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Abstract

Turning toward affective and emotional manifestations of resistance, this project engages Riot Grrrl cultural production including zines, flyers, lyrics, and performances. Positioning these artifacts and enactments as a specifically queer feminist praxis, I hone in on grrrl relationality and collectivity as the embodied space where political imaginings are carried out. After first establishing the Riot Grrrl movement as a primarily affectively configured movement, I focus specifically on the mobilization of anger and intimacy within the movement. First, I position anger as an emotion that enables a queering of patriarchal protection culture that the grrrls mobilize to subvert cultural logics of fear and established relations to state institutions of protection. I argue that the mobilization of anger enables the grrrls to implement different practices of protection within the movement as an enactment of grrrl relationality. Second, I locate intimacy through expressions of admiration, friendship, and desire. Here, I highlight how the grrrls entangled friendship, admiration, and affiliation with an awareness of erotic possibility, opening the door for indefinite queer relations. I describe this way of being Riot Grrrl as a “grrrl crush,” using the term as a politicized designation of the particularities of Riot Grrrl relationality as they identify and publically articulate their admiration and desire for other women and girls. Taken together, I argue that focusing on these affective practices enables an understanding of what it means to enact Riot Grrrl. Ultimately, this uncovers the political imaginings that propelled the movement forward and forged a process of becoming that allowed new queer intimacies, relations, and collective ways of being to emerge.

Affective Cultural Practice: Imagining Queer Feminism in the Riot Grrrl
Movement

by

Kate Siegfried

B.A. Butler University, 2014

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in Communication and Rhetorical Studies

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Introduction: Toward an Enactment of Queer Feminism | 1 |
| Grrrls to The Front: Historically Situating Riot Grrrl | |
| Theory & Method | |
| Affect Theory | |
| Affect & the Rhetoric of Social Movements | |
| Artifacts & Archive | |
| Chapter Overview | |
| Chapter 2: “Anger Makes Me a Modern Girl”: Queering Patriarchal Protection Culture | 25 |
| Affect Aliens & Feminist Killjoys | |
| Negative Feelings | |
| Queering Patriarchal Protection Culture | |
| Conclusion: Embodying Anger, Enacting a Movement | |
| Chapter 3: Queer Intimacy & Grrrl Crushes: Entanglements of Friendship & Desire | 50 |
| Becoming Intimate | |
| Merely Emotional: Gender & Expressions of Feeling | |
| Queering Intimacy & Queer Grrrl Intimacy | |
| Material & Aesthetic Intimacy | |
| Conclusion: Relational Imagining, Risk, & Solidarity | |
| Conclusion: Affective Residue, Queer Feminism & Becoming | 78 |
| “Turning Cursive Letters into Knives”: A Queer Feminist Political Orientation | |
| References | 87 |
| Vita | 94 |

Chapter One

Toward an Enactment of Queer Feminism

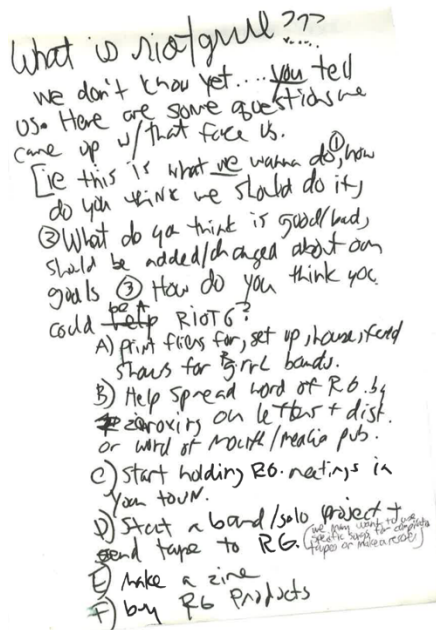


Figure 1

“What is Riot Grrrl? We don’t know yet – you tell us” (See Figure 1). This provocation, scrawled across a piece of notebook paper by an unidentified Riot Grrrl, articulates a question that often plagues collective forms of political action. The reader is further invited into the creative process of Riot Grrrl in the subsequent lines:

“Here are some questions we came up w/ that force us. [ie this is what we wanna do, how do you think we should do it, what do you think is good/bad, should be added/changed about our goals, how do you think you could ~~help~~ be a RIOT G?”

Suggested actions such as printing flyers and holding meetings follow, but this list of standard political organizing practices fails to capture what Riot Grrrl actually *is*, as

a particular political orientation and cultural moment. Following the precedent set by the writer of these notes when they crossed out the word “help,” I want to emphasize what it means to *be* a Riot Grrrl. What was the experience of Riot Grrrl, and toward what did this orient the movement? Turning toward the affective and emotional manifestations of resistance in Riot Grrrl cultural production, this thesis takes on the task of working through the being and doing of Riot Grrrl, uncovering the imaginings that propelled the movement forward and enabled a process of becoming that allowed new queer intimacies, relations, and collective ways of being to emerge.

The Riot Grrrls were an underground, decentralized movement made up of mostly young female punk musicians who worked to channel a fierce feminist politic through mediums of DIY cultural production, such as music, zines, performance, and visual art. The first Riot Grrrl Manifesto, published in 1991 in the zine *Bikini Kill #2*, describes the impetus for Riot Grrrl:

BECAUSE us girls crave records and books and fanzines that speak to
 US that WE feel included in and can understand in our own
 ways...BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = Dumb,
 Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak...BECAUSE we are unwilling to let our real and
 valid anger be diffused and/or turned against us via the
 internalization of sexism as witnessed in girl/girl jealousy and self
 defeating girltype behaviors...[sic]

Within the punk scene, a space long dominated by white masculinity, sexual harassment was widespread, as were physically aggressive crowds that discouraged

women and girls from participating at shows. In between songs, Kathleen Hanna, lead singer of Bikini Kill, would often call girls to the front of the stage and would pass around the microphone for individuals to share their personal experiences with abuse, rape, or sexual harassment, explicitly politicizing and personalizing the physical space. These personal experiences of violent marginalization, and the urgency and care with which they needed to be addressed in a larger context, drove the Riot Grrrl movement forward. Built from zine-making, music-making and spoken word poetry, the movement embodied the idea that producing culture is a means through which to push back against violent norms, claim agency, reimagine new subjectivities, and build solidarity.

This thesis is about Riot Grrrl cultural production and practices, affect, and resistance. Piecing together a mosaic of rhetorical artifacts including Riot Grrrl zines, lyrics, flyers as well as embodied performances and enactments, I untangle pieces of the movement's affective network, namely anger and intimacy, as they manifest in cultural production and practices. Positioning these artifacts and enactments as a specifically queer feminist praxis, I hone in on grrrl relationality and collectivity as the embodied space where political imaginings are carried out. My delineation between "grrrl" and "girl" throughout this thesis is intentional, as I aim to position "grrrl" as a particular political orientation, rather than emphasizing "girl" as a gender.¹ In Chapter Two, I locate anger as an emotion that enables a

¹ My choice to use "grrrl" in place of "girl" throughout this thesis also serves the purpose of carrying on the playful and subversive spirit of the movement. I am also skeptical of using "girl" in the context of the Riot Grrrl movement, due to how this implicitly excludes the role and presence of gender-queer individuals.

queering of patriarchal protection culture that the grrrls mobilize to subvert established relations to state institutions of protection, and instead, implement alternative practices of protection within the movement. In Chapter Three, I focus on intimacy, which I locate through expressions of admiration, friendship, and desire. I highlight how the grrrls allow entanglements of friendship and desire to emerge, embodying both sexually queer intimacies, as well as a queering of existing intimacies. Ultimately, I argue that these affective practices contribute to collective identity formation and solidarity building. As anger, desire, intimacy, and rage pulse through the movement, I locate how these affects operate as a political force, enabling the grrrls to move beyond the containment of the present, imagining and enacting alternative ways of relating, living, and being.

Research on Riot Grrrl has taken a variety of perspectives, such as focusing on the ethnographic and historical (Cateforis; Meltzer; Marcus; Rosenberg; Klein; Leonard; Leblanc; Nguyen), addressing the commodification of Riot Grrrl and the movements' incorporation into mainstream culture (Jacques; Riordan; Schilt), centering on cultural production and zines (Kearney; Dunn; Riordan), looking at Riot Grrrl specifically as a music scene (Huber; Strong; Schilt; Gottlieb), and pinpointing how Riot Grrrl has been popularly understood (Kearney). Drawing on prior interdisciplinary research for context, I position Riot Grrrl as a political and aesthetic movement, ultimately contributing to a larger conversation of the role of affect in social movements, rhetorical studies, and cultural studies.

Grrrls To The Front: Historically Situating Riot Grrrl

In the early 1990s, antagonism towards women in the punk scene was indicative of a hostile attitude directed at women by American politics and culture. The beginning of the decade was marked by a number of highly publicized events related to violence against women. The central park jogger investigation was underway, as was the Anita Hill trial. The year before, in 1989, the École Polytechnique Massacre took place in Montreal, in which Marc Lépine murdered 14 women before committing suicide. As president, George H.W. Bush vetoed the Civil Rights Act of 1990 that sought to protect women and minorities from job discrimination—this is the only civil rights act to be successfully vetoed. As all of this took place, mainstream media coverage proclaimed the death of feminism. Reflecting on the early 1990's, Riot Grrrl Johanna Fateman stated,

We were coming into a really heightened level of awareness in terms of feminism and sexist representation of women. A really clear memory I have is Kathleen showing me a copy of a copy of an article from *Time Magazine*, "Is Feminism Dead?" We were doing it and thinking it and feeling it – how could it be dead? (*The Punk Singer*).

This was not a welcoming climate for women to proclaim empowerment, yet the Riot Grrrl movement began in the spring of 1991 when the bands Bratmobile and Bikini Kill formed, started fanzines, and began hosting weekly female-only meetings that other zine makers, activists, artists, and other locals attended. As much as Riot Grrrl was an explicitly political movement, the means through which the grrrls produced their messages was rooted aesthetically and intellectually. As a movement started by college students on a university campus, at Evergreen State

College in Olympia, the foundation of Riot Grrrl built off of academic feminist writings, twinning these together with aesthetics of punk. “By the early 1990s, the divide between so-called “academic” and “grassroots” feminism was already dissolving, and Riot Grrrl was what it was because it emerged at this particular theoretical and political moment” (Eichhorn 107). At play alongside this intellectual vein was the influence of the heightened visibility of theatrical street activism generated by groups such as ACT UP and the Guerilla Girls. As Eichhorn details, ACT UP “exemplified [for Hanna] how the creative deployment of the media might be used to achieve both aesthetic and political objectives” (100). For the Riot Grrrls, these influences converged in their production of explicitly political, theoretically rooted, DIY content. For instance, Riot Grrrl bands used their music as an outlet through which to start discussions about personal issues of gendered oppression and violence.

In the summer of 1992 the Washington D.C. chapter of Riot Grrrl put together a national convention featuring performances by female bands and poets, and workshops on sexuality, rape, racism, fat oppression, domestic violence, and self-defense. “A week after the convention, *USA Today* published an article about the proceedings, under the banner “TEEN FEMALE REBELLION” (Marcus 169). Post-release, many Riot Grrrls across the nation became apprehensive of any press coverage as patronizing framing proliferated the news coverage. For instance, an article published in *Seventeen* called Riot Grrrls “She-devils out of Rush Limbaugh’s worst nightmare” before proceeding to state, “...A lot of Riot Grrrls don’t shave and deliberately give each other bad haircuts,” ultimately diminishing their political

stance to a non-normative fashion aesthetic (Malkin). In a similar tone, *Newsweek* stated, "Riot Grrrl is feminism with a loud happy face dotting the 'I'!" (Farai). Other articles covering the movement were published in *The Houston Chronicle*, *The Chicago Reader*, and *The New York Times*. As Kate Eichorn explains,

On the one hand, the article served as a call to arms for younger girls...who were not already connected to the Riot Grrrl scenes in Olympia, Washington DC, and Minneapolis. On the other hand, the *Newsweek* article opened the media floodgates, placing Riot Grrrls on the defensive in an economy of representation they had previously subverted through their astute suspicion of the mainstream media and savvy deployment of DIY media. (86)

In 1993 some of the Riot Grrrls instated a media block in which they attempted to collectively shun news outlet attempts to contact them for interviews or information. Given the disjointed nature of their movement, there was no way to ensure that all girls who identified as Riot Grrrls would hold to this, and some Riot Grrrls simply did not want to, as they thought the news coverage was a productive force of recognition for the movement. Despite the press block, content continued to be published through the winter and spring from *The Washington Post*, *Rolling Stone*, and other national print publications.

By spring of 1993, two original members of Riot Grrrl DC had Riot Grrrl Press, a zine distribution network, up and running. In line with punk DIY ethos, the Press enabled Riot Grrrls to create and circulate their materials without adhering to the mainstream press system. Rather than allowing their image to be completely

determined by mainstream press coverage, Riot Grrrl Press and the zines allowed the grrrls to both communicate with one another, as well as cultivate representation from the ground up. Through zine production and circulation, the Riot Grrrls quite literally took control of the means of production. As Dunn and Farnsworth point out in their study of the Riot Grrrl zine network, “The DIY ethos reflects an intentional transformation of punks from consumers of the mass media to agents of cultural production” (144). As active producers of zine content, the zines collectively demonstrate how the Riot Grrrls sought to position themselves in relation to mainstream culture. Further, as a medium through which individuals articulate personal experience, zine content operates on a personal level by demonstrating how Riot Grrrls worked through and publically articulated their lived experiences.

Theory & Method

Affect Theory

The primary concern of this project is highlighting the role that emotions play in the cultural production of social movements. Thus, I am primarily interested in conceptualizations of affect that enable theorists and critics to highlight emotion and affect as a resource for political resistance. As Brian Massumi points out in the preface to *The Politics of Affect*, affect already carries a political valence. “It concerns the first stirrings of the political, flush with felt intensities of life” (Massumi ix). Thus, affect does not need to be *made into* a resource for political action within movements. It is always already present, stirring under the surface of encounters. Here, I foreground theorizations that allow these political rumblings to come to into

the limelight, creating an access point for following the contours, twists, and dimensions of affect as they enable theorizations of alternative worlds.

Spinoza's definition of affect as "the power to affect and be affected" centralizes the integral role of relationality in politics and political spaces.² Relations between bodies and objects, whether in the streets collectively or dispersed into individual private lives, create the potential for collective resistance. To affect and be affected is to engage beyond oneself. Massumi claims, "To affect and be affected is to be open to the world, to be active in it and to be patient for its return activity" (ix). Also positioning affect as an inherently relational process, Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg argue, "Affect arises in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon (1). As will become clear as this project unfolds, I am particularly invested in theorizations that leave gaps, or settle in the yet to be discovered potential of "in-between-ness." Prioritizing theorizations of affect that allow for this wiggle room allows for the cultivation of imagination and queer invention that is integral to processes of revolution and social change.

This project finds its foundation specifically within work on affect and emotion done by feminist and queer cultural theorists, as that body of work explicitly foregrounds how affect and emotions circulate through public life as power-laden cultural forces. For instance, Kathleen Stewart defines "ordinary affects" as "the stuff seemingly intimate lives are made of" – a definition that helps point to the connections made in this project between affect and enacting

² Spinoza, Benedictus de. *Ethics*.

relationalities (2). Sara Ahmed's theorization and question of "how emotions operate to 'shape' and 'make' bodies as forms of action" is central to situating the theoretical interrogations of this project, as I aim to highlight the relationship between affect and emotion, and imagining more liberatory ways of being (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 4). Ahmed's project in *the Cultural Politics of Emotion* performs the importance of locating affect from marginalized positionalities by recognizing feelings such as shame, fear, disgust, or unhappiness as saturated with power and cultural meaning. Rather than casting them aside as personal experiences, Ahmed reads these emotions through the configuration of language, bodies, and emotions, connecting feeling to national narratives.

