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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.

http://depts.washington.edu/chid/intersections_Autumn_2009/Calla_Hummel_Riot_Grrl_in_Brazilian_Civil_Society.pdf

‘Tenho Minhas Ideias e Não Posso Ficar Calada’¹ Riot Grrrl in Brazilian Civil Society

By Calla Hummel²

University of Washington, Seattle

Introduction: Papai Só Quero Rock Roll³

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 scene⁴ 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

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

² 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.

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

⁴ 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 20th 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.⁵ These subversions and alternatives, however, have all been created in reference to national ideologies of gender.⁶ 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.⁷

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

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ Due to advances in communication technology, shared culture no longer depends on shared geographical space.¹¹ 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.”¹² 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

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

⁹ Mohanty, 22, 42.

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

¹¹ *Ibid*, 6.

¹² *Ibid*, 137.

people.”¹³ 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.”¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.”¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

¹³ Bennett 2000, 51.

¹⁴ Ibid., 55.

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

¹⁶ Ibid., 90.

¹⁷ 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,”¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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,²¹ as has Mitchell (albeit for hip hop).²² 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.²³ 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

¹⁸ Condry, 60.

¹⁹ Lipsitz, 7.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ Slobin, 112.

²² 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.

²³ 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ With the exception of two articles on Brazilian heavy metal²⁶ and Bennett's discussion of politically dissident 1970s rock in Mexico,²⁷ 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 Namorado²⁸

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

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Bennett, *Cultures of Popular Music*, 36.

²⁸ 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.

'90s as first a scene and then a movement of young artistic feminists. A core group of musicians and organizers in Olympia and Washington D.C. — fed up with the increasing sexism and violence in underground music communities²⁹ — began to form overtly feminist bands and zines.³⁰ As one zinester put it, “Riot grrrl was about creating the culture you wanted to live in.”³¹

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.³² 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.³³ 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.³⁴

In the 1980s grrrls in radical music scenes felt the backlash against feminism generated by conservative U.S. politics.³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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.³⁷ Tribe 8 ignited debate in the largely heterosexual

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

³⁰ 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.

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

³² *Ibid.*, 13.

³³ Raha, 59.

³⁴ Raha, xii.

³⁵ Raha, 107.

³⁶ Leblanc, 49.

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

indie scene, while major labels promoted Hole and L7 on the radio and MTV. Then, in the late 1980s, grunge revived punk, focusing an international spotlight the Northwest indie music scene.³⁸

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.³⁹ 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 1991.⁴⁰ The first event, "Grrrl's Night", showcased punk grrrl bands. The energy of that one event was the catalyst that launched the movement.⁴¹



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.

³⁸ Leblanc, 59.

³⁹ Raha, 151-163.

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

⁴¹ 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.⁴²

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.⁴³ 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

⁴² Corrigan, 40.

⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ Zines were central to the riot grrrl network and served as the main lines of communication connecting local scenes to the larger movement.⁴⁵ 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."⁴⁶ Between 1991 and 1997, this network encompassed hundreds of zines,⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹

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

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

⁴⁶ Corrigan, 118.

⁴⁷ 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).

⁴⁸ Interview with Flavia

⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰

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.⁵¹ 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!"⁵² 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.⁵³ In the end, the core bands broke up and the actors vowed to continue their work in other arenas.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ibid, 120.

⁵¹ Koch, *Don't need you*.

⁵² Leonard, *Gender in the music industry*, 158.

⁵³ Schilt, 124.

⁵⁴ 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).⁵⁵

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,⁵⁶ 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

Riot 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

⁵⁵ Raha, 223-230.

⁵⁶ 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 forces⁵⁷ — these are not one-way, center-periphery flows.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹ ‘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,⁶⁰ 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 clubs⁶¹ where the line between producer and consumer is blurred.⁶² 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.”⁶³ Thus, these networks do not break down along corporate/underground, commercial/amateur lines, but are in fact fluid.

⁵⁷ Condry, 90.

⁵⁸ Sansone, 136.

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

⁶⁰ Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19, 22, 90.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶³ 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 20th 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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ Sepultura grew to prominence in the international extreme metal scene through internet message boards and digitally-circulated tape trading lists.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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.

⁶⁴ 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.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶⁶ Harris, 15.

⁶⁷ Khan-Harris, 78.

⁶⁸ 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.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹

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.”⁷² However, because of an intentionally transnational network, the

⁶⁹ Kiewel.

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

⁷¹ Sansone, 138.

⁷² 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.⁷³ 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.⁷⁴ Civilian governance had been gaining power since 1982 and the military dictatorship had officially

⁷³ Ibid., 85.

