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"I'm A Little Pony And I Just Did Something Bad:" Feminist Pedagogy and the Organizing Ethics in the Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls

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“I’M A LITTLE PONY AND I JUST DID SOMETHING BAD:”
FEMINIST PEDAGOGY AND ORGANIZING ETHICS IN THE
ROCK ‘N’ ROLL CAMP FOR GIRLS

by

CAITLIN SWEENEY

SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF THE
ARTS

PROFESSOR KIMBERLY DRAKE
PROFESSOR CHRIS GUZAITIS
PROFESSOR MATTHEW DELMONT

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¹ The title of this thesis, and the title of each chapter are all lyrics from Rock Camp camper bands, or camp theme songs. The thesis title is from the Jailbreakers and their song "Bad Pony." It was written in July of 2012.

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Introduction

Misty McElroy had no idea when she crafted her senior undergraduate capstone project at Portland State University in 2001 that she was starting a worldwide phenomenon—the Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls. What started as a week-long summer camp for girls ages 8 to 17 to teach them how to play rock music has since blossomed into an organization with over 40 branches worldwide, serving 3000 girls every year and affecting the lives of thousands more women and girls in the surrounding communities. The Girls Rock Camp Alliance operates as the organizing body for the dozens of Rock Camps across the globe. Together, these organizations work to build girls’ self-esteem through music creation and performance and further, to create feminist cultural change. Rock Camp, like so many other nonprofits, exists on a political continuum, with radical direct-action groups on the far left and mainstream, foundation-funded organizations on the right. Misty’s original vision for the Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls was rooted in radical feminist politics that followed in the footsteps of Riot Grrrl and made an explicit connection between girls playing music and political movement. While feminist politics continue to form the foundation of the work that every Rock Camp does, from its pedagogy and curriculum in its programming to its organizational structure, and every organizer will agree that Rock Camp is a fundamentally feminist organization, it has made a series of choices over the past decade that now places it closer to the center of the continuum.

One such choice is succumbing to various societal pressures from patriarchal funding foundations, as well as conservative communities, Rock Camp chooses to

disassociate from the label of feminism, which establishes it primarily as a music summer camp rather than an organization promoting girls' empowerment. Throughout the ensuing chapters, I will investigate the main tenets of each of the waves of feminism in the United States and the ways in which Rock Camp applies feminist tactics to its programming and pedagogy as well as its organizational structure. The organizers of Rock Camp are often working at or over capacity and therefore the larger theoretical topics regarding feminist ethics and Rock Camp tend to go uninvestigated in favor of the more pressing day-to-day tasks of contacting parents, writing grants, and coordinating volunteers. Rock Camp organizers have to contend with the realities of working within a patriarchal, capitalist system and therefore often opt to modify their radical feminist politics in order to establish stability and consistency of the organization for the community. Although it is easy to succumb to societal pressures to make Rock Camp a more mainstream organization, I argue that the organizers must commit to radically re-examining Rock Camp's goals and purpose and reorient the organization towards creating social change and working to end gender-based oppression every day.

Methodology

In 2010, I stumbled upon Rock Camp in a desperate search for a summer internship after my first year at Scripps. I instantly fell in love and have been working at the Portland Camp every summer since and I plan to continue working there after I graduate. I currently work primarily as the camp's registrar and handle all of the camper paperwork and parent communication and after graduation, I plan to expand this position to include outreach to schools and camper recruitment. As a result of my commitment to

this organization, it was hard at times throughout this process to maintain a critical view about Rock Camp and find instances in which the organization could continue to move forward and to grow. I have personal experience with many of the issues I discuss throughout this thesis and know how difficult it can be to continually enact Rock Camp's feminist politics while contending with the day-to-day tasks of running the organization. However, thanks to this project, I now have a deeper understanding of the possibilities for Rock Camp in the future and for the work that I have ahead of me as I continue working with the organization.

I started this project by conducting preliminary research on United States feminist history from the beginning of the 20th century until the present, focusing particularly on Riot Grrrl and Third Wave Feminism, since those two movements are most directly related to Rock Camp's politics and methodology. Additionally, I investigated what Incite! Women of Color Against Violence has termed the Non-Profit Industrial Complex and the impact that nonprofit status has upon Rock Camp's organizational structure and funding choices. With this basis in mind, I interviewed organizers from five camps in different regions of the United States—Portland, Oregon; Brooklyn, New York; Charleston, South Carolina; Oakland/Bay Area, California; Chicago, Illinois. I selected the camps to focus on based primarily on their regional location because I wanted to get a broad view of the ways that Rock Camp operates across the United States. The selection process was also influenced by the age of the camp; I wanted a representation of more established camps as well as a few newer ones. Finally, I have personal familiarity with some of the camps, and I chose to focus on those camps with which I was already somewhat familiar. While this personal connection to the camps was useful in helping me

to understand the issues that the organizers were discussing, it was also in some cases a detriment to my ability to critique the organizers' perspectives.

My original intention was to interview two organizers from each camp in order to gain a broader understanding of the issues the camp was facing. However, due to time constraints, as well as the availability of the organizers, I only had the opportunity to interview one organizer from most of the camps. In Portland I interviewed sts¹ and Beth Wooten. Sts was one of the original volunteers at the Portland Camp and only recently resigned from the staff team in 2012. Beth Wooten serves as the new Executive Director and has also volunteered at Willie Mae Rock Camp² in Brooklyn, NY, Girls Rock! DC and Girls Rock! Charleston. In Brooklyn, I interviewed the executive director Karla Schickele. In Charleston, SC I interviewed Kim Larson and Jenna Lyles, who are both founders of the camp and are both involved with various other social justice movements in Charleston. I interviewed Carey Fay-Horowitz in the Bay Area, who is the executive director and founder of the camp and who volunteered at the Portland Camp before starting her own camp in Oakland. Finally, in Chicago, I interviewed Laura Swanlund, who is the Camp Director and has been involved with the camp since its inception in 2006. I started with the same basic set of questions for each interview, which are included in appendix one. However, these questions were only a starting point, and some of the interviews diverged considerably from the set questions based on the interviewee's knowledge and expertise.

¹ All names and camp affiliations used in this thesis are the organizers' real names. No pseudonyms are used.

² Willie Mae Rock Camp is named after Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton, one of the first women who played what came to be known as rock 'n' roll music.

Theoretical Framework

Miranda Joseph's text *Against the Romance of Community* provides an important lens through which to critique the benefits of community in regards to Rock Camp and its programming. Joseph devotes a significant portion of this text to a discussion of community and its supplementary relationship to capitalism. While that critique is certainly useful when analyzing Rock Camp, her discussions of the limitations of community formation, particularly the assumed positive impact of community, the ability of nonprofits to stand in for community and the way in which identity politics uses community as an organizing method prove to be more applicable to Rock Camp's programming.

Countless nonprofits cite community building, or community creation, as a part of their mission: Rock Camp is no exception. The Portland camp states that it works to "cultivate a supportive community of peers and mentors,"³ but at no point does the website discuss how that community is cultivated, or why it is necessary, because the goal of community creation is understood as an "unequivocal good."⁴ While community holds the possibility for affirmation of identity and belonging, the organization that defines that community also places limitations on belonging and holds the ultimate power over the formation of the community.

Joseph focuses on the Rhino Theater, a gay playhouse in San Francisco, as a case study to examine the dangers in operating as an organization with the goal of building and developing community, but her conclusions can be extrapolated to apply to other

³ "Our Mission & History, Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls," <http://www.girlsrockcamp.org/about/our-mission-history/>, accessed 18 Apr. 2013.

⁴ Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, vii.

community-based nonprofits. As an extension of her argument that volunteer work is done in and for the community, Joseph argues that nonprofits in the U.S. often operate as stand-ins for community:

When the imaginary of community is invoked, nonprofits are a central feature and, conversely, nonprofits are imagined to be expressions of community...One gives to one's community or to 'the community' by contributing labor or money to a nonprofit; nonprofits are asked to represent communities politically, to speak for the communities for which they are metonyms.⁵

In this critique, Joseph highlights the limited ability of nonprofits to fully encompass a community's identity, in part because nonprofits often function as extensions of the power of the ruling class and do not directly reflect the real needs of the community in which they operate. Belonging and power are again an important issue in thinking through what parts of a community are addressed by the work of a nonprofit. Portland Rock Camp, for instance, often struggles to advertise and structure its programs in such a way as to make them available to women and girls of color, or girls from working class and low income communities. This difficulty is compounded by the camp's reliance on volunteer work to staff programs, as volunteering is inherently classist in its assumptions of the volunteer's ability to either take time off work, or to have the necessary free time to volunteer. Rock Camp is certainly not the only nonprofit, or "community organization" to struggle with such issues of belonging and accessibility. However, especially when nonprofits have come to operate as a metonym for community, it is important to thoroughly assess the diversity of the populations reached by the mission statement and by the programs and services offered by the organization.

⁵ Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 70.

In her essay “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” Audre Lorde presents community as a desperately needed source of solidarity among marginalized groups, but she simultaneously cautions against the potential homogenizing effects of community. In Lorde’s argument, community can be conceptualized as larger than a neighborhood or any one physical space, and rather can be understood to be a group of people occupying a similar intellectual and political space who understand themselves to be in solidarity with one another. For Lorde, community is the source of activism’s power. Further, she believes that only through community will social justice organizers succeed in changing the patriarchal, sexist, racist system: “Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.”⁶ Lorde’s conception of community as bigger than one physical space is useful in thinking through the role that the Girls Rock Camp Alliance can play in advocating for intellectual and political unity between the disparate camps. The politics of the mission are shared to some extent by each Rock Camp and that commonality has the potential to bridge the regional differences between the camps and bring them into community with one another as a constellation of organizations fighting for the same cause.

Paul Kivel approaches the tensions in the nonprofit model from another angle, discriminating between social service and social change. In his essay “Social Service or Social Change?,” Kivel argues that organizations with missions of creating social change

⁶ Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 16.

all too often are co-opted into social service work as a result of the overwhelming financial and moral power of the ruling class. In Kivel's argument, the Non-Profit Industrial Complex is built upon the work of people in the buffer zone, which consists mainly of the middle class. These people are the ideal organizers and leaders of nonprofit organizations in the eyes of the ruling class, because they still have something to gain by perpetuating the ruling classes agenda and keeping the lower classes below themselves. One of the main methods of control of nonprofit organizations in Kivel's argument is funding: "the ruling class created the non-profit legal status primarily to establish foundations so they could park their wealth where it was protected from income and estate taxes."⁷ When nonprofits accept foundation funding, they will likely be "intentionally or inadvertently working to maintain the status quo," which puts them in the category of providing social services rather than working towards social change.⁸ However, Kivel does not believe that social service agencies are inherently bad, but rather argues that "the problem comes when *all* of our time and energy is diverted toward social services to the detriment of long-term social change."⁹ At times, Rock Camp organizers fall into the trap of focusing too much on the social service aspect of its mission, spending all their time writing grants and searching for funding instead of "identifying common goals, supporting each other, working for organizational and institutional change [and] building community."¹⁰ It is the latter group of activities that successfully puts organizations and groups in contention with the ruling class, and

⁷ Paul Kivel, "Social Service or Social Change?," in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Nonprofit Industrial Complex*, ed. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2009), 137

⁸ Ibid, 130.

⁹ Ibid, 142.

¹⁰ Ibid, 141.

thereby allows for real social change work to occur. Kivel's argument provides a useful framework to investigate the shortcomings of Rock Camp, and to explain the areas in which they fall into patterns of social service rather than social change. The instances when Rock Camp's work begins to look like social service instead of social change are especially important to take note of, in that those instances are indicative of the ways in which Rock Camp is slowly moving closer to being a mainstream summer camp and of Rock Camp's increased distance from its original radical vision.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one offers a historical background of the main tenets of the different waves of feminism in the United States and of Rock Camp itself to provide the reader with the foundation necessary to understand the ensuing analysis in chapters two and three. The chapter is broken up into three distinct sections: an organizational history of Rock Camp, a brief history of the three waves of feminism in the United States, and feminist tactics that apply directly to Rock Camp's pedagogy and organizational structure. While Rock Camp is firmly grounded in Riot Grrrl and Third Wave Feminism, it also draws on tactics that were prevalent during Second Wave Feminism such as consciousness-raising and separatism.

Chapter two analyzes the extent to which various branches of Rock Camp succeed in engaging in social justice work and where they fall short in terms of programming. The analysis is primarily based on interviews conducted with staff and core organizers at five different Rock Camps as outlined earlier in the introduction. The chapter works to draw out the regional and ideological complexities that play into each camp's engagement with

social justice, focusing on the role of explicit feminist identity and the creation and maintenance of meaningful community partnerships. While each branch of Rock addresses the issues of explicit feminist identity differently in accordance with the organizers' interpretations of the needs of the community, the chapter argues that community partnerships that engage various marginalized and oppressed communities in meaningful, intersectional dialogue are one of the most important ways that Rock Camp can continue to grow and engage in social justice organizing.

Chapter three similarly relies heavily on the interviews with the various organizers for its source material, but instead of focusing on the extent to which Rock Camp engages with social justice through its programming, it analyzes the influence of Rock Camp's organizational structure on its social justice engagement. I outline the basic tenets of the Nonprofit Industrial Complex and examine the effect of foundation funding and corporate sponsorships on the autonomy of Rock Camp, as well as other structural aspects of the organization such as paid staff, and the ideological divide between the board of directors and staff that is often a struggle for the various Rock Camps. Additionally, I discuss the impact of these structural decisions on the feminist ethics of Rock Camp and further argue that Rock Camp organizers make a variety of choices that limit their ability to effectively run a nonprofit organization and remain true to feminist, grassroots funding ethics and retain a horizontal staff structure. Often the compromises that organizers make between capitalist nonprofit structures and feminist organizing ethics are not driven by the needs of their camp's respective community, but rather are driven by what is most acceptable in the view of mainstream culture. When such compromises are not guided by the needs of the community, they serve to continue to

move Rock Camp closer to mainstream youth culture, and further away from its role as a social justice organization.

In conclusion, I discuss the role that the Girls Rock Camp Alliance can play in maintaining the radical political roots of the Rock Camp movement. I offer suggestions for areas that the GRCA can focus on in order to effectively develop a stronger sense of organizational unity among all of the branches of Rock Camp. Further, I propose that the annual conference can serve not only as a discussion space to give support to organizers, but as a foundation for further action to promote the feminist politics at each camp throughout the year.

**“See Our Sisters In A Band. Making Changes, Taking a Stand”:
Contextualizing Rock Camp Through U.S. Feminist History of the 20th
Century¹¹**

The Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls is a feminist nonprofit social justice organization originally founded in Portland, Oregon that has now expanded across the globe. The organization’s mission to build girls’ self-esteem and empower girls through music creation and performance is a distinctly feminist goal that has its roots in the ideas of Third Wave Feminism and Riot Grrrl. Third Wave Feminism and Riot Grrrl stemmed from critiques of earlier feminist and punk music movements respectively, and both came to be recognized as distinct movements in the early 1990s. Third Wave Feminism encompasses a diverse array of feminist theories and actions, but some of its defining issues as a movement include sex positivity, intersectionality of identities and postmodernism. Many of the key organizers and volunteers at the beginning of Rock Camp were involved in feminist activism in the late 80s and early 90s, as well as in the formation of Riot Grrrl and girl band culture, and therefore these ideas of the power of personal stories, consciousness-raising, and the power in working together as a team of women were deeply influential to the foundation of Rock Camp’s method of social change. This chapter is broken into three main sections: an organizational history of Rock Camp, an overview of the main tenets of U.S. feminism in the 20th and 21st centuries and a discussion of the feminist tactics employed by Rock Camp, in order to establish Rock Camp’s historical and political foundations and to elaborate upon the historical successes of radical feminist organizations. This chapter by no means presents a complete history

¹¹ Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls Los Angeles, “Theme Song,” Summer 2010.

of feminism in the United States but instead works to highlight the issues that are most salient to Rock Camp in order to give the reader a deeper understanding of Rock Camp's feminist predecessors. An awareness of feminist history and feminist organizing tactics provides a platform to critique Rock Camp's continued movement towards assimilation into mainstream youth culture and to gesture towards the possibilities of radical feminist organizing tactics.

Organizational History of Rock Camp and the Girls Rock Camp Alliance

The Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls was founded in Portland, Oregon in 2001 by Misty McElroy. Misty was a senior at Portland State University at the time and founded Rock Camp as her senior capstone project. The idea got an overwhelmingly positive response from the community, and one hundred girls participated the first summer.¹² While Misty did not necessarily envision Rock Camp growing as quickly as it has, she did have a sense of the power behind the creation based on the overwhelming excitement from the Portland music community even in the first year. Since the beginning, the organization has focused on building self-esteem and empowering girls through the medium of music creation and performance. Misty was inspired to start the initiative after nine years in the music industry, during which her male co-workers constantly assumed she did not know how to do her job because she was a woman. Fed up with the incessant sexism in the music industry, Misty wanted to make a difference in the culture and provide resources to young girls, so that they could learn both the technical and the

¹² Katia Dunn, "Misty McElroy," *Portland Mercury*, 25 Apr. 2002, <http://www.portlandmercury.com/portland/misty-mcelroy/Content?oid=26770>, accessed 10 Jan. 2013.

communication skills to stand up for themselves in the music world, as well as in their overall lives¹³. The Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls still closely follows the programming model that Misty and a team of dedicated volunteers developed in 2001. During the week of camp, girls learn an instrument, make a band, write an original song and participate in a variety of social justice-oriented workshops.