Ann Cvetkovich similarly approaches feeling and emotion as an entry point for articulating the experiential dimensions of marginalization in her ethnographic and archival work on "bad feelings." In her project *Depression*, Cvetkovich combines memoir with cultural analysis to first argue that "bad feelings" have been pathologized, and thus depoliticized, and second, to locate "bad feelings" as the potential grounds for political action. Cvetkovich states, "It's a search for utopia that doesn't make a simple distinction between good and bad feelings...feeling bad might, in fact, be the ground for transformation" (3).

Likewise, Sianne Ngai takes up bad feelings under the term of "ugly feelings" in her project under the same name. Ngai turns to aesthetics to interrogate feelings including anxiety, paranoia, irritation and disgust, positioning these ugly feelings as experiential elements of the violence of late capitalism and modernity. While Ngai's project positions these passive emotions as indicative of what she terms "obstructed

agency,” the main contribution of this project is to “recuperate several of these negative affects for their *critical* productivity” (3).

Across these queer and feminist engagements with affect theory, a common theme emerges in which these scholars take up emotions that are typically cast aside and thrown away. Beyond validating these bad feelings as experiences, these authors highlight the ways in which these feelings can point us toward alternative, liberatory futures. This same theme emerges in Heather Love’s project *Feeling Backward: Loss & the Politics of Queer History*, in which she thinks through the historical markings of a queer “backward” experience of shame, isolation, loss and self-hatred in relation to the contemporary moment in which these bad feelings are erased.³ Similar to others engaged in related projects, Love demonstrates the utility of feeling backward, and explores how we might reattach ourselves to those feelings.

The contribution of queer and feminist approaches to affect theory explicates specifically how affects operate within existing relations of power, and, more directly relevant to this project, how affect and emotion can be mobilized as a resistant force. In particular, because feminist and queer scholars prioritize embodiment and power, they are particularly positioned to take up affect and resistance. Positioning emotion and affect as a point of entry for interrogating cultural conditions, lived experience, and theorizations of dissent, these scholars demonstrate the necessity of a queer and/or feminist approach to affect.

³ A number of queer cultural theorists have taken up “shame” as a foundation from which to theorize alternative politics. See Sedgwich, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling*. Warner, Michael. *The Trouble With Normal*. Crimp, Douglas. “Mario Montez, for Shame.”

Affect & the Rhetoric of Social Movements

Affect occupies a fraught position within rhetorical studies. As Caitlin Bruce explains, “fears about rhetoric as cookery also can be used to characterize anxieties about infecting rational deliberation” (48). Despite this, some rhetorical studies scholars have critically and productively contributed to the theorization and study of affect, arguing for affect’s relevance within the field. For instance, Christian Lundberg, building on cultural theorists of affect such as Massumi, argues for the disarticulation of affect from emotion, positioning emotion as a “subjectively felt state” and affect as a “set of forces, investments, logics, relations, and practices of subjectivization that are the conditions of possibility for emotion” (390). This is an important distinction for my project, as part of my own political investment here is highlighting the ways in which affect can and does operate as a political force for collectivization. Lundberg proceeds to argue, “This disarticulation is a prerequisite to interpreting the public life of affects,” thus enabling a parsing out of investments, and the registers which drive those investments. Further, Lundberg’s emphasis on the *public* life of affects implicitly positions affect as a concern of rhetorical studies scholars.

Turning an eye to the circulation of affect in the public sphere, Dana Cloud theorizes the term “affected public” as an “irrational artificial social construct that enforces emotional identification over heterogeneity and dissent” (130). Cloud’s theorization highlights the significant point that affect can be used as a tool waged by the dominant class as a means of suppression and control. Celeste Condit further demonstrates the utility of attending to emotion and affect, or pathos, within

rhetorical criticism in her attention to Edwin Black's essay on Robert Welch's *Blue Book*. Condit argues that Black "mis-describes" Welch's rhetoric by failing to attend to pathos.⁴ Jenny Rice also argues for the incorporation of affect into rhetorical studies, and mobilizes different theorizations of affect to suggest, "deliberation generates affects that do not neatly conform to the signifying elements of that civic discourse" (211). Identifying the relevance of affect theory to rhetorical studies continues to raise questions and contestations surrounding the rhetorical nature of affect, the circulation of affect, and what role affect *should* play in public discourse.

More specifically relevant to the relationship between affect and social movements, interdisciplinary studies of affect and activism have utilized affect theory to parse out the relational economies and networks that movements are made of. As Deborah Gould highlights in *Moving Politics*, "The *movement* in "social movements" gestures toward the realm of affect; bodily intensities; emotions, feelings, and passions, and toward uprising" (3). Thus, emotions and affects are inextricable from resistance, as individuals orient and attach themselves to practices of resistance, and collectives enacting those practices.

Bringing rhetorical studies into conversation with affect theory and social movements, Erin Rand contextualizes contemporary queer theory's move to "shame" within the affective history of ACT UP. Rand importantly notes that affective registers can only heighten the *capacity* for action, and thus, are best understood "in terms of "potential" or "not-yet-qualified intensities" (77). Rand argues, "the rhetorical process of naming the inchoate intensities of affect, of

⁴ Condit, Celeste M. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's communism-as-cancer metaphor."

marshaling them in the name and direction...of a particular movement or cause— might be understood as the principle challenge of any activism” (77).

In line with the focus on affect as potentiality, Michaela Frischherz highlights the usefulness of affect theory to rhetorical studies in arguing that a “more textured set of forces...allows communication scholars to consider the psychic compulsions to act—to elaborate bodies, identities, and politics as otherwise” (258). Further highlighting the role of affect in protest, Caitlin Bruce foregrounds the affective dimensions of Kevin DeLuca’s “image event” to position the Pussy Riot balaclava as an “affect generator” for transnational solidarity, as well as to trace the mechanisms which allowed the icon to drop, gain, and shift contexts as it traversed borders. Here, it is important to note the unique lens that rhetorical studies offers affect theory, particularly in studies of dissent and social movements. For one, highlighting the affective relationalities and emotional ties which make up a social movement turns the focus away from the discourses focused outward from social movements to “the public”—which have dominated rhetorical studies of social movements—to looking at the communicative force of intramovement relations.⁵

Method: Rhetoric, Affect, & History

A number of challenges arise when utilizing affect theory as a methodology, particularly for historical projects.⁶ How am I to locate the feeling of being and doing Riot Grrrl, 20 years later? Cvetkovich highlights that cultural artifacts and

⁵ A detailed overview of the prioritization of resistant “public action,” by both social movement studies and rhetorical studies, is offered in Chávez, Karma R. “Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition Building.”

⁶ See Knudsen, Britta Timm & Carsten Stage. *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*.

spaces are difficult to archive “because they are lived experience, and the cultural traces that they leave are frequently inadequate to the task of documentation” (*An Archive of Feelings* 9). To work through this particular hurdle, my theoretical and methodological approach is rooted in Rachel Hall’s articulation of the culture studies ethic of “letting the object lead.”⁷ Hall argues that scholars should allow objects to lead them through disciplinary boundaries and methodologies in order to do justice to the artifact. Pairing affect theory with rhetorical studies offers a productive reading strategy, by orienting me toward the specific details that suggest affect as a central component of this movement.

However, the question remains of how to account for affect in historical moments. Affect is characterized by its ephemerality and fleeting nature, and as something that fails to be captured by language.⁸ As Eric Jenkins describes, “affect’s ephemerality, variations, and punctured nature make it difficult to describe and analyze” (9). Taking this to be true, how could I possibly locate the feeling of Riot Grrrl collectivity and experience, as my body occupies a detached time and space? Part of what I insist through this project is that archival remnants of cultural production do offer scholars insight into the felt nature of movements, and further, that rhetorical critics in particular are attuned to the persuasive residues of affect as they manifest visually, materially, and discursively. While these artifacts do not speak to claims about bodily sensation, and thus, historical reading strategies are limited, these material artifacts do carry affective force 20 years later. I locate these

⁷ Hall, Rachel. “Letting the Object of Study Lead: A Cultural Studies Ethic.”

⁸ I find the claim about language, and the ways in which affect “escapes” language particularly troubling, and perhaps even an argument aimed at further delegitimizing the study of emotion and feeling in the humanities. As language is a symbolic entity, we can *never* fully capture the things we talk about.

forces by positioning my analysis as primarily concerned with the function of affect within the movement; thus, my analysis often extends to the embodied cultural practices described and encouraged within these zine pages. For instance, in Chapter Two, a zine page offers instructions to grrrls on how to pop a cop car tire. Rather than prioritizing the discursive construction of those instructions (although I do offer analysis of that as well) I point my analysis towards what the *embodied action* of popping a cop car tire means, and what the action does for movement identity and grrrl solidarity. Thus, part of my aim here is to demonstrate how to locate historically situated affect through material remnants.

Artifacts & Archive

The materials used in this project were primarily obtained from The Riot Grrrl Collection at Fales Library and Archive located at New York University. Containing a wealth of primary documents ranging from master zines to recordings of performances, The Riot Grrrl Collection aims to “collect unique materials that document the creative process of individuals and the development of the movement overall” (“The Riot Grrrl Collection”). As Eichhorn argues in her study of The Riot Grrrl Collection in *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, this archival aim historicizes the movement as temporally and geographically specific, as well as “a bound movement synonymous with the cultural contributions of a core group of women musicians, writers, performers, and visual artists” (94). The rhetorical crafting of the archive is not my primary concern in this project, but it is relevant to my point of entry into

the project.⁹ First, I selected this archive because it matched with my own scholarly and political priorities. Rather than offering a study of music or zine culture broadly, I am primarily invested in positioning Riot Grrrl as a politically and aesthetically contextualized movement.¹⁰ Second, because I pulled from this archive and thus this project only includes materials created by core Riot Grrrl members, this analysis does not intend to answer questions or make statements regarding all engagement with zine making and distribution.

The specific artifacts featured throughout this project include zine pages, flyers, lyrics, and extends to the embodied actions called for in these visual and discursive articulations. All of these artifacts were produced between roughly 1990 and 1995. Given the home crafted, untraceable nature of zines, it can be difficult to locate them geographically. However, all of the pages analyzed here were likely crafted in major cities and/or Riot Grrrl hubs, including Washington D.C., New York City, and Olympia, Washington.

My own rhetorical choices of what artifacts to include in this thesis implicitly constructs an archival glimpse of what Riot Grrrl *is*. I intentionally included a wide range of artifacts constructed through different aesthetic venues in this project. First, this offers a broad view of the movement's aesthetics, politics, and discourses. Second, part of my aim in this project is to advocate for the foregrounding of activists' voices in studies of social movements. Whenever possible, I want to let the

⁹ For insight into the rhetorical nature of the archive see Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*; Morris, "The Archival Turn in Rhetorical Studies"; Morris, "Archival Queer"; Finnegan "What Is This A Picture Of?"; Biesecker, "Of Historicity, Rhetoric."

¹⁰ Most other archives that include Riot Grrrl materials are broadly focused on zine culture, such as the zine collections at Barnard College and Duke University.

Riot Grrrls speak and theorize on their own terms, rather than writing over their voices with my own. While my argument contributes to that political aim, this project can also be positioned as a performance of such.

When I began the archival work for this project at New York University, I did not know what I was looking for. I entered the archive with an infatuation with the unapologetic rawness present in punk feminist music, in particular. This “rawness” felt rhetorically rich to me. I found the Riot Grrrl’s aesthetic construction inherently hope filled and optimistic as I thought of teenage grrrls and their inventiveness in constructing these communicative art pieces for friends and strangers. Parsing through these materials—the master zines, personal correspondence, and flyers—and seeing my own personal feelings and lived embodiment visually, discursively, and performatively articulated viscerally affected me. Moving through the materials, rage, sadness, and laughter swirled together as they poured into my being, bubbling within my abdomen. Sara Ahmed describes affect as “sticky,”—a sensation that feels like an accurate description for my relationship to these artifacts, as I felt pulled into and made part of the personal narratives, the sharp wit, and the crude cartoon drawings.¹¹

In determining which artifacts to include and exclude, this orientation, stickiness, and emotional overflow first directed my attention. Then, my eyes were struck with the visibility of queer sexualities within the artifacts. As the Riot Grrrl movement is not typically talked about as an explicitly LGBTQ movement in coverage of the movement at the time of its happening or in retrospective

¹¹ Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

commemoration, the centrality of queer sexual orientations in these materials caught me off guard.¹² Most often, Riot Grrrl is described as a “feminist punk movement,” erasing mention of how other gendered and sexual embodiments came to bear on configuring the movement. However, simply looking to Riot Grrrl songs, poems, and zines makes the presence of queerness in the movement utterly clear. Here, Charles Morris’s call for “archival queers” comes to mind. Morris, nodding to pieces by Barbara Biesecker and Cara Finnegan published in the same forum on “the rhetorical (re)turn of the archive” in *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, argues that the archival queer should “utilize the tools of rhetorical criticism and theory to enhance navigation of archives and produce rhetorical histories of archives that will warrant and arm our queer scholarship, pedagogy, and activism” (147).¹³

Because of the erasure of queer identity and praxis, implicit and explicit, in mainstream media coverage, commemoration, and scholarship, I assumed Riot Grrrl queerness would always be just out of reach, unable to pin down and locate in a way that would be considered legitimate to audiences unfamiliar with the movement. Seeing non-normative relations, erotics, and embodiments visualized, articulated, and performed in the archive enabled possibilities for acknowledgement, theorizations, and risks to emerge. These queer erotic hints buzzed thickly around the archived pages—a feeling made all the more intense when paired with my surprise. I was elated, and my sense of camaraderie with the movement heightened. These flows of reaction directed my critical impulses, as scholar and activist, to

¹² For commentary on the erasure of queer individuals in the Riot Grrrl movement, see Halberstam, Judith “What’s That Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives.” Kearney, Mary Celeste. “The Missing Links: Riot Grrrl – Feminism – Lesbian Culture.”

¹³ See *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9.1 (2006).

focus on the *function* of these texts. How were the aesthetic, discursive, and embodied elements operating as a political force, and how were my emotional connections related?

The archive I constructed through these materials often shifted throughout the course of this project. When I struggled to write, I would parse back through all of my materials, itching to locate a remnant to inspire me forward. In this way, my archive is somewhat serendipitous. In these instances, it would be easy to say that my choices were idiosyncratic. While this may be true to some degree, my own turn toward a particular object, or that object's pull, also demonstrates that object's rhetorical and affectively laden nature. Most often, I felt pulled by materials that existed at apices of contradiction. These contradictions manifested in both form and content, from the way experiences of violence were articulated through humor, to broaching topics such as the contradictions of inhibiting a female identified body in contemporary society. Taking this as a starting point, I scanned through my materials for pieces that, to me at least, most aptly captured these contradictions, and demonstrated the utility of affect within the movement.

From there, I constructed coherence around my archive through the affective frames of "anger" and "intimacy," as demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three. I identified these two embodied emotions as frames due to their dominance in the materials. However, I want to be clear that I did not pick them as frameworks because they are the only two emotions at work in Riot Grrrl politics—there are certainly other emotions pulsing through Riot Grrrl rhetorics, including sadness, confusion, and disgust. Rather, I felt quite personally compelled by the particular

entanglement of anger, love, militancy, and intimacy and the fierceness with which the Riot Grrrls expressed this entanglement. My decision to organize this project around anger and intimacy is my attempt to work through this entanglement, revealing its contours, contradictions, possibilities, and imaginings.

