I do not have the data or the space to provide a detailed analysis of even a representative sample. I have chosen one issue to discuss in detail and elaborate on the plurality of original strategies that riot grrrls employ in their work. While the riot grrrl scene provides a forum through

<sup>151</sup> Mayra, October 20, 2007.

<sup>152</sup> Bullas writes such articles on a national website.

<sup>153</sup> Elisa Gargulio, and Geisa França, *Para Jovens Lésbicas: Consenso Sexual* (São Paulo: Quitéria, 2007).

which grrrls can be open about their sexualities, the pressures of femininity are not erased. This is clear in rigid beauty standards and resultant eating disorders. Eating disorders are a widespread problem amongst Brazilian women – a series of deaths resulting from anorexia produced a national scandal last year<sup>154</sup> – and riot grrrls are not immune.

Parker analyzed the characters in Jorge Amado's *O Pais do Carnaval* as part of his analysis of Brazilian gender representation. Amado posits Carnaval as a central part of national identity and Parker extends this to address the gender roles reinforced and subverted through Carnaval. He argues that this national identity is referenced against an authoritarian attitude towards female sexuality<sup>155</sup> that continues to influence Brazilian gender roles.<sup>156</sup> This national idea of beauty and sexuality extend through Brazilian women's lives, including riot grrrl. I will use this micro-discourse with examples from songs and riot grrrls' personal lives to illustrate how this impacts individuals and the channels that they in turn use to voice their critiques of these dynamics.

SpunkE's song "Barbie Doll" criticizes the Barbie effect on grrrls' self-image. Band composer Bullas addresses the issues of growing up, sexuality, and beauty standards:

It seemed so simple  
It was we without me  
Our eyes were different  
Your passions so innocent

I don't understand why  
You forgot to grow  
Girls all the same  
(a fool of a doll)

Are the norm in this familiar model<sup>157</sup>

Bullas, doesn't see herself reflected in the beauty ideal presented by Barbie to her peers. Her eyes aren't blue and she isn't a heterosexual virgin. She ridicules

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<sup>154</sup> Larry Rohter, "Burst of High-Profile Anorexia Deaths Unsettle Brazil," *The New York Times*, December 30, 2006.

<sup>155</sup> This has a racialized component as well – the story goes that white, upper-class women remain in the home, viewing from afar, while the men socialize and are seduced by the beautiful mulattas who come down from the *favelas* for the party. See Leu, 15-17.

<sup>156</sup> Leu, 16.

<sup>157</sup> SpunkE, "Barbie Doll," *SpunkE EP* (SpunkE {Unreleased}).

both those that enforce these beauty standards and the women that follow them as bland and infantile. Her angle is similar to “Typical Girls” by London-based The Slits:

Who invented the typical girl?  
Who's bringing out the new improved model?  
And there's another marketing ploy  
Typical girl gets the typical boy<sup>158</sup>

The Slits point to the industry-created, heterosexual model that places huge pressures on grrrls’ lives, instructing them how to act in nearly every instance (the rest of the song lists everything that the ‘typical girl’ is made off). In the end they conclude that the typical girl gets the typical boy – a pointless prize in their eyes. Bullas and other riot grrrls put a queer spin on this theme.

Through song lyrics and other forms Brazilian riot grrrls have very explicitly used their art forms to highlight beauty pressures – in particular how pressures manifest in crippling eating disorders. Bulimia was the first Brazilian riot grrrl band and they chose their name as a statement about the pressures grrrls face. According to their Tramavirtual profile:

Bulimia – this was the name chosen by the band. The name of a disease that attacks so many women, obeying a standard of beauty dictated by the media. There couldn’t be a better [name] for a band that struggles against the *machista* and patriarchal culture of our society that treats women as simple objects who should follow patriarchal stereotypes of beauty in order to be accepted.

Bulimia points to a combination of media and *machismo* as the driving forces behind these standards. They then use their band name and self-produced media to highlight and critique this issue, calling on the riot grrrl movement to present grrrls with alternative images.