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

ended in 1988 with a new constitution forged by nearly every sector of civil society⁷⁵ - including significant contributions and visibility from the women's movement and the gay rights movement.⁷⁶ However, the transition had experienced numerous set-backs and blockages, and the 1980s became popularly known as "a lost decade."⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸

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.⁷⁹

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

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

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ Smith, 211.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 208-213.

⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ 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.⁸² The outcome has been disillusionment and lowered expectations of the government.⁸³ 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.⁸⁴

Activists questioned this paradox using traditional political and academic channels as well as populist channels and underground networks.⁸⁵ 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.⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷ 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 20th century illiterate and ended with a level of schooling higher than that of [Brazilian] men.”⁸⁸ In addition, women have entered the work force in huge

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

⁸¹ Meade, 186-7.

⁸² 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.

⁸³ Smith, 214.

⁸⁴ Caldeira, 339.

⁸⁵ Castro and Hallewell.

⁸⁶ 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.

⁸⁷ Caldeira, 52.

⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹ 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.”⁹² Fanny Mitchell acknowledges this in her discussion on expectations for young women, but notes that the reality is often different than the rhetoric.⁹³ Over time, these ideologies have been questioned and alternatives formed, but always in reference to older traditions.⁹⁴

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.⁹⁵ 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

⁸⁹ Castro.

⁹⁰ Rago, 36

⁹¹ Leu, 17.

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

⁹³ 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.

⁹⁴ Leu, 18.

⁹⁵ Soares, 170-175

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

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.⁹⁸ Rago states that “The only revolution that truly succeeded in the 20th 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.”⁹⁹ 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,”¹⁰⁰ and bossa nova as its image abroad.¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰² 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.¹⁰³ 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.¹⁰⁴

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

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ 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.

⁹⁹ 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.”

¹⁰⁰ 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.

¹⁰¹ 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.

¹⁰² Murphy, 7-18; Perrone and Dunn and Perrone, 31-32.

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

¹⁰⁴ 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*¹⁰⁵ 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.”¹⁰⁶ Camus apparently agreed, and samba and bossa nova became top Brazilian exports following the making of *Black Orpheus* in 1959.¹⁰⁷ However, racism and classism were inherent in these statements and productions.¹⁰⁸ 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 exaltação¹⁰⁹ - and has only recently been widely critiqued in Brazilian society.¹¹⁰

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.¹¹¹ 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.¹¹² 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.¹¹³ Murphy states that women are discouraged from participation in traditional genres excepting

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

¹⁰⁶ Murphy, 14.

¹⁰⁷ 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.

¹⁰⁸ 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.

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

¹¹⁰ Pitanguy, 5.

¹¹¹ 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.

¹¹² Dunn, 10.

¹¹³ 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.¹¹⁴ While independent female singers Rita Lee of Os Mutantes, Gal Costa, Maria Bethania, (tropicalia)¹¹⁵ 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.¹¹⁶

After *abertura*, youth cultures took different routes than political movements, and breaking into the different *tribos*¹¹⁷ that persist today.¹¹⁸ *Baile funk* celebrated a decrease in military presence by creating huge dance parties in the *favelas*,¹¹⁹ and brought a number of *favelado* DJs to national prominence – though mostly through songs about dancing and *popozão*.¹²⁰ 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.”¹²¹ 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.¹²² 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.¹²³ This is reflected in the long-standing goals articulated by those I interviewed, which included

¹¹⁴ Murphy, 156.

¹¹⁵ McGowan and Pessanha, 185.

¹¹⁶ Harris, 14; Murphy, 156.

¹¹⁷ 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.

¹¹⁸ 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.

¹¹⁹ Sansone, 139.

¹²⁰ *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.

¹²¹ Avelar, 128, 133, 134.

¹²² Entrevista com Bianca.

¹²³ 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 Fantasma, 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.¹²⁴

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.¹²⁵ 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.

¹²⁴ 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

¹²⁵See 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.¹²⁶ 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 sang 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.¹²⁷

Bianca: It all came from conversations, from our worries – very literal.¹²⁸

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*.¹²⁹ This is particularly evident in “Chegou a Hora”:¹³⁰

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
 It just depends on you to make the REVOLUTION!¹³¹

¹²⁶ Mohanty, 22.

¹²⁷ Mayra, October 20, 2007.

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

¹²⁹ Translates to “The Biggest Error Committed was to Judge Incapable”

¹³⁰ Translates to “The Time has Arrived”

¹³¹ Bulimia, “Chegou A Hora,” *Se julgar incapaz foi o maior erro que cometeu* (Protons, 1999).

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.¹³²

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 baby¹³³

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

¹³² Leonard, 117.