Chapter Overview

Building off of cultural theorists who identify “bad” feelings as a force for politicization, Chapter One, “Anger Makes Me a Modern Girl, Queering Patriarchal Protection Culture,” is organized around the emotion “anger.” Through an analysis of the discursive and visual rhetorics of Riot Grrrl cultural production alongside the embodied cultural practices the grrrls encouraged and enacted, I trace the migration and utilization of anger across Riot Grrrl rhetorics as a force for movement solidarity, collective identify formation, and a means through which to imagine subversive relationalities.

First, I situate the Riot Grrrl movement as an affectively configured movement in which the members privilege affect, emotion, and embodiment as sites of knowing. Highlighting this connection within Riot Grrrl artifacts points out how these rhetorics *require* the use of affect theory in order to fully dissect how they operate within the movement. After highlighting the priority of the chapter as isolating anger as one means through which Riot Grrrl is performed and enacted, I situate the project within Sara Ahmed’s theorizations of the “affect alien” and “feminist killjoy.” This offers a foundation from which politicized anger, specifically feminist and queer anger, emerges. Bringing Barbara Tomlinson’s detailed genealogy of the gendering of anger in conversation with Ahmed’s “feminist killjoy”

points to the logics by which feminist dissent is depoliticized, silenced, and wielded as a weapon against women.

This chapter builds towards one main claim: that through the mobilization of anger as a political force, the Riot Grrrls enacted new relationalities through a queering of patriarchal protective culture. I position the Riot Grrrl artifacts within the feminist legacy of opting out of existing institutional structures, such as courts and the police, for justice when faced with gendered experiences of violence, such as rape and assault. Finally, I argue that these discursive, visual, and embodied forms of communication subvert hegemonic cultural logics of fear instilled in women and girls, ultimately enabling the grrrls to construct movement solidarity, identity, and the sense of a shared atmosphere within which the Riot Grrrls imagined new relationalities and ways of being.

Organized around the emotional experience of “intimacy,” in Chapter Three, “Queer Intimacy & Grrrl Crushes: Entanglements of Friendship & Desire,” I build on the prior chapter by exploring how feelings typically conceptualized as oppositional to “bad” feelings can operate in tandem, cohesively circulating and operating as a political force. Through an analysis of Riot Grrrl zines, song lyrics, flyers, and embodied acts, I identify queer intimacies as well as the queering of intimacy as a force for imagining new kinships, relations, friendships, and enactments of solidarity within the movement.

First, I theorize intimacy as an experience that takes on a politicized form within social movements as an element of solidarity, before locating Riot Grrrl rhetorics as offering material residues of these embodied relations. Next, I situate

this chapter within rhetorical studies, identifying that contemporary rhetorical theory has left the role of love and intimacy in persuasion undertheorized. Here, I offer the pairing of affect theory and rhetorical theory as a means through which to conceptualize intimacy and love beyond identification.

After contextualizing this chapter in relation to the historical gendering of emotion and privileging of rationality, I situate the analysis as uncovering part of the “libidinal economy” of the Riot Grrrl movement (Goodwin et al). I focus on highlighting how the grrrls entangled an admiration of other grrrls and their configurations of friendship with an awareness of erotic possibility, opening the door for indefinite queer relations. I describe this way of *being* Riot Grrrl as a “grrrl crush,” using the term as a politicized designation of the particularities of Riot Grrrl relationality as they identify and publically articulate their admiration and desire for other women and girls. Rather than positioning the “crush” as an ephemeral feeling, the grrrls take it seriously as an enduring way of relating. Similar to Chapter Two, this points to how the Riot Grrrls mobilized affect and emotion as a tool for imagining new social relations and ways of being.

In my final chapter, “Conclusion: Affective Residue, Queer Feminism, & Becoming,” I turn to my own first encounter with Riot Grrrl in 2011 as indicative of the ways in which affective residue can traverse time and space, adapting to new contexts and creating new meaning. I offer an overview of the cultural resonances of Riot Grrrl 20 years later as further evidence of this affective endurance, before moving to a discussion of Riot Grrrl as an enactment of a queer feminist politic. After commenting on the pairing of affect theory and rhetorical studies, I conclude

with a discussion of what the affective network of Riot Grrrl offers as a theorization of the emotional lives underwriting processes of activism and political organizing.

Chapter Two

“Anger Makes Me a Modern Girl:” Queering Patriarchal Protection Culture

*My baby loves me, I'm so angry
Anger makes me a modern girl
Took my money, I couldn't buy nothin'
I'm sick of this brave new world
-Sleater Kinney, “Modern Girl”*

A 1992 video recording of Bikini Kill performing at Sanctuary Theatre in Washington D.C. shows Kathleen Hanna pull out a cassette player and hold it up to her microphone. Behind her, as the recording starts, her two band mates lean in for a light kiss on the cheek. As the recording begins, a male’s voice reverberates through the theatre and the crowd falls silent. The recording buzzes and clicks, making some words inaudible. A few seconds in it becomes clear that the male voice is discussing what he thinks of gendered sexual harassment. A female is interviewing him, and asks, “Do you think [sexual harassment] is a problem?” The male replies, “Well, it’s not a problem because most of the girls ask for it.” The band on stage and the shadows of the audience are frozen in the dimly lit venue. “How do most girls ask for it?” asks the female. “The way they act, the...well I can’t say the way they dress because that’s their own personal choice...” Pause. “I could say some dumb hoe, some slut rocker bitches walking down the street...they’re asking for it. They may deny it but it’s true.”

Silence.

“BULLSHIT,” yells an audience member from the back.

“This song is dedicated to him,” states Hanna as the drums gear up. The guitars burst. Pause. “*SUCK. MY. LEFT. ONE.*” Hanna’s angry, disgusted, feminine voice

screams. Hanna's body heaves and lurches the words out, as if they are an infectious disease. The cacophonous guitars switch to a catchy riff, and Hanna's voice vibrates on – *“Sister sister, where did we go wrong? / Tell me what the fuck we're doing here / Why are all the boys acting strange? We've got to show them we're worse than queer. / SUCK. MY. LEFT. ONE.”* As Hanna spits the words out, she hunches forward, lurching towards the audience as if preparing to brawl against an unseen enemy.

When the Riot Grrrls launched into the punk music scene in the early 1990's it was in part to speak out against the proliferation of sexual violence, incest, rape, and gendered violence. While the impetus for the Riot Grrrl movement was largely located within the treatment of women in the punk scene, the grrrls' embodiment and articulation of disgust, rage, and anger also operated as a call out of patriarchal culture as a whole. Simultaneously, performances such as Hanna's offered another way of *being* for grrrls, as they collectively engaged in these affectively generative expressions and subverted expectations of embodied femininity.

In highlighting the relationship between affect, embodiment, and cultural production, I am interested in theorizations of affect and emotion that allow affective registers to emerge as moments of opportunity for politically charged action. In particular, this chapter will hone in on the mobilization of the negative affect *anger* and how this specific emotion operates as a politically productive force within the Riot Grrrl movement. Through an analysis of the discursive and visual rhetorics of Riot Grrrl cultural production alongside the embodied cultural practices the grrrls encouraged and enacted, this analysis traces the migration and utilization

of anger across Riot Grrrl rhetorics as a force for movement solidarity, collective identify formation, and a means through which to imagine subversive relationalities.

In orienting towards traces of affect, I aim to foreground the utilization and utility of emotion and affect within resistant spaces. In *Passionate Politics: Emotions & Social Movements*, Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jagger and Francesca Polletta argue, “Most discussions of the solidarity-building functions of movement culture have concentrated on shared rhetoric and beliefs rather than on the emotions which accompany them” (18). While artifacts of movement culture are understood as containing and communicating manifestations of participant’s beliefs, priorities, political motives, values, stories, and personae, these same components “also have an equally important emotional side, entailing joy, hope, enthusiasm, pride, and affective attachment to the group” (Goodwin et al. 19). Through looking to the affective manifestations within the rhetorical, aesthetic, and performative elements of Riot Grrrl cultural production, this analysis focuses on *how* emotions accompany circulating rhetorics, leading to a greater theorization of the operation, formation, and utility of affect in dissent.

As a movement organized around forms of cultural production, performances, and practices such as zine making, spoken word poetry, visual art, and music performances, the question of how one *does* Riot Grrrl is central to this chapter. Before turning to analysis, I situate this project within the contentious relationship between emotion, feminism, and resistance. Due to the feminization of emotions and the ensuing ways in which emotions have been used as the basis to discredit feminism as a political movement, this background provides necessary

context for understanding how the Riot Grrrls utilized emotion as a force within the movement. After describing the theoretical turn to negative affects, I turn to the analysis of three artifacts, each of which are zine pages taken from prominent Riot Grrrl zines published and circulated in the early 1990's. While the rhetorical artifact is discursively and visually constructed, the analysis extends to the embodied cultural practices described and encouraged within these zine pages. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the role of affect in the construction and sustainment of social movement solidarity.

Affect Aliens & Feminist Killjoys

*Hardly anyone is sincere
All I know is anger that is real
I barely know how true goodness feels
I don't even know how to feel
-Heavens to Betsey, "Complicated"*

The following excerpt from the Riot Grrrl zine *Bikini Kill #2* highlights oft-repeated sentiments found throughout Riot Grrrl discourses:

Inside, i know i exist and am important in my own ways but what i see outside does not match up with how i feel inside AND it gets really weird because i have to struggle to keep my insides (my soulheartbrain) believing that i am good in the midst of all the lies i get told about myself. YOUR LOGIC IS KILLING ME BECAUSE THE ONLY WAY I CAN EXIST IS THRU CONTRADICTION (sic) (*Bikini Kill 2*)

(See Figure 2).

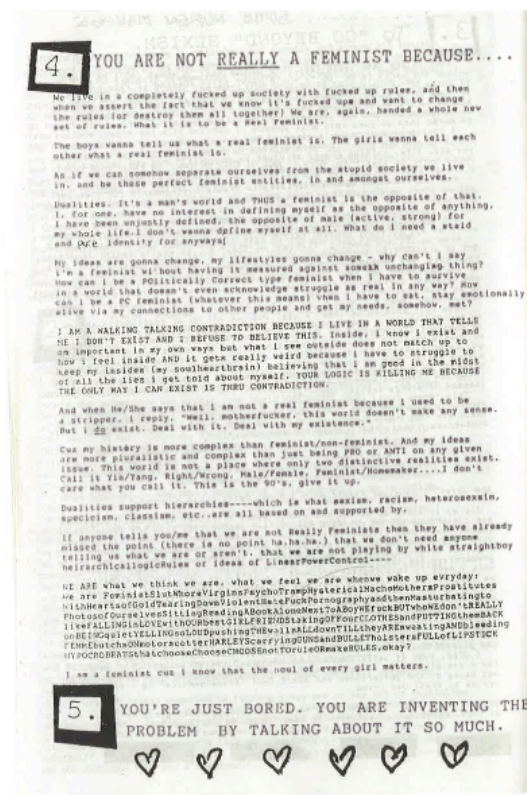


Figure 2

The writer of this excerpt identifies how their frustration and anger grows from the gap between what they see “outside” and how they feel “inside.” The embodiment of contradiction is central to existence, according to this author. This zine excerpt offers a lived articulation of Sara Ahmed’s theorization of the “affect alien,” a term she uses to name the gap between the expectation of feelings associated with a particular object, event, or experience, and the actual affective feeling of that particular object, event, or experience. The naming of this gap between expectation and experience offers a way of thinking through the specific affective experience of alienation—or as Ahmed puts it, “...the gap between the promise of a feeling and the feeling of a feeling” (*The Promise of Happiness* 42). The affect alien is estranged from

daily life due to how their internal feelings fail to match dominant expectations of how one *should* feel. Most relevant here is what emerges from this gap, or what fills the gap. Ahmed identifies narratives of disappointment, rage, anger, and anxiety as possibilities for explaining, filling, and making sense of these affective ruptures.

For the Riot Grrrls, a central part of their “affect alien” experience stemmed from the particularities of a postfeminist cultural context in the early 1990’s. Bonnie Dow explores the definition of “postfeminism” by pointing out that the prefix “post” implies that feminism is over, the implications of which are a depoliticization of feminism as a political movement.¹⁴ Within this cultural context, as women were told that they had finally achieved gender equality, the Riot Grrrls identified that their own lived experiences of sexual violence and marginalization were at odds with this popular narrative, thus creating the “gap” that Ahmed identifies.

Ahmed explicitly describes the affect alien as housing the potential for change. Ahmed states, “to suffer can mean to feel your disagreements with what has been judged as good. Given this, suffering is a receptivity that can heighten the capacity to act” (*The Promise of Happiness* 210). This interweaving of the affect alien, the potentiality for anger, and the heightened capacities for action creates a foundational point from which to situate Riot Grrrl cultural production, as many of their articulations stem from anger with gendered marginalization within the punk community. The relationship between feminists as affect aliens and anger oriented toward a feminist politic is especially relevant to this analysis.

¹⁴ Dow, Bonnie J. *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women’s Movement since 1970*.

A feminist orientation is inherently, intentionally, and instrumentally oppositional. Pointing to the relationship between disrupting or “causing trouble,” and happiness, Ahmed argues,

Feminist genealogies can be described as genealogies of women who not only do not place their hopes for happiness in the right things but who speak out about their unhappiness with the very obligation to be made happy by such things. (*The Promise of Happiness* 60)

Dominant power structures code these feminist articulations as excessive and unnecessary. Here, feminism becomes a nuisance and pest to the ability to be able to derive happiness from everyday pleasures. This provides the foundation for constructing narratives that position feminists as angry or entitled, thus delegitimizing and depoliticizing feminist resistance. Tropes including the angry black woman, “mad” women, and the angry dyke exemplify the complexity of how gender and the performance of emotions are deployed as a means through which to delegitimize and cast aside acts of resistance. Barbara Tomlinson argues, “the trope of the angry feminist draws from a deep well of related clichés, affective rhetorical strategies, and familiar tropes that are deployed routinely in our society...” (4). Tomlinson extends this argument by stating, “The countless irruptions of the trope of the angry feminist and its equivalents do not simply emerge spontaneously from a simmering core of misogyny and racism,” rather, “they are deployed deliberately as part of a set of productive tools...” (4). These tools contribute to constructing the existing social circumstances in which emotion is correlated with femininity, delegitimizing both emotionality as well as femininity. More specifically, Ahmed

approaches the trope of the “feminist killjoy” as an entry point for exploring the complexities of how emotion is wielded as a weapon for delegitimizing feminist dissent. Ahmed argues that feminist killjoys are “read as being unhappy, such that situations of conflict, violence, and power are read as about the unhappiness of feminists, rather than being what feminists are unhappy about” (67). This prioritized focus on the depoliticized emotion expressed by feminists operates as a silencing of dissent. Feminist dissent is often caught in an emotional catch-22. Feminist dissidents desire the ability to unabashedly express anger, frustration, and unhappiness with their oppression, but the dominant reading of emotionality is to cast it aside as a silly, unwarranted, or ridiculous performance of gender. These processes of correlation between gender and emotion are not singular for anger, but extend to other “negative” feeling such as depression, shame, and dissatisfaction.

For instance, Cvetkovich’s project in *Depression* also points out how everyday and political expressions of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and depression are pathologized, despite the fact that there are valid reasons to be depressed, thus pointing to the cultural, political, and material logics at work in trying to depoliticize bad feelings. This depoliticization of bad feelings becomes a way to ignore the expressions of dissent and results in “...a designation of feminism as ‘hostile’ and emotional, whereby feminism becomes an extension of the already pathological ‘emotionality’ of femininity” (Ahmed 170). Given these tensions, constraints, and connotations, next I will situate this project within the turn to negative and bad feelings in affect theory.