Two riot grrrls with whom I spoke in Goiânia reported eating disorders. One of them dealt with severe depression through bulimia and the other’s mother forced her to take diet pills. These standards are enforced within the rock scene as well, and sometimes within riot grrrl, as Flavia explains “. . .people think that if you’re not skinny or you don’t have the haircut, you’re not rock.”<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> The Slits, “Typical Girls,” *Cut* (Island Records, 1979).

<sup>159</sup> Flavia, October 20, 2007.

Thus, it is apparent that the riot grrrl scene is firmly embedded within contemporary Brazilian culture in many ways – membership does not allow women to escape pressures present in Brazilian society writ large. But the scene and individual actors within it denounce these pressures and in many ways provide grrrls with support and the tools to address these issues. By connecting itself to both the national feminist movement and the transnational riot grrrl network, the scene has the cultural resources to critique the hegemony of *machista* culture in Brazil through thought, art, and action.

#### Organizing and Sustaining the National Scene

Riot grrrl has been characterized from the beginning by unique interactions with a variety of media forms. The zine network was integral to the movement's cohesion and was a source of empowerment and energy. Many of these self-publications served to directly critique images, ideas, and methods used by conventional media outlets with respect to grrrls. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the fragmentation of U.S. riot grrrl was due largely to prolonged clashes with media produced outside of the scene. Thus, many riot grrrls are wary of any media coverage produced outside of the scene's control. While this sentiment is clearly present in the Brazilian scene, many actors within the scene have developed media management strategies that embrace at least some outside media involvement. I argue that these strategies have contributed to scene continuity in Brazil and are necessary to connect youth cultures, many of which rely on mainstream media distribution, and political struggles, which often lack wide public support due to a lack of coverage.

#### Media Literacy

From television to internet networking sites to street advertising, media channels can be found in abundance in Brazil. Most of the media that Brazilians interact with daily is produced by large national and international corporations, especially the Globo conglomerate. Despite this lack of local control, Dunn notes that “marginalized urban communities in Brazil have been remarkably successful in maximizing media resources in order to intervene in local, national, and international cultural production.”<sup>160</sup> Though Dunn refers to Black artists from urban *favelas*, this statement applies to strategies used by the riot grrrl community (albeit their marginalization takes a different form). Riot grrrl's

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<sup>160</sup> Dunn, 31.

continuity in Brazil is due in large part to the innovative use of multiple media channels by actors in the scene.

Organizers in the Brazilian scene utilize internet networking and digital media, as well as the historically powerful television networks, to promote their work and build community. The internet is for the Brazilian scene what the zine network was to the U.S and the U.K. fifteen years ago. Through both a rise in private computer ownership and a huge surge in cheap internet cafes throughout the country, the internet has become the chief medium for everything – interpersonal communication, inter-group communication, promotions, maintaining intercity ties, distributing tracks, and finding new material.

Andreia keeps in contact with other riot grrrls through networking sites and instant messaging. I interviewed her at her house in Goiânia while she maintained eight instant message conversations – one with her co-organizer Bullas, one with Elisa in São Paulo, one with a friend in Spain, and five others with other Goiânian scenesters; internet activity reinforces both local and translocal connections. While Goiânia has a thriving rock scene, the city is an inconsequential ranching settlement as far as the Paulistas – or those from any bigger city – are concerned. Andreia complained to me about this several times and Leticia spoke about having to leave if she actually wanted to go anywhere with her music.<sup>161</sup> Internet organizing and exchange connect more geographically remote areas to hubs like Rio and São Paulo, and to activity in countries such as Spain, Portugal, and the U.S.

Even when a grrrl uses a different media format, she tends to link it to the internet. The three the zinesters that I interviewed used the internet in direct connection with zine activities and a much larger number of grrrls did self-publishing solely on the internet. For example, when Bruna talked about zines in our first interview, she almost immediately passed me a website that she writes for that is circulated nationally.<sup>162</sup> Likewise, Virginia considers zines integral to her art and activism, though while she has hooked into both a local and international network, she made most of her initial connections through the internet.