What started as a one-time project quickly blossomed into an international phenomenon. By 2003, the idea had spread, and camps based on the Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls model started in Murfreesboro, Tennessee and Hurstfied, Sweden¹⁴. While the model of the camp is eerily similar to Portland, some say that Popkollo, the Swedish camp, started independently of the Portland camp, and only later did the two organizations discover each other. Southern Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls in Murfreesboro, on the other hand, was a direct offshoot from the Portland Camp. Its founder, Kelley Anderson, volunteered at the Portland Camp in 2002 and was inspired to go back to Tennessee and start her own camp¹⁵. Since 2003, countless other women have followed in Kelley’s footsteps, volunteering for a summer or two in Portland, and then returning to their home cities and starting new chapters of the organization. In 2008, a documentary based on the Portland Camp was released, as well as a book, *Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls: How to Start a Band, Write Songs, Record an Album and Rock Out! As* the movement continued to grow, more and more chapters began to sprout up around the

¹³ “Rock Power for Girls Origins,” <http://www.rockpowerforgirls.org/index.php>, accessed 1 Apr. 2013.

¹⁴ “History and Timeline, Girls Rock Camp Alliance,” <http://girlsrockcampalliance.org/about-2/history-timeline/>, accessed 15 Apr. 2013.

¹⁵ “Herstory of SGRRC,” <http://sgrrc.com/about/herstory-of-sgrrc/>, accessed 15 Apr. 2013.

world, started by women inspired by the documentary, the book, or by volunteering at one of the existing chapters.

By 2007, there were seven camps, and the organizers of each camp came together to create a centralized institution for networking and support. The Girls Rock Camp Alliance held its first conference in the summer of 2007 in Portland, with organizers from Willie Mae Rock Camp in Brooklyn, NY, Girls Rock Philly, Bay Area Girls Rock Camp, Southern Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls, Popkollo, Girls Rock! UK, and Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls in Portland in attendance¹⁶. For the first time, organizers from all of the existing Girls Rock Camps in the world were in the same place and were able to network together, sharing ideas and skills to strengthen the movement and to present a united front against sexism and patriarchy. The conference has become the main focus of the Girls Rock Camp Alliance and is held every March with the goal of “exchang[ing] ideas, experiences and best practices on how to fulfill [the missions of Girls Rock Camps], serve a diverse community, and fight different kinds of oppression.”¹⁷ While the conference is always an inspiring and thought-provoking weekend, the discussion often stops there. In my past two years at the conference, many of the same issues have been addressed and little to no change has occurred regarding issues such as transgender and genderqueer inclusion and the future of the Girls Rock! Movement in the year in between the two conferences. However, just this past year, the GRCA did succeed in gaining independence from the Portland branch of Rock Camp to become its own 501(c)3 nonprofit. In addition to the conference, the GRCA also provides resources and support to organizers starting new camps, or to camps that are only a few years old. With the

¹⁶ “History and Timeline,” GRCA.

¹⁷ Ibid.

assistance of the GRCA, Girls Rock! Camp organizers are able to work towards developing more consistent policies and guidelines for all participating camps, although that work is often limited to the annual conference. To that end, the GRCA is governed by a working board of directors made up of organizers of member camps and which is elected by member camps at the annual member meeting. This democratic structure is essential to GRCA and allows the organization to be consistently attentive to the needs of all branches of the Girls Rock Camp movement and to evolve with changing priorities and ideas.

As of the spring of 2013, there are now 43 member camps in 8 countries. Collectively, these camps serve approximately 3000 girls per year and create 750 new all-girl bands¹⁸. The movement is only continuing to gain momentum as new camps are forming in Australia, Brazil and Ireland. Part of the power behind the Girls Rock Camp model is its accessibility to women with varying levels of organizing experience. Women volunteer for a camp, or watch the documentary, and often feel that they can go back to their homes and successfully start another Rock Camp. Carey Fay-Horowitz, the executive director of the Bay Area Girls Rock Camp (BAGRC), spoke to this phenomenon when describing the beginning of BAGRC: “I didn’t really know at all what needed to happen to start a camp, but I met everyone and I asked a million questions and then from that point on decided that I definitely wanted to get this camp going.”¹⁹ As an extension of its mission of building self-esteem and confidence in girls, Girls Rock Camp provides an opportunity for women to become involved in creating cultural change in

¹⁸ “Impact, Girls Rock Camp Alliance,” <http://girlsrockcampalliance.org/about-2/impact/>, 15 Apr. 2013.

¹⁹ Carey Fay-Horowitz, interview with author, 9 Jan. 2013.

their community through social justice and nonprofit organizing. Rock Camp's support of any woman's ability to start a new Rock Camp is reminiscent of the DIY ethics of Riot Grrrl, a topic I expand upon later in this chapter. Part of the power of Rock Camp is that the model is malleable enough to mold to different women's interpretations of the organization, and those women are then able to take ownership over their own Rock Camp. However, the same malleability can also lead to weak political unity across the organization, a problem with which the Girls Rock Camp Alliance is currently contending.

A Brief History of Feminism in the United States

Rock Camp is most directly grounded in Third Wave feminism, a feminist movement that began in the late 1980s and focused on various issues including but not limited to race, sexuality, class, sex positivity, globalization and intersectionality. These issues, and especially intersectionality, were emphasized in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a response to widespread criticism of the Second Wave of feminism for essentializing female identity, and thereby being exclusionary to the varied experiences of women in terms of their gender, which included a lack of commitment to anti-racist, anti-heterosexist, and anti-classist politics. In order to further explain the positionality of Third Wave feminism and other feminist movements in this time period, I will give a brief overview of the main tenets of First and Second Wave feminism in the United States and the critiques of both waves that led to the development of Third Wave.

U.S. First Wave Feminism focused primarily on rights-based struggles, organizing around issues such as suffrage, the domestic sphere and access to education.²⁰ Many women involved in the suffrage movement were already active members of society and were engaged in other radical struggles such as the abolitionist movement.²¹ Even at this early stage of feminism, inklings of an intersectional analysis are visible in women's involvement in multiple social movements, although the connections are not yet fully formed. Feminists in the early 20th century based much of their argument on liberal humanism and discussions of the "rights of man," stating that women should also access those same rights and not be excluded on the basis of their gender.²² Here the basis of feminism is developed as being a movement that is fundamentally about equal rights regardless of gender identity, and although that idea has taken many different forms throughout the decades, it remains at the core of all feminist action.

Following the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, which legally afforded women the right to vote, feminism in the United States entered a period commonly referred to as the doldrums.²³ Women continued to participate in various political movements, as well as being major contributors to the war efforts in both WWI and WWII, but there was little in the way of organized feminist activities. This is not to say that there was no feminist action in this time period—Margaret Sanger was advocating for reproductive rights and the availability of birth control, and Virginia Woolf wrote one of the most widely-acclaimed feminist essays, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). After

²⁰ Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, "1792-1920 Introduction," *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 58.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 124.

having dedicated themselves so fully to the goal of achieving suffrage for women, many feminists involved in the suffrage movement were disappointed that the achievement did little to alter women's day-to-day lives. Although women were one step closer to being equal to men in the eyes of the law, they continued to face gender-based discrimination in their homes, workplaces and neighborhoods.

Betty Friedan's text *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is commonly credited as the beginning of the Second Wave of feminism in the United States. In this text, Friedan names "the problem that has no name," the feeling that many white, college-educated, suburban housewives carried with them throughout their daily tasks in the 1950s—"Is this all?"²⁴ In order to address sexism as a social issue, Friedan and others founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, which aimed to "take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men."²⁵ NOW's initiatives focused on issues that applied primarily to the white suburban housewives addressed by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*, and they represented the mainstream feminist goals of the Second Wave, including such issues as equal pay for equal work, equal representation in all "field[s] of importance in American society," and the reconceptualization of the domestic sphere.²⁶ In order to realize these goals, NOW worked to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, a bill that was originally introduced in 1923 by Alice Paul and advocated for various forms of equal rights for women. These

²⁴ Betty Friedan, "The Problem That Has No Name," *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 162.

²⁵ National Organization of Women, "Statement of Purpose," *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 175.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 176-177

goals are a clear extension of the feminist foundation established by the First Wave, as they continue to advocate for equality regardless of sex or gender. While NOW is often looked to as one of the primary organizations in this period, it represented a very specific middle-class, white version of feminism, and the work of feminists such as Emma Goldman, who promoted anarchist feminism or Ida B. Wells and Zora Neale Hurston, who worked towards women's rights as black women was excluded. The waves model of feminism only touches the type of the iceberg of feminist organizing, and privileges almost exclusively the work of white, middle-class feminists. Further, many women disagreed with NOW's tactics and believed that the solution was rather a fundamental reworking of the entire system. These women organized into various radical feminist collectives including the Redstockings, Radicalesbians, New York Radical Women, W.I.T.C.H, and many more.²⁷ Redstockings and Radicalesbians both depended on women's own experiences to form the basis for their organizing because in the words of the *Redstockings Manifesto*: "we cannot rely on existing ideologies as they are all products of male supremacist culture."²⁸ From this foundational ideology, these groups and others like them developed consciousness-raising meetings and separatism as feminist tactics, which I will discuss in more depth later in this chapter.

As the 1980s drew to a close, various identity groups were becoming increasingly vocal about their dissatisfaction with NOW's liberal approach to feminism and their feelings of exclusion from the mainstream Second Wave feminist movement. Women of

²⁷ Rachel Fudge, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Feminism But Were Afraid to Ask," *Bitch Magazine*, 2006, accessed 28 Mar. 2013, <http://bitchmagazine.org/article/everything-about-feminism>.

²⁸ Redstockings, "Redstockings Manifesto," *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 183.

color voiced frustrations with the tactic of separatism as it alienated them from their male allies in the struggle against racism, and did not allow for any intersection of identity.

Womanism and U.S. Third World Feminism are two examples of branches of feminism that were led by women of color in direct reaction to their mutual marginalization in anti-racist and feminist movements. Works by authors and activists such as Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Chela Sandoval among many others contribute to the development of U.S. Third World Feminism. In an article entitled “U.S. Third World Feminism: Differential Social Movement,” Sandoval outlines one of Third World Feminism’s main contributions to the overall feminist movement: differential consciousness. Sandoval defines differential consciousness as occurring “when the affinities inside of difference attract, combine, and relate new constituencies into coalitions of resistance,” which she contrasts with four main types of feminist consciousness that all insist on being separate and unique²⁹. When feminists approach their activism from a standpoint of differential consciousness, they are able to recognize the possible alliances between disparate feminist groups and seemingly contradictory feminist tactics. Sandoval’s contribution to Third World Feminism and to the wider feminist movement contributes to Third Wave’s focus on the intersectionality of identities, a term that was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989.

Third Wave Feminism had much less political cohesion than the two preceding waves of feminism . Both First and Second Wave Feminism can be defined through a few key issues, but Third Wave encompasses a much broader range of groups of people, ideas and politics. As Rachel Fudge states in her article “Everything You Always Wanted to

²⁹ Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," *Genders* 10 (1991).

Know About Feminism But Were Afraid to Ask”: “If you’re under 40 and you’re a feminist, then you’re a third wave feminist—regardless of your politics.”³⁰ While this statement may be slightly over-simplified, it does gesture towards the amazing breadth and diversity of interpretations of feminism that were developed under the umbrella of the Third Wave. Wendy Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski give a brief overview of some of the issues included in the Third Wave in their text *Feminist Theory: A Reader*: the spread of global communication, “transformation of family and kinship groups,” reproductive rights, sexual abuse, gay and lesbian unions, sex trafficking, and the “fluidity or fixity of transgender and transsexual identities.”³¹ Rock Camp and the work that it is doing to build girls’ self-esteem also falls under the rubric of Third Wave and is ideologically connected to many of the above issues with varying degrees of intimacy. The organization does not directly address many of these core issues, but many of the organizers of Rock Camp are also involved in other feminist social justice work and therefore Rock Camp’s pedagogy and curriculum are influenced by the broader aspects of the current feminist movement.

Third Wave encompasses countless feminist groups, collectives and theories including the music and activist movement known as Riot Grrrl, a movement after which Rock Camp is closely modeled. While there are many origin stories for the beginning of Riot Grrrl, Kathleen Hanna, the lead singer of Bikini Kill, is commonly thought to be one of the first proponents of Riot Grrrl. Hanna came up against sexist and post-feminist ideas all too frequently within the punk community; women and girls didn’t want to admit that they were not treated as equals in the punk community, especially in regards to

³⁰ Fudge, “Everything You’ve Ever Wanted to Know.”

³¹ Bartkowski and Kolmar, *Feminist Theory*, 474.

musical ability. Hanna interviewed other female musicians she met on tour asking them questions such as “how does being female affect your work?” Often, women responded with “ ‘Oh it doesn’t matter that I’m a woman; I’m a musician first.’”³² This post-feminist rhetoric was not unique to the punk scene but rather was visible across different communities of women in this time period, and continues to be today. Hanna understood the responses of these women to be rooted in internalized sexism, making women incapable of recognizing the sexism that was omnipresent in their own lives. Hanna, on the other hand, viscerally experienced instances of sexism every day as a female musician: “when [she] and her bandmate Louise were so often the only women onstage the whole night...when [she] felt a terror in dark alleys behind rock clubs that the men in her band never experienced.”³³ In response, Hanna began to work with other women she knew in the punk music community to create safe spaces for women and girls through all-female shows and meetings. These women came to be known as Riot Grrrls, a feminist music movement that worked to disrupt the patriarchal structure of show line-ups, record labels, mosh pits, and the world at large.

Especially in the early years, much of the Riot Grrrls’ attention was focused on meetings that were closely modeled on consciousness-raising (CR) meetings, a staple of Second Wave feminism. These meetings were held with the goal of creating spaces for individual women to “become aware of male supremacy and politicize their lives.”³⁴ The first Riot Grrrl meeting, held in the summer of 1991 in D.C. advertised itself as “an all

³² Sara Marcus, *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 42.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 14.

girl meeting to discuss the status of punk rock and revolution...we'll be talking about ways to encourage higher female scene input + ways to help each other learn to play instruments + get stuff done." Twenty teenage girls and young women came to the first meeting at the Positive Force house, a D.C. punk and activist collective, to talk to other like-minded girls, meet other musicians, and plan and organize shows.³⁵ While CR meetings were not the end goal of Second Wave feminism or Riot Grrrl, they did provide an important space in which new feminists could be born and in which feminist community could be developed.

Riot Grrrls whole-heartedly embraced punk's DIY ethic in the way they approached music creation, as well as their approach to the media and publicity. For Molly Neuman and Allison Wolfe, two students at the University of Oregon and future members of Bratmobile, Riot Grrrl made music seem more accessible than it ever had before: "music [...] wasn't a specialized activity for a cadre of skilled initiates; it was a simple thing that anybody could do if she just put some guts into it."³⁶ Bored with Eugene, Neuman and Wolfe traveled to Olympia, Washington most weekends to attend shows put on by Hanna at her DIY music studio, Reko Muse. As Neuman and Wolfe learned more about the music community in Olympia, they became ever more determined to start their own band. Neither of them played instruments when they started, but nonetheless within a couple months Bratmobile played its first show. Even though the show wasn't perfect, Bratmobile fully embraced the DIY ethic of Riot Grrrl by being willing to reveal the songwriting and music creation process to the public: "this was just a

³⁵ Marcus, *Girls to the Front*, 89.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 58.

band learning to write songs for the first time and airing that process in public.”³⁷

Although some expressed reservations as to the effect such half-formed sets might have on overall perceptions of female musicians, the most important contribution of Bratmobile, and other DIY female bands was the demystification of the music creation process and the destruction of barriers that stopped women and girls from playing music. Rock Camp follows in the footsteps of bands like Bratmobile and continues to perpetuate this model of knowledge sharing and process demystification.

Riot Grrrl, following in the footsteps of punk, made creating music less about the quality and complexity of the song, and focused instead on the simple act of getting up on stage and expressing oneself. Simple chord structure, barebones drum beats, and straightforward, sometimes repetitive lyrics were hallmarks of many Riot Grrrl bands. While the simplicity of the musical structure allowed more girls access to performance, Melissa Klein expresses a concern she heard throughout the Riot Grrrl community: “whether just playing, or ‘going for it,’ was the most important thing, or whether it undermined the status of women in rock to perform ill-played sets.”³⁸ This concern mostly reflects the preoccupation some Riot Grrrls maintained with the mainstream music world’s opinion. Klein concludes however that the power and impact of a woman playing music is more important than any negative press from the mainstream music industry: “there is something about the mere image of a woman playing the guitar that is thrilling, that gives me the same impression of the painting of Rosie the Riveter on my

³⁷ Ibid, 62.

³⁸ Melissa Klein, “Duality and Redefinition: Young Feminism and the Alternative Music Community,” in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, ed. Jennifer Drake and Leslie Heywood, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1997), 215.

kitchen wall—a strong woman with a power tool waiting to be bent to her will.”³⁹ In this way, Riot Grrrl made an explicit connection between political identity formation and music performance that resonates perfectly with Rock Camp’s mission. Without Riot Grrrl as a model, the connections Rock Camp makes between social change and girls performing rock music would not be culturally legible.