Negative Feelings

“Right now, maybe CHAINSAW is about Frustration. Frustration in music. Frustration in living, in being a girl, in being a homo, in being a misfit of any sort. In being a dork, you know, the last kid to get picked for the stupid kickball team in grade school. Which is where this whole punk rock thing came from in the first place.”

- CHAINSAW 2, zine publication

Particularly relevant to an analysis of emotion and affect in social movements are theorizations of affect that foreground affect’s circulatory force between bodies. For instance, Ahmed argues that affect operates by ‘shaping’ and ‘making’ bodies as *forms of action*. Within this broad understanding of affect, more specifically relevant to anger is the turn towards negative feelings within affect theory that locates “bad” feelings as a place of potentiality from which politically charged action can emerge. This “negative turn” is largely the result of queer and feminist engagement with affect theory, as these critical views understand emotion as a power laden cultural force.¹⁵ Largely focusing on affects such as shame, despair, regret, anger, hopelessness, and sadness, these critical engagements have worked to explore the “dark side” of experiencing marginalization, as well as to question the impulse to turn any emotion into something productive, good, or positive in order to “see them at all,” as Heather Love highlights.¹⁶ In her exploration of depression as a resource for political action, Cvetkovich argues,

This is not, however, to suggest that depression is thereby converted into a positive experience; it retains its associations with inertia and

¹⁵ Related is the turn to negative sociality in queer theory. See Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory & the Death Drive*; Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss & The Politics of Queer History*; Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Both of these theoretical moves are counterintuitive in the sense that they locate political potentiality, relevance, and validity in relationalities rooted in injury and trauma.

¹⁶ See Cvetkovich, Ann. *Depression: A Public Feeling*; Ngai, Sianne. *Ugly Feelings*.

despair, if not apathy and indifference, but these feelings, moods, and sensibilities become sites of publicity and community formation (2).

This is a critical point, as my aim here, in highlighting the construction and function of anger in movement solidarity is not to cast it as a “good” force. Rather, I am interested in how the alienation and dissatisfaction located at the heart of anger can be the foundation for imagining new ways of relating to one another. In line with this, Susan McManus foregrounds the “latent productivity” of ambivalent affect so as to interrupt “an affective politics in which hope is presumed to shape subversive agency.” Delving into these bad feelings creates an important tension for knowledge production in which the nuances and textures of social change retain their complexity and contradictions. In the following analysis, I aim to highlight what the role of anger is in *doing* Riot Grrrl. Toward what does anger orient the movement, and what then emerges? Ultimately, this analysis demonstrates that expressions of anger open doors of possibility for imagining and enacting alternative cultural practices and modes of relating to one another.

Queering Patriarchal Protective Culture

“And also: A lot of times several girls/women will have trouble with the same guy or group of guys BUT cuz the girls don’t know each other and are scattered about, we can’t warn each other effectively. If we are in a big gang we are less isolated from each other and more likely to start talking and dancing together and having some FUN.” – Huggy Bear

In her introduction to the text *Intimacy*, Berlant argues, “To rethink intimacy is to appraise how we have been and how we live and how we might imagine lives that make more sense than the ones so many are living” (6). This section of analysis will demonstrate how the Riot Grrrls imagine and enact new intimacies and ways of

relating to one another through a queering of patriarchal protective culture. I am not suggesting that the Riot Grrrl's actions were only performed by queer identified individuals or those whose identities fall on the LGBTQ spectrum. Rather, I employ "queer" and "queering" here as a disruption of existing relationalities and intimacies. Ranging from acts of collectively harassing male abusers to performing rejections of patriarchal institutions, such as the police, these cultural practices emerge from rhetorical articulations of anger and contribute to a broader exploration of the role of negative affect in constructions and embodiments of solidarity.

This is demonstrated in an excerpt from a zine published by the New York City Riot Grrrl chapter. Written by a teen named Ananda, this page features a narrative in which Ananda explains that her mother has an abusive boyfriend named John. Ananda states,

John is desperately trying to maintain control over her and make it as hard as possible to untangle ourselves from his fucking life. He even managed to get my mom arrested (the police themselves as lying, sexist bastards had a lot to do with it).

Ananda proceeds to leave John's phone number, and asks fellow Riot Grrrls to call him and leave him messages, reproaching him for hurting her mother. Ananda states, "FUCK YOU JOHN! HOPE YOU FUCKING DIE IN YOUR YUPPIE FORTRESS!" All of this is written in a typewriter print font, on an unassuming black and white zine page with no added illustrations.

This zine excerpt can be taken as exemplary of the ways in which zines, as objects, literally mediate the relationships between bodies. Ananda narrates bodily violence and control as experienced by her mother, as well as the somewhat removed position of Ananda herself, and the ways in which she has experienced seeing her mother abused. Ananda takes this embodied intervention a step farther by encouraging the girls to relate to one another differently by intervening through this act of solidarity. Encouraging fellow grrrls to call and accost an overtly violent abuser is a bold, antagonist act that subverts the logics of fear from which discourses about gendered violence and rape emerge. Rachel Hall traces rape prevention discourses since the 1980's, articulating the ways in which these discourses are built upon neoliberal risk management rhetorics that address women as "a conglomeration of risk factors" (6). Hall argues,

Women's safety pedagogy produces popular notions of female agency in which women are simultaneously assigned an *a priori* victim-status and expected to avoid the inevitable all on their own. The resulting paradox is that agency is possible for women only through avoidance (6).

Understood within this context of avoidance, Ananda and the grrrls' overt engagement with the possibility of abuse could easily be framed as "flirting with the accident" (Hall 6). However, the grrrls' call-out of John would take place over the phone, physically and spatially detaching themselves from the possibility of violence. In this way, their savvy action retains their personal anonymity, while still cueing John into knowing he is being watched. Further, because John would be

receiving these messages from strangers, there would be an element of mystery to the messages that contain the potentiality of cultivating a sense of paranoia; John knows that he is being watched, but he does not know where, when, or by whom. As a rhetorical act and intervention of bodies, Ananda's call for other grrrls to step up and protect her mother operates as a queering of patriarchal protective culture in which men must be called upon to protect women, thus opening room for a reimagining of relationships and intimacies.

Central to the process of this particular reimagination is that the Riot Grrrls publicize supposedly private behavior that is acceptable within a patriarchal culture. A public grrrl/grrrl/grrrl indefinite relation disrupts the private male/female couple relation, as Ananda's call circulates among and beyond her NYC Riot Grrrl Chapter. As Michael Warner argues, "a public is a relation among strangers," and in particular, publics constituted through the circulation of a discursive material connect and organize strangers (74). This "stranger relationality" exemplifies how materials connect us to those with whom we have something in common, but also that we never fully know which bodies we are connected to through discursive materials (75). We only have the assurance that we *are* connected to people "out there." The stranger relationality embedded in the norms of zine circulation enable the public grrrl/grrrl/grrrl indefinite relation, as Ananda herself cannot limit the number or specifics of who reads and acts on her call for grrrl protection.

By enacting grrrl solidarity, the Riot Grrrls begin to rethink the intimate conditions under which their bodies exist. Through this act of collectively calling an

abuser out, they begin working towards a culture founded on collective safety and protection, rather than succumbing to the physical threats of patriarchal violence. As Adela Licona argues in her study of borderland zines, “Zines perform the differences they are trying to make. By challenging, reimagining, and replacing exclusionary and oppressive discursive practices, zines perform new expressions of subjectivity” (2). Rather than just being a cultural intervention in which the zine offers new forms of representation to counter existing hegemonic cultural norms, this zine makes an intervention that extends beyond the pages, and to bodies moving through the world.

While the call to accost the abuser is an embodied act charged with anger, the rhetorical form of this zine excerpt exemplifies how the Riot Grrrls discursively articulated anger as a place from which to encourage new cultural practices. Ananda ends the paragraph with the statement, “FUCK YOU JOHN! HOPE YOU FUCKING DIE IN YOUR YUPPIE FORTRESS!” Here, Ananda utilizes inflammatory language, as well as the capitalized letters often found in Riot Grrrl texts, thus fitting seamlessly within the Riot Grrrl zine genre. She also tells John to die in his “yuppie fortress,” suggesting that there is a classed power dynamic at work. Ananda wages a clear insult with “yuppie,” as the term is typically used to describe an arrogant individual who flaunts their class standing. The word “fortress” both builds connotations of John as a wealthy man, while also visually and spatially positioning him as a patriarch. Fortresses evoke images of large, impenetrable structures that protect an interior, thus suggesting an awareness of an external threat. Placing John in a fortress references the protections that must be put in place to sustain his

power, suggesting that perhaps masculinity, as a central source of John's agency, is not so impenetrable after all. As the fortress protects, it also confines. Those inside the fortress are relegated to only interacting with others inside the fortress, thus cutting them off from the limitless relations of solidarity among those on the outside. While Ananda's call for grrrl protection is premised on the grrrl/grrrl/grrrl indefinite relation, John is constructed as an individual physically and materially confined and restricted from the "outside" world.

In *Putting Your Body on the Line* Pamela Haag offers a genealogy of feminist thinking on violence from the Second Wave to the 1980's, outlining the discourses that feminist thought responded to and reframed. Haag contends,

An explicit theorization of violence as an *order* with many manifestations...influenced the movement culture out of which feminism emerged. It questioned not *whether* but *how* violence would happen, how the body would be (ab)used or subjectively compromised (26).

The feminist acknowledgement of violence as daily reality offers the necessary contextualization for understanding why the Riot Grrrls sought other ways of surviving, coping, and protecting one another. Their actions can also be placed within a feminist genealogy of creating and enacting alternative cultural practices for resisting violence and enabling protection. Haag explains,

Earlier feminist initiatives had carved out a world of possible political responses between reporting to the police and remaining silence.

They included: feminist "street gangs" patrolling for safety; a Berkeley

initiative whereby citizens hung whistles and signs in front of their houses, designating them as safe places for women to go for assistance; plans to picket the houses of those assailants not likely to be brought before the courts or the police; and so on (55).

The Riot Grrrls were not singular in their “opting out” of established forms of “protection” such as the police or courts, but rather, they built upon decades of feminist survival strategies for enacting conditions better than those sanctioned by existing institutions.

In line with this enactment of grrrl/grrrl/grrrl protection and solidarity as a replacement for institutionalized forms of protection, another excerpt from the zine *Riot Grrrl 1*, placed under the heading “SCAMS, RIOTS, AND BROKEN RULES TO LIVE BY . . .” states,

1. Riot Trick: When you need to slash/pop some fucker’s (cops) car tire, and you don’t wanna get caught, you can just get a piece of wood w/ a nail coming up through it perpendicular and position it behind tire of said parked vehicle. They’ll slash itself when you’re long gone (See Figure 3).

Next to the “riot trick” is a small cartoon drawing of a cop car with an arrow instructing where to place the piece of wood in relation to the tire. Most fascinating about this zine page is the ideological position and unspoken assumption from which the “Riot Trick” is articulated. Rather than delving into the reasons *why* a grrrl might need to pop the tires of a cop car, the author speaks under the assumption that the audience understands that this is just a tip that they obviously

might need at some point, or as the header of the page states, something they might even “live by” (*Riot Grrrl 1*).

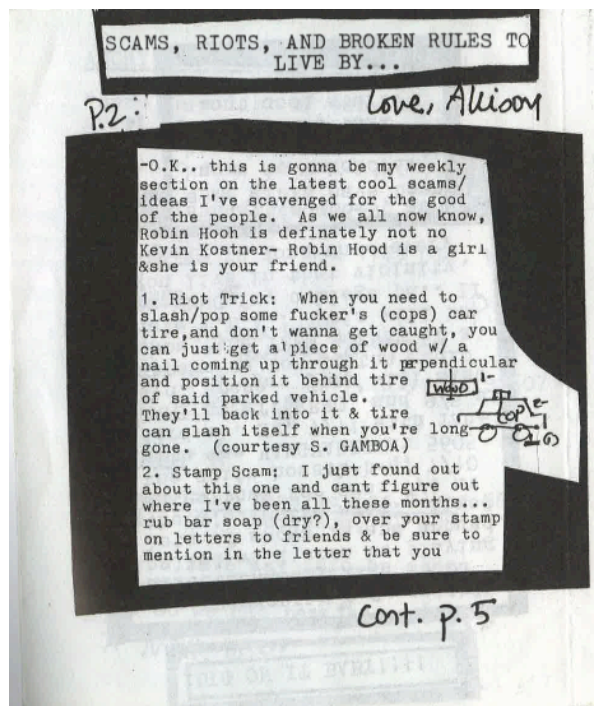


Figure 3

While the cops are traditionally thought of as a social institution put in place to protect, the Riot Grrrls' implicit identification of the police force as a patriarchal institution operates as an enthymeme for the articulation of this “riot trick.” Rather than relying on the police for protection, the unspoken premise of this “riot trick” suggests that the cops are, in fact, another patriarchal entity that needs to be disrupted. This action can be viewed as similar to the cultural practice enacted in Ananda's call for the grrrls to accost her mom's abuser; both instances offer an embodied act of disruption of a patriarchal authority figure. Ananda's call focuses

on the male abuser as the figure, while this action positions the police as a patriarchal institution.

The form that this zine excerpt takes is central to the message communicated. As the tip is titled “Riot Trick” and listed under a heading that states, “SCAMS, RIOTS, AND BROKEN RULES TO LIVE BY,” the traditional feminine teen magazine form is evoked. Flipping through the pages of a teen magazine such as *Seventeen*, *Cosmo Girl*, or *Teen Vogue*, it is typical to see page headings such as “8 Genius Styling Hacks That’ll Make Your Outfit Instantly Cooler” or “How to Make Out: 5 Tips That Will Drive Him Crazy” followed by pictures and/or descriptions of female identified bodies altering their way of being according to the particular guidelines of the heading (*Seventeen*). By taking this format of offering a set of guidelines premised on the assumption that they will improve a particular, embodied aspect of living, the “Riot Trick” mirrors this specific form of communication. The naming of the tip as a “Riot Trick” and the heading stating “...RULES TO LIVE BY” mimics the slang of a teen magazine. Underneath the heading and in-between the description of the “Riot Trick” someone has written over the typeface with a felt pen “Love, Allison” in cursive, aesthetically evoking personalized femininity, and drawing further parallels between the zine and a standard teen magazine. Mimicking the form of a teen magazine makes sense given the overlap between the intended audience of a teen magazine and the creators and audience of these Riot Grrrl zines—both groups are teenage girls. While the form of the zine page retains the aesthetic of an underground zine—typewriter font, black and white shading, lines crooked from scissors, and the shading of a Xerox machine—the page

verges on offering mimicry of a teen magazine page, while simultaneously turning the form on its head to instruct the reader on how to disrupt an established social system.

However, the premise through which the teen magazine genre and the Riot Grrrl zine suggest embodied improvements or “tips” are completely at odds. In the teen magazine genre, articles such as “8 Genius Styling Hacks That’ll Make Your Outfit Instantly Cooler” or “How to Make Out: 5 Tips That Will Drive Him Crazy” are predicated on the assumption that feminized bodies are in place to be aesthetically decorated or physically guided as objects for another’s pleasure (*Seventeen*). However, the “Riot Trick” turns this assumption on its head by suggesting an action that reconfigures patriarchal relationalities, and thus, a new means by which grrrls obtain agency through an affectively charged cultural practice.