The internet serves as a channel through which grrrls can overcome geographical barriers. Despite Goiânia's relative seclusion, Bullas and Andreia have fomented

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<sup>161</sup> Leticia (bassist of Voices of Hell), interview by author, August 1, 2007, Goiânia, GO.

<sup>162</sup> Bruna Provazzi (co-organizer of Mulheres no Volante and guitarist of Big Hole), interview by author, August 4, 2007, Juiz de Fora, MG.

enough interest through the internet about Festival Nacional de Punk Feminino that grrrls from all over the country are willing to bus, drive, and fly to a city they would otherwise never visit. The connections made at the festival create national awareness of the activity in Goiânia. Furthermore, the festival allows for two youth cultures – the Goiânia indie scene (mostly metalheads) and the national riot grrrl scene – to meet and interact with the older feminist activists invited by the organizers.

Riot grrrls' use of the internet maintains local, national, and international connections and creates a space in the scene for localities that were not formerly part of the scene network. While Brazilian riot grrrls demonstrate deep thematic affinities with their U.S. and European counterparts, they have developed different media management strategies as a result of geography and the political economy of telecommunications. Grrrls' placement within Brazil limits the effectiveness of some strategies developed in the U.S., but also presents them with alternatives used successfully by other youth cultures in Brazil. One of these is the strategic collaborations between grrrls and MTV Brasil.

In a bid for national unity and votes, the federal government funded the development of country-wide telecommunications networks that supported radio and later television, pushing viewership rates higher than literacy rates in the 1970s.<sup>163</sup> Television has remained central in the lives of most Brazilians, and perhaps unsurprisingly, MTV Brasil has been an important media outlet for the Brazilian riot grrrl scene. MTV promoted Hole, L7, The Donnas, and other mainstream U.S. girl bands (as well as São Paulo bands Dominatrix and CSS) that have led young Brazilians to the riot scene. MTV Brasil is a semi-autonomous subsidiary of the U.S. channel, employing mostly Brazilians and producing most of its own programming. Strategic coverage of riot grrrl activity is perpetuated through the presence of riot grrrls in the film industry, especially on the MTV Brasil staff. Of those I interacted with, Elisa works as a producer, Didi of Siete Armas is on the production crew, and Louisa of Fantasminas is the station's highest-rated VJ.<sup>164</sup> They ensure that most big riot grrrl events in São Paulo are covered by MTV, making entrance into the scene much easier for prospective members. The amount of media coverage both about and by the São Paulo scene is evidenced in this snippet of conversation from Ladyfest 2007.

<sup>163</sup> See Esther Hambúger, *A Historia da Vida Privada no Brasil* and the banned documentary *Brazil: Beyond Citizen Kane*.

<sup>164</sup> "VJ" means "Video Jockey." Aniversario de Didi (birthday party for Didi of Siete Armas, mix of riot grrrls and MTV Brasil staff), Participant observation notes, August 17, 2007, São Paulo, SP; Gargulio, Elisa (co-organizer of Ladyfest Brasil, director of Quiteria, guitarist for Fantasminas, vocalist and lead guitar for Dominatrix), interview by author, October 18, 2007, São Paulo, SP.

Elisa: [Yesterday] was crazy because I was trying to keep everything moving and I was also handling the press. There were like six groups - three TV stations, two websites, and a newspaper, like a teen magazine. And they wanted to interview us [Dominatrix] and the other bands.<sup>165</sup>

There were a number of mediums covering this particular event, with heavy representation from both websites and television, though a local print magazine was there as well. One of the websites was Dykerama, a site run by riot grrrls that reports news, education, and entertainment relevant to the dyke community.<sup>166</sup> Another was Tramavirtual, which filmed and interviewed a lot of the festival, producing a mini-documentary posted on both Tramavirtual and YouTube.<sup>167</sup> The MTV segments were all produced by Didi, accompanied by a camera crew, and was later posted on the MTV website.