Despite the feminist work of Riot Grrrl and other Third Wave feminist groups and collectives, many in the United States considered feminism to be obsolete and no longer necessary. From the Time Magazine cover in June of 1998 asking “Is Feminism Dead?” to young women disassociating themselves from the movement for fear of being ridiculed, post-feminist rhetoric was a consistent problem throughout the Third Wave and continues to be an issue today. This disassociation is in part due to the wide variety of feminist politics and actions present in the Third Wave, because this variety makes feminism ever more difficult to define succinctly. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, the authors of *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future* acknowledge this trend through their dedication at the beginning of the text: “To feminists everywhere--including those of our generation who say, ‘I’m not a feminist, but...’ and others who say, ‘I am a feminist but...’--with the faith that young women will transform the world in ways we haven’t yet imagined.”⁴⁰ This hesitation to either self-identify with feminism or to align one’s politics and activist work with feminism is all too common within younger generations and is politically dangerous. It allows many to believe we live in a post-feminist world in which all of the feminist goals have already been reached. bell hooks in her book *Feminism is for Everybody* advocates for the

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*, epigraph.

continued importance of feminism and emphasizes the role of older generations of feminists:

Since masses of young females know little about feminism and many falsely assume that sexism is no longer the problem, feminist education for critical consciousness must be continuous. Older feminist thinkers cannot assume that young females will just acquire knowledge of feminism along the way to adulthood... Overall women in our society are forgetting the value and power of sisterhood. Renewed feminist movement must once again raise the banner high to proclaim anew 'Sisterhood is powerful.'⁴¹

While it is easy to assume that younger generations of feminists are personally choosing not to identify with feminism, hooks suggests that it is a much more deeply rooted problem, in that older generations of feminists are failing to pass down feminist history. In order for the movement to continue to grow, the younger generations must understand the actions of earlier generations and be able to put their ideas into conversation with historical feminist action. Additionally, according to Kaia Wilson, a member of the queercore band Team Dresch and later The Butchies, young women often become complicit in a patriarchal system when they choose not to identify with feminism: "There can be really good reasons for not wanting to call yourself a feminist, but most of the time it's due to misogyny."⁴² In part out of fear of retribution and dismissal from mainstream society, younger women continue to disassociate with feminism, which limits the ability of feminism to continue to grow as a comprehensive movement.

Rock Camp is complicit in the tendency of young feminists of the Third Wave to not explicitly identify with feminism since it does not, for the most part, actively identify itself as a feminist organization. While I will return to a much more detailed analysis of

⁴¹ bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2000), 17.

⁴² Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*, 65.

this subject in chapter two, explicit feminist identity is useful here to investigate the historical choices of the Portland Camp and how those choices have affected the rest of the Girls Rock! Movement. In a 2005 interview with Misty McElroy, the founder of Portland Rock Camp, Stacey Lynne Singer asked Misty to elaborate on Rock Camp's connection to feminism. Although feminism was an oft-discussed topic in the early years of the camp, McElroy had ceased to use feminism to describe Rock Camp to foundations and potential donors because she consistently heard feedback from donors that the word feminism was "too strong...too risky, too edgy."⁴³ Misty did not autonomously choose to disassociate Rock Camp from feminism but was rather forced to police the language Rock Camp used to define itself in order to make the organization more palatable to patriarchal foundations. In the interview with Stacey, Misty also discussed the clear misogyny present in the expectations donors and foundations had for organizations for girls: "I think the instrument companies wanted [Rock Camp to be] cutesy and non-threatening and they wanted it like a guitar shaped like a heart or flower – a gimmick they could market."⁴⁴ In this instance, Misty chose to prioritize the organizational stability of Rock Camp to the detriment of the organization's feminist politics. Not only did she choose to disassociate the organization from feminism, but by doing so she allowed foundations to continue to market Rock Camp as cute and non-threatening. By continuing to not label itself explicitly as feminist, Rock Camp contributes to the continued depoliticization of ostensibly feminist action and movement, and further fails to align itself with other groups participating in feminist social justice organizing.

⁴³ Stacey Lynn Singer, "I'm Not Loud Enough to be Heard: Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls and Feminist Quests for Equity, Community, and Cultural Production," (MA thesis, Georgia State University, 13 July 2006), 120.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

When feminist organizations, movements and actions do not label themselves as such, they severely limit the potential for coalition building, and miss the opportunity to further clarify the often ill-defined politics of feminism. Baumgardner and Richards further elaborate this point by discussing the danger in separating an originally feminist issue from the larger movement:

The moment a concern pioneered and promoted by feminists--such as domestic violence, microenterprise, the fight for affordable health care, and day care--becomes mainstream or at all successful, it is no longer seen as a women's issue but simply as a newsworthy issue. It becomes depoliticized, taken out of the hands of the grass roots, and divorced from the very process that was necessary to its success.⁴⁵

While individual feminist initiatives have succeeded in getting widespread attention, it is only those initiatives that separated themselves from feminism that have succeeded in the mainstream, leaving the larger goals of the movement behind. Although some may view the ability of feminist issues such as domestic violence to continue to be championed in mainstream society without a direct connection to feminism as a success of the women's movement, the possibility for true feminist revolution is limited, and coalition building between feminist issues is stymied. As Baumgardner and Richards argue: "Issues divorced from their feminist roots eventually become depoliticized, and the resulting social programs are reduced to treating the symptoms rather than curing--or preventing--the disease."⁴⁶ Movements and actions begin to be understood as individual issues, rather than seen as interlocking pieces of a larger system-wide critique. Feminism is fundamentally working to end patriarchy and sexism, structures that are so deeply rooted in U.S. society that they are impossible to eradicate via a single issue campaign. Only

⁴⁵ Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*, 59.

⁴⁶ Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifest*, 16.

through strong feminist coalitions between issues, movements and groups will feminism and the women's movement succeed in creating a society in which patriarchy is no longer the accepted norm.

Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake advocate for thorough investigation of the history of feminism as a way of mitigating this tendency for young feminists to disassociate from the label. A study of the history of feminism, especially of feminist works by women of color and working-class women that are often left out of the waves model, allows for “the development of modes of thinking that can come to terms with the multiple, constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to the multiple, interpenetrating axes of identity, and the creation of a coalition politics based on these understandings.”⁴⁷ In essence, Heywood and Drake advocate the study of the history of feminism in order to develop a more nuanced intersectional analysis of the feminist movement, and through that analysis, to implement radical social change that continues to move the feminist movement forward towards a more just and inclusive future.

Feminist Tactics Used By Rock Camp

As the previous section demonstrated, an awareness of the history of feminist movement is key to understanding Rock Camp's position today. Rock Camp draws upon previous feminist theory and action in the development of its curriculum, pedagogy and structural organization using tactics such as consciousness-raising, emphasizing the importance of individual voices to a collective movement, separatism, and non-hierarchical organizing structures. These tactics have their grounding in various eras of

⁴⁷ Jennifer Drake and Leslie Heywood, *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1997), 3.

feminist movement in the 20th century, and hence, Rock Camp interfaces well with both Second and Third Wave feminist methods in order to situate itself in the current historical moment. However, by continuing to rely on tactics such as separatism that have been soundly refuted by Third Wave feminists, Rock Camp runs the risk of being viewed as stuck in a previous political time in which separatism was still a widely supported tactic and unresponsive to current feminist action that advocates the importance of intersectionality rather than separatism.

Although Rock Camp is primarily an action-oriented organization rather than focusing on theory production, attention to the feminist pedagogy that forms the basis of the organization's action is an important step that cannot be ignored. Charlotte Bunch gestures towards this in her article *Not By Degrees: Feminist Theory and Education*. Bunch occupies an interesting space as a theorist who has experience not only in academia, but also in grassroots organizing and community-based activism. When she decided to abandon academia for a more activist-oriented lifestyle in the 1960s, she quickly realized that theory and activism were intimately connected and that theory could provide a desperately needed "overall analysis" and clarity of concepts in order to streamline activist work.⁴⁸ As the Rock Camp Movement continues to grow, an attention to the feminist pedagogy and tactics that form its foundation will become increasingly important as a method for providing some form of organizational unity among all of the disparate branches. Bunch takes her intervention one step further and points out that all activism has theory behind it and that the real issue lies in recognizing that theory: "The

⁴⁸ Charlotte Bunch, "Not By Degrees: Feminist Theory and Education," *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 12.

question is not whether we have a theory, but how aware we are of the assumptions behind our actions, and how conscious we are of the choices we make—daily—among different theories.”⁴⁹ Bunch conceptualizes theory rather broadly and applies it to tactical decision such as domestic violence activists choosing between focusing on a rape crisis center or changing rape laws. In this sense, Bunch’s critique is applicable to Rock Camp as it works through various organizational choices including the creation of programming and curriculum, staffing structure and funding sources.

Consciousness-raising

Consciousness-raising (CR) is one example of the connection between broader feminist theory and Rock Camp’s pedagogy for which Bunch advocates. CR meetings were one of the most prominently used tactics in Second Wave Feminism, and they have continued to be used by various feminist groups since. Kathie Sarachild, a member of the New York Radical Women and then the Redstockings, wrote “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon” and presented it at the First National Conference for Stewardesses of Women’s Rights in 1973. The document details methods of consciousness-raising as well as the potential benefits and uses for such a tactic. One of the most important aspects for Sarachild was the variety of experiences consciousness-raising could encompass: it was a way of “keeping the movement radical by preventing it from getting sidetracked into single issue reforms and single issue organizing.”⁵⁰ Consciousness-raising is at its heart a way to honor the experiences of all women and to allow all of their voices and stories to

⁴⁹ Ibid, 13.

⁵⁰ Kathie Sarachild, “Consciousness-Raising: A Radical Weapon,” in *Feminist Revolution*, (New York: Random House, 1978), 147.

be heard. Additionally, counter to the argument that consciousness-raising is useless in that it does not provide any immediate change for women, Sarachild emphasizes that it is not just a step in the process of identity formation, but rather a form of activism as well and “an essential part of the overall feminist strategy.”⁵¹ Especially in the 1970s, discussing their experiences as women and recognizing commonalities throughout those experiences was a radical act and was an essential part of beginning to take more public political action. Every week at Rock Camp, campers participate in some form of an “image and identity” workshop, which is closely modeled after consciousness-raising meetings and provides girls with a space to discuss their experiences with stereotypes, discrimination, oppression, bullying and many other topics. This is an especially useful feminist tactic for Rock Camp because it is working with young children who are still developing their ideas of what it is to be female in today’s patriarchal society.

off our backs, a magazine run by a feminist consensus-based collective, expanded upon the importance of consciousness-raising and applied it to discussions about the intersections of sexism and racism in their winter 1979 issue. Authors Tia Cross, Freada Klein, Barbara Smith and Beverly Smith came together to argue that consciousness-raising was an essential part of breaking down the power of the racist patriarchy: “The CR format encourages personal sharing, risk-taking, and involvement, which are essential for getting at how each of us is racist in a daily way, and it encourages the ‘personal’ change that makes political transformation and action possible.”⁵² off our backs makes an important contribution to the discussion of consciousness-raising as a feminist tactic by

⁵¹ Ibid, 149-150.

⁵² tia cross et al., “talking about racism: cr guidelines,” *off our backs* 9, no. 10 (November, 1979), 9.

pointing to the ways it can help participants recognize ways in which they continue to oppress other women every day on the basis of race, class, ability and sexuality. The original use of CR is often critiqued for inadvertently privileging white, middle-class women's experiences as "common" to all women, and thereby silencing women of color and lower-class women. Therefore, using CR as a method for discussing not just sexism but other oppressions as well, as off our backs suggests, is an important intervention and allows space for CR to be more inclusive to various women's experiences.

While Black feminist thought is in many ways distinct and separate from the consciousness-raising groups used by collectives in the radical feminist movements of the 1960s, it does share a common understanding of the importance of the individual's awareness of sexism's impact on their own life. Patricia Hill Collins points to the potential for starting at the individual level as a part of creating social change: "[A distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought] is its insistence that both the changed consciousness of individuals and the social transformation of political and economic institutions constitute essential ingredients for social change."⁵³ Here Collins suggests that feminist action must approach the struggle against sexism, patriarchy, and all forms of oppression from a multitude of directions in order to have the greatest efficacy. When feminist movement lacks either a larger structural critique, or a space for individual consciousness-raising, the movement will necessarily fail to fulfill its full potential for social change. Rock Camp's mission also presents a similar understanding of the importance of simultaneous structural critique and individual identity development, by

⁵³ Patricia Hill Collins, "from *Black Feminist Thought*," *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 442.

focusing on creating social change through community partnerships and coalitions and also by building girls' self-esteem.

Individual Voices as a Source for Collective Movement

Since the Second Wave advent of “the personal is political,” feminism has consistently emphasized the importance of each woman’s voice as a way of counteracting patriarchal narratives and histories. Katha Pollitt, a writer for The Nation, and a self-identified feminist, encouraged a re-examination of the limitations of the mantra in a 1999 article for The New York Times: “the personal is political did not mean that personal testimony, impressions and feelings are all you need to make a political argument.”⁵⁴ Her point has some merit, in that the phrase is often divested from its original context and misused, but Baumgardner and Richards respond to her comment with the following: “It may not be all you need, but testimony is where feminism starts. Individual voices are particularly important when telling the history of a marginalized group, since the perspective of the marginalized or oppressed subject will often be told through the perspective of the oppressor in traditional text-based sources. The Redstockings directly addressed this issue in their manifesto by stating: “We cannot rely on existing ideologies as they are all products of male supremacist culture. We question every generalization and accept none that are not confirmed by our experience.”⁵⁵ Therefore, women’s experiences provide the basis for further action to eradicate gender-based violence and oppression from society. Rock Camp emphasizes the importance of

⁵⁴ Katha Pollitt, "The Solipsisters," *New York Times*, 18 Apr. 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/04/18/bookend/bookend.html>, accessed 20 Nov. 2012.

⁵⁵ Redstockings, “Redstockings Manifesto,” 183.

each girl's voice at every turn and gives them tremendous autonomy throughout the week of summer camp in everything from band practice to workshops, a topic I will discuss in greater detail in chapter two.

Separatism

Creating separatist spaces in which women could bond together without the influences of men was a common tactic of Second Wave Feminism, but the effects can be seen in today in the form of women's colleges, music festivals such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and nonprofit organizations such as Rock Camp. Separatism often receives criticism for being exclusionary to men who may also identify as feminist, or who partake in feminist politics and actions, or for being exclusionary to trans-identified women. However, it has proved to be an effective and necessary step in building feminist community, and it provides a space in which women and girls can openly discuss shared experiences as a result of patriarchal oppression. hooks elaborates upon this point by stating: "female bonding was not possible within patriarchy; it was an act of treason. Feminist movement created the context for female bonding. We did not bond against men, we bonded to protect our interests as women."⁵⁶ Separatism in many ways shares a common goal with consciousness-raising in that both tactics work to provide safe space for women to share their experiences relating to gender-based oppression. Baumgardner and Richards use the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival as an example of the helpfulness of separatism, stating that it "can be great in the short term—and for many feminists it's necessary to achieving certain kinds of consciousness,

⁵⁶ hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 15.

security, and possibilities that can be strong enough to transform the mainstream.”⁵⁷

Although Baumgardner and Richards see potential in spaces such as the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, the festival also received widespread criticism for excluding trans-identified women. *off our backs* devoted the majority of an issue in the fall of 1999 to discussing the opinions surrounding maintaining the festival as a “womyn-born womyn” space. Festival producer Lisa Vogel stated that the festival “value[s] and respect[s] the transsexual community as integral members of the broader queer community. [The festival] ask[s] that they in turn respect womon-born womon space.”⁵⁸ However, despite this statement of support for the trans* community, Vogel continues to refer to trans-identified women as men throughout her statement, directly contradicting these women’s gender identity. The Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival can serve as an important example of the negative effects of continuing to exclude transgender and genderqueer people from women-only spaces as Rock Camp as it continues to navigate this issue.

Additionally, separatism is a fraught tactic in that it prioritizes gender above all other aspects of women’s identities. The Combahee River Collective addresses this issue in their statement of beliefs: “although we are feminists and Lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand.”⁵⁹ Although it is clearly a parody, Valerie Solanas’ SCUM Manifesto encapsulates the extreme views of lesbian separatists, who advocated for the

⁵⁷ Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*, 18.

⁵⁸ Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, “A Statement from Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival,” *off our backs* 29 no. 9, (November 1999), 8.

⁵⁹ Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement,” *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 256.

complete removal of men from all aspects of life, and that a complete disassociation from men was the only possible way to overthrow the patriarchy. Women of color and lower-income women, such as the women involved in the Combahee River Collective, advocated against such extreme separatism because it not only essentialized their identities and forced them to prioritize gender-based oppression over racism or classism, but also it limited the feminist movement's ability to create coalitions with other social justice movements and fight for broad social change. Rock Camp occupies a slightly different position in regards to separatism than lesbian separatists did, in that it uses the tactic only temporarily in order to create a space for girls to recognize the oppressions that impact their daily lives without feeling the constant pressure to gain male approval.

Non-Hierarchical Organizing Methods

In addition to separatism, non-hierarchical organizing methods are another way that Rock Camp works to dismantle the patriarchal system and create safe spaces for women and girls. The Redstockings and many other radical feminist collectives emphasized the necessity of non-hierarchical structures within the organization, as a way of reworking the patriarchal system. As Audre Lorde made clear in the title of her essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," working towards feminist goals within patriarchal structures only serves to extend the patriarchal control of society. The Redstockings commitment to a non-hierarchical organizing structure is simultaneously a critique of patriarchal top-down structures and an extension of their belief in the power of every woman's voice and story: "We are committed to achieving internal democracy. We will do whatever is necessary to ensure that every woman in our

movement has an equal chance to participate, assume responsibility, and develop her political potential.”⁶⁰ By emphasizing the importance of every member, the women involved not only feel validated in their experiences, but also the movement is better able to represent the needs and desires of all women involved.

Starhawk expands upon the importance of non-hierarchical organizing structures and investigates the distinction between power-over and power-with in her book *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*. Power-with can “only truly exist among those who are equal and who recognize that they are equal,” and forms the foundation of non-hierarchical organizing methods.⁶¹ An essential part of power-with is that it is always revocable by the group; when the group members feel that an individual has overstepped her bounds, or acted against the interest of the collective, they can collectively revoke her power.⁶² This stands in direct contrast to the concept of power-over, which describes the irrevocable power given to the leaders of hierarchically structured organizations, to the CEOs of major corporations and to the executive directors of large nonprofit organizations. Each branch of Rock Camp follows non-hierarchical organizing methods to a different extent: Girls Rock! Charleston operates with a team staff structure while Girls Rock! Chicago has a camp director but still works with a consensus-based model of decision making.