This act of disrupting the police institution along with the previous zine excerpt of calling on other grrrls to protect Ananda’s mother, can be contextualized by Diana Russell’s argument in *Politics of Rape* in which she states,

Since the system of justice does not begin to deal with the problem of rape, it seems justifiable to deal with the problem in extralegal fashion. Those who see such a statement as condoning violence should remember that violence against women is already condoned without stirring too much concern. (276)

Rather than seeking the government, state, and socially sanctioned line of protection by calling the police for John’s abusive actions, Ananda opts out of this structure, implicitly deeming it useless, and instead calls on the Riot Grrrls as a collective

capable of enacting solidarity, offering an embodied cultural practice predicated on a queering of patriarchal protective culture.

These acts also enact a disruption of what Judith Hicks Stiehm describes as “the protected,” “the protector,” and “the defender.” In her naming and description of these gendered, power laden positions, the protected is an individual who is safe from attack because “a protector effectively threatens or uses force on her behalf” (368) while a defender “is expected to be ready to share in all risks and society deems necessary for its safety” (374). Stiehm outlines,

For the most part, then, men have forbidden women to act either as defenders or as protectors. At the same time a government’s very existence affirms the need for defenders or protectors. In this situation all women become ‘the protected.’ Some men become actual protectors; the rest remain potential protectors. (367)

Stiehm explains that these social conditions have resulted in only legitimizing the use of force for protection if men are the ones enacting violence. The grrrls’ popping, or suggested popping, of the cop car tire subverts this idea that women need to be protected, as well as the idea that women can only be positioned as “the protected.” Not only would this action require women to act upon and against the property of “the protector,” the literal act of popping a car tire would prevent the cops from speeding to the rescue if called upon, rendering them useless in an emergency situation. Expanding on Stiehm’s description, Susan Jeffords argues,

While protectors are irrevocably linked to the victims and villains who enliven their scenarios, their status as protector is dependent

upon just this kind of contradiction between community and hierarchy: in order to be differentiated from villains, protectors must be linked to a community, but that linkage is of a hierarchical and not a democratic nature, thereby negating the very pact that prevents any recognition of the protector as a threat.” (213)

Through the suggestion of popping “the protector’s” car tire, the Riot Grrrls enact this critique, suggesting that this hierarchical structure of relationality is inherently damaging.

Further, Stiehm’s theorization of “the protector” and “the protected,” as well as Jeffords’ expansion of this, is partially predicated on the sustainment of the cultural politics of fear. The justification for needing a protector, when outside an immediate threat, is premised on an ambiguous fear of harm. Ahmed describes the slippage, mobility, and temporality of fear: “while the lived experience of fear may be unpleasant in the present, the unpleasantness of fear also relates to the future. Fear involves an anticipation of hurt or injury” (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 65). Fear is a construction rooted in narratives of what bodies, objects, and threats are deemed as potential threats. When the grrrls suggest popping a cop car tire, they not only question the need of a “protector,” they also question the narratives on which the construction of that need rests. Ahmed proceeds to argue,

Such shrinkage is significant: fear works to contain some bodies such that they take up less space. In this way, emotions work to align bodily space with social space. It is not that fear begins in a body and then restricts the mobility of that body...the response of fear is itself

dependent on particular narratives of what and who is fearsome that are already in place. (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 69)

The act of popping a cop car tire, by its embodied nature, requires a traversal of space. The aim of the act—to disrupt business as usual for the state “protectors”—marks this traversal as subversive, as well as an act which discards expectations of where and how women move through public spaces. In this way, anger is utilized as a tool for embodied mobilization through which mobilities limited by the construction of fear are discarded and reconfigured. Through the rhetorical description and suggestion of this act of disruption, the grrrls suggest an alternative way of being, moving, and relating to one another by turning to each other for protection, rather than to the state sanctioned institution. Here, similar to the instance in which Ananda called on grrrls to protect her mother, the Riot Grrrls envision another way of existing through queering patriarchal protective culture.

Before concluding this section of analysis, I want to turn toward a short zine essay written by an unidentified author for the zine *What Is a Riot Grrrl Anyway?*

The excerpt states,

“...But I am a tuff grrl, sometimes. Maybe you could come to a weekly meeting and I would meet you and you would say I don’t want to walk home by myself. So I would walk with you and we would be a gang cuz we are fighting all the time on the streets for our lives so walking together we are a kickassgirlgang yea! This one night at a riot grrrl meeting some girls started talking about all these rapes that started happening at the college here. We got so mad at the total way the

school and the media ignore sexual abuse and harassment. And how shitty it is to live in fear. So we made up a secret plan and carried it out that night. We laughed and held hands and ran around in the dark and we were the ones you should be looking out for. In a girl gang I am the night and I feel I can't be raped and I feel so fuckin' free (See Figure 4).

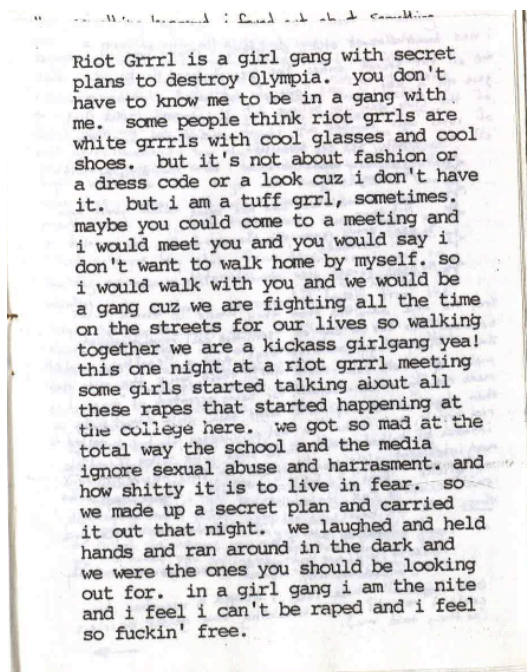


Figure 4

This brief excerpt narrates the process by which Riot Grrrls arrive at the queering of patriarchal protective culture. The structure of this narrative is simple; the author makes the decision to protect each grrrl through subverting gendered logics of fear. I am particularly struck by the final two lines, and particularly, the meshing together of anger, euphoria, fear, and love. The author's narration of "being the night" with the "girl gang" is offered not only as a subversive choice, but also as the *fun* choice,

thus complicating assumptions of where experiences and affects of anger, deviance, and subversion might lead. As anger and fun are brought together as a way of acting in the world, the complexity of the Riot Grrrl's affective network is highlighted.

While the impulse of the articulation is anger, the grrrl arrives at feeling "free" due to the intimate relations in practice—an affective element that I take up in the next chapter.

Conclusion: Embodying Anger, Enacting a Movement

"True Love Will Never Die and this I really do believe, despite bitter cries of treason from those closest to my own heart, and alienation becomes fuel for more fire and with this in mind it is my intention to ignite the flame that will burn the walls right down."
 – *Bikini Kill #2* (excerpt)

The Riot Grrrls offer an alternative theorization of anger, marking it as a motivational, imaginative force that opens doors for alternative worlds. This analysis, by interweaving discourses and embodied acts, offers insight into the means through which Riot Grrrls constructed movement solidarity, identity, and the sense of a shared atmosphere within which movement participants imagined new relationalities and ways of being. Here, anger orients zine readers and movement participants toward something else, refusing to perpetuate and enact destructive patriarchal relations. Through the articulation of anger, the grrrls envisioned, articulated, and enacted subversive ways of existing and new ways of relating to one another, pointing to the politically productive nature of building a movement from an angry foundation.

Ultimately, this analysis points to the necessity for rhetoric and communication scholars to take up the study of affect in social movements. While locating affect poses methodological challenges for scholars looking at particular

historical moments, this analysis demonstrates that the residue of embodied experiences can be located within cultural production and practices. Lending an eye to the ephemerality associated with affect points to the relational network of which social movements are made up—a vital component of movement mobilization, solidarity building, identity construction, and sustainability that must not be ignored if we intend to take activism seriously.

Chapter Three

Queer Intimacy & Grrrl Crushes: Entanglements of Friendship & Desire

"The revolution is about going to the playground with our best girlfriends. You are hanging upside down on the bars and all the blood is rushing to your head. It's a euphoric feeling. The boys can see our underwear and we don't really care."

-*Bikini Kill 1*, zine publication

On the Bikini Kill track "White Boy" Kathleen Hanna sings, "I'm so sorry if I'm alienating some of you / your whole fucking culture alienates me," summing up the Riot Grrrl's fiery attitude toward their experiences of disenfranchisement within the punk scene. They were fed up with being pushed to the margins of punk, both literally in the crowd at shows as men took up the space directly in front of the stage, and more expansively, as their art work was ignored by the subculture as well as mainstream music and art critics. The first Bikini Kill manifesto alone, a declaration of 16 statements, calls out the "bullshit" of capitalism, sexism, ableism, racism, internalized sexism, and heterosexism among other articulations of the violent effects of power.¹⁷ There was a lot to be angry about. However, rather than anger, rage, disgust and other "negative" affects consuming the entire affective experience of the movement, the Riot Grrrls crafted a complex affective network that fostered multifaceted, seemingly contradictory sentiments to emerge as a political force.

For instance, a handwritten iteration of a Riot Grrrl Manifesto includes the following declarations (See Figure 5):¹⁸

¹⁷ See *Bikini Kill #2*.

¹⁸ There are numerous versions of Riot Grrrl manifestos published through zines, which all typically take similar forms. The first Riot Grrrl manifesto was written by the band Bikini Kill and published in the zine *Bikini Kill #2*.

“Burn down the walls that say you can’t:

Be a dork, tell your friends you love them.

Recognize empathy and vulnerability as positive forms of strength.

Resist psychic death.

Cry in public.

Acknowledge emotional violence as real.

Figure out how the idea of competition (winning and losing) fits into your intimate relationships.

Believe people when they tell you they are hurting or in pain.”

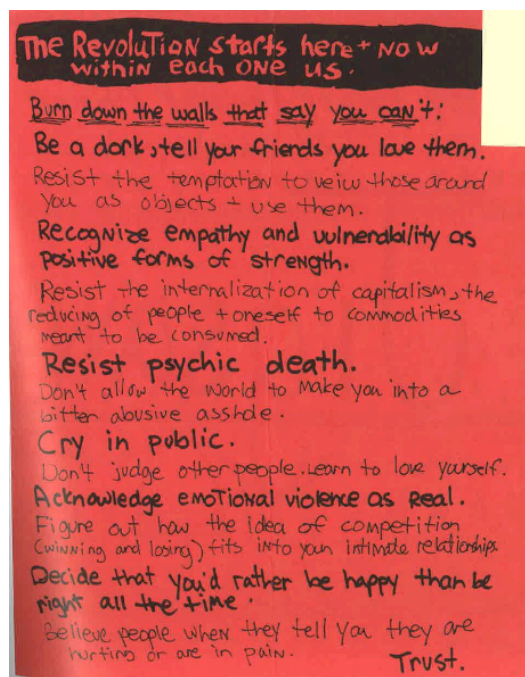


Figure 5

The manifesto begins with a physical and material threat to power, before moving to statements aimed at managing the affective and emotional elements of relationships. The Riot Grrrls proclaim an awareness of how power structures manifest in emotions, once again situating the movement as one configured around

affective experience. The demand to cry in public and tell your friends you love them positions affectively motivated declarations as having world making force. Further, the emotions described within this one manifesto, ranging from the anger driven act of burning walls down to recognizing vulnerability as a positive form of strength, demonstrates how the angry articulations described in the last chapter and more “positive” feelings such as intimacy, love, and friendship, are experienced simultaneously within the movement, adding up to a collective, identifiable experience of *enacting* Riot Grrrl.

Thus, this chapter highlights another primary affect at work within the Riot Grrrl movement. Here, I focus on intimacy and related components such as love, affiliation, friendship, admiration and their queer embodiments within the movement. Similar to the prior chapter, I am interested in how these particular emotions play a specific role as a political force for movement solidarity and the reimagining of relational structures, contributing to an understanding of what it means to *be* and *do* Riot Grrrl. Through an analysis of these forms of cultural production, this chapter traces the contours of queer intimacies within and across the Riot Grrrl movement as a force for imagining new kinships and ways of relating through the entanglement of grrrl friendship with erotic possibility.

In part, the focus on queer intimacies here is a political recovery project aimed at foregrounding the interconnected web of queerness and feminism in resistant spaces and cultural practices. However, I want to be clear that I do not aim to cast the movement as *only* queer. Through this analysis, I aim to uncover the complexity, diversity, and wide spectrum of grrrl intimacies ranging from queer

erotic practices to platonic friendships, and everything outside and in-between.

When I talk about queerness in this chapter, I am referring to queer as something performative. As José Esteban Muñoz argues, queerness is performative because “it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future,” and thus, queerness “is an insistence or potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (1).

Understanding queerness as a performative invested in imagining *toward* another way of being allows a foregrounding of affective relationalities and embodiments as a political action aimed at imagining, enacting, and sustaining a different social system.

In this chapter, I first situate my argument within cultural and affective theories of intimacy as a political force entwined with solidarity. I then position these theories within rhetorical studies, pointing to the ways in which an affective and emotionally driven theorization of intimacy can enhance, broaden, and alter traditional theories of identification. Before moving to analysis, I place the Riot Grrrl’s emphasis on love and intimacy within the historically situated devaluing of emotions as they correlate with the feminine. Next, I focus on zine excerpts and song lyrics, then read the materiality of the zine itself, aiming to highlight how articulations laden with intimacy, love, and affiliation point to the function of these embodiments within the Riot Grrrl movement. Mobilizing queerness as a possibility within their interpersonal relations, the Riot Grrrls embodied queer intimacies alongside a queering *of* intimacy through what I broadly identify as a “grrrl crush,” or an overlap and oscillation between friendship, admiration, and desire. Through these embodiments and ways of relating, the Riot Grrrls mobilized intimacy as a

force for collective identity formation, solidarity, and a means through which to actually enact their conceptualization of a better world.

Becoming Intimate

*Girl you're a star, girl you're my star
 Make a silver mess, from my touch
 Pull me under, and push me out far
 Under the moon, it's clear and brighter than mars
 Where it's at is where you are
 -Huggy Bear, "Aquagirl Star"*

The question of how we come to *feel* intimate is central to locating these affective traces and constructions of relationalities. Intimacy is simultaneously fleeting and enduring. The touch of another body might last only a moment, while the residue of that closeness can be carried around, bubbling under the surface of daily life. Perhaps you borrow the shirt of an intimate partner, and catch the distinct smell of *them* at random intervals as you move throughout the day, or after you hug a close friend, you feel the touch of their hand imprint upon your upper back long after parting. The etymology of the adjective *intimacy* stems from the Latin *intimus*, meaning “inmost, innermost, deepest.” In order for intimacy to be articulated as such, these “inside” feelings or experiences become attached to something external, or something literally outside of ourselves. To use Sara Ahmed’s language, to feel intimate with something means to turn towards that thing.¹⁹ Intimacy within a resistance space takes on a politicized role by contributing to movement solidarity and sustainment. How is solidarity felt, and in the process of *doing* solidarity, what world-making practices and relationalities are enacted, and what other ways of being are imagined?

¹⁹ Ahmed, Sara. *The Promise of Happiness*.