Even with this very organic involvement of the riot grrrl community in mainstream media like MTV, there is plenty of resistance to any involvement at all. The Dealers (with Mayra, who plays in The BIGGS as well) had refused to be interviewed by MTV at Ladyfest, even though one of their friends was the reporter. Later, Mayra's bandmate Flavia explained her avoidance of mainstream media and industry,

“There aren't very many girl bands in Brazil, just in the underground. And the ones that are in the mainstream are products of the industry. The BIGGS, we aren't going out of the underground. We're punks, we don't have to deal with that system.”<sup>168</sup>

For Flavia, commoditization is inauthentic – by entering the mainstream, one becomes a product that cannot generate meaningful critique. She calls on a long (contested) tradition of punk DIY ethos in making this statement as well as the riot grrrl experience. However, Elisa claims that this kind of involvement with the larger media outlets has contributed significantly to scene continuity.

<sup>165</sup> Elisa Gargulio (co-organizer of Ladyfest Brasil, director of Quiteria, guitarist for Fantasminas, vocalist and lead guitar for Dominatrix), interview by author, October 14, 2007, São Paulo, SP.

<sup>166</sup> “.:Dykerama:.” <http://www.dykerama.com/src/>.

<sup>167</sup> *Ladyfest Brazil 2007 – parte 1*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9xpXdrqUXw&feature=related>. Tramavirtual. 2007.; *Ladyfest Brazil 2007 – parte 2*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hC13VP7jRCg&NR=1>. Tramavirtual. 2007.

<sup>168</sup> Flavia (vocalist of The BIGGS), interview by author, October 20, 2007, Goiânia, GO

Elisa: ...Also, we were never scared of publicity, so girls in other places would hear us, and then find out about what was going on in São Paulo through us, and start small chapters in their areas. They would invite us to play and put together bands to open just for that night.<sup>169</sup>

Kerby and Elisa discussed at length the dynamics between the underground and the mainstream, which actors operate in one or the other and who crosses over, the audiences that are available or locked out, and what symbols and topics are the biggest flashpoints. As a prominent MTV VJ and a musician in Fantasminas, Louisa has had a big impact on the São Paulo scene.

Kerby: Louisa's interesting. She's one of the only famous people that people see up close. She has this double life of being MTV's biggest VJ and then playing at little clubs like OUTS where there's no backstage - or if there is, it smells like piss and vomit and no-one wants to be there.<sup>170</sup>

Brazilian riot grrrls use the resources available to construct a sustainable scene. On one hand, the clubs and other spaces that they play are like any other DIY punk venue – easy to make and easy to trash. But through riot grrrls involved in TV production, they are able to document and disseminate scene activities, and through networking and distribution, grow the scene.

Riot grrrls have used specific channels in both the mainstream (Tramavirtual, MTV Brasil) and the underground (zines, independent websites) to promote their art and activities. Given the sour history of riot grrrl and mainstream media outlets, this is not without controversy and a significant part of the scene argues against this practice. But up to this point, the Brazilian riot grrrl scene has successfully used mainstream media coverage to promote and document their activities which, when produced by members and used in combination with underground media, has contributed to the scene's longevity. Furthermore, by collaborating with larger outlets, especially ones followed by the majority of young people, Brazilian grrrls position themselves to disseminate rhetoric and information about political struggles to nearly all of Brazilian youth culture.

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<sup>169</sup> Gargulio, October 18, 2007.

<sup>170</sup> Elisa Gargulio and Kerby Ferris, interview by author, October 17, 2007, São Paulo, SP.

## Resource Management and Class Complications

Zines and songs reveal that riot grrrl cultural productions in the U.S. and Brazil share rhetoric, sounds, and imagery. Yet there are profound differences between the two scenes that can be attributed to the national systems and ideologies that each scene is imbedded in, which become apparent in how the two scenes are/were organized. As I have already discussed how grrrls use riot grrrl themes to engage local and national material, in this section, I will address the impacts of economic differences.