⁶⁰ Redstockings, “Redstockings Manifesto,” 183.

⁶¹ Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*, (New York: HarperOne, 1989), 12.

⁶² *ibid*

Conclusion

While Rock Camp enacts feminism in a myriad of ways, the tactics of consciousness-raising, emphasizing individual voices as a source of power for collective movement, separatism, and non-hierarchical organizing methods encapsulate most of Rock Camp's associations to feminism. These tactics have their origins in a wide variety of feminist movements and groups throughout the later part of the 20th century and demonstrate Rock Camp's connections to the historical feminist actions and theories. Rock Camp clearly fits within Third Wave Feminism and Riot Grrrl, but also emulates many of the methods used primarily during Second Wave Feminism such as CR and separatism. While the foundation of Rock Camp is rooted in feminist history, many of the camps have drifted away from the original radical feminist vision that Misty created in 2001 in favor of creating bigger, wider-reaching organizations. In order to reorient the organization to its radical roots, a re-examination of feminism's impact on Rock camp's pedagogy and curriculum, as well as the organizational structure, is necessary.

“Pink Whipped Cream Makes You Scream:” Community Partnerships and Feminist Pedagogy at Rock Camp⁶³

The Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls’ feminist politics and vision for the world follow closely in the footsteps of Riot Grrrl. The organization aims to empower girls to share their voice and build self-esteem through music creation, with the larger goal of dismantling our patriarchal society and creating feminist cultural change. Again, following the model of Riot Grrrl, Rock Camp works to connect political action to music creation by emphasizing the power of the individual voice in enacting a collective vision. All of Rock Camp’s programming strives to highlight the perspectives and experiences of women and girls, and through that focus to begin to shift the locus of societal power away from patriarchal control. In addition to this focus on individual development, and the potential power of the individual, Rock Camp works to enact social change by establishing community partnerships with other social justice organizations that are a part of the struggle against oppression in all its forms, ranging from racism and classism to heterosexism and transphobia. However, these partnerships are often lacking a true engagement with social justice issues in their current forms, because they do not fully engage the partnership organization’s community members. While Rock Camp strives to uphold its feminist political ideals, and continually work towards a more just society, the organizers at times fail to completely fulfill the organization’s potential for transformative social change because they become consumed in the day-to-day realities of running a nonprofit organization. In this instance, Rock Camp falls into patterns of social service as Kivel outlines in his article “Social Service or Social Change?.” In order

⁶³ Pink Whipped Cream, “Pink Whipped Cream,” (Portland, OR: Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls, 2012).

to consistently work towards social change rather than focusing on social service, it is crucial that people involved with Rock Camp continue to think critically about the organization's relationship to feminism and recognize the potential within the feminist movement for coalition building. The Girls Rock Camp Alliance could play a crucial role in reorienting the movement towards social justice and encouraging branches to work continually to build stronger community partnerships with organizations struggling for racial, economic and gender justice. These relationships should not only benefit Rock Camp, but also take into consideration the needs of the other organization.

In this chapter, I will investigate the programming decisions of five different branches of Rock Camp, as understood by each camp's core organizer(s): Girls Rock! Charleston, Willie Mae Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls in Brooklyn, NY, Rock 'n' Roll Camp for Girls in Portland, OR, Girls Rock! Chicago, and Bay Area Girls Rock Camp in Oakland, CA in order to analyze the effects that each camp's choices have on their engagement with feminist social change. While each camp interprets and enacts its relationship to feminism differently, all of the organizers interviewed for this project believe that Rock Camp is doing feminist work. Therefore, the question is not whether or not Rock Camp is a feminist organization, but rather the extent to which it is able to live up to its feminist politics. As the Rock Camp movement continues to spread across the globe, the organizers of the individual camps are making a series of choices that move the organization away from its original radical vision and closer to mainstream youth culture in favor of organizational stability as well as the sustainable growth of the Girls Rock! Movement. Some branches of Rock Camp are perilously close to being fully assimilated into mainstream culture—they are virtually unrecognizable as anything other than a

music summer camp and have almost completely forgotten the original focus on social change. Acknowledging that it is unrealistic to maintain a complete devotion to feminist politics and organizing within a capitalist, patriarchal system, I argue that Rock Camp needs to reorient its programming towards social justice, and commit to working towards its vision for a more just future for girls and women.

Feminism

While Rock Camp is a music performance camp on the surface, its intentions run much deeper than that, as it aims to create social change by showing young girls that their opinions are valuable and that by sharing their perspectives, they can affect change in their immediate communities. Sts, one of the original core organizers of Rock Camp in Portland in 2001, was always a strong proponent of listening to and trusting girls' opinions. During her decade of work with Portland Rock Camp and the Girls Rock Camp Alliance, sts continually emphasized the creative potential for change present in the perspectives of youth: "you've seen 8-year olds, they have opinions, they have ideas, they're right a lot of the time. Adults are totally wrong, adults make a world that works for them."⁶⁴ In sts' experience, Rock Camp has always been and continues to be a "youth-driven social justice organization," subverting the cultural norm of valuing the opinions of adults over the ideas of youth. Rock Camp therefore works to create a space in which campers see the impact of their ideas, and know that they are being listened to because they can see their suggestions in action. Band practice is the clearest example of this attention to the opinions of the campers. In my experience working at the Portland

⁶⁴ sts, interview with the author, 14 Jan. 2013.

Camp, I have sat in on countless band practices, and have observed the campers' excitement at having complete artistic freedom to write their song however they want. While a band manager or coach is present, the adult figure stays mostly off to the side, allowing the campers to lead the process and make their own decisions. At Rock Camp, there is no one right way to write a song: it does not matter if there are verses, a chorus or a bridge. What matters is that the campers come together as a band, and develop their communication and leadership skills by collaborating on accomplishing a rewarding task.

When asked whether or not the campers understand the feminist ethos behind the curriculum and pedagogy of Rock Camp, Beth Wooten, the current executive director of the Portland Camp, affirmed that the campers are able to internalize the skills that they are learning. While Beth suggests that the younger campers absorb the pedagogy of Rock Camp on a more subconscious level, she notices a clear change in the older campers throughout the course of the week of camp: "the older campers pick up on that they're learning transferable skills and that they're learning communication skills and they're being listened to in a way that's not just about the song they're writing."⁶⁵ Through music creation and songwriting, Rock Camp is able to instill a sense of self-worth and personal achievement in the campers, which then better equips those girls to return to their daily lives and face the sexism in their families, schools and neighborhoods with a little more confidence and assuredness. More than just feeling listened to, Beth expands upon the skills that campers learn at camp, and how those skills can directly relate back to making concrete changes in their own lives: "I just see that thread of what a sense of self combined with access to resources combined with not being afraid to ask for help, how

⁶⁵ Beth Wooten, interview with the author, 15 Jan. 2013.

important those three things are especially for anyone who has experienced discrimination.”⁶⁶ It is evident that Rock Camp’s primary contribution to social justice movements is working on the individual level to interrupt the internalized sexist narrative in girls’ heads, and then encouraging campers to critically engage with their surroundings.

While it is easy to identify individual development and recognition of oppression as a primary goal of Rock Camp, it is much more difficult to create curriculum that makes the feminism implicit in such goals legible to young girls. The organizers must have a basic understanding of the academic and theoretical components of feminism in order to create the curriculum, but the real task is in translating those ideas into activities and communication styles that girls can understand. Beth eloquently explained this conundrum: “I feel like Rock Camp is not supposed to put a semester of women’s studies in an 8-year-old’s brain, but to deny that Rock Camp is a feminist organization I feel like is insulting to everything that’s built Rock Camp up to this point.”⁶⁷ For Beth, the most important aspect of feminism at Rock Camp is the curriculum and the feminist pedagogy. Whether or not the eight-year-old knows that she is learning feminist principles is irrelevant, as long as she is becoming aware of the impact that sexism has on her day-to-day life. Again, band practice is a good example of Rock Camp succeeding in creating feminist curriculum and working within a feminist pedagogy in a way that girls can understand. The younger girls may not understand how the non-hierarchical structure of band practice is a part of feminist pedagogy, but they do understand that they are in charge of their own song, and that the band manager is only an advisor.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

While most branches of Rock Camp are successful in providing safe spaces for girls to voice their opinions, I argue that they could strengthen their commitment to fighting oppression of all kinds through improved community partnerships with other social justice organizations. Currently, most community partnerships are primarily comprised of scholarship programs with organizations that work in underserved communities, with the goal of bringing a more diverse group of campers to Rock Camp. While these scholarship programs are an important first step, they are an attempt to simply integrate underserved communities into the organization without investigating some of the foundational reasons why Rock Camp struggles with diversity in the first place. Miranda Joseph's critique of nonprofits as stand-ins for community is particularly useful here. Rock Camp paints itself as an all-inclusive organization for girls from all backgrounds—Portland Rock Camp uses the phrase “Every girl should go!” on many of its advertisements. However, as Joseph argues, nonprofits cannot be viewed as synonymous with community, since the very foundation of many of the organizations is exclusionary to members of the community.

In order to begin to work towards a more inclusive organization, a reworking of the foundational structure of Rock Camp is necessary. One aspect of this effort is the creation of stronger partnerships that better recognize the role that intersectionality plays in the feminist politics of Rock Camp. For example, the Portland Camp currently partners with the Native American Youth Association (NAYA) by providing five full scholarship spots in Summer Camp to girls at NAYA. However, in order to truly enact social change, the organizers of Rock Camp need to engage in more in-depth conversation with the organizers of NAYA and create a true collaboration between the two organizations. For

instance, Rock Camp organizers could go to NAYA and run a session of Camp at their location, or NAYA organizers could come to Rock Camp and run a workshop on local Native American musical traditions. Jenna Lyles, one of the organizers of Girls Rock! Charleston, attributes this disconnect partially to the identities of Rock Camp organizers: “Because it’s run mostly by white women and queer folks, [...] there’s a lack of a relationship with a lot of racial and economic justice work that has been happening for a long time.”⁶⁸ Although Jenna’s critique is specific to Charleston and the South, hir⁶⁹ commentary rings true for Rock Camps across the country. However, in part because most Rock Camp organizers are overcommitted, day-to-day tasks are often prioritized over creating strong community partnerships that have the potential to make Rock Camp a more inclusive space. By failing to take full advantage of these connections between Rock Camp and other social justice organizations, Rock Camp misses out on the opportunity to make its own programming more inclusive and to learn from other social justice organizers, and share common difficulties that arise in community organizing efforts.

One way for the organizers of Rock Camps to begin to strengthen these community partnerships is through a more nuanced understanding of the role of intersectionality in Rock Camp’s core feminist politics. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a founding contributor to critical race theory, introduces the concept of intersectionality in her article *Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Learning from Violence Against Women of Color* in order to point to the “mutual exclusion of the experiences of women of color from

⁶⁸ Jenna Lyles, interview with the author, 1 Feb. 2013.

⁶⁹ Zie is being used here as a gender-neutral pronoun, to denote a gender identity that is neither masculine or feminine. The singular direct and indirect object form of zie is hir. For example, *zie* is standing over there and I walked towards *hir*.

feminist and anti-racist theory and activism.”⁷⁰ Though Crenshaw’s explanation of intersectionality can be extrapolated to apply to any set of intersecting identities, not just women of color, although this intersection of identities is particularly salient for Rock Camp. Rock Camp could benefit substantially from a more complete understanding and implementation of intersectionality in its community partnership efforts, and throughout the rest of its programming. While the organizers interviewed for this project are almost certainly familiar with the concept of intersectionality as a result of their involvement in various activist and social justice movements, this awareness leaves them with a desire to move away from discussion of identity categories, rather than embracing the differences within identity groups. This hesitancy to embrace and work with differences among identity groups is reminiscent of liberal feminism, in which all women were assumed to have common experiences as a result of their gender. Further, by glossing over the differences within female identity, Rock Camp organizers only move further from their original radical roots. Crenshaw points to the potential power that exists in the differences between group members: “Through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics.”⁷¹ Rock Camp’s failure in most cases to create truly collaborative community partnerships is suggestive that the organizers lack a full understanding of intersectionality and its potential power. Through such an increased awareness of intersectionality, the organizers can begin to do

⁷⁰ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Learning from Violence Against Women of Color,” *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, ed. Frances Bartkowski and Wendy Kolmar, 3rd ed. (McGraw-Hill Education, 2009), 482.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 490.

the work to create Rock Camp as a more inclusive space for girls of all backgrounds, and thereby reorient the organization towards its radical feminist roots.

In addition to committing to creating curriculum and programming with an emphasis on intersectionality, Rock Camp organizers would benefit from more fully investigating the role that feminism plays in Rock Camp's pedagogy and curriculum. While everyone interviewed for this project agrees that Rock Camp is fundamentally a feminist organization, the ways in which that core feminism manifests itself vary significantly from camp to camp. Kim Larson, an organizer from Girls Rock! Charleston, and Beth Wooten both emphasize the importance of strengthening each camper's individual voice. For Kim, Rock Camp gives girls "an outlet for discussion, education, multiple voices and a dialogue to show the different ways in which you can represent yourself in society,"⁷² whereas Beth emphasizes the importance of providing a safe space in which girls can learn to "recognize oppression and to know what they're feeling might be oppression and how to respond to it and not necessarily to dwell on it."⁷³ While Beth and Kim agree that Rock Camp enacts feminism through its curriculum and pedagogy by creating safe spaces for dialogue among girls about the oppression they experience as a result of their gender, they diverge on the issue of explicit identification with feminism. Beth argues that explicit identification with feminism limits Rock Camp's reach to different communities, while Kim insists upon the importance of the label as a political tactic.

The contention as to whether or not to explicitly identify Rock Camp with feminism is not unique to Portland or Charleston, but rather is a movement-wide issue,

⁷² Kim Larson, interview with author, 13 Jan. 2013.

⁷³ Wooten, interview.

and has its roots in the very beginning of the Rock Camp movement. In her interview, sts discussed the early years of Portland camp, which in its role as the founding camp greatly affected the policy choices that successive camps have made. At the beginning of the Portland Camp in 2001, many female musicians were deeply invested in disassociating themselves from Riot Grrrl and anything that was remotely connected to Riot Grrrl as a result of the heavy media backlash that happened in the late 1990s. As Riot Grrrl grew and spread to different communities across the country, the mainstream media latched on to the movement and commodified the grrrls' words and actions. Angered by the media's skewing of their words, Riot Grrrl established a media ban in order to try and preserve the movement's radical feminist origins⁷⁴. This argument is one example of the reasons that many women doing feminist work in the 1990s and early 2000s worked to distance themselves from the label, for fear of their work being devalued or stigmatized. As a result of the personal identities of the early volunteers, and the social climate at the time, Rock Camp had little to gain from identifying with feminism, and so decided not to label itself as such, a decision that has stuck with the organization ever since.

Sts was also one of the main organizers involved in establishing the Girls Rock Camp Alliance, and in the creation of the mission statement for GRCA she advocated for omitting feminism because she wanted to make the organization inclusive to all: "I really wanted to respect women who didn't identify as feminist and be like 'that is totally valid.' We're not here for feminists, we're here for women."⁷⁵ Although sts does have a fair point in recognizing that a feminist organization is alienating for some women,

⁷⁴ Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garofalo, "Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from within," *Signs* 23, No. 3 (Spring, 1998), 826.

⁷⁵ sts, interview.

feminism is ultimately working for the equality of all women, and therefore, a feminist organization is by definition in existence for women. Sts continues to defend the rights of all women to identify as they choose by stating that Rock Camp's mission of building girls' self-esteem is not inherently feminist, but rather, that the organization operates with a feminist pedagogy and feminist organizing principles.⁷⁶ Sts is fundamentally more invested in creating Rock Camp as a feminist organization, meaning that the staff operate in a non-hierarchical structure, funding sources are constantly questioned and problematized, and that the organization refuses to become institutionalized under the patriarchal system, than she is in debating Rock Camp's association with the feminist label. I will return to the nuances of running a feminist organization in chapter three, but it is important here in understanding sts' view of feminism at Rock Camp, as she quickly gets frustrated when people dwell on the semantics of feminism rather than focusing on concrete feminist actions. Although the maxim "actions speak louder than words" rings true in many cases, I argue that the language that Rock Camp chooses to describe itself is important because it guides mainstream society's understanding of the mission and of the work that the organization does. By focusing exclusively on the importance of feminist action and not explicitly labeling itself as feminist, Rock Camp is assimilating itself into mainstream culture.

As a representative of the new generation of staff at the Portland Camp, Beth Wooten understands Rock Camp to be doing feminist work through its mission, and is hesitant to align herself strongly with one side of the argument, although Portland Camp continues to not mention feminism in conjunction with Camp anywhere on the website or

⁷⁶ Ibid.

in promotional materials. Demonstrating her understanding of the sensitive nature of the topic, Wooten stated “I could see how putting the word feminist might turn away some families, but I feel like that’s almost a community question and a marketing question that each camp needs to ask themselves.”⁷⁷ While considerations of regional and community differences are an important part of any discussion of feminist organizing, in this instance, Beth’s comment operates as an excuse that allows camps to choose the easier route. One solution to this issue is for the Girls Rock Camp Alliance to step in and establish stronger points of organizational unity. Although the GRCA cannot reasonably mandate every Rock Camp to explicitly label itself as feminist, nor would that solve the problem, the GRCA can take steps to ensure that Rock Camps focus on the social change aspects of the mission in their advertisement, by providing advertising templates for each camp to work off of, for instance.