The question of how one *does* intimacy is essential here, as is the question of what doing solidarity amounts to, as a collective way of being, feeling, and acting. Berlant asks of intimacy in everyday life, “What happens to the energy of attachment when it has no designated place?” (5). The uniqueness of social movement intimacy, love, and affiliation is that it *does* have a direction, place, or purpose stemming from political motivations. Underlying this analysis is the structure of cultural production within the Riot Grrrl movement, as a material space and set of practices where rhetorical significations of intimacy are expressed and generated, pointing toward and contributing to movement solidarity. In their study of the rhetoric of dissent, Bowers et al. explain,

Solidification includes the rhetorical processes by which an agitating group produces or reinforces the cohesiveness of its members, thereby increasing responsiveness to group beliefs, values, and ideologies. (Bowers et al. 29)

This definitional explanation points to how solidification is a continual process for movements, as well as an intimate process, as “cohesiveness” is generated through relation.²⁰ Even once movement solidification is achieved, the process and reinforcement is never finished. Rather, rhetorical and performative maintenance must continually take place, positioning solidarity as always in a state of becoming.

The becoming of solidarity points to the fluidity and transient nature of social movements, and as Deborah Gould highlights, “The *movement* in “social movements”

²⁰ Of course, the intimacy of solidarity manifests in indefinite ways depending on the particular circumstances, movement, and members.

gestures toward the realm of affect; bodily intensities; emotions, feelings, and passions; and toward an uprising” (3). For this chapter, theorizations of affect that emphasize circulation, process, materiality, and attachment are most relevant as these intensities are what amount to the feeling of intimacy and love. Drawing on Spinoza, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth argue, “affect arises in the midst of inbetweenness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon” (3). The emphasis on *inbetweenness* in this understanding of affect points to an essence of potentiality – an aura that also underwrites the Riot Grrrls reimagining and enacting of new intimacies and kinships. Emphasizing the role of affect in social movements, Goodwin et al. argues, “It is affective ties that bind and preserve the networks in the first place” (8). This highlights the necessity of engaging with the role and utility of affect in social movements, including affect’s sources, its contextual articulations, and its functions in movements.

Within contemporary rhetorical studies, intimacy and related concepts, such as love, have been undertheorized. Joshua Gunn argues that the lack of attention to love by scholars of rhetoric stems from love’s “close proximity to naïve idealism or “kitsch” in Western culture,” and more importantly here, from rhetorical theorists’ assumption that love is the “dynamic underwriting persuasion,” as evidenced by Kenneth Burke’s concepts of “identification,” “division,” and “consubstantiality” (133). Love is taken as the unspoken foundation from which rhetors speak, regardless of whether they strive to offer a critique or connect with their audience. Here, I argue that affect theory offers rhetorical studies a greater theorization of love and intimacy, as the embodied experience of both exceeds conceptualizations

of identification. This is evidenced in Gunn's own theorization of the relationship between love and rhetoric, in which he argues,

The gap or gulf between two people or a rhetor and an audience assumed by rhetorical theory...simply does not exist, and consequently, the love of rhetoric...would concern 'an a priori *affectability* or *persuadability*' that is previous to and in excess of any shared meaning (149).

Gunn's description of love's "excess" is most relevant here, as Riot Grrrls mobilized articulations of intimacy and love beyond what can be identified within the framework of identification. In particular, considering the role of affect in building movement solidarity and identification can point more explicitly toward a theorization of the collectivity of a movement. One way to understand this is through the framework of "collective identity," or the "sense of solidarity among movement members...suggesting bonds of trust, loyalty and affection" as Goodwin et al theorize (8). The "strength" of this collectivity is emotionally rooted and processed through embodied knowledge.

Merely Emotional: Gender & Expressions of Feeling

Especially relevant to this analysis is the gendering of emotion, particularly "soft" emotions such as love, kindness, expressions of friendship or closeness, and empathy. Emotion is gendered in the sense that the expression of such is coded as a central component of femininity. Simultaneously, due to the degradation of women and devaluing of femininity, emotions are then discredited on the premise of their association with the feminine. Citing Kant's description of women, or "the Kantian

feminine,” Sue Campbell argues, “...to have an emotional life as a woman, to be an ideal woman, in fact, is always already to be edging the excessive sensitivity that is a ground for dismissability” (56). In this sense, the narrative structure of discounting women on the basis of being emotional, and discounting emotions on the basis of “acting like a woman” mutually support and enhance one another, while also forcing gendered expectations and performance into a self-annihilating box.

This stands in contrast to the blanket valuing of reason and intellect. Ahmed points out that the hierarchy between emotion and reason, “clearly translates into a hierarchy between subjects: whilst thought and reason are identified with the masculine and Western subject, emotions and bodies are associated with femininity and racial others” (170). Goodwin et al. identify, “Women’s political claims are more frequently dismissed as ‘merely emotional’ than men’s (9). This casting of women’s political claims as “merely emotional” positions women as failing the standards of judgment and analysis as these are premised on impartial reason and thought. If women are failing at practices of judgment, then how are their critical insights to be taken seriously? Campbell highlights that the naming of expressions as being sentimental or emotional “disguises their own operation by suggesting that expressive failure lies in the individual,” thus pulling emotion apart from cultural power (55).

As Allison Jagger argues, emotion, as a cultural force, alongside the assumed detachment of emotion and reason results in an epistemological hierarchy of who can experience particular emotions, when, and how legitimate those emotional

experiences and expressions are considered.²¹ Jagger names moments in which individuals experience “unconventional emotional responses” as “outlaw emotions,” describing those instances as potential moments of feminist critique.²² Positioning Riot Grrrl intimacy, love, and affiliation within this historical context offers the framework necessary to understand the power and subversion at work in Riot Grrrl expressions of intimacy, as they expressed admiration, friendship, and desire to one another. However, building off of Jagger, Goodwin et al. highlights, “women’s expression of ‘outlaw emotions’ can become the basis for powerful political challenges” (9). The acknowledgement of emotions as a means through which political action can take place is central to this analysis; Riot Grrrls’ affectively laden rhetorics lead to a realization and enactment of alternative ways of interacting and relating to one another. This context surrounding emotion and affect as resistance within the Riot Grrrl movement provides the backdrop for the enactment of intimacy, specifically queer intimacy, as highlighted in the next section and the analysis that follows.

Queering Intimacy & Queer Grrrl Intimacy

*If you’ll be my bride
You can’t kiss and ride, kiss and ride
We can have real fun
I can’t fuck and run
- Bratmobile, “Kiss & Ride*

²¹ See Jagger, Allison. “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology.”

²² To describe “outlaw emotions,” Jagger uses the examples of a person of color experiencing anger rather than amusement when a racist joke is told and women experiencing discomfort or fear at male sexual banter, rather than flattery. In many ways, this concept compliments Sara Ahmed’s theorization of the “affect alien” as I describe it in the previous chapter.

In the introduction to *Passionate Politics*, Goodwin et al. highlight that within social movements, “*reciprocal* emotions concern participants’ ongoing feelings toward each other” and proceed to specify these emotions as “close, affective ties of friendship, love, solidarity, and loyalty, and the more specific emotions they give rise to” (20). This contributes to the “libidinal economy” of a social movement, “yielding many of the pleasures of protest, including erotic pleasures” (Goodwin et al 20). These erotics and pleasures are evident in Riot Grrrl texts, visual art, music, and performances, as the grrrls used these mediums to articulate and enact a queering of relations. Despite the evidence, as J. Halberstam and Mary Celeste Kearney have highlighted, queer and lesbian genealogies, practices, and presences in Riot Grrrl were erased in popular media and scholarly framing of the movement at the time it was happening, as well as in retrospective commemoration.²³ In her study of media framing of the Riot Grrrl movement, Kearney argues

In somewhat obvious attempts to distance this radical female youth culture from the taint of homosexuality, the press most often confines their discussions of riot grrrl’s relationship with lesbianism to this community’s appropriation of the practices and style of queercore (222).

Similar to the Riot Grrrl community in that it was also a politicized offshoot of punk organized around modes of cultural production, the Queercore scene began in the early to mid 1980’s and distinguished itself by organizing around sexual identity,

²³ See Judith Halberstam, “What’s that Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives.”. Mary Celester Kearney, “The Missing Links: Riot Grrrl—Feminism—Lesbian Culture.”

gender expression, and homophobia and transphobia. Michael du Plessis and Kathleen Chapman also highlight that Queercore operated as a counter-public “in opposition to the institutions of the lesbian and/or gay public sphere already in existence and exemplified by organizations like GLAAD and NGLTF in the U.S.” (46). Given the timing and politicization of Riot Grrrl and Queercore, there was often overlap between the two. As Kearney points out, “Discursive formations which position riot grrrl as emerging after and apart from the queercore scene help to reproduce the popular understanding of riot grrrl’s members as predominantly straight” (Kearney 222). This narrative of the movements as entirely distinct (whether or not they actually were in practice) operates as a rhetorical device to erase queer identities and practices within the Riot Grrrl movement. The following analysis highlights the various presences of queer identity and embodiment within the movement, as well as how these queer intimacies were mobilized to experiment with alternative enactments of collectivity.

After a steady beat of drums and the screech of a guitar, Kathleen Hanna matter-of-factly sings, “That girl thinks she’s the queen of neighborhood,” offering the opening line to the Bikini Kill song “Rebel Girl.” The song steadily builds up to the refrain, “Rebel girl, rebel girl / you are the queen of my world.” On the surface, the song offers an unapologetic celebration of female deviance, positioning rebellion as something to strive for. However, in the first refrain the singer oscillates between identifying this rebel girl as having “the hottest trike in town,” “holding her up head up so high” and wanting “to be her best friend.” Rebel, as a way of being, becomes sexually attractive, coded as a form of enviable confidence, and a quality that

attracts friendship. Jamming these forms of attraction into one relation, between the narrator and the rebel girl, offers an entry point to interrogate the presence, complexity, and imagination of intimacies at work in grrrl relations.

Delving into the erotics of the song, the chorus in its entirety sings, “Rebel girl, rebel girl / rebel girl you are the queen of my world / rebel girl, rebel girl, I think I wanna take you home / I wanna try on your clothes oh.” Most compelling to thinking through the variation of grrrl intimacies in the movement are the final two lines of the chorus, where we learn that rebellion is not only something to admire, but also something to be attracted to. The final line, “I wanna try on your clothes oh,” implies an erotic act, heightened by the breathiness of Hana’s voice as she vocalizes the “oh” at the end of the verse. In order for the singer to “try on her clothes,” the Rebel Girl would have to take her own clothes *off*. Paired with the sexual connotations of the suggestion, “I think I wanna take you home,” the dressing and undressing offers riot grrrls the potentiality for grrrl-grrrl eroticism. This is highlighted in later verses such as “In her hips, there’s revolutions” and “In her kiss, I taste the revolution,” overtly detailing not only the experience of grrrl sexual acts, but also aligning grrrl-grrrl sexual activity with “revolution.” Interweaving friendship and erotic possibility, “Rebel Girl” points to the overlap in wanting the rebel girl, wanting to be the rebel girl, and wanting to be wanted by the rebel girl. This acknowledgement opens up possibilities for the enactment of grrrl relations, intimacies, and forms of solidarity. Rather than confining grrrl friendship to an either/or of friendship or erotics, “Rebel Girl” offers an articulation and

performance of how these embodied intimacies can overlap and oscillate, thus expanding notions of what form intimacy, friendship, and solidarity might take.

Extending the theme of imagining new intimate possibilities, a page from the zine *Girl Germs* titled, “WHEN YOU MEET A LESBIAN: HINTS TO THE HETEROSEXUAL WOMAN” offers a disruption of heterosexual relationalities through an interrogation of assumptions surrounding sexuality. Above a cut out of a cartoon Queer Nation sticker, the page offers the following tips (See Figure 6):

“Do not assume she is attracted to you.

Do not assume she is not attracted to you.

Do not assume you are not attracted to her.”

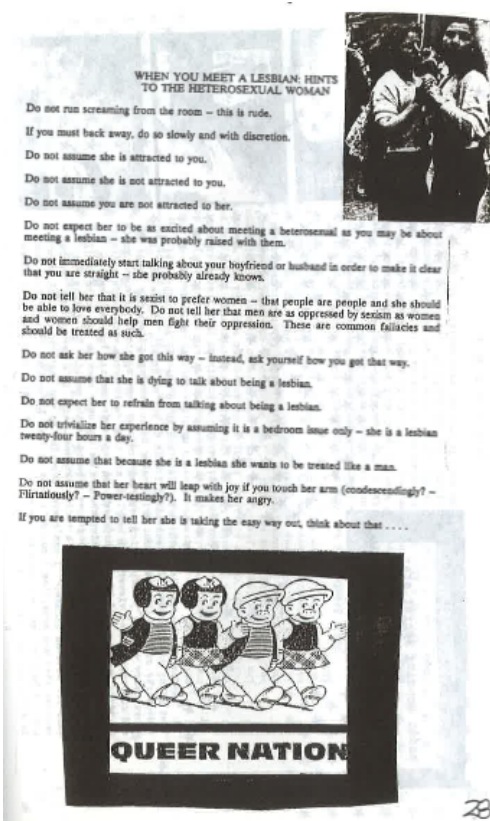


Figure 6

Similar to an example discussed in the last chapter, this page takes the form of a popular teen magazine through the framing of the proclamation as “tips.” However, tips regarding romance or sex in a teen magazine always—especially during the early 1990s—operate under the assumption that the reader is a heterosexual female. Because of this, a teen magazine would more likely feature “tips on how to get a boyfriend” or “tips on how to let a boy know you’re interested.” As the title states, the audience is still heterosexual females, but instead of predicating the “tips” on heterosexuality, the purpose of the page is to call out these relational assumptions, ultimately encouraging an imagining *beyond* dominant forms of relating. In particular, the tip, “Do not assume you are not attracted to her,” carries a hint of deviance, as the statement forces the acknowledgement of fluid sexual attraction. Acknowledging this, specifically as a *possibility*, pushes the reader out of the here and now, encouraging them to imagine alternative routes of intimacy. The command, “do not assume” articulated in the statements forces a queer process of unlearning hegemonic relations by inserting the potentiality of erotics, or what Muñoz might identify as the potential for “longing.” Muñoz states, “Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond the romances of the negative and toiling in the process” (1). Through commanding an acknowledgement of erotic potentiality, this zine excerpt opens the doors for indefinite configurations of queer intimacies, kinships, and collective ways of being.

★ December 5th, 1992

★
★
★
Dear sweet readers, friends + future dates,

I ♥ (HEART) AMY CARTER has been a long time in the making. The very first issue of this zine came out in the Fall of 86' and despite my good intensions and serious desires and devo- tions to it's existence, I just haven't been able to channel my juices in this direction. As a matter of fact I don't even have a copy of the first (now ancient and historic) zine. So if by chance there's any one out there coverting one of the precious few (there were only 25 of them made) pretty please do send me a copy. Anyways, this time it's going to stick, I mean I feel like I have a lot of AMY STUFF stored up and ready to share. And the other day her name came up on 3 seperate occasions, so I figured that somehow, somewhere, someone was trying to tell me something. Maybe even AMY her- self. Also there are two other reasons for starting this zine again: 1) I recently moved to southern CAL and I'm feeling isolated, bored, lonely, and wanting to meet rad dorky egg- head kinda girls...2) I moved here for graduate school and I need a solid procrastination project to provide me with an escape, and excuse to not constantly be feeling like all I do is create fodder for the art world (one of my bigger fears). And of course the most important of all reasons is AMY and my commitment to AMYness. More on this later. I would love it if you would send me any AMY STUFF, and I mean any- thing; sightings, stories, memories, drawings, comix, photos, paraphernalia, ANYTHING.....also if you want you could send me info on your favorite AMY TYPE PERSON - whoever this may be. In general I just love mail. I am a self confessed mail junkie. So until next time.....★ XO Tammy Rae

Figure 7

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WHY?! OR BETTER YET, WHY ASK WHY????????????