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

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.¹³⁴

Kerby: There's something inherently political about having all girls on stage, all girls playing rock. Especially when you bring in the technology thing - Fantasmias 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.¹³⁵

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.¹³⁶

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.¹³⁷

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.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Flavia, October 20, 2007.

¹³⁵ Ferris, Kerby (drummer and lead vocals for Fantasmias, web designer), interview by author, October 17, 2007, São Paulo, SP

¹³⁶ 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).

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

¹³⁸ Plano Proximo (Carol, vocals and keytar; Raquel, bass; Gustavo, drums; Daniel, guitar), 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.¹³⁹

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.¹⁴⁰ Brazilian feminists have had considerable success in creating a women's movement spanning class and race,¹⁴¹ 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.¹⁴²

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

¹³⁹ Flavia, October 20, 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Pitanguy, 5.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ferris and Gargiulo, October 17, 2007.

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.¹⁴³ Andreia works with Centro Popular da Mulher as a coordinator;¹⁴⁴ Bullas designs websites and writes educational articles for feminist groups; and university students involved in Juiz de Fora's Mulheres na Volante¹⁴⁵ 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.¹⁴⁶

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 the scene network.¹⁴⁷ 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.

¹⁴³ 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

¹⁴⁴ participant observation notes, July 29, 2007, Goiânia, GO

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

¹⁴⁶ Shepherd, 52.

¹⁴⁷ 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.

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.¹⁴⁸ 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,¹⁴⁹ 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.¹⁵⁰ 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 cultural changes and critiques. And it's a place where we can hook up.¹⁵¹

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

¹⁴⁸ Reynolds and Press, 204.

¹⁴⁹ 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.

¹⁵⁰ Mayra, October 20, 2007; Elisa, October 18, 2007.

¹⁵¹ Mayra, October 20, 2007.

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,¹⁵² 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!¹⁵³

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 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 year¹⁵⁴ – and riot grrrls are not immune.

¹⁵² Bullas writes such articles on a national website.

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

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

Parker analyzed the characters in Jorge Amado's *O País 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 sexuality¹⁵⁵ that continues to influence Brazilian gender roles.¹⁵⁶ 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 model¹⁵⁷

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 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?

¹⁵⁵ 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.

¹⁵⁶ Leu, 16.

¹⁵⁷ SpunkE, "Barbie Doll," *SpunkE EP* (SpunkE {Unreleased}).

And there's another marketing ploy
 Typical girl gets the typical boy¹⁵⁸

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."¹⁵⁹

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

¹⁵⁸ The Slits, "Typical Girls," *Cut* (Island Records, 1979).

¹⁵⁹ Flavia, October 20, 2007.

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."¹⁶⁰ 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 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

¹⁶⁰ Dunn, 31.

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.¹⁶¹ 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.¹⁶² 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 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

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

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

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.¹⁶³ 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 Fantasma is the station's highest-rated VJ.¹⁶⁴ 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.

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

¹⁶³ See Esther Hambúger, *A História da Vida Privada no Brasil* and the banned documentary *Brazil: Beyond Citizen Kane*.

¹⁶⁴ "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 Fantasma, vocalist and lead guitar for Dominatrix), interview by author, October 18, 2007, São Paulo, SP.

newspaper, like a teen magazine. And they wanted to interview us [Dominatrix] and the other bands.¹⁶⁵

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.¹⁶⁶ Another was Tramavirtual, which filmed and interviewed a lot of the festival, producing a mini-documentary posted on both Tramavirtual and YouTube.¹⁶⁷ The MTV segments were all produced by Didí, 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.”¹⁶⁸

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.

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.

¹⁶⁵ 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.

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

¹⁶⁷ *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=hCl3VP7jRCg&NR=1>. Tramavirtual. 2007.

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

They would invite us to play and put together bands to open just for that night.¹⁶⁹

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.¹⁷⁰

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.

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

¹⁶⁹ Gargulio, October 18, 2007.

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

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.¹⁷¹ 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.¹⁷²

While the grrrls participating are marginalized – they are gay, female, and Brazilian in a *machista* national culture and a Euro-centric world system – they 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.¹⁷³ Leticia asserted that true expression in rock means

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

¹⁷² Ferris, October 17, 2007.

¹⁷³ Goiânia, participant observation notes, July 31, 2007.

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!¹⁷⁴

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.¹⁷⁵

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.¹⁷⁶ 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.¹⁷⁷ 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.

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

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

¹⁷⁵ Regina, interview by author, October 14, 2007, São Paulo, SP.

¹⁷⁶ Goiânia. participant observation notes, July 31, 2007, Goiânia.

¹⁷⁷ São Paulo, participant observation notes from bar, August 17, 2007, São Paulo.

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.

Calla Hummel graduated from the University of Washington in 2009 with a B.A. in Latin American Studies and International Political Economy.