Girls Rock! Charleston is one example of the regional variation in terms of connection to feminism—according to Jenna, the word feminism is almost insignificant in comparison with the newness of the progressive work Rock Camp is doing in the community. As zie explains: “No white woman [in Charleston] calls themselves feminist. Nobody does, the cultural relevancy of feminism in Charleston, it’s just not the biggest thing.”⁷⁸ Girls Rock! Charleston is the only camp I interviewed that does identify itself as feminist, in part because it must contend with the institutional power of the conservative Old South. However, in the face of such a strong legacy of white supremacy and oppression of all kinds, feminism is only one piece of a much bigger puzzle: “I think that if it came down to the semantics of people wanting to volunteer or not because of calling

⁷⁷ Wooten, interview.

⁷⁸ Lyles, interview.

ourselves a feminist camp...I think that's not so much...the whole beast is new.”⁷⁹ Here, Jenna is referencing personal experiences she has had recruiting volunteers and campers for Rock Camp in which she received feedback that the whole organization was too radical. In Jenna's experience doing social justice organizing in Charleston, people are generally less concerned with the fact that the camp is labeled as feminist and are rather more taken aback by the work that Rock Camp is doing. Although the wider community may not attach any particular significance to the label of feminism, it provides a sense of solidarity for the organizers of Rock Camp and their immediate community: “Our camp identifies as feminist in a big way. That's a big part of our identity as a camp.”⁸⁰ For Kim, the feminist identity of Girls Rock! Charleston is intimately tied to the personal identities of the founding organizers: “I think [our identity] has a lot to do with the experiences of our organizers who [all] identified as feminist before they started working with the camp.”⁸¹ For many of the organizers in Charleston, feminism has provided an escape, as well as an entrance point into social justice organizing in the South. It is inevitable that Girls Rock! Charleston is explicitly feminist, because feminism is at the core of all of the community organizing work that the leaders of the organization do, both within Rock Camp and with other organizations in Charleston. Although Rock Camp organizers in other cities, such as Beth Wooten in Portland, also personally identify as feminist, Beth does not approach Rock Camp as a part of her larger feminist organizing efforts, but rather as her job. This approach establishes a separation between Beth's

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Larson, interview.

⁸¹ Ibid.

personal identity as a feminist and her work at Rock Camp that does not exist for the organizers in Charleston.

By choosing to identify explicitly as feminist, Girls Rock! Charleston maintains the original radical vision that Misty had in 2001, but as a compromise, runs the risk of alienating families who do not want their daughters exposed to feminist ideals, or do not fully understand the meaning of feminism in the context of Rock Camp. Last summer alone two families withdrew their campers from the program when they discovered that Charleston Rock Camp discussed queerness and transgender identities as a part of the curriculum.⁸² The label “feminist” has the potential to stymie Rock Camp’s ability to access communities of color and working class and low income communities, due to the historical image of feminism as a white, upper-middle class, women’s movement. Laura Swanlund, the director of Girls Rock! Chicago, justifies her camp’s choice not to label itself as feminist by stating: “telling some individuals that Rock Camp is feminist would make them feel uncomfortable and those are the type of campers that we want at camp.”⁸³ By not identifying as feminist, Girls Rock! Chicago avoids the drawbacks of feminism as a historical movement, and creates a space that is ostensibly inclusive to a wider range of girls. However, explicit feminist identification is by no means the only barrier to girls of color and girls from working-class communities feeling included in Rock Camp’s programming. Laura’s comment seems to suggest that by avoiding the term, Girls Rock! Chicago is automatically a more inclusive place, and that it is reaching out to more girls. Similarly to Beth’s comment regarding the regional differences of feminism, inclusivity is used here as an excuse to not take a risk and identify as feminist. While an argument

⁸² Lyles, interview.

⁸³ Laura Swanlund, interview with author, 16 Jan. 2013.

can definitely be made that feminist identification is a disincentive for certain populations to come to Rock Camp, the bigger issue is the ways in which Rock Camp's programming is exclusionary at a foundational level.

Although Charleston's choice to label itself as a feminist organization does limit its reach, its location in a historically conservative part of the country in some ways necessitates its radical and explicit identification. Jenna openly admits that Charleston Rock Camp cannot reach all of the girls in the area. Zie goes on to explain that the decision to identify as queer and feminist is in large part a safety precaution for the organizers of the camp. In a community that is as conservative and as small as Charleston, the people involved with Rock Camp are forced to identify Rock Camp as feminist and queer, since all of Charleston knows that the organization is run by feminist queer people and would be concerned if the organization pretended to be anything else. As Lyles notes, "old money powers are so strong here that the idea that we would be able to make any significant cultural change by sneakily making our camp look more moderate so that kids from more conservative backgrounds would be able to come and have this 'sneaky, feminist experience!' that actually just isn't effective here."⁸⁴ As a result, Charleston Rock Camp is more concerned with establishing the Camp as an institution in Charleston than it is with accessing conservative communities. To be clear, when Lyles refers to Rock Camp as an institution in Charleston, zie is not referring to a traditional sense of institutionalization, in which the organization loses its autonomy, loses its radical edge, and is funded by corporate foundations. Rather, zie is invested in establishing Rock Camp as an accepted part of Charleston culture, and thereby disrupting

⁸⁴ Lyles, interview.

the power and cultural dominance of old, white, elite men. Rock Camp is not Jenna's first or only activist endeavor in Charleston, but rather she understands Rock Camp to be one of many initiatives that will eventually force Charleston to be a more welcoming community for marginalized populations.⁸⁵ While there are certainly other Rock Camps that are located in conservative communities, Girls Rock! Charleston occupies a unique position, in part because of the identities and personal politics of its organizers, and in part because of its young age. Rock Camp in Charleston is only two years old, and so the organizers have only just begun to create a space for Rock Camp in Charleston's existing feminist and music communities.

At this point in its growth as an organization, Charleston Rock Camp does not have the capacity to simultaneously create Rock Camp as an institution and cater to the widest possible range of campers. Kim and Jenna are both focused on the longevity of Rock Camp in Charleston, and are more concerned with the long-term effects of the organization on the community, which will indirectly provide benefits to all girls and women in Charleston. In light of Charleston's focus on larger community-based social change, their emphasis on feminism and queerness in their mission statement and in their promotional materials is logical, as they aim to disrupt the current rhetoric in the city, and force the entire community to reexamine their priorities and privileges. A "sneaky feminist experience" isn't effective in Charleston because the power of the Old South is so strong, that in order to create any kind of progressive cultural change, a more direct tactic is necessary.⁸⁶ While other camps are not entirely secretive about their feminist identity, there is a higher level of bait and switch, in which Rock Camp is advertised just

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

as a music camp, but the campers are actually being exposed to feminist principles and ideas. Although it is one of the biggest points of contention among Rock Camp organizers, explicit feminist identification is not actually the main issue, but instead is indicative of the widespread separation from social justice work that prevails across different branches of Rock Camp. In the case of Charleston, explicit feminist identity is an essential part of their ability to do social justice work. However, in other communities, Rock Camp can be successful while continuing to disassociate with feminism, as long as it recommits to enacting social change through community partnerships and intentional programming.

With Charleston as a notable exception, the other organizers interviewed for this project all noted that their work at Rock Camp endeavors to show campers feminism in action rather than telling them. Even at the level of the mission statement, Chicago Rock Camp describes its version of feminism, rather than outright stating its feminist allegiance: “We’re empowering, we’re giving a voice, we have creative expression, we give self-esteem to girls and youth who don’t normally have a voice. That’s what our mission says, and that to me is the definition of feminism in our camp.”⁸⁷ In many ways, this description of the actions that create feminism at Chicago Rock Camp is more powerful than the word itself, as it disambiguates any possible confusion or disagreement as to the definition of feminism, yet still clearly connects Rock Camp to social change. Carey Fay-Horowitz, the executive director of the Bay Area Rock Camp, similarly explained that in their promotional materials, they concentrate more on the “what,”

⁸⁷ Swanlund, interview.

playing music, writing songs and making bands, and less on the “why.”⁸⁸ Although the outcome is similar in terms of actual programming and curriculum, Carey’s description fails to even describe the feminist politics of Rock Camp. There is nothing inherently feminist about girls playing music, performing and going to workshops. While the word “feminism” may not be essential to effectively describe Rock Camp to potential families and campers, the feminist tenets of Rock Camp such as empowering girls and building self-esteem must be present in all promotional materials if Rock Camp wants to remain politically engaged in anti-oppression activism.

Even though the feminist label is not necessarily critical to the success of Rock Camp’s mission, it is important to consider the impact that choosing to disassociate with the label has on the feminist movement. As bell hooks and Kaia Wilson from Team Dresch pointed to in the first chapter, the younger generation’s desire to distance themselves from a feminist identity is dangerous in that it provides further space for continued misconceptions of the feminist movement. Rock Camp participates in this disassociation, and as sts mentioned in her interview, that might constitute a loss to the larger feminist movement.⁸⁹ While it is not Rock Camp’s job to be a representative for the feminist movement, the organizers of Rock Camp must consider the way in which their work does contribute to the larger feminist movement, and how other feminist organizations, such as domestic violence shelters and free women’s healthcare clinics, are also fighting against the patriarchal system. When Rock Camp chooses to disassociate from the feminist label, it becomes even more essential for the organizers to be explicit about their connection to the work that other feminist organizations are doing, because

⁸⁸ Fay-Horowitz, interview.

⁸⁹ sts, interview.

feminism is only going to succeed in intervening in the patriarchal societal structure through coalitions and collaboration. The hesitation that Rock Camp organizers express at explicitly identifying with feminism is indicative of the organization's distance from the larger feminist movement and of the movement's increasing assimilation into mainstream youth culture. If the connection to feminism is not made explicit in the advertising of Rock Camp, then the role of community partnerships as a way of enacting feminist social change becomes even more integral, so that Rock Camp is never interpreted as just another summer camp. As soon as a majority of mainstream society reads Rock Camp as just another summer camp, Rock Camp will have failed to live up to its mission of creating social change and will have slipped into the patterns of being primarily a social service organization.

Rock Camp's impact does not stop at the campers, but rather influences entire communities. From simple outreach such as providing scholarships to girls associated with other social justice organizations, such as resource centers for low-income families and racial justice organizations, to more extensive and long-term social change, Rock Camp provides essential resources to its various communities. For Laura Swanlund, the most effective way to reach the larger Rock Camp community is through benefit shows. Though the events are nominally about fundraising, a topic I will discuss in greater depth in chapter three, Laura is more concerned with "living our mission more than camp."⁹⁰ Benefit shows allow Girls Rock! Chicago to create all-female performance spaces for musicians in the community, and thereby counteract the male-centric music culture that predominates across the country. More than just developing a girls' sense of self, benefit

⁹⁰ Swanlund, interview.

shows and other community engagement projects encourage the formation of a support network for female musicians, and provide resources for women to continue to follow their musical passions.

For almost a decade⁹¹ the Portland Camp took the support of female musicians one step further by opening up the building for practice space and lending their gear for free. Dozens of local musicians had keys to the Rock Camp building and held band practice as well as private lessons there. Additionally, any woman who did not have access to gear was allowed to borrow anything from a PA to a drum set. Through these resources, Rock Camp was able to “even the playing field” for female musicians in Portland, and take a more holistic approach to cultural change across generations.⁹² Carey Fay-Horowitz has noticed a similar phenomenon in the Bay Area since Rock Camp started there seven years ago. “It feels like there’s more women playing music or starting bands for the first time. I have seen among the volunteers who’ve been involved for a while, their own personal ways of interacting with each other have been changed by Rock Camp.”⁹³ Social changes such as these serve as a testament to the strength and success of Rock Camp’s programming and curriculum. Rock Camp simultaneously provides a space for identity formation for campers and works to change the perception of women in music, so that campers will be able to continue to play music after Rock Camp.

⁹¹ Portland Rock Camp was forced to relocate to a new building in 2012 because the old building was not in compliance with various city building codes.

⁹² sts, interview.

⁹³ Fay-Horowitz, interview.

Trans Inclusion

In addition to cultivating community support for female musicians, Rock Camp is actively involved in creating cultural change regarding the inclusion of trans-identified staff, volunteers, and campers at Rock Camp. While Rock Camp is primarily designed for girls and women, the Girls Rock Camp Alliance has recently discussed the target community of Rock Camp extensively. The 2012 GRCA conference had a workshop dedicated to the discussion of inclusion of trans-identified people in Rock Camp, and the issue came up frequently throughout other workshops at the conference. The branches of Rock Camp had varied opinions on the issue, and even within camps that do reach out to and include trans-identified people, there continues to be, contention as to whether or not that should be included in the mission statement, or only in the non-discrimination policy.

When Rock Camp first started in Portland in 2001, the inclusion of transgender and genderqueer individuals was never a question. The identities and politics of the organizers and core volunteers made it clear that all trans-identified people were welcome. However, as the idea spread to new cities, that understanding became less universal. As sts explains it: “Ten years ago [...] there was no doubt whatsoever that [Rock Camp] was transinclusive, that it was totally anti-homophobic. It was where all the freaks went without a doubt. But since the movement grew and grew and grew, there’s a lot of people who watched the movie or read the book and they didn’t get that.”⁹⁴ In 2007 and 2008, the Portland Rock Camp produced a documentary and a book, which detail the day-to-day occurrences at Rock Camp, and discuss how to start your own camp.

Following the production of these two media sources, the popularity of the Girls Rock

⁹⁴ sts, interview.

Movement grew even quicker than before, and multiple new camps sprang up every summer in cities around the world. Although it is certainly inspiring to chart the exponential growth and popularity of the Girls Rock Movement, certain core understandings are not as easily communicated to new camps when the organizers have only watched the movie or read the book and never actually attended a camp. Rock Camps are no longer run just by queer punk musicians, as Portland was in its early years, and although others certainly have the potential to be strong Rock Camp organizers, many new members do not have the same cultural and political knowledge that would lead them to automatically include transgender and genderqueer youth in Rock Camp's target audience.

The inclusion of trans-identified people in Girls Rock Camp has become one of the biggest issues within GRCA. In Laura Swanlund's experience at Girls Rock! Chicago, the issue divided the board and the staff. The board proposed that Rock Camp should be "an all-female space, in the traditional sense" while Swanlund and other staff members believe "anybody that has, or currently does, lived the experience of being a female in our society should be a member of our camp community."⁹⁵ In the process of these discussions, Laura discovered that the difference in opinion was fundamentally a result of a gap in knowledge, wherein the board members were not privy to the same conversations and communities as the staff members. In order to begin to rectify this, and thereby convince the board to allow trans-identified individuals to come to camp, staff members focused on planning training and education with the board members at staff and board retreats. Additionally, the volunteer community played a large role in forcing the

⁹⁵ Swanlund, interview.

board to reconsider their decision. Core volunteers threatened to stop being involved with the organization if trans-identified people were not included, arguing that the mission was not being adhered to. Realizing the negative effect their decision had, the board decided to include gender identity in the non-discrimination policy, but not in the mission statement.

Laura maintains, however, that the non-discrimination policy is not enough, and that transgender and genderqueer youth must be a part of the mission statement. She explains her reasoning as follows: “When you have it in your mission, you’re making it clear...because to me it’s not so much about girls as it is about youth who don’t have a voice, when you look at it from a gender perspective.”⁹⁶ When the mission statement continues to describe Rock Camp as an organization for girls, it establishes itself as an unwelcoming place for trans-identified people who don’t identify as girls, but are nonetheless welcome at camp. Laura’s insistence on inclusion in the mission statement is crucial, as it is only through that amendment to the mission that Rock Camp is made clearly legible as a welcome environment for trans-identified people. As exemplified here, the discussion surrounding transgender and genderqueer inclusion in Rock Camp is one of the clearest examples of the drawbacks of separatism as a feminist tactic. There are some benefits to establishing separatist spaces—in my conversations with campers, many of them say that they are more comfortable speaking up at Rock Camp because they aren’t worried about the boys’ opinions—but such spaces also exclude other individuals who would benefit from a similarly open and empowering space.

⁹⁶ Swanlund, interview.

Kim Larson and Jenna Lyles both agree with Laura about the importance of including trans-identified people as a part of the target audience in the mission statement. As a result, Charleston is one of the few Rock Camps that explicitly includes trans and genderqueer individuals in its mission statement. As with their decision to explicitly identify as feminist, Girls Rock Charleston received concerns from parents about the discussion of gender identity at camp. Parents said things along the lines of “Well, I don’t have anything against there being gay or trans people at camp, but why do they have to talk about it?”⁹⁷ By including transgender and genderqueer individuals in the mission statement, Girls Rock Charleston gives those individuals clear permission to be out about their identities at camp, if they wish. While gender identity is not a set topic in any part of the Girls Rock Charleston curriculum, volunteers and campers are free to talk about their identities as they see fit, and therefore, discussions around gender identity play a central role in the camp.

Personal as Political

The concerns voiced by the parents in Charleston brings up another set of issues regarding the separation between personal and organizational politics and identity. As far as the parents are concerned, a volunteer’s personal identity, and particularly when that identity is queer, should have no bearing on that individual’s behavior at camp. However, this viewpoint fails to recognize the ways in which hetero and cisgender people make reference to their gender identities and sexualities in everyday actions and interactions—wearing a wedding ring, mentioning their spouse or significant other, or dressing in

⁹⁷ Larson, interview.

gender “appropriate” clothing to give a few examples. Sts also works to keep her personal identity and opinions completely separate from her decisions about Rock Camp: “I always said, I’m not going to put my personal politics into what I think is best for camp. What’s best for camp is different than my personal politics.”⁹⁸ This statement directly contradicts the goals of feminist tactics such as consciousness-raising, in which personal politics and experiences form the basis for collective movement. Later in her interview, sts clarifies her position on the separation between organization and personal politics: “I don’t think that any adult should do anything that’s for their own benefit, sacrificing the mission for their own needs and their own desires or their own vision or their own politics.”⁹⁹ Here sts conflates two separate issues, an absolute separation between organizational and political politics and a dedication to the mission. In fact, the organizers’ personal politics often drives their dedication to the mission. As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, the identities and experiences of the organizers of Rock Camp have determined the course of the organization at various points in its history, and had the organization been started by different people it would have an entirely different trajectory. This tension between organizational and personal politics can be resolved to some extent by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards’ concept of “autokeonomy.” Autokeonomy, one of the points in the authors’ *Third Wave Manifesta: A Thirteen Point Agenda*, and refers to “self in community,” encouraging feminists to “see activism not as a choice between self and community but as a link between them that creates balance.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the politics of organizers and those of the organization do

⁹⁸ sts, interview.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Baumgardner and Richards, *Manifesta*, 523.

not need to be separated, but rather can work in unison to diversify the tactics used to enact Rock Camp's mission, thereby increasing the mission's effectiveness.