My interest/obsession/crush/wanna-be complex with AMY CARTER started on my 12th birthday, that was the day Jimmy Carter was sworn into office (Jan. 27th, 1977 to be exact). Well I don't quite know how it happened but something clicked, it was like I had found my new best friend only she didn't know I existed. I guess I had an instant crush on her only the crush had more to do with wanting to be her. Plus she was totally geeky and wore glasses and braids and was an only child. I wrote her letters, I'm not sure how many, I only got one response though and it was a form letter. I saved photos of her and talked about her like the other girls talked about The Bay City Rollers, Marie Osmond, Leif Garret and Micheal Jackson. When your a kid you tend to get really emotionally tied up in these kind of obsessions, they're an escape. The reality of it is that kids have nowhere to run so they of- ten times run away to these safe peaceful people and places inside their heads. Because if someone's fucking with you and you have no means of physical escape you resort to mental +/-or emotional escape. Shit this is getting serious, anyways it simply boils down to the fact that I think AMY is this sort of icon cuz she turned out to be a politically active geeky girl artist who makes paintings about race and gender and her- self. And yeah, I did want her to be queer, but I guess she's not and that's all I'm gonna say for now, I'll elaborate more on this next time. I do not want to be affiliated with John Hinckley and yes, I probably do have a secret service file.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Figure 8

In line with this call for recognizing indefinite erotic and intimate possibilities, the zine *I [heart] Amy Carter* aptly demonstrates the range and complexity of female sexuality, intimacy, and relationships within the Riot Grrrl movement. Published sporadically between 1990 and 1995 and written by Tammy Rae Carland, the zine's name, and the partial premise of the zine, is Tammy's crush on President Jimmy Carter's daughter, Amy Carter. An issue of the zine published on December 5, 1992 explains the impetus for the zine (See Figure 7). Carland states, "1) I recently moved to southern Cal and I'm feeling isolated, bored, lonely, and wanting to meet rad dorky egg-head kinda girls," then goes on to explain, "and of course the most important of all reasons is AMY and my commitment to AMYness." On the next page, Carland explains the beginning of her "obsession" with Amy, and states, "I guess I had an instant crush on her only the crush had more to do with wanting to be her" (See Figure 8). Through this articulation of premise, Carland points to the overlap and fluidity between sexual attraction, envy, and friendship, similar to Bikini Kill's "Rebel Girl."

Positioning Amy Carter, a political figure of the nation, as central in this discursive, visual and performative means through which to explore an overlap of potential intimacies also opens the door for a compelling exploration of political contradictions. While Amy assumed a position as a national figure while her father occupied the White House, she later became known for her political activism. In 1985, at the age of 18, Amy was arrested for taking part in an anti-apartheid demonstration at the South African Embassy, and then arrested again in 1986 at the University of Massachusetts Amherst for protesting CIA recruitment. The

connotations of the president's family are steeped in nation, family, and patriotism, as presidents have long sought to foster images of their children that would reflect positively upon their role as "father of the nation." While Amy's familial connection to President Carter positions her as a nationalist figure, her own political praxis is at odds with this position—particularly when considering the specificities of what appear to be explicitly anti-imperialist stances against the CIA and apartheid. While Amy occupied the typical position of "president's daughter" during her father's time in the White House and after, her dissident actions did generate more publicity as the media could easily frame them as "scandalous" and therefore, newsworthy. Particularly for individuals occupying oppositional political views similar to Amy's, her dual dissident/president's daughter public persona creates a compelling, engaging, and even playful image to rally around. The decision to build the premise of a zine on a figure that occupies an ambivalent position in the public political imaginary points to a particular playful mischievousness, political awareness, and deviance on the part of Carland, and the Riot Grrrl genre that *I [heart] Amy Carter* fits into.

I [heart] Amy Carter carries a hint of kitsch, as it features seemingly mundane pictures of Amy with her father, Amy holding a cat, and Amy walking down the street. The pictures are only of interest if you feel a particular affective connection to the "AMYness" invoked and described within the zine. Within this second issue, a page titled "SEX PERVERSIONS AND SEX CRIMES" features an extensive, dictionary style list of queer activities and relationships, featuring the word, a grammatical

designation, and a short definition, sometimes with examples (See Figure 9). The terms featured here range from words for identities, such as “mintie – noun.

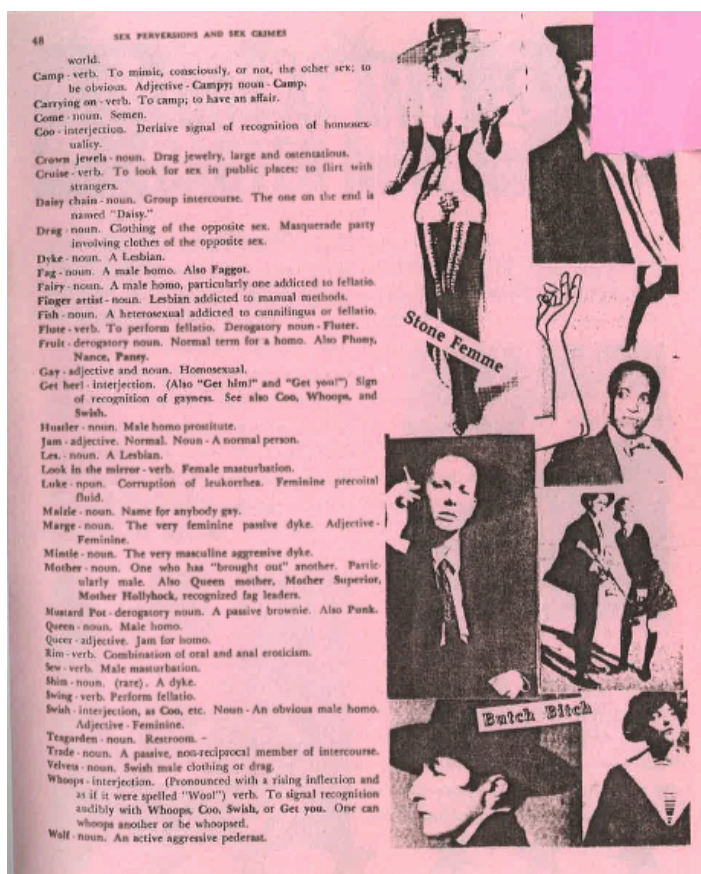


Figure 9

The very aggressive masculine dyke” to terms for spaces or objects, such as “Teagarden – noun. Restroom.” Including objects and spaces within a dictionary of “sex crimes and perversions” identifies how reconfiguring your intimate life extends beyond relations with human bodies, to relations with non-humans, inanimate objects, and spaces and places. Throughout these terms, despite most of them being nouns, is an emphasis on embodied actions and performativity. For instance, a considerable number of slang terms for various sexual acts are included in the list, such as “swing – verb. Perform fellatio” and “daisy chain – noun. Group intercourse.

The one on the end is named ‘Daisy.’” The form of this page mimics that of a dictionary page, thus positioning the list as informative rather than explicitly persuasive. However, by including these identity terms, enacted eroticisms, and embodied actions, the list offers insight into the possibility of an alternative intimate life. Next to this list is a cut and pasted series of six individuals with the overlay of text. Over one image of a woman it says, “stone femme” and “butch bitch” is placed over another. Simply glossing over the page and the extensive list of terms points to the variety, within queerness itself, of alternative ways of being, relating, and performing. Contextualized within *I [heart] Amy Carter*, this zine makes the connection between the crush/wanna-be complex for Carter, and the queer nature of that admiration.

While the content of the *I [heart] Amy Carter* zine features a range of content, spanning from pictures and essays specifically about Amy to direct references to queerness, it is also important to note the circulation of this zine. While the impetus for this zine was Carland’s own attraction to and admiration for Amy, the zine still circulates among other Riot Grrrls. This positions the crush/wanna-be complex as a point of connection between grrrls. Similar to the other zine excerpts, this example demonstrates how the Riot Grrrls paired an admiration for other girls with an awareness of erotic possibilities, positioning the “grrrl crush” as an actual way of being and relating. Typically, “girl crush” is used as a term to designate when a female and heterosexual identified individual feels some kind of attraction, admiration, desire, or respect for another female. While rhetorically playful, the term carries an inherently homophobic connotation, as it is used as a way for

straight women to clearly articulate that their girl crush is not a *real* (read: sexual or romantic) crush on another woman. This rhetorical maneuver creates the space to express an attachment to another woman while still clearly remaining within the box of “acceptable” heterosexual desire. The term “crush,” generally associated with desire, is coded as asexual through the use of the word “girl.” This evokes and reinforces a longstanding devaluing of femininity. The word “crush” is also typically used to refer to a youthful and insubstantial form of attraction, thus creating distance between the designation of a crush and “serious” love. Here, I use “grrrl crush” as a politicized term to designate the particularities of Riot Grrrl relationality as they both identify and publically articulate their admiration and desire for other women and girls, alongside evoking an awareness of erotic possibility. Rather than coding “crush” as something fleeting that can be cast aside, the grrrls take it seriously as a way of *being*, thus imagining and enacting new ways of relating by taking grrrl feelings and intimacy seriously.

Positioned as a specific praxis of Michael Warner’s “stranger relationality,” the grrrl crush, as it manifests in zine discourse, is able to circulate amongst a particular public of bodies, but the specifics of who is reading the zine remains unknown. Warner highlights, “This dependence on the co-presence of strangers in our innermost activity, when we continue to think of strangerhood and intimacy as opposites, has at least some latent contradictions...” (76). Here, I might suggest that when content such as that contained in *I [heart] Amy Carter* and other Riot Grrrl zines circulates, the particular enactment of stranger relationality at play carries an aura of eroticism, tied to both the discursive and visual content, as well as the

material zine and embodied practices of Riot Grrrl. The eroticism I highlight here is rooted in the contained mystery of who receives a zine such as *I [heart] Amy Carter*. The explicit queerness of the content operates as a form of coming out, or exploration, on the part of Carland when the zine passes hands to an individual Carland does not personally know. In this way, a stranger is able to learn details about Carland's overlapping sexual attraction for Amy Carter, desire to be friends with Amy Carter, and desire to be Amy Carter.

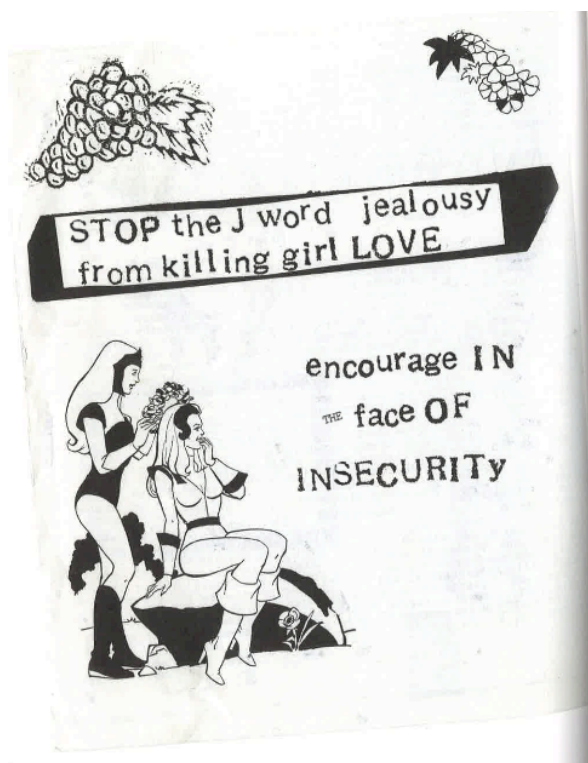


Figure 10

Alongside and entwined with these auras of erotics, Riot Grrrl rhetorics offer an explicit focus on fostering grrrl friendships and support. For instance, a page in *Bikini Kill 1* features a cartoon page with the statement, “STOP the J word jealousy from killing girl LOVE – encourage in the face of insecurity” (See Figure 10). The statement is typed in a classic typewriter font, but the letters are placed in a

mismatched form, and the first half is placed over a crooked black frame. Below the statement is an illustration of two women, wearing classic female superhero-esque outfits. One of the women is placing a flower crown on the other as she sits on a rock. Placing the women in superhero outfits casts them as strong and competitive. Taken together, the page visually argues that even “powerful” women can extend acts of friendship and kindness to one another, directly pushing back against assumptions of girl-girl competition. Girl competition is a manifestation of heteronormative gender roles as its basis is the idea that women are in competition for the approval of men. Pushing back against this idea offers a queer embodiment of another way of relating and interacting with grrrls, which is further enforced through the playfulness with gendered connotations of the super hero outfits. In his discussion of the punk aesthetic, which this zine page evokes, Muñoz argues that “performances of amateurism” in punk “signal a refusal of mastery and an insistence on process and becoming” (106). This note on aesthetic further supports how the Riot Grrrls approached alternative ways of being as a *queer possibility* for indefinite modes of intimacy, relationality, and collectivity.

In a similar vein, a short essay in the zine *Girl Germs 3* delves more deeply into these anti-jealousy sentiments, under the heading “Girls Rule,” written in two hearts with an arrow going through them. On the left side of the typed essay, written in pen, is the statement, “A shout out to the soulforce...” An excerpt from the essay states,

“I AM NOT going to judge you because the jerky sweet boy I used to date, dates you now. Or because you unwittingly fucked him because

maybe he didn't tell you the whole truth. I AM NOT going to talk about you behind yr. back because I don't know you...I AM saying that I am going to respect you from the start and make the assumption that you have a brain and heart and that because yr. a girl, you know about the fight – OUR FIGHT with 'the man.'”

The author of the piece is militant about drawing lines of solidarity with other grrrls, rather than lines of division. Given the context of girl/girl competition in which this occurs, grrrl solidarity and friendship occupies a queer place, and requires an unlearning, or queering, of existing relations in order to come to fruition. Even here, where the statements are devoid of queer sexual undertones, the performance of grrrl solidarity manifests as a queer form of embodiment.

The queer embodiments of Riot Grrrl are malleable and wide ranging, as located through the grrrl crush dynamic as a dual experience of friendship and desire. While so far, I have located these queer embodiments and relationalities in textual and discursive articulations, the formation of these intimate imaginings can also be found in the materiality of the zine itself, as it circulates among and between bodies.

Material & Aesthetic Intimacy

The queer rhetorical nature of Riot Grrrl zine content is not limited to the discursive, visual, and performative. The materiality of the artifact also holds significant rhetorical and performative value, and is central to the construction and circulation of Riot Grrrl intimacy, as created through admiration and erotics. Janice Radway highlights these connections by identifying zines as “semiprivate yet shared

spaces where inchoate same-sex desires could be explored,” and where “young people who disidentified with heterosexual norms could perform subjectivity in alternate ways” (25). This locates the performance of queering within the particular space of the zine. Zines as “semiprivate” extends from the materials used to craft them, the process of crafting, and the circulation norms. Giving attention to the experience of crafting or reading a zine locates identification as a multimodal construction that extends beyond the discursive. Allison Piepmeier argues,

We read the physicality or materiality of the book as and in relation to the text itself. Literacy, then, may be said to include not only textual competence but material competence, an ability to read the semiotics of the concrete forms that embody, shape, and condition the meanings of texts (“Why Zines Matter” 216).