Many of the interview participants cited differing resources as the main difference between U.S. and Brazilian riot grrrl. Between saving for a few months or buying used, nearly everyone can find an instrument in the US. But in Brazil, most equipment is imported in small amounts and subject to 100 percent tariffs, though rates of exchange make the relative price much higher.<sup>171</sup> Brazilian riot grrrls must make a much larger financial commitment than Americans before they can join and participate in the scene. Thus, while riot grrrl has supported some marginalized populations, the scene is unable to overcome certain aspects of the Brazilian class structure. I discussed this at length with Kerby, who has lived, worked, and played in bands in both São Paulo and Portland, OR.

Kerby: Well, there are a lot of similarities in spirit and influence. But there are vast differences because of economics. You simply can't have a lot of the spaces and materials that you find in Portland ...you don't have houses or DIY spaces or basement practice spaces. Sometimes it's impressive that there's even a scene at all. It's so difficult to get instruments here, but everyone manages to have a guitar, or pay R\$20 an hour for practice space.

CM: How do they manage it?

Kerby: Take the bus and split it, I guess. But it's not like everyone has everything, either - no one buys amps or a full drum kit, you play the club's equipment. A tour is some guitars, a snare, cymbals.<sup>172</sup>

While the grrrls participating are marginalized – they are gay, female, and Brazilian in a *machista* national culture and a Euro-centric world system – they

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<sup>171</sup> For a brief history and explanation of tariff rates, see the chapter on deregulation in Lacerda's *Globalização e Investimento Estrangeiro no Brasil*.

<sup>172</sup> Ferris, October 17, 2007.

still have access to the resources needed to put together spaces and activities for a cohesive scene. Those without that access have an extremely hard time entering and participating. Andreia told me over and over again that one has to be middle class to play in a band.<sup>173</sup> Leticia asserted that true expression in rock means playing rock music. Bonecas de Trapo, an all-grrrl metal band from Brasilia, and a PhD student at the Pontificia in São Paulo corroborated this:

Bonecas de Trapo: We have our middle-class group and then there's the folks in the periphery. They go to shows, make zines, they just don't pay!<sup>174</sup>

Regina: The community is mostly middle class... Though you could see yesterday at the show that there were some folks from lower classes - they participate, listen, but they don't have their own bands.<sup>175</sup>

Brazilian grrrls see full expression and scene support as almost entirely contingent on membership in a band. The few grrrls not in bands but still unequivocally scene members must still invest significant time and resources into organizing events or managing projects. Even though grrrls from lower classes go to shows and produce zines, most are not fully in the network because they are unable to muster the resources to play in bands.

Scarce resources are also an issue in recording, which requires a greater investment in equipment than putting a band together (though this is changing with the growing availability of high-quality digital home recording equipment). When bands that I spoke with had a CD out, it was usually recorded in a friend's home studio and printed in extremely small numbers. Andreia noted that most bands in Goiania don't have CDs, they just post tracks online.<sup>176</sup> This was the route that Siete Armas had taken. The day after the band had finished recording, we were at Kerby's house uploading the one demo copy onto Myspace.<sup>177</sup> Kerby later told me that Elisa sold her guitar to pay for a re-printing of one of Dominatrix's albums, *Self Delight*. Thus, under economic and cultural pressures, Brazilian grrrls strip down scene inputs to the minimum. The level of commitment revealed and perhaps even created by a scarcity of resources is huge – grrrls will sacrifice a lot to participate in the scene and disseminate scene productions.

<sup>173</sup> Goiânia, participant observation notes, July 31, 2007.

<sup>174</sup> Bonecas de Trapo (Daniella, Cilene, Diydi), interview with author, October 20, 2007, Goiânia, GO.

<sup>175</sup> Regina, interview by author, October 14, 2007, São Paulo, SP.

<sup>176</sup> Goiânia, participant observation notes, July 31, 2007, Goiânia.

<sup>177</sup> São Paulo, participant observation notes from bar, August 17, 2007, São Paulo.