Charleston's Jenna Lyles also disagrees with sts, insisting that the personal politics of the organizers are the driving force behind Rock Camp. Most organizers that Jenna meets were drawn to Rock Camp because their feminist politics alerted them to the power behind the mission: "The reason many of us are doing this work is because of our personal politics, she wouldn't be an organizer if it weren't for her personal politics."¹⁰¹

While this statement is perhaps overly generalized, it raises an interesting question: why do people choose to start a Rock Camp or work at one?. More often than not, Rock Camp organizers were either involved with activist nonprofit work or in their local music community before coming to Rock Camp. Despite some exceptions, but organizers' personal politics and identities are often the impetus for their involvement at Rock Camp. Kim Larson also attested to the interconnectedness of her personal politics and her work with Rock Camp: "To me, it's almost impossible to separate the work that we're doing at Rock Camp from my feminist ideas."¹⁰² For many Rock Camp staff members, and particularly for the staff in Charleston, their commitment to social change does not end with their work at Rock Camp, but rather plays a larger role in the way they navigate the world as feminists, activists and organizers.

Nonetheless, many Rock Camps encourage volunteers and staff to keep their personal identities separate from their work at camp by not discussing their identities with or around campers. However, as Jenna notes, such a request affects predominantly volunteers and staff who are queer, trans, low-income and of color: "Our straight,

¹⁰¹ Lyles, interview.

¹⁰² Larson, interview.

Christian, blonde volunteers, they're considered safe and appropriate for kids. My life as a genderqueer person of color is not considered to be safe or age-appropriate [...] Whose personal lives and whose personal politics do we mean are inappropriate at camp?"¹⁰³

Even though the GRCA and many Rock Camps are actively involved with discussions of queerness and trans-inclusivity, they are still perpetuating discriminatory practices through the silencing of personal identity at camp. Cisgender, heterosexual, white female volunteers are the expectation, and hence, even if they are not directly discussing their personal identity, that identity is safe and accepted at camp and is being affirmed. However, queer and trans identities remain a point of contention, because they are not perceived to be "appropriate" for children.

Regardless of whether or not the organization is labeled as feminist, feminism is at the heart of Rock Camp's mission. Feminism is evident in its pedagogy and in its wider goal of working against gender-based oppression. As discussed throughout this chapter Rock Camp's feminist politics are, or have the potential to be, manifested in a myriad of ways including but not limited to an emphasis on developing girls' sense of self, explicit identification with feminism, community partnerships with other social justice organizations, inclusion of transgender and genderqueer individuals in Rock Camp programming, and a recognition of the intersection between personal and organizational politics. Often these aspects of Rock Camp are not recognized as all being a part of the feminist politics of the organization, and the organizers of Rock Camp make a variety of choices in the process of navigating the day-to-day realities of running a nonprofit organization that limit Rock Camp's connection to its feminist roots. It is

¹⁰³ Lyles, interview.

precisely these aspects of Rock Camp that make it unique from other music camps and that allow it to create social change and engage in social justice. In order to maintain their fundamental mission of enacting social change, each individual Rock Camp, and especially the GRCA, must recommit to the feminist foundations of the organization, and resist the temptations to assimilate into mainstream culture. Feminism plays a crucial role not only in the programming aspect of the organization, but also in the structural aspects regarding issues such as leadership hierarchies, funding sources, and the treatment of issues concerning queer, trans, and genderqueer organizers, volunteers, and campers.

“Let’s Get Real, We Can’t Live on Mars:” Feminist Organizing Ethics and the Nonprofit Industrial Complex¹⁰⁴

Rock Camp is built upon a feminist foundation that is realized not only through the organization’s pedagogy and programming but also in the organizational structure. There is a constant tension at play in the structure of Rock Camp, a tug and pull between the regulations of 501(c)3 nonprofit status, and the development of a feminist organization. Feminist ethics and the mission of Rock Camp are inextricably tied together: feminist organizing methods such as a non-hierarchical staff structure and a divestment from corporate and major foundation funding are two important ways Rock Camp can enact its mission of creating social change. However, a complete devotion to feminist organizing principles is both unrealistic and unachievable, because some measure of these ideals are inevitably forsaken in favor of greater organizational stability and increased reach to more girls and women. No camp is able to perfectly enact their feminist ethics with regards to organizational structure and funding sources. Hence, the important question is not whether those ethics are compromised, but rather how, and to what effect. As seen in the previous chapter, Rock Camp often disassociates itself from feminism or chooses not to include transgender and genderqueer individuals in its programming not because it’s the right decision for the camp’s community, but because it’s the easier answer. Any decision to compromise Rock Camp’s radical feminist politics and assimilate into mainstream culture has to be based on the specific needs of the camp’s community and not on what is more politically advantageous. Deciding whether or not to accept a corporate sponsorship or a major foundation grant are two examples in

¹⁰⁴ Starry Knights, “Sometimes,” (Portland, OR: Rock ‘n’ Roll Camp for Girls, 2012).

which Rock Camp's feminist vision could potentially be compromised and in which the best interests of the camp's community need to be prioritized. As is discussed later in this chapter, Laura Swanlund from Girls Rock! Chicago chose to work with Guitar Center to encourage them to change their policies and take Rock Camp's mission into consideration in regards to their own organization rather than with simply rejecting the sponsorship, which contributed to the social change that Girls Rock! Chicago is enacting in their immediate community. Alternatively, following a model such as Portland or New York, who both accept and seek out funding from smaller, local community foundations allows Rock Camp organizers to be more accountable to their feminist organizing ethics. Both of these decisions create stronger ties between Rock Camp and mainstream foundations and corporations, but the organizers nonetheless maintain a commitment to social change in the ways in which they choose to accept the grants and sponsorships.

All of the Rock Camps interviewed for this project have 501(c)3 status, an IRS designation that allows potential funders to mark donations as tax deductible charitable contributions. Most major foundations will not give grants to non-501(c)3 organizations in part because they aren't eligible for the tax deduction, but also because the status signifies that the organization has had a stable staff, and has implemented consistent programming for long enough to acquire the status. While 501(c)3 status can be useful for organizations in securing consistent funding, the status can be at odds with the feminist social change towards which Rock Camp is working.

The Revolution Will Not Be Funded and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex

The anthology, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Nonprofit Industrial Complex* (2008) by Incite!, provides one of the most-thorough critiques of the drawbacks and pitfalls of the nonprofit system. Its main discussion centers on the use of nonprofits as a stand-in for services that should be funded by the state, the absorption and hegemonization of radical political movements by the state, and the ultimate control of nonprofits by foundations that are run by the wealthiest class of Americans. These phenomena all play into what Incite! Women of Color Against Violence labels as the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC). Dylan Rodríguez defines the NPIC as “a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements.”¹⁰⁵ Further, the NPIC can be theoretically understood in relationship to the concept of the prison industrial complex (PIC). Andrea Smith notes that the PIC serves to “overtly [repress] dissent” while the “NPIC manages and controls dissent by incorporating it into the state apparatus.”¹⁰⁶ As a state-sanctioned nonprofit, Rock Camp is complicit in this system and is necessarily controlled to some extent by the desires of the foundations that provide funding and by the state. Some of the critiques made in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, such as Andrea Smith’s discussion of the limitations of paying staff, are not directly applicable to Rock Camp, because Rock Camp is smaller than many of the nonprofits discussed in this text and still works hard to remain faithful to its feminist ethics, but it is nonetheless

¹⁰⁵ Andrea Smith, "The Revolution Will Not Be Funded," *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex*, ed. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2007), 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

useful to develop a thorough understanding of the insidious drawbacks to the nonprofit system.

Nonprofits as a method of social and political control is not a new phenomenon, and has been employed by governments across the world especially in the United States, to quell social unrest. The NPIC allows the state to “collapse various sites of potential political radicalism into nonantagonistic social service and pro-state reformist initiatives.”¹⁰⁷ Although an organization’s mission statement may reflect the original radical intentions and goals of the organization, those radical visions are often hard to realize within the NPIC. Adjoa Florencia Jones de Almeida, an active participant in nonprofits and social activism highlights an important disparity between the mission statement of many social-justice nonprofits and their actions that results from the pressures of the NPIC: “[The original] radical vision may still be reflected in our mission statements, in the posters and quotes with which we decorate our work spaces; but how are these ideals manifested in our actual day to day lives and in the work we are doing?”¹⁰⁸ Especially as an organization like Rock Camp becomes more established, it is easy to fall into a pattern of day-to-day tasks and community traditions that follows Kivel’s model of social service organizations and that does not allow for the necessary reflection and continual re-centering of actions to the radical vision of the mission statement. Furthermore, the influence of the NPIC becomes subconscious and hard to recognize in day-to-day practices. While nonprofit status does provide some benefits for

¹⁰⁷ Dylan Rodríguez, "The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-profit Industrial Complex*, ed. Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2007), 26.

¹⁰⁸ Adjoa Florência Jones De Almeida, "Radical Social Change: Searching for a New Foundation," *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2007), 186.

organizations such as more stable sources of funding and institutionalization in a community, it is often difficult to determine the extent to which nonprofits are still able to realize their vision of social change within the ideological constraints imposed by foundations and the state. Kivel speaks to this exact tension and while he recognizes the value of social service, and believes that it plays a role in nonprofit organizing, he advocates for an increased focus on social change. Kivel's model is essential for Rock Camp in thinking through the ways in which the organization can further its commitment to social justice, because it allows some space for the social service aspects of Rock Camp while still privileging social change above all else.

In addition to investigating the ways in which nonprofits are limited ideologically by foundations, it is also important to examine the methods by which foundations, nonprofits' main sources of funding, are established. Most foundations in the U.S. are established as an endowment when a member of a wealthy family dies. The state encourages the establishment of such foundations through charitable tax deductions that allow families to avoid paying taxes on the deceased family member's estate. Christine Ahn further discusses the implications of charitable deductions stating that "Foundations are made partly with dollars which, were it not for charitable deductions allowed by tax laws, would have become public funds to be allocated through the governmental process under the controlling power of the electorate as a whole."¹⁰⁹ Without the charitable deductions, more money would move directly into the government, which then would allow for greater potential funding of education, and the arts, two areas that are currently

¹⁰⁹ Christine E. Ahn, "Democratizing American Philanthropy," *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2007), 65.

largely served by nonprofits. Under the current system, foundations have fewer regulations on their spending than the government would, and can hence freely allocate grant money to whichever organizations they wish. Ahn astutely points out the ability of foundations to fund organizations that directly benefit the donor's private interests: "It is critical that social justice organizations abandon any notion that foundations are *not* established for a donor's private gain."¹¹⁰ Nonprofits are then forced to hide pieces of their political goals, in order to make the mission of the organization more palatable to potential donors. Rock Camp, for instance, may choose to emphasize the education and arts aspects of its mission in order to appeal to arts foundations, while omitting the core social justice in the mission. This connects back to the tension around explicit feminist identification discussed in chapter two, in that Rock Camp is choosing to emphasize the education and arts aspects of the mission not because that is the most important, but because it is what the donors and foundations want to hear. When choosing whether or not to identify as feminist, Rock Camp organizers often cited the negative reactions of the parents, community members and foundations as their reason to disassociate the organization from feminism. Similarly, focusing on the education and arts aspects of the mission while excluding the core social justice components only serves to assimilate Rock Camp into mainstream culture, and does not allow the organizers to continue to work towards social change.

Recognizing the tension between donors, foundations, and social justice nonprofit organizations, Amara H. Pérez, another contributor to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, advocates for a complete re-evaluation of the usefulness and productivity of the

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 64.

current nonprofit system. She argues that social justice activists have become overly dependent on a dysfunctional system, and have ceased to see other possibilities for organizational methods towards social change: “Foundation funding and non-profit management not only exhausts us and potentially compromises our radical edge; it also has us persuaded that we cannot do our work without their money and without their systems.”¹¹¹ While institutionalization and the stable funding that goes along with it carries certain advantages, including the ability to pay staff members, it also changes the focus of the work with more time and energy being spent on writing grants and grant progress reports. Despite Pérez’s argument against foundations, an organization must find funding somewhere, and individual donations are often just as time-consuming, even if they come with fewer constraints.

In examining the NPIC it is important to pay attention to benefits such as salaries for staff members that come from institutionalization and stable funding. Many of the contributors to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* hold negative views of the tendency of nonprofits to prioritize providing salaries for staff members, as they understand the professionalization of the nonprofit sector to be a further measure of state control. Jones de Almeida argues that “in this country, our activism is held hostage to our jobs.”¹¹² Smith frames a similar argument in terms of the NPIC: “the NPIC encourages us to think of social justice organizing as a career: you do the work if you can get paid for it.”¹¹³ Additionally, Smith argues that the NPIC encourages organizations to focus on policy

¹¹¹ Amara H. Pérez, “Between Radical Theory and Community Praxis,” *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2007), 98.

¹¹² Jones de Almeida, “Radical Social Change,” 187.

¹¹³ Smith A., “The Revolution Will Not Be Funded,” 10.

and reform versus grassroots efforts, preferring the knowledge and skills of those with advanced degrees.¹¹⁴ While both Jones de Almeida and Smith provide a necessary critique of the NPIC, and specifically the ways in which it dictates who is qualified to lead a grassroots organization, it is equally important not to require nonprofits to rely solely on volunteer efforts. The stability of foundation funding allows nonprofits to provide salaries to activists, who are then better able to support themselves and their families while remaining committed to their communities and the social justice work they are passionate about. Especially in the context of smaller nonprofits such as Rock Camp, organizers are less likely to lose their radical edge as a result of receiving a salary. In most cases, the salaried positions are the Executive Director and the Program Director, who are able to continue to emphasize the importance of Rock Camp's activist politics, regardless of whether or not they are paid.

Feminist Organizing Methods and the Nonprofit Structure

With these critiques of nonprofit structure in mind, I will now investigate the compromises each camp makes in navigating the divide between the mainstream stability afforded by 501(c)3 status and the radical potential of feminist organizing methods, and analyze the effects of said compromises. As seen in chapter two, Girls Rock! Charleston enacts their feminist and queer politics by refusing foundation funding of all varieties and depending instead on grassroots fundraising, as well as operating under a non-hierarchical team staff structure. Additionally, they choose not to pay staff members, though they are working to hire one full-time staff person to start an afterschool program.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 7.

Girls Rock! Chicago also recently began working toward full-time paid staff, and hired their first paid staff member in 2012. As a result, they have had to take more foundation grants and corporate sponsorships than before. Bay Area Rock Camp, on the other hand, accepts funding from anyone, placing more importance on making programming available to as many girls as possible and paying organizing staff than on maintaining absolute commitment to feminist funding ethics.

Willie Mae Rock Camp in New York City and Portland Rock Camp are the two most consistent role models for other Rock Camps, and hence their approaches to organizational structure are especially important. Both camps hold considerably more programming throughout the year than other branches of Rock Camp, running afterschool programs, Ladies Rock Camp (a weekend-long version of Summer Camp for women 21 and older), and extensive community outreach in the case of Willie Mae. Hence, both branches employ a larger staff than Chicago or the Bay Area. Willie Mae and Portland Camps are able to put on such consistent programming because of their steady influx of foundation funding. Both camps have been in existence longer than any other branches, and are both well known in their respective cities as strong and influential programs. This reputation provides both camps with access to a larger range of foundation grants and corporate sponsors. However, organizers in both Portland and New York expressed hesitation about seeking large foundation grants, and especially corporate sponsorships, since the well-established music and arts communities in Portland and New York afford both camps access to a greater number of local resources. The organizers in both cities consider their fortunate position in metropolises with thriving music communities when making funding decisions, choosing to turn down sponsorships from Guitar Center, for

instance, in favor of cultivating relationships with local music stores. Each camp represented in this project has made a different set of choices regarding organizational structure, some of which have compromised the branch's ability to fully enact social change. As I have gestured to earlier in this chapter, there are ways to continue to work towards social change while accepting corporate sponsorships and foundation funding, but these situations are often not navigated carefully enough, and as a result, Rock Camp is gradually becoming more assimilated into the mainstream, and is moving further away from its radical roots.

One of the basic tenets of the nonprofit structure is the board of directors. While the board has full decision-making power under official nonprofit structure, each Rock Camp has a slightly different relationship with their board. Jenna and Kim both attest to the Charleston board's relative hands-off approach: "On paper we [Girls Rock! Charleston] have a chair of the board and a treasurer and all of that stuff, and we have meetings every so often and we're supposed to vote in certain ways, but we also think a lot about how we work collectively and try to let our organization run in the way that works best for us."¹¹⁵ As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the organizers of Girls Rock! Charleston operate in a non-hierarchical team structure, and members of the staff are also on their board of directors. There is a strong connection between the staff and the board, but this amicable relationship is informal and completely dependent on the individuals involved. In order to ensure the longevity of this nominal power relationship, in which the board is theoretically in charge but wields no actual decision-making power,

¹¹⁵ Larson, interview.

Charleston must create a policy that details the expected interactions of the board and staff.