In this regard, reading is an embodied practice that is reliant upon the rhetoricity of the material zine. Peipmeier proceeds to argue, “The paper then, is a nexus, a technology that mediates not just of “people” but of bodies. Paper facilitates affection” (“Why Zines Matter” 220). Thus, the zine acts as an inherently intimate object as it transfers hands, connecting bodies. The zine medium requires the zinester to craft the individualized, layered pages with their hands, much like a piece of visual art, before mailing or passing copies of the zines into other hands. The DIY aesthetic markers of a zine, such as the copied outline of tape holding the edges of an image onto the primary piece of paper, or the black spaces created by the Xerox light, operate as signifiers of the embodied labor put into the making of each individual zine page. The rhetorical significance of this “homemade” aesthetic

should not be downplayed as a force for cultivating intimacy and movement solidarity. It evokes images of individuals crafting a particular zine, and when that zine is handed to another, that particularity, or aura of “specialness” is transferred into another’s hands, positioning the zine as a material manifestation of a particular intimate relation. Peipmeier argues,

The physical object, made by hand, typewritten or handwritten, cut and pasted together, distributed informally, and carrying sensory information (such as the house where it was made) to the recipient, engages the bodies of creators and the recipients (78).

The handmade zine object literally carries the marks of the creator’s embodiment, whether it be through the smells picked up by the paper, the particular creases of tape, the handwritten notes, or the aesthetic of the drawings. Thus, for a reader, reading the zine becomes an act through which one consumes the creator. Much like trying on the Rebel Girl’s clothes, as in the Bikini Kill song, zine making and reading is an intimate act. Touching the zine comes to stand in for touching the grrrl—a potential for eroticism that is heightened by the specific content of Riot Grrrl zines as they articulate feelings of admiration, love, friendship, and desire.

Zines operate as an aesthetic and laborious materialization of personal thoughts and ideologies, transferring between physical human touch, as they circulate through publics that are simultaneously contained and indefinite. Through circulation, zine making and circulation operates as a queer praxis within the Riot Grrrl movement, as they connect bodies across time and space. Through their traversal of temporal constraints, zine circulation operates by liminally mobilizing

the queer archive of feeling. Halberstam argues that queer subcultures offer alternative temporalities by encouraging members to “believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of conventional forward-moving narratives” (314). Embodied zine circulation operates by both mobilizing the content that encourages these imaginative ways of thinking, as well as by unpredictably moving from person to person, threading bodies together through discursive and material connections.

Through their privileging of embodiment in circulation norms, as well as the meshing of queer feminism in zine content, Riot Grrrl zines operate to enable the imagination and playfulness necessary to imagine and enact new communal ways of being. Combined with the visual and discursive material contained within the zines, the material object of the zine is part of what makes up the intimate relations of the Riot Grrrl movement, as the objects are crafted, circulated, and read.

Conclusion: Relational Imagining, Risk, & Solidarity

*“Imaginary friend – what are you doing?
This is our world not of make-believe or pretend
Imaginary friend; what is crazy anyway?
I say we put our safety blankets to their end.”
- “Imaginary Friend,” Excuse 17*

In this chapter, I highlight how Riot Grrrl intimacies are imagined and enacted through discursive, visual, embodied, and material communication. Within the Riot Grrrl movement, relationalities take a variety of forms, never settling as pulses of desire, admiration of politics, and a need for friendship were braided together, adding up to a collective experience and construction of movement solidarity. Locating this entanglement as the “grrrl crush,” I suggest that Riot Grrrl

relations allow particular manifestations of messiness and risk to emerge, as they refuse clear-cut distinctions surrounding embodied intimacies. Here, we see the interconnected and networked relations that actually make up and sustain the Riot Grrrl movement, thus pointing to the mobilization and function of affect and emotion as a political force.

As the grrrls enact queer intimacies as well as a queering of intimacy, the need for greater theorizations of love and intimacy within rhetorical studies emerges. While theories of identification highlight the processes whereby individuals become attached to rhetors and discourses, identification fails to capture the entwinement of bodies as they turn toward each other, becoming attached, and orient towards other ways of relating and being. Through an interweaving of affect theory with rhetorical theory, a conversation I will take up in the conclusion, rhetorical studies can broaden its orientation to capture these ephemerality and relationalities that directly contribute to identification, as it underwrites processes of movement solidarity and sustainment.

Conclusion: Affective Residue, Queer Feminism, & Becoming

[October 2011, Indianapolis, IN.] I sit in my apartment alone on a Saturday night after emptying it of my roommates and boyfriend. I pace my room, discontented with silence but knowing that feeling would breed resentment if I had company. Moving to my computer, I mindlessly click around on NPR and find a lengthy article mentioning the band Bikini Kill. I chuckle at the name, and click a link to their music. Guitar fuzz streams through the air in my room. *“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, cry outloud / you get so emotional baby.”* I erupt with laughter, my cackles breaking through the air to combine with the screams of Kathleen Hanna. My feeling of discomfort was addictive, and I play their songs over and over. Flash forward a week or two, and I timidly approach the professor of my media literacy class. I ask if instead of following the instructions for our midterm paper—to conduct a media framing analysis of a contemporary political issue—if I could instead do a media framing analysis of this 20-year-old punk feminist movement. The professor agrees.

I offer this narrative not only because it gives glimpses into the path that led me to the development of this project, but also because I think my own encounter is indicative of how affective residues of cultural production traverse time and space, settling and adapting to new contexts. My online encounter with Riot Grrrl in 2011 was not coincidental. The year marked the 20th anniversary of the movement, spurring a proliferation of nostalgia across numerous modalities. Publications ranging from *NPR* to *The Guardian* posted retrospective articles on the movement,

and the documentary *The Punk Singer*, covering Kathleen Hanna's rise to fame, was set for release. The first comprehensive historical account of Riot Grrrl, titled *Girls to the Front* by Sara Marcus, was released in 2010, the same year the Riot Grrrl Archive collection at NYU opened.

This nostalgia trip did not end after the 20th anniversary. As Lisa Darms, senior archivist at Fales and curator of the Riot Grrrl collection, said in a 2013 interview with *Timeout*, "I thought maybe 2010 was the moment for the Riot Grrrl resurgence and that it would sort of end...but it hasn't at all, it seems to be sustained." The continuation of Riot Grrrl commemoration is evidenced by the 2013 release of a book, titled *The Riot Grrrl Collection*, compiled from Fales Library materials, as well as Bikini Kill's 2012 announcement that they would begin reissuing materials from the band's catalogue, including their original demo tapes from 1991 (Pelly). Then, in 2014, peripheral Riot Grrrl band Sleater-Kinney announced a new album after a nearly decade long hiatus, opening the floodgates for retrospective comparisons and references to the movement (Hilton). Reaching an unexpected public display of commemoration, the city of Boston named April 9, 2015 "Riot Grrrl Day" in conjunction with Kathleen Hanna's visit to speak at Wilbur Theatre. This proclamation of "Riot Grrrl Day" was written in the style of the original Riot Grrrl Manifesto published in the zine *Bikini Kill #2*, and signed by Boston's major, Marty Walsh (*The Guardian*) (See Figure 11).



Figure 11

Other manifestations of Riot Grrrl can be found in spaces such as the Girls Rock Camp Alliance, an organization that sets up Girls Rock Camps across the country, providing young girls with the tools and instruction to play instruments through feminist pedagogy. Aesthetic and political traces can be found in formal publications, such as Rookie Magazine (See Figure 12), an indie online magazine made by and for teenage girls, and Bitch Media, an online publication that actually started as a Riot Grrrl zine. I am not so much interested in the rhetorical construction of these contemporary resonances and memory traces as I am in the *processes* by which these resonances come to materialize.²⁴ Here, I want to point back to the affective traces found in cultural production, as I locate them throughout

²⁴ A number of rhetorical studies scholars interrogate the rhetoricity of public memory. For examples see Phillips, Kendall ed. *Framing Public Memory*; Morris, Charles E. III, ed. *Remembering the AIDS Quilt*; Dickinson, Greg, Brian L Ott, & Eric Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum"; Hoerl, Kristen. "Burning Mississippi into Memory? Cinematic Amnesia as a Resource for Remembering Civil Rights."

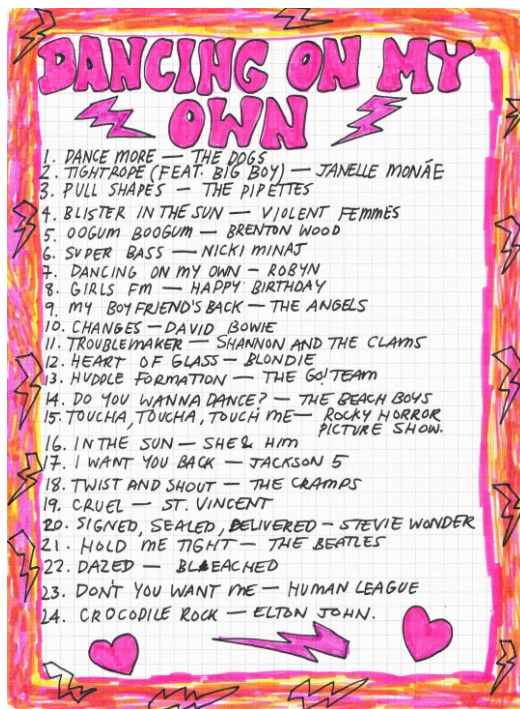


Figure 12

this thesis, highlighting the utility of orienting toward affect, particularly for rhetorical critics.

Similar to my processes of analysis, contemporary manifestations of Riot Grrrl manifest visually, discursively, and performatively. For instance, through the act of magazine making, such as that done by Rookie and Bitch, Riot Grrrl manifests aesthetically as these magazines often utilize a slightly cleaned up cut and paste aesthetic, cartoon drawings, and handwritten content that signifies a particular form of intimacy that traces back to the days of Riot Grrrl zine making. This is despite the fact that these texts are compiled and circulated digitally, pointing to the aesthetic itself carrying a particular political value. Similarly, despite the proliferation of the internet, zine making and production is still thriving, as evidenced by the dozens of zine fests held annually throughout the United States. In particular, spaces such as

the Feminist Zine Fest NYC and Feminist Zine Fest Pittsburg, and engagements such as the Queer Zine Archive Project carry resonances of Riot Grrrl. The question of why the laborious material practice of zine making continues to proliferate in today's digital context immediately comes to mind. While this is not a question I will attempt to answer, I will say that these continued cultural practices serve as evidence that materials, practices, and productions continue to pull people in, despite the passage of time. While numerous contexts contribute to this continuation, I argue that affective residue is central to this, as grrrls today participate in a genealogy of critical enactments of creativity that queers and feminists before them also practiced. Taking this into account alongside the arguments advanced in the prior chapters, I want to posit that rhetorical studies offers a particular lens that can point to how and why these affects manifest aesthetically, as well as the ways these affects span time and spaces, manifest in new contexts, and adapt meaning.

As Jenny Rice highlights, many rhetorical and public sphere theories “often presume that public rhetoric aims to generate deliberative talk resulting in a civic judgment about issues” (210). This framework orients the rhetorical critic toward elements of discourse that point towards a judgment of some kind. However, weaving affect theory into rhetorical theory requires a broadening and reprioritization of where we orient our critical gazes. For instance, in this project I demonstrate the utility of affect theory to rhetorical studies by locating action within the circulatory forces of emotion within the movement. Taking affect seriously as a force within Riot Grrrl first oriented my gaze toward different kinds of

objects than those traditionally taken up by the rhetorical critic. Rather than looking at manifestos or other, more explicitly “public” texts, I locate affect in zine excerpts that primarily circulated *within* the Riot Grrrl movement, leading to my emphasis on what it means to *enact* Riot Grrrl. Bringing together affect and rhetorical criticism also requires a different critical lens for these texts, as locating and tracing the circulation of affect demands reading strategies that differ from reading a text for arguments and argument construction.

Turning Cursive Letters into Knives: A Queer Feminist Political Orientation

My political motivations in this thesis emphasize an entanglement of queerness and feminism, as demonstrated by my analysis of Riot Grrrl cultural production. Not only do their texts offer a clear aim of subverting patriarchal institutions and practices, but they also feature a broad range of queer sexualities, as well as an enactment of queer ways of being. Scholars such as Mary Kearney uncover how political containments of Riot Grrrl have been implemented, particularly through press coverage. Kearney argues,

...The process of ideological and commercial recuperation engaged in by the mainstream media and experienced by marginal movements are glaringly obvious when we consider Riot Grrrl’s repeated representations by the popular press as a cultural (rather than political) phenomenon, especially as a *musical phenomenon*. (210)

Thus, my arguments here offer a counterpoint to these popular notions of Riot Grrrl. Relegating the movement to one that is *only* feminist or *only* queer obviously

renders invisible central pieces of the movement.²⁵ Beyond a question of visibility, it also actually transforms how we come to understand the resistant practices of this movement, their implementation, and ultimately, what world this particular movement imagines as being better than the one in which it came to exist.

Further, the relationship between queer politics and feminist politics has often been contentious.²⁶ While outlining the particularities of these different political priorities and disagreements is not the concern of my project here, I do hope to offer Riot Grrrl cultural practice as one enactment of a queer feminist way of being. As Lynn Huffer argues, I strongly believe that “politically and ethically, queers need feminism, and feminism needs queers” (9). Riot Grrrl rhetorics, aesthetics, and cultural practices can be taken as resource for a queer feminist political imagination, offering resources for future political and rhetorical invention.

My preceding chapters demonstrated how affect operates within the Riot Grrrl movement as a particular force for collective identity formation, enactment of new relationalities, and solidarity building. I argue that these embodied factors can all be placed within a queer feminist praxis as the Riot Grrrls encouraged a subversion of patriarchy alongside a reconfiguring of their intimate lives. Specifically, anger operates as a force that encourages the queering of patriarchal protection culture, opening doors for alternative forms of grrrl support and

²⁵ It is worth noting here that Mary Celester Kearney and J. Halberstam are the only two scholars I found who take Riot Grrrl seriously as a queer movement, which I would consider symptomatic of the same containment through “ideological recuperation” identified by Kearney in press coverage of Riot Grrrl. See Halberstam, Judith “What’s That Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives.” Kearney, Mary Celeste. “The Missing Links: Riot Grrrl – Feminism – Lesbian Culture.”

²⁶ A detailed outline of the “queer split from feminism” is offered in Huffer, Lynn. *Are The Lips a Grave? A Queer Feminist on the Ethics of Sex*.

protection. Alongside this, queer intimacies and a queering of intimacy offer a reimagining of grrrl relationships through the entanglement of friendship, admiration, and desire. Ultimately, I point these arguments toward a form of *becoming*, as the Riot Grrrl's affective cultural practices operated as a way to step out of, as well as against, existing social conditions and imagine and enact alternative ways of being, living, and relating—a process that is never fully complete.

In addition to positioning the movement as explicitly political, part of my aim in highlighting Riot Grrrl cultural practices as an enactment of a queer feminist politic is to engage the messiness and risk that is always at play in political practice. As I argue here, the Riot Grrrls actually embodied a form of utopic imagination, as they twisted and reconfigured existing relations into something else. Here, I want to point to Judith Butler's commentary on the continued transformation of the term "queer":

“...It will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes” (173).

This command of redeployment, twisting, and queering encourages a particular form of embodied action, as forms of resistance act on critical impulses, but also constantly engage in a continual movement *toward* something that has not yet been reached. Or, as Muñoz beautifully articulates, “From shared critical dissatisfaction we arrive at collective potentiality” (189). I might suggest that part of the task of all

activism and political organizing work is to process and enact this productive tension in which the hope for a better world emerges from a form of dissatisfaction, violence, anger, or marginalization. The Riot Grrrls aptly capture this tension, as they process anger, disgust and rage in tandem with the creation of new intimacies, kinship structures, and relations. Positioning the usually devalued characteristics of emotion and girliness as tools for enacting a radical new world, the Riot Grrrls open the door for the endless contours, risks, and inventions integral to implementing a particular political imaginary. As a female voice sings in Bikini Kill's "Bloody Ice Cream," "*...We are turning cursive letters into knives.*"

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