Brazilian grrrls have to engage in activism as riot grrrls – it is extremely difficult to play as a grrrl outside of the scene. While the novelty of the Brazilian scene results in some limitations in relation to either other youth cultures or political struggles, Brazilian riot grrrls have managed to develop an effective resource management strategy to keep the scene open as a space of leisure and debate. In this way, Brazilian riot grrrl provides a link between political struggles and youth culture. However, the reaches of their strategies are often limited by the class structures that the riot grrrl scene has been unable to transcend.

#### Keep On Livin': Conclusions and Further Questions

The riot grrrl scene in Brazil has been constructed at the intersection of a number of local, national, and transnational histories. Feminist and gay rights struggles that were involved in toppling the dictatorship created the possibility of a cultural space in Brazil for young feminists and young lesbians. In forming a music scene, Brazilian riot grrrls added to a tradition of Brazilian popular musics that have played central roles in generating debate and innovating new forms of Brazilian identity and civil society. Finally, the transnational riot grrrl movement was the catalyst that linked national youth culture and youth music with political struggles and debates.

In directly engaging with the national feminist movement, riot grrrls critique older feminists' attitudes towards young people, while building support for a young Brazilian feminist movement and highlighting the achievements of the past decades. They engage in debates of sexuality, personalizing the issues discussed by older feminists, asserting grrrls' roles in gay rights struggles, and bringing issues of sexuality out of the private sphere and into the public eye. Through these strategies, riot grrrls use cultural space to actively support each other while generating wider critiques.

Brazilian riot grrrls have utilized nearly every form of media available in an attempt to assert themselves in political struggles and disseminate productions to their peers in other youth cultures. They diverge from older riot grrrl trends of avoiding mainstream media outlets, but through inserting their own media into mainstream channels, they have increased awareness for the scene and still avoided cooption. Likewise, organizing in a middle-income country has necessitated new resource management strategies that strip down the inputs necessary to form a scene. While they have not succeeded in transcending class structures entrenched in Brazilian society, Brazilian grrrls have been successful in

expanding the scene over the years, thus increasing the linkages between youth culture and political struggles.

This case study has broader implications for youth culture(s). It is evidence in support of the assertion that youth culture is global and a democratizing force of globalization. Through new technologies, youth around the world are more intimately connected with each other's cultural productions and struggles. In many situations, these connections generate deeper affinities with youth in other countries than with those that share one's nationality. Furthermore, this case study joins a number of others in asserting that – at least in the case of youth music cultures – globalization has not entailed homogenization. Through bricolage and increased velocity in the exchange of styles, globalization has led to more frequent and widely circulated innovations in music. The Brazilian riot grrrl scene demonstrates that global communication channels, while highly unequal, are not unidirectional but multidirectional. Furthermore, there is ample evidence that access to these channels is improving via widespread internet usage. My case study supports Condry and Mitchell's assertions that youth culture is a democratizing force of globalization.

The future of riot grrrl is uncertain. Outside of Brazil, remnants of the movement in the U.S. and Europe have manifested in continued use of the zine network, NGOs inspired by riot grrrl rhetoric, and Ladyfest. However, outside of Brazil, there seem to be only two small riot grrrl revival scenes (Montreal and London, though I found this documented in only one source). The remainder of riot grrrl activity is confined to individuals identifying with the old scene and acting as individual grrrls in larger scenes and networks.

Yet in Brazil the scene has been going strong for fifteen years, with only occasional dips in the number of shows or recordings produced. The national scene does indeed have a sense of permanency through established bands, spaces, and events. With the activity being fomented by Andreia and Bullas in Goiânia, Bruna in Juiz de Fora, and continuing in Rio, São Paulo, Brasília, and Porto Alegre, participation in the scene does appear to be growing. However, it remains to be seen whether these organizers will succeed in creating a more active national movement, or how the scene will change with this expansion. At the very least, Brazilian riot grrrl will continue supporting grrrls across the country for several more years to come, fomenting debate in a number of local and national arenas, and connecting young grrrls' art and experiences to wider struggles for social change.

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# intersections