In its first couple of years, Portland staff had a similar relationship to its board as Charleston does now, but as a result of the informal nature of the relationship, Portland Camp endured a complete restructuring of the staff positions, which severely compromised the organization's feminist identity. To give a little background on the evolution of the staffing structure in Portland, Portland Camp almost shut down in 2005 when the founder left the staff team. However, the organization remained in operation because sts went to the interim executive director at the time and told him: “ ‘We can totally take this on. We know how to do it, we’ve been working here as volunteers, volunteers have basically been running this, hire me as staff’ and so he did.”¹¹⁶ This decision marked the beginning of JAWS, the executive team that ran Portland Rock Camp in various incarnations until 2011. In 2005, JAWS was made up of Jen Agosta, Amanda Paulk, Winner and sts. Together these four represented a united front against the board of the directors, defending the importance of the mission of Rock Camp. The board of directors included a number of lawyers, real estate agents, and other business-minded people, interested in streamlining and mainstreaming Rock Camp. The JAWS team proved to be essential to refocusing the goals of the board towards the mission of Rock Camp to create social change. While unconventional, variations on Portland's executive team model have proved to be an effective modification to the nonprofit structure for Rock Camp, enabling the staff to retain some directional power. The executive team

¹¹⁶ sts, interview.

model promotes consensus-based decision making, which allows the staff greater leverage in counteracting the institutional power of the board.

However, as Portland discovered in 2011 when the board disbanded the executive team, this unofficial convivial relationship between the staff and board can prove to be quite tenuous. The reasoning behind the board's decision to disband the executive team in Portland will never be completely clear, as there are widely varying interpretations of the event depending on who you ask. However, what can be said with certainty is that the board's decision to remove the team structure and instate a top-down executive director model fundamentally changed the staff dynamics as well as Portland Camp's understanding of itself as a consensus-based, feminist organization. In order to comply with 501(c)3 regulations, a nonprofit is required to have a board of directors, ostensibly to keep the staff accountable to the mission. However, as can be seen in the example of Portland Camp, the board often presents challenges to the staff's conceptualization of the purpose of the organization. The staff at the time, myself and sts included, struggled to reason through the hypocrisy present in teaching campers to work as a team and to value and include all opinions, and simultaneously working in a hierarchical environment. Since its inception, Portland Rock Camp had prided itself on functioning as a role model for campers of consensus-based feminist organizing. For sts, it is of utmost importance for Rock Camp's organizational structure to reflect the lessons taught to the campers: "If we're not working together as a team, how can we turn around to kids and say 'the best way to exist in this world is to work with your partners, work with your teammates.'" Otherwise, we should be teaching them how to be in a hierarchy where one person gets to

make crazy decisions and everyone else has to follow.”¹¹⁷ However, this isn’t to say that an executive director structure is inherently negative, or that it won’t work well for Portland eventually. Willie Mae, for example, has functioned effectively with an executive director for a number of years. When the executive director serves as a facilitator for the rest of the staff team and as a face of the organization to the outside world rather than the absolute boss of the staff team, the top-down director model can interface well with feminist organizing. However, in order for the two to work well together, the executive director must understand her position not as one of absolute power of the organization, but rather as a resource that enables the rest of the staff to do their best work.

Even within camps that are hierarchically structured, there is often a high level of collaboration between staff members. Girls Rock Chicago has a Camp Director, Laura Swanlund, but they are nonetheless a consensus-based organization. Laura provided an example of their consensus model in action during our interview. As Rock Camp in Chicago gains popularity and name recognition, more and more people want to do benefits for the organization. However, these events do not always align with the mission and ethics of Rock Camp. For example, a longtime volunteer planned a math rock concert that was advertised through a poster that had “some attractive man being like ‘hey girl, wanna kiss the drummer?’”¹¹⁸ Although the outreach director noticed the poster first, and found issue with the focus on the desirability of male musicians, the entire staff team immediately met about the event, and discussed possible solutions; it was not just the job of the outreach director. Laura says such occurrences happen almost weekly; as soon as

¹¹⁷ sts, interview.

¹¹⁸ Swanlund, interview.

one staff member gets an email about a potential benefit show or community partnership, she immediately looks to the rest of the staff for input and consensus before responding. In this way, despite their hierarchical structure, Girls Rock! Chicago continues to model teamwork for campers and enact feminist principles in their organizational structure.

Although the consensus model works well for Girls Rock! Chicago within their staff team, there is a strong ideological divide between the board and the staff. Laura noted two important diversions between the board and the staff in her interview: the inclusion of transgender individuals in Rock Camp's target audience, as discussed in chapter two, and the importance of foundation funding versus grassroots fundraising. This past winter the board and staff went on a retreat facilitated by a third party. On the retreat, the consultant asked each participant to describe an ideal newspaper headline for Girls Rock Chicago in ten years. The staff's answers were mostly focused on the activism of camp, "when we see the individuals of our community making a difference, and knowing Girls Rock was a place where they found a voice, or Girls Rock was the place that helped them through that process."¹¹⁹ The board, on the other hand, talked more about finances and the "health of the organization from that perspective."¹²⁰ While Laura admits that it is appropriate for the board to care primarily about finances, she expressed concern that the overall mission was often forgotten in the board's fundraising efforts. Although some branches have found ways to modify the nonprofit structure that allow them to operate as a consensus-based organization, there is often an ongoing tension between the ideas and values of the board and those of the staff and community members.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

This tension is one of the clear drawbacks to the nonprofit structure for Rock Camp, and it limits each organization's ability to act in the best interest of their community.

For Girls Rock! Charleston, the only real benefit of 501(c)3 status is the potential for later growth through more numerous fundraising opportunities; the nonprofit structure is unimportant to its fundamental operation as it stands currently. If Girls Rock! Charleston lost their 501(c)3 status, there would be no drastic changes to their programming, or to their influence on the community: “we’d still be Girls Rock! Charleston, we’d still be an organization that was working in the community.”¹²¹ Jenna wonders whether Rock Camp as a movement even needs to participate in the nonprofit system, or whether the movement would be better off without the limitations of nonprofit status. If more organizers of Rock Camps had a greater understanding of the effects of nonprofit status on their autonomy, and were more aware of the Nonprofit Industrial Complex, Jenna believes that the Girls Rock Movement would recognize that the nonprofit structure is not in its best interest, and that it doesn't need to be dependent on foundation funding, instead relying on income from programming and grassroots fundraising. Jenna's opinion on this issue is heavily influenced by her position at Charleston, one of the smallest branches of Rock Camp, which does only one week of summer camp per year, and additionally, the only camp interviewed for this project that relies completely on grassroots community fundraising. Even though the stipulations associated with nonprofit status are fraught and place limitations on the ability of Rock Camps to create organizational structures in a way that best benefits their communities, the status is essential to countless camps because of the access it provides to foundation

¹²¹ Lyles, interview.

funding. Camps other than Charleston, including Portland, Willie Mae and the Bay Area would not be able to serve the needs of their respective communities without access to foundation funding because their programming is too extensive to be based solely on grassroots fundraising.

In talking with the current organizers of Rock Camps who do rely heavily on foundation funding, I observed that none of them were aware of, or willing to admit to, the limitations placed upon their programming by grants. Karla Schickele, Beth Wooten, and Carey Fay-Horowitz all agreed that they do not feel limited by grants, because they only seek out grants that match programming they already want to do. They claim they have never modified a program to fit a grant, or designed a whole new program based on a newly discovered project grant. Karla does admit that there is always more programming that Willie Mae Rock Camp wants to do than they have funding for, and clearly the programs that can get funded are prioritized¹²². However, she does not view this as being beholden to grantmakers, since Willie Mae designed the program separately from the grant stipulations, and therefore, the organization is only doing the programs that the staff are in favor of¹²³.

Despite this common perception, the grantmakers do still control the programming of Willie Mae and other Rock Camps that rely on grants, in the sense that only specific programs will receive funding, and other programming ideas will never come to fruition. While the decisions as to which programs receive funding and which do not may seem arbitrary and therefore inconsequential, every program that a foundation funds is a political move that supports some aspects of Rock Camp's mission over others.

¹²² Karla Schickele, interview with the author, 1 Mar. 2013.

¹²³ Ibid.

For example, Portland Rock Camp applied for two grants last summer, one to fund translating all promotional materials into Portland's four most commonly spoken languages besides English, and the second to expand Rock Camp Studio, a program that provides technical skills for older campers interested in recording and the music industry. They received the funding for expanding Rock Camp Studio, but have yet to implement the translation initiative due to lack of funding. The expansion of an already existing program is easily palatable by the ruling class, and does not threaten their control in any meaningful way, whereas the translation of Rock Camp's materials to make the organization more accessible to immigrant communities and communities of color is a distinctly political program. This is not to say that a translation initiative would never receive funding, but rather that it is always easier to find funding to buy more guitars, or expand programming to a new school than it is to fund initiatives that are so clearly challenging the white, patriarchal control of society. Therefore, the true danger in relying on foundation funding is that Rock Camp will focus primarily on programming that can easily receive funding, rather than on more political programs and initiatives that are in line with the feminist ethics of the organization. Foundation funding provides yet another example of the ways in which Rock Camp is gradually moving further and further away from Misty's original vision, and is becoming more assimilated into mainstream culture and the most insidious part is that the organizers often do not realize the extent to which they are complicit in the mainstreaming of Rock Camp.

In addition to considering what kinds of programming receive funding, it is important to interrogate the origin of that funding. While the branches of Rock Camp have received offers from various corporations over the years, the most salient example is

Guitar Center. Last summer Guitar Center reached out to the Girls Rock Camp Alliance and offered every member camp a donation package including \$10 gift certificates for every Girls Rock camper, instruments, and other Guitar Center swag. The corporation has a negative reputation among female musicians for its sexist, condescending employees and consistently misogynistic attitudes towards women and girls. Additionally, as a national corporation, its branches often put independent music stores out of business. As a result, many camps hesitated to accept the generous offer, not wanting to be associated with a company that so clearly contradicted Rock Camp's core values of creating safe spaces for female-identified musicians and working within and supporting local music communities. While some camps such as Chicago and the Bay Area did accept the offer, they retained significant reservations about doing so, and continued to express hesitation or regret about their decision to accept because of negative personal interactions with the store.¹²⁴

In their position as more established camps in strong supportive music communities, Portland and Willie Mae could both afford to turn down such an offer. Guitar Center was the first donation that Beth declined in her role as Executive Director, stating that Portland Camp already has close relationships with local music stores, and does not need to solicit more instruments or other gear. Willie Mae similarly works collaboratively with local music stores such as Main Drag Music, and has strong partnerships with other music-related organizations in New York such as Tom Tom Magazine, and therefore it does not need to accept donations from Guitar Center¹²⁵.

¹²⁴ Swanlund and Fay-Horowitz, interview.

¹²⁵ "Donors, Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls," accessed 28 Mar. 2013, <http://williemaerockcamp.org/support/donors/>.

Portland and Willie Mae are able to enact Rock Camp's mission through their funding choices, a position that organizers at both camps recognize as incredibly fortunate. Their communities provide them with enough resources to make Rock Camp happen without relying on Guitar Center funding, and they are therefore able to remain more true to feminist organizing ethics.

Bay Area Rock Camp appears to be in a similar position to both Willie Mae and Portland Rock Camp with numerous local music businesses listed in their "Friends and Sponsors" section of the website, yet Carey and the rest of the staff at Bay Area Camp chose to accept the Guitar Center sponsorship. Historically, the Bay Area Camp has just taken money from "anyone who wants to give it to [them]," prioritizing the reach and breadth of their programming over the source of their funding¹²⁶. However, Carey's personal experience shopping at Guitar Center has since made her more cautious of the funding she accepts. Every Bay Area camper received a \$10 gift certificate, which is not enough to buy anything substantial at Guitar Center, rather functioning as an incentive to go to the store. Carey used one of the gift certificates at the end of the summer, only to experience the condescending, aggressive salesmen that so many female musicians have come to expect at Guitar Center. Subsequently, Carey regretted promoting such a company to the campers and their families, and Bay Area Camp has decided to decline any similar packages in future years.

While Bay Area Camp still accepts donations from many other major corporations such as Vic Firth and Daisy Rock Guitars, as do Portland Camp and Willie Mae, the Guitar Center donation was particularly insidious. Other companies want

¹²⁶ Fay-Horowitz, interview.

recognition for their donation, and benefit by having their name associated with Rock Camp and therefore reaching a new customer base, but Guitar Center benefits more directly than that from this partnership. Every camper who goes to Guitar Center to spend her gift certificate is almost guaranteed to exceed the ten dollars, and therefore, Guitar Center not only accesses a new customer base, they also profit directly from their donation to Rock Camp. Although every corporation is clearly profit-driven in a capitalist economy, Guitar Center's donation is most explicitly about making a profit than all the rest. Vic Firth and Daisy Rock provide in-kind donations, drumsticks for the drums class, or guitars for raffles, and do not make any direct profit from their donation, whereas the gift certificates from Guitar Center are primarily designed to bring new customers to the store. Blindly accepting a donation that promotes sexist music corporations to campers and encourages them to support such businesses is clearly counter to the social change elements of Rock Camp's mission.

Laura Swanlund and the rest of the staff at Girls Rock! Chicago took yet another approach to navigating the Guitar Center donation by deciding to engage the managers of the Chicago locations. Even before the offer in the summer of 2012, Girls Rock! Chicago was actively working to change the average female musician's experience at Guitar Center. At their Ladies Rock Camp, volunteers ran workshops teaching women the basics of gear, what to look for in a new guitar, the pros and cons of different amps, and what function different pedals serve, to name a few skills. With this knowledge, Ladies Rock Campers were better equipped to go to Guitar Center, or any other music store, and were more prepared to make an informed purchase without being bullied by the salesmen. Following the offer from Guitar Center, these efforts only increased. Girls Rock Chicago

staffers went and met with local representatives of Guitar Center, as well as the managers of all the Chicago branches, and provided them with information and resources for creating a business environment that is friendlier to female customers. Since this relationship was established, people involved with Girls Rock Camp in Chicago have experienced a marked improvement in service, and have noticed that Guitar Center salespeople are more aware of their actions.¹²⁷ However, this initiative is certainly not the last step in making Guitar Center a more welcoming place for female musicians, as Laura's girlfriend continues to receive the same service as always, because she does not mention her connection to Girls Rock Camp, and is therefore not afforded the same respect. Although their efforts are not yet entirely successful, it is admirable that the organizers at Girls Rock Chicago took active steps to change the average Guitar Center experience for female musicians.

Girls Rock! Chicago's efforts to change the attitude and actions of Guitar Center salesmen is one method of retaining some measure of financial ethics while still accepting funding and donations from major corporations. In this context, financial ethics refers to an awareness of the mission and core values of the funding sources for Rock Camp, and the extent to which those values match the values of Rock Camp. Jenna from Girls Rock Charleston expressed extreme frustration with camps that are not "principled" enough in their funding decisions, and that accept funding from anyone and everyone without questioning the funding organization's core values.¹²⁸ Zie went on to explain that zie wants camps to be able to justify their decisions, to be able to say "we're accepting the Guitar Center sponsorship because we think that it's more important for us to be able

¹²⁷ Swanlund, interview.

¹²⁸ Lyles, interview.

to accept three more campers who will then have guitars to play than it is for us to uphold these core financial ethics.”¹²⁹ Here Jenna is referring primarily to younger camps who do not yet have the kind of community support that Charleston has. Especially in a camp’s first summer, Jenna is willing to give the organizers some flexibility in terms of funding sources, because she recognizes how difficult it can be to establish a Rock Camp in a new community. The organizers in Charleston believe, however, that only way to maintain a true commitment to financial ethics is to rely solely on grassroots fundraising in their community in the form of benefit shows, auctions, and other similar events. While Jenna understands that each camp is in a different financial situation, and may not have the ability or desire to rely on its community in this way, she does insist that all camps need to have higher levels of transparency regarding not just who their funders are, but also the thought process behind taking money from large corporations such as Guitar Center.

Sts agrees with Jenna and was also always a strong proponent of community-based fundraising in her time at the Portland Camp. However, she experienced strong pushback from board members, as well as from other members of the executive team, who expressed concerns that grassroots fundraising was inefficient. Sts was confident in her ability to raise funds for Rock Camp through grassroots initiatives because of her strong personal ties to the Rock Camp volunteers and to the wider music communities in Portland, but others in the organization “didn’t think it was realistic to generate a lot of money from the community.”¹³⁰ Compared to the time and effort necessary to do community-based fundraising, whether it is an annual fundraising campaign as Sts did, or monthly benefit shows as Charleston does, the amount of money fundraised tends to be

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Sts, interview.

relatively small. Additionally, all of the time spent on organizing and planning events and campaigns is time that is not spent on programming, the heart of the Rock Camp mission. Although benefit shows serve a multitude of purposes besides fundraising, including camper and volunteer outreach and community formation, the frequency necessary to support a Rock Camp solely through grassroots fundraising is often all-consuming, leaving little to no time to focus on revising curriculum and programming.

Jenna defends Charleston's decision to rely completely on grassroots fundraising by explaining the importance of community buy-in to the work that Charleston Rock Camp does. Grassroots fundraising allows the organizers in Charleston to avoid one of the biggest drawbacks to foundation funding, namely a lack of community input about which programs receive funding. Jenna argues that "if [Charleston Rock Camp] is doing work that the community finds valuable, they will fund it," and inversely if Rock Camp is no longer providing necessary services to the community, they will cease to fund it.¹³¹ In this model, the organizers are forced to have greater organizational integrity because they have to listen and respond to the community's needs in a way that is not necessarily required when relying on foundation or corporate funding. However, it also assumes that the community has enough disposable income to be able to contribute to the organization, and it does not take into account the multitude of reasons why a community may not be able to support such an organization, despite having a very real need for its services. Especially for an organization that relies almost completely, if not entirely, on volunteer labor, asking a community to give their time as well as their money can easily lead to stark class divisions within the organization. Additionally, Jenna's analysis does not take

¹³¹ Lyles, interview.

the sustainability of such a model into consideration. Girls Rock! Charleston is just entering its third year, and as such, its community is still able to financially support the organization. However, as it continues to grow and becomes a more long-standing institution in Charleston, those same donors may not be willing or able to continue to give every year.

Although Jenna's commitment to feminist organizing principles and community-based fundraising is admirable, as Girls Rock! Charleston develops itself into a community institution, the needs of the community in terms of programming will continue to grow, and the organization will no longer be able rely solely on the community for financial support. This mismatch between the needs of the community, and the ability of the community to financially support the institution is one instance in which the organization must choose between its feminist organization principles in terms of funding sources and fully serving the needs of the community. When community-based fundraising can work, and the organization can continue to provide sufficient levels of programming for the community, I argue that it is preferable to a reliance on foundation funding because it forces the organization to be responsive to the community's needs. However, in so many instances, community-based fundraising is unrealistic because it is too time consuming, or because the organization provides more extensive programming as in the case of Portland Rock Camp or Willie Mae. This is one instance in which I argue that the decision to rely completely on grassroots fundraising and to refuse all foundation funding must be made on a case-by-case basis, and no one standard can be applied to the entire GRCA. However, recommendations from the GRCA as to how best to use community-based fundraising tactics, and how to navigate corporate

sponsorships would help alleviate the tension between the two methods and provide a sense of organizational unity.

Kim Larson, one of the Charleston organizers, articulated a more nuanced understanding of the positive and negative aspects of community-based fundraising, and acknowledged some of the inherent difficulties and dangers of relying so heavily on one group of people. The major benefit is clearly that the organization is not beholden to foundations or corporations: “we don’t have to make decisions based on what our donors expect of us or we don’t have to hide certain aspects of our mission in order to appeal to people with more money.”¹³² However, while Jenna stopped here, Kim goes on to explain the drawback of such a method: “it also means that the people who are our volunteers and their families and our campers and their families and other musicians in the community who actually support what we’re doing are the ones who are financially supporting it.”¹³³ While Kim agrees with Jenna about the centrality of grassroots fundraising to the mission and work of Girls Rock! Charleston, she demonstrates a better understanding of what the future will look like for the organization, and that this model is almost certainly not sustainable as the organization continues to grow by putting on more programming and starting to pay staff members.

Paid staff is a consistent priority for all five camps interviewed for this project, and is commonly understood as a basic way to promote organizational stability and prevent burnout among organizers. Willie Mae, Portland, and the Bay Area all pay their staff and have done so for a number of years, whereas Chicago and Charleston are just beginning to entertain the idea. For Beth, it is important to recognize the historical

¹³² Larson, interview.

¹³³ Ibid.

devaluation of women's work in American capitalist society, and to respond to that by ensuring that Rock Camp is financially supporting its primarily female organizers. A large part of sustaining a responsible women's empowerment organization such as Rock Camp is financially supporting the key organizers, thereby allowing them to devote all of their time and energy to creating social change through Rock Camp, rather than requiring them to work multiple jobs to support themselves. However, providing salaries almost necessitates greater reliance on grants, as community-based fundraising is simply not consistent enough to guarantee an annual salary. This issue of the structural implications of paying staff relates back to Andrea Smith's arguments discussed earlier in this chapter. Smith argues that paying staff ultimately changes the organizer's relationship to the mission, but her argument is not directly applicable to Rock Camp. When a Rock Camp organizer is hired as paid staff, her job does not change substantially in most cases, and she is often the Executive or Program Director, and so can continue to make the same decisions that she made as a volunteer organizer.

Although Willie Mae, Portland and Bay Area Rock Camps all pay their key organizing staff, they still rely heavily on volunteers for programming positions such as instrument instructors, band coaches, and workshop leaders. As Beth notes, there is an unspoken assumption that the mission takes priority above all else: "that you just do everything that you can, and sacrifice everything you can for camp, surrender to the cause and the mission."¹³⁴ Volunteering for Rock Camp, and for other social justice organizations, is often framed as an all-consuming commitment to the mission and to the struggle for social change. Through her humor, Beth explains the contradiction present in

¹³⁴ Wooten, interview.

this assumption: “There’s this utopic DIY, you know it’s cool, we’ll feed you vegan baked goods and herbal tea and we’ll all be okay. And some days that is okay, but some days you can feel really burnt out.”¹³⁵ Organizations such as Rock Camp ask its community to volunteer tirelessly to run its programming but often fail to offer any real incentive for those dedicated people beyond the dream of the realization of the mission.

As the Rock Camp movement matures, and individual Camps become more established in their communities, it is essential to interrogate the sustainability, as well as the effectiveness of the Rock Camp volunteer model. At many Rock Camps, especially in Charleston and Portland, the organization struggles to recruit a volunteer staff that matches the racial and class diversity of the campers. While campers often reflect the racial and class diversity of the area fairly accurately, volunteers are overwhelmingly white, upper-middle class, college-educated women. While this disparity is multi-faceted, Jenna suggests that it is in part due to the historical connotation of volunteer labor, and the connection different racial groups have to volunteer work. As Jenna explains: “Women of color have been historically forced to do free work and their work is exploited in a racialized way and at a higher level than white women’s work,” which to her, compounds the struggle to create a diverse and representative volunteer staff.¹³⁶ In this instance, Jenna is not only contending with an overall shortage of potential volunteers, but also with historical disincentives that make women of color less likely to volunteer at Rock Camp.

When asked about the diversity of their volunteer base, Laura Swanlund and sts both skirted around the issue and chose to interpret the question as one about diversity of

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Lyles, interview.

opinion, rather than one about racial and class diversity. Sts stressed the absolute importance of having volunteers who “don’t get it” here, people who come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and represent some of the differences in opinion regarding issues such as feminism and gender justice.¹³⁷ Both sts and Laura were proud of their organization’s ability to achieve diversity among their volunteers in terms of representations of female gender identity and a range of political views. While this diversity of opinion is certainly an important aspect to having a representative volunteer staff, it does not fully embrace an intersectional understanding of feminism. The fact that both Laura and sts chose not to discuss diversity in terms of race and class, but rather in terms of politics and gender presentation, is suggestive that the volunteer base at both camps is not racially or economically diverse, and that both organizers answered the question in a way that put their respective organization in the best possible light. However, their inability to admit to the shortcomings of their volunteer base presents a problem for their enactment of an intersectional feminist politics. Kimberlé Crenshaw’s understanding of intersectionality as a method for “mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics,” is useful here in analyzing sts’ and Laura’s avoidance of the subject of racial and economic diversity within their volunteer base.¹³⁸ Both women clearly recognize the tension that Crenshaw points to, but cannot yet articulate a solution to that tension in their volunteer recruitment, or in the organization overall.

Additionally, volunteering is inherently classist in that it does not allow for people who work full-time jobs or care for their children and families to take time off to

¹³⁷ sts, interview.

¹³⁸ Crenshaw, “Intersectionality and Identity Politics,” 488.

participate. Many parents are therefore excluded from volunteering, unless their child is attending Rock Camp. In observing the demographics of volunteers at Rock Camp, they tend to be overwhelmingly white, young, middle or upper-middle class, women, and are often college students or recent college graduates. In part, these women are able to volunteer for Rock Camp in greater proportions than other people because it is culturally acceptable for young, recent college graduates to take time to find their next steps in life, and to not know their exact career or life path, therefore allowing them space to volunteer with organizations such as Rock Camp. As a result, Rock Camp tends to attract young, white women, whereas greater outreach is necessary to reach other potential volunteer communities. In order to do effective outreach to diversify the volunteer base in terms of race, class and age, Rock Camp organizers need to develop and implement a more complex intersectional analysis of their outreach techniques.

On top of extensive volunteer outreach, providing opportunities for personal growth is critical to volunteer retention over a long period of time, and by extension, the sustainability of the organization. For Jenna, a large part of Rock Camp's programming goals is leadership development for campers, and she argues that this same goal should be extended to volunteers. By providing opportunities for growth and skill-building, Rock Camp will be better able to avoid volunteer burnout: "We should be thinking about the ways in which every time we engage volunteers whether that's in helping us screenprint, or helping us hang posters, or helping us write a grant, that that is leadership development too."¹³⁹ While the temptation to allow the salience of the mission to be enough to keep volunteers coming back summer after summer is strong, it is

¹³⁹ Lyles, interview.

fundamentally not enough to sustain an organization or community, and it does not promote empowerment and skill-building for volunteers as well as campers. By providing leadership development opportunities for volunteers, Rock Camp can engage in an important part of strengthening its community by expanding women's skill sets and encouraging them to then contribute back to the community.

Kim Larson provided a small example of the possibilities realized by empowering volunteers with new leadership opportunities. When Charleston Rock Camp first started, the organizers struggled to find women with strong enough instrument skills to be instrument instructors. Kim worked endlessly to convince her musician friends to give it a try, regardless of their experience level. Although many expressed hesitation, at Kim's insistence, a few agreed to try it, and as soon as they got to Rock Camp and started working with 8-year olds who had never played an instrument before, they realized they could teach.¹⁴⁰ By believing in her friends and encouraging them to take a risk and push their limits, Kim created a group of committed volunteers, who stood to gain new skills and confidence by volunteering, which kept them coming back to camp. However, no matter how many skills volunteers gain by offering their time to Rock Camp, the fundamental fact remains that they are not being financially supported by Rock Camp, and are therefore limited in their ability to contribute to camp by financial obligations.

The organizers of Rock Camps across the country are ultimately responsible to their communities. Any decisions they make that in any way compromise the feminist ethics of Rock Camp, be it operating under a hierarchical structure, relinquishing power to the board of directors, or accepting and pursuing foundation funding and corporate

¹⁴⁰ Larson, interview.

sponsorships, should be directly connected to specific needs of the community, and should be influenced primarily by considerations of more fully enacting the mission. Within this there is room for each camp to have different interpretations, and prioritize different aspects of the ideal Rock Camp organizational structure, but this variety must be dependent upon the stated needs of the community, and be only marginally influenced by the individual goals and aspirations of the organizers. The Girls Rock Camp Alliance, in its role as the governing body, provides an opportunity for all branches of Rock Camp to organize around points of unity. These points of unity can clarify Rock Camp's political priorities in regards to organizational structure, and funding sources, as well as programming aspects discussed in chapter two, such as the inclusion of transgender/genderqueer individuals in camp, and the discussion of other forms of oppression besides sexism in curriculum, while simultaneously leaving room and flexibility for each camp to enact these points of unity differently in response to their community's specific needs.

Conclusion

In order to fully realize Rock Camp's potential for contributing to social justice work and cultural change, the organizers of Rock Camp must commit to affirming the feminist politics and foundation of Rock Camp's vision in every decision they make. Whether or not the particular branch identifies explicitly as feminist, the organizers must remember that the work that Rock Camp does is part of a wider coalition of organizations doing feminist and anti-oppression work. While the work that Rock Camp does to build individual girls' self-esteem is at the core of the organization's mission, it is only a part of the puzzle. As Patricia Hill Collins, the Redstockings, and countless other feminist theorists and collectives have suggested, raising the individual woman's consciousness is an important part of the struggle to end patriarchy, but consciousness-raising by itself is not the complete solution. Therefore, to enact social and cultural change, the organizers of Rock Camp must recognize their potential allies and partners in the struggle to end oppression of all kind, and further, they must create meaningful and lasting partnerships with these other social justice organizations.

While it is easy to state that Rock Camp must reorient itself towards its feminist politics and build stronger coalitions with other social justice organizations, the reality of the Rock Camp organizers' day-to-day work makes such a task exceedingly difficult. Navigating the intricacies of the capitalist system and working to create a stable organization that provides consistent programming is often a big enough struggle for the organizers of Rock Camp that little energy remains to tackle the bigger theoretical issues. However, Rock Camp is not the first nonprofit social justice organization to navigate the tension between feminist pedagogy and organizing methods and mainstream capitalist

nonprofit structures, nor will it be the last. This puts Rock Camp in a position to serve as a potential model for future organizing efforts by other feminist activists. The compromises Rock Camp organizers make between the organization's feminist organizing ethics and mainstream stability affect not only the immediate service community, but also other organizations modeling themselves on Rock Camp. At least two such organizations exist already: Pushing Margins in Oakland, CA, an organization that offers creative writing workshops as a creative outlet for queer teenagers, and App Camp for Girls in Portland, OR, a camp that aims to make technology and technological development more accessible to women and girls. Both of these organizations were started by Rock Camp volunteers and follow closely in Rock Camp's footsteps. If they succeed and grow as Rock Camp has, they will face similar tensions between nonprofit status and feminist organizing ethics and need models to emulate in order to navigate that tension.

In light of the continued growth of the Girls Rock! Movement through GRCA member camps as well as offshoot organizations such as Pushing Margins and App Camp for Girls, the movement desperately needs a stronger sense of overall organizational unity and shared purpose. As demonstrated by the varied views of the Rock Camp organizers interviewed for this project, every camp interprets the mission and purpose of Rock Camp slightly differently. While variation is necessary in order to serve different communities of girls and women, as the movement moves further and further away from the original radical politics of the Portland Camp in the early 2000s, the organizers must not lose sight of the social justice aspects of the mission, because without them. Without these aspects, Rock Camp is just another summer camp. The Girls Rock Camp Alliance

plays an essential role in determining the direction that the movement moves in over the course of the next few years; it has the potential as the governing body to help to reorient all of the camps towards a commitment to social justice and social transformation.

Last month, I attend the GRCA conference in Atlanta, Georgia, and many of these precise issues of organizational unity and the future of the Girls Rock! Movement were stressed throughout the weekend-long event. The conference is organized into a series of workshops led by GRCA board members, as well as organizers of member camps. One workshop I attended discussed the development of the GRCA, both in terms of staffing structure, and in terms of its position as the guiding organization for the movement. This workshop, as well as conversations I had throughout the rest of the conference, served to reemphasize the importance of organizational points of unity for the future of the Girls Rock! Movement. The GRCA has established a set of core values, but they do provide a framework for how to enact said values, which allows member camps to become complacent instead of consistently working towards the implementation of the core values. The GRCA website presents the organization's core values as follows:

We value the power of music as a means to create personal and social change;
We value efforts that actively expand opportunities for girls and women;
We value positive approaches to fighting sexism;
We value integrity, honesty and respect;
We value appropriate sharing of resources, cooperation, and collaboration;
We value using our collective voice to further our mission;
We value diversity.¹⁴¹

While these core values accurately represent the work that the Girls Rock! Movement professes to do, suggestions of concrete actions that member camps can take in order to

¹⁴¹ "Core Values, Girls Rock Camp Alliance," accessed 10 Apr. 2013, <http://girlsrockcampalliance.org/about-2/about/>.

reach these goals are necessary, and would enforce more consistent implementation of the core values.

While the suggestions for action from the GRCA need to be concrete, the suggestions must also navigate the delicate balance between overall political unity within the movement and the reality of each camp being located in drastically different communities. Nevertheless, some areas in which all camps could come together include community partnerships with other social justice organizations, support for transgender and genderqueer individuals and stricter policies regarding accepting corporate sponsorships. The GRCA should establish a rubric for what a responsible and complete community partnership looks like—a give and take between the two organizations, an effort on Rock Camp's part to provide more than just a scholarship, and a mutual commitment to continuing to struggle to end oppression of all kinds. While not all Rock Camps necessarily want to include transgender and genderqueer individuals as a part of the direct service community of the organization, the GRCA needs a statement of solidarity that declares the movement's support for all queer and trans people, and for the Queer Rock Camp movement. Through that statement of solidarity, Rock Camp would strengthen its commitment to social justice and to recognizing the intricacies of gender-based oppression—that it affects more than just women and girls. Finally, the GRCA needs to address the issue of funding and sponsorship, and the effect it has on the organizational integrity of the movement. Again, each camp has a distinct financial situation in terms of the support of its wider community, and the amount of funding it needs to complete its programming. Therefore, while the GRCA cannot realistically force all camps to rely on grassroots funding, nor would that fix the problem even if the GRCA

could enforce such a demand, the GRCA can and should require camps to reject offers such as the Guitar Center offer that are clearly profit-driven. Any corporate sponsorship accepted by any Rock Camp should not directly benefit the corporation in the form of profit, but rather should primarily benefit Rock Camp, either in the form of a grant or in-kind donations.

Through suggestions such as these, the GRCA can encourage all Rock Camps to reorient themselves towards social justice and to resist becoming too assimilated into mainstream culture. Feminism should be at the core of Rock Camp's every move, from its pedagogy and programming to its organizational structure and funding decisions. As soon as Rock Camp begins to move away from its feminist roots, it loses what makes it unique from other music summer camps—a commitment and drive to change the world one girl at a time.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions¹⁴²

1. When did you first become involved with Rock Camp and in what capacity? Why were you drawn to Rock Camp?
2. What does activism mean to you? Do you consider your work at Rock Camp activist? Are you or have you been involved in other activist work?
3. What does feminism mean to you? Is Rock Camp feminist? Why or why not?
4. How does your understanding of Rock Camp's mission in terms of activism and feminism affect the way your camp fundraises?
5. To what extent is your Rock Camp's programming affected by the stipulations of grants/foundations from whom you receive funding?
6. Please explain your approach to camper outreach. What kind of language and materials do you use to explain Rock Camp to parents/families?
7. Do you think that Rock Camp has instigated any change in the local music community? Please explain.
8. My background research of Rock Camp currently focuses primarily on Riot Grrrl and Third Wave Feminism. Are there other historical movements that are commonly overlooked when discussing Rock Camp?

¹⁴² While most interviewees were asked these questions, some interviews went off on long tangents and led to a whole secondary series of questions that were improvised.